

7<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
TEACHING BLACK HISTORY  
CONFERENCE | JULY 26-28, 2024

**BLACK**   
**TO THE FUTURE**

Afro-futurism as Black History



**REIMAGINE THE WORLD WITHOUT RACISM AND ANTIBLACKNESS.**

In 2024, the conference will focus on reconceptualizing the past and present through writing about the future. We will push the boundaries of learning, using our knowledge of the past as commentary for Black people's future, not one of despair but one that reimagines what it means to be Black in a society that historically was meant for us not to survive.

 University at Buffalo  
Center for K-12 Black History  
and Racial Literacy Education  
Graduate School of Education

Black to the Future: Afro-futurism as Black History

A Call for Proposals

7th Annual Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Conference

July 26-28, 2024

[Submit proposal here](#)

Hello Everyone,

Welcome to another Teaching Black History Conference! This is our 7<sup>th</sup> conference, and we are overjoyed to have your continued support after all these years and after our move to Buffalo, NY. This year's theme is **Black to the Future: Afro-futurism as Black History**. This is our official call for proposals for the 2024 conference. As always, your proposal can include any topic related to Black history education. Our themes help expand how we think about Black history education, but all different proposals are welcomed.

Additionally, if you submit a proposal and are accepted, please note that you must register and pay the conference fee. The conference fee is \$125, which is excellent for a 3-day conference. The conference is the only professional development the Center charges for, and it helps set our budget each year. It also allows me to pay for our graduate fellows and assistant directors.

This year, the conference will have two days dedicated to in-person learning and one day of virtual learning. Note that this year we will not have asynchronous or live stream learning for our virtual attendees. All sessions will be recorded, and everyone who registers will receive all recorded sessions in an email sent to them after the conclusion of the conference.

Below, you will find our call for proposals. We look forward to reading all your ideas.

### **Black to the Future: Afro-futurism as Black History**

Cultural critic and journalist Mark Dery is credited with introducing the term Afrofuturism to the public in his essay "[Black to the Future in the anthology, Flame Wars: The discourse of cyberculture](#)". Dery asked, if a community whose past has been deliberately erased and whose energies have subsequently been consumed by the search for legible traces of its history, imagine the possibilities in the future? Thirty years have passed since this essay, which also featured interviews with Tricia Rose, Greg Tate, and Samuel Delany, and while Afrofuturism was practiced by people such as Sojourner Truth, W.E.B. Dubois, George Clinton, Derrick Bell, Octavia Butler, Outcast, and even Benjamin Banneker. The reach and popularity of Afro-futurism has ascended.

The first Afrofuturists were probably enslaved Africans who dreamed of a free world for African people worldwide. In many respects, any person with a dream of liberating and transforming the minds and bodies of Black people is a futurist. Black people have a history of not only dreaming but imagining alternative Black futures, ones that are different from today's realities. Historically, Black people have been hopeful about social transformation no matter what trauma has been experienced. Robin D.G. Kelley reminds us that Black history is filled with a tradition of radical imagination, a process of Black people collectively envisioning a revolutionary and liberated future. This has been the cornerstone of history, where our imagination has birthed many movements and initiatives such as Emancipation, the Civil Rights Movement, Black Lives Matter, and an academic and professional development center dedicated to improving Black history and racial literacy instruction. At its basic level, Afro-futurism is about resistance to oppression and freedom throughout the world.

In a more popular sense, Afrofuturism is seen as a cultural aesthetic combining science-fiction, history, and fantasy to explore and connect the African American experience to their forgotten African ancestry. Others have noted that Afrofuturist imagines a world absent of white supremacist thought and institutional structures hindering and oppressing Black communities. Afrofuturism evaluates the past to

create a better present and prepare for a future void of those problematic histories. Afro-futurism is about using science fiction that is fact based to teach about Blackness that diverges from societal understandings about Black people and their history.

Author Nnedi Okorafor has called her work African futurism, which differs from Afrofuturism. Her work is directly rooted in African culture, history, mythology, and point-of-view. She notes that African futurism centers not on Western culture but on the work of people of African descent. It is rooted in the African continent and the Black diaspora, not simply African Americans. In other words, African futurism is centered in and about Africa and its people.

Afrofuturism is typically associated with Black science fiction and includes various sub-categories, including cyberpunk (art in futuristic settings focusing on futuristic technology and scientific achievement, think Artificial Intelligence, and cyber culture), Black speculative fiction (futuristic literature focusing on race and the history of race, may also include fantasy and horror), and music such as Afropunk and funk, art, fashion, costumes, and films. Yet, it is history education that ties everything together. To reimagine a safe and free world for Black people, Afrofuturism must use history as its foundation. For many, it is commentary on where we have been. In many ways, it is about teaching us about our history that has been forgotten or ignored.

Therefore, we challenge proposals to help us look at the many ways we can use Afro-futurism or African Futurism to teach Black history. We seek non-traditional ways that educators have used the concepts and new ways that these have developed in classrooms or even as you think through the concept in various lessons. We can also understand the transdisciplinary nature of Black history within literature, art, and music. The sky is the limit with this type of Black history teaching. Also, we are looking for proposals that are tailored to other Black history topics that just simply challenge traditional history teaching that make our students think critically and act in ways that help improve our society.

We welcome your proposals!

## OUR CONFERENCE

This multi-day conference aims to bring together hundreds of educators who seek transformative and engaging ways to teach PK-12 Black history through history classes and other humanities courses. Workshop presentations are informative and interactive, providing participants with culturally relevant and sustaining strategies and resources to incorporate Black histories throughout the school year and across curriculum disciplines.

### *PROPOSAL FORMAT*

Presentations should take the form of workshops that will actively engage conference participants. We welcome submissions from all disciplines to highlight how to bring Afro and African Futurism into and across subject areas.

In 300 – 500 words, please submit proposals that address the following:

- Topic
- Learning Objectives
- Category (PK/elementary, middle/high, general, or University/Adult)
- Curricular issue and pedagogical approach(es)
- Structure of workshop (explain how the workshop will be conducted)

- Connections to the [Black History Consciousness framework](#)
- Any special technical requirements

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: March 2, 2024

Submit proposals here

Presentation proposals will fit into one of the following four categories:

1. Early childhood/elementary (PK-6)
2. Middle/High School (7-12)
3. General (all academic levels)
4. University teacher education or the training of practicing teachers

#### *GUIDELINES AND RULES GOVERNING PRESENTATIONS*

There are two ways that you can present at the conference. The first is in-person. These are presenters who are traveling to Buffalo, NY and holding Friday or Saturday (July 24 and 25 sessions in classrooms provided by the Center. The second is virtual. These presenters will hold sessions on Sunday (July 26) and present to a virtual audience. Presenters will be allotted one hour to conduct their workshops. Note: Depending on the number of accepted proposals, the structure and the organization of the conference presentation may change.

Presenters are responsible for providing any/all materials they plan to use or distribute in their presentation. For presenters, we adhere to the 5- 40- 15 rule. This means the presentation should follow a 5-minute introduction about you and the topic at hand. Next, the 40-minutes includes the content of the workshop where you will explore your topic with the audience. The workshop should be interactive, where the presenter provides materials and resources to the participants, asks questions, has short discussions, etc. We would like the workshop to be as close to an interactive classroom environment. If presenting online, [see 10 tips for giving effective virtual presentations](#). Virtual presenters must use their laptops/computers and internet connection. Whether presenting in-person or virtual, we do not want our workshop to be strictly lectured but based on good pedagogical practices. Workshops will take place online in virtual classrooms.

Commercial solicitation is prohibited at all presentations. If you represent a commercial interest, your presentation must be educational. It will not be accepted if the essential purpose is to promote books, materials, or services for sale. There will be vendor space for those sorts of inquiries.

Proposals will NOT be accepted after the March 2, 2024, submission deadline. Please submit the proposal here

#### **SAMPLE PROPOSAL TOPICS**

We welcome all Black history topics, but here are some possible Black Futurism-related history topics, more are welcome:

- Afro-futurism literature

- Black history, art, and Afrofuturist
- AI, STEAM/STEAM-related content
- Black science fiction/fantasy
- Black comic books/ graphic novels
- Harriet Tubman and the Underground railroad
- Funk and Futuristic music
- 1970s history and music
- Black inventors and inventions
- Teaching Black sci-fi movies
- How history and futurism interact
- Teacher Education and Abolitionist teaching
- Teaching Black Panther
- Betinna Love's Get Free curriculum
- The Black Arts Movement
- Using *Conjuring Worlds* by B. Sharise Moore
- Sharing students' work
- Examining W.E.B. Dubois' book, *The Comet*
- Derrick Bell's *The Space Traders*
- Black history and technology
- Google and Apple classroom
- Imagining new technologies
- And much more

### **PRESENTER NOTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION**

Those who submit proposals will be notified of their receipt within a week. The proposal's acceptance or rejection will be communicated starting April 1, 2024. If you do not receive notification by April 5, 2024, please contact Dr. LaGarrett King at [lagarret@buffalo.edu](mailto:lagarret@buffalo.edu). If accepted, you will be required to register for the conference. The registration fee is USD 125.00. Registration for presenters is due June 1, 2024.

### **ABOUT THE CENTER**

#### *The Center for K-12 Black history and Racial Literacy Education*

The Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education at the University at Buffalo focuses on research projects and teacher professional development activities to improve K-12 Black history education. The center engages in services and teaching related to its research mission while also helping to build networks of people and organizations committed to Black history education.

#### *Research*

Our research mission centers on the question: What is Black History Education? The center's research will focus on how Black history and race are taught and learned worldwide in K–12 schools, teacher education programs, and other educative spaces concentrating on research,

professional development and learning, networking, and advocacy.

### *Education*

We seek to educate K–12 students, in-service and pre-service teachers, and the general society through various educational activities, including history clubs, teacher professional development, and community learning labs. The center will serve as a place for education through monthly events held in virtual and community classrooms.

Our monthly Saturday schools and professional development events will serve as a space for learning that did not happen in schooling. Our most popular professional development activity is our summer conference. The Teaching Black History Conference is a three-day event where classroom teachers share an effective Black history curriculum and instructional strategies. Additionally, the center is creating a Teaching Black History certificate program for teachers and educators to use as endorsements for teaching history classes in their school districts.

### *Networking*

The center will serve as a networking site for engaging and collaborating with other people and organizations in helping promote Black history and racial literacy. Our goal is to connect with like-minded individuals and organizations to combine resources to advance our goals of understanding Black history and race within the K–12 curriculum, pedagogy, policy, and its psychological and sociological influences.

### *Advocacy*

The center aims to advocate for Black history and racial literacy education. We seek to help teachers and other educational entities expand opportunities to learn about crucial concepts related to Black history and race.

For more information, please visit our website: <http://ed.buffalo.edu/black-history-ed.html>.