

## CAWGS Network Meeting Minutes for April 3, 2009

Attending: Veronica Arreola-UIC, Ann Brigham-RU, Kathleen Carot-Oakton, Laurie Fuller-NEIU, Margaret Haefner-North Park, Marian Staats-Oakton, Katy Weseman-NU

We held a planning meeting hosted by Margaret Haefner at North Park University. The meeting was facilitated by Laurie Fuller, with Marian Staats taking notes.

We began with distribution of the program for DePaul University's Women's and Gender Studies conference "Creating Solidarity: Creating Coalitional Consciousness and Action," which takes place on Friday, 4/24, and Saturday, 4/25, at DePaul's Levan and Schmitt Academic Center, 2320 N. Kenmore. The CAWGS interactive session, "Building Coalitional Consciousness: From Theory to Practice," is scheduled from 3:30-6 on Friday afternoon/evening.

We next examined the process handout for a "coalitional consciousness building" exercise adapted from Cricket Keating's *NWSA Journal* article, "Building Coalitional Consciousness," and Laurie F. noted some of the highlights and challenges of working through the "difficult dialogues" exercise with a group of eight Women's Studies students as part of a class session. They enjoyed the process and discussion but didn't fully cover *Step Three*, so for the conference exercise we decided to develop a timetable, including the steps detailed below. During our conference session, Katy W. will keep track of the time, to help groups work through each step:

3:30-4 – Cricket Keating will introduce the idea of "coalitional consciousness." We'll distribute a handout at this point, so that at 4:00 we'll be able to start. \*Note: Laurie F. is making copies of the handout, and including one revision we discussed: pluralizing "experiences" and "relationships" in the first question under *Step One*.

4- 4:20 – Laurie F. will introduce CAWGS and the CAWGS' project; groups will gather and generate "difficult dialogue" topic suggestions on the whiteboard. We also discussed counting off as a strategy for encouraging people to stretch themselves by working with folks they don't know and decided that 5-6 people would be an optimal number for each group.

4:20-4:30 – *Step One: Locating Experience*

Groups decide on topics and do their free writes.

4:30-5:00 – *Step Two: Seeing Resistance to Multiple Oppressions*

Sharing experiences within small groups. For this step we discussed the importance of beginning dialogue that takes seriously our histories and experiences of power relations in a new way, shifting focus from the "difficult dialogue" topic itself to learning and practicing a process of examining "multiple relations of oppression and resistance" that will facilitate coalitional action.

5- 5:30 – *Step Three: Coalitional Risk-Taking*

Considering possibilities for coalitional action. This step will enable us to think about the promise of collegial work, in the process transforming our relationships and the dynamics of working together in coalition. \*Note: We want to have post-it notepads and markers for this step so that each group can record their ideas for coalitional action, and Ann R. has indicated that DePaul can supply materials.

5:30-6 – Big Gather. Share small group reflections with the larger group.

After generating a timetable for the conference session, we then practiced our own abbreviated version of a “difficult dialogue” on the topic of recognizing and working with “privilege” – though there were 7 people in our group, which is larger than the 5-6 we anticipate for the conference small groups, we concluded that it may be necessary to allow at least 20 minutes for *Step One*.

We will meet again at the conference on April 24 – looking forward to seeing you there!