

Friends of the

# PEMBROKE CENTER

## Newsletter

AUTUMN/WINTER 2022 | BROWN UNIVERSITY

# HISTORIC ACQUISITIONS:

## the Fernández and Abu-Jamal Papers

**AFTER 26 MONTHS** of work, over 5,000 text messages, two trips to New York City, six attorneys, and hundreds of emails, 92 boxes of archival papers detailing the life experiences of Johanna Fernández '93 and Mumia Abu-Jamal have come to Brown, curated by

Mary Murphy, the Nancy L. Buc '65 LLD'94 hon Pembroke Center archivist. Both collections will be processed by Amanda Knox, Pembroke Center Assistant Archivist, and anchor a new strategic collecting focus at the John Hay Library: [Voices of Mass Incarceration](#).

*Continued on pg. 3*

A selection of items from the collection.



## From the Director



There's much to tell you as I begin my second year as Director of the Pembroke Center. We started the fall with a fully staffed team and an increase in our in-person programming, and we haven't stopped since. Our first event of autumn, a panel discussion "Reproductive Justice after Roe v. Wade," augured things to come: over 300 people attended (online and in person) and the [recording](#) of the event has already been viewed over 700 times on our YouTube

playlist. This inaugurated a significant theme for us this year: reproductive health and justice. We co-sponsored a webinar with the [Sarah Doyle Center for Women and Gender](#), "What Next? Reproductive Justice in a Post-Roe Nation." If you follow us on social media, you'll also notice more posts highlighting materials in our archives related to reproductive rights, health, and justice. And, through our Public Health Collaborative, we are co-sponsoring a reproductive health/justice research working group. Sarah Williams, Louise Lamphere Visiting Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Gender Studies, is also teaching a related Gender and Sexuality Studies course in the spring. "Reproductive In/Justice" will include the opportunity for students to receive doula training through the organization Mama Glow. Finally, Dorothy Roberts of the University of Pennsylvania will give our Pembroke Public Lecture in April. The title of her talk is "All of Reproductive Justice."

In late August, *The New York Times* published an in-depth [piece](#) on the acquisition of the papers of Johanna Fernández '93 and Mumia Abu-Jamal by the Pembroke Center Archives and the John Hay Library, in collaboration with the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America and the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice. Nancy L. Buc '65 LLD'94 hon Pembroke Center Archivist Mary Murphy was instrumental in identifying and acquiring these collections.

This fall also brought early career and independent scholars together with established academics at a two-day symposium celebrating the work of renowned Black feminist theorist Hortense J. Spillers, who in 2019 contributed her papers to the Pembroke Center's Feminist Theory Archive in the name of the Black Feminist Theory Project.

The pandemic urged many of us to fast-track our online projects, and the Pembroke Center was no exception. The first ten years of *differences* are now fully digitized and [online](#). We have also been able to share many of our events with colleagues and Pembroke supporters near and far through our YouTube [playlist](#), which we encourage you to check out when you aren't able to join us in person. Additionally, a special issue of *differences* guest edited by associate editor Michelle Rada and titled *Psychoanalysis and Solidarity* is appearing this month. The essay collection continues the work of thinking clinical and theoretical psychoanalysis as a political project motivated by the individual's desire for a better life and world and a broader social commitment to our intersubjectivity in common.

Finally, as 2022 winds to a close, I want to thank you, as ever, for your continued support of the Pembroke Center. Our mission of feminist inquiry has never been more urgent, and we could not meet this particular moment without your support. We are grateful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leela Gandhi", with a horizontal line underneath.

Leela Gandhi  
Shauna McKee Stark '76, P'10  
Director of the Pembroke Center



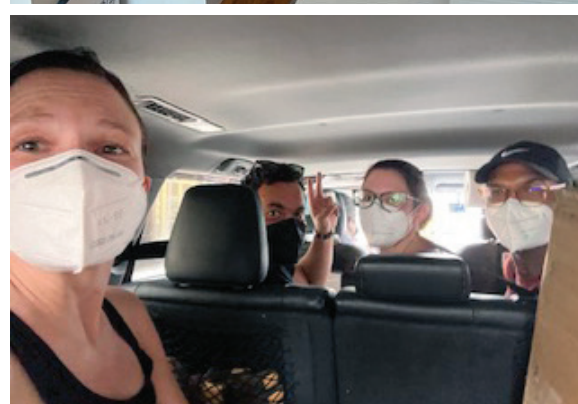
Abu-Jamal, once referred to as the “most famous man on death row,” co-founded the Philadelphia Black Panther Party and worked as a journalist and community organizer prior to his imprisonment. Since 1981, he has pleaded his innocence and fought his conviction for the killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. No longer on death row, Abu-Jamal has been imprisoned for 41 years. Fernández, Associate Professor of History at Baruch College (CUNY), is a Brown alumna, social justice activist, and long-time member of the Pembroke Center Advisory Council. Like many students who attended college during the 1990s, the height of the Free Mumia movement, Fernández likely first learned about Mumia while at Brown. In 2005, in the midst of a postdoctoral fellowship at Carnegie Mellon University, Fernández had a colleague suggest that she visit Abu-Jamal on death row, and the visit sparked a lifelong friendship. Fernández edited *Writing on the Wall: Selected Prison Writings of Mumia Abu-Jamal*, co-edited with Abu-Jamal a special issue on incarceration for the journal *Socialism and Democracy*, and wrote and produced the one-hour documentary film *Justice On Trial: The Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal*. Then in 2011, when Abu-Jamal’s sentence was commuted from death to life in prison, he began sending papers that had been accumulating in his cell to friends and advocates outside of prison. Fernández stepped up to gather those papers in a central location for safekeeping in her home.

The acquisition of Fernández’s and Abu-Jamal’s papers began with a Pembroke Center Oral History Project interview conducted by Judith Surkis ’92, Professor of History at Rutgers University and Member at the Institute for Advanced Study, in 2017. Surkis interviewed Fernández about her experience as a first-generation college student, student activist, and scholar.

Then, at the start of the pandemic in 2020, archivist Mary Murphy [interviewed](#) Fernández again, this time about Fernández’s experiences as a pandemic-era radio host and the award-winning author of *The Young Lords Party: A Radical History*. In sharing her story, Fernández and Murphy connected and began speaking by phone about Fernández’s papers. It was just after one of these calls that Fernández called Murphy back and shared the jaw-dropping news that she also stored Abu-Jamal’s papers in her New York apartment. This led Murphy to pursue the acquisition of both collections.

Voices of Mass Incarceration is a partnership between several academic units at Brown that has drawn connections between mass incarceration and systemic inequalities in the U.S. These centers include the Pembroke Center, the John Hay Library, the [Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America](#), and the [Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice](#). The Abu-Jamal papers at the John Hay Library will join a growing archive of scholarly materials on incarceration amassed by the CSREA. The acquisition, along with the Fernández papers, will be made available for use in 2023 following a thorough cataloging process by Knox.

Speaking to Brown University Communications, Kenvi Phillips, Director of Library Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Brown, noted, “Prisons are designed to keep the incarcerated in and to keep others out. As a result, people who are incarcerated are largely absent from national conversations — with the exception of Mumia Abu-Jamal, who has spoken on behalf of this often-invisible demographic. This collection will give scholars a rare chance to peer inside prison walls and understand how incarcerated people live, think, and advocate for themselves.” ■



▲ Top: Mumia Abu-Jamal and Johanna Fernández ’93 in 2013. Middle: The collection process at Fernández’s New York apartment. Bottom: On a road trip to New York City.





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Leela Gandhi

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## A Note from the Advisory Council Chairs

It is a pleasure to serve as the chair and vice-chair of the Pembroke Center Advisory Council this year. The Council met in October and has begun its work in earnest — collaborating with Pembroke Center leadership and staff to further support feminist inquiry and scholarship; developing plans for engaging programming this spring and the Commencement forum in May 2023; and providing stewardship to actualize the Pembroke Center's mission as a feminist research center devoted to critical scholarship.

Last month Brown University graduate students organized and led [The Nicknames of Distortion: A Hortense Spillers Symposium](#), the 2022-23 Shauna M. Stark '76, P'10 Out of the Archive Event. This event was presented with the support of the Friends. It captured the wide reach of the Pembroke Center as it brought together graduate students, early-career scholars, independent scholars, and community members in celebration of both the "[Hortense J. Spillers: A Life Recorded](#)" collection and exhibit. You can read more about it on this page.

You, the Friends of the Pembroke Center, make this important work possible. If you haven't yet renewed your [support](#) this year, please consider doing so today. We look forward to seeing you in 2023!



*Sophie Rifkin*

Sophie Waskow Rifkin '07  
Chair, Pembroke Center  
Advisory Council



*Emily A. Coe-Sullivan*

Emily Coe-Sullivan '99  
Vice-Chair, Pembroke Center  
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## Hortense J. Spillers Symposium a Success

November brought early career and independent scholars together with established academics at a two-day symposium celebrating the work of Black feminist theorist Hortense J. Spillers. The event, timed to coincide with our exhibit, "[Hortense J. Spillers: A Life Recorded](#)" (on display until Dec. 21, 2022 in Pembroke Hall) featured participation from Spillers, as well as a keynote lecture from C. Riley Snorton (University of Chicago) and a conversation between Spillers and Margo Natalie Crawford (University of Pennsylvania). This symposium was led by graduate students [Tara Holman](#), [Christopher Lasasso](#), [Kiran Saili](#), and [Semilore Sobande](#) in collaboration with the Pembroke Center. It was an opportunity to support graduate student research and professional development, incubate early career scholarship, showcase the Feminist Theory Archive and Black Feminist Theory Project at the Pembroke Center, and most importantly, celebrate the life and work of Hortense J. Spillers. The symposium was well attended, with a completely full house for the closing conversation between Spillers and Crawford. As Crawford commented afterwards on Twitter, the symposium was "sustained revelation and joy."

This event was co-sponsored by the [Department of Africana Studies](#), the [Department of American Studies](#), the [Department of English](#), and the [Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America](#). It was presented with the support of the Friends of the Pembroke Center.

Top: Graduate student organizers with Spillers and Crawford. Middle: Keynote speaker C. Riley Snorton. Middle Right: Spillers and Crawford in conversation. Bottom Left: Hortense J. Spillers. Bottom Right: A full house.



# The Pembroke Center | Events and Projects



## A New Project: The Pembroke Public Health Collaborative

The Pembroke Public Health Collaborative is an initiative of the Center focused on building relationships, developing curricula, and offering co-curricular opportunities for students interested in the intersections of gender and sexuality studies and public health. Visiting Assistant Professor of the Practice of Gender Studies Sarah Gamble began this work in May 2022 with a focus on building relationships between Brown's

School of Public Health and the Center, and is expanding into advising undergraduate students interested in this intersection.

The Public Health Collaborative is also creating opportunities for the broader campus to engage with public health through the lens of gender and sexuality studies. The Collaborative co-sponsored a Women in Public Health Meet and Greet event with the School of Public Health on November 16, 2022. In the spring semester, the Collaborative is sponsoring a dialogue between Gamble and Assistant Professor

of Behavioral and Social Sciences in the School of Public Health Madina Agénor '05 aimed at GNSS concentrators and potential concentrators titled "What Will You Do with That?" Concentrating in Gender and Sexuality Studies and Working in Public Health." Additionally, the Collaborative will co-sponsor the panel discussion "Queer Pandemic(s)" with the Pembroke Center LGBTQIA+ Thinking Initiative in the spring. Finally, Gamble and Agénor are convening a research working group on reproductive health/justice that will launch in fall 2023.

▶ Sarah Gamble (above) and Madina Agénor (below).

## Spring 2023 Events

In the spring, we look forward to welcoming Dorothy Roberts to give the Pembroke Publics Lecture and Emily A. Owens, who will deliver the annual Elizabeth Munves Sherman '77, P'06'09 Lecture in Gender and Sexuality Studies. Roberts is George A. Weiss University Professor of Law and Sociology and the Raymond Pace and Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander Professor of Civil Rights. She has written and lectured extensively on race, gender, and class inequities

in U.S. institutions and has been a leader in transforming public thinking and policy on reproductive freedom, child welfare, and bioethics. Roberts's talk, "All of Reproductive Justice," will address the importance of recognizing, integrating, and acting on all the key principles of reproductive justice. Emily A. Owens, David and Michelle Ebersman Assistant Professor of History at Brown, researches and teaches about U.S. slavery, the legal history

of race and sexual violence, and the intellectual history of American feminisms. She is most interested in the ways that massive cultural, legal and economic systems shape intimate life across different historical moments. Owens will discuss her new book, *Consent in the Presence of Force: Sexual Violence and Black Women's Survival in Antebellum New Orleans*.

▶ Dorothy Roberts (above) and Emily A. Owens (below).



# The Pembroke Center | Online

## Annual Report

The Pembroke Center Annual Report for the 2021-22 academic year has been published on the Center's [website](#). Here, you can get a comprehensive overview of the Center's many programs and activities of the last year, as we moved into a hybrid virtual/in-person model and welcomed our new Director and Associate Director.

## The Digitization of *differences*

We are delighted that the first ten years of *differences* are now fully digitized and [online](#), available for full text downloads. Articles published in *differences*' first decade are highly requested by scholars and researchers, and we are pleased that several articles have been made accessible without cost for limited durations.



## Featured Oral Histories

If you follow the Pembroke Center on social media, you may have seen a new series of posts featuring the Pembroke Center Oral History Project. Our online oral histories record the experiences of the cisgender women, trans, and non-binary members of Brown University. They include transcripts, biographies, and photographs by and about students, alums, faculty, and staff who have studied and worked at Brown since as early as 1907. This rich collection has much to offer us for reflection on the history of Brown, Rhode Island and the historic and present day experiences of cisgender women, trans, and non-binary people in higher education and the world. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#) to see more.

**PEMBROKE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

"The whole system has to change and be focused on the mom and the baby....They don't listen to women, literally, about what they want. In my scenario, the mom is the captain, the partner is the co-captain, and I'm the advisor."

— Alisa Hassan '11, midwife and founder of The Birthing Place



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**PEMBROKE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

At Brown I began to hone my skills around being active politically, being active around racial justice issues. I became a public defender in Washington D.C. I represented people charged with crime, largely people of color who looked like me. I could see myself in them.

— Kim A. Taylor '77



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**PEMBROKE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

"There's no one way to look like or be a lawyer. Work on your best qualities, and be that."

— Lillian Y. Lim '75, first Filipina American Judge in the United States




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**PEMBROKE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

Pembroke College students were apt to have access to the resources that were needed to get reasonably safe abortions, and that was a real privilege. But the secrecy and shame surrounding them, even in a place like Pembroke, added a lot to the physical and emotional toll.... That experience motivated me to get involved in the abortion reform movement.

— Susan Rogers '72, member of Women of Brown United



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