On Campus

Farah Jasmine Griffin Named University Professor

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Jamall Calloway

Farah Jasmine Griffin, the William B. Ransford Professor of English and Comparative Literature and an influential scholar of African-American studies, has been named a University Professor, the highest academic distinction for a Columbia faculty member.

Since 2019, Griffin has served as the inaugural chair of Columbia's Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies, which brings together scholarship in history, literature, social sciences, and the arts to study Black culture and experience in the United States and beyond.

Griffin, who played a pivotal role in shaping the department, has written and edited eight books on subjects ranging from African-American migration to the legacy of Billie Holiday. Her recent books include *Read Until You Understand: The Profound Wisdom of Black Life and Literature*, from 2021, and a compilation of new and selected essays, *In Search of a Beautiful Freedom*, in 2023. A jazz enthusiast, Griffin is the co-creator of two stage productions with the late composer Geri Allen and director S. Epatha Merkerson, including *Conversations with Mary Lou*, a 2014 musical about jazz artist Mary Lou Williams that has been performed at the Kennedy Center.

University Provost Angela Olinto observes that Griffin “is a visionary and pioneering scholar and an outstanding member of our Columbia community. Her work has impacted multiple fields and areas of focus and exemplifies the sort of pathbreaking, interdisciplinary scholarship that we seek to honor in our University Professors.”

A native of Philadelphia, Griffin holds a bachelor’s degree in history and literature from Harvard and a PhD in American studies from Yale. Since arriving at Columbia in 2000, she has earned a reputation as an exceptional instructor, winning a Great Teacher Award from the Society of Columbia Graduates in 2020.

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