

ICI Lecture Series Models – 27 March 2024, 19:30, In English

This talk examines how former Black Panther Party Communications Secretary Kathleen Neal Cleaver has used photography to make 'home' in the world. Through close examination of a family photography album made by Cleaver of her family's time living in exile in Algeria and France, 1969-1972, and drawing on Raiford's three years of working with Cleaver leading a team organizing and cataloguing her vast personal photography archive, (since acquired by Emory University in Spring 2020), Raiford considers the everyday image making practices that a public figure committed to improving the conditions of Black lives globally has engaged to imagine, identify, create, fabulate, inhabit, leave and, sometimes, destroy 'home'. While Cleaver's photography collection broadly, and the family album specifically, have great political and historical significance, enriching our knowledge about the Black Panther Party, the work of Black internationalism in the era of Black Power, and gender politics in the context of Black revolutionary struggles, it is perhaps best understood as a family archive. Thus, Raiford reads the Algiers album as a Black-woman authored text, a model that offers an affective and personal history of a movement that has been conveyed primarily as historical document. Its form as a family album forces us to reckon with the messiness of movement and cannot deny the failures and disappointments of family relations — whether a difficult marriage, a growing community of exiles, family as a metaphor for nationalism or as a map of intergenerational kinship ties — as well as the possibilities and limitations of photography itself.

Leigh Raiford is Professor of African American and African Diaspora Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, where she teaches, researches, curates and writes about race, gender, justice and visibility. At Berkeley, Raiford is also Co-Director with Tianna S. Paschel of the Black Studies Collaboratory, a three year initiative to amplify the world-building work of Black Studies funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Raiford is the author of *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* and, with Ariella Aisha Azoulay, Wendy Ewald, Susan Meiselas and Laura Wexler of *Collaboration: A Potential History of Photography*, forthcoming from Thames and Hudson. Raiford is the Spring 2024 Anna-Maria Kellen Fellow at the American Academy in Berlin.

Lecture Series Models: A model can be an object of admiration, a miniature or a prototype, an abstracted phenomenon or applied theory, a literary text — practically anything from a human body on a catwalk to a mathematical description of a system. It can elicit desire, provide understanding, guide action or thought. Despite the polysemy of the term, models across disciplines and fields share a fundamental characteristic: their effect depends on a specific relational quality. A model is always a model of or for something else, and the relation is reductive insofar as it is selective and considers only certain aspects of both object and model. Critical discussions of models often revolve around their restrictive function. And yet models are less prescriptive and more ambiguous than codified rules or norms. What is the critical purchase of models and how does their generative potential relate to their constitutive reduction? What are the stakes in decreasing or increasing, altering or proliferating the reductiveness of models? How can one work with and on models in a creative, productive manner without disavowing power asymmetries and their exclusionary or limiting effects?

An ICI Event in cooperation
with the American Academy in Berlin

Leigh Raiford When Home is a Photograph

Kathleen Cleaver's Albums of Exile



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