

TIRREA S. BILLINGS

Artist. Educator. Storyteller.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

EDUCATION

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI

M.A., Communication, April 2020

Master's Thesis: [Counter Stories in Counterpublics: Exploring Documentary as a Form of Activist Media to Counter Reinforced Stereotypes about the Criminalization of Black Men](#)

Thesis Committee: Dr. Anna Popkova (Chair), Dr. Jennifer Richardson, & Professor Kelly Wittenberg

B.A., Film, Video, Media Studies, December 2016

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Part-Time Adjunct Lecturer

Georgetown University, Prisons and Justice Initiative

JUPS 2021-1: Storytelling for Social Change (Spring 2024)

Part-Time Instructor (Online)

Western Michigan University, School of Communication

COM 3550: Digital Video Production: Nonfiction (Spring 2021)

COM 4570: Advanced Digital Video Production (Spring 2021)

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Western Michigan University, School of Communication

COM 1000: Communication and Community Engagement (Fall 2018; Spring 2019)

COM 2400: Introduction to Media and Telecommunication (Fall 2019)

COM 2410: Film Communication (Fall 2019)

COM 4300: Persuasion and Social Influence (Spring 2020)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Billings, T., Harris, W., Haynes, G., Hopkinson, N., Williams, S. (2023, November).

“Stereotypes and Stigma: Liberating Black Women's Images, Demanding Authenticity and Reflecting Humanity.” Panel. *National Communication Association Conference*, National Harbor, MD.

Billings, T. (2022, October). Seeing Through The Bars: How Digital Media Gives Voice, Agency, and Power Back to People Who Are Incarcerated. Workshop Presentation. *Narrative Power Summit*, Reframe & RadComms, Long Beach, CA.

Billings, T. (2021, May). “Counter Stories in Counterpublics: Exploring Documentary as a Form of Activist Media to Counter Reinforced Stereotypes about the Criminalization of Black Bodies.” Master’s Thesis. *Virtual Social Justice Research Symposium*, Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership.

Billings, T. (2020, February). “Counter Stories in Counterpublics: Exploring Documentary as a Form of Activist Media to Counter Reinforced Stereotypes about the Criminalization of Black Bodies.” Thesis Proposal. *Michigan Undergraduate and Graduate (MUG) Communication Conference*, Central Michigan University.

Billings, T., Badiei, B., (2019, April). “Advancing Cross-cultural Understanding by Exposing Biases through Video.” Great Ideas for Teaching (GIFT). *Central States Communication Association Conference*, Omaha, NE.

Billings, T. (2018, October). “Breaking Down the Negative Images of Black Women in Reality Television.” Conference Paper. *Michigan Undergraduate and Graduate (MUG) Communication Conference*, Central Michigan University.

PUBLICATIONS

Conrad-Pérez, D., Coskuntuncel, A., Billings, T. (2025). *THE FIRST STEP: Coalition Building, Social Change, and Pushing for Progress After the Credits Roll*. Research Report. The Center for Media and Social Impact.

Billings, T. (2023, Dec.). Sustainable Farming of the Future. (Photo Series). *Camas Magazine*.

Billings, T. (2022, Sept. 13). When It Comes To Race And Black History, Educators Can’t Rely on Textbooks. *THE PUBLIC Magazine*. <https://medium.com/the-public-magazine>

Billings, T. (on behalf of Color Of Change 2022, Jul. 8). With Abortion Protections Eliminated, It’s Up To Elected Prosecutors To Ensure Pregnancy Outcomes Aren’t Criminalized. *Blavity*. <https://blavity.com/>

Billings, T. (on behalf of Color Of Change 2022, Feb. 17). It's Time Fashion Leaders Put Equity First With The New #ChangeFashion Inclusion Rider. *Blavity*. <https://blavity.com/>

Billings, T. (on behalf of Color Of Change 2021, Nov. 17). It's Not A Debate: TV And Film Content Clearly Impacts Real World Behavior. *Blavity*. <https://blavity.com/>

Billings, T. (on behalf of Color Of Change 2021, Oct. 28). Countless Corporations Looked Inward During The BLM Uprisings. The Country Music Association Didn't Even Pretend To Address Its Racism Problem. *Blavity*. <https://blavity.com/>

CONFERENCE SUBMISSIONS

Billings, T., Badiei, B., (2020, April). "Anti-perfection: How Female Influencers of Color Construct Postfeminist Personas on Instagram." *Central States Communication Association Conference*, Chicago, IL. Accepted.

Billings, T., Badiei, B., (2020, April). "Watch-Think-Reflect: How Documentary Film Can Enhance Historical Thinking." Great Ideas for Teaching (GIFT). *Central States Communication Association Conference*, Chicago, IL. Accepted.

RESEARCH POSITIONS

2025	Research Assistant, Narrative Initiative
2023	Research Associate, Documentary Power Research Institute at the Center for Media and Social Impact
2023	AI Policy Clinic Research Group Participant, Center for AI and Digital Policy

HONORS AND AWARDS

2021	Grant Winner , Kalamazoo Film Society. Kalamazoo, MI. Project: <i>baamaapii</i> . Awarded: \$1,000
2019	Best of Show, Say Something! Film Fest , Public Media Network. Kalamazoo, MI. Documentary: Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership
2019	Best Documentary, Say Something! Film Fest , Public Media Network. Kalamazoo, MI. Documentary: Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership
2019	Travel Grant , Western Michigan University Graduate Student Association Awarded: \$500

- 2019 **Travel Grant, National Communication Association Student Caucus,**
Baltimore, MD. Awarded: \$150
- 2016 **Creative Studies & Research Award,** WMU College of Arts & Sciences
For: Renewal from Fall 2015's Award. Awarded: \$500
- 2016 **Honorable Mention (out of 1,538 entries),** 2016 Broadcast Education
Association (BEA) Festival of Media Arts
- 2016 **Creative Studies & Research Award,** WMU College of Arts & Sciences
For: Documentary production for *The Spirit Moves with Us*. Awarded: \$500
- 2015 **Creative Studies & Research Award,** WMU College of Arts & Sciences
For: Documentary production for *Painting Dreams: The Story of Johnson Simon*
Awarded: \$500

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Communications Network

International Association for Media and Communication Research

National Communication Association

International Documentary Association

Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity

SERVICE

Service to Western Michigan University

2019 - 2020 Vice President, Graduate Communication Organization

Service to the Community

2026 Adult Literacy Tutor, LA Central Library

2023 Reading Tutor, Reading Partners DC

2023 Readers' Circle Summer Editing Workshop (Editor), USC Dornsife Prison
Education Project (PEP)

2022 Vice President, Passionate Hands Foundation

- 2022 Visual Arts Judge, Scholastic Art & Writing Awards
- 2021 National Conference on Higher Education in Prison (NCHEP) Proposal
Submission Reviewer, Alliance for Higher Education in Prison
- 2020 Media & Messaging Committee Member, Alliance for Higher Education in Prison
- 2017 - 2020 Marketing Coordinator, Society for History and Racial Equity
- 2017 - 2019 Videography Instructor, Merze Tate Explorers Youth Group

INVITED LECTURES

- 2024, September. Teaching Artist Series. (Presenter). Docs In Progress. Silver Spring, MD.
- 2023, June. Prison Scholars Program. (Guest Lecturer). Georgetown University, Prisons and Justice Initiative. Washington, D.C.
- 2021, May. Virtual Social Justice Research Symposium. (Presenter). Kalamazoo College Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership. Kalamazoo, MI
- 2020, September. Webinar: “Using Film To Drive Social Change.” (Speaker). National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Alpena, MI
- 2020, June. Digital Juneteenth Celebration. (Featured Filmmaker). Power To The People 989. Saginaw, MI
- 2019, August. Unreeled: Film at the KIA: The Black Artists Series. (Featured Filmmaker). Film Screening & Panel Discussion. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts. Kalamazoo, MI
- 2019, July. Fresh Start | A Branding & Business Workshop. (Panelist). FRSH Marketing, Branding & Design LLC. Saginaw, MI
- 2019, April. “The Hate U Give: The Book vs The Movie.” (Speaker). Reading Together Series, Kalamazoo Public Library. Kalamazoo, MI
- 2019, February. “What’s Your Story?” (Speaker). Food For The Soul Lecture Series. Intercultural Center at Kalamazoo College. Kalamazoo, MI

2018, March. “College, Entrepreneurship, and Chasing Your Dreams.” (Speaker). WIRE Youth Development Program - The Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations at Western Michigan University. Kalamazoo, MI

CERTIFICATIONS

2020 International Instructor, Inside Out Prison Exchange Program

RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- **Public Relations Manager**, California Black Power Network (Sept. 2025 - Present)
 - Lead press relations and media outreach efforts, cultivating relationships with reporters and outlets, securing earned media coverage, and managing the coalition’s public narrative across traditional and digital media channels.
 - Co-lead and facilitate the Communications Circle, providing strategic guidance and capacity-building training to network partners across 40+ grassroots organizations spanning 13 counties.
 - Spearhead culture-shift initiatives that position Black art and storytelling as tools for transformation, building alignment across coalition partners.
- **Senior Communications Manager**, United Philanthropy Forum (Nov. 2022 - Nov. 2024)
 - Managed Forum’s communications infrastructure, establishing workflows and coordination systems between leadership and staff that strengthened organizational alignment.
 - Led comprehensive strategic communications planning and execution for the Forum’s programming, managing promotion and engagement across both virtual and in-person convenings.
 - Managed all social media channels, establishing editorial standards and content standards for the website, social platforms (Facebook, X, LinkedIn), and the biweekly newsletter.
- **Communications Manager**, Color Of Change (Aug. 2021 - Oct. 2022)
 - Managed earned media for high-profile culture and entertainment campaigns, coordinating press strategy and managing media relationships across multiple initiatives in the Hollywood, music, and fashion industries.
 - Led narrative development for the #ChangeIndustries initiative, creating talking points and media briefing materials that equipped spokespeople to effectively communicate the initiative’s goals in press interviews, industry convenings, and partnership negotiations.
 - Wrote and placed op-eds in national outlets, focusing on issues of industry diversification and cultural representation.
- **Communications Manager**, Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership at Kalamazoo College (Aug. 2019 - Sept. 2020)

- Directed comprehensive digital communications strategy for the Center, serving as the lead for organizational messaging and narrative frameworks that connected the Center's work with the broader campus and community.
- Served as the managing editor for the Praxis Center, a publication led by the Center that discussed social justice issues and provided tools and resources that could be implemented in the classroom.
- Led editorial and content strategy for the Center's digital platforms, including the website, newsletter, and Instagram channel.
- **Communications Intern**, W.K. Kellogg Foundation (Jun. 2018 - May 2019)
 - Conducted strategic media monitoring and analysis, synthesizing coverage trends about the Foundation and insights to inform the Foundation's monthly media reports and communications strategy.
 - Drafted the weekly board report, summarizing organizational updates and strategic communications insights to inform executive decision-making and governance priorities.
 - Developed concepts for video content that advanced the Foundation's storytelling objectives and amplified its philanthropic mission across their geographic focus areas: Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico and New Orleans, Chiapas and the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico and in Central and South Haiti.
- **Creative Director and Co-Founder**, Reflct Media (Jan. 2018 - Dec. 2021)
 - Directed all creative operations and strategic vision, leading end-to-end production processes for documentary-style video and photography projects that centered social justice narratives.
 - Managed production workflows, overseeing concept development, pre-production planning, on-site production, and post-production editing to ensure alignment with client objectives.
 - Established the company's brand and creative philosophy, cultivating client relationships with social justice organizations, activists, educators, and policymakers, and translating their missions into compelling visual narratives.

FELLOWSHIPS

- **Park History Program Media Fellow**, African American Civil Rights Network, National Park Service (Jun. 2023 - Aug. 2024)
- **Communications Fellow**, National Association of City Transportation Officials (Aug. - Dec. 2022)
- **Press Fellow**, American Bridge 21st Century (Feb. - Jun. 2022)
- **Communications & Development Fellow**, Aubin Pictures (Aug. 2021 - Aug. 2022)

COMMUNICATIONS + MEDIA CONSULTING CLIENTS

- **DC Fair Budget Coalition**
- **Friends Committee on National Legislation**
- **Black Public Defenders Association**
- **Thomas Whitener Campaign for Kalamazoo County Treasurer**
- **Rootead**
- **Council of Michigan Foundations**
- **The Democracy Collaborative**
- **Food Lab Detroit**
- **The Mahogany Project**
- **Black Women's Blueprint**
- **United States Department of Arts & Culture**