



Callaloo & Wattleseed

A Symposium on Caribbean Culture in Australia

Western Sydney University

Parramatta City Campus

May 3, 2024

'zinc house pon mountain top' © Acquille Dunkley, 2024

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



Writing and Society
Research Centre



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

Program



9:00 Welcome to Country by Uncle Harry Allie

Opening remarks: Ben Etherington & Sienna Brown

9.30-10.30 Keynote: Maxine Beneba Clarke

10.30-10.45 *Coffee break*

10.45-12.00 Writing: Cath Moore, Consuelo Martinez, Sienna Brown

Chair: Caryn Rae Adams

12.00-13.00 *Lunch by Jamaican Delight*

13.00-14.15 Music: JJ Roberts, Athésia, Errol H Renaud

Chair: Amma Owusu

14.30-15.45 Education: Anne Hickling-Hudson, Karo Moret, Emelda Davis

Chair: Ben Etherington

15.45-16.00 *Tea Break*

16.00-17.00 Performance: Zahra Newman, Nancy Denis

Chair: Sienna Brown

17.10-18.00 Open discussion

Chair: Cath Moore

18.00 *Informal drinks at Ruse Bar*

Callaloo & Wattleseed



Building on pioneering efforts to recover the long history of Caribbean people in Australia and to understand movements of people between the regions, *Callaloo & Wattleseed* focuses for the first time squarely on the cultural contributions of Caribbean Australians. Caribbean artists from various fields will consider through the prism of their practice questions like: do Caribbean artists work within a ‘diaspora’ or ‘community’ in Australia? Or do their experiences tend to be more isolated, on the one hand, or placed into broader groups, such as the global African or South Asian diasporas, on the other? How have Caribbean artists in Australia navigated the experience of being, in many cases, part of minoritized racial groups? What have been the connections and relations between Caribbean and First Nations people? How do the experiences of Caribbean artists compare with those who have emigrated to other parts of the world?

Keynote: ‘Writing Ourselves Home’

‘Writing Ourselves Home’ will discuss what it means to be an artist, writer, educator and creator of Afro-Caribbean heritage, in a country where the history of the African continent, and of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, remains largely untaught.



Maxine Beneba Clarke is an Australian writer of Afro-Caribbean descent, and the author of over fifteen published books for children and adults, including the critically acclaimed memoir *The Hate Race*, which she has recently adapted for theatre, the ABIA and Indie award-winning short fiction *Foreign Soil*, the poetry collection *Carrying The World*, which won the 2017 Victorian Premier’s Literary Award for Poetry and, most recently, *It’s the Sound of the Thing: 100 new poems for young people*. She is the inaugural Peter Steele Poet in Residence at The University of Melbourne.

Writing



Born in Guyana, **Dr Cath Moore** is an academic, writer and filmmaker of Afro-Caribbean and Anglo-Irish heritage. Cath's screen projects have appeared on SBS and ABC, and at major film festivals around the world. She has written for *The Age* and was a contributor to *Growing up African in Australia*. Her debut novel *Metal Fish Falling Snow* explores the challenges of identity, race and belonging. Cath has taught at several universities and is currently a lecturer in screenwriting at The University of Melbourne.



Dr Consuelo Martínez Reyes is a Puerto Rican writer, translator, and Lecturer in Spanish and Latin American Studies at Macquarie University. She is the author of the short story collection *En blanco* (2018), published in translation as *BLANK Canvases* (2021), which portrays the idiosyncrasies of life in the Spanish Caribbean. She is currently working on her first novel, *La enfermedad* (The Illness), which deals with the effects of colonial powers upon the Puerto Rican ecology and people.



Jamaican-born **Sienna Brown** writes historical fiction that centres on the Caribbean Experience in Australia. Her novel *Master of My Fate* (2019), won the MUD Literary Prize at Adelaide Writers Week for the best debut novel and was shortlisted for the ARA Historical Novel Prize. In 2021, she was commissioned by ABC Radio National to create *Caribbean Convicts in Australia*. Since 2022, she's been a Research Associate at Western Sydney University as part of the ARC project 'Creole Voices in the Caribbean and Australia.'



Dr Caryn Rae Adams is a Lecturer at Trinity College, the University of Melbourne. She moved to Australia from Barbados to complete a PhD that considers themes of trauma and shame in the life writing of Black and Blak women in the Caribbean and Australia during the 1980s and 1990s. Passionate about teaching and learning, Caryn is currently researching her first book on mother-daughter relationships in contemporary Caribbean women's writing. She lives in Melbourne with her two dogs, Negus and Paco.

Music



JJ Roberts, born in Jamaica, grew up with sound systems such as Sir Coxson. Reggae was almost unknown when he arrived in Australia, via the UK, in the early 70s. He designed and had built his own sound system to hold 12" and 15" speakers and played using a valve amplifier. His first show with Soulmaker Reggae sound system was in 1973. He struggled with the rejection of a new genre of music being presented on the virtually unknown concept of a powerful sound system but went on to pave the way for reggae in Australia.



Athésia, a Haitian French Canadian/Australian of African, French, Spanish, and Taino descent, is an international jazz singer, songwriter, radio host, and actor. Arriving in Australia in 2013, she has served as a radio host and producer on ABC Jazz and Eastside Radio and, in 2018, she produced Australia's first Haitian musical event, blending storytelling, traditional Haitian chant, and songs from her album *Athésia & The Gentlemen*. She embraces her roots as a guiding force and is a fervent advocate for diversity and inclusion. athesiamusic.com



Errol H Renaud, from Trinidad & Tobago, started his career with The Ujamaa Performing Company based in Cocorite. He first came to Australia to join The Trinidad Cavaliers during their world tour, and has since performed in over twenty-five countries across the world. Since 1980 Errol has been based in Sydney playing a brand of original music with a rich Caribbean flavour. He has released six albums and two singles, available on all digital platforms. His seventh album is due for release in mid 2024.



Amma Owusu is a DJ, producer, and lawyer with strong links to Jamaica and Jamaican music through her Mum. She has a particular love for the soulful simplicity of rocksteady. Her Dad is Ghanaian, which adds an appreciation and understanding of genres like highlife and Afrobeat. Amma is the co-ordinating producer and co-presenter of Eastside Radio's *Bambu Hut* and a rising star in the Sydney DJ scene. In 2020, she was featured in Trojan records *Young, Gifted and Black* 50th-anniversary tribute to the Bob Andy and Marcia Griffiths tune.

Education



Anne Hickling-Hudson, an adjunct Professor of Education at QUT, has had a long career as a teacher and teacher-educator in the Caribbean, USA, Hong Kong and Australia. In her 25 years in Australian teacher education, she has been committed to decolonization, preparing teachers to challenge racism, inequity, and xenophobia in the classroom. Anne will speak on ‘Black, Multicultural and Internationalist: journey of a Jamaican educator in Australia.’



Dr Karo Moret is an Afro-Cuban historian and artist who lectures in African and Afro-descendant Studies at ANU. Her journey has been shaped by her experiences as an undocumented immigrant, a Black woman, and the first member of her family to earn a degree. Her courses delve into the lasting impact of colonialism and its influence on the lives and beliefs of people of colour. She will speak on ‘Why is it important to teach Caribbean History in Australia?’



(Waskam) **Emelda Davis** is of Australian South Sea Islander (ASSI) and Grenadian descent and is the first Black woman to serve on the City of Sydney Council in 180 years. Emelda's expertise in capacity building for social justice and human rights across marginalised communities has garnered state and federal government recognition. This work has extended to serving on Sites of Conscience board and being a speaker at the United Nations and international symposiums. Accolades include NSW Woman of the Year, NSW International Human Rights Premiers Medal, and 2024 patron for ‘She Inspires Me.’



Ben Etherington is an associate professor in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts and a member of the Writing and Society Research Centre. His teaching and critical work concerns poetics and decolonisation and he's currently writing a history of poetry in West Indian Creole languages from the end of slavery to Louise Bennett. Ben has also produced audio features including a documentary for ABC Radio National on Gangallida activist Clarence Walden, which was co-produced with Waanyi author Alexis Wright.

Performance



Born and raised in Jamaica, **Zahra Newman** is an award-winning actor who has worked with many of Australia's premiere theatre companies. Her film and tv work can be seen on Netflix, ABC, SBS and Foxtel, and includes *Wentworth*, *Rush*, and *Childhood's End*. Most recently she starred as Billie Holiday in a critically acclaimed one-woman show at Belvoir and has just completed an acclaimed world premiere stage adaptation of Maxine Beneba Clarke's memoir *The Hate Race* at the Malthouse in Melbourne.



Nancy Denis is a Haitian woman born and raised on the Gadigal Peoples Clan Lands of the Eora Nation. She is a multidisciplinary artist who performs on Australian stage, tv and film. She has written an original play with songs titled *M'ap Boulé*, which shares a story about a sense of belonging in a country not of her Ancestors. She continues to explore her creativity through the mediums of poetry, art and dance.



Callaloo & Wattleseed forms part of a broader ARC-funded project, *Creole Voices in the Caribbean and Australia*, which is led by **Ben Etherington** and **Sienna Brown**. Ben and Sienna have previously teamed up as convenors of the Australian Association for Caribbean Studies conference and to produce *Caribbean Convicts in Australia* (2021), an audio documentary for ABC Radio National's *The History Listen*. They are currently working with *The History Lab* at UTS's Impact Studios to produce further podcasts on the history of Caribbean people in Australia.



The organisers pay tribute to the Burrumattagal people of the Darug nation on whose unceded lands this gathering takes place. We acknowledge their ancestors and elders and join their calls for justice.

Callaloo & Wattleseed has been generously funded by the Writing and Society Research Centre and the School of Humanities and Communication Arts at Western Sydney University, and the Australian Research Council. We are grateful to Suzanne Gapps for her assistance throughout, to Kate Fagan, Director of the Writing and Society Research Centre, for her support and encouragement, to Acquille Dunkley for permission to use his art, to Jamaican Delight for their delicious food, to Jamaican Products for beverages, to Jane Curtis from UTS Impact Studios and Tegan Nichols from the ABC for recording the event, and to all our wonderful speakers and participants for their time and enthusiasm.

