



Exploring Race in Contemporary Jewish Life: A Symposium on Jewish Diversity

October 6, 2008

10:30 AM - 5:30 PM

Paley Library Lecture Hall (Ground Floor)

SESSION 1 *The Bodied Politic: Ethnobiology, Anti-Religiosity and the Reckoning of Black Hebrewism*

Speaker: **John L. Jackson, Jr.**, University of Pennsylvania

John L. Jackson, Jr., is an anthropologist, author and filmmaker who lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is the Richard Perry University Associate Professor of Communication and Anthropology in the Annenberg School for Communication and the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. Jackson is author of *Harlemworld: Doing Race and Class in Contemporary Black America* (U of Chicago, 2001), *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity* (U of Chicago, 2005), and *Racial Paranoia: The Unintended Consequences of Political Correctness* (Basic, 2008). As a filmmaker, Jackson has produced a feature-length fiction film, along with documentaries and film-shorts that have screened at film festivals internationally.



SESSION 2 *African Judaism: Ancient Myths and Modern Phenomena*

Speaker: **Edith Bruder**, University of London

Edith Bruder is currently Research Associate at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and at the French Centre National de Recherche Scientifique. Her main subjects of research concern African Judaism and religious Diasporas, new religious movements, globalization of religions, shifting identities and marginal religious societies. Dr Bruder is the author of *The Black Jews of Africa, History, Identity, Religion* (Oxford U Press, 2008), which provides scientific information, and a comprehensive list of references on the issue of Judaism in Africa. She also authored a number of articles on the subject. As an art historian, she has been the coordinator of several artistic projects in France and the director of important private collections.



SESSION 3 *400 Miles to Freedom* (a film screening and discussion)

A work-in-progress documentary co/directed & produced by Avishai Mekonen and Shari Rothfarb Mekonen, and executive produced by the Institute for Jewish & Community Research and Pacific Street Films. The film explores racial and ethnic diversity in Judaism through the story of Avishai Mekonen, whose disappearance in Sudan as a boy launches a quest that leads him to other African, Asian and Latino Jews in Israel and in the U.S.

Speakers: **Avishai Yeganyahu Mekonen**, Photographer and Filmmaker

Avishai Mekonen is an Ethiopian Israeli filmmaker and photographer living in New York whose past work includes the award winning documentary *Video Flour*, screened widely at international film festivals and broadcast primetime on Israel's premiere network. He has directed, produced, written, assistant directed and acted in numerous award winning dramatic, documentary and news programs for Israeli television and international distribution. His current projects are *400 Miles to Freedom* and *Seven Generations*, a photography project that focuses on a dying Ethiopian Jewish oral history custom while examining the relationships between the elder and younger generations of Ethiopian Jews in Israel.



Shari Rothfarb Mekonen, Filmmaker and Professor (CUNY)

Shari Rothfarb Mekonen has extensive production credits in documentary, dramatic and experimental film & video, and her film and artwork have been exhibited internationally. She is currently an Associate Professor of Video Arts and Technology, City University of New York, BMCC, where she is the director of the VAT Program and Sr. Principal Investigator for the NSF grant, Creating Career Pathways for Women and Minorities in Digital Video Technology.



Sponsors

Center for Afro-Jewish Studies, Institute for the Study of Race and Social Thought, Jewish Studies at Temple University, Religion Department at Temple University, Center for the Humanities at Temple, and the Feinstein Center for American Jewish History.

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