

Critical Race Studies in Education Association

Derrick Bell Legacy Award

In this inaugural year for the Derrick Bell Legacy Award, we honor critical race theorists, critical race studies scholars, and progressive educators-activists committed to advancing social justice and educational equity through their teaching, research, writing, and/or direct community action. Positive actions that illuminate our insight into the human condition require courage and commitment and is worthy of respect and acknowledgement. CRSEA is dedicated to breaking the limitations of oppressive master narratives, which denies the essential, complex roles of race, gender, and class within formal learning environments, diverse community settings, and across global contexts. This award recognizes individuals whose career accomplishments demonstrate personal courage and professional commitment to supporting and advocating for the “faces at the bottom of the well.”

2012 Recipients:

Gloria Ladson-Billings, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Kimberle W. Crenshaw, University of California at Los Angeles/Columbia University

Richard Delgado, Seattle University School of Law

David Gillborn, University of London, Institute of Education

Mari J. Matsuda, University of Hawaii at Manoa, William Richardson School of Law

Marvin Lynn, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Daniel Solórzano, University of California at Los Angeles

We wish to extend a heartfelt thanks to Dr. Betty M. Merchant, Dean of the College of Education and Human Development, The University of Texas at San Antonio, for sponsoring the 2012 Derrick Bell Legacy Awards.

Keynote Speaker: Dr. David Gillborn



"Intersectionality and the primacy of racism: race, class, gender and disability in education"

The notion of ‘intersectionality’ is generally credited to Kimberlé Crenshaw, one of the founders of critical race theory. In recent years, however, the term has taken on a life of its own and, in some treatments, has lost its critical edge and become a social science ‘buzzword’ devoid of clear meaning and political significance. Indeed, it has been argued that, because identity categories are infinitely divisible, the misuse of intersectionality could lead to the paralysis of critical work amid a mosaic of never ending difference. In this paper I argue for a return to a critical understanding of intersectionality as a tool in understanding the complex and fluid operation of racism. The paper draws on empirical data charting the continuing significance of white racism: first, at the micro level in the day-to-day life of parents and children as they seek justice in relation to processes of labeling in special educational needs (SEN); and second, at the macro level, through an analysis of the broad sweep of education policy and the repetitive harm that policy enacts against the interests of Black children. I argue that the intersection of different forms of oppression is a vital dimension in understanding contemporary educational inequities but that we must follow Derrick Bell’s courageous lead in retaining the confidence and political will to name and oppose the continuing primacy of racism as an empirical reality; an autobiographical touchstone; and an activist rallying point.

Conference 2012

Columbia University
Teachers' College
New York City
May 31 - June 2