

## **When the Speculative Gets Real: Creating Carnavalesque Spaces in Afrofuturist Literature to Combat Social Injustice**

Both Afrofuturism and the carnivalesque are on the same plane of thought that challenges dominance and advocates for the mental, physical, and emotional freedom of society. While the carnivalesque creates the space for imaginative freedom, Afrofuturism uses that space to ruminate on the possibilities of Black cultural futures and representations. Therefore, the combination of both frameworks presents a unique pedagogical tool to initiate social justice conversations through the examination of underlying metaphors that challenge the status quo. Given this context, it is essential to analyze the ways in which Afrofuturist authors use the carnivalesque to emblematically critique society and initiate conversations about social justice.

In this presentation, I use *The Chaos* by Nalo Hopkinson and *A Blade So Black* by L.L. McKinney to elucidate how Afrofuturism offers a way for Black authors to interrupt societal hierarchies, to experience a reprieve from misrepresentation and stereotypes, and to lay the groundwork for visions of renewal and change. I begin with an analysis of the connections between Afrofuturism and the carnivalesque, showcasing both as prime locations to initiate conversations about oppression, equity and justice. I will then illustrate these connections by examining the young adult Afrofuturistic texts, highlighting how larger social injustices experienced by Black people are symbolically addressed in these stories while also granting Black protagonists the agency to make change. Finally, I address the implications of using Afrofuturism as an experiential portal to assist in the analysis of current and historical social justice issues that have and are affecting Black people.