

EDCP Lecture Series 2014-2015

International Perspectives on Curriculum and Pedagogy

hosted by William E. Doll, Jr., Donna Trueit, William Pinar

"Somebody's got to tell it like it is": Conjugating James Baldwin and Curriculum

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April 10th | 12:30-2:00pm | Scarfe room 1107

Sandwiches and informal conversation at noon in room 1223 | The lecture commences at 12:30 pm

Throughout 2014-2015, to celebrate what would be James Baldwin's 90th year, a range of scholarly symposia and creative activity were feverishly planned and convened, to revisit, debate and celebrate Baldwin's prodigious and prescient lifetime body of work under the sign, "James Baldwin Now". Although his "telling it like it is" refrain, in that inimitable public voice—his subjectivity—is evoked from time-to-time in curriculum theory, the year of Baldwin has passed, and as far as I can discern, with scant notice in the field. In this paper I tease out what it means to bring Baldwin back into conversation with curriculum—to stimulate critical attention on Baldwin as a key thinker for imagining curriculum now, twenty-eight years after his death. The objective is neither to establish stable or didactic relationships between Baldwin and curriculum; nor to speculate about what Baldwin would "talk" to curriculum theorists about were he here to lecture to us today. More modestly, I consider my own return to Baldwin, and where this has led, as I imagine the task

of curriculum work in the context of the precarious social conditions of our present. In particular, I return to Baldwin through encounters with two texts from 1963: "A talk to Teachers," and the public television documentary, "Take This Hammer". I suggest that the idiomatic fever and cosmopolitan riffing of these works underwrites fundamental questions Baldwin posed in his 1963 *The Fire Next Time*. Provocatively I will ask, troping on Baldwin: if curriculum cannot make us larger, freer and more loving, then perhaps we should get rid of it.

Dr. Warren Crichlow teaches in the Faculty of Education, York University, where he primarily teaches undergraduate foundations and humanities informed courses in the teacher education program, and graduate courses in cultural and global studies in education. His recent publication is: "Its All About Finding The Right Excuse" in Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act Of Killing. Film Quarterly*, 67:2 (Winter 2014) and *After Genocide: Examining Legacy, Taking Responsibility. Canadian International Council/OpenCanada.Org Online* (May 2014). In addition to interests in Baldwin and W. G. Sebald, his current research investigates narratology of memory and transitional justice in emergent independent filmmaking in Rwanda.

