



**REA Annual Business Meeting**  
**Friday, November 2, 2018**  
**Hyatt Regency Reston, Virginia**  
**Minutes**

The meeting was called to order by the President of REA, Mualla Selçuk, at 7:00pm.

The following documents were approved by a Consent Agenda:

*A consent agenda is a process whereby items which generally do not elicit much conversation are presented to the membership in advance of the meeting. REA documents were posted at <https://religiouseducation.net/rea2018/business-meeting/>. Then, at the meeting itself, these items are clustered together in a format that makes clear that they are on the consent agenda. The chair of the meeting inquires of the membership if there are any items they would like moved from the consent agenda to the regular agenda, thus allowing for discussion of them. Any member may ask for something to be moved, and one request is all that is necessary for that movement. Any items remaining on the consent agenda are adopted in whole as they are presented. This is a mechanism that makes it possible to move through items more quickly, thus creating more room for substantial discussion of items that truly require discussion.*

- Minutes of 2017 REA Business Meeting
- Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation regarding dissolution of assets
- Slate of 2019 nominees
- Executive Secretary's report
- Treasurer's report
  - REA Balance Sheet (with previous year comparison)
  - REA 2019 proposed budget, with 2018 Revenue and Expenses
- Networking Secretary's report
- *Horizons* Editorial Board Report
- Call for Proposals for 2019 REA

After the above items were approved by consent, a strategic discussion was held by members around tables on the following questions:

1. Where do you find yourself in this conversation of "white normativity"? What are the challenges and possibilities of that location?

The continuum might be 1) this is new information; 2) somewhat engaged; 3) disaffected; 4) left out; 5) "why are we behind in this conversation as a field?"

2. How have you witnessed religious education in robust practice in the wider public toward challenging white normativity?
3. What one thing do you hope REA would do to challenge our own hegemonic imagination about what is "white normative" for our guild and field?

[See compiled notes of table discussions.]

Mary Elizabeth Moore, Chair of the Harper/Wornom Committee, announced the winner of the 2019 Wornom Innovation Grant, Rabbi Jefferey Schein of the Kaplan Center for Jewish Peoplehood for the project, “Text Me: Ancient Jewish Wisdom Meets Contemporary Technology.”

Vice-President/Program Chair Elect, Hanan Alexander, presented the theme and call for proposals for the 2019 REA Annual Meeting in Toronto, “Coexistence in Divided Democratic Societies: Pedagogies of the Sacred, of Difference, and of Hope.”

President Selçuk adjourned the meeting at 8:30pm.

## **Appendix**

### **Notes from REA Strategy Discussion**

**Question 1. Where do you find yourself in this conversation of “white normativity”? What are the challenges and possibilities of that location?**

#### Table 1.

Geographies of race

Whiteness as homogeneity

POC as tokenized/otherized in this meeting

Letting POC “sing their song” at the center → universal/particular

Whiteness under microscope leaves POC out

#### Table 2.

Important to talk together across racial lines.

There are not spaces to have the conversation in general. Here it is programmed. Away from here we must be more careful.

Everything white is right.

Difficult to draw into. Why waste the energy.

Challenged to see if it is a life and death situation.

Compelled to do the work as a white person.

What I do should be done with people of color (integrity).

Don’t expect POC to do the work.

Political environment to make it supportive.

White folks’ job to straighten out white folks.

50 years lived in hope. Now it is frustration.

Children still being taught that this country was founded on justice and liberty for all.

#### Table 3.

Questions aren’t directed toward a person of color.

Some fields have intentionally taken this on.

Insulated from it at an educational institution...on continuum to institutions that have wrestled with it for decades.

Congregations

Table 4. Michael Horan, Carl, Patrick, Bud, Jane, Rachelle, Leah, Tom  
 Marginally engaged/sympathetic listener, not something I've invested time and energy in.  
 Helpful because we've been talking about it at Fordham but we haven't known what to do with it; it has confirmed some things we've done right and some not so right.  
 I'm still wondering what my missteps have been.  
 Sanguine. In some ways I thought we'd made more progress but the contradictions since Trump are startling. We've gone back so far as a country. And it's the will of so many people in our country. Racism, chauvinism, destruction of environment.  
 We still have a ways to go in our schools in addressing white normativity. To have to deal with this as an AA professionally and personally is unbelievable. My family was harassed recently.  
 Somewhat engaged. Recognizing my own discomfort and dealing with it.  
 Long way to go.  
 Struggle to diversify student body. Best explicit conversations occur around searches for faculty.  
 [hard for some to locate self in this way]

Table 5. Beth Nolan, Maureen, Karen-Marie, Daniel Hauge, Christine Lang-Hearlson, Cynthia Cameron, Tim Hanchin, Katherine Turpin  
 Lots to ponder in afternoon plenary (Tochluck), but I'm in passive middle moving toward active.  
 Reflecting about teaching mostly white students in a white undergrad institution; feeling ineffective so far. Found Tochluck's strategies and categories helpful.  
 Another predominantly white space. Easier to work along gender and sexual identity and applying that to race.  
 Chafing that white normativity collapsed from/against white male heterosexual normativity.  
 Always separating them out. Still not unpacking intricacies that cause white patriarchy to prevail.  
 Strange mixture of understanding why this is framed as US context, because of the huge pain that is here. I want to challenge the US normativity because of attention in my local congregation to visa applications (\$ and attendance going down) in pain of white normativity, painful location of acknowledging white dominance and acknowledging oppression around same-sex marriage.  
 Indigenous communities and Latinx communities get erased even in conversation.  
 Pushback against migrants. Caravan conversation, separate and fold all these together.  
 I'm in critical whiteness studies and this topic is on my mind a lot. Things I need to learn in a guild like this perhaps not what POC need to hear in a conference. We've experienced that as a tension.  
 Already know this.  
 Not helpful for POC to learn "I am racist."  
 Feels as if the conversation started and was just discovered this year when some people live in it.  
 I'm tired.  
 Who is the "we" that is being spoken of?  
 Had heard in REA over the years from lots of different voices in plenaries, but been focused on white experience.  
 Challenged by Hanan's reminder that we violated the Sabbath. Christian normativity. Are apologies helpful?  
 What if we had paired "white normativity" and "black struggle"? Or some other way of framing with multiple perspectives?

Table 6. Kathy Winings' table

- I am moderately to fairly engaged. Challenges me to change and encourage others to change as well. To consider the world differently.
- I am on the awareness point of the continuum trying to take steps toward more engagement. My wife is native American and we have interracial grandchildren so it is a topic close to

home.

- This may be my calling. My original call to ministry was around Civil Rights. So maybe I can invest more.
- I am on the awareness point probably. I am engaged in a lot of diversity discussions on campus. I connect with in-coming faculty with their research-related aspirations because I help them with grants. There is an effort to help them get started with their research and so supporting these new scholars in helping them with their work load. School is seeking to increase its knowledge of diversity.
- We do have EDI – equity, diversity, inclusivity
- I work with congregations. I am in the position of being generally aware of the issue but what is hard for me is to how to begin to talk about it in our congregations. Minnesota is my context, a white culture. Not having POC in their congregations, how do we help them learn to talk about it and with POC? We are taught to be nice to them is all. I hear the language that we are inclusive and diverse but it is a passive diversity and passively inclusive. We are not really going to engage people outside of our box. Or we don't know how to do it. One suggested to work with Black Somalian children in a project across the street but had no clue how to work with them as they were Somalian and Muslim. Hard to get them to understand the issues.
- I have 2 jobs – continuing educator and lead a program in United Church of Canada. Have to do social justice training for staff. We use virtual meeting rooms to connect with people as they are scattered. Working now with a group that is becoming intercultural intentionally. So I am white and have to think about what I am learning about this point. Toronto is more than 50% of people who were non-white and immigrants. People displaced from their homes. We struggle with what is white normativity. People workshop still in their own ethnic grouping. I learn so much from their stories.
- Normativity issue is more about gender and sexuality in my context. That is where many of the UMeth congregations are at that I deal with. How do I take what I am learning here at REA to that context.

Table 7. Sybrina Atwaters, Dave Csinos, Elizabeth Lighthen????, Joshua Lunde-Whitler, Greg Fritzberg, Lucinda Huffaker: 5 white scholars (4 U.S., 1 from Canada), one attending REA for the first time, one Black female--the board member recorder).

- I find myself in a white normative culture at a Canadian University. All white faculty and 90% of white students. I see it as a problem. We have made concrete efforts w/ indigenous population. More work to do.
- This is our first year my university admitted a non-majority class. Change is happening. Yet, that is not to say we are ready for change. I feel like I have lot to learn. Hopeful that the Dean (who is African American) and a dear friend will be a catalyst towards this change.
- I consider myself a Race scholar. I'm wondering how to do it where people of color voices are not erased.
- I am an executive director of a program. I recognize that I am in a position of power. I am paying attention to who is in the room. I question what my role is in this and in shaping programs.
- Quoted: White supremacy is the most powerful and unnamed system in our country.
- I'm not sure how productive it is to continue to talk about whiteness. Quoted a scholar as saying "sometimes our conversations about race and focusing on difference reinforces our difference and divides, and diminishes our similarities and what could bring us together." I am not sure it matters. I am still learning, but it makes me think.
- If we speak of white normativity on an individual racial/ethnic spectrum, I do not see myself a part of the conversation at all. For me this is all about structures and system. White

normativity is not about privilege, kindness, or begging someone to give people of color something out of their goodness/kindness of their heart...it is about systems. A powerful system of injustice that oppress and regulates our lives. It is a right not a gift. It is economic, political, social, and educational issue.

Table 8. Jos de Kock's table

- Canadian context: re-emergence of indigenous people: deeply spiritual people; white majority in Canada should seriously reflect on history in this regard and in particular religious communities should reflect on it and they should re-assess their religious beliefs in this regard. Bottomline is re-engagement with indigenous people.
- it is a daily reality for me; it is, thus, a necessary conversation; also when it comes to the theological dimension of the conversation;
- there is quite some skepticism/annoyance towards two white people doing the plenaries this day
- white normativity is just one dimension of the broader issue of race. Maybe it would be better if the conference had addressed race and racism and within that perspective the component of white privilege and white normativity. The current theme of the conference is almost racist.
- I was angry when I read the conference' theme: it is racist
- The problem with the arrangement of the room this morning was (1) one white person in the middle; (2) she was with her back to a large part of the participants

**Question 2. How have you witnessed religious education in robust practice in the wider public toward challenging white normativity?**

Table 1.

Not much

White Christian Nationalism as "RE" or at least formative

Youth and young adult opting out of religion as an example of the above. Nontraditional ecclesial spaces

Table 2.

Merger of Luther Seminary looking at issue of white normalcy through intention education.

Challenges previous constructs.

Antiracism workshops.

Story of Memphis Theological Seminary

REA over the years, slowly things have changed.

Question openness to practitioners. APPRE not being honored.

Jewish excluded with Fri and Sat events.

Why not work in communities? Not doing something with the people.

Table 3.

Way we've written about the field

Difficult teaching different ways; a different mirror

Hard to find resources that reflect the diversity

Table 4.

Racism is America's original and deepest sin. At no level is American education, let alone RE, challenging racism. There is no attention given to racism in public schools, etc.

Students have been initiating the conversations. Schools/RE are not leading the conversations.

RE in Catholic circles and wider circles is losing its authority/ability to speak to the wider public.

At best, it's coming from the learners/students. RE isn't leading.

It's hard to speak about these topics and not be accused of being too political or heretical. Civility has hidden the racism that's there.

Table 5.

Interfaith conversations and intentional examining setting up crossracial and crossreligious conversations around summer camps. Mutual endeavor of nurture of children.

What's an entree to explicit education building on informal?

One thing I have wished for today is practical use of religious resources. Wanting ritual, music, art, meditation. Feeling overwhelmed and tired. No session began in silence and gratitude.

Feeling frustrated about the lack of religious approaches, longing for song, art, poem.

Longer history of conversations around race and whiteness that went poorly. Nothing I said was right. Felt attacked.

Long plenary with no dialogue after. Instead, lightning round and lots of talking, talking. So often very traditional plenaries don't sustain conversation. Academia has its own normativity that runs here. I enjoyed a session this morning about how to be white and self-aware and not end in paralysis.

Shelly's plenary as strategy for dealing with inadequacy of shame/guilt.

These conversations require interior work, not show up and got it and now ready to go out.

Table 6.

- There is a Presbyterian church in Atlanta who set out to challenge white normativity and build a more multicultural church. Church is still going. Leadership has changed. That was a place with a robust practice. I have seen the denomination proactively promote people of color. It challenges people. Some respond with usual, "Is this affirmative action?" Oakhurst Church.
- I have a hard time finding robust practice. But I have seen robust failure. The failure of our system to facilitate cross-racial appointments. Non-white pastors to white congregations. Where I see the failure is the system is able to educate congregations and non-white clergy about what this means and how to move into this situation. Conversation remains superficial about loving each other. The effort is to create safe spaces but not brave spaces.
- I have had conversations with people on providing support and education for such pastors of color going into a white church. How do we help interview committees? We have not done anything in this area.
- Need to get people to acknowledge who they are and have people talk to diverse people in the church. They don't know how to talk together when they are so diverse.
- It is hard to engage Native American individuals in our churches and communities because we don't know or understand their culture enough at all. We don't go there. There has been no brave spaces created to engage in such dialogue. Plus the Native American community does not trust the white community enough to open and build a mutual relationship. And a denial of what the whites did to Native Americans exists.
- In the Uniting Church of Canada, we just went through Truth and Reconciliation process with First Nations people. What is becoming part of our practice is, at the beginning of a meeting, acknowledge who owns the land on which we are meeting and ask permission to meet there. REA should acknowledge the land and ask permission to meet there as part of the opening of the meeting in 2019. Contact a FN person to do some ceremony. (Stephen Fetter from ALLM)

Table 7.

- The most recent example I have, my partner is lead pastor of a small community outside of Boston without a lot of diversity in the church but a diverse surrounding community. Some of them came together to at least have a conversation about white privilege

(recognizing/applauding that a majority white group seeking to address this issue). There was a moment where intersection of religion and race came up. A colleague gave an anti-hero story of Jewish culture. The rabbi that happened to have a person of color as their partner pointed out the bias and challenged their colleague.

- In the midst of policy overhaul. Recently marijuana is legalized in Canada. We looked at the “no smoking” and “no tobacco” policy but decided it can be used in ceremonial process (indigenous ceremonies).
- Dr. Boyoung Lee is where I have been able to witness this happening. I have been fortunate to have her as a mentor. The way Dr. Lee structured classes is a strong example.
- Other ways are rubrics that checks bias in faculty searches. Reevaluate policies. Classroom practices.

#### Table 8.

- canadian context: churches have become the most important / strong pleaders for (rights of) indigenous people; we now have more and more first nations people 'speak'  
- How do Religious Education deal with the political questions. And how does the REA deal with it. Please, do something in terms of education. There should be more than awareness raising. You should do something

### **Question 3. What one thing do you hope REA would do to challenge our own hegemonic imagination about what is “white normative” for our guild and field?**

#### Table 1.

See Questions 1.

What does it feel like to be (white, black, latinx, Asian, et.)

#### Table 3.

Visions – as part of formation programs in theological education, to open conversations

#### Table 4.

We have to name it for ourselves, examine, critique, and plan to change.

We can't be told our problem. We have to name it for ourselves.

Pedagogically, lead us into reflection. Don't tell us what the problem is. Help us name it.

#### Table 5.

Persistence of single topic. Feedback requires attention to white normativity.

Notion that one topic we should all work on should be alike.

Cycle through a set of related themes around diversity.

Lots of people don't attend because research is different.

Shoe horn into theme. How to broaden the conversation.

Different topics around a common concern, or ask related questions.

#### Table 6.

- I hope the Toronto program will include some perspectives from the First Nations people in 2019. Another issue is sexuality. Most especially the issue of transgender people.
- The design of the REA program – how can we learn with so many presenters and to go from 8am to 9pm? Overload of information and presenters. Where is the time and space to stretch, to meet others? Is this sound educational pedagogy? Too long a day.
- Reading the papers in breakout. Not good. There was one presenter in my breakout who appeared to read his paper.
- I liked the concentric circles in the morning plenary and was unhappy to see the theater

setting in the second plenary. I am part of a church that works in the round and we all find it works very well as adults. It is less hegemonic.

Table 7.

- Bring in more voices.

Table 8.

- the pedagogies, the processes are very patriotic: one room, listen to one speaker