

Charis Kubrin and Erik Nielson:

# RAP LYRICS ON TRIAL

The politicization of rap music has intensified dramatically in recent months as rap artists have lent their voices and influence to support the “Black Lives Matter” movement. Professors Erik Nielson and Charis Kubrin are experts on the use of rap lyrics as evidence of criminal activity. They will discuss this important issue within the context of the *Elonis* case, which is currently before the United States Supreme Court, as well as the Jamal Knox case, involving a Pittsburgh rapper who is in prison for his song that protested the shooting of his friend by a Pittsburgh police officer.

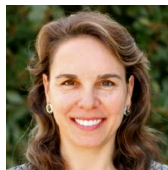
## This event is part of the Pittsburgh Humanities Festival

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### CHARIS E. KUBRIN

Charis E. Kubrin is Professor of Criminology, Law and Society and (by courtesy) Sociology at the University of California, Irvine. She is co-author or co-editor of 5 books and has published dozens of journal articles, many of which focus on the intersection of music, culture, and social identity, particularly as it applies to hip-hop and minority youth in disadvantaged communities. She is a frequent media contributor whose writing has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Forbes*, *CNN*, *The Seattle Post Intelligencer*, *The OC Register*, and *The American Banker*. She is co-author of a recent amicus brief on rap music that was filed with the U.S. Supreme Court (*Elonis v. U.S.*) and has served as an expert witness and consultant in multiple criminal cases involving rap music as evidence of alleged underlying criminal activity. Charis recently gave a TEDx talk, *The Threatening Nature of...Rap Music?*, on the use of rap lyrics as evidence in criminal trials. @cekubrin



### ERIK NIELSON

Erik Nielson is an Assistant Professor of Liberal Arts at the University of Richmond, where he teaches courses on hip hop culture, African American literature, and advanced writing. His research focuses on the relationship between law enforcement and African American art, with a particular emphasis on rap music. He is co-editor of *The Hip Hop & Obama Reader* (forthcoming in 2015 from Oxford University Press) and is at work on a book titled *Under Surveillance: Policing the Resistance in Hip Hop* for Manchester University Press. His work has appeared in several academic journals, as well as a number of popular outlets, such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Atlantic*, *NPR*, and *CNN*. He was co-author of a recent amicus brief on rap music that was filed with the U.S. Supreme Court (in *Elonis v. U.S.*), and he has been an expert witness or consultant in approximately twenty criminal cases involving rap lyrics that were presented as evidence. @ErikNielson



**March 28, 2015, 1:30 pm**

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