

**COMMITTEE ON FACULTY RESEARCH LECTURE**  
**Annual Report 2022-2023**

To: Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

The Committee on the Faculty Research Lecture (CFRL) enthusiastically nominates Feminist Studies Professor Gina Athena Ulysse as the 58th Faculty Research Lecturer. Professor Ulysse is a multidisciplinary scholar who crosses borders, bringing together feminisms, ethnography, visual art, performance art, photography, and public anthropology. Her work addresses Caribbean Studies, the African Diaspora, reflexivity, creative and feminist ethnography, public anthropology, performance, installation and spokenword. Until her appointment at UCSC in 2020, Dr. Ulysse was a professor of anthropology at Wesleyan University.

At the core of all of her work is “*rasanblaj* – a gathering of ideas, people, things, and spirits.” Her commitment to *rasanblaj* is in conversation with scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa, bell hooks, Zora Neale Hurston, Faye V. Harrison, and Michel-Rolph Trouillot.

Dr. Ulysse was selected by CFRL based on her multidisciplinary work that has earned her a national and international reputation. Moreover, her work is timely in not only addressing colonialism, empire, and anti-Blackness, but also love, joy, resistance, renewal, dreams, and liberation. Dr Ulysse's early career cemented her place as a feminist ethnographer of Black diasporas, and her work as an artist has made more explicit Caribbean *rasanblaj* as decolonial practice and embodiment. A generous scholar-activist, she lifts up her colleagues and students across humanities, arts, and social sciences through her mentorship and collaborative approach.

Dr. Ulysse is the author of three important and groundbreaking books, with a fourth, *A Call to Rasanblaj: Black Feminist Futures and Ethnographic Aesthetics*, to be released in late Spring/early Summer 2023, in Greek. Her first book, *Downtown Ladies: Informal Commercial Importers, a Haitian Anthropologist and Self-Making in Jamaica*, deploys what some reviewers call an experimental ethnographic narrative style to explore the processes through which female entrepreneurs negotiate and make sense of globalization. The book examines the political economic shifts engendered by globalization in the Caribbean as well as the processes of self-making and ethnographic relationships. It has become essential reading in courses on feminist theories and methods, teaching us to push back against the colonial claim to universal knowledge and revealing the ways in which knowledge is situated and generated from bodies and relationships.

Professor Ulysse's second book *Why Haiti Needs New Narratives: A Post-Quake Chronicle* was the 2015 Winner of the Haitian Studies Association Excellence in Scholarship Award. This book is an essential intervention into the dominant discourses of Haiti; it is a compendium of public scholarship pieces that has reached an extremely wide and diverse readership. The process of writing the book marks an important turning point in Professor Ulysse's career, as she moved toward a more public-facing dissemination of her scholarship. Her third book, *Because when God is too busy: Haiti, Me, & THE WORLD*, was the 2018 Connecticut Book Award winner in Poetry

and was long-listed for a PEN Open Book award. Like her previous work, this book breaks methodological and disciplinary boundaries.

Dr. Ulysse's work in the arts (performance, spokenword, and multimedia art) "does the work" of assembling, regrouping, dwelling in ideas, concepts, objects, the materiality of all that breathes – 'things' that are otherwise categorized and placed in different, bounded spaces. Dr. Ulysse's art rejects the compulsion to occupy the position of native informant and offers direct and easily consumable translations as an act of democratizing knowledge.

Professor Ulysse's visual art has been selected to be featured on three covers of feminist journals. The first, "A Priestess's Salutation: A Study in Movement," also includes a photo essay and artist statement, with trilingual translation, in *Frontiers: Journal of Women's Studies*. The second cover art, "Ola Thunder," appears in *Feminist Formations*. The third, "Indigo," is forthcoming in *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*.

Dr. Ulysse's work has been showcased at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Biennale in Sydney, Australia, the 9th Encuentro of Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics in Montreal, Canada, and the SP Escola de Teatro, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. She has also performed at The Bowery, Brecht Forum, The British Museum, Brooklyn Museum, Court Theatre, Gorki Theatre, House of World Cultures in Berlin, LaMaMa, Lyric Stage Theatre, Marcus Garvey Liberty Hall, and MoMA Salon.

At UCSC, Professor Ulysse received the Excellence in Teaching Award 2021-22 from the Committee on Teaching. In her classes, like in her scholarship, she invokes rasanblaj, inviting students to engage with course content through readings, artistic representation, videos, and lectures, using all to examine a set of questions or topics from different vantage points. Professor Ulysse is currently the Director of Graduate Studies in Feminist Studies. She has also served as a member of COR.

We are proud to nominate our esteemed colleague to present her research to the University and to the larger community as faculty research lecturer.

Respectfully submitted,

COMMITTEE ON FACULTY RESEARCH LECTURE

Regina Langhout  
Jason Nielsen  
Brant Robertson  
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Barbara Rogoff, Chair

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