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Winter Symposium

Winter Symposium 2017

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Feb 8th, 8:00 AM - 12:30 PM

## Program Presentation

Portland State University

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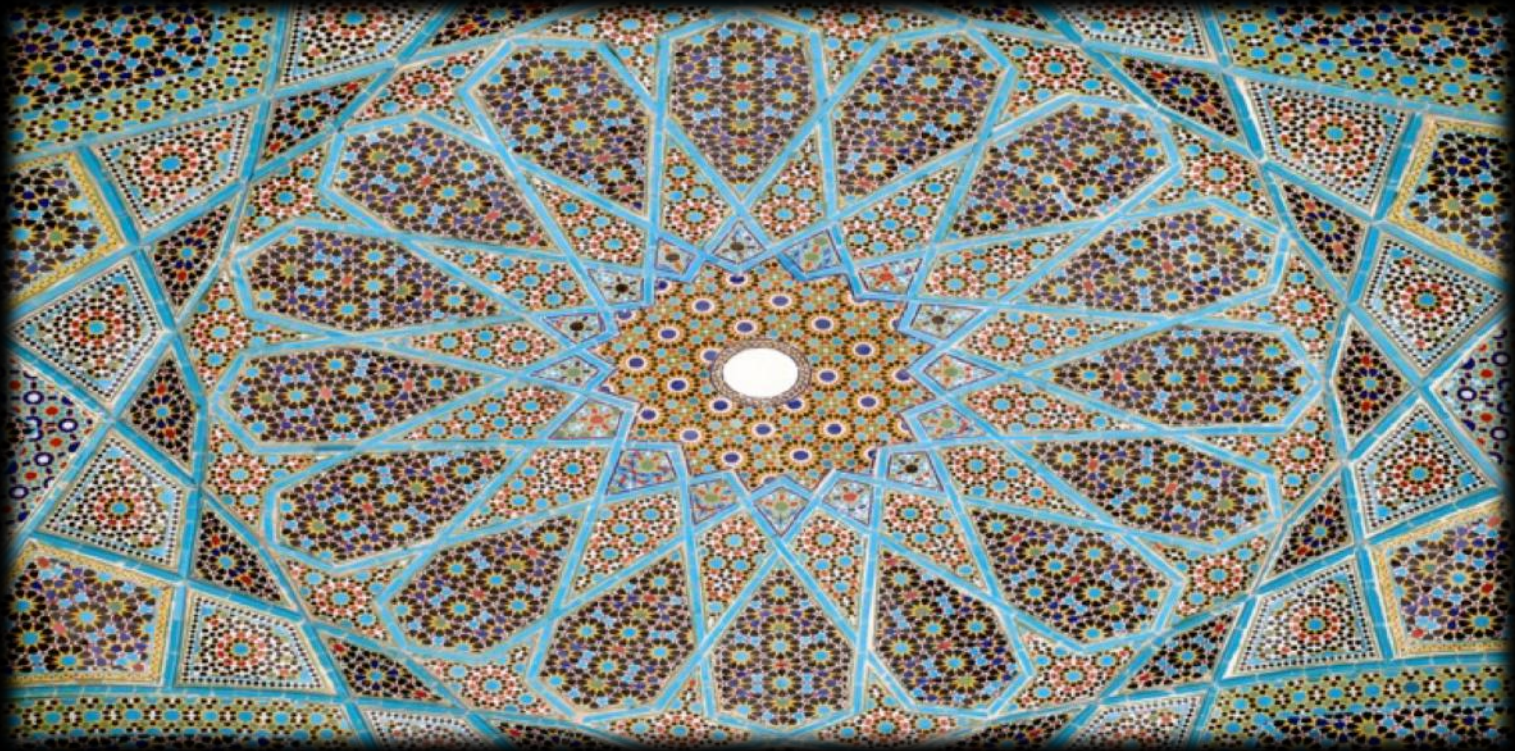


# Community Engagement, Equity, and Social Justice

Winter Symposium, 2017  
Portland State University  
Vanessa Andreotti  
and Sonali Sangeeta Balajee



We are all connected.



We all benefit when all of us  
are thriving.



# Acknowledgments

**Indigenous people and original inhabitants of this region:** Multnomah, Umatilla, Siletz, Grand Ronde, Warm Springs, and more

**Partners and Resources:** Portland State University (specifically Sona Andrews, Amy Spring, Lisa Grady-Willis, Celine Fitzmaurice, and the Partnership Council), Multnomah County, John Powell and the Haas Institute, Coalition of Communities of Color, Race Forward, indigenous and other community-of-color-based leaders and healers, Kellogg Foundation, Government Alliance on Race and Equity

**Larger movements:** For economic, ecological, cognitive, racial, and gender justice, and collective liberation

[http://relacionesinternacionales.media/wp-content/uploads/  
2016/05/1\\_030416011403.jpg](http://relacionesinternacionales.media/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/1_030416011403.jpg)



# Agenda

- Framing and Context: Experimenting with a Different Kind of Space
- Recognizing Normalized Imaginaries
- Holistic View of Change: Clearly Seeing The Scope of Reform

Rest (~10:15-10:30)

- Supporting Alternatives and Life-Sustaining Solutions
- Deconstructing Barriers, Reducing Harm, and Transforming
- Going Forth: Resiliency, Strength, and Sustainability
- Closing: Reflections and Next Steps





# Limitations, Tensions

- Complexity around context nationally and locally – hard to read the moment
- Not a cure all nor an easy fix
- Risk of paralysis, feeling overwhelmed
- Balancing accessibility and expression with integrity to self and principles
- Equity work to date still affected by greater pervasive systems of capitalism, oppression, and institutions that embody them
- Challenges of necessary time, will, structures to learn deeply
- Our own limitations and conditions: schooling, experience of race / gender / ableism / orientation, capacity, our own patterns of behavior, complicit in capitalism, our own biases, our experiences in this work
- Unrealistic expectations of speed, pace, depth and support required for change



# First (most difficult) steps

Learning to walk differently together in a foggy road, experiencing, stumbling and learning from failure, requires ...

- spaces for sober, holistic, multi-voiced and socially accountable engagements
- transitional frames: vocabularies, mappings, tools that enable us to expand and deepen conversations and relationships



# Experimenting with a different space

## inquiry

the stories we tell,  
what we want them to do,  
what they show and what they hide,  
where they come from,  
where they lead us to,  
how they enable or constrain  
possibilities for  
co-existence and change...

## pedagogy

opening our imaginaries for  
other possible ways to tell stories,  
other beginnings, endings, framings,  
other ways of knowing, being,  
relating, walking...  
in ***non-coercive*** ways.



# Experimenting with a different space

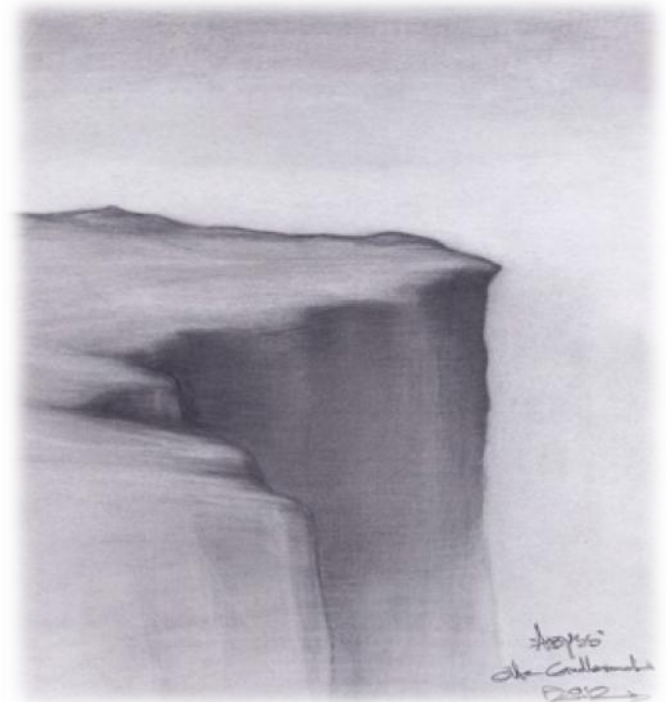
**hosting**

ourselves, each other, conflict  
in the face of  
complexity, uncertainty, ambivalence  
asymmetry, vulnerability, incommensurability  
with courage, humility, sobriety, discernment

# “Normalized” Imaginaries



# “Normalized” Imaginaries



Not what we don't imagine as an extension of our knowledge, but what we **CANNOT** imagine from within our realms of intelligibility (normalized imaginaries).

Souza Santos, B. (2007) 'Beyond abyssal thinking: from global lines to ecologies of knowledges', *Revista Critica de Ciencias Sociais*, 80. Available at <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-06-29-santos-en.html> . Last accessed February 26, 2016.

# “Normalized” Imaginaries

engagement

**H**egemonic (reinforce/justify status quo)

**E**thnocentric (project one view as universal)

**A**historical (forget historical legacies and complicities)

**D**epoliticized (disregard power inequalities & ideologies)

**S**alvationist/Self-serving (invested in  
congratulatory heroism)

**U**n-complicated (offer ‘feel good’ quick fixes)

**P**aternalistic (waiting for a ‘thank you’)

# “Normalized” Imaginaries

inclusion

## tokenization

(you were brought here so that business can go on as usual)

## display

(you should be available for an equity photograph)

## debt

(you have your place, you should be grateful)

## burden

(your job is to meet all needs)

## trap

(if you articulate a problem, you become the problem)

## betrayal/cost

(your investments must align with ours)

## subservience

(your body is an extension of our entitlements)

Arjiss  
of the Gullerian  
2012

# “Normalized” Imaginaries

Self-awareness

what we think, say and do

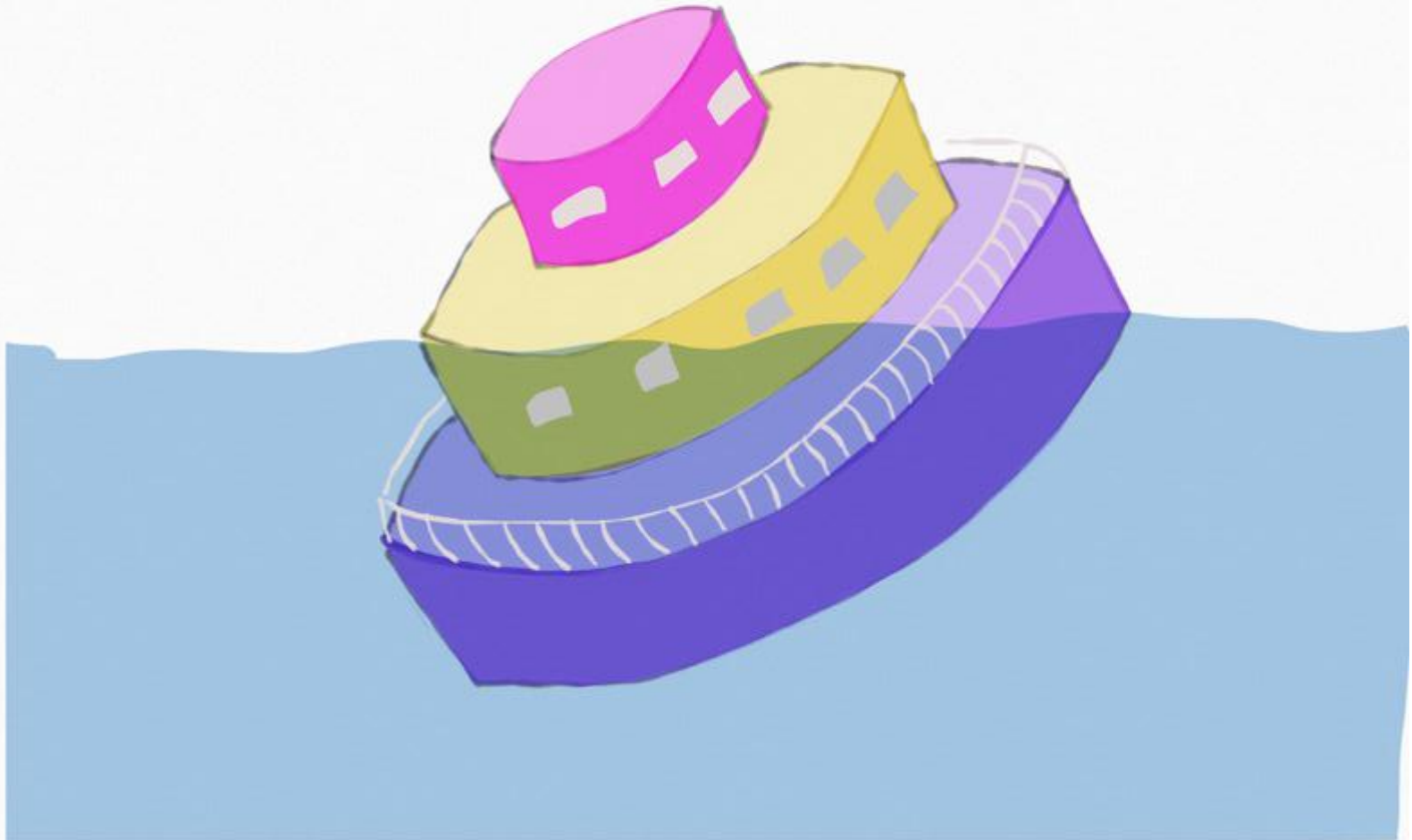
Self-reflection

our personal journeys

Self-reflexivity

our inherited referents for knowing and being

# “Normalized” Imaginaries



# Dispositions of engagement

**Table: Dispositions of engagement**

| <b>disposition</b>           | <b><i>affect</i></b>            | <b>intellectual frame</b>   |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>right vs wrong</b>        | <i>(defensive)</i>              | <b>absolute certainty</b><br>search for firm grounds, correct answers, deep desire for affirmation and consensus  |
| <b>transition</b>            | <i>(discomfort / confusion)</i> | <b>partial certainty</b> and <b>partial uncertainty</b><br>not comfortable with ground shifting, search for familiar, authoritative and affirming knowledge               |
| <b>absolute relativism</b>   | <i>(quick fix / angst)</i>      | <b>many possible 'right answers'</b> ,<br>being selective in putting together different knowledge systems   |
| <b>contextual relativism</b> | <i>(pause / discernment)</i>    | <b>knowledge is constructed and context dependent</b> , seeing different answers, and that each answer depends on their context of production and where they are situated |
| <b>liminal knowing</b>       | <i>(humility)</i>               | focus on <b>the limits of knowing</b><br>contemplating other possibilities that were impossible to imagine before   |
| <b>de-centered openness</b>  | <i>(disarmed)</i>               | <b>'presencing'</b> , relating beyond the need for meaning, identity or understanding, deep listening   |



# Framing Equity

## Strategic Goal 4: Expanding Our Commitment To Equity

“Ensuring everyone has access to opportunities necessary to satisfy essential needs, advance their well-being, and achieve their full potential. Our aim is to address the roots of inequities, including but not limited to racism, homophobia, sexism, ableism, classism, and the intersections of these inequities. We commit to inclusion of historically marginalized communities and those underrepresented in higher education.”

PSU Strategic Plan 2016-2020



# Framing Community Engagement

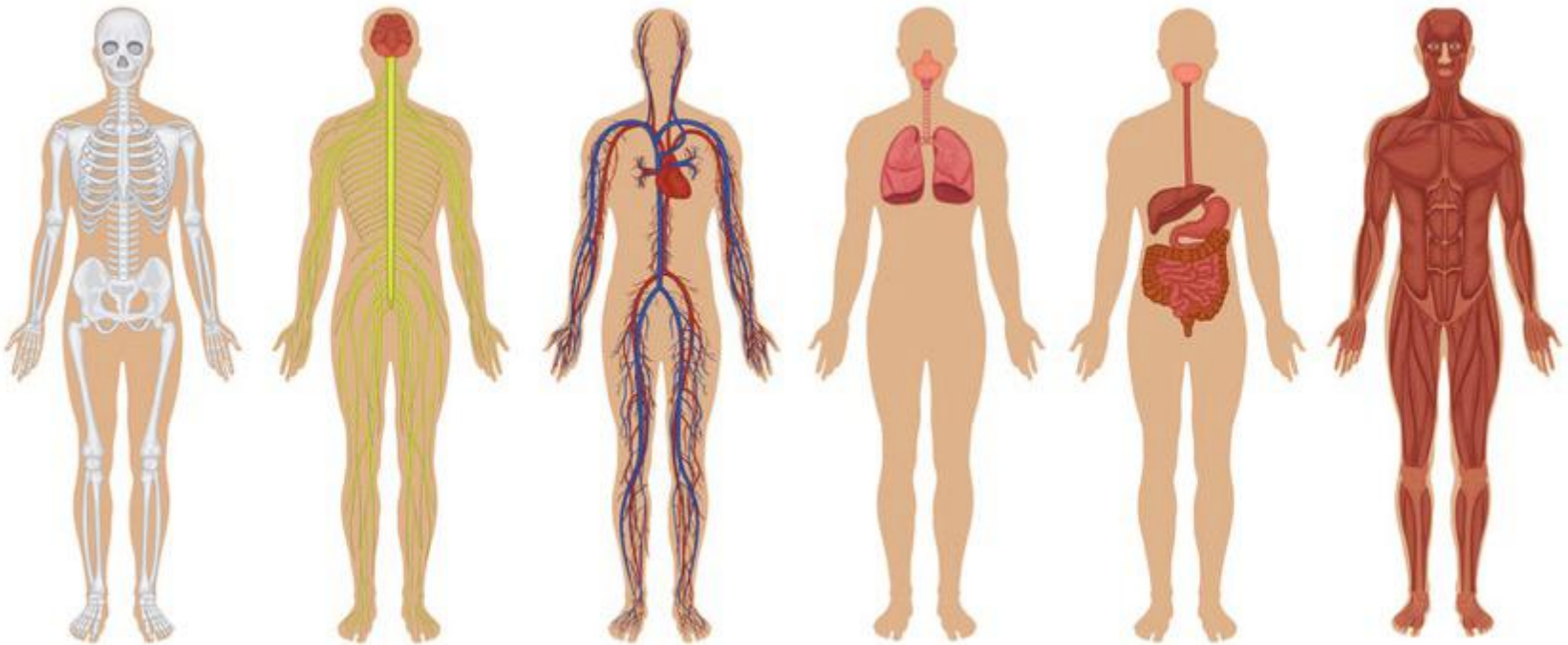
- To en•gage (from Webster's Dictionary)
  - "to interlock with"
  - "to deal [work] with, especially at length"
  - "to come together, interlock"
- Means through which there can be a shift in caring from the individual to the wellbeing of the whole
- What are we committing to? What can we responsibly commit to?
- What and who drive our vision for community engagement, and how often do we engage with its re-definition and with whom?
- PSU Engagement and Partnership Spectrum:  
Community Engagement, Co-Curricular Student Engagement, Professional Development, Research and Sponsored Projects, Strategic Partnerships

# Holistic View of Change: Clearly Seeing The Scope



Source: Gary Halverson, Oregon State Archives

# Holistic, transformational systems approach



**What parts and systems of the body politic do we miss?  
Why?**



# The Whole System: Community Engagement and Equity Revisited

- ...Policies AND practices AND purpose-driven
- ...Ecosystem AND all species
- ...Students AND staff AND faculty AND leadership AND channels
- ...Heart AND mind AND skeletal structure
- ...Relational AND structural
- ...Root causes AND branches AND symptoms
- ...Parts AND whole
- ...Social justice AND racial equity
- ...Social suffering AND spiritual suffering
- ...Belonging AND othering
- ...Individual AND systemic

Uplift the areas that we shut out, know why we shut them out,  
Interrupt perpetuating their exclusion.

# Different Perspectives on Social Change

## Soft Reform

To make the same world a little bit better through personal transformation and individual action

(MAKE A DIFFERENCE)

Individually focused analyses, single story, simple solutions, self-affirming, comfort

SAME QUESTIONS,  
SAME ANSWERS

Recognition of a dominant way of knowing

## Radical Reform

To make the same world a lot better by including more people, voices and perspectives in collective action.

(RETHINK, INCLUDE)

Systemic & historical analyses, multiple perspectives, self-implicating, complex solutions, discomfort

SAME QUESTIONS,  
DIFFERENT ANSWERS

Recognition of a dominant way of being

## Beyond Reform

To disinvest in the current unsustainable world and to walk with others into the possibility of new worlds .

(IMAGINE the IMPOSSIBLE)

Systemic & historical analyses a step further, realizing false promises and contradictions, undoing of modern structure of being

DIFFERENT QUESTIONS,  
DIFFERENT ANSWERS

# PSU contributions to the whole





# International, National, and State Context

- Kellogg Foundation: Truth, Healing, and Transformation Initiative – Higher Ed Centers
- Governing Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)
- Georgetown University
- Learner / student expectations: Equity and healing as 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies
- Oregon Campus Compact: Executive Learning Series on Equity and Empowerment (ELSEE)
- International examples



# Engagement 2: Questions

- What community engagement, equity, and justice look and feel like in each of these strands or columns?
- Where do your thinking and practices, and the practices and policies of your institution fit and sit in this mapping of your perspectives today? Where would you like them to be?

# Break



# Supporting Alternatives and Life-Sustaining Solutions






bridging

engaging

bonding

dissolving

inter-wovenness



# Creating Alternatives: Belonging, Wholeness and Racial Equity


- Calls for both addressing ontological and social suffering, noticing imbalances, and re-balancing
- Requires a justice-orientation bent
- Calls for eliminating barriers and promoting life-sustaining solutions
- Defined by multiple paradigms – no one owns racial healing nor racial equity
- Emphasizes healing as well as decolonizing and deconstructing.
- Leads to healthier intra and inter relationships

[http://relacionesinternacionales.media/wp-content/uploads/  
2016/05/1\\_030416011403.jpg](http://relacionesinternacionales.media/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/1_030416011403.jpg)



# A few helpful practices

- Spend time radically envisioning. Be aware of how you hold creativity back, and where. Interrupt the barriers you place on yourself and others.
- Broadly, value and embody healthy and healing spaces for growth, innovation, love and empathy
- Encourage critical thinking and dissent, create conditions and structures that lead to positive cultural identity for people experiencing injustices
- Bond emerging alternatives with necessary structures and resources to support them.




# Engagement 3: Creating Alternatives and Life-Sustaining Solutions

Questions:

- What would you like to more about?
- What might be critical for your institution to invest in?

# Deconstructing Barriers, Reducing Harm, and Transforming Relations

*Artist: Yinka Shonibare. a HOUSE 2014 and Brighton Festival co-commission. [https://  
www.turnercontemporary.org/exhibitions/yinka-shonibare-mbe](https://www.turnercontemporary.org/exhibitions/yinka-shonibare-mbe)*



# A Historical Legacy: Role of Higher Education In Racial Inequity

- Campuses built on Indigenous land to promote settler rule
- Enslaved peoples were used to maintain campuses, and overall, contributed to growing institutional wealth.
- Higher education furthered race research both in the States and Europe, creating and fostering theories of biological supremacy and inferiority
- Academia has been a tool of imperialism
- Academia created and sustained the production of knowledge that fostered a dominant way of being, 'doing,' and acting.


Source: Wilder, Craig Steven. Ebony and Ivy. Bloomsbury Press, NY. 2013.

Kara Walker (American, born 1969), The Emancipation  
Approximation (Scene 18), 1999–2000, courtesy the artist



# Barriers: The Blockages to Equity

- Occur at individual, institutional, community, and systemic levels
- Can be internally facing, and externally facing
- Have impacts emotionally, physically, socioeconomically, politically, and spiritually
- Both structural and relational
- Examples include: political, being blindly complicit, legal, financial, unexamined assumptions and practices, emotional, and more



# Engagement 4: Deconstructing Barriers, Reducing Harms, and Transforming

- What are a few barriers / restraining forces that exist to the integration of community engagement and equity work
- Who is experiencing these barriers in your context? how do you know? What is the impact of these barriers?

# Resiliency, Strength, and Sustainability



# Resistance as white blood cells

Source: Melody Patry



# Fighting the infection

- The benefits of having a fever politically:
  - Stimulates the political immune system to produce more supports
  - Higher temps help kill off invasive elements and organisms
- Resistance dispels invisibility and disappearance
- Resistance heals when we tap something beyond our individual selves
- Resistance helps us realize our visceral sense of being inter-woven in each other
- For people of color, resistance also includes interrupting becoming instruments of oppressive systems
- Resistance is a learning process and requires radical interruptions with normalized ways of knowing and being.



non-cognitive,  
non-verbal

pause

sympathetic

para-sympathetic

food and  
drink for  
health

breathe

inter-wovenness



# Engagement 5: Going Forth – Resiliency, Strength, and Sustainability

What are some ideas to support the resiliency of students, staff, and leadership during this time of great transition and stress?



Thank you!

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