

5 April 2019

Leslie M. Alexander
Associate Professor of History
University of Oregon
President, Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD)

Dear Professor Alexander:

Thank you so much for your recent email informing me that I have been nominated to serve on the ASWAD Board. I am honored and humbled by the prospect of working in this capacity.

Nearly twenty years have passed since the inaugural ASWAD Conference in New York City. In the time since its initial founding, ASWAD has been a key intellectual partner in a veritable explosion of new bodies of scholarship and emerging fields of interest concerning the peoples, cultures and histories of African people on the continent and around the world. A quick glance at past conference programs makes clear that this organization has served as an incubator for some of the most dynamic scholarship published in the field of African Diasporic studies for nearly two decades.

At the same time, ASWAD has been an important witness to history, often from the frontlines. This was true in 2015 when members met in Charleston in the immediate aftermath of the deadly shooting of Walter Scott. And it was true two years earlier, in 2013, when members met in the Dominican Republic just days after that country's high court issued a devastating ruling, effectively rendering stateless whole sectors of the country's black citizens. More recently, ASWAD has issued clear and unequivocal statements concerning recent anti-immigrant turns in the United States and elsewhere. Along the way, ASWAD has provided warm testimonies to the lives and legacies of stellar scholars recently lost, and far too soon.

When I first joined ASWAD, the organization's Board was comprised of some of my most cherished mentors and intellectual elders. It is for this reason that I accept this current nomination with such humility. My own work has been devoted to interrogating and clarifying the historical relationships that pertain between the cultures of Africa and those of the African Diaspora. These interests are reflected in my scholarship, as in *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry Region of Georgia and South Carolina in the Era of Slavery* as well as in articles and essays published in *The Journal of African American History*, *The Journal of Africana Religions*, *African Studies Quarterly* and *The Journal of Southern Religion* among others. My commitments in this arena are also evident in some of my more public facing work with cultural and historical institutions including my work as a member of the Advisory Board for the International African American Museum (IAAM) in Charleston, South Carolina and as a member of the Editorial Board for the *Journal of Africana*

Religions, among others.

At a time when even basic human and moral principles are under attack around the globe; and with African diasporic peoples feeling the brunt of old, but insurgent waves of ignorance and intolerance, ASWAD--an organization that has accomplished much--has yet much to do. As ASWAD transitions into a new leadership team, I hope to work, as Christina Sharpe puts it, *in the wake*. A luta continua.

Jason R. Young
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<https://lsa.umich.edu/history/people/faculty/jason-young.html>