“Black & White / Red & Blue: A Visual Culture Conference”
Saint Louis University
Department of American Studies
October 10-11, 2014.
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Within contemporary American life, representations of division are ubiquitous. Racial boundaries are apparent in our films, television shows, and album covers. Gender differences are highlighted across magazine covers, websites, and music videos. Class divisions are obvious in the brands of our clothing, our cars, and our foods. Visual cultures such these can provide a powerful forum for exploring the resistance, oppression, agency, and creative expression inherent in these divisions, serving as a commentary on the state of the nation and the diverse cultures that constitute the American experience. In today’s hyper-mediated society, visual culture provides the methods of exploring and expressing notions of identity. In this national election year, we are reminded not just of visual culture’s enduring potency in addressing the politics of race, class, and gender in the context of existing “Red State,” and “Blue State,” ideologies, but also the ways wherein artists from numerous walks of life turn to visual culture as a means of articulating their own powerful commentaries that are striking in their form and intent, courageous in their willingness to present views that challenge dominant narratives, and above all, inspiring in their ability to transcend or bridge lines of socio-culture division.

The Department of American Studies at Saint Louis University invites applicants whose research and scholarly interests examine the topic of division within America and its representations in visual culture. We would like to invite papers that address a variety of topics and media pertaining to visual culture within American life.

We welcome papers that address such themes as:

- The depiction of race, class, gender, and American identity/identities in visual media
- The politics of representation through visual means
- The intersection of cultural and national identity in visual culture
- Visual culture as a platform for social and cultural commentary
- Visual culture across diverse media
- The politicization of the visual within the context of local and global American policy
- Historicized depictions of visual culture in relation to America
- Visual culture as a facet of producing and asserting identity
- The relationships of audiences and receivers to visual culture

Interested contributors are asked to submit a 300-450 word abstract of their paper along with a CV to slu.visual@gmail.com. The closing date for submissions is May 30, 2014.

The keynote speaker of this year’s conference will be Dr. Kevin Gaines, the Robert Hayden Collegiate Professor of History and Afroamerican and African Studies at the University of Michigan. Professor Gaines served as president of the American Studies Association in 2009-2010. He is the author of *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* named a Choice Outstanding Academic Book by the American Library Association;
Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics and Culture During the Twentieth Century, which was awarded the 1997 John Hope Franklin Book Prize of the ASA; and co-editor with Janice Radway, Barry Shank, and Penny Von Eschen, of American Studies: an Anthology. His forthcoming book, The African American Journey: a Global History, will be published by Oxford University Press.