

**International Studies Public Forum (ISPF)
Institute for International, Global and Regional Studies (IGaRS)
& the Department of European Languages & Studies**

present

**Containing Abjection: Haiti,
Gender, & the Humanitarian Gaze**

By: Kaiama L. Glover

From the Haitian republic's revolutionary beginnings to its current positioning on the world stage, the idea of the nation's "African" character has been a commonplace of both popular and scholarly discourse. While it may be argued that this commonplace has been put forward by some as a cultural attribute, it has been deployed far more readily as tangible measure of Haiti's pitiable difference. Prevalent, indeed, in global representations of Haiti ever since 1804, this denigrating narrative was evermore vividly deployed by global news media during the period immediately following the January 2010 earthquake. In this discussion, I consider the narratives of difference and the language and imagery of disaster that more and less subtly evoke Haiti's fundamental abjection as a function of its "Africanness." Putting in dialogue concepts taken from the fields of critical media science and communication studies, on the one hand, and questions raised by literary studies and psychoanalysis, on the other. I reflect here on the uncanny commonalities between constructions of Haiti and of sub-Saharan Africa in the Euro-North American media, and offer some thoughts on the ways in which deep-seated industrial-world perceptions of the poor, black, female body and its material realities effectively disallow empathy, insisting on the deficient unrecognizability of the other.

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5:00 – 6:00 PM

Social Science Plaza A, Room 1100



KAIAMA L. GLOVER is an Associate Professor in the French Department and the Africana Studies Department at Barnard College, Columbia University. Her work has appeared in *The French Review*, *French Forum*, *Research in African Literatures*, *The Journal of Postcolonial Writings*, and *The Journal of Haitian Studies*, among other publications and her latest book, *Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Postcolonial Canon*, was published by Liverpool UP in 2010. She is co-founder of the Transnational and Transcolonial Caribbean Studies Research Group, an editor of *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, and has contributed regularly to the *New York Times Book Review*. Professor Glover's current projects include *Disorderly Women*, a forthcoming study of the ethics of self-care and configurations of the feminine in 20th and 21st century Caribbean fiction, and *Revisiting Marie Vieux Chauvet: Paradoxes of the Postcolonial Feminine*, an edited volume of critical essays for *Yale French Studies*.

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