

**The Initiative on Race and Resilience & The
Department of Anthropology Present:**
**"Medical Gaslighting" in ALS Care: Black Patients'
Quest to be Heard, Seen, and Understood**

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Via Zoom



Dr. Carter's talk speaks to larger structural concerns about racism in clinical spaces in the United States. During her ethnographic research, she repeatedly observed Black people pursuing biomedical answers for their debilitating and disabling symptoms from ALS (also known as "Lou Gehrig's Disease") but often being turned away for care or treatment because of a doctor's bias, classism, and/or racism. This reoccurring theme among Black people with ALS and their caregivers revealed that many Black patients had an earnest desire to be seen and cared for by the medical system, despite their experiences of marginalization in these clinical spaces. *Racialized medical gaslighting*, not their purported distrust, kept many Black patients from a diagnosis, timely clinical interventions, and treatments.

This talk reveals the ways that *racialized medical gaslighting* functions structurally within medical systems and individually through implicit biases held by healthcare workers; for example, assuming a patient's health conditions are a result of their race and not their biology. Despite a Black patient's learned distrust of the medical system and often multiple failed attempts to receive care or answers, Dr. Carter witnessed Black patients continue to fight to be heard by the medical establishment. Yet, access to fair and equitable healthcare should not require a *fight*. She argues that *racialized medical gaslighting* is a key factor in why many Black patients with ALS do not get the medical care they need. She contends that a necessary shift in our biomedical lexicon could impact how physicians care for Black people with ALS and also bring to light further health disparities and *health omissions* in diseases not thought to impact Black and Brown communities.