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The Long Crisis of Black Masculinity in Racial Capitalism

Abstract:

In this talk, I explore labor narratives and imaginaries of Black masculinity to explore how racialized ideals of manhood shifted in response to changing capitalist regimes. Complemented by an analysis of Black masculinity vis-à-vis capitalist processes of production, consumption, and commodification, I examine colonialism to the period known as *la crise* (the crisis) as a narrative arc in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. I draw on my fieldwork examining the livelihoods and lifestyles of underemployed Abidjanais men to illuminate the sustained power of imaginaries even while capitalism affords a deficit of real opportunities.

Bio: Dr. Matlon is an urban sociologist and scholar of race and colonial legacies in Africa and the African diaspora. Her scholarship interrogates the ways “Blackness” operates as a signifier, intersects with gender norms, manifests in popular culture, and illuminates our understanding of political economy. Her multiple award-winning book, *A Man among Other Men: The Crisis of Black Masculinity in Racial Capitalism* (Cornell University Press) investigates the relationship between masculinity, work, and globalization in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Her new book, *Blackness as Being: Black Survival in the Age of Climate Catastrophe* (under contract, Polity Press), bridges literatures on surplus populations, climate change, and racial capitalism to theorize the possibilities and precariousness of species-survival in the Anthropocene. It offers Blackness as an analytic to think with the paradox of precarious possibility –of past and present modalities of survival and of futures alternatively devastating or liberatory.

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