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Teaching Human Rights Inside and Outside the Classroom: Education Without Borders (abstract)

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2015 Conference of the University of Dayton Human Rights Center

Oct. 1-3, 2015, Dayton, Ohio

For the archive of the conference, see http://ecommons.udayton.edu/human_rights/2015/

Research Panel: Roundtable

Presenters: Shayna Plaut, Alice Kim, Lisa Brock, Carol Gray, William Simmons

Title: Teaching and Doing Human Rights Well: Developing Courses and Trainings on Methods and Ethics

Roundtable:

University courses addressing various human rights issues have grown exponentially at the undergraduate and graduate levels over the past 20 years. Most of these courses focus on specific issues and many programs require fieldwork and/or internships. In addition, the use of the international human rights language is increasingly integrated into professional training programs that are often labeled “social” issues; for example, labor, immigration or domestic violence. What is lacking, despite the resonance and inclusion of human rights issues in these and other areas, is the development of comprehensive human rights methods and ethics courses.

This roundtable seeks to bring together people engaged in human rights scholarship, teaching and training to explore the particular skills that are needed to do theoretical and applied research on human rights, human rights violations and advocacy. It will also discuss the ethics and methods of human rights work and, in so doing, will address the consequences of doing such research poorly.

The roundtable thus aims to expand the understanding of human rights education beyond issue and content to specifically address the question of how do we do intellectually robust and reflexive human rights scholarship that works to make things better in the world?

As Indigenous scholarship has taught us, good research must be evaluated on the basis of respect, reciprocity, relevance and responsibility by recognizing the ethics that are involved in *doing* such work. Thus, the roundtable aims to work towards developing a conversation around the *methods* of human rights academic and applied academic work. In this way one can develop best practices as well note concerns in current practice.

Biographies:

Lisa Brock (a.k.a. Doc Brock) is the Academic Director of the Arcus Center of Social Justice Leadership. Her articles on Africa and the African Diaspora have appeared in dozens of academic journals and as book chapters. Lisa is also on the editorial collective of the Radical History Review and the Board of the Davis Putter Scholarship Fund. An activist all her life, Lisa has fought for girls’ rights and Black rights in her native Cincinnati, Ohio area and against police violence and judicial misconduct in Washington D.C. She became a leader in the anti-apartheid movement in Chicago and lived in Mozambique as a Fulbright Scholar where she successfully merged her academic interest with southern African Social Justice struggles. She worked to co-found the Chicago Anti-Apartheid Movement Collection at Columbia College Chicago (CCC) and led the effort to endow an international travel scholarship at CCC. She also successfully developed study abroad programs in South Africa and Cuba. As an historian and activist, Lisa is an internationalist who views history as a way to enter contemporary discussions about race, class, gender, and global inequalities. Lisa attended Oberlin College and earned her B.A. from Howard University and her Ph.D. in African History from Northwestern University.

Alice Kim is an educator, cultural organizer, activist, and writer. You can find her instigating, building, and conspiring. More specifically, she teaches and develops curriculum for the Gender and Women's Studies program and Social Justice Initiative at the University of Illinois at Chicago. A long-time death penalty and prison abolitionist, Alice is a founding member of the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials project, a collective that documents the history of Chicago police torture through the arts and seeks justice for the survivors of police torture. She was previously the Director of The Public Square, a program of the Illinois Humanities Council that creates spaces for public conversations about social, political and cultural issues. She also worked as the Program Director for the Campaign to End the Death Penalty and the Consortium Administrator for the Women's Interagency HIV Study. Alice received her B.A. from Northwestern University, M.A. from DePaul University, and most recently, her M.F.A. from Bennington College Writing Seminars. She is a humanist, an optimistic realist, and a pragmatic dreamer. But mostly, she's a lover of wise words, radical imagination, the pursuit of social justice, and evocative art, books, and poetry.

Shayna Plaut is obsessed with how people represent themselves – especially people who do not fit in well with the traditional “nation-state” model. She has the unshakable (at times idealistic) belief that realities can be challenged and power changed by the pen, the brush and the lens. Shayna has designed and taught courses on human rights and human rights reporting to journalists and future producers of culture in the United States and Canada since 2004. Among other things, Shayna Plaut earned her PhD at the University of British Columbia focusing on the intersections of journalism, human rights and social change with people who identify with being transnational. Her academic work focuses on how Romani (Gypsy) and Saami (the Indigenous peoples in the Nordic Arctic) journalists teach their own how to be journalists – and what we can learn as we try and develop better reporting on human rights. Since 2000, Shayna served in a variety of leadership positions with Amnesty International and Amnesty USA including the Human Rights Education Coordinator for the Midwest Region of Amnesty International USA. She received her MA from the University of Chicago and her BA from Antioch College. Shayna has two cats and refuses to color within the lines.