

# James McCune Smith Annual Conference

8-9 July 2026



## Conference Day 1: Wednesday 8 July 2026

- 09:00 Registration
- 09:30 Conference Opens
- 09:45 **Welcome Address: Prof Chris Pearce**, Vice Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange, and Professor of Computational Mechanics
- 10:00 **Scholar Presentations:** Christopher Reid, Martin Kalemba, Michelle Amoah, Emmanuel Leo
- 10:20 **Guest Speaker: Dr Dayne Beccano-Kelly**  
Dr Dayne Beccano-Kelly is a neuroscientist and Group Leader at the UK Dementia Research Institute at Cardiff University. His research focuses on how synaptic dysfunction contributes to the earliest stages of neurodegeneration, particularly in Parkinson's disease.
- 10:50 Break
- 11:10 **Scholar Presentations:** Françoise Uwase, Ifunanya Nduka, Isra Abdi, Justin Espoir Machongo
- 11:30 **Guest Speaker: Prof Lisa-Dionne Morris**  
Professor Lisa-Dionne Morris (LDM) is Professor of Public and Industry Understanding of Capability-Driven Design, Director of Internationalisation, and a member of the Institute of Design, Robotics and Optimisation within the School of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Leeds, UK. She is also Founder and CEO of Black Female Academics' Network (BFAN), a Community Interest Company dedicated to empowering Black female academics and professional services staff.
- 12:00 Lunch
- 13:00 **Scholar Presentations:** Nkechi First, Augustina Ugwu, Paul Gordon, Owolona Ogbe
- 13:20 **Guest Speaker: Dr Josie Gill**  
Dr Josie Gill is an Associate Professor at the University of Bristol in the Department of English. Her research to date has focused on the intersections between contemporary literature, science, and ideas of race, and her first book, *Biofictions: Race, Genetics and the Contemporary Novel*, won the British Society for Literature and Science Book Prize for 2020.
- 13:50 **Scholar Presentations:** Mamello Pheko, Marwa Osman, Tyler England, Valerio Lhamine
- 14:10 Break
- 14:30 **Guest Speaker: Prof Hakim Adi**  
Professor Hakim Adi is currently a Visiting Senior Fellow at the Department of International History at the London School of Economics and Professorial Research Associate at the Centre of Pan-African Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies. Hakim was the first historian of African heritage to become a professor of history in Britain.
- 15:00 **Guest Speaker Panel Discussion hosted by Dr Farai Chipato**
- 16:00 **Drinks Reception**  
*Glasgow University Union's Dining Room*

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## Unconference Day 2: Thursday 9 July 2026

09:30 Registration

10:00 **Welcome Address: Dr Hayes Mabweazara**, Chair of the JMS PhD Scholarship Steering Board

10:15 **Making Good Trouble – Briana Pegado FRSA**

How can we be good troublemakers in our work as Black leaders and scholars? Historically, showing leadership has been demonstrated by particular myths, archetypes and legends that have not been attributed to Black people. By shifting the narrative of our approach to leadership and reclaiming our historic archetypes through systems like the tarot and astrology, we can better understand our approach to leadership and talk about it with confidence.

At the Good Trouble Co., Pegado has taken decades of experience with founders, artists, social entrepreneurs, and creatives across sector to develop a bespoke archetype system, in this workshop understand your Good Trouble Leadership Archetype and understand your approach to leadership in a way that is authentic to you with insights from leaders that have made mistakes, so you do not have to.

11:00 Break

11:30 **2022 Cohort Panel Talk hosted by Steven Ulysse**, a JMS PhD Scholar and researcher of Afro-diasporic religious traditions with a focus on Vodou and its development in Brooklyn, NY.

12:30 Lunch

13:30 **Fiction, Freedom & the Social Life of Age with Season Butler and Gracie Mae Bradley**  
*University Memorial Chapel*

In collaboration with UofG Creative Writing: a talk by award-winning writer, artist and dramaturg Season Butler, followed by a discussion with writer and JMS scholar Gracie Mae Bradley.

14:30 Break

15:00 **Classical Music Performance with Adam Heron (piano), Cristina Dimitrova (violin) and Katy Bell (cello)**  
*University Concert Hall*

An Irish composer and pianist of Nigerian-Filipino ancestry, **Adam Heron** won the Harriet Cohen Bach Award in 2020. Born in Hong Kong, Adam achieved widespread recognition following his 2018 television debut as a BBC Young Musician category finalist. Through his cosmopolitan heritage, coupled with a flair for storytelling, he is a leading ambassador for young classical musicians.

**Cristina Dimitrova** is a Portuguese-Bulgarian violinist currently based in the Netherlands. She holds a Master of Music degree from the Conservatorium van Amsterdam and a Bachelor of Music (First Class Honours) from the Royal College of Music in London, graduating with distinction in both degrees. She received her early musical training at Wells Cathedral School as a full scholarship holder and at the Lisbon National Conservatoire.

**Katy Bell** grew up in Glasgow before studying cello in London and then in Cincinnati, Ohio. She then lived and worked in The Netherlands and in Inverness before moving back to her hometown of Glasgow in 2020 and joining Live Music Now Scotland in 2024. Katy loves teaching and community music and has worked with Sistema Scotland for many years. She is an advisor to The Agar Trust which supports young musicians living in rural areas.

16:15 **Closing remarks: Steven Ulysse**  
*University Concert Hall*