

from  
**TARZAN**  
to  
**TONTO**

Stereotypes as  
Obstacles to  
Progress Toward a  
More Perfect Union

A SPECIAL PROGRAM EXAMINING  
THE Pervasiveness OF STEREOTYPES  
IN AMERICAN CULTURE



**a**s early Americans sought to define their identity in a new country, race became a major fixation. Tarzan and Jane, Tonto and the Lone Ranger, Uncle Ben and Aunt Jemima—these and other stereotypes about Native American, African, and African American people have long been part of the American scene. Join us for a lively evening as noted scholars, writers, and critics discuss the ongoing presence of such stereotypes and the barriers these stereotypes pose to the advancement of American culture. A reception in the museum's Potomac Atrium follows the symposium.

*From Tarzan to Tonto* is cosponsored by the National Museum of African Art, the National Museum of the American Indian, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

February 9, 2017 | 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

at the

National Museum of the American Indian  
Rasmuson Theater  
4th Street & Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C.

Live webcast at: <http://nmai.si.edu/multimedia/webcasts>



This symposium is generously  
supported by **accenture**

from top to bottom (details) | "Adventures of Tarzan," Ritchey Litho. Corp, 1921, photolithograph, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-pmssca-03434 | Ham and Sam the Minstrel Team windup toy, 1921, tin, oil paint, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, gift of the Collection of James M. Caselli and Jonathan Mark Scharer | *The Lone Ranger's Companion Tonto* (no. 14, Feb.-Apr. 1954), detail from Dell Comic series featuring Tonto, the Indian "sidekick" to television and popular culture figure, the Lone Ranger, private collection

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## **PROGRAM**

- 6:00 p.m. **Welcome** by Kevin Gover, Director, National Museum of the American Indian
- 6:05 p.m. **Opening Remarks**  
Jacquelyn D. Serwer, National Museum of African American History and Culture  
Johnnetta Betsch Cole, Director, National Museum of African Art  
Marty Rodgers, Managing Director – Metro DC, Accenture
- 6:20 p.m. **Introductory Remarks** by Tiya Miles, University of Michigan
- 6:30 p.m. **Deconstructing Stereotypes in African Literature**  
Gaurav Desai, University of Michigan
- 6:45 p.m. **Navajo Flasks, Hipster Headdresses, and “Magic in North America”:  
Native Representations in Fashion, Media, and Popular Culture**  
Adrienne Keene, Brown University
- 7:00 p.m. **Racial Narratives and Their Role in Inequality**  
Imani Perry, Princeton University
- 7:15 p.m. **First Flicker**  
Jesse Wentz, Director of Film Programs, TIFF Bell Lightbox
- 7:30 p.m. **Panel Discussion/Q&A**
- 8:00 p.m. **Symposium concludes; Reception in the Potomac Atrium**

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## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

**Johnnetta Betsch Cole** is the director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art. She has had a long and distinguished career as an educator and humanitarian, including making history when she became the first African American woman to serve as president of Spelman College. Later, she also served as president of Bennett College for Women. Cole received her undergraduate degree at Oberlin College and earned a master's degree and Ph.D. in anthropology with a focus on African studies from Northwestern University, eventually retiring from Emory University as a professor emerita and the Presidential Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, Women's Studies, and African American Studies. Cole has been the president of the board of the Association of Art Museum Directors, has been the recipient of numerous awards and honorary degrees, and serves on the boards of many charitable and corporate groups.

**Gaurav Desai** is professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan. Author of *Subject to Colonialism: African Self-fashioning and the Colonial Library* and editor of *Teaching the African Novel*, he also co-edited, with Supriya Nair, *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*, which has become a standard reference and classroom text. Among Desai's other publications are articles in edited collections and journals such as *PMLA*, *Genders*, *Representations*, *Boundary2*, *Interventions*, *Research in African Literatures*, *African Studies Review*, and *Cultural Critique*. Recipient of a residential fellowship at the National Humanities Center in 2001, Desai has also been awarded a Rockefeller Foundation award for a residency at the Bellagio Center in Italy; a visiting fellowship at the Center for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and the Humanities at Cambridge University; and an ACLS Burkhardt Fellowship for his research. In 2004, Desai was made a life member of Clare Hall, Cambridge University. His book on narratives of

Indian Ocean connections between Africa and India, *Commerce with the Universe: Africa, India and the Afrasian Imagination*, received the 2014 Rene Wellek Prize from the American Comparative Literature Association.

**Kevin Gover** (Pawnee) is the director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian and a former professor of law at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University (ASU). He served on the faculty of the university's Indian Legal Program and was co-executive director of ASU's American Indian Policy Institute. From 1997 to 2001 Gover was the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in the U.S. Department of the Interior, where he won praise for his efforts to rebuild long-neglected Indian schools and expand tribal and Bureau of Indian Affairs police forces throughout the country. His tenure as Assistant Secretary is perhaps best-known for his apology to Native American people for the historical conduct of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

**Adrienne Keene** (Cherokee Nation) is assistant professor of American Studies and Ethnic Studies at Brown University. A Native scholar, writer, blogger, and activist, she is passionate about reframing how the world sees contemporary Native cultures. She is the creator and author of *Native Appropriations*, a blog discussing cultural appropriation and stereotypes of Native peoples in fashion, film, music, and other forms of pop culture. Through her writing and activism, Keene questions and problematizes the ways indigenous peoples are represented, asking for celebrities, large corporations, and designers to consider the ways they incorporate "Native" elements into their work. She is interested in the way Native peoples are using social and new media to challenge misrepresentations and present counter-narratives that showcase true Native cultures and identities. Her blog work has received national and international attention as a voice on contemporary Indigenous issues. Keene holds a doctorate in Culture, Communities, and Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a B.A. from Stanford University.

**Tiya Miles** (Symposium Moderator) is Mary Henrietta Graham Distinguished University Professor; Elsa Barkley Brown Collegiate Professor; and professor of American Culture, History, Afroamerican and African Studies, Women's Studies, and Native American Studies at the University of Michigan. Her research and creative interests include African American and Native American interrelated and comparative histories (especially 19th century); Black, Native, and U.S. women's histories; and African American and Native American women's literature. She is the author of *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* and *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom*. She also co-edited, with Sharon P. Holland, the book *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country*. Her numerous fellowships and awards include being named a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellow, 2011. Her teaching includes such courses as Blacks, Indians, and the Making of America; Images of African American Women; Native American Women's History; and Narratives of Gender, Race, and Nation.

**Imani Perry** is the Hughes-Rogers Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University, where she is also affiliated with the Programs in Law and Public Affairs and Gender and Sexuality Studies. She is an interdisciplinary scholar who studies race and African American culture using the tools provided by various disciplines including law, literary and cultural studies, music, and the social sciences. She is the author of the books *More Beautiful and More Terrible: The Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States* and *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop*. She has published numerous articles in the areas of law, cultural studies, and African American studies. Perry earned a B.A. from Yale, a Ph.D. in American Civilization from Harvard, and a J.D. from Harvard Law School, as well as an LL.M. from Georgetown University Law Center. Prior to joining the Princeton faculty, she taught at Rutgers School of Law, and has been a visiting professor at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, and an adjunct professor at the Columbia University Institute for Research in African American Studies, and Georgetown University Law Center.

**Jacquelyn Days Serwer** has served as chief curator at the National Museum of African American History and Culture since 2006. She focuses primarily on building the museum's foundational collection and developing exhibition projects. Previously she served for six years as chief curator of the Corcoran Gallery of Art where she coordinated all museum activities. In addition to her own projects, Serwer supervised the museum's exhibition program and related publications, as well as the in-house and outreach activities of the Education Department. Prior to her tenure at the Corcoran, she served as chief curator and curator of contemporary art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Serwer, who taught art history at the École des Beaux Arts in Geneva and at Brooklyn College, received her M.A. from the University of Chicago and her Ph.D. from the City University of New York.

**Jesse Wentz** (Ojibwe), a leading film critic and programmer of Indigenous cinema, is the Director of Film Programs at TIFF Bell Lightbox, overseeing New Releases, series, and TIFF Cinematheque programming and scheduling. Some of his contributions to programming since the opening of TIFF Bell Lightbox in September 2010 include retrospectives on Roman Polanski, Paul Verhoeven, David Cronenberg, Oscar Micheaux, Studio Ghibli, and Michael Mann. His first major curatorial project was the landmark film program *First Peoples Cinema: 1500 Nations, One Tradition* and its accompanying gallery exhibition, *Home on Native Land*, in 2012. Prior to his appointment as Director of Film Programs, Wentz served as one of the Canadian features programmers for the Toronto International Film Festival, and also programmed for the imagineNATIVE Film and Media Festival. Well known as a film critic and broadcaster in Toronto and across Canada, he is a weekly contributor to CBC Radio's Metro Morning and has covered film and pop culture for 20 other local CBC Radio programs. Wentz is the former president of Native Earth Performing Arts, Canada's oldest Indigenous Performing Arts Company.