

Robert Trent Vinson

I am currently the Cummings Associate Professor of History and Africana Studies at the College of William & Mary. I received my Ph.D. in African and African Diaspora History from Howard University and my research and teaching explore African pasts in global contexts, internationalize African-American history and center Africa and Africans in African Diaspora Studies. I first became an ASWAD member in 2001, when I was a presenter at the very first ASWAD conference in New York City. I am currently an ASWAD Board member and the lead organizer for the Tenth Biennial ASWAD Conference, November 5-9, 2019 in Williamsburg, Virginia.

My publications include two books, *The Americans are Coming!: The Dream of African American Liberation in Segregationist South Africa* (Ohio University Press, 2012) and *Albert Luthuli: Mandela before Mandela* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2018). I am currently working on two additional co-authored book projects: 1) *Shaka's Progeny: Zulu Peoples and Cultures in the United States and South Africa* and; 2) *Crossing the Water: African Americans and South Africa, 1890-1965*, a documentary history (forthcoming, Ohio University Press). I also serve on the editorial board of *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies*, the *Ruth Simms Hamilton African Diaspora* series and the *African History and Culture* series at Michigan State University Press.

From 2009 to 2012, I was founding co-director of the Lemon Project at William & Mary, a long-term research project named after Mr. Lemon, one of many enslaved blacks owned by William & Mary before the Civil War. The continuing mission of the Lemon Project is to better understand, chronicle, and preserve the history of blacks at William & Mary and in the community and to promote a deeper understanding of the indebtedness of the College to the work and support of its diverse neighbors.

I am deeply honored to stand for election to be the next ASWAD Director. If elected, I will model the collaborative, democratic, transparent and visionary leadership of our esteemed former Directors, the Founder Michael Gomez, Abena Busia, Kim Butler, and Leslie Alexander, who have led ASWAD to its current position as the leading professional organization focused on the African Diaspora. As a trained Africanist, I would like to continue our

traditional scholarly and activist focus on historic and contemporary African Diasporas in the Atlantic World *and* deepen our engagement with Africa and Africans, historic and contemporary African diasporic populations in the Pacific and Indian Ocean worlds, Europe and the Middle East. While building on our core North American-based membership, I would also seek to expand our global membership to more fully represent Africans and the many worldwide African Diasporas outside of North America, particularly in the global South. The expanded global scope of our membership and scholarship is tied to another envisioned goal: greater interdisciplinary and multilingual diversity in ASWAD membership and biennial conferences. The continued expansion of our online and social media presence to reach both academic and non-academic audiences will facilitate our core mission of creating and disseminating new interdisciplinary knowledge about global African-descended peoples. Increased membership and expanded global reach will also enhance our organizational fiscal health. Finally, I would strongly support and encourage our renewed emphasis on mentorship and network development for mid-career and junior faculty as well as for graduate and undergraduate students. This is not only vital to the organizational growth of ASWAD, but to the broader development of African Diaspora Studies inside and outside of the academy. Thank you for your consideration.