

N O L I W E M . R O O K S

L. Herbert Ballou University Professor
Chair, Africana Studies • Brown University
Nrooks@Brown.edu

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

L. Herbert Ballou University Professor <i>Africana Studies, Brown University</i>	2021–Present
W.E.B. Du Bois Professor <i>Africana Studies, Cornell University</i>	2018–2021
Associate Professor <i>Africana Studies, Cornell University</i>	2012–2018
Associate Director and Lecturer <i>African American Studies, Princeton University</i>	2000–2012
Visiting Scholar <i>African American Studies, Columbia University</i>	2003, 2007
Visiting Assistant Professor <i>History and African American Studies, Princeton University</i>	1997–1999
Assistant Professor <i>English and African American Studies, University of Missouri, Kansas City</i>	1994–1997

ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION

Chair, Africana Studies <i>Brown University</i>	2021–Present
Director, American Studies <i>Cornell University</i>	2017–2021
Interim Chair, Africana Studies <i>Cornell University</i>	2015–2017
Director of Graduate Studies, Africana Studies <i>Cornell University</i>	2013–2015
Associate Director, Center for African American Studies <i>Princeton University</i>	2000–2012
Founding Coordinator, Center for African American Studies' Civic Initiatives on Environmental Justice, Urban Education Reform, Art & Social Justice <i>Princeton University</i>	2009–2012
Founding Director, Black Studies Program <i>University of Missouri–Kansas City</i>	1994–1998

EDUCATION

Ph.D., American Studies <i>The University of Iowa</i>	1994
M.A., American Studies <i>The University of Iowa</i>	1991
B.A., English <i>Spelman College</i>	1987

PUBLICATIONS: MONOGRAPHS

Integrated: How Schools in America Failed Black Children. Pantheon, 2025.

Best Book of 2025: New York Public Library, Fresh Air Reads, Publishers Weekly (Education Round Up), Kappan. Shortlisted: 2026 PEN/Galbraith Award for Non-Fiction. Publisher's Weekly, Starred Review. Lit Hub, Spring 2025 Most Anticipated. San Francisco Chronicle, Must Read Books 2025. Kirkus Review. Booklist Review. Read Between the Spines, Most Anticipated 2025. Paste Magazine, Most Anticipated Books and Memoirs 2025. The Atlantic, "The Rise of the Brown v. Board Education Skeptics," March 2025.

A Passionate Mind in Relentless Pursuit: Mary McLeod Bethune. Penguin Press, 2024.

Nominated: 2025 NAACP Image Award. New Yorker Magazine, Best Books of 2024. Books-A-Million, Most Anticipated Summer 2024. Ms. Magazine, 2024 Most Anticipated Feminist Book. American Library Association, 2024 Editor's Choice Award. College Transitions, Best Books of 2024. Publisher's Weekly, Starred Review and Best Holiday Gift Book 2024. Booklist, Starred Review. National Archives, Longlisted: 2024 New Deal Book Awards.

Cutting School: Privatization, Segregation, and the End of Public Education. The New Press, 2017.

Winner: 2018 Hurston Wright Legacy Award, Non-Fiction.

White Money/Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race in Higher Education. Beacon Press, 2006.

Ladies' Pages: African American Women's Magazines and the Culture That Made Them. Rutgers University Press, 2004.

Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture, and African American Women. Rutgers University Press, 1996.

Choice Award.

PUBLICATIONS: EDITED VOLUMES

Women's Magazines in Print and New Media. Co-edited with Victoria Pass and Ayana Weekley. Routledge, 2017.

"Black Fashion: Art. Pleasure. Politics," Guest Editor, Special Issue, NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art, No. 37, 2015.

WRITING FOR THE POPULAR PRESS (SELECTED)

Time Magazine

"As Trump Moves to Dismantle the Department of Education, We Need a Constitutional Amendment," July 16, 2025

"The Statue That Taught Me About the Power of Black Women and Democracy," July 23, 2024

"Renisha McBride and Evolution of Black-Female Stereotype," November 14, 2013

"The Biggest Barrier to Elite Education Isn't Affordability. It's Accessibility," February 27, 2013

"MLK Day: It's Time for a Second Emancipation Proclamation," January 21, 2013

"Is Obama's Cabinet Too Male?" January 16, 2013

"The Problem with Food-Stamp Challenges," November 28, 2012

"What Would Lincoln Think About Laws That Deny Felons the Right to Vote?" October 25, 2012

“Why It’s Time to Get Rid of Standardized Tests,” October 11, 2012

“The Myth of Bootstrapping,” September 7, 2012

The Chronicle of Higher Education

“The Pendulum Has Swung Away from Social Justice—Trump Is Destroying the DEI Regime Using the Same Tools That Built It,” May 23, 2025

Medium

“HBCU Graduates Are Finally Getting the Respect We Deserve: We’ve Always Been Vanguard of Excellence, and It Didn’t Start with VP-Elect Kamala Harris,” November 13, 2020

New York Times

“Cindy Hyde-Smith Is Teaching Us What Segregation Academies Taught Her: The Campaign Gaffes of Mississippi’s Newly Elected Senator Reveal the Way That the Past Is Always Present,” November 28, 2018

CityLab

“Are Cyber Elementary Schools Coming to New York? While These Schools May Be Cheaper to Run, They Haven’t Demonstrated a Record of Success,” March 2018

Washington Post

“How ‘Segrenomics’ Underpins the Movement to Privatize Public Education,” January 2018

2025 LECTURES & PUBLIC EVENTS

Mary McLeod Bethune: A Life <i>Council House, Washington, D.C.</i>	March 8, 2025
Cockefair Chair Women’s History Month Celebration Lecture <i>University of Missouri–Kansas City, Kansas City, MO</i>	March 11, 2025
Integrated Book Launch (with Victor Ray & Arielle Gray) <i>Brookline Booksmith, Brookline, MA</i>	March 18, 2025
Providence Integrated Book Talk <i>Riffraff Books, Providence, RI</i>	March 20, 2025
New Jersey Integrated Book Talk <i>Ida’s Bookshop, New Jersey</i>	March 21, 2025
Baltimore Integrated Book Talk <i>Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Library, Baltimore, MD</i>	March 24, 2025
NYC Integrated Book Talk <i>The Center for Brooklyn History, New York, NY</i>	March 25, 2025
Philadelphia Integrated Book Launch <i>Philadelphia Free Library, Philadelphia, PA</i>	March 26, 2025
Atlanta Integrated Book Talk (with Bettina Love) <i>Charis Books, Atlanta, GA</i>	March 27, 2025
Detroit Integrated Book Tour <i>Source Booksellers, Detroit, MI</i>	March 31, 2025
Tampa Integrated Book Tour <i>Oxford Exchange, Tampa, FL</i>	April 6, 2025
Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity Talk	April 9, 2025

<i>Watson Institute, Brown University, Providence, RI</i>	
Black Metropolis Research Consortium Lecture <i>Loyola University, Chicago, IL</i>	April 15, 2025
Salve Regina University Lecture <i>Newport, RI</i>	April 30, 2025
Unspeakable Challenges Conference <i>Bethune-Cookman University, Daytona Beach, FL</i>	June 19–22, 2025
Panel Chair: A Labor of Love...History of Black Teachers <i>ASALH Conference</i>	September 25, 2025
Induction Ceremony—Society of Fellows <i>Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA</i>	October 2, 2025
Gas Lit Nation Podcast (Recorded Talk) <i>Remote / Virtual</i>	October 7, 2025
Race, Education & the Law <i>Roger Williams University School of Law, Bristol, RI</i>	October 7, 2025
Bob Moses Conference—Keynote Speaker <i>Boston University Questrom School of Business, Boston, MA</i>	October 11, 2025
History of Education Society Annual Meeting—Panel Chair <i>Annual Meeting</i>	November 4–5, 2025
History of Education Society—Discussant <i>Annual Meeting</i>	November 7, 2025

SELECTED ACADEMIC PANELS AND CONFERENCES

- “Anti-Racism and Public Education in the United States,” April 2021
Annual Anti-Racist Book Festival, Boston University
- “Activists and Academics,” February 2021
Teens Take Charge Youth Summit, The Civil Rights Project, University of California–Los Angeles
- “An Ethic of Care and Reimagining Higher Education,” December 2020
President’s Panel, Social Science Research Council
- “An Election, The Aftermath,” November 2020
The Association of Black Women Historians (ABWH-TV)
- “Racism in America Webinar Series—Education and Housing,” December 2020
College of Arts and Sciences, Cornell University
- “Black Studies at 50,” September 2020
Association for the Study of African American Life and History
- “From Slavery to Segrenomics,” November 2018
History of Capitalism, Faculty Panel, Cornell University
- “Crisis of ConFORMity: The Material Dimensions of Race and the Built Environment,” November 2018
American Studies Association Annual Meeting, Atlanta, Georgia
- “Madam C.J. Walker in Historical and Contemporary Perspective,” October 2018
Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Indianapolis, Indiana
- “Jim Crow as Friend and Foe,” October 2018
Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Indianapolis, Indiana
- “Race and Public Education in America,” November 2017

Smithsonian National Museum of American History and Culture

- “A New Education Is Possible,” November 2024
Data for Black Lives III, Miami, FL
- “A Passionate Mind,” November 2024
National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.
- “Rosa Parks and Mary McLeod Bethune” (with Jeanne Theoharis) October 2024
Hunter College, Roosevelt House
- “I Leave You Love. I Leave You Hope. I Leave You Faith: Mary McLeod Bethune in Our Time” (Keynote)
October 2024
Salve Regina University
- “Black Educational Histories for Contemporary Action,” October 2024
Harvard University
- “McLeod Bethune: Growing a Global Heart,” October 2024
United Way Worldwide, Arlington, VA
- “The Life and Legacy of Mary McLeod Bethune,” October 2024
African-American Research Library and Cultural Center, Fort Lauderdale, FL
- “A Woman of Substance, a Person of Consequence,” September 2024
ASALH National Convention, Blassingame Lunch, Pittsburgh, PA
- “Introducing Bethune,” June 2024
Roosevelt Reading Festival, Henry A. Wallace Center, FDR Presidential Library, National Archives
- “Racism, Teachers, and Public Education in America” (Keynote) May 2021
American Federation of Teachers–Massachusetts, Annual Conference
- “You Tried to Kill Us With Your Democracy, So We Fought You With Our Own,” March 2021
SNF Agora Institute, Johns Hopkins University
- “Black Children, Courage, and Creating the Beloved Community in Schools” (Keynote) March 2021
University of Buffalo–Center for Diversity Innovation and the Graduate School of Education
- “Litanies for Survival: Black Education in the Past, Present, and Future,” February 2021
Africana Studies, Brown University
- “Racism in America,” February 2021
American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO
- “Indigenous Nations, Apartheid, Education, and the Founding of the United States,” February 2021
Black Studies Department, Amherst College
- “A Killing Cure: Education, Segregation and the Meaning of Health When Black Communities Disappear”
(The Ilene Katz Lowenthal and Edward Lowenthal Lecture) February 2021
Department of Education, Washington University, St. Louis
- “Legalize It?: A Story of Cannabis, Race, Global Capital and Civil Wrongs,” December 2020
Society for The Humanities, Cornell University
- “The Price of Integration: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting,” December 2020
The Goethe Institute–NYC, Fictive Witness Series
- “We Have Full-on Integration Fatigue: The Brewing Fight to Return to Separate but Equal Schools,”
December 2020
Wesleyan University, College of Education Seminar Series
- “In Support of Neighborhood Schools” (Keynote) November 2020
Network for Public Education Annual Conference
- “Full-on Integration Fatigue: The Resurrected Fight for Separate but Equal Schools,” February 2020
Program in Education, Inquiry and Justice, Georgetown University
- “Pretty Politics: How Beauty Impacts Electoral Politics for Women,” March 2019

Cornell Club of Boca Raton/Fort Lauderdale, Cornell University Office of Alumni Affairs and Development

- “Segrenomics and American Public Education,” February 2019
The Kennedy School, Harvard University, Graduate Student Conference on Poverty and Inequality
- “White Supremacy/Black Education” (Keynote) February 2019
Randolph College Black Alliance Conference on Social Justice in Education, Lynchburg, VA
- “Black Students, Billionaires, and the End of Public Education,” January 2018
The Impact Empowerment Group, Inaugural Lecture, School Solutions Series, Denver, CO
- “Why Segregated Schools Are Too Lucrative to Fail” (Allison Davis Lecture) October 2018
Northwestern University, Evanston, IL
- “Segrenomics. Food. Cannabis. Justice,” October 2018
Fall Colloquium, Environmental and Sustainability Studies, Cornell University
- “Apartheid Education in America” (Keynote) June 2018
Transfer Schools Annual Conference, Department of Education, New York City
- “The Race for Beauty” (Distinguished Guest Lecturer) May 2018
UC Consortium for Black Studies, UC–Santa Barbara
- “Privatization, Segregation and Underfunding,” February 2018
New York State Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators, Albany, NY (with Chancellor Betty A. Rosa)
- “Black Resistance in the Age of Trump: An Education Story,” February 2018
Conversations in Black Freedom Struggles, Schomburg Center, New York Public Library

S E L E C T E D G R A N T S A N D A W A R D S

NAACP Image Award, Nominated	2025
Amistad Award for Civil Rights and Social Justice	2022
Angela Davis Lifetime Achievement Award, American Studies Association	2021
Hurston Wright Legacy Award, Non-Fiction	2018
Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future—Faculty in Residence Fellowship	2017
Kaplan Family Distinguished Faculty Fellowship, Cornell University	2016
Mellon Foundation, New York Humanities Corridor Grant	2013