



# Race & Pedagogy National Conference

University of Puget Sound • Tacoma, Washington

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## **Radically Re-Imagining the Project of Justice: Narratives of Rupture, Resilience, and Liberation**

### Invitation to a Critical Learning Experience

University of Puget Sound will host its fourth quadrennial [Race & Pedagogy National Conference](#) September 27-29, 2018 focused on the theme Radically Re-Imagining the Project of Justice: Narratives of Rupture, Resilience, and Liberation. As with the first Race & Pedagogy National Conference in 2006 and the following ones in 2010 and 2014, the theme of the 2018 Conference Call emerges out of an orientation to pay keen attention to what is happening in our current socio-cultural, political, and economic moment. This kind of orientation invites us to read, question, and respond to the lived and interpretive complexities with which this moment presents us, especially as they speak to both immediate matters and enduring legacies related to race and its intersections with other categories of difference, identity, disparity, and discrimination.

We therefore invite you to a deliberative, reflexive and creative space of thinking, expression, engagement and reflection that we believe will be transformative. Together, we will be encouraged to experience learning as an open, multi-directional and reflexive process through which we can challenge ourselves and one another, and question our forms of knowledge, contexts, histories, identities and institutions as we connect our voices in grappling with what we mean by fostering rupture, resilience, and liberation. We hope that the overarching Conference theme and subthemes will provide the conditions for us to challenge ourselves as we consider, as part of the project of radical re-imagination, critical questions, including:

- What are the urgent enduring and new learning and teaching, public, pedagogical, activist, and social movement tasks before us now?
- How do we deepen our willingness, awareness, and capacity to do the complicated work of thinking and acting in the present in ways that always keep in mind both a critical sense of the past and the long haul work of making futures?
- What are the sources for nourishing and honing an alert sense of critical resilience?
- Where do we turn for inspiration, intuition, or instruction, in mapping our radical imagination?

- What are the practices of knowing and intersections of knowledge, coalitional relationships, socio-historical memories, and resources of the spirit that we need?
- How do we make our institutions truly ready for taking on the work of transformation and for understanding their historical debt to communities as part a radical praxis of justice?

### Making the Conference Call

The Call to radically re-imagine what constitutes the project of justice is grounded in the mission and vision of the [Race & Pedagogy Institute](#) (RPI). Our practice of paying attention to our context makes us acutely aware, particularly in this moment, of the ethical weight of RPI's mission to educate students and teachers at all levels to think critically about race, to cultivate terms and practices for societal transformation, and to act to eliminate racism. This moment inspires us to probe and meet the measure of the Institute's vision of realizing a society where the systemic causes of racism have been uprooted and in which we are energized to reimagine a world oriented toward a shared experience of liberation.

Importantly, the Call is formulated through a collaborative planning process across campus and community constituencies, at the core of which remains the Institute's Community Partners Forum. This Forum is a coalition of individuals and organizations representing a broad spectrum of the Puget Sound who have forged ways to come together in partnership with the university to execute strategic action on a range of issues at the intersection of race, education, and social justice. The Forum lives at the heart of RPI's enactment of the meaning and role of community engagement and knowledge production. It is in this spirit of the Institute's practices that the 2018 Conference will become an extended and amplified site of critical pedagogies at the nexus of race.

### Context and Purpose of the Conference Call

Times of severe turmoil and testing are certainly not new in the history of the United States' turbulent journey with matters of race. But our time, now, feels like a particularly troubling and heightened one. Longstanding forms of White supremacy, domination, violence, xenophobia, racist, nativist nationalisms, and settler colonialism are being recharged and rearticulated, both as spectacle and subterfuge in the national and transnational arena, even as the reality of their enactments are being obscured and deflected. Pivotal social institutions that we have invested with delivering on the promises and expectations of equity, access and justice have historically and continuously betrayed their charge and the atmosphere of social impatience is intensifying. In response, forms of activism which both creatively build on and critique earlier social movements have been growing with boldness while increasingly engaging in strident and impactful calling-out and calling-in practices.

So much is on the line and therefore we must read with all the care we can summon the meaning of what we are experiencing. This is not a time when we can afford the social and

moral consequences of misreading and messing up in the ways in which we shape our responses or miss out on noting our moments to act.

“You look at the other times that our people have stood up, our peoples have stood up,” Winona La Duke urged in her keynote at the last Race & Pedagogy National Conference. “They’ve put their bodies on their line, their minds on their line. They spoke their voices, they sang, they had their ceremonies, they got arrested, they got tear gassed, they got water cannons put on them, they got killed, they had courage. You see they had courage. We have to find our courage.”

We desire to contribute to creating the groundswell for narrating such a kind of courage through this 2018 Conference. It is urgent now that we deepen and expand our understanding of and responsiveness to why and how race can persist as a delegitimized and denied category in our public discourses, practices, and educational arenas, even in the face of the ways that it still works as a real, embodied, and visceral construct and force which produces and pervades the social relations and institutions of our daily lives. What is required is that we now confront and search deeply the raw and reconfigured racialized complexities of this moment, digging into them, and doing the deep root work of turning them inside out. We are thus moved to issue the invitation to collective engagement in charting the work of *Radically Re-Imagining the Project of Justice: Narratives of Rupture, Resilience, and Liberation* at the [2018 Race & Pedagogy National Conference](#).

### Conference Call – Three Sub-Themes

This overarching theme, *Radically Re-Imagining the Project of Justice: Narratives of Rupture, Resilience, and Liberation*, will be elaborated through the following three subthemes.

#### 1) *Rupturing the Logics of Domination: Urgencies in the Project of Justice.*

This first subtheme calls us to consider what it means to critically read and rupture the resurgences, reconfigurations, and new formations of this moment.

#### 2) *Undoing Miseducation: Reclaiming and Rewriting Narratives of Liberation.*

This second theme calls us to bring into dialogue our connecting and contending socio-historical narratives in the name of reclaiming and rewriting and retelling our scripts of liberation.

#### 3) *Radical Transformations: New Publics, New Social Contracts.*

This third theme calls us to focus on the institutions, systems and practices which carry the weight of transforming our public social contracts, building a genuine sense of social wholeness and healing, and shaping a new sense of radically inclusive justice in major areas, including education, mass incarceration, and public health.

We invite proposals for papers, panels, and other presentation formats, including, but not limited to, roundtables, posters, performances, visual arts, and interactive sessions from a multidisciplinary, multi-institutional, and diverse range of participants, including scholars, teachers, students, and administrators in higher education and Pre-K-12 education, along with those involved in educational practices in a variety of civic, artistic, and community-based organizations. All proposals will be peer reviewed in light of the overarching conference theme and in relation to one or more of the three subthemes.

### **SUB-THEME ONE: Rupturing the Logics of Domination: Urgencies in the Project of Justice**

It is by no means an exaggeration to say that we have been moving through an unsettling season. Social sensations of divisiveness, unrest, reeling, perplexity, grief and (out)rage are palpable. Recent years have been marked by seemingly unrelenting moves in the political arena to undo policies and legislation that came into being as a result of ranging forms of Freedom and Civil Rights struggles. The sense of a turning back of the clock in the work of justice feels stark. It is like being “present” in Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s terms, “while your history is erased before your very eyes.” A key part of the backdrop for noticing this messiness and destabilization in our times is certainly related to the results of the 2016 presidential election and the deepened partisanship of the election campaign out of which it emerged. But it would be a mistake and misreading to tie the reality of this atmosphere solely to these events.

This moment has been long in the making. Selectively aimed and racialized anti-immigration vitriol which has spurred the growth of Detention Centers and the move to end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, along with increasing calls for travel bans and restrictions articulated in defense of safety and protection of the nation state feel reminiscent of the terms of the social languages of fear-mongering and logics of exclusion underlying social and immigration policies during the 19th and 20th centuries. The mounting heartbreak and outrage over the extrajudicial killings of people of color out in the open across the nation and the plundering of Indigenous lands and histories, and ecologies and economies, in the name of building pipelines that facilitate corporate expansion and deflect its social accountability for environmental issues, bear the long shadow of the logics of lynchings of the old(er) Jim Crow and of settler colonial relations. The accumulated and intersected meanings of the movements of Black Lives Matter, the DREAMers, and Standing Rock, urgently call us to awaken to the gravity of the reality that there are logics of dominations with which we still have not reckoned and that these meanings and movements are fundamental sites of action for the work of rupturing and re-imagining that we have to do.

Proposals for presentations under this theme may include exploration of the following:

- What is missing in our examination and understanding of the current moment?
- What are the digging-into and peeling back tasks in which we need to be engaged?

- How are national and transnational dynamics and histories implicated in racialized, supremacist, and colonial logics of domination?
- What method, forms of knowledge and ways of knowing can help to provide us with deeper readings and critical angles of vision?
- What is the role of science and the histories of scientific knowledge in shaping the projects of justice?
- What kinds of big picture and integrated thinking and practices are required to move the project of justice forward?

### **SUB-THEME TWO: Undoing Miseducation: Reclaiming and Rewriting Narratives of Liberation**

Crucial to the enormous interrogative, creative and breaking-through endeavor of radically re-imagining the project of justice is that of voice and history. Understanding, locating, articulating, connecting and mobilizing our differently situated and multigenerational voices in order to build nuanced critiques, protest stances, change-charting responsiveness and courageous counter-narratives of struggle and resilience is imperative. Doing so requires thoroughgoing historical and contextual forms of knowledge and interpretation of ourselves and one another. Learning to engage one another authentically across real difference and disparity, especially at intersections of race, and the accompanying challenging histories that come with such engagements, is so vital now if we are ever going to be able break through the traps and effects of longstanding patterns of domination and see-through their new forms in our moment.

To accomplish this we must confront, make visible and take apart the deeply embedded and persistent structures of avoidance, suppression, distortion, and in Carter G. Woodson's terms, "miseducation," in educational structures of teaching and learning, academic and commercial textbook publishing, and in public political and cultural discourse. Undoing miseducation will involve speaking truth to power and also speaking truth to and amongst ourselves, across crisscrossing lines of historically marginalized and dominant identities. It will involve growing dispositions of humility, engaging in practices of reckoning and unlearning, and enlarging our capacities for deep listening and reciprocal critique. In our own location of Tacoma and the University of Puget Sound, we continue to struggle with knowing and facing the histories and current effects of painful histories of dehumanization carried in the Chinese Expulsion, tellingly called the Tacoma Method, the Medicine Creek Treaty, Japanese Internment, Black Face Minstrelsy and the Fish Wars. The work of reclaiming and releasing suppressed voices and untold knowledges in this present serves to bring such "histories back into dialogue" in Craig Steven Wilder's words, ask difficult questions, and truly "make ourselves vulnerable to the answers to them."

Proposals for presentations under this theme may include exploration of the following:

- How do we bring divergent histories into dialogue to disrupt historical and current processes of miseducation?
- What are the community, cultural, artistic and language practices, and the disciplinary and other forms of knowledge that we need to excavate and connect?
- What is the role of science education in the work of undoing, reclaiming, and rewriting?
- What are particular considerations for excavating and researching archives of difficult histories?
- How do we effectively challenge the practices of the textbook industry amidst the rampant commercialization of education?
- What are effective pedagogies of unlearning?
- What are the roles of digital platforms and social media in creating and connecting critical voice and knowledge and fostering processes of unlearning?

### **SUB-THEME THREE: Radical Transformations: New Publics, New Social Contracts**

Calls for change in institutions which carry the charge for taking care of the public good seem never ending as they function as sites through which we have worked out and contested national and community ideals and actions. Such institutions also make visible what operates as the public social contracts which govern our lives, the terms of them, and their cracks and exclusions. Amidst the waves of social sensations of disquiet in our moment, the sense of weariness, loss of faith, checking out, feeling locked out, and impatience with reform responses that are achingly slow in their pace and tinkering and trickle-down in their conception and method, is unmistakable.

In public education, preparation and resource gaps which disproportionately affect students from lower income backgrounds and students of color persist, and the pattern of stark underrepresentation of teachers of color shows little signs of changing. Interlocking issues of cost and structural diversity complicate the increasingly heated debates about access to and the very meaning of higher education. In the midst of this landscape of disparity, Tressie McMillan Cottom's work insightfully tracks and names "the troubling rise" of yet another tier of educational institutions that has been emerging before our very eyes – for-profit colleges and its enactment of a system of "lower ed." The combined activism, research and advocacy which has revealed the devastating reality of the school to prison pipeline has also contributed to the mounting critical focus on the criminal justice system and the moral and material crisis of mass incarceration. Such integrated interrogation of the state of our public brokenness has also served to push attention on the historical and systemic dynamics connecting forms of inequity

and the ways in which we systemically create categories of disposable people and lives in systems of profit, not only in education and criminal justice, but across multiple systems.

It is time to take a different kind of hold of the disquiet of our times in the direction of forging radically transformative modes of being whole, being human in its fullest sense to include emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being and re-structuring the relations and institutions of our lives. Our moment of debate and protest over national health care policy provides an opening to reconsider what we mean by health in more broadly structural and historical terms, and to facilitate practices that can support public health in ways that include mental health in our public conceptions of well-being. Taking on such rethinking requires examining and breaking-through key oppressive social contracts which structure our collective lives. What would it take and mean to examine and break-through the social contracts of gender and heteronormativity, opened up, in part, as the “sexual contract” in Carole Pateman’s terms, the “racial contract,” as also a global White supremacist one, in Charles’ Mills’ naming, and the terms of alien and undocumented in marking national belonging? Through them and their intersections, bodies and beings have been rendered non-human, subjugated, made illegal, mocked and berated, open to violence and disposable. The social toll and social death that systemic enactments of these contracts have been reproducing is untenable.

Proposals for presentations under this theme may include exploration of the following:

- How do we ensure that new demographic shifts result in more inclusive and open practice of democracy?
- How may we live and grapple with multiracialities in ways that disrupt White supremacist foundations of racial formations?
- How do we critically embrace new social developments and meaningfully engage historical practices that predate settler colonialist displacements?
- How may we create public practices and spaces of reckoning, mourning and healing?
- What relationships exist between radical transformations and academic practices?

### Conference Design and Special Features

The [Conference](#) will include Keynote, Spotlight and Concurrent sessions. Conversation Spaces will be built into the program to multiply opportunities for more informal interactions among attendees around selected topics drawn from the formal sessions. As part of the Institute’s commitment to understanding the arts as public pedagogy, the fine and performing arts will speak, in campus and community spaces, to the trauma and costly yields of entering the archives of painful histories of dehumanization and internment; to the similarly and differently turbulent and violent crossings through which migrations, genocide and enslavement have

been wrought; to Tacoma's own struggles for justice over the course of many years. The Conference will also feature a Youth Summit for middle and high school students built on the Institute's engagement with Washington State public schools. In addition, a conference strand designed by PreK-12 educators will focus on Unlearning Racism and wrestling with issues of representation, curriculum and pedagogy in public schools and teacher preparation.

Clock hours and professional development credits will be available for local statewide educators. Conference participants will have access to a digital program platform that will serve as a guide for choosing and moving through the Conference program to craft a rich educational experience and for making connections with other attendees.

Race & Pedagogy Institute

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