

CAVEAT LECTOR: The following slides were shown in the “LGBT Religious History: Queering the Spirit” sessions indicated in the PowerPoint presentation title because they related to the required readings for those days. These can be found on the course syllabus.

The slides do not necessarily reflect the views of the instructor and in some cases were selected precisely because they contain errors of fact or differences of opinion with the authors whose scholarship students were reading. The more controversial graphics were intended to prompt conversations in college classroom settings and lead to engagement and respectful dialogue.

There is no straightforward way to “teach the slides”—nor should there be. It is up to individual teachers to use their judgment as to what materials are age-appropriate and decide whether they fit within existing lesson plans or can form the basis for new ones.

god watching LGBT kids
create new genders



A meme
on our theme...



Mack Johnson, Sydney Baloue, Christian A'Xavier Lovehall, and Sunny Marks at the Philly Trans March, photographed by Sydney Baloue on October 7, 2017. See more at <https://48hills.org/2020/06/for-pride-queer-people-must-stand-up-for-black-lives/>

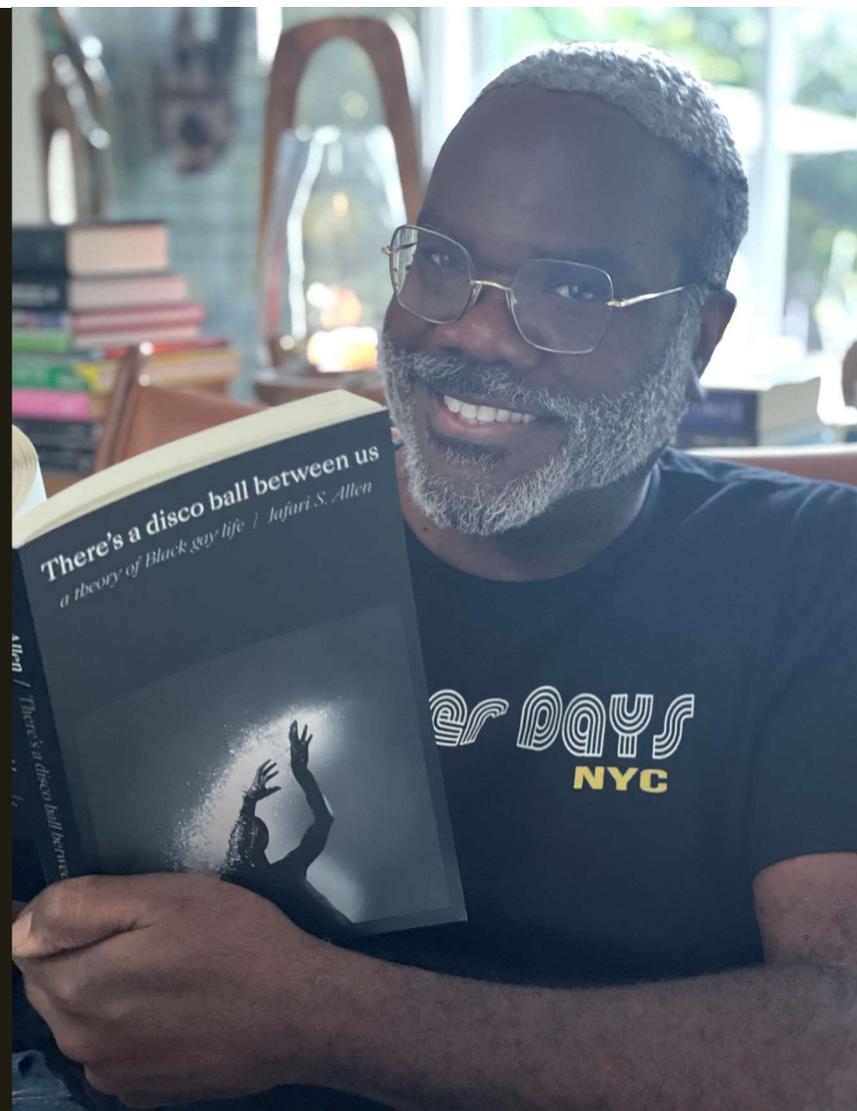
Malidoma Somé, a West African writer and spiritual leader, notes that same-sex loving and transgender Dagara people of Ghana, Ivory Coast, Togo, and Burkina Faso are known to be gatekeepers between the spirit and earth realms. He describes them as bridging this world and the other world and as people who “experience a state of vibrational consciousness which is far higher and different, from the one a [heterosexual] person would experience.”³⁰ Every year among the Dagara, transgender and same-sex loving people would assemble apart from others and perform a ritual that was essential for the survival of the community.³¹

From Marcelitte Failla, “Black Femmes Black Gods: Magic as Justice,” *Journal of Religion and Culture*, <http://www.jrc-concordia.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/JRC-v28n02-FAILLA-marcelitte-1.pdf>

NEVER FORGET THAT
ROCK N'ROLL WAS
INVENTED BY A QUEER
BLACK WOMAN.



Jafari S. Allen



It is now about 4:30 on Saturday morning, and church has become the central activity of this dance floor congregation. There are bars and dark corners—folks are making dates, drinking alcohol, and a few giving graphic description to the biblical phrase *man shall not lay with man nor woman lie with woman*, in this space marked as profane, yet practiced and felt as sacred sanctuary.

Yonder they do not love your [body]. . . . Here in this place, we flesh . . . flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it This is flesh that I am talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved.¹⁶

Toni Morrison is audacious in her insistence that former “slaves” in the post–Civil War Midwest claim their own bodies and bodily pleasure as their own. Black lesbians and gay men in the current late capitalist moment are no less transgressive. No less flesh that needs to be loved than the reconstructed subjects in her *Beloved*, gathered together “here, in this place” to hear an old woman preach amid the trees. Reading Morrison, I hear electronic claps, djembe drums, and cowbells. Tambourines and whistles shout. Sweat pours off my face and hers. His body, mine. A choir hums as Sylvester sings/preaches Baby Suggs’s words to a hard-hitting house beat.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



AUDRE LORDE



TONI MORRISON

Both born on February 18)!



M. Jacqui Alexander

Pedagogies of Crossing

MEDITATIONS ON FEMINISM, SEXUAL POLITICS, MEMORY, AND THE SACRED



The two resplendent butch queens are singing high notes in response to the call of Bobien's Hammond organ, which has now been complemented with piano, bass, and guitars. Here is a ground for, if not instantly coherent "community," certainly *congregation*, which suggests "free your *ass* and your *mind* will follow."

The club is the central institution of Black queer communion. Here we assert bodies, putatively dangerously riddled with disease and threat of violence, not only as instruments of pleasure but also as conduits to profound joy, and perhaps spiritual bliss and transcendent connection. Interstices or conduits that connect, perhaps to utopias.

Enchanted Suffering: Queer Magick as Educated Hope

Jasper Jay Bryan

Queer theorists have used “concrete hope” in pursuit of queer futurity. Queerness, a political and philosophical orientation that evolved out of the AIDS crisis, is an embodiment of impermanence, challenging heteronormative time and space. Munoz writes that:

Queerness is utopian, and there is something queer about the utopian. Frederick Jameson describes the utopian as the oddball or the maniac. Indeed, to live inside straight time and ask for, desire, and imagine another time and place is to represent and perform a desire that is both utopian and queer.¹⁵

Queer theorists ask: is there such thing as a queer future? What does queer hope look like? If there is no future, can there be hope, or utopian drive amidst suffering? Using a queer,



**You know, religious community
they wanna pray together a lot, right?**

Still from 1990 American documentary *Paris Is Burning* (with Angie and Justice Jones)

From our positions—perched at the bar, twirling on the dance floor, shamelessly flirting, testing our sexual power—we easily found our ways to parades and protests and letter writing and workshops and interventions and civil disobedience and consciousness-raising; and spiritual reconciliation with new goddesses and new languages and new lands where we connected with those on similar paths. For queers of color, this is not an either/or proposition, but a both/and, living as we do in the interstices, or what Gloria Anzaldua would call *nepantla*, “*una tierra desconocida*” (a land unknown). This life *in-between*, constrained as it is, is also a site of potential freedom, most centrally because it has to be.

Victor Turner would call this liminal space in which newly imagined perspectives unfaithful to the status quo emerge, *communitas*. With *communitas*, we can start thinking in terms of what follows *the read*, critique, the protest, or the transgression of the norm. Here the in-between spaces we occupy feel less lonely, individualized and vulnerable.

It is no wonder that so many people experience Holy Ghost conversions on the dance floor, and meet among the most significant folks in their lives at clubs.

I am writing for the children of color—*the kids* routinely harassed, criminalized, and targeted for destruction, displaced from the small shelters they had built. Thus, it is more aligned with the queer-of-color critique of Audre Lorde, Joseph Beam, Essex Hemphill, Barbara Smith, Gloria Anzaldua, and others, and reflected in the utopian hermeneutics of José Esteban Muñoz.

night is not about
the man you play all week
but about banshees
and haints finding crawlspace in your back
djs paging a house music god to the floor
over crackly p.a. system
it's about waiting by black speaker box burning bush
for sign
for word
that only comes to the children who lose their minds on this dance floor
who come to lay their burdens down
and get blessed on this music
it's about never having been called
or chosen for anything except this
this dance
and not being welcome in any house
except this one
where we blur
push



Meko Lee Burr, Mechee Harper and Spirit Ebony in vogue.

STRIKE A POSE

ST. LOUIS HAS A STORIED BALL SCENE — AND ITS STARS ARE READY TO STRUT THEIR STUFF AT PRIDE

BY CHRIS ANDOE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THEO WELLING | STYLING BY SIRGLAMOURETTI LIBERACHI

It was 2001 when Mechee Harper took her nineteen-year-old friend Meko Lee Burr to Chicago for his first ball. “We ended up taking over a KFC as our dressing room,” Harper recalls. “And the employees were like, ‘Well, alright!’”

The underground, largely black and Latinx LGBTQ ball culture has mostly existed out of mainstream awareness throughout its long history, although Langston Hughes wrote of drag balls as far back as the 1920s. It briefly pierced broader queer consciousness in 1990 with Jennie Livingston’s powerful documentary *Paris Is Burning*, which explores the highly structured ball competitions in which contestants “walk,” much like fashion models on a runway, and compete, or “battle,” with other performers. That same year, Madonna introduced voguing—the highly stylized dance that evolved out of the ball scene—to the world with her chart-topping hit.

Now, the Netflix series *Pose*, which takes place in the New York ball scene of the late 1980s and early 1990s, has put the culture front and center for a new generation. And we’re all rooting for our favorite “house” to win.

Eighteen years after his first ball experience in Chicago, Burr remembers it as a defining moment in his life.

“Everyone was costumed and dressed up. It was summer, but there were people in mink coats for one of the categories. Everyone was elegantly going about their business, holding court at their personal tables, but I was ready to turn it up!” Burr says, his face beaming. “The loud house music overtook me and I lost control of myself. I knew some of the fundamentals of voguing and began dancing down the steps, but my family stopped me and told me I wasn’t ready. I knew I couldn’t make

a mockery of my family. I needed more preparation.”

When he returned to St. Louis, Burr began rearranging life to accommodate that preparation. That included dropping out of Lincoln University, where he’d been studying sociology.

“I had to learn everything there was to learn,” Burr says. I first took note of Burr during a rehearsal for Chuck F’s Maximum Exposure Fashion Series, which I was writing. The flamboyant Burr, wearing big dark sunglasses, would model down the runway to show them how it was done: walking his hips side to side. Then he’d stand with the mic and address them with a seemingly hypnotic chant, saying things like, “Walk the runway. Serving the runway. Walk!”

Months later, when I was researching ball culture, I learned not only that St. Louis has a vibrant ball scene going back decades, but that Burr is the voice of it.

FAMILIES & HOUSES

At only 22, chiseled model Spirit Ebony has already cemented his reputation as one of the leaders of the younger ball culture generation, traveling the nation and winning battles. Ebony, a native of St. Louis, began walking balls at only fifteen. A cousin introduced me to the ball scene, promising “a whole bunch of guys” would be there,” he recalls. Since his parents were in jail, and his grandparents worked nights, getting the house wasn’t a problem.



Kiire Wellness

343 subscribers

Breathing yet again reminds us that she's precious.

For black people disproportionately so.

Breathing with Orisha helps to repair what has been broken, providing language to help one see the intention behind many rituals still practiced today.

The energy from these rituals like movement and song, respiratory rituals that keep our bodies, hearts, and lungs strong, our spirits hella grounded and our exhales hella long,

stress/less thriving through duress,

breathing deeply by vocalizing the new and soon to be sacred neighborhood resilience flex

The description for “Re(s)parations -Breathing With Orisha | Kiire Wellness” by Baba Oludare,
<https://youtu.be/StZAxI7WRU4>

That energy has been rerouted like electricity
into corporate making money off my hips and feet,
my respiration used to power entertainment industry,
I take it back, my respiration's only used for me.

Pay me, I'm healing. America.

Dedicated to All Black Lives, because they matter.

Movement- Orisha Oya and Vogue, specifically blended to inspire young Black Afro descendant LGBT youth to embrace their Vogue because it's sacred, born from Afro ancestral tradition and divine in its placement. The arms of vogue invoke the ceremonial movement of Oya. The divine feminine embodied in the spine, undulating sacred curvature. A deep connection to the spirit, to every muscle and bone within the body, for to extend and to bend is to exhale passed what they taught us was the end.

[#respiratoryactivism](#) [#resparation](#) [#kiirewellness](#) [#oludarelive](#) [#breathingwithorisha](#) [#icantbreathe](#)
[#icanbreathe](#) [#changetheprayer](#)

The description for “Re(s)parations -Breathing With Orisha | Kiire Wellness” by Baba Oludare,
<https://youtu.be/StZAxI7WRU4>