M.E. JOHN SEMINAR

Carolyn Finney, PhD

November 20, 2020, 2:30 - 3:30 PM

Zoom link: https://psu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_bPiR_H8sSaK7G4AsKRTW2w

2020 Vision: Christian Cooper, John Muir and the Nature of Green Space

Central Park birder Christian Cooper. George Floyd. Removal of Confederate Statues. Renaming of institutions. Reparations. Systemic Racism. What's "environment" got to do with it? How do we meet this moment? Drawing from her book, Black Faces, White Spaces, her relationships "in the field" and lived experience, Dr. Finney explores the complexities and contradictions of our past, the realities of our present, and the possibilities of our future as it relates to green space, race, and the power to shape the places we live in our own image. By engaging in "green" conversations with black people from around the country, she considers the power of resistance and resilience in the emergence of creative responses to environmental and social challenges in our cities and beyond.

Carolyn Finney, Ph.D., is a storyteller, author, and cultural geographer. She is deeply interested in issues related to identity, difference, creativity, and resilience. Carolyn is grounded in both artistic and intellectual ways of knowing - she pursued an acting career for eleven years, but five years of backpacking trips through Africa and Asia and living in Nepal changed the course of her life. Motivated by these experiences, Carolyn returned to school after a 15-year absence to complete a B.A., M.A. (gender and environmental issues in Kenya and Nepal), and a Ph.D. (where she was a Fulbright and a Canon National Science Scholar Fellow). Along with public speaking, writing, media engagements, consulting & teaching, she served on the U.S. National Parks Advisory Board for eight years. Her first book, Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors, was released in 2014. Recent publications include Self-Evident: Reflections on the Invisibility of Black Bodies in Environmental Histories (BESIDE Magazine, Montreal Spring 2020), and The Perils of Being Black in Public: We are all Christian Cooper and George Floyd (The Guardian, June 3rd, 2020). She is currently working on a performance piece about John Muir (The N Word: Nature Revisited) while doing a two-year residency in the Franklin Environmental Center at Middlebury College as the Environmental Studies Professor of Practice.

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