

The Department of Black Studies
presents:

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11 AM
UCEN Flying A Studios Room

Looking for Trade: Erotic Crossings among the Displaced

“Looking for Trade” in black queer vernacular references a desire for anonymous sex, moreover social relationships that from a politics of respectability are marked as deviant. “Looking for trade”, as the desire for and practice of an alternative and autonomous self, sex, moreover public life is increasingly marked within and between black and queer communities as the target of urban renewal. Through ethnographic fieldwork this paper considers meanings of black queer sexual politics and cultural performance in the context of post-flood displacement, HIV/AIDS prevention, and state violence in New Orleans. How are these practices at once produced by and contest the compounded effects of cultural and socio-economic displacement, militarization, and privatization? I argue that “looking for trade” is a generative practice toward the erotic autonomy of increasingly displaced communities, and a potential method of resisting the normalizing and exclusionary forces that lie at the very fulcrum of state and civil society.

Alix Chapman is a Ph. D. candidate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Texas, Austin. His dissertation, *Break It Down: Black Queer Performance and the Politics of Displacement in New Orleans*, addresses the ways in which home, heritage, and the body are reconceptualized in the wake of crisis. Through a combination of performance ethnography and historical, and literary critique Alix explores “Sissy” Bounce, a local genre of hip hop that expresses black queer people’s sexual and gendered displacement from the traditional home. Moreover, he looks at how this public culture intersects a public sphere in which socioeconomic disaster and reconstruction determine the life chances of all black people. Pushing Cathy J. Cohen’s 2004 work, further, do the artistic acts of black queer cultural producers constitute “resistance”? If so, what meaning can be drawn from oppositional enactments that occur in contrast to communities that reinforce normative standards of race, gender, and sexuality, enactments that seek to redefine narrow, state-centered understandings of citizenship. Alix is particularly interested in Southern U.S. and Caribbean African diasporas and is deeply invested in interdisciplinary projects that bring art and politics into conversation with each other.