

Campus-wide theme on Mass Incarceration at CWU
Introductory Meeting
June 8, 2015
Barge 304

Minutes

Present: Stacey Robertson, (Dean, CAH); Lisa Norris (English) , Manuel Rodriguez (CLCE), Gregg Schlanger (Art) Delores Cleary (Soc & President's Office), Raymond Hall (Anth). Mark Auslander (Anth), Kathleen Barlow (Anth), J. Hope Amason (Anth), Lene Pedersen (Anth), Valerie Chapman Stockwell (Public Affairs). Matt Altman,(PHIL) Judy Hennessey (SOC) , Keith Champagne (Student Success) , Bobby Cummings (English), Laila Abdala. (English, WL). Paulus Pimono (English) Anne Cubilie (DHC). Mike Harrod (SOC), Molly Allen (Library), Michele Reilly (Library), Kendyl Hardy (CCA), Melanie Palm (Centers/CE), Ryan Anderson (ASCWU), Epiphany Clark (Univ. Advancement), Travis Box (the Burg), Nikki Marra (The Burg), Michelle Cyrus (CDSJ), Kathy Gaer Carlton (Admissions), Mindie Dieu (English), Laila Abdall (English), Veronica Gomez (CDSJ), James Johnson (CDSJ), Katrina Whitney (CDSJ), Cody Stoddard (L&J), Roger Schefer (L&J), Gayla Blaisdall (Music), Christina Denison (Music), Kathy Whitcomb (ENG)

1. Overview. Dean Robertson welcomed everyone and emphasized that while she will coordinate and facilitate events throughout the year, but that individual units will take lead. Nothing is being dictated as to topic or approach. Let us try to support one another's programs and classes. A central website will serve as a clearinghouse of all activity. Please check the website before scheduling an activity. See what you connect with, to link in with other activities, and please liaise with Valerie Chapman Stockwell (Public Relations): valeriec@cwu.edu

2. Preliminary working title is: *Understanding Mass Incarceration: Origins, Analysis, Solutions*. Raymond Hall expressed the concern that this title was a little vague, and others suggested that the central problematic of racial injustice and police violence against persons of color needs to be brought to the fore. Laila Abdalla suggested keeping the emphasis on "Black and Brown Lives Matter." Stacey urged faculty to email her by end of the week with suggested titles.

3. There was some discussion about the wisdom of a strict 'chronological' sequence through the year: historical foundations (Fall) — the current crisis (Winter) - solutions (Spring). Was this, some suggested, a bit too much like a syllabus or a book proposal? Might it be better, some asked, to keep a focus on race and justice throughout the year, leavening in history, contemporary analysis, and reform through multiple events, curricular content, film screenings, and so forth?

4. There was consensus that a dramatic opening event or opening events, perhaps performance-based or an academic talk would be essential to galvanize interest and support across campus.

5. Valerie asked if the focus is US-specific or global? Lene Pedersen suggested some attention to comparative cases, including low-incarceration societies, such as Iceland.

6. Lisa Norris noted that the English Department's Lion Rock's series will feature several writers whose work is engaged with incarceration and criminal justice issues, including Rene Denfeld, author of a novel set in Death Row (Oct. 13); Fred D'Aguiar (April 19) on the Atlantic slave trade and its

legacies; Natalie Diaz (May) on Native American issues, including incarceration, and Marjorie Agosin in Spring 2016, on torture, imprisonment and the Disappeared in Chile. (The Museum of Culture and Environment will host an exhibition on art associated with the era of the Disappeared in the Spring.) Lisa also emphasized the importance of personalizing the accounts of the incarcerated; Raymond noted that for many persons of color, these stories are already highly personalized.

7. Jay Ball (Theater) noted a planned event in early October featuring students of color, celebrity athletes and others sharing stories of encounters with law enforcement, including traffic stops (the entry point for many into to the criminal justice/correctional system) as well as encounters with police use of deadly force. This event will be informed by such works as Stuart Hall's *Policing the Crisis* and Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed*.

8. Paulus Pimono (English) called for a global, comparative analysis, linking domestic policies of incarceration with a discussion of US and other nation's interventionist foreign policies that establish zones of confinement over subject peoples, as well as internal colonialisms such Native American reservation systems.

9. Bobby Cummings argued for rigorous multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary analysis, situating mass incarceration in historical contexts emerging out of slavery, the Black Codes, Jim Crow, etc., with careful attention to the psychology of oppression, and education as the pipeline to the prisons system. Incarceration is not a 'product' as some students believe of individual 'bad choices' but rather emerges out of structural forces that are historically over-determined.

10. There was some discussion of marketing strategies. (Raymond Hall suggested that term "branding" was rather inappropriate in the context of histories of racial terror.) Should there be a common logo or image for all these events? The student group Central Communication Agency has agreed to take the "mass incarceration" year as a client. Close coordination is needed with Admissions as well as efforts at recruitment, advising, and retention, especially of students of color and others from historically disenfranchised groups.

11. Manuel Rodriguez (CLCE) noted that his office will explore possible MOUs with juvenile justice and correctional facilities for serving learning initiatives. Some concerns were voiced over pursuing projects with minors; Dean Champagne noted that there has been a successful campus partnership with the Parke Creek juvenile justice center in Ellensburg for four years, and this can be built on during the coming year.

12. Mel Palm reminded us that Centers are 10 per cent of the CWU student body and need to be involved.

12. Raymond Hall argued that the central issue of race should not be glossed over.

14. Shared resources. A Canvas site would allow for shared access to PDFs of readings and bibliographies/syllabi, as well as digitized video and other teaching resources. We will get that set up. Dean Robertson hopes that the various events will be videoed and archived. Perhaps a multi authored wiki could help faculty share ideas?

15. There was some discussion of shared books across the campus. Could a book such as *The New Jim Crow* (Michelle Alexander) be adopted by Univeristy 101 and other courses? Some suggested it

would be best not to mandate books; others seemed interested in forming a reading group or book club, meeting periodically, and open on a voluntary basis to students, staff, faculty and community members.

16. Michelle Alexander's speaking fees may be prohibitive. Other speakers, such as Doug Blackmon, (*Slavery By Another Name*) and Talitha LeFlouria, (*Chained in Silence*) may be considered.

17. Kandee Cleary noted strong support is expected from the Office of the President for this initiative. Dean Robertson indicated there is a current search for internal support, and interest in seeking external donors and Foundation support and linkages with other universities.

18. Dean Robertson in summary emphasized the need for a hard-hitting, meaningful conversation on this campus on racial justice that speaks to on-campus issues of retention and students success as well as the broader ethical responsibilities of a university and of higher education in the wider public sphere. We need to think about how to assess each event's impact. Let us reflect, Bobby Cummings stated, on the implications for curricular change.

Dean Robertson will propose a mid-summer planning meeting, perhaps in July. Please send her all suggestions and ideas: SRobertson@cwu.edu

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Auslander
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