

RACE Conference
Reparative Arts in Community Engagement
Center for Social Concern, Johns Hopkins University
Call for Proposals
Convenors: Dr. Jasmine Blanks Jones and Dr. Antoine Johnson
October 5-8, 2023 in Baltimore, Maryland

Background

In *The Cross of Redemption*, James Baldwin boldly proclaimed that artists are the only people who know the truth about us—not soldiers, priests, salesmen, or union leaders. If taken seriously, one must ask, what are reparative arts, and how we might chart a way forward by creating living monuments through staging, performance, and other ways of memorialization? How might one incorporate health- and medicine-based approaches to artistic living monuments? Baltimore is a fitting location for such questions, especially regarding the term repair, offering more questions than answers. Some questions to consider are: what is being repaired? Who decides when the harms in question have been sufficiently repaired? How does society look and feel after addressing these wrongdoings? What counts as reparative action?

Concept/Purpose

Drawing on Dorinne Kondo's (2018) concept of 'reparative creativity', we understand reparative arts as the processes (methodologies/pedagogies) and/or products (visual, audio, performance) designed to present a call-to-action for change to systemic and/or structural causes of inequity and injustice in our society by amplifying community solutions towards repair and healing. In medicine and public health, reparative arts can help memorialize victims of medical racism in Baltimore whose stories deserve more coverage. Beyond Henrietta Lacks, whose cells posthumously revolutionized scientific research, Baltimoreans have also fallen victim to lead poison crises, an ongoing AIDS epidemic that is exacerbated by structural violence, gun violence, and a rodent problem that continues to threaten the safety of its youth and elderly. How might the arts document these lived experiences? What is to be done to rectify these problems? And to what role does the American academy, medicine, and public health play in alleviating these harms?

This inaugural RACE Conference theme is Monumental Movements (The People Make the Space). We begin with the case of what remains of Civil War Confederate monuments in Baltimore to explore how public spaces may better represent a shared vision backed by action where Baltimore citizens experience belonging. We explore this theme expansively and seek submissions which would ask our audiences to think differently about what we consider to be *monumental*, as in of great importance or referencing emplacement and memorialization, and also *movement(s)*, such as but not limited to those which are social and/or political mass actions, embodied expression, and migrations, circulations, flows of people, ideas, and/or resources. Further, this year's theme calls us to consider how the design, management, and study of public space is racialized with serious implications for "community recovery, improvement, and thrivability" (Hoover & Lim, 2021). In community engagement, reparative arts enable the expression and contemplation of diverse views and perspectives which may struggle to be fully articulated in written or spoken texts alone (Blanks Jones, forthcoming). Reparative arts include, but are not limited to, collective visioning processes and expressions from scholars, artists, activists, community

organizers, and others to elevate community concerns for changes in policy and practice. Reparative arts concerned with public use of space, monuments, memorialization, and movements will be prioritized. However, all submissions that speak to the broader focus on reparative arts in community engagement will be considered.

Call for Submissions

We invite submissions for presentations, workshops, installations and performances which make claims about how and for whom public space is made and remade.

- Conceptually: submissions that attend to the theoretical, practical, philosophical, and political possibilities and limitations of reparative arts in community engagement and/or its related constructions: civic engagement, democracy, social change, health equity, medical humanities, etc.
- Methodologically: forms/formats of reparative arts that go beyond visioning and present calls-to-action or are themselves actions.
- Pedagogically: submissions that offer lessons, tools, skills, and/or strategies for anti-racist multimodal teaching, learning and research, or arts-based practices in general; or that put the techniques, strategies and lessons of reparative arts at work in contexts beyond the classroom, museum, etc.

Format and Submission

Proposals may take written, audiovisual, and/or portfolio forms. Proposals should include, at a minimum, names and contact info of all presenters/artists, title of presentation/workshop/installation/performance, description of work and rationale (goals, processes, etc), applicability to the conference purpose and theme. Please limit all written submissions to no more than 500 words and audiovisual submissions to no more than 5 minutes. Links to digital content are preferred. Please submit all proposals to reparativearts@jh.edu by May 15, 2023. Larger file sizes may need to be uploaded to google drive (reparativearts@gmail.com).

Partners

The RACE Conference is made possible through the support of many partners: JHU Center for Social Concern, Eubie Blake Cultural Center, JHU Arts and Innovation, National Great Blacks in Wax Museum, JHU Office of Economic Development and Community Partnerships, JHU Center for Africana Studies, JHU Center for Medical Humanities and Social Medicine, Billie Holiday Center for Liberation Arts, JH Center for Health Equity, JH Urban Health Initiative, JHU Program in Medicine, Science, and the Humanities, Sawyer Seminar: Rethinking the Right to the City through the Black Radical Tradition, JHU Alexander Grass Humanities Institute, JH Program in Arts, Humanities, and Health.