From September 23 to 27, 2026, I attended the 111th Annual Meeting and Conference of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), held in Norfolk, Virginia. Founded in 1915 by historian Carter G. Woodson, ASALH is one of the foremost international scholarly organizations dedicated to African American history. It has long promoted research on African American life, history, and culture, preserved historical records, and pursued educational and publishing activities, bringing this scholarship to both academic and public audiences. At this five-day conference, I presented the initial findings of my doctoral project, titled "Reconstructing Civil Rights Memory: Representations of SNCC in Contemporary College Textbooks." I was also privileged to take part in the conference in other ways, including joining other sessions and volunteering with event operations. In this report, I briefly describe the most meaningful aspects of my experience.

On September 24, I presented my research, which examines how African American history, and the history of the Civil Rights Movement in particular, has been constructed in U.S. history textbooks. Focusing on the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the project asks whose histories are told and whose are left untold. I received both encouraging and critical feedback from attendees. I was especially fortunate to speak with an African American woman historian, who offered valuable advice on the future direction of my research. These comments will be of great help as I refine the scope and methodology of my dissertation.

I also attended a range of other sessions. Because this year's conference theme centered on commemoration, many sessions addressed how African American history and its legacies should be taught and passed on to future generations. As a Japanese researcher who hopes to teach African American history to students in Japan, I found it especially meaningful to learn from experienced educators and scholars. In one session, for example, a scholar led a workshop on what teachers should keep in mind when teaching African American history as a history of resistance, and each participant received a teaching toolkit.

In addition, I served as a volunteer. The conference was large in scale, with nearly one thousand attendees. Alongside close to ten concurrent paper sessions, it featured plenary sessions, luncheons, book signings by recently published scholars, and film festivals featuring discussions of films related to African American history. After my presentation on September 24, I spent several hours assisting with conference operations, mainly setting up equipment and guiding attendees before events. This work not only gave me the opportunity to connect with people from diverse backgrounds, including scholars, students, archivists, and librarians, but also offered a valuable view of how a major academic conference is organized behind the scenes.

Beyond the presentations and events themselves, meeting scholars and fellow Ph.D. students and exchanging ideas about our research made this experience truly special. Building on what I learned at the conference and the connections I made there, I intend to further develop my research. Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Japanese Association for American Studies (JAAS) for the financial support that made my participation possible.

Conference Report: Stanley Cavell at 100, Boston University

Shuning Yan

Kyoto University

On 23–24 October 2026, I attended "Stanley Cavell at 100" at Boston University together with my supervisor, Professor Naoko Saito, and a fellow graduate student, and presented my research on aspiration in Emerson and Cavell. The conference marked the centenary of Stanley Cavell (1926–2026), one of the most original American philosophers of the twentieth century. Boston hosted the last of three installments, following Paris (4–5 June, organized by Sandra Laugier) and Rome (8–10 June, organized by Piergiorgio Donatelli). Organized by Juliet Floyd, the Boston meeting focused on philosophy and literature, tragedy, music, and the idea of America. The conference showed how far Cavell's thought still travels across disciplines. Philosophers, literary scholars, and critics discussed his readings of Shakespeare and tragedy, his writing on opera and music, and his claim that America is still unfinished, still something to be discovered. Several themes ran through every session: skepticism and acknowledgment, the ordinary, and moral perfectionism. It was very interesting to learn other perspectives on the topics we are all working on in Cavell. Besides the sessions, a Cavell film screening and Emerson-themed events made the meeting especially lively.

On the first day, I gave my first conference presentation. My paper argued that aspiration should be reclaimed as a perfectionist idea, drawing on R. W. Emerson and Stanley Cavell. It builds on my master's thesis, "Reclaiming aspiration through the philosophies of R. W. Emerson and S. Cavell: Toward a perfectionist education." In ordinary use, aspiration often means a fixed goal, such as a career, a test score, or a social position. Emerson's idea of the "unattained but attainable self" and Cavell's Emersonian moral perfectionism suggest a different picture: aspiration is not a target set in advance but a continuing turn toward a better self that one cannot yet fully name, requiring both self-trust and openness to others. This matters for education. When young people feel pressed to aspire only in the forms society rewards, aspiration itself can become a source of 生きづらさ (difficulty in living). A perfectionist education would instead help students find their own voice. I received valuable suggestions, such as how Cavell's thought connects to Emersonian moral perfectionism, and the question of "breathing" as a bodily orientation within an educational framework. These perspectives were new to me and will be very helpful in developing my paper.

The conference also let me meet many scholars whose work I cite, including Russell Goodman and James Conant, as well as Cornel West. I was honored to meet Cavell's wife, Cathleen Cavell, and his three children.

Because I lived next to Harvard University, I had the chance to discussed my research with a retired professor from Harvard's philosophy department, and even went on a morning run with a Harvard philosophy professor and also borrowed her running shoes, it was an interesting experience.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to the Japanese Association for American Studies (JAAS) for the financial support that made this trip possible. Without it, I could not have attended. I hope to present my work at the next JAAS annual meeting and to

contribute to the association in return.



(Photo No.1 The film screening event)



(Photo No.2 Picture of my presentation)