

# Summer Faculty Research Fellowship Program Application for Summer 2017

## APPLICANT IDENTIFICATION SECTION

Name:	<b>Thomas</b> <small>(Last Name, First Name, Middle)</small>	Email Address:	<b>Jennifer.thomas@howard.edu</b> <small>(Example: Username@Howard.edu)</small>			
School/College:	<b>Communications</b> <small>(Enter Name of School/College)</small>	Department:	<b>Media, Journalism and Film</b> <small>(Enter Name of Department)</small>			
Academic Rank:	<b>Assistant Professor</b> <small>(Academic Rank and/or Title)</small>	Academic Status:	<b>Tenure Track</b> <small>(Enter Tenured, Tenure Track, Temporary)</small>			
Appointment Date:	<b>7/2013</b> <small>(Initial Appointment Date)</small>	Anticipated Tenure Year:	<b>2017-2018</b> <b>YEAR</b>	(If you are currently not tenured, please provide the academic year you will come up for tenure.)		
Appointment Type:	<b>9 Months</b> <small>(Enter 9 or 12 Months)</small>	Will you be employed as a Howard University faculty member for the 2017 - 2018 academic year?				<b>X</b>
Highest Degree:	<b>Master of Arts</b> <small>(Please indicate the highest degree attained)</small>			Other Degree/Certificates:	<b>Bachelor of Arts</b> <small>(Please provide any additional degrees/certificates attained)</small>	

## PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION SECTION

**Program Applying for** (mark with an X and select only one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Summer Faculty Research Fellowship (\$10,000)</b>  For relatively new assistant professors. Preference to faculty within their first 3 years of appointment and who have not received summer salary support as part of a start-up package.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Advanced Summer Faculty Research Fellowship (\$15,000)</b>  For assistant professors preparing promotion/tenure dossier for Fall 2017 or Fall 2018. <b>Faculty is eligible only once.</b>

**Does the research require review/approval by university policy and/or federal law?**  
(If Yes, complete the appropriate section below.)

YES	NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Please indicate for ALL subjects and materials your proposal covers.**

	<b>Human Subjects</b>  Does this project involve the use of human subjects? If yes, the project MUST be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) BEFORE funding can be released.
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(Mark with X)	IRB PROTOCOL NUMBER	DATE APPROVED	
	<b>Animal Subjects</b>		
	Does this project involve the use of animal subjects? If yes, the project MUST be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) BEFORE funding can be released.		
(Mark with X)	IACUC PROTOCOL NUMBER	DATE APPROVED	
	<b>Hazardous Materials</b>		
	Does this project involve the use of any Radioactive or Biologically or Chemically hazardous material (e.g., recombinant DNA, pathogenic organisms, chemical carcinogens)? If yes, the project MUST be approved by the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) BEFORE funding can be released.		
(Mark with X)	IBC PROTOCOL NUMBER	DATE APPROVED	
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE USE ONLY</b>			
ADMINISTRATIVE CERTIFICATION	DATE	DECISION	CONTROL#

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Few realize that, historically, the women voted upon to serve as “Queens” of Howard University, a premier Historically Black College and University (HBCU), have often been reflections of various social, political and cultural issues of the time. This parade of pulchritude, intellect, and charm could also be counted on to reflect the climate of the University and the country on matters that pertained to cultural politics, institutional identity and mission, and evolving definitions and standards of beauty. This became most apparent during the turbulent period of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements of the 1960s and 1970s. I seek the honor of participating in the Advanced Summer Faculty Research Fellowship so that I may produce a documentary on a little-known, yet influential, aspect of Howard University history. This scholarship will examine the embedded traditions, historical significance and controversies of the role of “Miss Howard University” – highlighting the Civil Rights Movement through the mid-1970s Black Power Movement. “Pageantry and Politics: Miss Howard University from Civil Rights to Black Power,” will provide a direct correlation between the historic movements at Howard during this period, and the women who assumed the role of Miss Howard University.

My research was inspired after participating in the 2014 Moorland-Spangarn Research Center (MSRC) Summer Faculty Scholars program. That initial research was entitled, “Gravity and Grace of the Gridiron Queen: The History of Miss Howard University.” During the summer of 2014, I used the extensive MSRC archives to conduct substantial textual analyses and data

collection. Also included in my research is ethnographic data I obtained by studying and contacting former queens and recording their personal recollections through a survey I authored.

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This research chronicled the political, cultural atmosphere of the university from the inception of the title in 1929 through the early 1990s.

Despite the glory, there were and remain questions regarding the necessity of what some consider an unavailing aspect of college life. With Howard being regarded as the exemplar of academic research and representation, should it even hold such pageantry? Other questions are often posed, “What is the true definition of “Black beauty?” “Is such a tradition outdated and sexist?” My study explores these questions and discusses how the position of Miss Howard not only contributed to the cultural construct of the institution, but also how it evolved into an important aspect and opportunity for the queens who subsequently became Howard University student ambassadors.

My initial desire to delve into this topic was based on personal experience when I was crowned the 1987-1988 Miss Howard. During Homecoming Week, I met former queens, (then referred to as Gridiron Queens) in their 70s and 80s, who shared vivid memories of their experiences. They also challenged me to stay the course and to make them proud. What began as a genuine interest in the history of the coveted role, transformed into impactful exploration that is congruent with the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center and the University’s dedication to “Preserve the legacy of the Black Experience.” As stories of former queens unfolded, and as I

## **Howard University**

### Summer Faculty Research Fellowship for Summer 2017

#### **Proposal Narrative**

Narrative Page 2 of 5

began to learn more of the shifting political atmosphere of the student body at Howard, my focus shifted to the Civil Rights and Black Power eras.

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### Proposal Narrative

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In 1966, Robin Gregory became the first Miss Howard to sport an Afro hairstyle. Her selection signaled a cultural and political shift at the university. It was during her coronation that the political phrase, "Black Power," was first chanted at the University, and came just months after Howard graduate and activist Stokely Carmichael first chanted the slogan. Two years later, Helen McCrary (Slahuddin) became the second queen to don an Afro. She won the title under the "Black is Beautiful" theme. Now a practicing attorney, she teaches Black and Latino youth their history and culture, and sponsors an annual trip to Africa. Slahuddin discussed her experience in my survey:

In the midst of change we protested the university's lack of relationship with the Black community. We took over the administration building and shut the university down. After I was elected I served on the "Toward a Black University" committee. We were radical and enthusiastic about change... We campaigned on Black Power... I remember participating in protests against South Africa's Apartheid; Wearing my crown and sash! We as a student body also staged sit-ins and took over the "A" (administration) Bldg. We were demanding that African American Studies be a requirement for all freshman students. We believed that all HBCU's must first and foremost be an advocate for learning our history. Of course we won! I was not one of the students who served on courts (fraternity or school queens). I was approached to run because we were trying to change the concepts of beauty and thought about black women. Natural hair, independent thinking, Africa!

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Summer Faculty Research Fellowship for Summer 2011

**Proposal Narrative**

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Summer Faculty Research Fellowship for Summer 2017

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**Proposal Narrative**

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That research uncovered the underlining congruency of pageantry and politics for Miss Howard, which I studied further during my 2016 Summer Junior Faculty Writing and Creative Works Summer Academy experience. The aim of that program was to provide faculty mentors who would assist junior faculty scholars in completing a writing or creative works project on a specific area of research. I was able to achieve my goal, a journal article, which is currently under review. My mentor for the project was Dr. Sandra Shannon, Professor of African American Literature in the Department of English.

I am also excited about the possibility of participating in the Advanced Summer Faculty Research Fellowship so that I may expand this study into a documentary feature, in the broadcast journalism medium for which I served as an industry executive and insider for more than twenty years. As a veteran award-winning journalist, I have interviewed countless subjects for accuracy, truth and compelling storytelling, on topics ranging from the September 11<sup>th</sup> Terrorist Attacks, to Hurricane Katrina, to unsung heroes of the Civil Rights Movement. This documentary will allow me to utilize reporting and producing techniques that bring to conceptualization the oral histories, photographs and documents to which I have devoted much research. This type of project is extremely time-consuming, thus this Fellowship will provide the opportunity for me to devote the time necessary to effectively interview, record, document, and perform post-production for the project. The ultimate result will be an impactful qualitative study for the humanities, history and Social Sciences, which will appeal to both scholarly and public interest

audiences. This documentary, and its supporting research, will also serve as a fundamental component of my tenure dossier, in that it will be considered as “Major

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Creative Work.” The Department of Media, Journalism and Film Appointment, Promotion and Tenure Criteria Guidelines for Creative Achievement, describes this Scholarship/Creative Activity:

Creative and/or professional activities must advance or extend knowledge frontiers, be grounded in sound practices within the discipline or demonstrate innovative ideas or techniques that contribute to greater public/target audience knowledge, understanding and use of information. Professionally oriented work in roles such as reporter, photojournalist, editor, broadcast journalist, producer, director or scriptwriter must demonstrate in-depth research, analysis, innovation and/or impact, regardless of length or medium. Evidence of contribution to the field must be documented by peer review and/or by significant recognition, acceptance and success as defined by professional or academic constituents.... (Howard University Department of Media, Journalism and Film Appointment, Promotion and Tenure Criteria Guidelines for Creative Achievement)

I intend to ultimately have the project produced for nationwide distribution, and to have it formally become part of Howard University’s Moorland-Spingarn renowned collection. This research is more than noble and nostalgic. It will provide unheralded accounts of a select few

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### Summer Faculty Research Fellowship for Summer 2011

#### **Proposal Narrative**

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Howard University women, and enroot their stories into the rich historical and cultural archives of Howard University and Black life and culture.

## **Howard University**

Summer Faculty Research Fellowship for Summer 2017

### **Proposal Narrative**

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## Howard University

### Summer Faculty Research Fellowship for Summer 2017

#### References

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N/A

# Howard University

## Summer Faculty Research Fellowship for Summer 2017

### Biographical Sketch

Biographical Sketch Page: 1 of 4

**Please refer to the application instructions in order to complete sections A, B, C, and D of the Biographical Sketch.**

**DO NOT EXCEED FOUR PAGES.**

APPLICANT NAME

**Jennifer C. Thomas**

TITLE

**Assistant Professor**

EDUCATION/TRAINING *(Begin with baccalaureate education, include postdoctoral training and residency training if applicable.)*

INSTITUTION AND LOCATION

DEGREE

MM/YY

FIELD OF STUDY

**Howard University**

**B.A.**

**05/88**

**Broadcast Journalism**

**Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism**

**M.A.**

**05/11**

**Journalism – Arts & Culture**

### A. Personal Statement

I am well-suited to produce the proposed documentary project, “Pageantry and Politics: Miss Howard University from Civil Rights through Black Power,” for the Advanced Summer Faculty Research Fellowship, based on personal and professional experience. My interest in writing about the history of women who served in the coveted and sometimes criticized role of Miss Howard University is based on my personal experience as a former queen. In November 1987, I became one of the women to continue the tradition which began in 1929. Reaching out to former queens has been an exciting aspect of my ethnographic research, in that the women who have assumed this role during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, have unconsciously become a part of Howard’s history.

As a journalist, I am aptly able to apply the professional attributes of the industry to the Academy. Journalists, by trade, are researchers. It is the first fundamental step in storytelling. To produce a documentary, my empirical research will include traveling to the locations where the previous queens reside, and conducting video interviews, based on the research I have conducted. I will then begin the detailed process of post-production, which includes reviewing, writing, and editing the project. This research will also adhere to strict



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Biographical Sketch Page 2 of 4

visual and audio standards for public (or general) broadcasting. Ultimately, this documentary will continue the rich tradition provided by the archival material in Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, which is described as,

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“One of the world’s premiere centers for the study of the Black experience. It has made possible new research and enabled scholars to probe more deeply into the complexities of Black history and culture.” “Pageantry and Politics: Miss Howard University from Civil Rights through Black Power” will hopefully be one of the latest and most cherished studies added to this noble collection.

### **B. Positions and Honors**

#### **Positions and Employment**

##### **Academic Employment**

Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA Division of Communication Arts	Adjunct Professor	2011- 2013
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Howard University, Washington, DC Department of Media, Journalism and Film	Assistant Professor	2013- Present
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##### ***Honors***

- President, Howard University Communications Alumni Association
- Keynote Speaker, Alpha Chapter, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., 2014 Membership Intake Luncheon, Washington, DC
- Alpha Kappa Alpha International Award for Communications Excellence | North Atlantic Region, Xi Omega Chapter, Media/P.R. Liaison/Chair for 2015 Norma E. Boyd 5K Race for Education
- Board of Directors, Gandhi Brigade Youth Media
- Fellow: IRTS Faculty Seminar, Media Insiders 2016: Today's Opportunities & Tomorrow's Challenges, Las Vegas
- Lead Mentor, Multi-Media, 2016 National Association of Black Journalists/National Association of Hispanic Journalists National Convention, Washington, DC
- Luncheon Speaker, 2016 Junior Faculty Writing and Creative Works Summer Academy, Howard University
- 2016 Keynote Speaker, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Alpha Chapter Rush

##### ***Funded Grants***

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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- 2015-16 Challenge Fund Winners - Online News Association, Challenge Fund for Innovation in Journalism Education “HU Insight” group submission (\$35,000)
- NBCUniversal Sponsorship: NewsVision newscast on WHUT TV (co-author) (\$4,845.00) 2016

### **Other Experience and Professional Memberships**

#### **Professional Experience**

Producer, Associate Producer  
WAAY TV

Huntsville, AL 1988-1989

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Producer, Reporter  
WHNT TV

Huntsville, AL 1989-1991

**Recognition:** Selected as producer for newly-created 5pm newscast. Produced two newscasts daily—5pm and 10pm.

Producer

WTVD TV/ABC

Durham, NC

1991-1995

**Recognition:** National Association of Black Journalists second place award; producer, three-part African American History series featured at Duke Center for Documentary Studies; producer, 30-minute Martin Luther King, Jr. station special.

Supervising/Regional Producer

NBC News, NBC News Channel

Charlotte, NC

1995 - 1999

**Recognition:** Spearheaded live on-location specials including: Democratic National Convention; Presidential Inauguration; 1996 Summer Olympic Games; Oklahoma City Bombing anniversary

Producer

Cable News Network (CNN)

Atlanta, GA

1999 - 2003

**Recognition:** National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, recognition September 11th, 2001 Coverage

Executive Producer

CNN Headline News

Atlanta, GA

2003- 2008

**Recognition:** George Foster Peabody Award, 2005

Alfred I. DuPont Columbia University Award, Tsunami Disaster in South Asia, 2005

President, Founder

MediaReady Consulting, LLC

Atlanta, GA

2008 - 2013

#### ***Notable Events/Clients:***

- Communications Consultant, Cascade United Methodist Church, Atlanta, GA. Created, maintained media marketing, video strategy, internal publications, web design management, and overall communications strategy for 5,000 member historic church.
- Political Campaign Communications Director, Fulton Co. Superior Court Judicial candidate Kimberly Esmond Adams, July - December 2008
- Event Coordinator, BET’s “The Game” – *Grand Opening, Grand Closing* episode- Season Five September 2012
- Media Manager, U.S Labor Secretary Hilda Solis Job Training Symposium, Atlanta, GA October 2011

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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Freelance Producer, Cable News Network (CNN) Washington, DC/Atlanta, GA 2011 – Present

**Other Honors:** Performer, 2003 Atlanta Jazz Festival

### **Professional Memberships**

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)

Columbia University Alumni Association

National Association of Black Journalists

Society of Professional Journalists

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### **C. Selected Peer-reviewed Publications**

#### **Most relevant to the current application**

Conference Paper: 2016 Junior Faculty Writing and Creative Summer Academy - Glenview Mansion, Rockville, MD | "Pageantry & Politics: Miss Howard University from Civil Rights through the Black Power Movement" | Tuesday, August 9, 2016 (sole author)

#### **Other Published Journals| Creative Works**

Journal Article - Reassessing Journalistic Pedagogy: Howard University's Broadcast Coverage during the 2014 Midterm Election, Sage Publications | Asia Pacific Media Educator | December 2015 (sole author)

Major Creative Work - Executive Producer NewsVision Newscast on WHUT (May 2016, Dec 2016)

Major Creative Work- Producer WHUT TV Election 2016: Road to the Conventions (Feb 2016), Democratic Debate (Feb 2016)

#### **Additional recent publications of importance to the field (in chronological order)**

**Under Review:** Pageantry & Politics: Miss Howard University from Civil Rights to Black Power | The Journal of Negro Education | Submitted October 2016 (sole author) The goal of this research is to have it documented in a peer-reviewed journal, and introduce the topic as an exploration of the Black Experience at Howard University.

**Fellow:** 2016 Howard University Junior Faculty Writing & Creative Works Summer Academy | Pageantry & Politics: Miss Howard University from Civil Rights to Black Power

Selected among Howard University faculty applicants to take part in the debut program which assists junior faculty in completing creative works projects and/or scholarly publications which include manuscripts for journal articles, book chapters and monographs in a university press or other academic presses. Summer 2016

**Fellow:** 2014 Moorland-Spangarn Research Center (MSRC) Summer Faculty Scholars program Summer 2014 | "Gravity and Grace of the Gridiron Queen: The History of Miss Howard University"

Conducted research on the history and political impact of Howard University "queens" from inception with focus on the decade of the 1960s-1970s, when student activism shifted from Civil Rights to Black

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

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Power. This research enabled me to discover and focus on the time frame for this current study, and have research as part of the historic MSRC collection with fellow Summer Scholars.

### **D. Research Support**

#### **Ongoing Research Support**

N/A

#### **Completed Research Support**

N/A

# Howard University

## Summer Faculty Research Fellowship for Summer 2017

### Department Chair's Endorsement

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## Howard University

### Summer Faculty Research Fellowship for Summer 2012

#### Dean's Endorsement

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Department Chair Name	Date	Decision	Name of School/College and Department Name

Applicant Name:	
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### Dean's Endorsement

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Name of Dean	Date	Decision	Name of School/College