



THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY PRESENTS
OUR DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI SPEAKER
AND SPRING INSTITUTE GUEST:



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Wednesday, June 2, 12:30–1:50 CST
Zoom link: <https://bit.ly/2SRxmWU>

The Children of the Great Migration: Black, Sexual Minority Women and the Search for Autonomy and Economic Freedom

In this talk I analyze the development of community and identity for black, sexual minority women in the pre-Stonewall era. Drawing from archival materials, African American periodicals, oral histories and ethnographic fieldwork, I show that the development of black lesbian group membership was largely formed outside of the political contexts examined in past research on the birth of sexual communities. Instead, it was primarily shaped by two areas of African American social life: the church, which was the dominant public institution for women, and “the streets,” or the underground and informal economy where public and semi-public expressions of same-sex desire took place. A critical frame for these experiences is the Great Migration of African Americans to northern and western cities in the mid-twentieth century. This work examines the experiences of migrants, the children of migrants, and northern blacks who received these southerners as actors shaping new cultural institutions and constructions of community at the intersection of race and sexuality. It offers new angles of vision on the ways LGBTQ identities and social worlds came together and were sustained during this period.