

“Making Knox: The Anti-Slavery and Abolitionist Aspirations of a Midwestern College”

Faculty Development workshop | Dec 6-7, 2022

This workshop is a key component of our Mellon Foundation “Abolition for All Time” grant and is designed to help us explore our roots as an institution connected to abolitionism. Over the course of two days, we will learn more about the founding of Knox, definitions of abolition, past and present, and why they matter for us today.

The workshop will last two days, Tuesday-Wednesday, December 6th and 7th, and run daily from approximately 8:30 in the morning to 3 in the afternoon. It will include opportunities for participants to think differently about the College’s legacy, grapple with founding documents and key questions in its early history, and explore what abolitionism means today. This conversation is for all, regardless of disciplinary specialization, and connects us to our fundamental sense of the educational mission of the College.

Our keynote speakers are Dean Christian Crouch (Bard College) and Professor John F. Bell (Assumption University). In preparation for workshop discussions, attendees will read several short articles for the workshop.

Readings (for the workshop)

- Doug Kiel (Oneida), “[Erosion of the Middle Ground: Native Peoples of the Great Lakes Region after 1815](#),” National Park Service.
- [Before Knox](#) website
- Walter Johnson, “[To Remake the World: Slavery, Racial Capitalism, and Justice](#),” *Boston Review*, February 20, 2018.
- Angela Y. Davis, “[Believe in New Possibilities](#).”
- Mariame Kabe, “[So You’re Thinking of Becoming an Abolitionist](#).”

Agenda

Day One: December 6

9am Introductions. **Welcome** from Mike Schneider

9.15am **Timelining Activity**

9.45am **Group activity:** Defining our Terms

10:30am **Break**

10.45 **Dean Christian Crouch (Bard College):** “Wall Street Started in the Cotton Kingdom: Race and Finance in the Antebellum South”

Abstract: Popular misconceptions about the pre-Civil War United States put forward ideas about the South as a region that had always produced cotton, was “in but not of capitalism,” and had none of the economic sophistication of northern states. This talk reveals the financial collaboration between north and south to expand racial capitalism in the United States. It also outlines the roots of the “Cotton Kingdom” as a specific historical time and place, explain the complex financial mechanisms that supported “King Cotton,” and suggest the intertwined relationships of philanthropy, southern Indian removal, and abolition on financial development in the North.

11.30 **Group Activity:** What Did you Learn Way Back When?

- Table of Contents handout

Noon **Lunch**

1.15 **Dr. Jen Andrella:** Envisioning Union: Rethinking Reconstruction through the Career of James M. Ashley

2.25 **Minute paper**

2.30 **Mix and mingle** with snacks and beverages

Day Two: December 7

9am **Warm up:** what's been on your mind since yesterday?

9.15am **Documents** from the Knox College archives

9.45am **Dr. John Bell**, "Degrees of Equality: Abolitionist Colleges and the Politics of Race."

Abstract: The abolitionist movement influenced a number of antebellum colleges and universities, particularly in the Midwest. But to what extent did these institutions put antislavery principles into practice? This talk will explore the ambivalent legacy of abolitionism in nineteenth-century higher education, connecting Knox's antislavery past with that of other abolitionist colleges such as Oberlin.

10.45am **Break**

11am **Group work:** What does all of this mean for us as Knox educators?

- Liberatory Education handout

Noon **Lunch**

1pm **Group work:**

For people not already part of the Abolition Lab: workshopping new ideas in the Trustees Room

For people already in an Abolition Lab team: time to discuss how the workshop applies to / expands the work you're doing. Go anywhere in Alumni Hall with your team members to do this, and be ready to report back to the full group at 2pm.

2pm **Reporting back**

2.30 **Mix and mingle** with appetizers, and drinks from a luxury hot chocolate bar

Further reading

Bell, John Frederick. "When Regulation Was Religious: College Philanthropy, Antislavery Politics, and Accreditation in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century West." *History of Education Quarterly*, 57,1 (February 2017): 68-93.

Bell, John Frederick. *Degrees of Equality: Abolitionist Colleges and the Politics of Race*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2022.

Calkins, Earnest Elmo. *They Broke the Prairie: Being Some Account of the Settlement of the Upper Mississippi Valley by Religious and Educational Pioneers, Told in Terms of One City, Galesburg, and Of One College, Knox*. 1937.

Delbanco, Andrew. "Endowed by Slavery." *The New York Review* (June 23, 2022): 59-62.
<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2022/06/23/endowed-by-slavery-american-universities-delbanco/>

Muelder, Hermann R. *Missionaries and Muckrakers: The First Hundred Years of Knox College*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984.

Norman, Matthew. "From an 'Abolition City' to the Color Line: Galesburg, Knox College, and the Legacy of Antislavery Activism." *Journal of Illinois History* 10,1 (Spring 2007): 2-26.

Sinha, Manisha. *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016.