

2021 Watson Conference - April 21 - 23, 2021

Social Justice In and Beyond Conferences

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Overview

This document summarizes best practices for building relationships among scholars, conferences, and local community activists. These practices came out in roundtable discussions between Pittsburgh activists and conference attendees to share knowledge and lived experiences about ethical community-engaged relationships in and beyond the conferences. “Exploring Local Activism: A Round Table Workshop with Local Pittsburgh Activist Organizations,” a social justice event held on March 14, 2019 at the 2019 Conference on College Composition and Communication. The practices below are starting points for designing conferences that allow *community access* -- deliberate invitations for activists and other community members of host cities to shape the work of Writing Studies and vice versa.

Questions for Activist Panels

- How do we define activism in or through our work?
- In what ways does our work reflect and support local Pittsburgh communities?
- What advice might you share for those looking to bridge partnerships with local organizations in their home communities?

Questions for Roundtable Discussion

- What does global and local (“glocal”) action mean to you?
- How can we enact global activism in cities we visit and in our home communities?
- What are 3-5 actionable items each participant might develop to begin steps toward action in these ways?
- How can we support one another in these goals? What resources are available that we might share and amplify?

Welcome Activists to Conferences

- Use conferences as conduits for bringing together different local organizations to educate the attendees, start and/or continue conversations related to community justice
 - This may avoid **national volunteer tourism** -- one-off volunteer work that does not address systemic inequality in that community
 - Connect local activists who didn't know each other to collaborate in the future
- Individual attendees can connect with local organizations while visiting cities to build future relationships
- Learn to listen to what's happening in the community and resources you can engage in

Going Beyond Single-Class Community Engagement

- Questions to Ask Before Reaching Out and Creating Relationships
 - What is the practical side of what it means to do work with a non-profit, particularly with students and sustainable work?
 - How can I add value to this organization and the dilemmas they're facing?
 - How can I build relationships *first* and then consider linking in my classroom?
- Maintaining relationships
 - Create a memo of understanding to establish parameters
 - Go beyond the classroom: Create multidisciplinary groups creating synergy between organizations, non-profits, and institutions
 - Offer your own expertise to support the community activist, reciprocating relationships
 - Develop funding for stipends and honorariums to community partners