

January 25 • 3:30 PM • Old Horticulture Conference Room (second floor)

# Lecture by Dr. LaShawn Harris

## Department of History, MSU

*The Commonwealth of Virginia vs. Virginia Christian:  
Southern Black Women, Crime & Punishment  
in Progressive Era Virginia*

In 1912, sixteen year-old Hampton, Virginia resident and laundress Virginia Christian killed her white employer: fifty-one year-old widow Ida Belote. Contributing to the expanding historical scholarship on African American female criminality, this study employs Virginia Christian's life as a window into the lived experiences of some southern working-class African American women during the Nadir. It interrogates Christian's experiences as a household laborer, her murder trial and execution, and her use of lethal violence as a survival and resistance strategy against white aggression and brutality. Furthermore, this paper investigates a diverse yet significant group of African American and white Progressive era political activists' efforts to save Christian from capital punishment.

