Foreword

Welcome to Chicago and the 96th Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Our Theme, “Toward Justice: Culture, Language, and Heritage in Education Research and Praxis,” generated great enthusiasm among the membership. Over 13,000 proposals were reviewed, and our program features over 8,000 participants across 2,600 sessions.

A short while ago someone asked if we had chosen the Annual Meeting theme in response to the “events in Ferguson and New York”—euphemistic language for the almost daily occurrence of egregious injustice. Of course, this year’s Annual Meeting theme had already been selected before grand juries in Ferguson, Missouri, and New York announced there would be no indictments in the deaths of Mike Brown and Eric Garner. In fact, the theme does not reference any particular event in the U.S. or beyond. Rather, our intent is to present an opportunity for the AERA community to consider our contributions to the praxis of education research and policy within the context of the “moral arc of the universe.” It is our hope that these Annual Meetings will permit us to consider our engagements through research and practice, theorizing and policy making in bending the arc toward justice and equity in education.

Shakespeare tells us “What’s past is prologue.” While 2015 is the 150th anniversary of the passage of the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery, we have today a “school-to-prison pipeline” that has shuttled more African American males into prison than were enslaved at the end of the Civil War in 1865. It has also been 150 years since the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln and the massacre of hundreds of mostly women, children, and elderly Native Americans at Sand Creek, Colorado. We recognize that these historical events remain emblematic of deep divisions in our national experience and linger in different visions for our future. Between 1915 and 1920 more than 15 million European immigrants arrived in the U.S., joining the Great Northern Migration of African Americans, and the Great Mexican Migration to Chicago’s Southside. These transformations are alive in the contemporary fabric of Chicago and every American landscape, and continually [re]write the terms and challenges of what it means to understand the role of culture, language, and heritage diversity in teaching, learning, and equitable educational outcomes.

Chicago offers a vibrant and dynamic setting for examining our historic and contemporary challenges of justice in education and in civic life. We are excited and pleased that so many sessions across the Divisions and SIGs have engaged this year’s theme, both locally and globally. Likewise, the Annual Meeting logo highlights diverse students, who represent the future of this country and the larger global community. In fact, high school and college student researchers are involved in several sessions, including the “Education Research to Performance Youth Research Festival”—a major presidential initiative that Council has enthusiastically supported—and a Youth Tribunal.

You will be able to follow AERA on Twitter at @AERA_EdResearch (Twitter.com/AERA_EdResearch). You can join the conversation about the 2015 Annual Meeting by using the hashtag #AERA15 and following @AERA_EdResearch.

It is our hope that at the conclusion of this meeting, you will leave with a strengthened sense of purpose and resolve that educational, cultural, and intellectual “Justice” is not only our task, but an essential feature our professional praxis.

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