

Keynote: “Citizen Monk: Stories of Civic Engagement and Visionary Politics”

Robin Kelley (History and American Studies, University of Southern California)

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Abstract

Citizen Monk: Stories of Civic Engagement and Visionary Politics

I will talk broadly about Monk's political participation and vision, even when he insists that he's not interested in politics or policy or anything of that nature. Monk is merely a template for thinking about musicians as more than musicians but rather social and political beings in the world who may express their hopes and concerns in forums other than music. It is also about a much longer African American political tradition that I argue can inform the current administration, but has virtually been erased from public discourse in an effort to e-race President Obama and his administration.

Biography

Robin D. G. Kelley is professor of American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. He is the author of the prize-winning books *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (University of North Carolina Press, 1990); *Race Rebels: Culture Politics and the Black Working Class* (The Free Press, 1994); *Yo' Mama's DisFunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (Beacon Press, 1997), which was selected one of the top ten books of 1998 by the *Village Voice*; *Three Strikes: Miners, Musicians, Salesgirls, and the Fighting Spirit of Labor's Last Century*, written collaboratively with Dana Frank and Howard Zinn (Beacon 2001); and *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Beacon Press, 2002). He also edited (with Earl Lewis), *To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans* (Oxford University Press, 2000), a Choice Outstanding Academic Title and a History Book Club Selection. *To Make Our World Anew* was an outgrowth of an earlier collaboration with Lewis, the eleven-volume *Young Oxford History of African Americans* (Oxford University Press, 1995-1998), of which he authored volume 10, titled *Into the Fire: African Americans Since 1970* (1996). Kelley also co-edited (with Sidney J. Lemelle) *Imagining Home: Class, Culture, and Nationalism in the African Diaspora* (Verso, 1994). His biography of pianist/composer Thelonious Monk, titled *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original*, is due out in the fall of 2009 (Free Press). He is also completing *Speaking in Tongues: Jazz and Modern Africa* (Harvard University Press, forthcoming 2010), and a general survey of African American history co-authored with Tera Hunter and Earl Lewis to be published by Norton. Kelley's essays have appeared in several anthologies and journals, including *The Nation*, *Monthly Review*, *The Voice Literary Supplement*, *New York Times (Arts and Leisure)*, *New York Times Magazine*, *Rolling Stone*, *Color Lines*, *Code*

Magazine, Utne Reader, Lenox Avenue, African Studies Review, Black Music Research Journal, Callaloo, New Politics, Black Renaissance/Renaissance Noir, One World, Social Text, Metropolis, American Visions, Boston Review, Fashion Theory, American Historical Review, Journal of American History, New Labor Forum, Souls, Metropolis, and frieze: contemporary art and culture, to name a few.