

# MICHELLE S. JOHNSON, Ph.D.

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## EDUCATION

*Doctorate of Philosophy in American Culture* 1994  
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

Dissertation: "Juju Leaves in the Center of a Whirlwind: African American Nature/Culture Mediation."

Areas of examination: African American Literature, 19th Century Literature and Environmental History

*Bachelor of Arts in Humanities* 1986  
Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI  
Areas of focus: English, Philosophy, Psychology and Women's Studies

## PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP

**Historian** 2014 - Present  
State of Michigan, Lansing, MI  
Lead state-wide documentation of black communities in the state between 1815 and 1915. Collaborate and coordinate with public and higher education, family history, museums, libraries, arts and cultural organizations throughout Michigan's Lower and Upper Peninsula. research and collectively establish themes. Make recommendations for inclusion in exhibits, educational materials, on-line extensions to stimulate visitor engagement and active learning for the new pre-1910 permanent exhibit at the Michigan Historical Museum

**Historian** 2000 - Present  
Link Cultural Resource Service, Kalamazoo, MI  
Conduct oral histories. Provide historical research and writing. Develop curricular and historical programming, Serve clients such as Hamilton Anderson, Detroit on Paradise Valley Commemorative Park Project and Friends of First Living Museum, Detroit on NEA grant implementation for research, tour development, programming and creation of interpretive exhibits featuring text and historic graphics related to the Underground Railroad and resistance to slavery.

**Freedom Trail Coordinator** 2000 - 2008  
State of Michigan, Lansing, MI  
Facilitate dialogue, planning and implementation of the documentation, preservation, exhibition and promotion of research, education, preservation and cultural tourism regarding Slavery, Resistance to and Underground Railroad in Michigan.

**ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVITIES Co-Founder & Executive Director  
2005 - 2015**

Fire Historical and Cultural Arts Collaborative, Kalamazoo, Michigan  
Strategic Planning and Implementation, Program Development and Management, Fund  
Development/Grant Oversight and Fiscal Management, Staff Management, Community  
Relations, Arts Advocacy, Youth Development.

**Oral Historian & Producer 1997-1998**

Co-created a 2-year community project in Loughman, Florida researching, interpreting and  
performing, for the first time in history, Hurston's co-authored play set in that community, *Polk  
County*.

**ORAL TESTIMONY PROJECTS Project Director  
Fall 1998 - Present**

Community Spaces of the Industrious: The Oral Histories of African Americans and Latino/as in  
Saginaw, MI  
Conduct oral histories. Curated Carlean Gill Collection of Idlewild photos, fliers and vinyl  
records. Present and consult on Gill's presentation and exhibition the Gill collection.

**Oral Historian & Editor 2016-2017**

Passage to Paradise: Saginaw, Idlewild & Detroit's Paradise Valley Oral History Digitization  
Project  
Digitize previously collected interviews. Serve as oral history consultant for the  
Saginaw Community Spaces of the Industrious Oral History (SCSIOH) archives. Edit SCSIOH  
interviews. Collect new oral history from Carlean Gill. Coordinate with Poet on pairing of  
poems. Moderate youth workshop. Moderate public discussion with Historian and Poet

**Oral Historian & Trainer 2014**

The Civil Rights Movement in Kalamazoo Collect and train and oversee high school students in  
the collection of testimonies from activists of the 1950-1980 era.

**Oral Historian 2010-2012**

Breadcrumbs, an exploration of black LGBTQ Kalamazoo residents and their journey to finding  
the voice.

**Oral Historian, Trainer & Testimony Editor 2011**

When and Where I Enter, collect and train and oversee undergraduate and high school students  
in the collection of testimonies from 20 to 60 year-old people exploring access to people, places  
and resources and accompanied. Edit testimonies for inclusion in travelling exhibit.

**Historian & Oral Historian**

**2005** History

of Paradise Valley and gathered stories from residents and patrons of Detroit for the Paradise Valley Park.

**UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE Grand Valley State University**

Visiting Associate Professor, Liberal Studies 2006 - 2008  
Adjunct Professor, African and African American Studies Fall 2006

**Michigan State University**

Visiting Assistant Professor, History Fall 2003  
Visiting Assistant Professor, American Thought and Language 1999 - 2003

**Saginaw Valley State University**

King/ Chavez/Parks Visiting Professor of the Humanities 1998 - 1999

**University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee**

Assistant Professor, English 1994 -1999

*Select Courses Taught*

Race, Ethnicity and Gender in American Cultural Arts Developments  
Oral History-American Cultures  
Freedom, Equality and Liberation in African American Thought and Action  
Space, Place and Environment in African American Literature  
Primary Telling: Becoming the Secondary Voice  
Participatory Diversity: Social Justice, Equality and Community  
Early Representations of Slavery and Freedom  
Resistance to African American Slavery  
Racial and Ethnic Inquiry  
Images of Slavery and Freedom in African American Literature  
Images of Slavery in Contemporary African American Literature

**AWARDS AND GRANTS**

Jim Knox Humanitarian Award

2016

Acknowledged as making a significant difference in the lives of LGBTQ individuals and families in southwest Michigan by the Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center.

Arcus Center for Social Justice Fellow. Kalamazoo College.

2011 - 2012

Numerous certificates from organizations such as Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency programs, Youth Opportunity Unlimited and Education for Employment (EFE)  
First Congregational Church, Detroit.

State and Local Grant Awards 2005 - Present  
Kalamazoo Community Foundation, Irving S. Gilmore, Arts Council of Kalamazoo, Michigan Council for the Arts and Culture, Michigan Humanities Council, and City of Kalamazoo and totaling \$500,000

Michigan Humanities Council Grant Recipient. 1999 - 2000  
Saginaw Oral History Project

Florida Humanities Council Grant Recipient. 1997 - 1998

Rockefeller Humanities Fellow. 1995 - 1996  
Center for Latin American Studies, University of Florida.

Committee for Institutional Cooperation Fellow. University of Michigan 1988 – 1993

**SELECT PRESENTATIONS**

Radio Show Host/DJ 2006 - Present  
Weekly host of *Slip Back Soul*, an R&B, Soul, Jazz, Funk and Blues retrospective.

Historical Presenter and Actor, 2004 - Present  
*Each of These Legs is a Road* and *Sites of Resistance, Detroit and Windsor*, exploring Underground Railroad and resistance to slavery in Michigan and Canada through primary sources, persona poetry and vocal music.

Expert Consultant 2014 - Present  
Regular guest on Kalamazoo Public Radio's WMUK, for shows related to arts, history and culture.

Keynote Speaker 2016  
Lavender Graduation, Office of LGBT Student Services, Western Michigan University.