

Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education: *Conversation Series*

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

ESEA at 50: The Federal Government and Equity in American Education

Feb. 18, 2015

Noon to 2 p.m.

PANELISTS

JUDITH BROWNE DIANIS

Judith Browne Dianis is a co-director of the Advancement Project. She has an extensive background in civil rights litigation and advocacy in the areas of voting, education, housing and employment. She has protected the rights of people of color in the midst of some of the greatest civil rights crises of our modern times, including in Florida after the 2000 election and in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Dianis is also a pioneer in the movement to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline in school districts. She has authored groundbreaking reports on the issue, including "Opportunities Suspended" and "Derailed: The Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track," detailing the unnecessary criminalization of students by their schools. Working closely with grass-roots organizations, the Advancement Project's work has significantly decreased student suspensions and arrests in Denver, Baltimore and Florida. Additionally, the Advancement Project has worked to build and support a growing national movement on this issue. Dianis' commitment to racial equity in public schools carries over to her position on the board of FairTest, and she is a founding convener of the Forum for Education and Democracy. In recognition of Dianis' work on these issues, she was recently named a Black Male Achievement Social Innovator by the Leadership and Sustainability Institute, an award given to leaders whose work has resulted in real improvements in the life outcomes of black men and boys.

Dianis joined the Advancement Project at its inception in 1999, after serving as the managing attorney in the Washington, D.C., office of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc. She is a graduate of Columbia University School of Law, was awarded a Skadden Fellowship, served as a Tobias Simon Eminent Scholar at Florida State University College of Law, and served as an adjunct professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center. She was named one of the "Thirty Women to Watch" by *Essence* magazine and has written and commented extensively in the media about race, voting rights and education issues, appearing often on MSNBC, CNN, BET, TVOne and various radio shows.

WADE HENDERSON

Wade Henderson is the president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the Leadership Conference Education Fund. He is also the Joseph L. Rauh Jr. Professor of Public Interest Law at the David A. Clarke School of Law at the University of the District of Columbia.

Henderson is well known for his expertise on a wide range of civil rights, civil liberties and human rights issues, and is the author of numerous articles on civil rights and public policy issues. Since taking the helm of the Leadership Conference in June 1996, Henderson has worked diligently to address emerging policy issues of concern to the civil and human rights community and to strengthen the effectiveness of the coalition. Under his stewardship, the Leadership Conference has become one of the nation's most effective advocates for civil and human rights.

Henderson currently serves on numerous boards and committees, including the National Quality Forum board of directors, which seeks to improve healthcare quality through performance measurement and public reporting; the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Advisory Committee on Economic Inclusion, which was created in 2006 to provide the FDIC with advice and recommendations on important initiatives focused on expanding access to banking services by underserved populations; the board of directors of the Center for Responsible Lending, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting homeownership and family wealth by working to eliminate abusive financial practices; and the board of trustees of the Educational Testing Service, a private, nonprofit organization devoted to educational measurement and research.

Prior to his role with the Leadership Conference, Henderson was the Washington Bureau director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Before that, he was an associate director of the Washington national office of the American Civil Liberties Union, where he began his career as a legislative counsel and advocate on a wide range of civil rights and civil liberties issues. Henderson also served as the executive director of the Council on Legal Education Opportunity.

Henderson is a graduate of Howard University and the Rutgers University School of Law. He is a member of the Bar in the District of Columbia and of the U.S. Supreme Court. As a tireless civil rights leader and advocate, Henderson has received countless awards and honors, including the prestigious Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights.

RANDI WEINGARTEN

Randi Weingarten is the president of the 1.6 million-member American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, which represents teachers; paraprofessionals and school-related personnel; higher education faculty and staff; nurses and other healthcare professionals; local, state and federal government employees; and early childhood educators. Prior to her election as AFT president in 2008, Weingarten served for 12 years as president of the United Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 2, representing approximately 200,000 educators in the New York City public school system, as well as home child care providers and other workers in health, law and education.

Weingarten has launched major efforts to place real education reform high on the nation's and her union's agendas. She created the AFT Innovation Fund to support sustainable, innovative and collaborative education reform projects developed by members and their local unions. At Weingarten's direction, the AFT developed a model to transform teacher evaluations into a tool for continuous improvement and feedback, and is using this model to align tenure and due process so that tenure serves as a guarantee of fairness. Weingarten led an AFT committee that called for all prospective teachers to meet high entry standards. Weingarten oversaw the development of the AFT's Quality Education Agenda, which advocates for reforms grounded in evidence, equity, scalability and sustainability. She promotes "solution-driven unionism"—an approach to collective

bargaining and collective action that unites the interests of union members and those they serve in the pursuit of solutions that benefit students, schools and communities.

Weingarten spearheaded the development of Share My Lesson, the United States' largest free collection of educational resources created by teachers, for teachers. Weingarten and the AFT were asked to lead a partnership to transform McDowell County, W.Va., one of the poorest counties in the United States. The AFT has assembled close to 100 partners not only to improve the quality of education provided to children in the county, but to focus on jobs, transportation, recreation, housing, healthcare and social services. The AFT also has developed a partnership with First Book to provide free and reduced-price books to children. In 2012-13, Weingarten served on an education reform commission convened by New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, which made a series of recommendations to improve teaching and learning. She was appointed to the Equity and Excellence Commission, a federal advisory committee chartered by Congress to examine and make recommendations concerning the disparities in educational opportunities that give rise to the achievement gap.

For 10 years, while president of the UFT, Weingarten chaired New York City's Municipal Labor Committee, an umbrella organization for the city's 100-plus public sector unions, including those representing higher education and other public service employees. From 1986 to 1998, Weingarten served as counsel to UFT President Sandra Feldman, and during that time, from 1991 to 1997, she was a teacher of history at Clara Barton High School in Brooklyn's Crown Heights neighborhood. Elected as the local union's assistant secretary in 1995 and as treasurer two years later, she became UFT president after Feldman became president of the AFT. Weingarten's column "What Matters Most" appears in the *New York Times'* Sunday Review section on the third Sunday of each month. Weingarten holds degrees from Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations and the Cardozo School of Law.

**NEXT CONVERSATION:
IS THERE A PENSION CRISIS?**

**Wednesday, March 11, 2015, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001.
Register at: shankerinstitute.org/event/pensioncrisis**

