

Being Black in Classics: Some Experiences and Perspectives

This panel will consist of four presentations, each of them 15-20 minutes, with the organizer serving only to state the basic idea, introduce each speaker, and moderate the discussion. The goal is to bring front and center a discussion about some of the experiences of Classicists who happen to be Black. Each speaker represents a different and important segment of the CAMWS population: secondary school teacher, untenured professor, tenured professor, professor and administrator. This range represents one of the great strengths of CAMWS: the fact that we include and celebrate so many members of our profession at all levels, from high school students right through to senior faculty and administrators. Each speaker necessarily has a different story of her or his life and experiences in Classics and has expressed a willingness to share that story in this panel. There are no preconceptions about these stories being similar or different or illustrative of larger trends. We cannot hear all the voices, but we have to start somewhere, and that is with these four speakers. This panel, then, will be unlike more traditional panels that involve a more impersonal presentation of research – though research might figure prominently in each personal story. Rather, the focus will be on what brought each speaker to Classics and what experiences within the field, if any, were driven or affected by the fact that each speaker is Black. Ideally, we'd hear about the experiences of other underrepresented or even threatened groups but, again, we have to start somewhere, and this is a moment in the US to focus on Black experiences. Our desire is that CAMWS, and Classics more broadly, be more welcoming, diverse, and inclusive. While we don't expect to have all the answers about how to achieve that, or solutions to the obstacles we face, we do believe that listening to these voices might be a place to start a discussion.