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2 Director's Message  
BONNIE THORNTON DILL, PH.D.

3 Tools for Social Justice: Creating the Democratic  
University/Bridging the Gap Between Communities  
BONNIE THORNTON DILL, PH.D.

6 Historic Sites as Tools for Social Justice in the  
'New' South Africa: Black Heritage Preservation  
in the 'Rainbow' Nation's Townships  
ANGEL DAVID NIEVES, PH.D.

9 Avenues to Opportunity: Higher Education in the  
Context of Welfare Reform  
AVIS JONES-DEWEEVER, PH.D.

12 Theorizing Class, Race, Gender, and Place  
MARY CORBIN SIES, PH.D.

15 CrISP Scholars Named for 2004–2005

16 CRGE on the Internet: Building an Online Community

# Director's Message

Bonnie Thornton Dill, PH.D.



Welcome to the new annual version of *Research Connections*, the research report from the Consortium on Race, Gender, and Ethnicity at the University of Maryland. This publication replaces our bi-annual newsletter with something we feel

better reflects our mission to promote, advance, and conduct research at the intersections of race, gender, ethnicity, and other dimensions of difference. In order to familiarize our readers with the directions in which our research programs are heading, each issue will feature selected articles by faculty who collaborate with us during the year. This inaugural issue is exciting because it has grown out of the campus-wide Research and Scholarship Day, introduces our newest cohort of CrISP scholars and their research interests, and details how you can make use of our updated and expanded website.

“Tools for Social Justice: UM at the Intersections of Scholarship and Community” was hosted by CRGE on September 22, 2004. This very special day united approximately 200 attendees who share a dedication to intersectional scholarship. They represented five schools and more than 20 departments. It was apparent to all who attended and supported the day that the University of Maryland offers substantial expertise in intersectional scholarship, and with continued support from the campus administration, faculty, and students, CRGE is committed to capitalizing on these strengths to become a national leader in this field of research and scholarship.

Momentum from that day continues to drive many of our activities at CRGE: in particular, this edition of *Research Connections* was shaped to give a sense of what the day embraced. My keynote address, “Creating the Democratic University: Bridging the Gap Between Communities,” is published here, as are papers by Drs. Angel David Nieves (historic preservation), Mary Corbin Sies (American studies), and Avis Jones-DeWeever (Institute for Women’s Policy Research).

We were very fortunate to work with Margo Humphrey from the Department of Art to develop a beautiful emblem for the day. Her painting, *Pyramids for Lunch*, was not only a glorious image to have on our program but illustrated the importance of this kind of scholarship across all disciplines, and we thank her for her contribution. We would also like to thank President C.D. Mote, Jr., Provost William Destler, and Dean James Harris for their support and attendance throughout the day.



We hope you enjoy this selection of research reports, and we encourage you to visit our website where you will be able to read all the papers as we collect them from our Research and Scholarship Day participants. The complete list of papers and presenters currently is posted on our website ([www.cрге.umd.edu](http://www.cрге.umd.edu)).

*Thank you for your support of CRGE.*

BONNIE THORNTON DILL, PH.D.  
DIRECTOR, CRGE

# Tools for Social Justice: Creating the Democratic University/Bridging the Gap Between Communities

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following commentary was Dr. Dill's luncheon keynote address September 22, 2004 for the University of Maryland's CRGE-sponsored Research and Scholarship Day.*

In an opinion piece in the *Washington Post* in June, UM president, C. Dan Mote, Jr., raised the question of future expectations for higher education.<sup>1</sup> The picture he paints is, at best, sobering. Higher education today, though serving more students than ever before, faces a number of major challenges. Dr. Mote's essay focuses on two issues: funding/finance and public support. In addition to those challenges, I add a third: corporate/market forces—mounting pressure from outside the university to accommodate and increased pressure from within to adapt to those demands.

Among the funding and financing impediments Dr. Mote identifies are a reduction of state and federal support; rising tuition and fees; and increasing student debt. It is not coincidental that these problems have reached crisis proportion at a time in which corporate (e.g., privatized) solutions to the funding and organization of universities is prevalent. In today's university there is greater emphasis upon "treating students as consumers and education as a commodity that produces credentials."<sup>2</sup> There is also enhanced pressure for entrepreneurship among increasingly specialized units, which are forced into competition with one another for limited resources. As President Mote points out, the funding model for higher education today is based upon a notion of higher education as a "personal benefit," in contrast with an earlier (post-WWII) model in which funding of universities was based on the notion of higher education as a "public good."

The lack of public support for higher education is one that President Mote identifies as a reason for some problems of funding and finance. In the past, funding of higher education, he argues, has been "based on models that reflected a prevailing societal consensus." Given his conclusion that "...there is no taste in our present culture for increased taxes to support higher education at the state and federal levels; no general alarm about the fate of higher education and no belief in its value sufficient to lift it to a top national priority (through which funding might be generated)," he asserts that "much needs to be done—and fast—to turn public opinion in support of higher education."

Interestingly, the shift from a "social benefits" to a "personal benefits" model of financing in higher education and the emphasis upon corporate and entrepreneurial strategies has coincided with growth in faculty, staff, student, and intellectual diversity in higher education. It has happened at the same time that students from historically under-represented minority groups have had access to universities in greater numbers than ever before. Thus, the challenge of turning public opinion into support of higher education—especially a model of higher education grounded in diversity—provides a particularly enlightening context in which to think about the ideas and issues that will be presented and discussed in the conference today.

In the last five years, much has been written about reshaping the role and mission of research universities. In fact, in 1999, a group

of university presidents, provosts, deans, and faculty members along with representatives of professional associations, private foundations, and civic organizations issued a declaration in which they challenged American universities to renew their civic mission. The Wingspread Declaration outlines a number of strategies, at all levels of the institutions, to accomplish these goals. The strategies address (1) preparing students for responsible citizenship in a diverse democracy; (2) engaging faculty members to develop and utilize knowledge for the improvement of society; (3) including staff contributions to student learning and the building of community both within and outside the university; and (4) outlining the importance of sustained administrative leadership and support of both the goals and process of civic engagement.<sup>3</sup>

The democratic, engaged university offers a way to garner public support for higher education through engagement with multiple communities inside and outside the institution and challenges the University of Maryland to reclaim and refocus our mission as a public land-grant institution. We already have some of these components on campus. At the Consortium on Race, Gender, and Ethnicity, we have been working with The Annie E. Casey Foundation to develop a set of research and action briefs on racial disparities. These briefs are designed to link research knowledge with promising community practices and social policy recommendations. They are written for scholars interested in practice and practitioners in need of research documentation. But even with these and many other programs and opportunities, our efforts are so widely dispersed that we often have no idea what others are doing. Additionally, limited financial resources often place these initiatives in competition with one another as each seeks support in the entrepreneurially driven marketplace of the contemporary university.

The Consortium on Race, Gender, and Ethnicity works to bring these efforts into communication and collaboration with one another. This Research and Scholarship Day is as much for those of us on campus as for those who have come from off campus. This day provides an opportunity to learn who is doing what, so that, as an institution and as individual scholars and practitioners, we might better apply our intellectual and social capital to addressing the needs and problems of urban, suburban, and rural communities and residents within our state and region.

The concept of the Democratic/Engaged University, which I advocate here, has as its goal inclusion, justice, and equality. It understands democracy as a complex and contested construct that contains contradictions, injustices, and continuing debates. We experience these debates today in the controversies surrounding admissions and affirmative action; in hiring and discussions suggesting that excellence contradicts representation; and in tenure decisions where service and teaching are pitted against research and scholarship. The democratic university to which I refer would seek resolutions that support inclusion and justice.

The Wingspread Declaration cites the following as a result of these struggles: “Today, research universities are more richly varied in the cultures, economic backgrounds and outlooks of our students. Our curricula are more inclusive of diverse cultures, traditions and ways of knowing. Fields of research and scholarship have proliferated and path-breaking advances have been made in areas scarcely imagined a generation or two ago... Yet, despite such gains,” they continue, “few leaders in research universities today would ...claim that their fundamental mission is to serve democracy or that they are filled with the democratic spirit.”

Research, scholarship, and activism around diversity and the intersections of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and other dimensions of difference—the kind of work featured at this Research and Scholarship Day—are among the path-breaking advances that were “scarcely imagined a generation or two ago.” The marginalization of this scholarship is ironic because central to it is the creation of social justice. It is also scholarship filled with the ideals of the democratic spirit and it offers important tools for creating an engaged institution in which individual citizens, local communities, and ultimately the society at large have a stake. Among these are four tools that I want to mention briefly. These four tools, knowledge production, social critique, representation and inclusion of difference, and communication, are approaches to knowledge and society that have grown out of and reinforce practices and ideals of social change and social justice.

#### Tool 1: Multiple Sources of Knowledge Production

Intersectional scholarship and scholarship on diversity are products of a historical moment when social issues, theory, art, political ideology, activism, and social change converged. The resulting synergy created not only new knowledge, but also new ways of constructing knowledge, and new ways of knowing. As an analytical strategy, this scholarship begins with the lived experiences, observed realities, and struggles of previously excluded and oppressed groups. It does such things as extend our notions of what constitutes a text as well as identify multiple sources and locations of theory and theorizing. It provides new perspectives on both self and society, as scholars have come to think about analytical categories not simply as competing and separate but as interlinked and intertwined. In research, writing, teaching, and advocacy, scholars and practitioners are finding ways to capture and convey dynamic social processes through which identities are formed and shift in continuous interaction with one another within a context of social inequality.

#### Tool 2: Social Critique

When you begin by giving legitimate space to the knowledge and perspectives of marginalized and previously excluded groups of people, you immediately confront questions of inequality, power, and privilege. Within a classroom, students soon ask, “Why haven’t I ever learned this information before?” The answers uncover relationships of knowledge and power and reveal whose

story (or version of a story) gets told and why. Through this process, students learn to grapple with paradox, contradiction, and ambiguity. They learn to look at ideas, events, and culture as products of particular times, places, and communities. Critical thinking of this sort is an essential skill in a diverse democracy. It is a tool that helps us unmask our social myths and find multiple solutions to complex problems.

### Tool 3: Representation and Inclusion of Difference

Difference and diversity yield multiple perspectives on the same event. Thus, the more varied the perspectives at “the table,” the more complex and nuanced our analyses and understanding of an issue become. Also, the ability to find solutions that address the needs of multiple and even conflicting constituencies is enhanced. Though pejoratively termed “bean-counting,” the numbers of people of different backgrounds and experiences matter. The inclusion of even a small but critical mass of people who are members of underrepresented minorities has expanded the curricula and extended the relationship of universities into multiple communities. And, though this work has only begun, it is clear that inclusion, when taken seriously, leads not merely to reform but to transformation.

### Tool 4: Communication

In scholarship, in advocacy, in communities—voices previously silenced or ignored have begun to be heard. These voices of marginalized and disempowered people have been the source of new knowledge, new perspectives on society, and new social arrangements. Learning to listen without judgment, to accept and even embrace different styles and forms of communication, is one of the biggest challenges, yet one of the most important tools for social justice. In addition, understanding the relationship of power and privilege to the styles, means, and processes of communication is a prerequisite to creating social change. Even a brief examination of the divergent uses of language in framing debates and influencing public discourse demonstrates how important it has become in contemporary social change strategy. The shifting meanings of affirmative action and equality of opportunity provide a vivid example.

### Conclusion

These four tools are vital in our efforts to link universities and communities, to create an engaged and democratic university, and to gain public support for higher education. Regenerating public support for higher education is a challenge. But I would argue that it can happen for universities that place an inclusive and justice-driven notion of democracy at their core; that engage their students in the complexities of civic education and improvement; and that encourage and support their faculties to become public intellectuals—not in the narrow sense of being public celebrities, but in the broader sense of doing work that engages and benefits local communities and the broader society.

At UM we are taking steps to bridge these communities. Today’s campus-wide Research and Scholarship Day is an important milestone on this journey and we are pleased that the Offices of the President, Provost and VP for Research and Graduate Studies have been willing to provide, not only words of support, but funding for this event. Nevertheless, we are acutely aware that like most other research universities, we are caught in the press between declining public funds and the need to seek private capital. This tension is pushing all of our institutions, especially research universities, into a funding model in which success is too often measured in dollars generated and academic rankings. Because the work and scholarship of diversity is occurring in this climate it risks becoming merely another commodity—a product to be consumed, a component of public image that affects the institutions’ marketability.

It is therefore incumbent on those of us engaged in this kind of scholarship to continue to work to push the boundaries of our disciplines and the measure of our success to make our mission central, and to fully use our insights and tools to construct a university that citizens will see as vital to the life and growth of a truly democratic nation.

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# Historic Sites as Tools for Social Justice in the ‘New’ South Africa: Black Heritage Preservation in the ‘Rainbow’ Nation’s Townships

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In 1982, when Nelson Mandela (prisoner 488/64) was transferred from his jail cell on Robben Island to the Cape Town mainland, he could never have imagined that some seventeen years later, in 1999, he would return to inaugurate one of South Africa’s first three UNESCO World Heritage Sites.<sup>1</sup> Robben Island, along with the other two sites is considered globally significant because of its “outstanding relevance to humanity ... as a world-class tourism destination and ‘living museum,’” and is just a short 30-minute ferry ride from Cape Town’s redeveloped tourist and shopping mecca, the Victoria and Albert Waterfront.<sup>2</sup> Robben Island has become South Africa’s most famous cultural tourism attraction—an international symbol of freedom and liberation.<sup>3</sup> The maximum-security prison was home to key leaders of the African National Congress (ANC), the so-called “Rivonia Trialists” of 1964 that included Nelson Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada, Walter Sisulu, and Govan Mbeki.<sup>4</sup> Mandela spent nearly twenty years imprisoned in its “B Block” where political prisoners accused of plotting against the apartheid government were kept between 1960 and 1990.<sup>5</sup> Shortly after Mandela’s release in 1990, proposals began to emerge, suggesting the island be converted into a “university”—South Africa’s own version of the Open University. The site, designated the Robben Island Museum (RIM) in 1997, is today heralded as the locus for civic engagement in the “new” multicultural South Africa.

From gulags in the former Soviet Union to the Slave Forts on Ghana’s Gold Coast, communities across the globe are struggling with their long-ignored and hidden histories of state torture, terror, and mass genocide.<sup>6</sup> With the rise in the “prison tourism” phenomenon across the globe, new heritage management strategies require re-envisioning sites of “dark tourism” and tragedy in some important ways. Can these sites of tragedy and “dissonant heritage” be used as models for community based education and renewed political inclusion? Marginalized urban communities across South Africa are now questioning state sponsored “national narrative” efforts, like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), that sought to investigate human rights abuses and grant amnesty to miscreants.<sup>7</sup> As art historian Annie Coombes has argued in *History After Apartheid* (2003), “...difficulties have arisen in South Africa, as elsewhere, since the rhetoric of ‘community’ is the result of a genuine attempt to incorporate a more representative multicultural diversity in many aspects of public life, but can also be a slipshod way of ‘managing’ the more contradictory and potentially troublesome aspects of cultural and political diversity.”<sup>8</sup>

In particular, my work (based on the early stages of my new research project) examines efforts to establish historic places, such as the sites of the former “prison industrial complex” and of political unrest, as potential alternative educational and community based museums for enhancing citizen participation. I argue that these sites can be seen as viable “tools for social justice” and human rights through a renewed process of civic engagement in

grassroots community based museums.<sup>9</sup> Can a community based museum model help to establish a culture respectful of human rights only a mere decade after apartheid? Can these heritage sites begin to foster a set of political values and attitudes favoring human rights through civic engagement for all South Africans? I am focusing on two sites in my research—the Langa Pass Office and Court Building in Cape Town and the Hector Pieterse Museum and Memorial Precinct in Soweto, Johannesburg (which will not be addressed here). Both cities have invested numerous resources in developing new initiatives that encourage domestic and foreign visitors to reflect on the country’s non-White population—unfortunately an examination of heritage resources within former all-Black townships has been deferred until recently. A decade of democracy has brought massive reforms and advances across the heritage industry, while bringing little or no change to the understanding of the cultural significance of Black heritage resources in South Africa’s still isolated townships. Despite ten years of massive reform by the ANC, and the emergence of new political discourses of nation building and Black self-empowerment, these inequalities are growing. I maintain that while the Robben Island Museum offers an acceptable (or more easily palatable) vantage point for “collective memory making” for the ANC in a “new” democratic South Africa, the sites in the former all-Black townships highlight the many continued injustices and social ills faced by residents still victims of segregation (i.e., poverty, the AIDS pandemic).

What are the necessary steps to be undertaken if an informed model for sustainable tourism, which engages the complex social, economic, and environmental issues facing these long-ignored townships, is to truly take hold?<sup>10</sup> Despite attempts by the government to build an inclusive national identity, grassroots organizations remain marginal in the creation of a national narrative that exposes the history and processes of apartheid more fully. In heritage work, community ownership is an essential part of transformation, but a recent study that gives an overview of the entire heritage sector in South Africa admits that, to date, community involvement and participation has received very little attention.<sup>11</sup> Clearly, the massive changes that took place after apartheid was dismantled resulted in the ANC’s efforts to begin a process that acknowledged the country’s atrocities and human rights violations as well as the decades long liberation movement that began in the 1950s.

The City of Cape Town has recently developed new community based tourism initiatives that support skills development, job creation, and enterprise that reflect the city’s cultural diversity and promote cultural pluralism. The township of Langa, outside center Cape Town, is significant as a site of protest and self-determination; in 1960, 6,000 marched there in protest against apartheid pass laws. The South African police fired on the protestors, killing four people at Langa, as well as 69 others in Sharpeville, thereby catalyzing the subsequent Black liberation movement. The Langa



INTERIOR VIEW, LANGA PASS OFFICE AND COURT BUILDING MUSEUM, CAPE TOWN (2004). AUTHOR’S PHOTO.

Heritage Foundation, in partnership with the City of Cape Town’s Heritage Resources Section, has been working to conserve the site of the Langa Pass Office and Court Building and to develop a model program for sustainable tourism through a new community based museum site. Local residents are now witnessing the creation of tourism-related jobs as concrete benefits of cultural heritage management, thus increasing public support for further heritage projects.

Langa was founded in 1927 and is the oldest-surviving formally planned township of its kind in South Africa. It is the very first township established under the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923. The Act was designed to enforce racial segregation, control Black access to cities, and control the development of residential housing in the urban apartheid city. The township’s population of over 47,000 comprises only seven percent of the total number of Blacks living in Cape Town. The township was planned as a model “native urban village” under the 1923 Act on a segregated site on the urban periphery of Cape Town’s central business district.<sup>12</sup>

Residence in Cape Town among Blacks could only be legally attained by having proof of being born in the city, or proof of employment. A pass, indicating the status of each person, had to be carried at all times and regularly renewed for fear of reprisals from local police. The handling of passes and cases related to pass laws was located within the Administration Block in Langa and the Pass Office and Court Building—a timber frame structure built in the early 1950s. Pass administration involved daily queues of people coming to have their passes renewed or getting new passes issued, as well as those waiting to appear in court proceedings against them for violation of the Urban Areas Act (i.e., not carrying an up-to-date pass). Built of untreated wood, the building by the 1980s was deteriorating after disuse. A multiracial group of heritage leaders and residents began meeting in 2000 to discuss the

site's potential. Funds for the restoration of the building and the initial museum have been garnered, primarily, from the local government. The partnership between the government and the community representatives was initiated with a proposed large-scale documentation project of significant heritage sites throughout Langa—which was recently completed.

### Conclusion

The ANC has, over the past decade, faced an enormous challenge in creating a new national identity that embraces the past while it allows for a framework that still incorporates its many diverse groups from across the African diaspora and its transnational borders. I contend that to measure the challenges facing South Africa, heritage sites are among the best cultural and civic institutions involved in “collective memory making.”

I argue that it is possible to see these sites of protest and former prisons as repositories for national histories and a new form of community based civic engagement. Perhaps a form of “cultural sustainability” (coupled with civic engagement) may support both economic development and contribute financially to resource management for marginalized communities. The demands of tourism may also paradoxically contribute to the destruction of the natural and cultural environment; therefore, it is essential to find ways to protect these environments for present and future generations through continued community involvement. Nevertheless, understanding the cultural significance of historic sites in South Africa's former all-Black townships requires an intersectional framework that both cuts across a long-held ‘tourist's gaze’ based on White supremacy and challenges our assumptions about power, authority, race, class, and gender in our globalizing world.

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# Avenues to Opportunity: Higher Education in the Context of Welfare Reform

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Americans have long-believed in the dream of upward mobility. Central to that belief is the idea that poverty can be overcome with sheer determination and the willingness to roll up one's sleeves and "do the work." At the heart of this "bootstraps" ideal is a key component: opportunity—the opportunity to acquire education. Perhaps there is no opportunity held more dear by Americans.

While all levels of education are valued, it is higher education that has become the gateway to the middle-class. Over the years, the cost of higher education has increased steadily, while government assistance for meeting its costs has substantially tilted away from the poor. States now largely invest their assistance dollars in the area of merit-based awards, which disproportionately favor middle- and upper-income students. At the same time, the federal government's efforts are focused on the expansion of tax credits and loan programs—two options either underused by, or unavailable to, the poor (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2001). In addition, the real value of Pell Grants, the nation's historic, need-based assistance, has plummeted, supplying less than half what it supplied in the 1970s towards the costs of higher education. For America's poor, the opportunity to acquire post-secondary education has become increasingly constricted.

Yet the marketplace has largely come to demand post-secondary credentials as the price of admission to quality jobs, even as college has become less affordable. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, some two-thirds of the fastest-growing occupations through the year 2012 will require post-secondary education, with over half (57 percent) requiring at least a bachelor's degree. As educational prerequisites for the American job market increase, some project that America's college-bound population is decreasing, thereby putting America at a distinct disadvantage in the global marketplace of the future. Reports released by the National Governor's Association (National Governor's Association, 2002) and the Aspen Institute (Ellwood, 2002) foretell an impending crisis facing America's workforce. After two decades of phenomenal growth in the percentage of workers who have acquired at least some level of post-secondary education (39–58 percent between 1980 and 2000), over the next twenty years only slight growth is projected (58–62 percent by 2020). Similarly small levels of growth are anticipated in the percentage of workers who have completed a college degree (30–34 percent by 2020). An impending skills deficit could have a devastating impact on the nation's ability to maintain its stature as a leader of the world's knowledge-based economy.

Quite simply, in order to remain a world leader with regard to economic expansion, America no longer has the luxury of discounting any group. Instead, it is necessary to look beyond the typical conception of the college student as young, middle-class, and childless and expand opportunities to every individual who has the desire, motivation, and ability to improve her/his life through the acquisition of post-secondary education.

In an upcoming report, “Reaching for More: The Fight to Acquire Higher Education in the Context of Welfare Reform,” the Institute for Women’s Policy Research examines the issue of expanding access to higher education to one of America’s most disadvantaged populations—its welfare participants. The study employed a mixed-mode data collection strategy that included mail and electronic mail surveys of 92 student-parents (current and former); three focus groups of current and former student-parents; and in-depth interviews with eight college administrators from various institutions across the state of California. Taken together, the collected data documents the challenge of balancing the demands of parenthood, college-level coursework, and adherence to strict welfare requirements. While some may question the ability, ambition, and level of motivation inherent in this population, the study garnered strong evidence of the capability, determination, and strong desire for change found within this often-overlooked segment of society.

### California Legislation

The state of California represents a unique case for analysis regarding the issue of access to higher education for low-income populations. This state has in place one of the nation’s most well-respected community college systems; it routinely serves as a bridge to the state’s four-year institutions for students across the social and economic spectrum. In addition, the state has historically demonstrated a special commitment to expanding the access of low-income and welfare-participating students to higher education. Even prior to the federal JOBS legislation, which sought to expand access to post-secondary education and training under AFDC, California had already established a variety of key programs meant to expand access to higher education for disadvantaged populations. Through such programs as the Expanded Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS, founded in 1969), the Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education program (CARE, founded in 1982), and the Greater Avenues to Independence program (GAIN, founded in 1985), California distinguished itself as a leader in the provision of services designed to meet the special needs of low-income students working to improve their lives through the acquisition of higher education.

Together, these programs granted access to higher education for welfare participants for up to two years (GAIN), while providing financial and academic assistance, counseling, and other support services for low-income students in general (EOPS), as well as low-income single parents (CARE) in particular (Price, Steffy and McFarlane, 2003).

In response to welfare reform, California adopted the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility for Kids Act (CalWORKs). Simultaneously, the state set aside \$65 million in state Maintenance of Effort (MOE) dollars specifically for programs to support CalWORKs participants at community colleges across the state. Under the CalWORKs system, participants already enrolled in post-secondary education when entering the system were

allowed to count their educational activities towards the state’s 32-hour work requirement, as long as the student was enrolled in an approved field of study deemed likely to lead directly to employment. In addition, if the participant’s classroom, laboratory, and/or internship activities did not meet the 32-hour minimum work requirement, the participant would be required to engage in a work activity for the amount of time necessary to fulfill the work-hour minimum codified in CalWORKs legislation (Center for Women’s Policy Studies, 2003; Fein et al., 2000; Price, Steffy and McFarlane, 2003).

California’s unique history and contemporary policies make it an interesting case for analysis. While the state has historically been quite proactive in its approach to supporting the educational needs of low-income populations in general, and welfare participants in particular, in the wake of welfare reform, even in this comparatively progressive state, policy regarding post-secondary access and achievement has become significantly more restrictive. This study provides the opportunity to examine the effects of these changes.

### Study Findings

Here’s a taste of what we found: Roughly 95 percent of those surveyed indicated that they made sacrifices to pursue higher education. The most often cited sacrifice was time with their children (73 percent); followed by employment/income (65 percent); and leisure activities (61 percent). Although significant sacrifices were made, more than 9 in 10 indicated that they believed education was worth the sacrifice.

One woman stated, “It has been worthwhile because I know that the sacrifices I make now will eventually lead to a better and brighter future for me and my son.” Another added, “It has been worthwhile because I know in the long run I can have a better career for [the benefit of] my children; but the 32-hour requirement has made it a heartbreaking struggle because I would have rather spent the majority of that time with my kids.”

Most respondents echoed the beliefs of one woman whose views took into account the price of sacrificing today in order to have a better tomorrow. Quite simply she stated, “I know that my situation is only [temporary]. I hate being on welfare and I will sacrifice anything for a degree and a great paying job with benefits.”

Higher education was worth the sacrifice because, according to more than 90 percent of the respondents, it has changed their lives. The three most-often cited changes were in feelings of higher self-esteem (80 percent), feelings of making a contribution to society (66 percent), and the opening up of better job opportunities (63 percent).

One respondent described how higher education has created the opportunity for a career rather than mere employment in a low-

wage job. She stated, “I could have gotten a low-wage deadend job with no problems. The reason why I did not want that life is because I knew if I had, I would most likely be there 10 years later. I didn’t just want a job. I wanted a future, a career, a life for my daughter. Attending college will give me that. I attend USC [University of Southern California] and my whole life has changed for the better because of the doors my education has opened for me.”

On a broader scale, however, other women described how higher education made a positive impact on their sense of self. One mother stated, “My education is priceless. No one can take it away from me, and it empowers me to succeed in life.” Another proclaimed, “Education empowers. The material you learn in school is nothing compared to the self-knowledge you gain...Education is the one sure guarantee that you will never have to need social services again! I hated my workers so much, and now I am so far away from that, it’s like an old, bad dream. Educate yourself away from those people who try to keep you down. Also, being Phi Beta Kappa, *summa cum laude*, and getting the Humanities Student Award has made me feel proud. I never felt pride, only shame about everything I did before. Feeling pride is a great feeling.”

In addition to the impact that exposure to higher education had on their own lives, nearly 8 in 10 respondents indicated that their children’s educational experiences had also been influenced. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) indicated that their children were now more likely to express a desire to go to college. Nearly half (45 percent) indicated that their children had improved their study habits, and nearly a third (32 percent) said their children now make better grades.

One father described how his example of educational excellence filtered down to his daughter: “...when I was going through school here at the college, we became homeless for nine months and we really thought things were down and out for us, but I kept struggling in school to keep up my 4.0 GPA, and I mean I was struggling hard with trying to find a home for us and so forth. When I started winning some scholarships my daughter saw that it actually paid to do good in school. She totally did a U-turn. By the time she was in sixth grade, she was one of the top students in her class, went on to junior [high] and just excelled.

“When she left junior high...that summer of graduating from junior high going into high school, she started taking college classes. She did high school and college together.

“When she graduated from high school she got her AA degree in engineering here at the city college. She got her [AA] degree in her hand before she actually received her high school diploma in her hand the following week. She’s now at Long Beach State and she’s just zooming right along in school...”

## Conclusion

Having to balance the responsibilities of parenthood and college life is no easy task, even under the best of circumstances. For parents muddled in poverty and under the restrictions associated with welfare reform, the pursuit of a college degree is not only a challenge but a goal that requires significant personal sacrifice. Findings from this study, however, paint a picture of an extraordinarily resilient, determined, and hopeful population struggling through challenging circumstances in search of a better future for themselves and their children.

With both the Temporary Aid to Needy Families Act and Higher Education Act on the verge of reauthorization, it is hoped the results from this study can help inform policy makers of the importance of expanding access to post-secondary education to this often overlooked, yet capable and eager population.

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# Theorizing Class, Race, Gender, and Place

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This report describes a toolkit that historian Andrew Wiese and I are developing to explore the relationships between White and Black suburbs in metropolitan areas of the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. We conceptualize the audiences for this paper as urban and planning historians less familiar with race and intersectional theories and as scholars focusing on race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality who wish to think more systematically about place. Relationships between suburbs and neighborhoods formed an essential context in which North Americans experienced and shaped metropolitan life. We have discovered a myriad of relationships between communities differentiated by race and class, and we aim to understand their social, economic, political, ideological, and geographical dimensions.

In doing so, we challenge three examples of common wisdom about the physical and social forms of suburbs and cities. The first is that suburbs were White, middle-class, green leafy havens peppered with golf courses and superior schools. Viewed collectively, suburbs in the United States have been heterogeneous, catering to different racial-ethnic groups and classes. African American and working-class households have been living in suburbs as long as White middle-class people have.<sup>1</sup> The second is the assumption that our knowledge about cities and suburbs comes from empirical research. On the contrary, many Americans fashion their ideas of suburb and city from powerful representations of what these places look like and how people should live in them. Scholars can be as guilty of this as, say, real estate agents. A third example of common wisdom is that exclusivity is the central logic of suburban organization.<sup>2</sup> Rather than assuming that social relations always separate different kinds of suburbs from one another, we advocate developing a more nuanced grasp of the principles and the practices of residential and land use exclusivity.

## Studying Suburban Relationships

But how shall we study the relationships between neighboring suburbs? And why? Any toolkit we deploy must enable us to 1) analyze how different kinds of people imagined and experienced metropolitan life on the ground, 2) focus on issues of class, race, power, and agency as they relate to suburban space and the built environment, and 3) help legitimate the study of these factors in subfields of history where they are frequently overlooked. Three social justice impulses underlie our research program. If housing and neighborhood revitalization policies are to serve different constituents in an equitable and practical manner, we must base them on knowledge about how diverse households experience and conduct their lives in metropolitan places.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, we must critically interrogate (mis)representations that shape what policy makers, scholars, and designers think they know about certain Americans and their life ways and residential preferences. It is important to leaven scholarly conversations in urban history and historical geography with ideas that will stimulate thinking about neighborhood, housing, and planning inequalities.<sup>4</sup>

Toward those ends, we identified five issues that we needed our theoretical toolkit to address. The first was a more sustained inquiry into the nature of social class. What happened when different class cultures interacted? Class, as we have understood it from our evidence, has several components. It was, first, a performance encompassing many facets of life; it was not solely a calculus of relation to the means of production. Thus class must be studied locally. Both class culture and class formation are firmly implicated in the shaping of the built environment. We see spatial change and class formation as interactive processes, in other words.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, we cannot separate the cultural from social and systemic issues. In devising a workable understanding of class, we have to discern the ways cultural and social phenomena are embedded in each other. Finally, we have to theorize cultures of class as logical and fluid sets of practices and values. As Lora Romero reminded us in *Home Fronts*, “ideologies like domesticity become popular...not because they provide the masses with a finite and orderly set of beliefs relieving them from the burden of thinking but instead because they give people an expansive logic, a meaning, vocabulary, and rich symbols through which to think about their world.”<sup>6</sup>

A second concept we employ to understand the relationships between White and Black suburbs is intersectionality. Intersectionality focuses on the ways dimensions of difference—e.g., race, gender, ethnicity, class, and sexuality—can form interlocking inequalities and must be simultaneously considered to understand accurately how people shape their environments and negotiate their everyday lives.<sup>7</sup> The systematic study of intersections can illuminate both large-scale, historically constructed systems of power and the small-p politics of individuals, families, households, or neighborhoods. Since no urban or suburban communities control their circumstances, we need to analyze both the larger theatres within which cities and suburbs perform—capitalist urbanization and domestic consumption—and how different communities interacted with those circumstances—the attitudes, life experiences, and resources they brought to those interactions. Intersectionality helps us understand how dimensions of difference interacted as suburbanites worked out new and distinct social, cultural, and artistic forms in early twentieth century U.S. suburbs, and how the meanings of those forms were contested both within and between the groups we’re studying.

A third concept in our toolkit is cultural hegemony. Racial formation theory and several other approaches to theorizing power relations have helped us conceptualize cultural hegemony in tension with local politics. We draw from Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s and Lisa Lowe’s understandings of hegemony as flexible, reciprocal, and dynamic, and scrutinize what goes on at different axes of power. Hegemony, according to Lowe, “does not refer exclusively to the process by which a dominant group exercises its influence but refers equally to the process through which emergent groups organize and contest any specific hegemony.”<sup>8</sup>

This is where local politics comes in. When we look through the lens of class cultures, we recognize that ordinary American interaction with urban and suburban space constituted a local politic. We join many scholars who insist that politics is more than elections and party agendas; it includes political behavior based in the family, the household, women’s organizations, and neighborhood social actions. Two sets of ideas have influenced our thinking on this matter. The first is John Fiske’s discussion of the cultures of everyday life as a “creativity of practice,” what de Certeau calls the “peoples’ art of making do with what they have.” In the context of understanding how cities and suburbs are constructed and construed, we look at how people “construct their spaces through the practices of living.”<sup>9</sup> The second is the idea of the heterogeneity of power as developed by historical archaeologists Robert Paynter and Randall McGuire. They theorize “power permeates social life.” Agents exercise power from a number of bases: “through the reproduction of the material world, the construction of meaning, the giving of pleasure, and the socialization of people.”<sup>10</sup> We harness these ideas to recover how citizens in White and Black suburbs participated in genuine politics by responding to the processes and policies of (sub)urbanization through different forms of community building.

Our fifth concept is infrapolitics, especially Robin D.G. Kelley’s application of the concept to African American working-class studies. Infrapolitics is one means particular groups may contest hegemony and develop a local politic. The term describes the dissident political culture that aggrieved communities may construct to challenge or confront individuals, institutions, or symbols of domination. Kelley’s exploration of urban Black working-class opposition in the Jim Crow American South inspired us to undertake a similar kind of investigation to map out the relationships between White and Black suburbs.<sup>11</sup> We examine 1) transactions between household members and servants within a key workplace—affluent domestic households, 2) contestations of boundaries and public spaces, 3) development of safe spaces or hidden social or cultural worlds, and 4) uses of domestic consumption for accommodation and resistance.

## Conclusion

We are working with these five concepts to build an infrastructure for a more complicated understanding of race, class, gender, and place in North American cities and suburbs. Using that framework, we have investigated how neighboring Black and White communities in early twentieth-century suburbs depended upon, logically required, constrained, reciprocated, and diverged from one another.<sup>12</sup> Although our project is very much in process, I conclude with preliminary observations. Scholars must reconceptualize planning to include purely local actions, such as aesthetic traditions and theories of economic development and change generated by community members in response to their circumstances.<sup>13</sup> We also advocate moving beyond binary oppositions to understand the urban built environment and its cultures. Among

those we challenge are the division of social activity into public and private, the city/suburb binary in its stereotypical form, the production/consumption binary—and especially the coupling of production with working-class suburbs and consumption with affluent suburbs—the agent/victim or oppressor/oppressed binary, and the planned/unplanned conceptualization of how communities come to be. We recommend “community building” as a more useful trope for uncovering the different ways people marshal their skills and resources to obtain the most salubrious circumstances they can manage. The issue we most need to tackle is how to activate race and gender more thoroughly as conceptual factors for understanding place.

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## CrISP Scholars 2004–2005

The Consortium on Race, Gender, and Ethnicity is home to an innovative two-year graduate fellowship program designed to develop national and international leaders in the research and scholarship of intersectional analyses. CRGE Interdisciplinary Scholarship Program (CrISP) scholars are typically incoming graduate students from the following academic areas: American studies, family studies, sociology, history, curriculum and instruction, counseling and personnel services, education policy and leadership, and women's studies. CRGE faculty mentors work with departmental advisors to design an appropriate course of study complimentary to the departments' expectations and the students' interests. Each year, a diverse group is recruited to foster scholarship on intersectionality and social justice with the goal of promoting meaningful social change.

### Tee Leathers (AMERICAN STUDIES)

*Research interests: hip hop, R&B, pop culture, and representations of women of color in the aforesaid, American materialism, and the cultural development of young people of color.*

“Being a CrISP scholar enables me to further cultivate research skills I learned during my tenure as an undergraduate. Currently, I am updating an online meta-site on African American visual and material culture through one of CRGE's research program areas.”

### Anaya MacMurray (WOMEN'S STUDIES)

*Research interests: African American Muslim women, Black women and minority religions, Islam in Black popular culture, women in Black resistance movements, and various forms of Islam in America.*

“As a CrISP scholar, I receive excellent mentorship, work on meaningful projects that help to develop my research skills, and have the opportunity to network with graduate students, faculty, and staff members who share a commitment to social justice.”

### Angel Miles (WOMEN'S STUDIES)

*Research interests: intersections of gender, race, and disability, specifically employment and poverty disparities for women, and racial ethnic minorities with disabilities.*

“CRGE provides me with a rare opportunity to engage in intersectional scholarship. I have benefited greatly from the work that CRGE has produced and events that they have sponsored, such as their colloquia, research seminars, and research interest groups as well as CRGE's first Research and Scholarship Day.”

### Melanie Miller (HISTORY)

*Research interests: women's history, Asian American history, and the intersections of domestic violence, poverty, and race in women's lives.*

“CrISP has offered me wonderful opportunities that helped me to further my development as an academic. I have been able to connect with different faculty members, get experience doing research, and most importantly, learn from mentors about doing research on intersectionality.”

### Manouchka Poinson (AMERICAN STUDIES)

*Research interests: transnational studies as it relates to migration and Haitian women's experiences in Washington, D.C., and forms of Haitian women's organizing, resistance, and development.*

“CRGE's commitment to intersectional research has contributed to my personal, scholarly growth as a CrISP scholar. The networks of the CrISP program have provided me with guidance that has been the foundational support of my graduate career.”



CRISP SCHOLARS  
(LEFT TO RIGHT)  
ANAYA MACMURRAY,  
ANGEL MILES,  
TEE LEATHERS,  
MELANIE MILLER,  
MANOUCHKA POINSON,  
AND MELANIE MILLER

# CRGE on the Internet: Building an Online Community

The Consortium's website has a number of resources for scholars interested in the intersections of race, gender, ethnicity, and other dimensions of difference.

CRGE's interactive calendar, designed by the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH), is one of our website's newest enhancements. The calendar features announcements about all intersectional events on campus, including scholarship/fellowship deadlines, conference paper requests, job openings, and regular university events and holidays. Please help us maintain a comprehensive listing by keeping us informed of events you would like to see featured.

This semester, MITH and CRGE are teaming up to create a searchable online database. This interactive research system will contain more than 200 annotations (books, articles, and websites) related to CRGE's research areas. Our CrISP scholars have been hard at work on the annotations, so we're excited to get this project off the ground.

Our report on intersectional scholarship at UM is available online in two formats: Adobe PDF format, which can be downloaded and viewed at any time, and HTML, which can be browsed like a web page. Report sections include an alphabetical listing of UM intersectional scholars and recent faculty publications. Think of our report as a type of social justice Yellow Pages.

Last September's conference, "Tools for Social Justice," was a major event on our campus. As such, we've devoted a considerable portion of our website to that innovative Research and Scholarship Day—the first of its kind. From our homepage, a visitor can experience—through a combination of text, images, and video—what tools for social justice really are.

Pages of our website are devoted to CRGE's four research program areas: the health and social well-being of low-income women, children, and families; intersections, identities, and inequalities; education and urban communities; and material culture/visual culture. If you're interested in participating in a RIG (research interest group) or learning more about work being done by these innovative working groups, please visit our website to learn more.

Finally, our listserv is another way to become involved with CRGE. We will send you weekly updates on exciting opportunities and events that go on every day at UM and beyond. The listserv is free and anyone may join. If you'd like to be included, simply email our communications coordinator, Patrick Grzanka, [pgrzanka@umd.edu](mailto:pgrzanka@umd.edu).

This is just a sampling of the many useful resources on our site. At CRGE, social justice is about taking information from within the academy and sharing it with the community-at-large. Our innovative website is central to that mission. We hope you'll visit often. [www.crge.umd.edu](http://www.crge.umd.edu)