Letter from the Chairs

Dear CESJ community,

As this new school year begins, we recommit to our ongoing work. As a community, CESJ stands with those who are marginalized and oppressed, and we remain committed to dismantling power structures, protecting communities from violence (physical, institutional, and symbolic), and working toward justice in education. At this current moment, individuals feel emboldened by the hate speech perpetuated by this administration as witnessed in Charlottesville. While the violence toward and disrespect of people of color, women, LGBTQ communities, and religious minorities by the current administration and its followers is overt, we know that this is the legacy and foundation of our country.

We must firmly denounce the repeal of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and all other proposed and ongoing policies that exacerbate inequalities and further marginalize members of our communities and global society. We must also remember to honor and celebrate the victories, like the declaration of the unconstitutionality of Arizona’s termination of Mexican American studies in Tucson, Arizona. Judge Tashima explicitly stated that the closure of the ethnic studies program was motivated by racism and political opportunism.

We aim for the Critical Educators for Social Justice SIG to serve as a community for exchange of ideas and to offer critical hope, radical healing, and a community of collective care. It is our hope that we can provide support to each other in our efforts to discuss these events with our students and incorporate critical viewpoints in our teaching, scholarship, and activism.

As critical scholars, we understand that we have the privilege and responsibility to use our voice to continue to agitate and create change. We are especially thinking about the ethical complexities of social justice scholarship and activism: we must ensure our work furthers the vision and priorities of the communities we purport to serve. We must neither allow our privilege to lead us to take over or supersede community leadership and activism, nor lull us into complacency within white supremacist institutional systems.

We will be hosting a webinar soon to invite more dialogue around these critical issues. Please stay tuned for future events and connect with us on Facebook to network with like-minded critical scholars.
AERA Updates

Below are some resources that might support your work.

Our Children Deserve Better: A Call to Resist Washington’s Dangerous Vision for U.S. Education
(Education Deans for Social Justice)
Charlottesville Syllabus: Readings on the History of Hate in America
Charlottesville organizers ask you to take these 8 actions
UWD #HereToStay Toolkit for Educators
How DACA Affects the Health of America’s Children
800,000 Reasons to Teach about DACA
One of 7 Asian American Immigrants is Undocumented
Victory for Mexican American Studies in Arizona: An Interview with Curtis Acosta
Relevant Resistance in the Classroom
Yes, Race and Politics Belong in the Classroom
There is No Apolitical Classroom

In Solidarity,
Kari Kokka & Wayne Au, CESJ Co-chairs

CESJ Business Meeting and Social
The 2017 CESJ business meeting took place Saturday, April 28th, with the timely theme “Resist, Disrupt, Refuse”. Past CESJ Board Co-Chair Bianca Baldridge began the meeting with an acknowledgement of the tumultuous political and social climate that is sweeping the nation and leaving no marginalized community untouched. She reiterated that the theme of the business meeting was not only an appeal for our members to remain vigilant in opposing injustices, but a larger demand for AERA as a collective body to call out and contest individual and collective injustices. The business meeting also recognized and celebrated the 2017 award winners. The much anticipated highlight of the night was an invigorating discussion of our theme moderated by current CESJ Board Co-Chair Wayne Au and featuring panelists: Arshad Ali, Ed Brockenbrough, Dolores Calderon, Julio Cammarota, Rita Kohli, Erica Meiners, and Daniel Solórzano. The business meeting concluded with a group photo of Dr. Solórzano surrounded by past and current mentees, a fitting tribute to a “Revolutionary Mentor” whose influence continues to reach far and wide. The evening continued at the first annual Super SIG Social at Rita’s on the River. CESJ joined with members of Queer Studies, Critical Issues in Curriculum and Cultural Studies, and Post Colonial Studies and Education to continue discussions of radical resistance in their scholarly and community work. The Executive Board of CESJ thanks everyone who made the business meeting and Super SIG Social a success!
AERA Updates

Early Career Scholar Forum
The CESJ Early Career Scholar Forum is designed to support early-career tenure track faculty, non-tenure track faculty, and postdoctoral scholars. In 2017, our 2nd annual Scholar Forum brought together almost 40 early career CESJ members at Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio. The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center was founded in 1980, and is one of the largest community-based, multidisciplinary organizations in the U.S. Their mission is to cultivate, promote and preserve traditional and contemporary Chicano, Latino and Native American arts and culture through multidisciplinary programming, which made it a great space to host the forum.

The planning committee, Drs. Laura Quaynor, Leslie Locke, Alison Dover, Kelly Brown, Shantá Robinson, and Nini Hayes invited respected scholars and comrades, Drs. Erica Davila, Bree Picower, Michael Dumas, and Carolina Valdez to be panelists. In a communal, interactive, and intimate setting, participants explored themes about navigating different university contexts as a social justice scholars, publishing and advocating for justice-oriented scholarship, and balancing scholar-activism, wellness, and the demands of the academy. If interested in attending the 2018 CESJ Early Career Scholar Forum stay tuned for emails from CESJ.

Graduate Student Forum
Graduate students Arturo Nevarez, Kari Kokka, Malayka Cornejo, Farima Pour-Khorshid, Aja Reynolds, and Josephine Pham invited Dr. Crystal Laura, Dr. Sonia Nieto, and Dr. Michael Dumas to join as the distinguished panelists. Participants engaged in a Beyonce/Solange ice breaker, small group discussions, and interacted with panelists through a discussion moderated by Aja Reynolds. The Esperanza Center for Peace and Justice was the perfect venue to host the Graduate Student Forum. The founders shared their history of being founded by Chicana activists committed to bringing together diverse movements to work collectively toward peace and justice.

Feedback included comments like the following: “This was my first AERA and starting it with you all was amazing. It was a great way to start the conference and build community.” “I am awe inspired and privileged to be part of this amazing event. Having one on one time with these amazing scholars was inspirational and gave me a lot to think about.” If interested in attending the 2018 CESJ Graduate Student Forum be on the look-out for emails from CESJ.
Dissertation
Bailey Smolarek
UW-Madison
Honorable Mention:
Dawn Sherman

Scholar Activist & Community Advocacy
Rita Kohli
UC Riverside
Honorable Mention:
Ty-Ron Douglas

Revolutionary Mentor
Daniel Solórzano
UC Los Angeles
Honorable Mention:
Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz

2017 Awards

Thank you to all the 2017 committee volunteers!
Please consider joining a committee this year, descriptions on the next page!
The time has come again for us to begin the process of soliciting volunteers for our 2018 AERA Pre-Conference Forums and SIG Awards! We hope that you consider serving on a forum or awards committee! If you’re interested in volunteering to join a committee, please contact the appropriate board member by November 1, 2017 to indicate your interest in serving on the committee.

Outstanding Dissertation Award
This award recognizes doctoral level research that utilizes critical theory and focuses on the struggle for social, environmental, racial and/or economic justice or human rights. This award includes a $300 stipend towards the cost of attending the AERA conference. Please contact the committee chair, Beth Sondel bsondel@pitt.edu

Dr. Antonio Nieves Martinez Scholar-Activist & Community Advocacy Award
This award recognizes a scholar-activist (any rank) who has made significant contribution to the promotion of social, environmental, racial and/or economic justice or human rights through collaboration with community partners (this new award has collapsed the Scholar Activist and Community Advocacy Awards). Community activism can be broadly conceptualized and can include political action, service, grassroots organizing and any other advocacy work that directly benefits community members. The AERA member and their community partner(s) will share this award. Please contact the committee chair, Alison Dover adover@fullerton.edu. **This award was renamed in 2017 to honor the life of Antonio Nieves Martinez, a co-founder of the People’s Education Movement and treasured member of the CESJ community.

Revolutionary Mentor Award
This new CESJ award recognizes the essential role mentorship plays in supporting critical scholarship. This award recognizes a scholar who has made distinguished contributions in the mentoring of PK-12 students, undergraduate and graduate students, and/or junior scholars, as a means of helping to develop critical social justice scholars, educators, and activists. We seek to honor a scholar (at any rank) who has been vital in supporting others in their research, teaching, and/or critical community engagement. We want to highlight scholars who encourage, support, and help guide critical scholarship inside and outside of the academy. Please contact the committee co-chairs, Shantá Robinson srrobinson@uchicago.edu and Carolina Valdez cavaldez@fullerton.edu.

Graduate Student Forum
The Graduate Student Forum is a day-long forum to connect critical graduate student scholars to each other and to more senior scholars in the field. The forum typically includes small group discussions, a panel with scholar activists, and other networking activities. The purpose of the Graduate Student Forum is to create space for doctoral students committed to and engaged in social justice and critical education research to 1) Help prepare critical scholars for future scholarship and related work. 2) Identify strategies and tools to share and take back to our colleagues, students, communities, and home institutions. 3) Learn from scholars and peers about the possibilities and tensions that arise in social justice and critical education research. Please contact Malayka Neith Cornejo barbara.cornejo@unlv.edu

Early Career Scholar Forum
The forum is open to early-career tenure track faculty, non-tenure track faculty, and postdoctoral scholars. During the forum, participants gather with scholar-mentors from CESJ to discuss various topics related to research and scholarship, teaching, community-engaged scholarship, and service. The purpose of the forum is to provide early career scholars with 1) a sense of community with scholars committed to critical scholarship and social justice; 2) mentorship from a range of scholars (junior and senior level colleagues); 3) practical tools and strategies for navigating academic contexts; 4) a chance to network and build community with other CESJ early career scholars. Please contact Nini Hayes ninihayes@gmail.com and Sosanya Jones sosanya@gmail.com
Curtis Acosta on MAS Court Case

Many members of CESJ have been following the legislative controversies regarding ethnic studies in K-12 classrooms, and specifically the court case related to Mexican American Studies program in Tuscon Unified School District. In September, a federal judge ruled that the elimination of MAS was both a violation of the constitutional rights of students and motivated by—in the words of Judge A. Wallace Tashima—“racial animus” and a “desire to advance a political agenda and by capitalizing on race-based fears.”

The following excerpts are from Ari Bloomekatz’ recent Rethinking Schools interview of Dr. Curtis Acosta, who taught for 20 years in Tucson with the Mexican American Studies program and was a plaintiff in some of the initial legal challenges to the ban. To read the interview in full, visit the Rethinking Schools blog at https://www.rethinkingschools.org/blog

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ARI BLOOMEKATZ: Were you surprised by the verdict?

CURTIS ACOSTA: Shocked is better than surprised…We were definitely shocked with the intensity, and the care, and the totality of the victory. Judge Tashima's legal analysis was just exhaustive in how he connected all of the actions, both in the production and construction of the law as being highly motivated by racial animus, to the application, to the enforcement. It was amazing, so that's the reason the word shocked comes to mind. Just an incredible moment in history and an incredible punctuation to a long journey….it was just shocking to hear the clarity and the affirmation, the validity of our program, of my colleagues and me. Our integrity was restored through a 9th Circuit judge. This is the United States of America judicial system, it's pretty amazing to think that Mexican American students and the Mexican American community and ourselves as Mexican American teachers could find this form of justice.

BLOOMEKATZ: What was it that really happened? What did Judge Tashima see? When you think of the evidence that he focused on, what do you think of?

ACOSTA: Well there are the obvious ones that started permeating the national consciousness — unfortunately posthumously after our program had been dismantled. [Former Arizona State Superintendent of Instruction] Huppenthal's racist blog post kind of revealed the person beneath the veneer. He tried to project a sense of this great patriarchal protector of these poor Mexican American kids and he was trying to do right by them. But doing right by them in his mind was ripping away the greatest program in the history of our state for these youth?

BLOOMEKATZ: They went to the ends of the earth to go after this program. Why do you think they were just so absolutely threatened by it?

ACOSTA: We need to look to history, we need to look in the mirror at who we are, what this country has been built on, both the good and the tragic. And I'll never forget, my good friend and our director of Mexican American Studies, Sean Arce — we were in a meeting like eight superintendents ago in TUSD, he was talking to the superintendent, saying you have to understand that Arizona, the state has, from the inception of our state, has had negative and hostile sentiments toward Mexican Americans. Mexicans first, and now Mexican Americans. It's been with us for a long time, for over 100 years. So that's still in the bloodstream. We can't ignore the historical memory. It's definitely still with us… And I think there's a lot of value in looking back at our ancestors and gathering strength from the generations before us so that we can make better and informed decisions.
ACOSTA: …if we want to be who we already are, which is a nation that’s turning toward a multicultural, multilingual, pluralistic place — we’re always going to have English as this dominant language, I don’t think that’s to be debated — but to stomp out other languages, to stomp out other cultures, that’s a mindset that comes from a very dark part of the way this country was built, and I think we’re evidence of how one can get caught up in that. The tonic, the antidote to this is to learn about one another and to enjoy that. It’s something that our students and our classrooms were unabashed about loving one another and learning about each other and creating space for that, too.

Our students know where the country’s going much more than we do, and we need to tap into that, and all that stuff frightens these folks. Another part of [former Arizona Attorney General] Tom Horne’s testimony… is he was offended by how we talked about our pedagogy…. He is a person that doesn’t believe in constructivist and co-construc-tive-types of education. He was very firm: The teacher should teach, the students should listen. Very much this patriarchal, paternalistic, asymmetrical power relationship. He loves that. He thinks that’s wonderful. That one teacher should be the fount of information. It’s very much anti-Freire, anti-Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy. He thinks that’s damaging to students, literally said that, thus he thought we were damaging.

BLOOMEKATZ: Why is this program so important for young people?

ACOSTA: I love answering that question. There are many particular, small, nuanced ways that our program may have been unique, but I think just flat out, if you boil it down, the space was powerful because it was a space where the students felt not only safe, but a space where they could be brave, a space where they could grow into their own strength. And we did that by being very real with our students about our expectations, how much we loved them, and what love means in a classroom and that we were working not only for them but for their grandparents, and for those that came before them, and that they needed to work for our children, and the young ones coming up, and that we had this understanding that we were in this beautiful space together to work to get better as human beings.
The CESJ Board

Wayne Au: Co-Chair
Wayne is a former public high school teacher, is a Professor in the School of Educational Studies at the University of Washington Bothell, and he is an editor for the social justice teaching magazine and publisher, Rethinking Schools. Au’s scholar-activism focuses on critical education theory and practice, specifically high-stakes testing, education policy, anti-racist education, and curriculum studies. His most recent book, with Brown and Calderon, is Reclaiming the Multicultural Roots of U.S. Curriculum (TC Press, 2016), and he is currently co-editing the forthcoming Rethinking Schools’ books on Teaching for Black Lives and Rethinking Ethnic Studies.

Alison G. Dover: Communications Co-Chair
Alison G. Dover is a first generation college graduate, a former high school teacher, and an Assistant Professor in the Secondary Education Department at California State University, Fullerton. She’s been a member of CESJ since 2010. Alison’s research examines social justice-oriented teacher agency in K-12 and teacher education contexts, with an emphasis on curricular, pedagogical, and activist responses to unjust and restrictive policies. Her recent publications include Preparing to Teach Social Studies for Social Justice: Becoming a Renegade (2016, Teachers College Press), and articles in Teaching and Teacher Education, The Educational Forum, English Journal, and Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy.

Nini Hayes: Program Co-Chair
Nini Hayes is an Assistant Professor in Environmental Education at Western Washington University. Her teaching, learning, and research is centered on equity, justice in education, and the laboring of critical and justice-centered faculty of color, their work both within and beyond the academy. Prior to graduate school, she was a former fifth grade teacher and environmental educator. She has been both a participant and planner for both the CESJ Graduate Student Forum and Early Career Scholars Forum.

Sosanya Jones: Fiscal Co-Chair
Sosanya is an assistant professor of Qualitative Research Methods and Higher Education in the Department of Educational Administration and Higher Education at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. Sosanya currently serves as Co-President of the SIUC Black Staff and Faculty Council. Last year she created a student centered Diversity Symposium which featured student proposals for addressing equity and inclusion for different populations at SIUC. Sosanya's research interests include governmental policies and practices related to equity and access, the politics of campus diversity, and creating better support, training, and contemplative practice for diversity professionals in higher education.
The CESJ Board

Kari Kokka: Co-Chair
Kari Kokka is an Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education at the University of Pittsburgh. She studies Social Justice Mathematics, STEM teacher activism, and retention of STEM teachers of color in urban schools. Prior to her doctoral studies, she was a math teacher for 11 years in Title I public high schools. Kari completed her doctorate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and earned her M.A. and B.S. at Stanford University. She is co-founder of the Creating Balance in an Unjust World Conference on STEM Education and Social Justice and a core member of the People’s Education Movement Bay Area.

Shantá R. Robinson: Program Co-Chair
Shantá R. Robinson began her professional career as a high school history teacher in Charlotte, NC. She earned her PhD in educational studies at the University of Michigan, where she specialized in the sociology of education, qualitative methodologies, and issues of race, class, and access in secondary schooling. Her research interests include the role of social identity in marginalized students’ educational experiences, aspirations, and outcomes; empirical investigations of marginalized student achievement and underachievement; inequities in the distribution of educational resources; and the history, culture, and social organization of K-12 educational institutions. Her most recent work focuses on the educational experiences and occupational aspirations of adolescents experiencing homelessness.

Beth Sondel: Fiscal Co-chair
Beth Sondel is a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and the Center for Urban Education at the University of Pittsburgh. Sondel's research, teaching, and activism is concerned with the socio-political context of teaching, social justice pedagogy, and privatization. She completed her Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin and her M.Ed. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Prior to her doctoral work, Beth was a Middle School Language Arts and Social Studies teacher and the Director of an Arts and Science Summer Camp.

Carolina Valdez: Communications Co-Chair
Caro taught elementary school in Los Angeles while completing her Ph.D. in Urban Schooling at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research interests include critical ethnic studies pedagogy in the elementary classroom and teacher organizing. She organized in Los Angeles in several grassroots organizations, and helped found the People’s Education Movement (People’s Ed) in 2012, an organization for critical educators of color. Now an Assistant Professor at California State University, Fullerton, Carolina prepares elementary educators for social justice teaching and continues to support the development of People’s Ed chapters across the state.