

# Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education: *Conversation Series*

SPONSORED BY THE ALBERT SHANKER INSTITUTE AND THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

## Ten Years after the Deluge: The State of Public Education in New Orleans

Sept. 9, 2015

Noon to 4 p.m.

### **BARBARA FERGUSON**

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Barbara Ferguson is a founder, board chair and attorney for Research on Reforms, whose mission is to contribute to the improvement of the New Orleans Public Schools by conducting research on reforms, and publishing research findings, so that successful reforms can be replicated and failing practices eliminated. She has a doctoral degree in educational administration from the University of New Orleans and a juris doctorate from Loyola Law School. Ferguson was the first female superintendent of the New Orleans Public Schools, where she had previously served as a teacher, elementary school principal and high school principal. Subsequently, she served as the superintendent of the St. John Public Schools, assistant superintendent of research and development in the Louisiana Department of Education, deputy secretary in the Louisiana Department of Labor, and attorney to the workforce commission in the office of the governor. Ferguson's work has always been connected with improving education for at-risk children and youth. She serves on several community and civic boards and is active in church affairs, currently serving as a state officer with the United Methodist Women.

### **RAMON GRIFFIN**

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Ramon Griffin is a full-time student in the K-12 doctoral program and a graduate research assistant in the College of Education at Michigan State University. Before joining the doctoral cohort at MSU, Griffin worked as an administrator in charter schools in New Orleans and Detroit. He dedicated his life to education after working with adjudicated minority juveniles. Griffin's scholarly interests include urban education, response to intervention, culturally responsive pedagogy, and emotional and mental health issues in K-12 education. After his studies at MSU, he plans to create equitable educational experiences for youth who are disadvantaged and disenfranchised.

## **DOUGLAS HARRIS**

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Doug Harris is the director of the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans at Tulane University, where he is also a professor of economics and the University Endowed Chair in Public Education. His research helps inform and influence national debates over a range of education policies, particularly in the realm of their impacts on the most disadvantaged students. His first book, *Value-Added Measures in Education*, was published by Harvard Education Press in 2011 and nominated for the national Grawemeyer Award in Education. In addition to having written dozens of academic articles, Harris has advised the White House, the U.S. Senate and several governors on education policy. He contributed to the Obama administration's transition team on the measurement of school performance, advised the White House on college performance measures, and testified in the U.S. Senate about the TRIO college access programs. Most recently, his Brookings report on community colleges helped shape the president's recent reform plans. Harris is also widely cited in the national media, including CNN, MSNBC, NPR, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *National Journal* and others. He was recently named one of the most influential economists studying education. Previously, Harris was an associate professor of education and public affairs at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He received his Ph.D. in economics from Michigan State University.

## **KARRAN HARPER ROYAL**

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Karran Harper Royal works as an education advocate in New Orleans and as the assistant director of the Pyramid Community Parent Resource Center. Her work at Pyramid involves providing one-to-one support to parents of children with disabilities and conducting workshops to help parents understand their rights under federal special education law. She is also the co-host of "Pyramid Parent Talk," a radio show on WBOK in New Orleans. Harper Royal is a consultant with the Southern Poverty Law Center and is a contributor with Research on Reforms. She is a member of the Coalition for Community Schools, the Coalition for Louisiana Public Education and the New Orleans Education Equity Roundtable. She has appeared in several television broadcasts and publications, and she speaks nationally and internationally about public education in New Orleans.

## **WARREN SIMMONS**

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Warren Simmons directs the work of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University and team-teaches a course in urban systems and structure. Before joining AISR in 1998, Simmons was founding director of the Philadelphia Education Fund, a reform support organization that helped the School District of Philadelphia. Previously, at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, he developed and funded initiatives on community development and urban school reform. He also served as director of equity initiatives for the New Standards Project, and as special assistant to the superintendent of schools in Prince George's County in Maryland. Simmons received a B.A. in psychology from Macalester College and a Ph.D. in psychology from Cornell University. He is a recent recipient of the Distinguished Citizens Award from the National Governors Association and has served on the advisory groups and boards of several prominent national organizations, including the National Center on Education and the Economy, the Public Education Network, the Merck Institute, PLATO Learning Inc. and the Campaign for Educational Equity. He currently co-chairs the Aspen Institute Urban Superintendents Network and was recently appointed by the National Research Council to serve on its Committee on Strengthening Science Education through a Teacher Learning Continuum. Simmons was also recently elected as a trustee at Roger Williams University and as a member of the board of directors of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

## **MARGARET SOMERS**

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Margaret Somers, a professor of sociology and history at the University of Michigan, is a social theorist and comparative historical sociologist. Her recent book, *Genealogies of Citizenship: Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to Have Rights*, was awarded the 2009 Giovanni Sartori Book Award for Qualitative Methods by the American Political Science Association. The book focuses on how decades of market fundamentalism has transformed increasing numbers of rights-bearing citizens into socially excluded, internally stateless persons. With Hurricane Katrina's racial apartheid as a demonstration case, Somers alerts us that the growing moral authority of the market is distorting the meaning of citizenship from noncontractual shared fate to conditional privilege, making rights, inclusion and moral worth dependent on contractual market value. Her most recent book (co-authored with Fred Block), *The Power of Market Fundamentalism: Karl Polanyi's Critique*, aims to generate a repertoire of concepts and theoretical insights that can help explain the current financial meltdown as well as add up to a usable social theory. She is also completing a book on the making of citizenship rights, a work of comparative historical sociology with a focus on English legal history. Somers has been awarded fellowships from the European University Institute, the University of Michigan's Institute for the Humanities and Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies, the American Sociological Association Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline, Yale University and the German Marshall Fund of the United States. She holds a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

## **TRACIE L. WASHINGTON**

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Tracie Washington is a native New Orleanian. For more than 20 years, she has maintained a general civil practice concentrated in education law, civil rights, and labor and employment law. She has also served as general counsel to the New Orleans Public Schools system. When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, Washington was forced to evacuate the city with her son, returning in December 2005. Post-Katrina, Washington's practice has focused on protecting the civil rights of individuals affected by this national catastrophe. She has been counsel in several cases involving the rights of New Orleans Katrina survivors, including litigating the rights of returning New Orleans Public Schools students to immediate re-enrollment and admission to publically funded Orleans Parish schools, litigating the voting rights of New Orleans evacuees and their right to equal access to the franchise as promised by the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the U.S. Constitution, litigating the landmark class-action suit demanding the state of Louisiana reopen Charity Hospital, and litigating a case that in 2012 resulted in a ruling that elevated Louisiana's first African-American Supreme Court chief justice, Bernette Johnson. Washington has received numerous state, local and national leadership and civil rights awards, was named by MSNBC's TheGrio as one of its "100 History Makers in the Making," and was named by *The Root* as one of "America's Leading Black Women Advocating Change." She has a master's degree in public administration from Drake University and a juris doctor from the University of Texas School of Law.

### **NEXT CONVERSATION:**

### **FLORIDA EDUCATION REFORM UNDER JEB BUSH: MIRACLE OR MIRAGE?**

**Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2015 | 12:00-2:00 pm**

**555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001**

**More information and registration: [www.shankerinstitute.org/event/florida-education-reform](http://www.shankerinstitute.org/event/florida-education-reform)**