

Call for Papers
Pauline E. Hopkins Society
American Literature Association
31th Annual Conference
May 21-24, 2020
San Diego, CA

Pauline E. Hopkins and Social Justice

In an historic vote on December 19, 2018, the US Senate unanimously passed the Justice for Lynching Act (jointly proposed by Democratic Senators Cory Booker, NJ, and Kamala Harris, CA), which now awaits discussion in the House of Representatives. A dozen years earlier in 2005, Congress officially apologized for failing ever to pass a federal anti-lynching law, even though over 200 such bills were presented before the House or Senate from the early 1880s through the mid-1930s. The most famous of such proposals was the Dyer Bill, first introduced in 1918, but one of the earliest anti-lynching measures was the 1894 Blair Bill, which called upon the federal government “to investigate, ascertain, and report” the facts and circumstances concerning alleged acts of rape and racially-motivated mob violence from the previous decade. Noted African American writers and activists supported the Blair Bill, including Thomas Fortune, the influential editor of *The New York Age*, and Ida B. Wells, who championed the bill in the concluding chapter of her second anti-lynching pamphlet, *A Red Record* (1894).

Joining Fortune, Wells, and a host of other African American writers at the turn of twentieth century, Pauline Hopkins wrote her first published novel, *Contending Forces* (1899), expressly to contest “mob violence,” “lynch law,” “mob-law”—terms she repeatedly deployed in the novel’s short preface. Hopkins, moreover, defined fiction in her preface “as a preserver of manners and customs—religious, political, and social,” thus providing the novelist a means of intervening in political debates and cultural practices to argue for social justice. Yet Hopkins’s participation in anti-lynching activism is just one example among many of her engagement in the politics of race and justice. Indeed, all of her fiction—along with much of the journalism she published in *The Colored American*—takes up issues of social justice, broadly defined, or specifically articulated in cases like that of lynching, as Hazel Carby, Thomas Cassidy, William Moddelmog, Lois Brown, and other scholars have shown.

The Pauline Hopkins Society welcomes proposals for papers on any aspect of Hopkins and social justice for presentation at the American Literature Association’s 31th annual conference in San Diego, CA, in May 2020. In addition to proposals that examine Hopkins’ work in relation to social and political movements of her own day, we are especially interested in papers that reconsider Hopkins in light of movements for social justice today, such as the Equal Justice Initiative and its sponsorship of a new legacy museum in Montgomery, Alabama, commemorating America’s tragic history of slavery and lynching, which in part inspired the Justice for Lynching Act currently in Congress.

John Gruesser, Senior Research Scholar at Sam Houston State University and co-editor of the forthcoming Broadview edition of Hopkins's Hagar's Daughter, will serve as the panel's Respondent.

Instructions for proposal submission:

- Proposals should be no more than 300 words and accompanied by a brief CV.
- Proposals should be sent to John Barton, Program Committee Chair, at bartonjc@umkc.edu by January 20, 2020.
- The subject line of the email should be "Hopkins/ALA panel."
- AV needs should be included in the proposal.

Membership in the Pauline E. Hopkins Society is required of presenters.

The American Literature Association's 31st annual conference will meet at the Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel in San Diego, CA, May 21-25, 2020 (Thursday through Sunday of Memorial Day weekend). The deadline for proposals is January 30, 2020. For further information, please consult the ALA website at www.americanliteratureassociation.org or contact the conference director, Professor Leslie Petty, at pettyL@rhodes.edu or the Executive Director of the ALA, Professor Alfred Bendixen of Princeton University, at ab23@princeton.edu with specific questions.