Engendering Change 2017: INSTITUTIONALITY AND PRECARITY
Graduate Student Conference
Northwestern University, Evanston, IL
April 14-15, 2017

Engendering Change is an annual Graduate Student Conference focused on issues of gender and sexuality. This year’s theme is Institutionality and Precarity. We welcome papers that address the institutionality of gender, sexuality, and race in relationship to structures including but not limited to the university; charity and activist organizations; capitalism and debt; marriage; healthcare; prisons; media, art, and popular culture; schools; and local, state, and federal law-making.

Feminist and queer movements and scholarship have been and continue to be self-reflective about their entanglements with cultural, state, and academic institutions. At the same time, these movements are in a continuous process of institutionalization themselves. This process inspires us to look to institutions as sources of stability and as a refuge from precarity. However, these same institutions are increasingly implicated in the production and reproduction of economic and social instability, political upheaval, and the uneven distribution of resources. Especially in the aftermath of the 2016 election, the relationship between institutionalization and precarity raises a number of urgent questions:

- How do institutions produce precarity in relation to race, gender, class, socio-economic status, sexuality, dis/ability, ethnicity, and citizenship?
- In what ways do social movements and related scholarship work with or against institutions? In what ways do these structures work to heighten or diminish precarity?
- How are these interactions shaped by their contemporary or contemporaneous moments? What methodologies and practices are available to us to interrogate current conditions?

Our keynote speaker will be Alexis Pauline Gumbs, a queer black troublemaker, a black feminist love evangelist, a prayer poet priestess and has a PhD in English, African and African-American Studies, and Women and Gender Studies from Duke University. Alexis was the first scholar to research the Audre Lorde Papers at Spelman College, the June Jordan Papers at Harvard University, and the Lucille Clifton Papers at Emory University, and she is currently on tour with her interactive oracle project “The Lorde Concordance,” a series of ritual mobilizing the life and work of Audre Lorde as a dynamic sacred text. Alexis has also published widely on Caribbean Women’s Literature with a special interest in Dionne Brand. Her scholarly work is published in Obsidian, Symbiosis, Macomere, The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Literature, SIGNS, Feminist Collections, The Black Imagination, Mothering and Hip Hop Culture, The Business of Black Power and more. Alexis is the author of an acclaimed collection of poems 101 Things That Are Not True About the Most Famous Black Women Alive and poetic work published in Kweli, Vinyl, Backbone, Everyday Genius, Turning Wheel, UNFold, Makeshift and more. She has several books in progress including a book of poems, Good Hair Gone Forever, a scholarly monograph on diaspora and the maternal,
and an educational resource called the School of Our Lorde. She is also the co-editor of a forthcoming edited collection on legacies of radical mothering called This Bridge Called My Baby. Alexis is the founder of Brilliance Remastered, a service to help visionary underrepresented graduate students stay connected to purpose, passion, and community, co-founder of the Mobile Homecoming Project, a national experiential archive amplifying generations of Black LGBTQ Brilliance, and the community school Eternal Summer of the Black Feminist Mind. Alexis was named one of UTNE Reader’s 50 Visionaries Transforming the World in 2009, was awarded a Too Sexy for 501-C3 trophy in 2011, and is one of the Advocate’s top 40 under 40 features in 2012.

The Organizing Committee for Engendering Change 2017 issues a Call for Papers. Academic, Activist, and Creative projects could address one of the following topics, or any other aspects of institutionality and precarity:

- Community activism and practices
- Racialized patriarchal institutions
- Economics and debt
- Power and agency
- Access to employment and opportunities
- Art, media, literature, and performance
- Neoliberal theory and/or pedagogy
- The disappearance of feminist, queer, black, and people of color spaces
- Queer feminist historiography / social history
- Gender and sexual identities and practices
- The university and its creation of departments/programs/majors
- Teaching institutionality/precarity in the classroom
- Teaching precarious topics / identities
- Legacies of slavery and slave labor
- Relationships with bodies of authority (local / state / federal governments, police departments, etc.)
- Dis/ability
- Temporality
- Intimacy and relationality
- Language and rhetoric

Please email paper abstracts to engenderingchange2017@gmail.com by FEBRUARY 1, 2017 for consideration. Applicants will hear back by early March.