

# MLK DAY SYMPOSIUM 2018:

## RUN TOWARD FEAR

### **SESSION 1 OFFERINGS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)**

**Asian Privilege? Think Again.** “Don’t complain—you’re Asian, so you already have it better than others.” How do Asians experience racism in the United States? Are the stereotypes imposed on Asian people really “compliments”? In this workshop, we will analyze specific historical examples of racism towards Asian Americans in the United States, and how history has created a lasting impact on racism towards Asian Americans today. We will discuss how institutionalized racism *and* internalized racism have altered the lives of Asian Americans, and how the UHS community can address these seemingly small microaggressions and impromptu remarks that are so prevalent in everyday student life. NOTE: this session is open to *all*, and is *not* limited to self-identified Asians.

**Contextualizing the News Through AJ+.** Since 2014, AJ+ –Al Jazeera’s primary digital channel– has worked to help viewers contextualize news and information, telling the stories of the powerless in our societies across the globe both in the U.S. and beyond. This workshop will explore how AJ+ tells these stories through the perspective of producer Omar Duwaji, who told the story of his own community in his series, *Syrians in America*. The session will also illuminate how AJ+ tackles other big stories related to themes of race, identity, xenophobia, and U.S. foreign policy. (*Omar Duwaji, Journalist and Digital Media Producer for AJ+*)

**Ending Anti-Muslim Bigotry—Breakout Session with Panelist Madihha Ahussain (Special Counsel for Anti-Muslim Bigotry, *Muslim Advocates*).** This session explores the ways misinformation, media and public and foreign policy in post 9/11 America contribute to negative public perceptions of Muslims at home and abroad. The session will discuss the ways legal and policy experts are responding to Islamophobia in the US. The importance of intercultural sensitivity, and ways for individuals and communities to combat anti-Muslim hate, threats, and violence will also be considered.

**Madihha Ahussain** serves as special counsel for anti-muslim bigotry at Muslim Advocates and heads the Program to Counter Anti-Muslim Hate. Ms. Ahussain works with a coalition of organizations to combat anti-Muslim efforts by public officials. In addition, she monitors hate crimes targeting American Muslims, works with communities to respond to threats or incidents of violence, and mosque opposition. During law school, she excelled in numerous regional and national moot court competitions, including the Whittier Juvenile Law competition

where she was a member of the Best Overall Team and was named Best Oral Advocate, as well as the Jerome Prince Memorial Evidence competition where she was a national finalist and was given the award for Best Oral Advocate in the Final Round. She was also honored by the State Bar of California with the Wiley W. Manuel Certificate for Pro Bono Legal Services for outstanding community service during her law school career. Ms. Ahussain was a recipient of summer public interest fellowships from both the South Asian Bar Association of Northern California and the Hastings Public Interest Law Foundation, which allowed her to pursue her interests in civil rights work. She interned with U.S. District Court Judge Edward Chen of the Northern District of California, the Asian Law Caucus, and the ACLU of Southern California. Ms. Ahussain also worked part-time in a small law firm during and after college. Ms. Ahussain received her B.A. with a double major in Sociology, and Psychology and Social Behavior from the University of California at Irvine and earned her J.D. from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law.

**Moving Forward After the Election.** Whether your response to last November’s election was to mourn or to celebrate, the fact is that the United States inaugurated a new president on January 20, 2017. This workshop will explore how we can respond positively and productively to this historic moment. How can we grow more effective at talking honestly, compassionately, and respectfully with people who see the world differently than we do? How can we take powerful action to support the ideals we cherish? What might it look like for each of us to bend the arc of history towards justice in the coming months and years? And how can we sustain ourselves for the long haul? All perspectives welcome; open ears, heart and mind required.

**My Zombie and Me (with Filmmakers Noël Amherd & Wellington Bowler).** What if we proposed the following reality—that the zombie apocalypse has already happened and we are all currently wading through the aftermath. After thinking “No way, prove it!” your next question might be, “So how do we know who are the living and who are the living dead?” In our workshop, we’ll suggest to you that this country we call the USA actually founded itself on a thread running through Roman law, enslaved Africans, and the walking dead. In its institution of slavery, a previously non-existent ‘whiteness’ created ‘blackness’ as a sacred, living-death so it could bring itself to life. If you begin to understand race as a tool of power rather than a fact of biology or a pattern of economics, you can then begin to truly fear your zombification. Come take this theory for a walk with Noël and Wellington and brave an effective, mind-altering reimagining of race and race relations in America today. (*Noël Amherd, Wellington Bowler*)

**Net Neutrality—Breakout Session with Panelist Jasiri X (Hip-Hop Artist/Activist, *1 Hood Media*).** What is net neutrality and how does repeal of net neutrality affect you? What are the implications for net neutrality alongside national debates about privatization and corporatization of public space? Jasiri will also discuss what net neutrality means for him as a grassroots activist and artist, and the impact repeal has for millennial activism.

**Jasiri X** is the first independent hip-hop artist to be awarded an Honorary Doctorate, which he received from Chicago Theological Seminary in 2016. This recognition grew out of the spiritual/political urgency and artistic vision he shared in songs like “Justice For Trayvon” and “Strange Fruit (Class of 2013),” which documented the police killings of young Blacks in the Millennial Generation. Likewise, he has been deeply involved with the national Movement for Black Lives, working with organizations like The Gathering for Justice, Blackout for Human Rights, Justice or Else, BYP100 and Sankofa. Still, he remains rooted in the Pittsburgh based organizations he co-founded, the anti-violence group One Hood as well as the New Media Academy, which teaches African-American boys how to analyze and create media for themselves. Jasiri emerged on the national scene in 2007 with the powerful hit song “Free The Jena 6” and the groundbreaking Internet video series *This Week With Jasiri X*, a program that reached millions of Internet views. More recently, his critically acclaimed album *Black Liberation Theology* (2015) has been recognized as a soundtrack for today’s civil rights movement. He has performed his music from the Smithsonian to the Apollo Theater and has discussed his views on hip-hop, race and politics at leading institutions across the nation, including Harvard University, the University of Chicago, NYU, Stanford, among others.

**Nonviolent Noncooperation.** Come learn about nonviolent change makers. We'll hear from Dr. King, Thich Nhat Hanh, Gandhi, and Tolstoy. If we have time, we may also hear from Jesus, Buddha, Lao Tzu, and Krishna.

**Priced Out: Art and Life in the Bay Area.** If the Bay Area has always been a place that embraces alternative culture, what happens when the time and space for experimentation disappear? This workshop will explore the impact of rising costs of living on artistic life in and around the Bay Area. We'll ask the question: What do artists contribute to the lifeblood of a city? When artists leave, what do we lose? We'll watch a short documentary film about an alternative living space threatened with demolition, read some stories of recent evictions, and look at the ways in which artists are often complicit in the pattern of gentrification that eventually forces them out. The bulk of our time in this workshop will be spent in an open discussion.

**Prison Industrial Complex—Breakout Session with Panelist Yusef Salaam (Exonerated member of the Central Park 5).** Currently the United States, although the world’s third most populous country, houses the largest prison population on earth. For the last decade, our nation’s prison population has remained around 2 million, growing by 700 percent since the late 1970s. These imbalances have disproportionately affected the hip-hop generation, Blacks, Latinos and the poor, and pose serious challenges to our democracy. Yusef will discuss the ways US class and race based policing and criminalization practices overlap with America’s criminal justice system.

**Yusef Salaam** is a motivational speaker who serves on the board of The Campaign to End the Death Penalty and the Learn My History Foundation, an organization dedicated to youth

empowerment, education and change. He's the inspiration behind People United for Children Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving youth in the juvenile and foster care systems. In 1989, he was one of the five boys—four black and one Latino— tried and convicted for the brutal rape of a young woman in New York City's Central Park. They became known as "The Central Park Five." Their convictions were vacated in 2002 after spending between six and 13 years of their lives behind bars. The now exonerated Yusef Salaam, who was 15 years old when he was wrongly convicted, has committed himself to advocating and educating people on the issues of false confessions, police brutality and misconduct, press ethics and bias, race and law, and the disparities in America's criminal justice system. In 2012, documentarians Ken and Sarah Burns released the documentary *The Central Park Five*, which tells this travesty from the perspective of Salaam and his cohorts.

**Reproductive Rights: Under Attack and Fighting Back.** In 1973, the landmark *Roe v. Wade* case legalized abortion in the USA. Since then, access to abortion and contraception has been challenged and chipped away through legislation and social attitudes. But while the current Trump administration is threatening further ferocious attacks on reproductive rights, local government is fighting back. All are welcome to this session, in which we'll watch part of *Trapped*, a 2016 documentary about the fight for reproductive health clinics to remain open, and then share our views on the past, present and future of reproductive choices.

**Resisting State Sanctioned Murder—Breakout Session with Panel Moderator Bakari Kitwana (Author, *The Hip-Hop Generation*).** Although the Movement for Black Lives protest efforts have waned from national headlines, state sanctioned police and vigilante killings of often unarmed civilians remain at the center of national activist debates. Police killing of unarmed civilian for 2017 has already reached 937. This session will use the community response to police killing of Tamir Rice as a springboard to discuss the anatomy of resistance to what activists describe as state sanctioned murder.

**Bakari Kitwana** is an internationally known cultural critic and thought leader in the area of hip-hop, youth culture, and Black political engagement. A senior media fellow at the Harvard Law based think tank, The Jamestown Project, Kitwana is the Executive Director of Rap Sessions, which conducts town hall meetings on difficult dialogues facing the Millennial and Hip-Hop Generations. The former Editor-in-Chief of *The Source* magazine, he is the co-founder of the first ever National Hip-Hop Political Convention, which brought over 4000 18 to 29-year-olds to Newark, NJ in 2004 to create and endorse a political agenda for the hip-hop generation. The 2007-2008 Artist-in-Residence at the Center for the Study of Race Politics and Culture at the University of Chicago, Kitwana is the author of *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop* and the forthcoming *Hip-Hop Activism in the Obama Era*. His groundbreaking 2002 book *The Hip-Hop Generation* popularized the expression "the hip-hop generation" and has been adopted as a coursebook in classrooms at over 100 college and universities. Kitwana served on the organizing

committee for the 2013 Black Youth Project convening that launched the millennial Black activist group BYP100. In 2015, he edited an essay series for Mic.com on race and policing, “Shifting Perceptions: Being Black in America.” Also in 2015, he was part of a group of Cleveland activists called “The Cleveland 8” that filed affidavits challenging the city to arrest the officers who murdered 12-year-old Tamir Rice outside of a community recreation center.

**Social Justice and Community Education—Breakout Session with Panelist Erika González (Activist and Community Social Justice Educator).** This session examines social and racial justice education in the lives of American youth and answers the questions: Why is Social Justice education important, and how should it be incorporated into the curriculum in the earliest stages of a child’s development? The session will emphasize the ways grassroots communities and the arts enhance these efforts, and will encourage participants to share insight based on their own experiences as students and teachers.

**Erika González** is a Xicana educator and former environmental justice organizer with fifteen years of experience working with children and families in K-12 schools. Erika infuses art, social justice and culture into her curriculum. She is the former Co-Director of PODER (People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources) based in East Austin, TX and is currently a founding teacher at Roses in Concrete Community School, a social justice school in East Oakland where she teaches Kindergarten.

**Threads of Social Justice: Finding Your Political Voice (with Sara Trail of Social Justice Sewing Academy).** While it is no surprise that Black people have been subjected to a multitude of injustices within the short span of American History, the current social climate underscores the lack of progress that has been made as it pertains to issues of race. The recent election has brought White America's deeply rooted feelings about race, religion, sexism, immigration, as well as their disdain and resistance to change to the forefront. Instead of crumbling under the weight of this new found awareness, it is imperative that there be productive outlets to channel this energy of resistance. This Social Justice Sewing Academy workshop will serve as a tool to help you understand the complex tapestry of your own personal and cultural identity within the current political climate. Drawing on your creative mind and unique ideas, this workshop will ask you to reimagine a political future where your voice carries this nation forward. Using fabric and raw-edge appliqué techniques participants will create a social justice quilt block that will serve as a narrative for their lived experiences.

**Water Rights and the Flint Water Crisis: Science, Policy, and Impact.** We will start with some background information on the chemistry and health implications of water quality and pollutants that folks are dealing with in Flint, Michigan and around the country. Then we’ll discuss the US and UN rules and policies about water quality and the concept of water access as

a basic human need. To get a sense of the impact of the crisis on Flint's residents, we'll look at some photojournalism and demographic data. We hope to wrap up with a discussion about ways to have an impact and get involved.

**Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion.** As the 2016 election revealed, America is seemingly more polarized than it's ever been. It's as if we've stopped talking to each other or even trying to understand one another. Do things have to be this way? In this workshop, we'll try to comprehend how morality works and why we make certain political judgments. We'll look at the ways that various kinds of moral frameworks differentiate and underlie conservative and liberal political choices. What drives your decisions? Can you understand the factors that might drive someone else to make a very different decision about the same question? We'll also discuss how you might go about talking to and empathizing with (to argue with, learn from, and/or convince) someone who has completely different political views or just doesn't agree with you.

**Understanding Whiteness.** This workshop is designed for white people who would like to explore how we may be contributing to a culture of white supremacy, even if we are opposed to the idea of racism and want to treat everyone equally. We will look at common patterns of thinking and behaving that obscure and protect racism, and discuss ways to shift these often unconscious patterns within ourselves and in our actions. This will be a supportive space aimed at inviting participants to connect more fully with ourselves and one another as we learn about and reflect on this complex topic.

## **SESSION 2 OFFERINGS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)**

**A Disappearing World.** Coral reefs are the largest and most inhabited ecosystem in the world, but thanks to human-induced global warming, this ecosystem will soon be completely gone, unless we act NOW. This workshop will focus on educating people on how global warming has seriously affected coral reefs, and what the disappearance of this ecosystem could mean for not only oceans, but humans as well. At the end of this session, we will talk about and brainstorm ways we can help reverse global warming and the effects it has had on our Earth. The goal of this session is to leave listeners with optimistic hopes, a toolbox for helping our world, and the reasons to do so.

**Building Racial Bridges.** In this workshop, we will explore how different racial groups experience racism both at UHS and in the greater community. We will then use what we discuss to form a base for alliances between racial groups, specifically in regard to microaggressions. Our goal is to help everyone understand the conflicts that can come up between oppressed racial groups and how to resolve these conflicts. Through this interactive workshop, participants will gain tools to better navigate their daily interactions with people of varying racial backgrounds.

**Come Share about Hair with SWEAR!** In today's society, there are certain topics feel off limits and uncomfortable when put into words. As SWEAR leaders, we have noticed that our relationship with hair is one of these uncomfortable subjects, and we want to change that. SWEAR will be holding a intersectionality-focused discussion about women's relationships to hair **open to self-identifying women**. We will cover topics such as body hair, hair type, and expectations around beauty by connecting our personal experiences with greater societal norms. What do certain individuals have to do to feel comfortable with their appearance? Why is there a pressure to remove certain types of hair but not others? What does it mean to be a feminist and still want to shave your legs? While this session will have limited structure, our discussion is intentionally open ended—we can address all or none of these topics, depending on what direction the group moves in.

**Environmental Politics and Activism.** In this session, we will be discussing policies and practices coming from the current administration that will inevitably impact the environment. Get ready to talk about the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), recent environmental disasters, and the Paris Climate agreement! We will also introduce new ways in which you can get involved with environmental activism.

**Feminism & Religion.** This workshop will focus on the question of what it means to be a self-identified feminist as well as a member of a religious tradition that may sometimes be in conflict with feminist values. We will look specifically at the issue of widespread Christian support of Alabama senatorial candidate Roy Moore, and consider how religious traditions can be sources of support and respect for women, rather than divisive and politicized doctrines. (Just to be clear: this session is open to participants of ALL GENDERS and ALL RELIGIONS.)

**Habits of Citizenship: Letter-writing 101.** Elected representatives work for us. The First Amendment guarantees the right to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. Cultivating the habit of letter-writing (or making phone calls / office visits) can be a personally satisfying but also useful exercise. Like any good habit, it takes willpower and initiative to get over initial hurdles. The goal of this session is for us to write and/or call a few of our elected representatives to express our hopes and concerns about the direction of our country. Stamps, envelopes, contact information and a printer will be provided—bring a laptop if you can. This session will not take on any particular political point of view, other than the need for an informed citizenry to express itself to its elected leaders.

**How to Be a Better Ally.** An ally is a person who empowers and supports another person, group, or cause. At UHS, we have many obvious ways to be an ally through participation in clubs, volunteering activities, and events such as the MLK Day Symposium workshops and panels. In this workshop, we hope to highlight the less obvious and more challenging ways to be

an ally—such as speaking out against oppression, leaning in to difficult discussions, and taking personal inventory of our own actions and words. We will work to create an action plan for UHS to celebrate allies and encourage everyone in the community to work on being a better ally.

**James Baldwin in 2018.** Thirty years after his death, writer James Baldwin (*The Fire Next Time*, *Giovanni's Room*, *Another Country*) remains a highly influential figure who is quoted frequently by artists and activists, and who has inspired the works of contemporary writers like Ta-Nehisi Coates (*Between the World and Me*) and Jesmyn Ward (*The Fire This Time*) as well as filmmaker Raoul Peck (*I Am Not Your Negro*). Does Baldwin's lasting relevance imply we have not made enough advances in our society, or is it pointing to something else? And what is the role of art today—is it any different from the role James Baldwin's work played in his time? To begin to answer these questions and more, we will watch a selection from the film *I Am Not Your Negro*, which pairs Baldwin's original words with archival material that examines race and racism in this country, the Civil Rights movement, and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Familiarity with James Baldwin is not at all a prerequisite; all are welcome!

**Mahmoud Darwish and the Poetry of Witness.** What is the role of the poet in the midst of and the aftermath of disaster? In our era of continual disaster and relentless information about disaster, how is the poet's documentation of violence and injustice different from the journalist's? How can the poet stand as a witness to the forceful erasure of place, identity, and history? In this workshop, we will explore the life and work of the poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008), an internally displaced Palestinian (or "present absentee"), whose works bear witness to real catastrophes and give voice to utopian longings. The workshop will include a brief lecture on Darwish's biography and an open discussion on one or two of Darwish's poems.

**Monuments: Should They Stay or Should They Go?** This interdisciplinary workshop will investigate the current debate around the taking down of monuments across our country. By looking at a few monument controversies from the past and present surrounding the decision to dismantle monuments, we will address issues of legacy, memory, race and culture, and the complexity each side brings to this important conversation.

**Public Schools: Maybe We're Not So Different, After All.** This discussion will provide attendees an opportunity to learn about the role of public schools in today's educational landscape using their involvement in the Civil Rights movement, shepherded by Martin Luther King Jr., and more specifically *Brown v. Board*, as the foundation for our larger discussion. What are the (seemingly hidden) strengths of public schools? How do we talk about public schools, their teachers, their students, etc.? What rhetoric do we hear from politicians about public schools' relationship to educational reform, and how much of that conversation is helpful v. detrimental to progress and growth? What type of expectations do public school teachers have

from both students and parents that they serve? What is the history of education reform, and why is it so difficult to achieve? What is a union and what is their purpose in a public school? What are the similarities between public and private schools?

**Seeing Everything at Once.** Danzy Senna, in her novel *Caucasia*, describes being biracial as “this yearning for a place that doesn’t exist. I felt that. Still do. I’m never completely at home anywhere. But it’s a good place to be, I think. It’s like floating. From up above, you can see everything at once. It’s the only way how.” What does it mean to be biracial, multiracial or multiethnic? Is it about holding all identities equally? In various amounts? Not at all? Participants will explore their own racial and ethnic identities while acknowledging the various ways individuals experience being “mixed.” Possible topics may include Kip Fulbeck’s *The Hapa Project*, the ways in which people attribute various identities on to others, a history of being mixed race in America, and common myths and misconceptions about multiracial identity. Note: while this workshop focuses on the experience of mixed race people, it is open to participants of all races.

**Social Construction of the Self, the Other, and Social Reproduction Theory.** How do we come to know who we are? How is that sense of ourselves related to others around us and the specific histories of our societies? How are large groups of people socialized and prepared to play certain roles as they move through childhood to adulthood, and how can we think critically about the specific ways we come to know ourselves and others in a society founded on racism, patriarchy, and capitalism? This session aims to briefly introduce certain concepts (drawn from a variety of disciplines, including psychology, semiotics, and social reproduction theory) that help illuminate the way we form our own identities, how those identities are formed in relation to a sense of the “Other” in society, and finally how that happens on a massive generational scale to further the social systems and institutions that power society, including capitalism. Any and all of these topics deserve much more time in their own right—this is definitely intended as an introduction to give participants some tools, ideas, and starting points for thinking through these issues.

### **Socioeconomic Status: What Is It? Why Do We Care?**

*“Socioeconomic status is the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation.”*

*—American Psychological Association.*

A session on socioeconomic class has been the most requested workshop on this day for a few years. What are the different socioeconomic statuses (SES)? Why is it hard to talk about SES? What assumptions do we make about certain SES profiles? What role does SES play here at UHS? How does SES intersect with other identifiers? In this workshop, we will respond to these questions by closely examining how SES impacts us individually and collectively.

**The Role of Protest in US History.** Do you ever find yourself wondering how you can make an impact within a large scale social movement? What is the point of attending the Women’s March or other similar protests if you are only one individual in a mass of people? Are you really making a difference? In this session, we will examine a range of social movements throughout the history of the United States and wrestle with their lasting impact on our society. What is the role of protest in a social movement? To what extent are the conditions that led to historic social movements present in our current political climate? We will answer these questions and also address how you can maximize your voice in social movements today.

**Threads of Social Justice: Finding Your Political Voice (with Sara Trails of *Social Justice Sewing Academy*).** While it is no surprise that Black people have been subjected to a multitude of injustices within the short span of American History, the current social climate underscores the lack of progress that has been made as it pertains to issues of race. The recent election has brought White America's deeply rooted feelings about race, religion, sexism, immigration, as well as their disdain and resistance to change to the forefront. Instead of crumbling under the weight of this new found awareness, it is imperative that there be productive outlets to channel this energy of resistance. This Social Justice Sewing Academy workshop will serve as a tool to help you understand the complex tapestry of your own personal and cultural identity within the current political climate. Drawing on your creative mind and unique ideas, this workshop will ask you to reimagine a political future where your voice carries this nation forward. Using fabric and raw-edge appliqué techniques participants will create a social justice quilt block that will serve as a narrative for their lived experiences.

**Tuned Out: Cultural Politics of the Family Sitcom.** From *Friends* to *Fresh Prince*, we all have a favorite sitcom. Since the 1950s, this television form has both upheld and defied social norms about the American family. Sitcoms have often presented a white, middle-class family with a male breadwinner and stay-at-home housewife as the norm, which has been challenged over the years. This workshop will explore the evolution of the family sitcom over the last 50 years through selections from episodes of *I Love Lucy*, *All in the Family*, *The Cosby Show*, and *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*. We’ll discuss whether the form is inherently conservative, how the portrayal of the American Black experience changes over time, and how different maternal figures from various shows have both supported and undermined the feminist movement. Our big question will be what sitcoms do both for us and to us.

**Voting & Gerrymandering: A Mathematical Perspective.** This workshop will provide a brief overview of voting in the US and gerrymandering—the process of manipulating voting boundaries to favor one party or another. We’ll consider recent court cases involving gerrymandering and see how mathematicians are working on fair solutions to the problem of redistricting.

