



24 December 2015

It has just been over a month since the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Religious Education Association, when 188 scholars and practitioners from more than 12 countries gathered for a weekend in Atlanta to probe the ways in which *imagination* is “central to humanity’s sense of its own worth,” with connecting, transforming, and even disrupting power that enable us “to look at things as if they could be otherwise.”

Invigorated as we were by the generativity of academic discourse, we are stunned to confront reality as it currently is, in particular, the continuous assault on human worth and dignity through escalating acts of local and global violence. It is devastating to witness the prevailing manipulation of religion and worldview toward terrorizing end. More distressing are the paralyzing effects of *disimagination* at work in public responses to tragedies and atrocities, when public leaders continue to misdirect collective consciousness by locating the cause of fear and terror squarely on the bodies of those most vulnerable in our societies.

We find reprehensible the public pedagogies of “misinformation and demagoguery” persistently deployed against individuals and groups. More than irresponsible social and political wangling, these are forms of moral-ethical malpractice, an affront to any collective commitment to the ultimate concerns which propel steadfast work toward the flourishing of all persons and of this earth.

We scholars and practitioners of Religious Education believe in the power of public conscientization to generate active hope. We have seen this power exercised by local communities and trans-local movements that challenge destructive ideologies and unjust policies. The Religious Education Association (www.religiouseducation.net) is more committed than ever to partner with communities across national, cultural, and religious borders to promulgate the study and practice of faith and worldview for the sake of civil, peaceable, and just society. We call on teachers, faith leaders, politicians and pedagogues to *lead as critical learners*, to make manifest the rich repertoires of cultural, religious, and educational resources that bolster a “consistent ethic of decency and civility,” characterized by

- Empathic understanding and mutual respect
- Deep study and reflective dialogue
- Inclusive friendship and accountable solidarity
- Steady vision and passionate action for the common good.

This is a season of sacred preparation and celebration for many cultures and faith traditions. It is no time to stand aside and wait and see. Let us *teach* as if the world could be otherwise.

*The Steering Committee of the Board of Directors
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The Religious Education Association

The REA is an Association of Professors, Practitioners, and Researchers in Religious Education

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