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Communications

Lily Xu
Paul Kuttner

Alumni of Color Conference

Harvard Graduate School of
Education
Office of Student Affairs
101 Larsen Hall
Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138
Aocc2009@gmail.com

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Dear Mr. Rodriguez,

In the spirit of "to whom much is given much is expected," the theme of this year's Toni Morrison (1992) inspired AOCC conference is **Response-Ability: Using Dissonance and Delight for Justice**. Whether we find ourselves in schools, policy organizations, or research institutions that evoke dissonance or delight, we aim to cultivate and activate our *ability to respond* to historic and contemporary racial inequality. As Bonilla-Silva (2001) explains,

"...Persistent inequality experienced by blacks and other racial minorities...is due to the *continued* albeit *changed* existence of racial structure...[R]acial practices that reproduce racial inequality in contemporary America are (1) increasingly covert, (2) embedded in normal operations of institutions, (3) void of direct racial terminology, and (4) invisible to most..." (p. 48).

Acknowledging our responsibility to respond to this persistent racial inequality and a need to build our capacity to respond, we enthusiastically extend an invitation for you to participate on a panel during our conference occurring **February 27, 2010** at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The purpose of this event is to:

- 1) Employ and develop innovative, equalizing educational practices,
- 2) Validate and create new paradigms of research that de-stigmatizes, raises voices, and highlights strengths, wellness, and dignity.
- 3) Build and charge networks committed to socio-political justice to action.

Overall, we believe that your work and insights will be germane to accomplishing these purposes and sincerely hope that you will join our community next spring.

In this vein, we hope you will consider our invitation to participate in the featured panel entitled ***Building Our Own Counter-Narrative: Social Justice Schools of Today***.

Several of today's most passionate urban educators are driven by values articulated by radical educators like Paulo Friere, who throughout history have focused on creating equity and changing systems of oppression within public schools. These focused principals, teachers, and leaders have championed a brand of school reform based on empowerment of communities that have traditionally been marginalized. This panel seeks to bring together the voices of our nation's social justice educators and schools, asking them to answer: How do we deliver students the kind of education that will empower them to take ownership of their education and the systems that govern and distribute power? How do we structure a school with a focus on cultural and community empowerment, while maintaining academic rigor that will result in pathways towards student success? This panel seeks to provide a look into the daily practices and will highlight projects and processes used to activate student civic engagement. Participants will listen to students and administrators and leave with an understanding of how schools are defining and promoting social justice for the next generation of youth.

If you are willing to lend your expertise as a panelist, please email Aaliyah El-Amin at ase350@mail.harvard.edu. Our priority notification deadline is **December 1, 2009**.

For more information regarding the conference, please visit our web site at <http://gseacademic.harvard.edu/~aocc> and feel free to contact us with any questions. We hope that you can participate on this panel and we look forward to hearing from you soon. If you are unable to participate, please let us know and please consider recommending the names of other colleagues who may be willing to participate.

Sincerely,

Aaliyah El-Amin (Ed.D. candidate, Education Policy, Leadership, and Instructional Practice)
ase350@mail.harvard.edu

Tanya St. Julien (Ed.M. candidate, Education Policy and Management)
tas789@mail.harvard.edu

Ameer Kim El-Mallawany (Ed.M. candidate, School Leadership Program)
ake850@mail.harvard.edu