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Your silence will not protect you.

—Audre Lorde

This past June marked the twentieth anniversary of my PhD, when I became the first African American to receive a doctorate in art history from Stanford University. At the time, I was working under COVID-19-hobbled research conditions developing two anniversary-based museum exhibitions—one to mark the centenary of the Harlem Renaissance and the other in honor of the United States semiquincentennial in 2026. No matter how entrenched I was within the art-historical establishment (either as an Ivy League professor, a Smithsonian-based scholar, or a lifetime member of AHAA), I still felt I was—to borrow a phrase from Elizabeth Johns—standing “just outside the door” of American art history proper.

Falling in the same month that state-controlled racist violence and an out-of-control public health crisis were causing widespread civil unrest and protests, the arrival of this anniversary made me reflect upon longstanding issues of structural racism within the discipline of art history and the field of American art. I asked myself, “What has actually changed for Black Americanists in the last twenty years?” My own department at the University of Pennsylvania had only just granted its first PhD to a Black art historian in 2017. Despite the work done and the advances made by Americanists like me, the subjects, objects, and real-life communities at the center of our work still remain tokenized, undervalued, and marginalized by much of the white-normative, academic and mainstream museum establishment in which many of us attempt to operate.

But I was reminded by being asked to participate in this conversation that the status quo has been permanently disrupted by AHAA’s launch of *Panorama*. As an open access online journal dedicated to amplifying the voices of younger scholars, with its embrace of a diversity of topics and different modes of writing, *Panorama* legitimately upended the handful of publishing options that I encountered twenty years ago when I began my professional career. With each issue of *Panorama*, the challenges of what it means to be an “Americanist,” in a time when simply being an American may feel particularly difficult, are further explored.

As this strange summer of 2020 wore on, I debated whether to replace the stars and stripes on my front porch flagpole with a Black Lives Matter flag. Ultimately, the words of Audre Lorde reminded me that to use my voice in this country, at this moment of crisis, is imperative, lest all be lost. The last twenty years of professional struggle to be seen as a full-fledged Americanist have really only been training for what is still to come. And although I hate to wait another year, I really do look forward to the rescheduled AHAA symposium in 2021.