

SEMINAR NO. 6 OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH: A CURRICULUM FOR  
STUDIES INTO DARKNESS

# GOING TOWARDS THE HEAT: SPEAKING ACROSS DIFFERENCE



**MONDAY, JUNE 10, 2019**  
**6:30-8:30 PM**

Vera List Center for Art and Politics  
The New School  
Theresa Lang Community and Student Center  
55 West 13th Street, 2nd Floor  
New York City

## **VERA LIST CENTER FOR ART AND POLITICS**

The Vera List Center for Art and Politics is a research center and a public forum for art, culture, and politics. It was established at The New School in 1992—a time of rousing debates about freedom of speech, identity politics, and society’s investment in the arts. A pioneer in the field, the center is a nonprofit that serves a critical mission: to foster a vibrant and diverse community of artists, scholars, and policy makers who take creative, intellectual, and political risks to bring about positive change.

We champion the arts as expressions of the political moments from which they emerge, and consider the intersection between art and politics the space where new forms of civic engagement must be developed. We are the only university-based institution committed exclusively to leading public research on this intersection. Through public programs and classes, prizes and fellowships, publications and exhibitions that probe some of the pressing issues of our time, we curate and support new roles for the arts and artists in advancing social justice. [www.veralistcenter.org](http://www.veralistcenter.org)

## **NEW YORK PEACE INSTITUTE**

New York Peace Institute provides conflict resolution services in the form of mediation, conflict coaching, restorative processes, group facilitation, and skills training. Their programs are a resource to thousands of New Yorkers facing conflict each year—whether it is between parents working out a custody agreement, a noise dispute between neighbors, diverting a misdemeanor case from court, or a conflict between a parent and school regarding a student with special needs. Their services foster listening, empathy, and communication among their clients and help them develop their own creative solutions. As the city’s largest civilian peace force, their mission is to build peace and prevent violence in New York City and beyond.

They also provide vital communication and conflict management skills training to a broad range of organizations, including city agencies, non-profits, labor unions, and schools. They employ a creative, learn-by-doing approach in our trainings, drawing upon theater, visual arts, music, and kinesthetic activities. [www.nypeace.org](http://www.nypeace.org)

## **FREEDOM OF SPEECH: A CURRICULUM FOR STUDIES INTO DARKNESS**

*Going Towards the Heat: Speaking Across Difference* is the sixth seminar in a year-long examination of Freedom of Speech, and is co-presented by the Vera List Center for Art and Politics with New York Peace Institute. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees four specific freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and protest, and freedom of religion. With Indian artist Amar Kanwar's film *Such a Morning* (2017) as a point of departure, the seminar series imagines these four freedoms enshrined in the U.S. Constitution as points on the compass rose, which can be overlaid with intersectional thinking from artists, Indigenous peoples, feminists, and innumerable other perspectives, to question current circumstances, and to confront the inequities and uncertainties in our times, especially as they pertain to freedom of speech.

### **SEMINAR 6. SUGGESTED READINGS**

Each seminar is accompanied by Suggested Readings listed on the Vera List Center website as well as a summary of the other proceedings, full video documentation, and the program booklet.

Cloke, Kenneth. «Why Dialogue In Politics.» and «How To Design, Organize and Facilitate Dialogues Over Difficult and Dangerous Issues.» In *Politics, Dialogue and the Evolution of Democracy: How to Discuss Race, Abortion, Immigration, Gun Control, Climate Change, Same Sex Marriage and Other Hot Topics*, 81-97 and 99-129. Highland Park Village: Goodmedia Press, 2018.

Pranis, Kay. «Circles in Practice,» «Foundations of Circles.» and «Key Elements of Circles.» In *The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/old Approach to Peacemaking*, 11-18, 24-30 and 33-46. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2005.

## **SEMINAR 6. PROGRAM**

### **“Going Towards the Heat: Speaking Across Difference”**

#### **Part One**

##### **Welcome Remarks**

**Carin Kuoni**, Director/Chief Curator,  
Vera List Center for Art and Politics &

**Laura Raicovich**, independent curator and writer, co-curator of the  
seminar series

##### **Introduction**

**Jennifer Magida**, CEO, New York Peace Institute

##### **Circle Keeping**

**Anne Marie McFadyen**, Restorative Justice Program Manager, New  
York Peace Institute

with:

##### *Circle Keepers*

Kailani Capote

Suzanne Hitchman

Wendy Knight

Stephanie McGuinness

Skye Roper Moses

Sharon Shaji

Marisa Zalabak

#### **Part Two**

**Shaun Leonardo**, artist

## SEMINAR 6. PROGRAM NOTES

### “Going Towards the Heat: Speaking Across Difference”

Before the concluding convening in September, **Going Towards the Heat** gathers insights and understandings arrived at over the course of all seminars, and offers specific strategies to address conflict. New York Peace Institute, a mediation service and the designated Community Dispute Resolution Center (CDRC) for both Manhattan and Brooklyn, New York, is the guide to this seminar.

In keeping with its mediation and conflict resolution work, **New York Peace Institute**, under the guidance of Restorative Justice Program Manager **Anne Marie McFadyen**, will lead participants in a community-building circle practice. Each Circle will examine a facet of freedom of speech as a Peace Institute Circle Keeper guides the discussion during the first portion of the seminar. This will be followed by a discussion between Circle Keepers and performance artist **Shaun Leonardo** who also uses dialogue as a primary material, as well as seminar participants. Leonardo is an artist whose work confronts uncomfortable or divisive subjects including race, incarceration, and gun control often via public performances that activate alternative modes of communication. For example, for a recent performance in the Guggenheim’s rotunda, he posited that spoken language might be at the core of the problems behind the debate on gun control in the U.S. and therefore staged a wordless debate among 25 participants of divergent viewpoints.

In the Peace Institute’s work, the Circle is a carefully constructed, intentional dialogue space. The process of Circle Keeping is grounded in Indigenous teachings and philosophies which values respect, equality, empathy, problem-solving, responsibility, self-regulation and awareness, and shared leadership. Circles are designed with structural elements that organize the interaction between participants for maximum understanding, empowerment and connection. This structure creates a space that encourages all participants to speak their truth respectfully to one another on an equal basis and to seek a deeper understanding of themselves and others.

## SEMINAR 6. PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

**Shaun Leonardo's** multidisciplinary work negotiates societal expectations of manhood, namely definitions surrounding black and brown masculinities, along with its notions of achievement, collective identity, and experience of failure. His performance practice is participatory in nature and invested in a process of embodiment, promoting the political potential of attention and discomfort as a means to disrupt meaning and shift perspective.

Leonardo is a Brooklyn-based artist from Queens, New York City. He received his MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and is a current Smack Mellon artist-in-residence, as well as a recipient of support from Creative Capital and Guggenheim Social Practice. His work has been presented in galleries and institutions, nationally and internationally, and recently featured at The Guggenheim Museum, the High Line, Recess, and VOLTA NY.

**Anne Marie McFadyen** is the Restorative Justice Program Manager at New York Peace Institute. Anne Marie has been working in the conflict arena as a mediator, conflict coach, community conference facilitator and trainer for the past ten years. She works collaboratively with schools and within communities and organizations where she designs conflict management programs and supports the implementation of restorative practices. Her goal is to support individuals and organizations use the experience of harm and hurt to create more conflict resilient cultures.

## SUMMARIES OF PREVIOUS SEMINARS

### SEMINAR I. SUMMARY “Mapping the Territory” November 11, 2018

#### Participants

Mark Bray, political organizer, writer and historian

Abou Farman, Ass. Professor, Anthropology, The New School

Amar Kanwar, artist and filmmaker

Carin Kuoni, Director/Chief Curator, Vera List Center for Art and Politics

Mendi and Keith Obadike, artists; Vera List Center board members

Vanessa Place, artist, writer and criminal appellate attorney

Laura Raicovich, independent writer and curator

Svetlana Mintcheva, Director of Programs, National Coalition Against Censorship; moderator

This seminar sought to map the sprawling territory of what freedom of speech might mean today within the context of Amar Kanwar’s film *Such a Morning* (2017). Svetlana kicked off the discussion by framing the “value” of free speech, particularly given the uneven distribution of/unequal access to these rights, and the limits on government power that free speech in the US is meant to define. Mark opened the conversation beyond the relationship between government and the populous by questioning the right of speech in relation to harm and fascism. He questioned whether “deplatforming” is really a curtailment of free speech or rather an assertion of a particular politics and values of liberation. Mendi and Keith brought the conversation into the realm of the control of data and speech, particularly in the context of race realities in the US both in history and in the present, including the particularly disturbing right to vote as a free speech issue being impinged upon in such a way to make it look like a data error (see voter suppression in Georgia 2018 Governor’s race). Abou spoke to darkness or silence as a place of power and the determination to remove oneself from violence in the “security of darkness” (Arendt). He also discussed the importance of using people as shelter, as in people with certain privileges protecting others. Amar asked some important questions of the group including questioning how we might identify our own blind spots; how we

might retreat to reconfigure or reconstitute seemingly irresolvable conflicts; how might we question the “good guy/bad guy” duality; how might we prepare for the resolution of the fundamental questions so we are ready for the next. Vanessa finally brought us into the contentious territory of advocating for speech that is criminal and allowing the ugliness of humanity a space to exist, meaning that supporting the right to differ might come at the expense of justice and equality.

The discussion then centered on the friction between harm and safety, and the reality that freedom of speech for one person might impinge upon or curtail another’s access to those rights. This aspect of the conversation is certainly ripe for deeper exploration.



**SEMINAR 2. SUMMARY**  
**“Feminist Manifestos”**  
**December 3, 2018**

Participants

**Becca Albee**, visual artist and musician

**Chiara Bottici**, Associate Professor of Philosophy, The New School for Social Research

**Silvia Federici**, philosopher, scholar, writer and activist from the radical autonomist Marxist tradition

**A.L. Steiner**, visual artist, teacher, collaborator and co-founder of Ridykeulous and Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.)

**Gabriela López Dena**, Vera List Center Graduate Student Fellow, Art & Social Justice; moderator

At each pronouncement, speech is embodied by an individual acting at a historical moment in a specific site, all of which bring forth their own histories – that was the gist of the second seminar. Throughout the day across The New School campus, students, faculty and staff were reciting from historical and contemporary manifestos demanding equality for women. Proposed by Vera List Center Graduate Student Fellow Gabriela López Dena, the manifestos ranged from Olympe de Gouges’ *Declaration of Women’s Rights from 1791* to artist Mierle Ukeles Laderman’s *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!*, from the Zapatista Women’s Welcome at the First Indigenous Women’s Gathering in early 2018 to Nayéléni’s *Women’s Declaration on Food Sovereignty*. What made these readings so poignant is that each was read in a place where it mattered most: elevators, cafeterias, dormitories, classrooms, or the foyer to the university president’s offices. Each reading thus resonated with the distinct social and economic conditions of each site demonstrating and enacting intersectional feminism. In some cases, crowds began to gather around the person reading; in others, the student masses simply washed by the speaker, seemingly oblivious to their calls.

In the evening, we met for an exchange with people who had read manifestos during the day, our regular seminar participants as well as artist and musician **Becca Albee**, philosophers **Chiara Bottici** and **Silvia Federici**, and artist **A.L. Steiner**, a co-founder of Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.), moderated by

**Gabriela López Dena.** Each of the four began their presentation with a manifesto.

Becca started us off by reading an expanded “manifesto,” an alternative to the traditional land acknowledgment: hers was a long list of first names of hundreds of women to whom the Federation of Feminist Women’s Health Centers had dedicated their text book from 1978, not because these women had written for the book but because its content was built on the intellectual and activist foundations they had provided in their times. The jump to labor relations and questions of visibility came easily: *Wages for Housework*, also from 1978 and presented by Silvia, positions wages as a capitalist instrument to render invisible non-waged work. At the time of the book’s publication such labor was still predominantly performed by women in their homes, a situation that has renewed relevance in today’s gig-economy. Becca then described her installation *Prismatera* where text panels only become legible in a certain light: Which conditions need to be met to make something invisible visible, or heard?

Chiara took up the issue of conditions of visibility by reading the most up-to-date version of the anarchy-feminist manifesto, an ever evolving text that gets shaped by a trans-individual process of continuously assembling fragments of other manifestos and re-phrasing its goals through an aggregational online process. Later, Chiara’s call to defy a (academic) system that oppresses women by acting as if one were in control of it raised issues of privilege: who can afford to challenge a system they are part of? How does academia relate to politics, theory to practice or activism? What agency do we have in a system that we are ourselves implicated in? A.L. Steiner, who had read Valie Export’s *Women’s Art as Manifesto* from 1972, reminded people that reality is a social construction with men as its engineers and that the notion of freedom itself was a conservative construct.

As we considered the uncomfortable contradictions we inhabit and our complicity in systems of power, some called to embrace such experiences of discomfort, to hold contradictions within us, to stay in a moment of suspension from usefulness, and that being political means to continuously engage in the labor of disentangling these conflicts and examining the blind spots. The slow work of “borderless feminism” (Spivak) could mean, some posited, that we need to embrace concepts of mobility and flux and embrace the multiplicity of historical times that are present at each moment and part of every

identity and speech act.

Where does this leave us for Seminar 3? A recognition that the individual voice can amount to a chorus of related articulations, that every pronouncement is something else at another moment, that history reverberates in all pronouncements, and that resistance is still personal.

**SEMINAR 3. SUMMARY**  
**“Pervasive and Personal”**  
**February 11, 2019**

Participants

**Deborah Brown**, Global Policy Advocacy Lead, Association for Progressive Communications

**Molly Crabapple**, artist and writer

**Julia Farrington**, Associate Arts Producer, Index on Censorship; member, International Arts Rights Advisors

**Shawné Michaelain Holloway**, artist

**Nancy Schwartzman**, documentary filmmaker, *Roll Red Roll*

**Judy Taing**, Head of Gender and Sexuality, ARTICLE19; moderator

Following a summary of the series of seminars, Carin Kuoni introduced each of the panelists and the moderator. Judy Taing began urging everyone to put forward questions throughout the panelists’ remarks, and then posed a series of framing questions: Does technology advance expression for women, LGBT+ persons? Is the internet an equal space? What are the “new” risks that come with expression online? She stressed that freedom of expression online for women is a societal issue that produces complex challenges due to the specificities of culture, geography, legal frameworks, and language, among many other factors that impact the field globally. She signaled that nonetheless preserving freedom of expression for women online is crucial given the power and amplification that the internet enables. She then pointed to questions of enforcement and authority: should attacks on individuals should be handled legally, by the state, or by the companies that run the technology (like Twitter and Facebook)? Would we trust either to be the gatekeepers? What should be done in relationship to anonymity and encryption, so necessary for some and abused by others? Is it possible to grow an inclusive space online as the technology grows and changes?

Molly Crabapple read a deeply compelling and terrible story she reported on for the *New York Times* about Tara Fares, a young woman who became an Instagram celebrity based in Iraq, who was subsequently murdered for being a highly visible, outspoken woman. Judy followed up the reading by asking if the visibility provided by the internet could make us safe. Shawné suggested an important distinction that would remain central to the seminar when she

questioned whether the discussion should be centered on visibility or rather, legibility? Perhaps, she offered, if legibility were the goal then users would be truly 'seen' rather than assumptions made about their presence.

Julia Farrington recounted the story of a young, female photographer working in the Middle East named Yumna Al-Arashi, whose photography was posted on social media platforms and made her a target of threats and hate. Julia described the very real need to provide artists with protocols for interacting more safely online. She made the important point that for many, withdrawal from online platforms is a luxury and a privilege. She noted that not only was there a sense of shame amongst artists that were targeted by hate campaigns but that it often also led to self-censorship. Julia further suggested that guidelines like those created for journalists and documentary filmmakers needed to be repurposed for artists' specific needs to provide artists much-needed protocols to follow in moments of crisis, and connecting them to others and avoid the isolation these situations often promote.

Molly drew an important distinction between direct threats of violence, and coordinated smear campaigns. She noted that while certainly egregious, the former threats were often empty and that the latter could result in unemployment, isolation, and removal from the public sphere. A robust discussion ensued.

Nancy Schwartzman spoke next, introducing her documentary *Roll Red Roll*, and showed the trailer. The film is about the sexual assault of a young woman in Steubenville, Ohio, and attempts to cover up the crime(s) given the perpetrators' status on the local football team. The way the perpetrators were discovered was via their online footprint; they had talked about the assault on Twitter and via text message. A discussion followed about the ways in which bystanders and witnesses were complicit in this scenario and how this is amplified online. There were further discussions of how to maintain credibility when under attack, as both Nancy and the lead investigator became targets once their work was made public.

Deborah Brown offered examples of creating a coordinated, international, co-created methodology to combat the attacks that while contextually specific, had the pervasiveness of misogyny in common. She suggested that imagining how to "take back the tech" could create a feminist space on the internet. She described this feminist internet as being a platform for freedom of expression that

should be intersectional and accessible, be supportive of movements, provide alternative economic models, and promote a vast array of principles around consent, privacy, anonymity, and other crucial issues. She suggested feminist internet and feminist IT for further details. She and the panel also discussed alternative ways to confront attacks collectively, rather than individually, a strategy that is used by APC which provides flexibility and de-personalization.

Shawné presented several of her media-based work that are largely created explicitly for the internet. She discussed UI (user interface) as a mode of manipulation, and how her works produce a perceived 'realness' or intimacy that is both real and veiled through her costumes and efforts to otherwise disguise herself. She presented a work that is not publicly accessible other than for a fee behind a paywall. The work repurposed footage she had created for paying clients and overlaid words and images, both legible and pixelated, confounding and revealing the positionality of the artist to her audience. Shawné then read *Poetry is not a Luxury* by Audre Lorde. She emphasized the online experience as being one of transformation, as a place to make dreams, to escape judgement, to submit, concluding the conversation by pointing to the convergence of light, as in the light that comprises the internet, and also is emitted from the screen, as well as in the sense that "being in the light" relays being seen and public.

These final comments of Shawné's brought the group, in some ways, back to Molly's first presentation, to addressing the incredible power of the online world to connect and free us, while simultaneously being a location of potential patriarchal violence. Fortunately this group of powerful women, among a significant network of others, are working to create a feminist internet, as Deborah termed it, to make the publicness of our intimacies heard and safe.

**SEMINAR 4. SUMMARY.**  
**“Say It Like You Mean It”**  
**March 11, 2019**

Participants

**Natalie Diaz**, Mojave poet, language activist, and educator

**Aruna D’Souza**, writer and art historian

**Suzanne Kite**, Oglala Lakota composer and performance and visual artist

**Stefania Pandolfo**, professor and director of the UC Berkeley Medical Anthropology Program on Critical Studies in Medicine, Science, and the Body

**Ross Perlin**, writer and linguist; Co-Director, Endangered Language Alliance, New York

**Kameelah Janan Rasheed**, artist, writer, and educator

Moderators

**Carin Kuoni**, Director/Chief Curator, Vera List Center for Art and Politics

**Laura Raicovich**, independent curator and writer

Two astounding performances framed Seminar 4: “Brighter Than the Brightest Star I’ve Ever Seen” is the title of Suzanne Kite’s language class that opened the evening, to which Natalie Diaz responded with the poem “The First Water is the Body” at the closing, both offering attempts at translating Indigenous concepts. In-between, two panels were convened on translation, communication and languages, moderated by Laura and Carin respectively.

From behind the lectern, Suzanne staged her lesson as lecture, coaching the audience in the pronunciation of some Lakota words and their meaning as she shared (in English) the interlacing stories of a paranormal encounter between a girl and a ghost; the collusion of law enforcement personnel with defendants in a historical sexual assault case that happened on an Indian reservation in the 1980s; the linear orientation of both Settler colonialism westward and Christian eschatology; and peppered her lecture with examples of Indian names claimed by cities and towns throughout the U.S. As the audience gained confidence in pronouncing the Lakota words, the story unraveled, the room became awash in red light, and we lost sight – literally and metaphorically – of the narrative and its meaning.

Are translations possible, even desirable, was the key question of the first panel. Speaking about the Endangered Language Alliance of New York City, Ross Perlin discussed various paradoxes, among them how a wealth of language diversity in one location might in fact exacerbate linguistic extinction in another; how in times of political strife, environmental crises, and global migration, cities often serve as last-minute hold-outs of cultures endangered where they originated. “[The city] is where linguistic diversity comes to die.” Other paradoxes include the need to make languages visible with maps that remain inadequate to represent them. Ross’s demand for implementation of a principle of linguistic equality was taken up by Kameelah Rasheed, who spoke about her current project “Scoring the Stacks” at the Brooklyn Public Library. “Why is my stuff, my voice not in the library?” she asked, and with this project she demands the reader perform the text as they write it. It is only in this co-authored, collaborative experience, she proposes, that writing can amount to a performance of democracy. Aruna D’Souza shattered all assumptions of decorum and community by forcefully demanding that expectations of empathy, which is based on the assumption that we can understand one another if we just try hard enough. She posited that empathy be replaced by the acknowledgment that there is value in incomprehension. “As a political project, I want to think about what it means that we don’t have to understand in order to care for each other or create spaces in which people are cared for.” This first panel closed with a discussion on how to sit with incomprehension, how to defy capitalist notions of efficiency, and what that might mean for politics and engagement outside of understanding.

The second panel focused on how our bodies are implicated in language and knowledge production – in **Suzanne Kite**’s words, “you cannot not involve the body [...] It requires the body, in a space, an entire lifetime, to comprehend even a little bit of a story.” She described how she often uses a computer interface in her work, offering new forms that invite the body into conversations that are not based on facts or information. The Lakota word for “sacred,” she pointed out, refers to something that is actually incomprehensible. **Natalie Diaz** compared Western languages to data systems, in contrast to Mojave which “pulls us back into our body.” She returned to the term empathy from the first panel, explaining how it does not exist in Mojave because the energy in the stone is the same as in a person, neither is knowable. Given that only 30% of communication is verbal, can touch or other experiences account for it? This would not



necessarily be a comfortable position – referring to “discomfort,” a term from Seminar 2 – but as she said, “I’ve learned to sit in the luck of an energy of living.” **Stefania Pandolfo** read from the introduction to her book “Knot of the Soul,” describing a walk across the roof of a crumbling house that to one person seemed precarious and to another comprised a map of the world. The resemblance was uncanny to a key scene in Amar Kanwar’s film *Such a Morning* where a house gets dismantled while the heroine remains seated in what used to be the foyer, ready with a rifle on her lap. From there, Stefania arrived at incomprehension or incommensurability of language and time via references to post-colonial studies (Fanon), psychoanalysis (Freud), and her extensive engagement with notions of consciousness or “madness” in Islamic communities in the Maghreb.

In the closing discussion, comprehension and understanding were further unpacked: how it might be safer not to be legible; how literacy can be an exercise of power (for example disruptive speech (such as protest) may become illegible because it’s not recognized as associated with power); how language is an index of time spent with others, establishing conditions of possibility. Considering the conditions of language embedded in all the connotations of Freedom of Speech, the seminar came to a close with Natalie’s demand for a new shape of language that is not complacent, that demands imagination and struggle for yet-to-be-realized possibilities. Stefania reminded us that Amar’s film comes from a complete black-out, an attempt to create a space where something can again enter the world. As coda of Seminar 4, Natalie sent us off into the night with her poem to the Colorado River, spurning linguistic conventions that distinguish between body and land, internal and external energy.

**SEMINAR 5. SUMMARY**  
**A TIME FOR SEDITIOUS SPEECH**  
**Saturday, April 13, 2019**

Participants

**Kazembe Balagun**, cultural historian, activist, and writer

**Rob Fields**, President & Executive Director, Weeksville Heritage Center

**Prithi Kanakamedala**, Bronx Community College CUNY

**Michael Rakowitz**, artist

**Dread Scott**, artist

**Nabiha Syed**, General Counsel, *The Markup*

*Actors and Performers*

**Zenzelé Cooper**

**Alphonse Fabien**

**Jeremiah Hosea**

**Travis Raeburn**

**Sean C. Turner**

**Nana Kwame Williams**

*A Time for Seditious Speech* began with an introduction by **Kazembe Balagun** and a performance/reading of Henry Highland Garnet's 1843 "Call to Rebellion" speech. Performers were stationed throughout the historic grounds of Weeksville Heritage Center, and the speech resonated powerfully with the history of the site as a home of Black self-determination, alongside contemporary realities. The performers led the audience back into the lecture room for the rest of the seminar.

Kazembe Balagun, a historian and writer, introduced curator and historian **Prithi Kanakamedala**, as well as media and technology lawyer **Nabiha Syed**. Prithi kicked off her history lesson by pointing out that the direct link between Henry Highland Garnet and Weeksville was through his wife, Sara Thompkins Garnet, who was the first Black woman principal. She also asked what it meant to be free within the context of the city and discussed historic Weeksville as the second largest community dedicated to Black self-determination in the 19th century. She emphasized the importance of self-determination as a way to achieve freedom on one's own terms by asserting 1) a right to exist; 2) a desire to feel safe/find refuge; and 3) the right to joy and self-celebration.

Nabiha picked up the thread of self-determination by explicitly naming the link between individual action and state/community action as it played out historically in the courts. She pointed to historical cases such as whether *The Masses* radical journal “caused” insubordination during WWI; the Eugene Debs decision of 1919; and the Brandenburg decision of 1969 as examples of ways in which the law is politically contingent on the times in which it was made. She noted that boycott movements today parallel Garnet’s exhortations because they bring individuals together in collective action towards change.

Kazembe then discussed the ways in which speech and the joining together in ideas around speech can create community. Prithi discussed the right to take space and the right to be heard as related ideas, and Nabiha noted that the First Amendment protects rights of both speech and association, and that these are nearly always interpreted in relationship to contemporary political realities. The panel then discussed the paradox of the digital realm in relationship to free speech, bringing up many issues addressed in the Personal and Pervasive seminar.

Next, artist **Michael Rakowitz** discussed his film project *I’m Good at Love, I’m Good at Hate, It’s in Between I Freeze* (2018), which has been recently excluded from the Leonard Cohen exhibition at the Jewish Museum because the Leonard Cohen Estate might sue him for copyright infringement. Michael explained that he became obsessed with Cohen and even learned classical guitar to play his songs (which he does beautifully in the film) all the while looking deeply at Cohen’s history of playing for Israeli troops during the 1973 Yom Kippur war. He then showed a clip of the film, which narrates the artist’s obsession with Cohen as well as his attempts to convince Cohen not to play in Tel Aviv in order to play in Ramallah, so as to avoid breaking the call by Palestinian civil society for a boycott of Israel. He spoke of his Arab Jewish heritage as well as his personal links to Cohen and his legacy.

Artist **Dread Scott** then declared a need for seditious speech today, and noted that his 1988 flag work, that was outlawed by Congress, is proof of the power of art. He then described his forthcoming *Slave Rebellion Reenactment* that will take place in November 2019 in New Orleans in depth, describing the recruitment and training of 500 Black people who will wear period costumes and re-enact the largest revolt of enslaved people in the US in 1811. He stressed that he was building his army the way they would have been recruited originally, one by one, by personal interview and word of mouth.

Kazembe then prompted the artists to say more about their work in relationship to free speech. Michael said he was interested in making a work within the boycott and thought that if you can't get someone to understand human rights, perhaps you can get them to understand civil rights. Dread talked about the importance of embodying freedom and emancipation and connecting it to the present, as well as why it is just as important, if not more so, to talk about slave rebellion as it is to talk about slavery. He said that artists produce non-verbal and non-linear space in society, and he and Michael discussed the ways in which silence can also produce powerful impacts. Nabiha then added that the structure of speech today, and the ways in which racist speech was amplified was important to interrupt, noting the wildfire of marginal ideas that are often swept up to the White House.

## PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

**ARTICLE 19** works for a world where all people everywhere can freely express themselves and actively engage in public life without fear of discrimination. They do this by working on two interlocking freedoms which set the foundation for all their work:

1. *The Freedom to Speak* concerns everyone's right to express and disseminate opinions, ideas and information through any means, as well as to disagree with and question power-holders.
2. *The Freedom to Know* concerns the right to demand and receive information from power-holders, for transparency, good governance and sustainable development.

When either of these freedoms comes under threat as a result of power-holders failing to adequately protect them, **ARTICLE 19**, with one voice, speaks through courts of law, through global and regional organizations, and through civil society wherever they are present.

**National Coalition Against Censorship** promotes freedom of thought, inquiry and expression, and opposes censorship in all its forms. The Coalition formed in response to the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Miller v. California*, which narrowed First Amendment protections for sexual expression and in turn, opened the door to obscenity prosecutions. Over 40 years, as an alliance of more than 50 national non-profits, including literary, artistic, religious, educational, professional, labor, and civil liberties groups, the Coalition has engaged in direct advocacy and education to support First Amendment principles. NCAC is unique in that they are national in scope but often local in their approach, and they work with community members to resolve censorship controversies without the need for litigation.

**New York Peace Institute** provides conflict resolution services in the form of mediation, conflict coaching, restorative processes, group facilitation, and skills training. Our programs are a resource to thousands of New Yorkers facing conflict each year— whether it is between parents working out a custody agreement, a noise dispute between neighbors, diverting a misdemeanor case from court, or a conflict between a parent and school regarding a student with special needs. Our services foster listening, empathy, and communication among our clients and help them develop their own creative solutions. As the city's largest civilian peace force, our mission is to build peace and prevent violence in New York City and beyond.

We also provide vital communication and conflict management skills training to a broad range of organizations, including city agencies, non-profits, labor unions, and schools. We employ a creative, learn-by-doing approach in our trainings, drawing upon theater, visual arts, music, and kinesthetic activities.

**Weeksville Heritage Center** is a multidisciplinary museum dedicated to preserving the history of the 19th century African American community of Weeksville, Brooklyn - one of America's many free black communities.

Our mission is to document, preserve and interpret the history of free African American communities in Weeksville, Brooklyn and beyond and to create and inspire innovative, contemporary uses of African American history through education, the arts, and civic engagement. Using a contemporary lens, we activate this unique history through the presentation of innovative, vanguard and experimental programs.

## CREDITS

The seminar series *Freedom of Speech. A Curriculum for Studies into Darkness* is organized by the Vera List Center for Art and Politics as part of the center's 2018–2020 curatorial focus *If Art Is Politics*. It is directed by Carin Kuoni, Director/Chief Curator, Vera List Center, and Laura Raicovich with assistance by Gabriela López Dena. Partner organizations for the seminars are ARTICLE 19; the National Coalition Against Censorship; New York Peace Institute; and Weeksville Heritage Center.

Seminar 6 is co-curated by New York Peace Institute.

cover image: Shaun Leonardo, *Primitive Games*, 2018. 1-hour performance at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, June 21, 2018. Photo by Paula Court.

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2019**

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