



HANDS UP - DON'T SHOOT!



Reflecting on Ferguson, MO
Highlights of the upcoming November meeting
Details for Chicago
and more inside

From our program chair and vice president, Mai-Anh Le Tran

It is hard to *not* be overcome by recent headlines declaring local and global calamities, much of which are caused by human tantrums. Ferguson, Missouri, is one of St. Louis's urban backyards, and I am confronted by how the theme of REA's Annual Meeting in November in Chicago — “**Religion and Education in the (Un)Making of Violence**” — is having yet another rehearsal right in front of my eyes on the streets of St. Louis (where I live and teach), never mind on other socio-political stages around the globe. Locally, religious organizations, schools, academics, and community leaders are confronted with the question, “What do we do now?!” The question decries passive sympathies and begs for principled action. As Galilee-based non-profit organizer Rabbi Marc J. Rosenstein wrote in a blog: “Praying for peace, but believing it is not really up to God — it’s up to us.”

The notion that it is “up to us” may be melodramatic, yet it is a materially raw acknowledgement of why we scholars of *religious education* (RE) must respond to the urgent issues of our time and place. After all, leading voices of Religious Education and the Religious Education Association (REA:APPRRE) have demonstrated this instinct throughout this organization’s ebb and flow. A quick scan of articles in the association’s journal, *Religious Education*, since the early 1900s reveals how RE scholars and field allies have persistently issued clarion calls concerning pressing realities of their times— wars, *Sputnik*, nuclear armament, social revolutionary movements, “obscurantisms and exclusivisms” (Mary C. Boys) on account of gender, race, and faith, economic injustice

and environmental degradation, globalization and transnationalism, violation of civil/human rights, to name a few.

I am struck by how our organization, REA, might respond to the challenge raised to public intellectuals and people of faith to step up and speak out. After all, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. locking arms on the streets of Selma was more than just powerful “optics.” In Ferguson, it is one thing to put up our hands in symbolic protest on the streets; it is another thing to roll up our sleeves for the long, enduring work of addressing systemic social injustices and dysfunctions which turn neighborhood cul-de-sacs, school playgrounds, local convenient stores and gas stations into social, political, and economic combat zones.

In such times as these, what resources of critical education and critical faith might RE scholars lift up to remind the public that moral conscience, social agency, structural analysis, self-reflective dialogue, and passionate action for the collective good is in fact within reach?

The **2014 Annual Meeting in Oak Brook/Chicago** this coming November follows the cues of the REA’s long legacy of advancing critical inquiry for relevant religious educational praxis. Guided by the theme “Religion and Education in the (Un)Making of Violence,” the meeting will offer an array of **plenaries, break-out sessions, site visits, and performances** to catalyze collaborative inquiry into violence’s insidious production through the pedagogic implements of culture, religion, and religious education. See our conference website for program descriptions: www.religiouseducation.net/rea2014.

Pay close attention to see if the flow of the conference follows the hermeneutic movements articulated by several respected scholars of the field and organization — namely, Mary Elizabeth Moore, Thomas Groome, Boyung Lee. The movements are: *readying the ground; remembering and reflecting; researching and reinterpreting; recovering and remaking*. The movements suggest constructive critique, with emphasis on the familiar imperative, “think globally, act locally.”

The conference will kick off — with the accompaniment of Tsukasa Taiko drummers and a “Ritual and Arts” team — with World-Café-styled conversations on themes related to religion, education, and violence. **Willie James Jennings, Andrea Bieler, Gabriel Moran, and Roy Tamashiro** will serve as “conversation catalysts,” offering insights from their own work to formulate generative questions for subsequent roundtable discussions among all conference participants.



Jennings's (Duke Divinity School) book *The Christian Imagination* traces the colonial evolution of a Christian religious imagination which reinforced a logic for slavery and racism. Bieler's (Wuppertal, Germany) research revolves around memory, ritual, and violence, pressing such questions as, How is violence remembered? How might the ambiguity of memory generate new violence? Tamashiro (Webster University, St. Louis, Missouri) serves on the Advisory Board for the International Network of Museums for Peace, and has written on the evolution of modern museums for peace, their changing roles, and educational/political agendas. Former APPRE President Gabriel Moran (New York University) brings a persistent RE voice to interdisciplinary ethical discourses on human rights. How might religious educators reclaim religious grammars and vocabularies for a "lifelong and lifewide" educational agenda that engenders nonviolent living?

And that's just the first plenary!

To reinforce "on the ground" discovery, we have designed an opportunity for conference participants to "go into the field" and put our ears to the ground, to sense the impulses of violence and the vibrant pulses of active work of intervention and prevention. As an activity for "Plenary #2," we have organized **site visits** to four local faith- and

community-based organizations that have done outstanding educational and activist work related to violence in the neighborhoods of Chicago: *Southwest Organizing Project*; *Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation*; *John Marshall Law School Restorative Justice Project*; and *Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education*. Conference attendees will select at registration which group they would like to visit.



Plenary #3 is a performance with discussion of a play titled *Unveiled*, by Chicago-based playwright/actor Rohina Malik. The event underscores the potency of aesthetics in facilitating hard-talk about difficult issues.

Plenary #4 brings the conference to a close with a constructive conversation between Mai-Anh Le Tran, Evelyn L. Parker, and Bud D. Horell on the tensions of imagination and *disimagination* in religious education's response to violence.

The plenaries may be the conference's anchors, but lively collegial exchange is often best experienced in break-out sessions, where papers are presented and discussed. The collection of papers — **Research Interest Groups, Colloquies, Workshops, and Posters** — which have been accepted for presentation at this meeting gives evidence to the robust and expansive energy of RE and REA, reflecting the international (seven countries), interreligious (Islam, UU, LDS, ecumenical Christian), and inter-institutional reach embedded in REA's vision and mission. The range of topics is breath-taking:

- religious bullying, illiteracy and misrepresentation...
- gendered, racialized, and religious violence...

- children and youth, guns, gangs, and structural disposability...
- class, urban poverty, eschatological violence...
- social trauma, moral injuries, liturgical healing and embodied theology...
- sexting, transvestism, body performances...
- hip-hop, spirituals, *sobaliba*, philosophies of compassion for culturally relevant moral education and prophetic action...
- redemptive violence and media analysis...
- intercultural, interreligious, decolonial pedagogy...
- community organizing, systemic curricular reform and nonviolent leadership....

Paired into more than thirty sessions, these papers promise to advance thought-provoking conversations with wonderful complementarity to the plenaries and site visits.

Regular features of the REA's Annual Meetings remain in place: gathering of denominational/religious affinity groups; meeting of task forces/working groups; breakfast forum for students; bookstore; annual banquet and community luncheon; sharing of news and celebrations.

A highlight to this year's pre-conference program is the co-sponsorship of **two workshops** on teaching and technology by the **Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning**, led by Mary Hess, Eileen Daily, and Daniella Zsupan-Jerome. This event accentuates REA's enduring inter-institutional relationships, many of which are made possible by the expansive work of our members in the wider contexts of academia. The Wabash Center, for instance, has long been a supporter of forums for PhD students.



Needless to say, the orchestration of an event of this scope requires incalculable time and innumerable talent. Gratitude is due to the 2014 Program Committee, the Call for Papers Committee, members of the Board of Directors, and REA members who have volunteered their labor with such energy and creativity.

With building excitement for what will come in November, we are reminded of the scholarly streams into which we step as members of a 110-year-old association. It is chronicled that in 1944, REA Vice President Monsignor George Johnson did not yield to uncritical U.S. patriotism and the stream of Christian realism that made war justifiable. Nearly sixty years later, in 2002, REA President Anne Streaty Wimberly called religious educators to “dare to lead with hope in this ‘messy world.’”

It is 2014, and it is still “up to us.”

Mai-Anh Le Tran
Program Chair

Join us in Chicago in November

All the details you need for registering for our annual meeting in November can be found on the meeting website: <http://www.religioeducation.net/rea2014/>.

Keep in mind that we have had a very strong response to the Call for Papers, and already have a stronger than usual registration. **Early registration ends September 15th.** Get involved in the leadership of our organization, consider nominating yourself or someone else for one of the many positions we will elect in November: vice-president/program chair, treasurer, community forum chair, Harper committee member, nominations committee member, and student representative. More details online: <http://www.religioeducation.net/board>.

Please help us spread the word on the meeting! You can get free pdfs of flyers at the program website: <http://www.religioeducation.net/rea2014/flyers>.

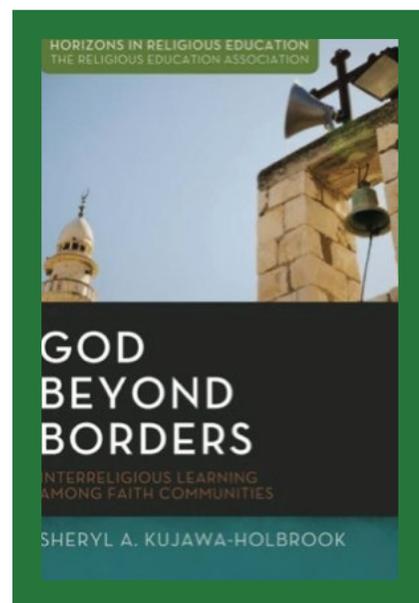
First book in Horizon series out and at AAR!

We are excited to announce the first book in the new Horizons in Religious Education book series, *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities*, by Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook. There is a flyer about the book — which includes the table of contents and excerpts from the book — available both in the email which brought you this newsletter, and at our website: <http://www.religioeducation.net/horizons>.

This year our special session at AAR will be focused on the book. The session is entitled “God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning and Global Possibilities.” Harold Horell from Fordham University will preside at the session, which is scheduled for Saturday, November 22 from 6:30 - 8:00 PM.

How can people of differing religious traditions learn from one another? What within each religious tradition inspires its congregations to build interfaith cooperation? How can communities work together to bring the wisdom of religious traditions into public discussions of socio-moral issues? A panel discussion with the author will also feature Marianne Moyaert (VU University Amsterdam), Najeeba Syeed-Miller (Claremont School of Theology), and Mary Elizabeth Moore (Boston University).

The panelists — international, inter-professional, inter-disciplinary — are border-crossers and bridge-builders who have contributed significantly to scholarship on religious plurality, interreligious dialogue, teaching religious diversity, conflict resolution, justice and reconciliation.



New editor of *Religious Education* announced



The Board of Directors has announced the selection of Rev. Dr. Joyce Ann Mercer as Editor-Elect of the journal *Religious Education*, effective September 1, 2014. Dr. Mercer is Professor of Practical Theology and the Arthur Lee Kinsolving Chair in Pastoral Theology at Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, Virginia. She will work with editor Jack Seymour (Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary) through a transition period until she assumes the editorship of *Religious Education* in January 2016.

New networking coordinator

Mary Hess, Professor of Educational Leadership at Luther Seminary, has generously agreed to serve as the networking coordinator for REA:APPRRE for the next year. She is eager to connect with members about outreach to other organizations, as well as ideas for strengthening our social media content. Please connect with her at mhess@luthersem.edu.



eREACH is a newsletter of the Religious Education Association, an Association of Professors, Practitioners, and Researchers in Religious Education.

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