

# Adam Lee Cilli

Assistant Professor of History | University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg  
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## EDUCATION

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- Ph.D. University of Maine, 2016**  
African American History  
Subfields: Gilded Age & Progressive Era, Public History, Labor History
- M.A. Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, 2010**  
Social Science
- B.A. Thiel College, 2005**  
History and Philosophy, *Summa Cum Laude*

## ACADEMIC POSITIONS

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- 2022-present      Assistant Professor of History  
University of Pittsburgh – Greensburg
- 2018-2022      Teaching Assistant Professor of History  
University of Pittsburgh – Bradford
- 2017-2018      Lecturer of History  
Texas A&M University – San Antonio
- 2016-2017      Adjunct History Instructor  
Gannon University

## SCHOLARSHIP

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### Book

*Canaan, Dim and Far: Black Reformers and the Pursuit of Citizenship in Pittsburgh, 1915-1945*  
(Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2021). [Reviewed in the [Journal of American History](#),  
the [Journal of African American History](#), the [History Teacher](#), and [Black Perspectives](#)]

### Refereed Journal Articles

- “The NAACP, the Black Press, and Jim Crow Juvenile Justice in Depression-Era New York,”  
*Journal of African American History* (accepted for publication; forthcoming 2027).
- “‘The Curing of Ills’: African American Women Activists at the Intersections of Race, Class, and  
Gender during the Great Migration,” *Journal of Women’s History* 33, no.1 (2021): 37-60.
- “The Pursuit of Happiness: Racial Utilitarianism and Black Reform Efforts in John T. Clark’s Urban  
League,” *Journal of Urban History* 45, no.1 (2019): 6-22.
- “Robert L. Vann and the *Pittsburgh Courier* in the 1932 Presidential Election: An Analysis of  
Black Reformism in Interwar America,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 141,  
no.2 (2019): 141-176.

## Essays and Book Chapters

“Black Women Reformers in Interwar-Era Pittsburgh,” in *The Cambridge History of Black Women in the United States*, ed. Karen Cook Bell (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2027) (forthcoming).

“In Search of Knowledge and Opportunity: Josephine Crawford Bellinger and the *San Antonio Register*,” in *Centuries of Voices: Portraits of Black Women in Texas History*, ed. Bruce A. Glasrud, Jessica Brannon-Wranosky, Merline Pitre, and Cecilia Gutierrez Venable (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2027) (forthcoming).

“[The Urban League](#),” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, ed. Jane Dailey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024).

Adam Lee Cilli and Pauleena MacDougall, “Between People and Nature”: The Climate Change Institute at the University of Maine,” in *Becoming Modern: The University of Maine, 1865-2015*, edited by Howard Segal and Anne Acheson (Orono, Maine: University of Maine Press, 2023): 185-203.

“The Place of Institutions in Urban Black Communities,” *Journal of Urban History* 47, no.4 (2021): 907-913.

## Book Reviews

Robin Bernstein, *Freeman’s Challenge: The Murder that Shook America’s Original Prison for Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2024), in *American Historical Review* 130, no.3 (September 2025): 1415-1417.

Aaron Pride, *Apocalyptic Rhetoric and the Black Protest Movement: William Monroe Trotter’s Civil Rights Activism in Early Twentieth-Century Boston* (Lanham: Lexington, 2024), in *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 23, no.4 (2024): 486-488.

Yahya Jongintaba, *Mary McLeod Bethune: Village of God* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2021), in *Journal of African American History* 108, no.2 (2023): 316-317.

Christopher W. Schmidt, *Civil Rights in America: A History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), in *Journal of Southern History* 88, no.2 (2022): 424-425.

Utz McKnight, *Frances E. W. Harper: A Call to Conscience* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2021), in *History: Reviews of New Books* 50, no.1 (2021): 7-8.

*Freedom’s Racial Frontier: African Americans in the Twentieth-Century West*, edited by Herbert G. Ruffin II and Dwayne A. Mack (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018), in *Journal of Arizona History* 59, no.4 (2018): 393-395.

## Digital Media

“[Migrant Voices: A Website on the Great Migration to Pittsburgh](#),” in *Black Perspectives*, the blog of the African American Intellectual History Society (May 13, 2024)

“[Reconsidering Black Reform Work in the Interwar Period](#),” in *Black Perspectives* (February 10, 2023)

[“Jeannette Washington: Pittsburgh’s First Black Public Health Nurse,”](#) in *Women’s History Network* (October 22, 2021).

[“The Pittsburgh Courier’s Discursive Power, 1910–1940,”](#) in *Black Perspectives* (September 8, 2021).

[“Interview with Adam Lee Cilli on \*Canaan, Dim and Far\*,”](#) in *New Books in History*, a podcast channel of the New Books Network. Interviewed by Dr. Hettie Williams (July 26, 2021).

[“\*Canaan, Dim and Far\*– Q&A with Dr. Adam Lee Cilli,”](#) in *ANZASA Online*, the blog of the Australia & New Zealand American Studies Association (July 12, 2021).

### Works in Progress

“Black Migrants, Reformers, and the Criminal Justice System during the Interwar Years,” *Modern American History* (provisionally accepted; pending minor revisions).

*Necessary for My Release: Racial Policing and Criminal Justice Reform during the Great Migration.*

### Research Grants

National Endowment for the Humanities, Summer Stipend, 2024

American Council of Learned Societies, Project Development Grant, 2023

Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellowship, 2023

## COURSES TAUGHT

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### University of Pittsburgh – Bradford & Greensburg Campuses (2018–present)

#### *Thematic Courses*

HIST0665	African American Literature & History
HIST 1636	Transnational Pittsburgh – Black Migration
HIST 1632	History of the Civil Rights Movement
HIST 1327	Race and the Urban Environment
HIST 1323	America’s Great Migration
HIST 1321	The Civil War and Reconstruction
HIST 0216	U.S. Women’s History Since 1865
HIST 0208	African American History

#### *Period Courses*

HIST 1317	Contemporary U.S. History
HIST 1316	America Between the Wars
HIST 0211	The Gilded Age and Progressive Era
HIST 0107	U.S. History Since 1865
HIST 0106	U.S. History to 1865

### Texas A&M University – San Antonio (2017–2018)

HIST 4380	Crucial Topics in U.S. History: African Americans and the Law
HIST 4361	African American History
HIST 1302	U.S. History Since 1865
HIST 1301	U.S. History to 1865

**Gannon University (2016–2017)**

HIST 392	Freedom Now! Civil Rights in America, 1865-2016
HIST 222	The U.S. and the World
HIST 221	U.S. History to 1865

**Husson University (2015-2016)**

HY 111	U.S. History to 1865
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**University of Maine (2014–2016)**

HTY 415	African American History
HTY 398	The New Africa
HTY 104	U.S. History Since 1865
LAS 102	Success in Liberal Arts and Sciences

**CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS & INVITED TALKS**

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[Keynote Address](#), “Black Reformers and the Great Migration to Pittsburgh,” Black History Month Speaker Series, La Roche University, February 21, 2025.

[Plenary Session](#), “Place, Politics, and the Future of Black Pittsburgh History,” Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), Pittsburgh, PA, September 26, 2024. [with Joe W. Trotter, Aaron Cowan, and Jessica Klanderud]

“Jeannette Washington, Pittsburgh’s First Black Nurse,” ASALH, Montgomery, AL, September 30, 2022.

“Joel A. Rogers, the Black Press, and the Work of ‘Memory Making’ in Interwar America,” African American Intellectual History Society, virtual, March 12, 2022.

“African American Women Reformers and the Black Family in Interwar Pittsburgh,” ASALH, virtual, September 16, 2021.

“Black Reformers and the Urban League Movement in Pittsburgh, 1918-1926,” Organization of American Historians, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, April 2019.

“Maneuvering at the Vanguard: Robert L. Vann and the *Pittsburgh Courier* in the 1932 Presidential Election,” ASALH, Cincinnati, Ohio, September 2017.

“Reform Work in John T. Clark’s Urban League,” ASALH, Richmond, Virginia, October 2016.

“The Greatest Good: African American Professionals and the Early Civil Rights Movement in Pittsburgh, 1925-1940,” ASALH, Atlanta, Georgia, September 2015.

“Shanghai 40: The Response of Black Reformers to the 1933 Deportation of Migrants in Western Pennsylvania,” ASALH, Memphis, Tennessee, September 2014.

“African American Migrants and Professionals in Greater Pittsburgh, 1919-1933,” New England Historical Association (NEHA), Springfield, Massachusetts, April 2014.

“American Labor History and Historiography,” NEHA, Westfield, Massachusetts, April 2013.

“Dime Novels and Mass Culture,” Univ of Maine/Univ of New Brunswick, Orono, October 2012.

## PUBLIC HISTORY

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### 2021-2024

Creator of [Migrant Voices](#), a website on the Great Migration to Pittsburgh

- ~Includes over fifty digitized oral history interviews of Black migrants as well as links to key manuscript collections and other primary sources.
- ~Featured in the University of Pittsburgh's news outlets—[The University Times](#) (2024) and [Pittwire](#) (2026).
- ~Selected for inclusion in the Library of Congress's [Resource Guide for Pennsylvania](#).

Jeannette Washington Commemoration at Allegheny Cemetery in Pittsburgh, PA

Collaborated with Lisa Speranza, historic director at the Allegheny Cemetery in Pittsburgh, to have Jeannette Washington, Pittsburgh's first Black nurse, added to the cemetery's *African American History Tour* and to make an informational brochure (2021)

### 2013-2018

Ex-Convict Re-Entry Services in San Antonio, TX (Ministry House of Restoration [MHOR])

Worked with MHOR staff to conduct oral history interviews with ex-convicts and recovering drug addicts receiving re-entry support services at MHOR (2018)

African Americans in Erie, PA

Worked with Gannon University students to develop a questionnaire and conduct oral history interviews with African Americans in the Erie community (2017)

Climate Change Institute 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Oral History Project, Orono, ME

Conducted oral history interviews with over thirty members of the Climate Change Institute (CCI) at UMaine; collected documents pertaining to the Institute's history (2014)

Industrial Workers in Monaca, PA (Horsehead Corporation Zinc Plant)

Conducted interviews with displaced industrial workers in Monaca, PA; created and distributed deposit agreements and consent forms; collaborated with chief archivist at Heinz History Center (Pittsburgh) to preserve and archive the digitized interviews (2013)

## SERVICE

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### Service to Historical Discipline

#### *Organizational Support*

- 2024 Editor of the *Trotter Review*, the journal of the William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black Culture at UMass Boston
- 2022-24 Book review editor for *Black Perspectives*, the blog of the African American Intellectual History Society.
- 2023 Wrote letters to support grant applications for the Heinz History Center and West Overton Museum

*Essay & Book Manuscript Reviews*

- 2024 External Reviewer, "Ulysses Kay in Arizona," for the *Journal of Arizona History* (April)
- 2022 External Reviewer, "Having Become Free by the Law of 1780: Black Liberation and the Pennsylvania Abolition Society Archives," for *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies and Research* (February).
- External Reviewer, "Black Women in Higher Education," for *Oxford Bibliographies in African American Studies* (January).
- 2021 External Reviewer, "Activism in the Name of God: Religion and Black Feminist Public Intellectuals from the Nineteenth Century to the Present," for *University Press of Mississippi* (August).
- External Reviewer, "Confronting the Pseudo-Science of Race: W. E. B. Du Bois's Letter to Waights Gibbs Henry, 1916," for *Academia Letters* (June).

*Conference Work*

- 2022 Panel Chair, "Health Disparities," annual meeting of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), September 29. Panelists: Andrew Maginn, Montia Gardner, Susan Bradshaw.
- 2021 Panel Chair, "The Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity," ASALH, September 25. Panelists: Andre E. Johnson, Brenda Aghahowa, Elaine Sugar, Penny S. Seals.
- Panel Chair, "Black Families and Oral History," annual meeting of ASALH, September 25. Panelists: Mary Romney-Schaab, Adelle Banks, Rosemary Crockett, Savannah Britt.
- Panel Chair, "Black Families Across Generations," annual meeting of ASALH, September 21. Panelists: Constance Belton Green, Adrenne Ronee Washington, Stephanie Boddie, J. Vern Cromartie.
- 2020 Panel Organizer, "Pushing the Boundaries of Democracy: Black Professionals and the Struggle for Recognition and Advancement in Jim-Crow America," Organization of American Historians (OAH). Included Stephanie Shaw, Uzma Quraishi, and David Hamilton Golland
- 2018 Panel Organizer, "Laboring for Citizenship: Middle-Class Black Activism from Reconstruction to the Black Power Movement," OAH. Included Stephanie Shaw, Stephen Kantrowitz, Joseph Jewell, and Eric Brown.
- 2016 Panel Organizer, "Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Racial Activism in Urban America," ASALH. With Dennis Dickerson, Priscilla Dowden-White, and L. Rowe.

*Community Engagement*

- 2023 Presentation at Latrobe Area High School, "The Great Migration and the Study of Urban Black History" (March 14)
- 2022 Presentation, "Historic Inequities in Healthcare," to medical residents enrolled in the Pediatric Advocacy, Leadership, and Service (PALS) track at UPMC Children's Hospital (July 15)

## Curriculum Development / Creation of New Courses

HIST0665: African American Literature & History (scheduled for spring 2026)  
 HIST1636: Transnational Pittsburgh - Black Migration (taught fall 2023 & spring 2025)  
 HIST1327: Race and the Urban Environment (taught spring 2020)  
 HIST1323: America's Great Migration (taught regularly 2019-2023)  
 HIST0216: U.S. Women's History Since 1865 (taught fall 2021)  
 HIST0211: The Gilded Age and Progressive Era (taught regularly 2019-2022)

## University DEI Initiatives

Organized Speaker Series on Race in America (AY 2023 and 2024)  
 Affiliated Researcher, Collaboratory Against Hate: Research and Action Center (Co-sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University) (April 2021-Present)  
 Member, Working Group #2: Educational Interventions for Youth, a Committee of the Collaboratory Against Hate (July 2021-Present)  
 Panelist on Campus Roundtable (w/Dr. Jean Truman, Professor of Nursing): "Nursing and Gender Then and Now" (28 March 2022)  
 Member, President's Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion (AY 2021 & 2022)  
 Roundtable Discussant: "Pitt Bradford Against Anti-Asian Violence: Support and Solidarity" (31 March 2021)  
 Guest Presentation (in *PS 0207: Congress and the Presidency*): "Voter Suppression from Jim Crow to the Present" (22 March 2021)  
 Campus Talk (Black History Month Series): "Homer Brown & the Black Reform Community in Pittsburgh" (25 February 2021)  
 Campus Talk (Black History Month Series): "Robert L. Vann, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the 1932 Presidential Election" (18 February 2021)  
 Participant on Panel (with David Fitz, Helma DeVries Jordan, Steve Robar, and Drew Flanagan): "Beyond Talking Heads: A Discussion of the 2020 Elections" (19 Nov 2020)  
 Participant on Panel (with Helma DeVries Jordan, Steve Robar, and Drew Flanagan): "Internships, Scholarships, and Graduate School" (23 Sept 2020)  
 Campus Talk (Third Thursday Symposium Series): "Racial Reaction and Black Reform Efforts in Interwar Pittsburgh" (20 Feb 2020)  
 Campus Talk (Black History Month Series): "Black Experiences of WWII," co-presented with Dr. Drew Flannigan (12 February 2020)

## Committee Service (2018-present)

Promotion and Renewal Committee (chair)  
 Faculty Welfare Committee (chair)  
 Academic Technology Committee (chair)  
 Search Committee for Assistant Professor of History  
 General Education Assessment Committee  
 Search Committee for Director of Housing  
 Search Committee for Visiting Assistant Professor of History  
 President's Steering Committee (Revising the Univ. Mission Statement)  
 Faculty Instructional Planning Committee  
 Electronic Information and Technology Accessibility Committee  
 Black History Month Planning Committee  
 Women's History Month Planning Committee

## AWARDS & HONORS

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Research Grant, National Endowment for the Humanities, 2024  
Research Grant, American Council of Learned Societies, 2023  
Andrew W. Mellon Research Fellowship, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 2023  
Faculty Development Grant, University of Pittsburgh at Bradford, 2019-2021  
Summer Faculty Research Fellowship, Texas A&M University—San Antonio, Summer 2018  
Summer Dissertation Writing Fellowship, University of Maine, Summer 2015  
Communicator's Award for Maine 4-H Extensions, National Science Foundation, Summer 2014  
Frances Robinson Mitchell Scholarship, University of Maine, Fall 2014  
Susan J. Hunter Teaching Fellowship, University of Maine, Spring 2014  
Graduate Student Government Research Grant, University of Maine, Fall 2013  
Provost Fellowship with the Maine Folklife Center, University of Maine, Fall 2013  
Charles J. Dunn Dissertation Research Grant, University of Maine, Spring & Fall 2013  
John J. Nolde Teaching Fellowship, University of Maine, Spring 2014  
Graduate Student Government Travel Grant, University of Maine, 2013, 2014, and 2015  
Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Department of History, University of Maine, 2010-2013

## ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS

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African American Intellectual History Society  
Association for the Study of African American Life and History  
American Historical Association  
Organization of American Historians

## REFERENCES

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Dr. Hettie V. Williams

Former Director of the William Monroe Trotter Institute for Research on Black Culture  
Past President, African American Intellectual History Society  
Professor of African American History, Monmouth University  
732-977-8209 ~ hwilliam@monmouth.edu

Dr. Helma de Vries-Jordan

Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Pittsburgh at Bradford  
Chair, Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
814-362-7586 ~ hdevries@pitt.edu

Dr. Liam Riordan

Professor of History, University of Maine  
207-581-1913 ~ riordan@maine.edu