

## Candidate's Statement for ASWAD Executive Board Election 2017

My name is Yolanda Covington-Ward, and I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Africana Studies with a secondary appointment in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh. I received my M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Michigan and a B.A. in Afro-American Studies from Brown University. My research places the body at the center of human experience, and focuses on the dynamic relationship between how society shapes physical bodies and how bodies can be used to transform society. I examined such questions through research on religious movements in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in my first book *Gesture and Power: Religion, Nationalism, and Everyday Performance in Congo* (Duke University Press, 2016) (Winner of the 2017 Elliott P. Skinner Award from the Assoc. for Africanist Anthropology). My second book project, *Transforming Communities, Recreating Selves: Displacement, Conflict, and Identity Formation in the Liberian Diaspora* looks at the relationship between migration and identity formation for Liberian immigrants. I also have other interests in migration and health. I have previously published in the journals *Africa Today*, *The Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, *Women and Performance*, *Transforming Anthropology*, *The Journal of Africana Religions*, and *The Journal of Black Studies*, among others. My research overall considers how people of African descent make new worlds in contexts of massive social transformation, dislocation, and displacement. These themes clearly resonate with ASWAD's focus on diasporas, identities, and power relations. Find out more about my work at [www.covington-ward.com](http://www.covington-ward.com)

I chose to stand for election to ASWAD's executive board because as an organization, ASWAD is at the forefront of intellectual production and advocacy for people of African descent worldwide. It would be an honor to be a part of such an amazing international team. I have been an active member of ASWAD since 2011, when I served on the local arrangements committee for the ASWAD conference in Pittsburgh, PA. After working tirelessly to ensure the conference was a success, I saw the value of the organization even more clearly. I have attended every ASWAD conference since 2011, and aspire to continue to do so in the future. There are several things that I seek to bring to the organization. First, I want to help establish new partnerships with universities and colleagues outside of the United States (especially in Africa) and build upon existing relationships, so that members of ASWAD can strategically collaborate with other members on publishing opportunities, grant funded research, or other collaborative endeavors. Second, I will bring ideas to recruit potential members in the U.S. who conduct research on Africa and the African diaspora, but have not been as involved in ASWAD. Third, I would like to help the organization further develop its mentoring activities to promote the success of early career faculty. Additionally, I want to put my skills and experience in event planning, grant writing, and partnership building at the service of ASWAD. It is my sincere hope that you will give me your support!

