

MLK Jr. Day 2020
Call for Workshop Proposals:
“From the Ground Up: Inequity, Bias, Privilege, Structure, Death”
Proposals are due October 21, 2019 by 5pm

The theme for the Bates observation of Martin Luther King Jr. Day 2020 is, “From the Ground Up: Inequity, Bias, Privilege, Structure, Death.” Black, brown, native, and indigenous people in the United States have historically faced, and continue to face, social structures and biases that result in significant disparities in wealth, health, life-expectancy, freedom, and security.

Each year, a major part of MLK Day at Bates consists of 90-minute workshops organized by Bates faculty, staff, and students, and by members of the wider community. We write now to invite proposals for such workshops. We especially encourage workshops that view issues through an intersectional lens and that center marginalized perspectives and groups, including black, brown, native, and indigenous people, perhaps also focusing on trans people, LGBTQ+ people, women-identified people, recent immigrants to the United States or to Maine, poor and working people, among others. **Please submit your workshop proposals [here](#).**

To help you consider workshop possibilities, here are some examples of inequities, biases, privileges, and unjust structures that lead to suffering, harm, and early death:

- Black and brown (especially male-identified) people face incarceration rates more than five times higher than those faced by white (male-identified) people (“The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons;” <http://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/color-of-justice-racial-and-ethnic-disparity-in-state-prisons/>).
- As compared to white parents, black, brown, and indigenous parents are far more likely to have the state interfere in their parenting; black, brown, and indigenous children are much more likely to be removed from parental care, and to be removed for minor infractions, and placed in foster care. (See: “Has Child Protective Services Gone Too Far?” Michelle Goldberg, *The Nation*, September 30, 2015, obtained from: <https://www.thenation.com/article/has-child-protective-services-gone-too-far/> See also: “A Child Bumps Her Head. What Happens Next Depends on Race,” Jessica Horan-Block, *New York Times*, August 25, 2019.)

- According to the Indian Health Service of the US Federal government, American Indian and Alaskan Native peoples have long experienced lower health status than other Americans. This includes higher rates of disease, lower life expectancy, and earlier death, including deaths from self-harm, injuries, assaults, and homicides (<https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/disparities/>).
- Black and brown mothers experience far higher rates of morbidity and mortality in childbirth than do white mothers. According to the World Health Organization, the US ranks 43rd in the world in its rate of maternal mortality, but 80th in the world for black and brown mothers in the US (see: “America is Failing Its Black Mothers,” https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/magazine/magazine_article/america-is-failing-its-black-mothers/ winter 2019).
- Black and brown families have accrued less wealth than have white families. The typical black or brown family has 1/10th the wealth of the typical white family: reported in June 2019, the average white family has a net worth of \$171,000, while the average black family has a net worth of \$17,600: (<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brookings-now/2019/06/18/a-conversation-about-the-racial-wealth-gap-and-how-to-address-it/>). Native and indigenous people in the US also have a far lower household income (\$41,882 in 2017) than their white counterparts (<https://www.epi.org/blog/digging-into-2017-acs-income-native-americans-asians/>).
- The Human Rights Campaign reports that fatal violence disproportionately affects Black transgender women (<https://www.hrc.org/resources/violence-against-the-transgender-community-in-2019>).
- In the college and university context, white students, staff, and faculty members are advantaged in their ability to navigate the cultural context of their institutions (<https://www.thenation.com/article/anthony-abraham-jack-the-privileged-poor-book-q-and-a/>). A series of short essays in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 18, 2019) is instructive. The essays begin: “the “Operation Varsity Blues” [bribery scandal](#) led to an outpouring of conversation on privilege, merit, and fairness in higher education. African-American scholars were quick to point out the hypocrisy the scandal revealed. As Anthony Abraham Jack, an assistant

professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, [put it](#), “I have been told by people at times, ‘You stole a spot because you’re here.’ Now, who stole what from who?” In the wake of the scandal, *The Chronicle Review* asked graduate students, junior professors, and senior scholars what it’s like to be an African-American academic today.” These essays give their answers.

These outcome disparities, and many others, demonstrate that black, brown, native, and indigenous people face suffering, risks, harms, and earlier deaths than are faced by white people in the US. We invite workshops that address inequities such as these: workshops might address individual biases, such as implicit associations, that contribute to these outcome disparities; workshops might address privileges held by white people, but which should be held by all people; workshops might address social structures and processes that result in these outcome disparities; workshops might seek to place such disparities as these into historical context; or workshops might propose ways to overcome these inequities, biases, privileges, and structures. These are just a few of the many possible ideas. Please submit your workshop proposals [here](#). Thank you!