

WPC9 Executive Summary

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The ninth annual White Privilege Conference, April 1-4, 2008, was an overwhelming success. The local host was Goddard College and the faculty, students and alumni of the Social Justice Education Program at UMASS Amherst. The conference took place at the Springfield Sheraton and Marriott.

The theme for the 2008 national conference was: *Critical Liberation Praxis: Creating Transformation for Social Justice*. The Matrix Center's WPC is a conference that examines the challenging concepts of privilege and oppression and offers solutions and team-building strategies to work toward a more equitable future. WPC attracts students, professionals, faculty, activists, parents, and community leaders/members from diverse perspectives. WPC welcomes folks with varying levels of experience addressing issues of diversity, cultural competency, and multiculturalism. WPC is committed to a philosophy of "understanding, respecting and connecting."

This was the second year of the partnership between the UCCS Matrix Center and Dr. Eddie Moore Jr., founder and director of the conference. The conference drew a record number of 1112 participants from 37 different states and countries. Approximately 45% of the participants were drawn from the New England area. Of those reporting, approximately 70% of the participants were white. The largest group of people of color attending was African-American, and the second largest group identified as multiracial. Participants were a mixture of college faculty and students, high school students, K-12 teachers, individuals working in non-profit or religious organizations, and businesses.

The conference, held at the Springfield Sheraton, sold out approximately 350 rooms per night. Hundreds of additional attendees were directed to the overflow hotels in the area.

A diverse group of faculty, staff and students at UCCS, at UMASS, and from organizations around the country, volunteered much time and effort to make this event happen. The WPC9 again received widespread community support, with sponsorship from The Hartford, the Social Justice department of the Episcopal Church In the USA; the Association of Independent Schools in New England; the Committee for Racial Justice of the Toronto Conference of the United Church of Canada; EdChange, New York University Center for Multicultural Education and Programs, Teaching Tolerance; Stylus Publishing, The Wellesley Center for Women, and many other businesses, organizations, and individuals from MA and around the country (please see website for full list).

Over 150 anonymous conference evaluations were returned, the vast majority of which attest to the enormous success of the event. Overwhelmingly, attendees rated the conference a 4 or 5 on a scale of 5 (as highest). One attendee explained that she attends the WPC to "continue my learning process and life long journey of trying to be anti-

racist.” Respondents emphasized the “wonderful, provoking speakers,” and the unique “access to the presenters” this conference provides.

Unlike most diversity conferences, the WPC is focused on social justice activism, and provides a supportive learning environment for anti-racist activists to come together. One respondent emphasized how heartening it is “to see the amount of activism happening in places around the country.”

In addition to twelve day long institutes and 107 workshops lead by presenters from around the country, Keynotes speakers included:

John D. Palmer, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Colgate University, "Karate Chops, Geishas, Nerds, and the Asian Invasion: Reflections of a Korean Adopted American."

Rhea V. Almeida, MS, Ph.D., LCSW, founder of the Institute for Family Services (IFS) in Somerset, N.J., "Enacting Liberatory Practices -- From Critical Consciousness to Action."

Salome Raheim, PhD, ACSW, Associate Professor, The University of Iowa School of Social Work . "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize: The Role of Song in Critical Liberation Praxis."

Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu, Educational Consultant, African American Images, Inc. "An African Centered Response to Ruby Payne's Poverty Theory."

Professor Joe Feagin, McFadden Professor, Department of Sociology, Texas A&M University, "The Two Faced Racism."

The conference included numerous one day Institutes, providing an in-depth focus on a specific issue, as well as special events, including a Shabbat banquet, and a meet the speakers reception.

Plans are under way for the tenth anniversary White Privilege Conference in Memphis, April 1-4, 2009. Information about the WPC can be found at: www.uccs.edu/wpc