



Department of
**FORESTRY AND ENVIRONMENTAL
CONSERVATION**
Clemson® University

Dr. Edda L. Fields-Black
Associate Professor
Carnegie Mellon University
Department of History

*Environmental & Human Costs of Enslaved Labor
in South Carolina and Georgia on Rice Plantations*

November 4th, 2022— 11:15 Watt Center

The Natural Resources Graduate Student Association and the Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation are pleased to welcome Dr. Edda Fields-Black to Clemson University. Dr. Fields-Black is an Associate Professor of History at Carnegie Mellon University with degrees from Emory University, the University of Florida and University of Pennsylvania. She was raised in Miami, FL with her grandparents who were Gullah speakers from Green Pond, SC.

Dr. Fields-Black has written numerous studies on the trans-national history of West African rice farmers, including *Deep Roots: Rice Farmers in West Africa and the African Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University: 2014, 2008).

Dr. Fields-Black chronicles the development of tidal rice-growing technology by the inhabitants of the West African Rice Coast region, the region where most captives disembarking in South Carolina and Georgia originated. By integrating linguistic evidence, biological and botanical studies of mangrove ecosystems, oral traditions, and travelers' accounts from the first European traders to visit the coastal region, *Deep Roots* reconstructs a historical period pre-dating the first written sources for the region and beginning more than a millennium before the trans-Atlantic slave trade when both West African rice and rice farmers became important commodities. It presents a rare picture of dynamic early coastal West African societies, challenging Africanists' assumptions that rice-growing technology diffused from the interior to the coast. A picture of a dynamic, diverse, highly specialized, and localized pre-colonial Africa also stands in sharp contrast to Americanists' constructions of a static, undifferentiated pre-modern Africa which acted as the progenitor of cultures in the African Diaspora. *Deep Roots* builds on the underlying premise of the comparative method of historical linguistics – inheritance, innovation, and borrowing – to fashion a theory of cultural change which is sufficiently open and elastic to encompass the diversity of communities, cultures, and forms of expression in Africa and the African Diaspora.

In addition, Dr. Fields-Black is co-editor of *Rice: Global Networks and New Histories* (co-edited with Francesca Bray, Peter Coclanis, and Dagmar Schaeffer), which was awarded the Choice Outstanding Academic Title for 2015. From 2012 to 2016, Dr. Fields-Black served as the consultant for the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture's permanent exhibit "Rice Fields of the Lowcountry" located in the Power of Place Gallery. Dr. Fields-Black is also a history consultant for the International African American Museum (scheduled to open in Charleston in 2022) and advised the "From Slavery to Freedom" permanent exhibit at the Senator John Heinz History Center.