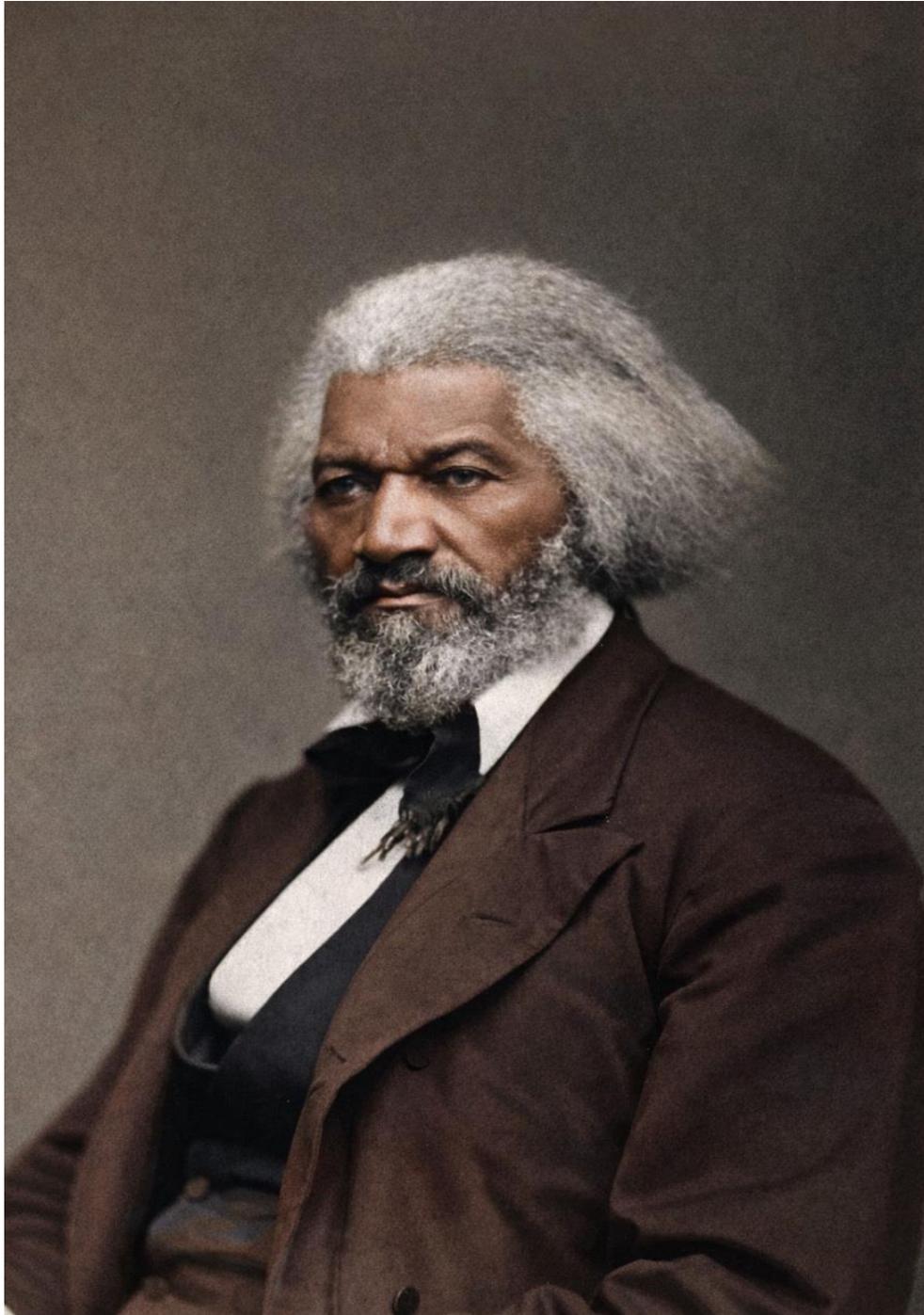


**Frederick Douglass Institute  
PASSHE 2026 Collaborative Conference  
West Chester University of Pennsylvania**



*March 31 – April 1, 2026*

**Conference Book of Abstract and Schedule**

## MISSION

# THE FREDERICK DOUGLASS INSTITUTE

The mission of the Frederick Douglass Institute at West Chester University of Pennsylvania (FDI) is to maintain the legacy of the great abolitionist, orator, and statesman Frederick Douglass before the campus community, local community, region, and the nation through the highest quality of academic programming that promotes excellence in scholarship, teaching, and institutional advancement. Consistent with its mission, and with the mission, vision, and values of the university, the Institute is an educational and cultural resource for advancing multicultural studies across the curriculum and for deepening the intellectual heritage of Frederick Douglass, the former slave, distinguished orator, journalist, author, and statesman. Douglass, who was a frequent visitor to the West Chester area, gave his last public lecture on West Chester's campus on February 1, 1895, just nineteen days before his death.

Guided by the spirit of Douglass and his legacy, the Institute aims to create opportunities to build a better community for all of us to fulfill our destiny as human beings. Perhaps Douglass himself put it best when on October 1, 1865, at the inauguration of an Institute named for him in Baltimore, Maryland, Douglass said that the mission of that Institute was, in part, "to be a dispenser of knowledge," and "a radiator of light." As Douglass also declared in his remarks, "In a word, we dedicate this Institution to virtue, temperance, truth, liberty, and justice." Through the leadership of WCU, there are Frederick Douglass Institutes at all campuses of the Pennsylvania State Universities System (PASSHE). Collectively, the Frederick Douglass Institutes at all campuses of the State System are known as the FDI Collaborative.

The programs listed below are examples of how we continually work to keep the spirit of Douglass alive.

**The DeBaptiste/Douglass Lecture:** The past speakers, Dr. James Trotman, Rev. Dr. Wayne Croft, Senator Andy Dinniman, Dr. Brenda Allen, and Rev. Dr. Kyle Boyer.

**The Lunch (En)Counter Series:** The series takes its name from the famed Lunch-Counter Protests of Civil Rights era, aiming to provide campus forums for discussing topical issues related to race, equity, and civil rights. This academic year, FDI's focus is on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

**The FDI Educational Outreach:** This project connects 3,000 elementary students at Coatesville and 800 high school students at Coatesville and Norristown school systems with an expansion to Chester Upland and other school districts.

**The FDI Debate Team:** In spring of 2024, the FDI Debate Team became repeat champions of the PASSHE FDI Debate Tournament.

## ONCE IN A WHILE, A MOMENT IN HISTORY CHANGES THE LIFE OF AN INSTITUTION



On October 1, 2013, West Chester University unveiled the statue of Frederick Douglass. The statue continues the study and the creative uses of the life and legacy of Frederick Douglass that began in the classroom. Students discovered that Frederick Douglass had been in the Borough of West Chester every decade after his escape from slavery in 1838 on his way to becoming a champion in the fight to end slavery. The former enslaved man who devoted his life to liberating others rose to become the most photographed American in the nineteenth century. He gave his last public lecture on the campus of West Chester University nineteen days before he died on Feb. 20, 1895.

### THE DISCOVERY

In the fall 1990, Dr. C. James Trotman assigned students in the African American Literature class to look at different buildings and libraries on the campus as a way of familiarizing themselves with campus history. Some of the students went to the Phillips Autograph Library where they discovered that Harper's Magazine had a picture of Frederick Douglass on the cover. Inside of it, Principal George Morris Phillips wrote that "This is an admirable likeness of Mr. Douglass when he lectured at West Chester" It was his last public lecture 19 days before he died. The information from this classroom assignment was validated and became the starting point for what is now the Frederick Douglass Institute at West Chester University under Dr. Trotman, founding director

### THE SCULPTURE AND THE STATUE

Richard Blake, WCU professor and esteemed sculptor, was invited to draw a sketch of what a Douglass sculpture would look like. The image was approved by the board of the Douglass Institute and the campus president, Dr. Greg Weisenstein. By the time the new semester started in 2010, the sculptor had the approval of all the signatories required to develop and install the Douglass statue. Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste, the former Mayor of West Chester, was the first major donor.

### THE SETTING

The location for the statue happened when the administration was redesigning the Quad. The statue's steering committee (John Baker, Chris Awuyah, Richard Blake, Mildred Joyner, and James Trotman) met with the campus grounds planners to determine the best location for the statue. Its current location was a decision that took into account visibility, lighting, and accessibility to all.

Finally, the dedicated benches surrounding the statue were contributions from families who wanted to show their support for West Chester University and its journey with one of the nation's champions of freedom.

Dr. C. James Trotman [Retired Emeritus Professor of English and Lifetime FDI Director, WCU]

## THE PRESIDENT -WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY



### **Dr. R. Lorraine (Laurie) Bernotsky**

As the 16th President of West Chester University, Dr. R. Lorraine (Laurie) Bernotsky brings a distinguished record of transformative leadership and an unwavering commitment to public higher education to the helm of PASSHE's largest R2 institution. A first-generation college graduate and longstanding champion for public education and State System students, Dr. Bernotsky was unanimously appointed by the Board of Governors of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), effective July 1, 2024. Known for being a transformative leader in higher education, she is prepared to help West Chester University chart its path toward the next 150 years.

A collaborative and inclusive leader centered on student success, Dr. Bernotsky holds nearly three decades of progressive experience in higher education. She began her career at West Chester University in 1996 as a member of the political science faculty and later competed in a national search to serve as associate provost and dean of graduate studies. She subsequently became provost in 2015, successfully leading the University's Academic Affairs Division, which oversees approximately 850 faculty across six colleges and two schools, offering more than 100 academic degree programs. In this role, she also provided leadership for the Office of Institutional Research, the Center for International Programs (now the Center for Global Engagement), the offices of undergraduate admissions, enrollment management, financial aid, the graduate school, and undergraduate student support services.

The role of executive vice president was added to Dr. Bernotsky's responsibilities in 2017 and, as the University's second-in-command, she also assumed leadership of the University's budget and labor relations functions, further broadening her institutional impact and administrative scope.

Recognized throughout the Commonwealth as a highly respected and effective higher education leader, Dr. Bernotsky was asked by Chancellor Daniel Greenstein to serve Pennsylvania Western University (PennWest) temporarily in the fall of 2022 as executive vice president and chief operating officer, providing guidance and direction across all operational areas. From October 2022 through June 2023, Dr. Bernotsky worked collaboratively in this loaned capacity to help strengthen PennWest's operational excellence, strategic enrollment management systems, and long-term plans for financial sustainability. The positive effects of her leadership ultimately led to her appointment as interim president of PennWest on July 1, 2023 by PASSHE's Board of Governors — a role she assumed four months after serving as PennWest's acting president and following the retirement of PennWest founding president, Dr. Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson.

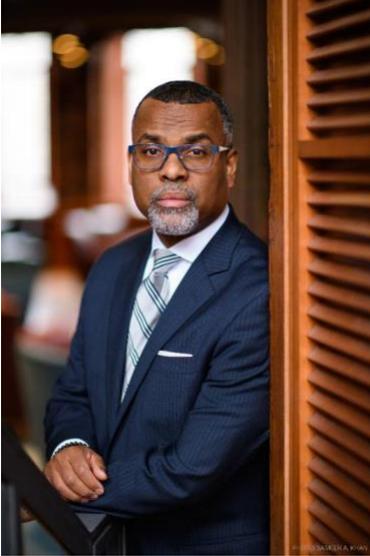
West Chester University's Council of Trustees felt especially fortunate to have such an exemplary and highly sought candidate among its own senior leaders. The Council requested and secured approval from Chancellor Greenstein, in consultation with the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors, to authorize the Presidential Search Committee to explore Dr. Bernotsky's candidacy before deciding whether to proceed to an open national search. The Executive Committee concurred with the recommendation and approved the request.

Following its charge, the Presidential Search Committee led a comprehensive and inclusive university-wide process that elicited feedback from West Chester University students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Numerous opportunities to interact with Dr. Bernotsky were provided through interviews, open forums, and presentations. As a result of the resoundingly positive feedback that came back from the University community, the Search Committee unanimously made a formal recommendation to the Council of Trustees on Dr. Bernotsky's candidacy. The Council voted unanimously to recommend that Dr. Laurie Bernotsky be considered by the State System's Board of Governors to serve as the 16th president of West Chester University.

A social scientist by training, Dr. Bernotsky earned a master's and doctorate in politics from the University of Oxford, as well as a master's in sociology from Temple University.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

### Dr. Eddie Glaude, Jr.



*New York Times Bestselling Author & James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor, Princeton University*

One of the nation's most prominent scholars, Dr. Eddie Glaude, Jr. is an author, political commentator, public intellectual and passionate educator who examines the complex dynamics of the American experience. His writings, including *Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul*, *In a Shade of Blue: Pragmatism and the Politics of Black America* and the *New York Times* bestseller *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for our Own*, take a wide look at Black communities, the difficulties of race in the United States and the challenges we face as a democracy.

Glaude's latest book, *We Are the Leaders We Have Been Looking For*, will be released in April 2024. Based on the Du Bois Lectures he delivered at Harvard University, Glaude shows how ordinary Black Americans can shake off their reliance on a small group of professional politicians and pursue self-cultivation and grassroots movements to achieve a more just and perfect democracy.

In his writing and speaking, Glaude is an American critic in the tradition of James Baldwin and Ralph Waldo Emerson, confronting history and bringing our nation's complexities, vulnerabilities and hope into full view. Hope that is, in one of his favorite quotes from W.E.B. Du Bois, "not hopeless, but a bit unhopeful."

Some like to describe Glaude as the quintessential Morehouse man, having left his home in Moss Point, Mississippi at age 16 to begin studies at the HBCU and alma mater of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He holds a master's degree in African American Studies from Temple University and a Ph.D. in Religion from Princeton University.

Glaude is known both for his inspiring oratory and ability to convene conversations that engage fellow citizens from all backgrounds - from young activists to corporate audiences looking for a fresh perspective on DEI. In 2011, he delivered Harvard's DuBois lectures. His 2015 commencement remarks at Colgate University titled, "Turning Our Backs," was recognized by the *New York Times* as one of the best commencement speeches of the year.

Combining a scholar's knowledge of history, a political commentator's take on the latest events, and an activist's passion for social justice, Glaude challenges all of us to examine our collective American conscience, "not to posit the greatness of America, but to establish the ground upon which to imagine the country anew."

## DAY ONE: MARCH 31<sup>ST</sup> 2026

### CONCURRENT PRESENTATIONS

All presentation sessions will take place in the Sykes Student Union 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

Time	Room 209	Room 210	Room 252
11:00am-12:00pm	Stitching Memory and Meaning: Faculty and Student Voices  Presenters: <i>Amber Pabon, Aaliyah Nelson, Jeremiah Purvis</i>	Food Insecurity as a Neurological and Structural Equity Crisis  Presenters: <i>Fatima Komoro</i>	Beyond Abolition: Understanding Modern Segregation in Pennsylvania and the United States  Presenters: <i>Kairo Howell-Nelson</i>
	Frederick Douglass, Human Rights, and the [US] American Dream  Presenters: <i>Donato Fhunsu, Jayla Walker, Mallory Shrubbsall, Jone't Fofana</i>	Beyond Labels: Race, Class, and Comedy in the Work of Preacher Moss:  <i>Presenters: Ali Akarcesme, Damere Jackson</i>	Student Activism and the Formation of Ethnic Studies at WCU  Presenter: <i>Miguel Ceballos</i>
<b>LUNCH BREAK   12:00 PM – 12:45 PM AT SECC</b>			
Time	Room 209	Room 210	Room 252
1:15 - 2:15pm	Faith Misplaced: Black Military Service  Presenter: <i>Bob Kodosky</i>	Black Women Resilience in Digital Economy  Presenter: <i>Brian Walker</i>	Racial Inequality in America's [US] Legal System  Presenter: <i>Tai Goodwin-Okaome</i>
	Language Deprivation and Early Access to American Sign Language  Presenters: <i>Torri Singh</i>	Collective Punishment: Irish Memory and the Atlantic World  Presenters: <i>Timothy Dougherty, Ron McColl, Colin Howe, Cameron Gasior</i>	Civil Rights, Jim Crow Legacies, and the Ongoing Struggle for Justice  Presenter: <i>Taliab Smith</i>
Time	Room 209	Room 210	Room 252

Time	Room 209	Room 210	Room 252
2:20pm - 3:20pm	Frederick Douglass at West Chester State Normal School (1895) Presenter: <i>Ron McColl</i>	Students' Constitutional Rights and Educational Equity Presenters: <i>Sharnine Herbert, Taniya Fuller</i>	Cultural Relevance in College Classrooms  Presenter: <i>Kerrie DeVries, Ralph Godbolt</i>
	Globalized Visions of Social Justice: Frederick Douglass and Colum McCann's TransAtlantic Presenter: <i>William(Bill) Lalicker</i>	Protest Art and Sanctuary Theology As Resisten to Immigration Presenters: <i>Ana Sanchez</i>	Sci-Fi Literature as a Gateway to Social Justice Conversation  Presenters: <i>Arianna DiPaola</i>
Time	Room 209	Room 210	Room 252
3:25 – 4:25 pm	Sojourner Truth- Cultural Relevance and Intersectionality Presenter: <i>Gregory Pagano</i>	Abuse in America's Faith and Religious Communities  Presenter: <i>Dynasia Speaks</i>	Life of Undocumented Persons in the US  Presenter: <i>Evelina Bodon-Morales</i>
	Antinatalism: Reproduction, Ethics, and Social Inequality Presenter: <i>Jasmine Smith</i>	Constitutional Power and the Threat of Authoritarianism Presenters: <i>Rashad Mcknight-Lawson</i>	

## POSTER SESSION

The following two poster presentations will run from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm in Room 254

1. Teachers and Place-Based Education: Revitalizing Professional Development
2. Beyond the First Ballot: Activating the Civic Legacy of Thomas Mundy Peterson (1824–1904)

## DAY TWO: APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup> 2026

### THE DEBATE TOURNAMENT

**Resolution: “The Commonwealth of PA should end all vaccine mandates.”**

All debate teams will compete in four preliminary rounds of competition. On the day of tournament a schematic “pairings” will be posted indicating which teams compete against each other and in what room.

8:00 – 8:30 AM	Debate Check in Sykes Union
9:00 AM	First Round
10:00 AM	Second Round
11:00 AM	Third Round
12:00 PM	Lunch
1:30 PM	Fourth Round

**Top four teams advance to semi-finals, based on win/loss record in the four preliminary rounds.**

2:30 PM	Semi – Finals
3:30 PM	Finals with Awards Ceremony to Follow

## PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

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### Students' Constitutional Rights and Educational Equity

On February 24, 1969, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed that students do not shed their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate. This presentation examines how students at West Chester University exercised their First Amendment freedoms during the Fall 2025 semester through a project led by the Frederick Douglass Institute. Exploring free speech, religious expression, freedom of the press, and the right to assemble, student participants connected these constitutional protections to contemporary challenges facing young people. The session reflects on the relevance of landmark legal precedent in today's political climate and how student voices continue to shape democratic participation in academic settings.

**Presenter(s):** *Sharnine Herbert, Taniya Fuller*

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### Constitution Power and the Threat of Authoritarianism

The tension between constitutional democracy and authoritarianism represents one of the defining challenges of modern governance. This presentation examines how institutional frameworks designed to constrain power can paradoxically become instruments for dismantling democratic norms. Analyzing executive overreach, legislative erosion, and the psychological appeal of strongman leadership, the research identifies structural vulnerabilities that enable authoritarian tendencies to take root. Drawing on political science and legal theory, the presenter argues that protecting democracy requires not only legal safeguards but also an informed and engaged citizenry capable of recognizing and resisting the incremental erosion of constitutional principles.

**Presenter(s):** *Rashad Mcknight-Lawson*

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### Language Deprivation and Early Access to American Sign Language

Language deprivation occurs when a child lacks consistent access to a natural language during the critical developmental window from birth to age five. This issue disproportionately affects deaf and hard-of-hearing children who are often directed toward auditory technologies that cannot guarantee full language access. This presentation argues that American Sign Language (ASL) provides a fully accessible linguistic foundation for deaf children, supporting cognitive, social, and academic development at rates comparable to hearing peers. The presenter advocates for early ASL exposure, connection to the Deaf community, and bilingual communication approaches as essential strategies for preventing language deprivation and ensuring equitable developmental outcomes for all deaf children.

**Presenter(s):** *Torri Singh*

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### Frederick Douglass, Human Rights, and the [US]American Dream

This presentation uses Frederick Douglass's Narrative alongside the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to explore the enduring struggle between mental slavery and mental freedom in the context of the American Dream. Drawing on Douglass's revelation that literacy was the pathway from slavery to freedom, faculty and student presenters examine how their own study of this text has generated new insights into race, power, and self-determination. Set against current cultural and political events, the session highlights how Douglass's nineteenth-century reflections remain urgently relevant to contemporary conversations about equity, civil rights, and the meaning of freedom in American life.

**Presenter(s):** *Donato Fhunsu, Jayla Walker, Mallory Shrubbsall, Jone't Fofana*

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### **Frederick Douglass at West Chester State Normal School (1895)**

In February 1895, Frederick Douglass delivered the last public lecture of his storied career on the campus of West Chester State Normal School. While the visit is remembered locally, this presentation recovers the broader institutional and cultural context in which it occurred, placing Douglass within a vibrant lyceum tradition that brought many distinguished speakers to the campus that year. Drawing on archival materials held in the university's Special Collections, including letters written by Douglass himself, this presentation illuminates dimensions of his legacy that have been obscured by time, offering a richer portrait of his enduring influence on the West Chester community.

**Presenter(s):** *Ron McColl*

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### **Faith Misplaced: Black Military Service and the Promise of Equality**

This presentation examines Frederick Douglass's passionate advocacy for Black military service during the Civil War and the tragic gap between that promise and the reality Black soldiers faced. Douglass believed that bearing arms in defense of the Union would earn Black men undeniable citizenship rights. Yet decades of history reveal that military service, from the Civil War through the twentieth century, failed to deliver the equality it promised, as Black veterans returned home to discrimination, violence, and disenfranchisement. Drawing on scholarship in Black military history, this session interrogates the relationship between patriotism, sacrifice, and civil rights in the American experience.

**Presenter(s):** *Bob Kodosky*

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### **Racial Inequality in America's Legal System**

This presentation argues that racial inequality in America's legal system remains one of the most consequential and under-addressed issues in contemporary society. Although the United States represents only 5% of the global population, it holds 25% of the world's prisoners, a disparity deeply shaped by race. The presenter examines how mass incarceration, sentencing disparities, and systemic bias within policing, and the courts perpetuate racial inequality and undermine the promise of equal justice. Drawing on empirical research and lived community experience, this session makes the case for urgent legal reform as a civil rights imperative.

**Presenter(s):** *Tai Goodwin-Okaome*

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### **Sci-Fi Literature as a Gateway to Social Justice Conversation**

Literature has long served as a mirror, window, and sliding glass door, reflecting readers' experiences, revealing unfamiliar lives, and inviting active engagement with the world. This presentation draws on Rudine Sims Bishop's foundational theory to examine the role of diverse and culturally relevant texts in K–12 classrooms. The presenter argues that when students encounter literature that reflects their identities and broadens their understanding of others, engagement deepens and empathy grows. Focusing on inclusive curriculum design, this session offers practical frameworks for educators seeking to build classrooms where all students feel seen, valued, and intellectually challenged.

**Presenter(s):** *Arianna DiPaola*

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### **Beyond Abolition: Understanding Modern Segregation in Pennsylvania and the United States**

Although slavery and legal segregation were formally abolished, their structural legacies persist in measurable and harmful ways. This presentation examines how the systems of slavery and Jim Crow have evolved into contemporary forms of inequality, including residential segregation, educational inequity, and disparate access to economic opportunity. With a focus on Pennsylvania and national patterns, the

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presenter maps the connections between historical policy and present-day outcomes for Black Americans. The session aims to provide an accessible, evidence-based framework for understanding how systemic racism operates today, and what meaningful structural change would require.

**Presenter(s):** *Kairo Howell-Nelson*

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### Civil Rights, Jim Crow Legacies, and the Ongoing Struggle for Justice

Jim Crow was not merely a set of discriminatory laws, it was a comprehensive social system engineered to maintain racial hierarchy through segregation, disenfranchisement, and economic exclusion. This presentation traces the origins and mechanisms of Jim Crow, examining how its formal dismantlement through civil rights legislation left many of its structural effects intact. From disparities in education and wealth accumulation to ongoing struggles for voting rights and equal justice, the presenter argues that understanding the full scope of Jim Crow's legacy is essential to comprehending the persistent inequalities that define American life today.

**Presenter(s):** *Taliah Smith*

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### Cultural Relevance in College Classrooms

Many colleges' faculty and staff express a genuine desire to engage marginalized students but struggle with how to do so effectively. This interactive session presents practical strategies for incorporating culturally relevant content into college courses and programs in ways that build authentic engagement, community, and connection. Drawing on the presenters' work co-founding the Black Studies Minor at Commonwealth University, the session demonstrates how intentional curriculum design and institutional commitment can transform classroom environments. Participants will leave with concrete tools for creating educational experiences where all students feel welcomed, challenged, and meaningfully represented.

**Presenter(s):** *Kerrie DeVries, Ralph Godbolt*

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### Sojourner Truth- Cultural Relevance and Intersectionality

This paper examines how Northern journalism represented Sojourner Truth, born Isabella van Wageningen (c. 1797–1883), and her significant contributions to the Union's Civil War effort. Applying Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality, the presenter analyzes how Truth navigated overlapping systems of racism, slavery, and patriarchy while advancing the causes of abolition and women's rights. Northern press coverage reveals both the power and the limits of public recognition afforded to Black women activists in the nineteenth century. The session invites reflection on how Truth's legacy of resistance and advocacy continues to resonate in contemporary struggles for racial and gender justice.

**Presenter(s):** *Gregory Pagano*

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### Protest Art and Sanctuary Theology as Resistance to Immigration Enforcement

This paper examines protest art and sanctuary theology as interconnected forms of resistance to immigration enforcement policies that have disproportionately impacted Latinx communities during the Trump administrations. Historically, art has served as a vehicle for political dissent, while faith-based movements have provided moral frameworks for challenging unjust laws. The presenter analyzes how murals, performance, and visual activism alongside church sanctuary movements have worked in tandem to assert the humanity and dignity of undocumented immigrants. The session highlights how cultural and spiritual resistance strategies operate as forms of community protection and political action in the face of aggressive federal enforcement.

**Presenter(s):** *Ana Sanchez*

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### **Life of Undocumented Persons in the United States**

This presentation examines the lived realities of undocumented immigrants in the United States, exploring how escalating immigration enforcement shapes daily life in profound and often invisible ways. Many undocumented individuals live under constant fear of family separation, job loss, and detention without warning. Drawing on community stories and policy analysis, the presenter highlights how immigration enforcement, particularly through agencies like ICE, affects not only individuals but entire communities. The session argues that humanizing data through personal narrative is essential for building public understanding and advancing more just and compassionate immigration policy.

**Presenter(s):** *Evelina Bodon-Morales*

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### **Abuse in America's Faith and Religious Communities**

This study investigates the recent rise in religious engagement among Generation Z and Millennials across a broad spectrum of faith traditions including Christianity, Islam, New Age Spirituality, and Buddhism. The presenter examines which faith communities have grown most significantly over the past five to ten years and explores the factors that led many young people away from organized religion, and what drew them back. Situating rising religiosity alongside documented cases of institutional abuse within faith communities, the research asks what responsibility religious institutions bear in both causing and addressing spiritual harm. The session offers a data-informed and personally grounded examination of faith, resilience, and accountability.

**Presenter(s):** *Dynasia Speaks*

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### **Food Insecurity as a Neurological and Structural Equity Crisis**

Food insecurity is not merely a matter of hunger; it is a neurological and structural equity crisis. This presentation examines the critical relationship between food insecurity, brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), neuroplasticity, and academic performance in underserved communities. Adequate nutrition supports the production of BDNF, which is essential for learning, memory, and cognitive development. When students experience chronic food insecurity, their neurological development and educational outcomes are measurably affected. The presenter connects these biological realities to systemic inequities in school funding and calls for policy interventions that address food access as an educational rights issue.

**Presenter(s):** *Fatima Komoro*

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### **Antinatalism: Reproduction, Ethics, and Social Inequality**

The United States celebrates reproduction as a cultural ideal while rarely confronting the conditions into which children are born, marked by extreme wealth inequality, environmental degradation, and unequal access to healthcare. This proposal explores how an antinatalist framework can be applied not to shame individuals but to critically examine the social and ethical dimensions of reproduction in an unjust society. The presenter argues that structural conditions, rather than personal choices alone, must be central to any serious ethical discussion about bringing new life into the world. The session invites participants to consider reproduction as a social justice issue with implications for policy, equity, and community well-being.

**Presenter(s):** *Jasmine Smith*

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### Stitching Memory and Meaning: The Douglass Paper Quilt Project at Kutztown University

This panel centers the voices of Frederick Douglass Institute faculty and student scholars who participated in the Douglass Paper Quilt Project at Kutztown University. Developed amid a national climate of book bans, DEI rollbacks, and restrictions on racial history in education, the project invited students to explore identity, collective memory, and Black cultural traditions through research, dialogue, and artmaking. Over an academic year, student scholars created a collaborative paper quilt, inspired by African American quilting traditions, representing their reflections, histories, and lived experiences. The session highlights how collaborative, culturally grounded learning can create meaningful spaces for connection and inquiry, particularly for Black students navigating Predominantly White Institutions.

**Presenter(s):** *Amber Pabon, Aaliyah Nelson, Jeremiah Purvis*

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### Globalized Visions of Social Justice: Frederick Douglass and Colum McCann's TransAtlantic

Beginning in 1845, Frederick Douglass traveled to Ireland and Great Britain to collaborate with anti-slavery leaders, raise funds for abolition, and bear witness to the brutality of American slavery before large and enthusiastic audiences. This presentation examines how Irish novelist Colum McCann's National Book Award-winning Novel *TransAtlantic* reimagines Douglass's transatlantic journey to explore themes of history, memory, and social justice across generations and national borders. Connecting historical fact with literary imagination, the session argues that fiction can illuminate dimensions of Douglass's legacy that conventional biography cannot, offering a humanizing and globally resonant vision of the struggle for human rights.

**Presenter(s):** *William Lalicker*

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### Student Activism and the Formation of Ethnic Studies at West Chester University

This study investigates the history of West Chester University's Institute of Race and Ethnic Studies to understand how students and faculty shaped the development of the Ethnic Studies program within broader social and political contexts. Born out of the Civil Rights Movement, Ethnic Studies emerged from student demands for curricula that reflected the histories and experiences of communities of color. The presenter traces how activism, institutional negotiation, and community organizing gave rise to a program that continues to challenge and enrich the academic mainstream. The session reflects lessons from this institutional history for current efforts to defend and expand equity-centered education.

**Presenter(s):** *Miguel Ceballos*

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### Collective Punishment: Irish Memory and the Atlantic World

In 2015, a team led by research librarian Liam Hogan launched *Collective Punishment*, a project combining archival research and open-source mapping technology to catalog mob violence against African-heritage people in the United States during the 19th and 20th centuries. This presentation examines the project's methodology, its connection to Frederick Douglass's known presence in Limerick, Ireland, and its significance as an act of counter-memory in the Trump era. Faculty and student researchers from West Chester University present their own contributions to this ongoing archival effort, exploring what it means to document violence, preserve public memory, and recover erased histories in the present political moment.

**Presenter(s):** *Timothy Dougherty, Ron McColl, Colin Howe, Cameron Gasior*

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### Black Women’s Resilience in the Digital Economy

This presentation examines how Black women exhibit resilience within platform-driven digital economies while navigating the paradox of cultural influence without proportional economic benefit. Employing Kimberlé Crenshaw’s intersectionality theory and Moya Bailey’s scholarship on misogynoir, the presenter analyzes how cultural practices popularized by Black women are simultaneously appropriated, stigmatized, and commodified in digital spaces. The research interrogates how identity, race, and gender interact within the economics of social media platforms to produce structural inequalities. The session calls for greater equity in how Black women’s creative labor is recognized, compensated, and protected in the evolving digital landscape.

**Presenter(s):** *Brian Walker*

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### Beyond Labels: Race, Class, and Comedy in the Work of Preacher Moss

This presentation explores how humor and documentary storytelling can both challenge and reveal assumptions about race, class, and identity. Focusing on the work of Preacher Moss, a Black Muslim comedian, it draws on a key scene from the documentary *Who Needs Preacher Moss? Between Faith and Funny* to show how discussions of race often shift into deeper reflections on class and economic visibility. The session invites participants to reflect on their own reactions to humor, particularly moments of laughter or discomfort, as a way of uncovering internalized assumptions. It emphasizes that race is often the primary lens through which identity is interpreted, while class remains less visible despite its importance. Connecting these ideas to campus settings, the presentation highlights how labels can oversimplify complex identities and shape student experiences. Ultimately, it presents comedy as a powerful tool for fostering dialogue, challenging dominant narratives, and encouraging more inclusive and thoughtful engagement across difference.

**Presenters:** *Ali Akarcesme, Damere Jackson*

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## POSTER PRESENTATIONS HELD IN ROOM 254

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### Beyond the First Ballot: The Civic Legacy of Thomas Mundy Peterson (1824-1904)

Thomas Mundy Peterson (1824–1904) is widely recognized as the first African American to cast a ballot following the ratification of the 15th Amendment on March 31, 1870. Yet Peterson is frequently reduced to this singular milestone rather than understood as a dynamic civic leader embedded in a complex social fabric. This presentation recovers the fuller dimensions of Peterson’s life and work, situating his historic vote within a broader legacy of community engagement, advocacy, and democratic participation. The session invites reflection on how Black civic life has been historically flattened and calls for richer, more nuanced commemorations of African American civic achievement.

**Presenter(s):** *Juanita Wooten*

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### Teachers and Place-Based Education: Revitalizing Professional Development

At a time when educators face intensifying pressures and political attacks on their profession, teachers of writing need space for joy, imagination, and professional renewal. This presentation examines a place-based professional development model in which teachers collaboratively explore primary sources and develop classroom applications rooted in local history and community context. Designed and facilitated by the West Chester Writing Project, the program demonstrates how site-specific learning can reinvigorate teachers’ sense of purpose and deepen their pedagogical practice. The session highlights the importance of investing in teacher agency and creativity as a foundation for sustaining equitable and inspiring education.

**Presenter(s):** *Subarna Basu, Pauline Schmidt*

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## FREDERICK DOUGLAS INSTITUTE BOARD MEMBERS WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

Dr. Beatrice Adera	Professor and Chair of Special Education, Department of Special Education
Dr. Bridget Asempapa	Associate Professor of Counselor Education, Department of Counselor Education
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