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The Door of No Return: What Black Event Theory Is and Why It Begins Here

Abstract:

What is Black Event Theory? This opening lecture introduces BET from the ground up: its philosophical foundations, its departure from conventional ontology, and its insistence that Blackness is not a problem to be solved but a structure of being to be thought. Beginning with the temporal rupture at the heart of *The Door of No Return: Being-as-Black*, and an ambition to respond to the thinking of Toni Morrison, we establish the tripartite framework of Cognition, Consciousness, and Being that organizes the theory before asking what it means to originate a philosophical system from the site of the Middle Passage rather than from the traditions that sought to make the world before it unthinkable.

Short Bio:

Michael E. Sawyer is Professor of African American Literature and Culture in the Department of English at the University of Pittsburgh, where he also serves as Director of Graduate Studies. He is a faculty affiliate of Africana Studies and Director of the Graduate Program in Cultural Studies.

A scholar, author, and artist, Professor Sawyer has published four monographs: *An Africana Philosophy of Temporality: Homo Liminalis*, *Black Minded: The Political Philosophy of Malcolm X*, *Sir Lewis* and *The Door of No Return: Being-as-Black* (Temple University Press, 2026). *Sir Lewis*, a cultural biography of Afro-British Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton, has been translated into twelve languages and is an international bestseller in its category.

In addition to his academic work, Professor Sawyer is an artist in residence at ONX Studios in New York City and Athens, Greece. He is co-editor of the *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* and serves on the Executive Committee of *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon*.