



2026 UNCF/MELLON PROGRAMS CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 1-3, 2026

Scholars Transforming the Academy: Centering and Stabilizing Scholar Activism in Times Like These

UNCF/MELLON PH.D.S

DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARS, AWARD RECIPIENTS, FELLOWSHIP HOLDERS, AND ACADEMIC LEADERS

This briefing highlights UNCF/Mellon Ph.D. conference attendees with nationally recognized book awards, major fellowships, significant research grants, notable scholarly achievements, and distinguished leadership appointments.

NATIONAL BOOK & LITERARY AWARD RECIPIENTS:

Jericho Brown **Emory University**

- Pulitzer Prize for Poetry (2020) for *The Tradition*
- American Book Award recipient
- Anisfield-Wolf Book Award recipient
- Whiting Award recipient
- Guggenheim Fellow
- National Endowment for the Arts Fellow

Jarvis McInnis **Duke University**

Author of *Afterlives of the Plantation: Plotting Agrarian Futures in the Global Black South*.

- Pauli Murray Book Prize
- ASALH Book Prize
- Society for U.S. Intellectual History Book Prize
- On the Brinck Book Award
- Stone Book Award Finalist

Julius Fleming **Washington University in St. Louis**

Author of *Black Patience: Performance, Civil Rights, and the Unfinished Project of Emancipation*.

- College Language Association Book Award
- Hooks National Book Award
- Multiple national finalist and honorable mention recognitions

James Ford III **Occidental College**

Author of *Thinking through Crisis: Depression-Era Black Literature, Theory, and Politics*.

- Winner of the Modern Language Association's William Sanders Scarborough Prize

Shanna Benjamin **Wake Forest University**

Author of *Half in Shadow: The Life and Legacy of Nellie Y. McKay*.

- 2022 Hurston/Wright Legacy Award recipient
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MAJOR FELLOWSHIP, GRANT, AND RESEARCH AWARD RECIPIENTS

Kalenda Eaton

University of Oklahoma

- Fulbright Scholar
 - Recipient of multiple university research, leadership, and service awards
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Mahaliah Little

Spelman College

- Audre Lorde Award Recipient
 - AAUW American Dissertation Fellowship
 - SSRC Mellon Mays Graduate Studies Enhancement Grant
 - SSRC Mellon Mays Predoctoral Research Grant
 - Ford Dissertation Completion Fellowship Honorable Mention
 - Carter G. Woodson Institute Postdoctoral Fellow
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Nafeesa Muhammad

Spelman College

- 2024 ACLS HBCU Faculty Grant recipient supporting research on the Nation of Islam and Black Nationalism
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Tanya Clark

Morehouse College

- ACLS HBCU Faculty Grant recipient
 - Vulcan Award for Teaching Excellence
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Indya Jackson

Ramapo College of New Jersey

- DEFCon Teaching Fellow
 - Social Science Research Council Predoctoral Research Grant recipient
 - Project Narrative Travel Grant recipient
 - Ronald E. McNair Scholar
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Howard Rambsy

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

- McNeese ADEI Lifetime Achievement Award recipient
 - National leader on Mellon-funded Black Lit Network initiatives
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Kenton Rambsy

Howard University

- Co-Principal Investigator on an NEH-funded project
 - Collaborator on Mellon-funded Black Lit Network initiatives
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DISTINGUISHED INSTITUTIONAL LEADERS

Doretha Williams

National Museum of African American History and Culture (Smithsonian Institution)

- Director of the Robert F. Smith Center for the Digitization and Curation of African American History
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Fareeda Griffith

Delaware State University

- Associate Provost for Academic and Student Success
 - Tenured Full Professor of Sociology
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Candice Jackson
Lane College

- Associate Provost
 - Former Provost at Kentucky State University
 - Former Acting President of Kentucky State University
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ADDITIONAL NOTEWORTHY SCHOLARS

Natanya Duncan
Queens College, CUNY

- Author of *An Efficient Womanhood*
 - Director of Africana Studies
 - Scholar of Garveyism, Black internationalism, and African Diaspora history
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Kimya Loder
Georgia Institute of Technology

- Stanford-trained sociologist
 - Research focuses on race, gender, political participation, and Black transgender organizing
 - Developing a major scholarly monograph
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Anisah Nu'Man
Spelman College

- NSF-supported educational research project leader
 - Recognized by *Mathematically Gifted & Black*
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