

**CALL FOR PAPERS**  
**Rethinking the Afropolitan:**  
**The Ethics of Black Atlantic Masculinities on Display**  
**College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA**  
**Friday, October 20th and Saturday October 21st, 2017**

**Conveners:**  
**Rosa Carrasquillo, College of the Holy Cross (rcarrasq@holycross.edu)**  
**Lorelle Semley, College of the Holy Cross (lsemley@holycross.edu)**

A 21<sup>st</sup> century term, “Afropolitan,” already is charged with contested meanings. Celebrated by some as the pinnacle of African modernities, others see the Afropolitan as a glorified consumer or perennial object of Western consumption. However, most discussions of Afropolitans have occurred in relation to the arts, literature, and fashion and almost exclusively in relation to Africans in Western cities or Westernized enclaves in Africa in the present. A historicized approach to the concept of the Afropolitan raises new questions about how scholars and activists read race, gender, identity, and ethics in images and texts.



(Credit: Hector Mediaville)

For example, a recent proliferation of images and news articles about Congolese men known as *sapeurs* (The Society of Ambiance-Makers and Elegant People) might be considered an example of Afropolitans and the epitome of the “black dandy.” While the “black dandy” may be a resurgent theme in academic circles or in popular culture, the *sapeur* evokes a long history of empire, immigration, religious

change, and economic upheaval that touches upon more than an elite lifestyle. Other versions of the “black dandy” have existed across the Atlantic world throughout history, including the caricatures of Julius Soubise, the freed slave who became a fashionable fencer and riding master in eighteenth-century London, or the “fast-talking” “*curro*” in nineteenth-century Cuba. At the same time, women of color have also been characterized as the jezebel, “mulatta,” or housewife, alternatively signifying rebelliousness, hypersexuality, or complacency in Latin America, the United States, the Caribbean, Europe, as well as in Africa. Even with the perennial image of enslaved black bodies, women and men of African descent also have been viewed and abused as consumers historically and globally.



(Victor Patricio de Landaluce

*Los negros curros, ca. 1880).* Thus, each of the core themes animating this conference are broad. We challenge our participants and audience to historicize and complicate the idea of the Afropolitan and the controversies it has engendered. Our conceptualization of the Black Atlantic incorporates people of color and the range of communities they form among themselves and with others across the African and European continents and the whole of the Americas and the Caribbean. Masculinities also include women, third gender, sexualities, and trans-identities. Similarly, texts and histories are part of our understanding of visibility and the media. Indeed, the Afropolitan serves as the perfect invitation to think about this crossroads of history and visual culture because, increasingly, transnational historical actors, social movements, and the politics of identity profoundly shape what we research, what we write, and what we think that we see.

This symposium aims to examine the intersections of gender, race, and visual culture, in the Atlantic, spanning Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, and Europe, from the sixteenth century to the present. We will consider proposals that also de-center the Atlantic by treating similar themes in or between other regions such as the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, or Pacific Ocean worlds. We plan to publish selected papers as an edited volume or as a special issue of a journal.

Submissions need not be confined to these topics, but, if possible, please indicate at least two themes that correspond to your proposal:

The Politics of Performance

- Visual, music, and multimedia arts
- Performing citizenship
- The art of athletics

Redefining the Black Atlantic

- Transnational networks
- Geographies of power
- Beyond empire

Sexualities

- Bodies of knowledge
- Politics of desire
- Trans- networks

Men in Labor

- Histories and legacies of slavery
- Policing work
- Representing leisure and resistance

Fatherhoods and Families

- Affective ties
- Iconic mothers
- Blended families

The Politics of Religion

- Disciplining bodies
- Ethics of redemption
- Gendered representations of the divine

Reproducing Bodies

- The economics of citizenship
- Symbolism and consumption
- Criminalization and mass incarceration

Theories and Male Models

- Space and mobility
- Politics of community organizing
- Self-fashioning beyond genders

Please submit a title, 250-word abstract, and a 2-page CV by April 1, 2017 to “afropolitan@holycross.edu” If you have any questions, please contact Rosa Carrasquillo at [rcarrasq@holycross.edu](mailto:rcarrasq@holycross.edu) or Lorelle Semley at [lsemley@holycross.edu](mailto:lsemley@holycross.edu) and include “Rethinking the Afropolitan” in the subject line. Authors of accepted proposals will be contacted by June 1, 2017 and complete papers or presentations will be due on August 15, 2017 for pre-circulation with discussants and conference participants.