

CALL FOR PAPERS

Protests and pedagogy: The legacies of Caribbean student resistance and the Sir George Williams Affair, Montreal 1969.

Date: February 8-9, 2019.

Venue: Concordia University, Montreal

Abstract: 150 words

Submission Deadline: July 10, 2018

With Black civil rights in the USA, decolonization struggles in the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia, and Canada's opening to immigration from the Global South, the 1960s was a period of immense change. The old order was shifting, and decolonization meant not only political independence, but a quest for dignity and respect denied under colonialism.

In 1969, West Indian students at Sir George Williams University (now Concordia University) occupied the university's computer centre from January 29 to Feb 11 as part of one of the largest student protests in Canadian history. The student occupation was in response to discriminatory pedagogical practices and the University's failure to effectively address the students' complaints. The protest culminated with a now iconic and widely circulated image of computer punch cards being thrown out the window of the ninth floor by students. The end of the protest was also marked by varying accounts of police brutality, racist slurs, and a mysterious arson which forced the students' evacuation. In the aftermath, nearly one hundred students were arrested. The impact of this event was felt acutely in Montreal, but followed closely by national media in Canada, with ripple effects across the Caribbean, impacting Caribbean-Canadian relations and resulting in Caribbean-based student protests, which pushed governments to demand justice for their nationals.

This conference commemorates the 50th anniversary of the "Sir George Williams Affair" as a lens to reflect upon the unfinished business of decolonization and its relationship to questions of pedagogy, institutional life and culture and ongoing discussions about race and racism. We seek to remember this historical moment and its questions of decolonization and pedagogy as ones which remain urgent in higher education around the world. We also acknowledge the long history of student protests in various institutions across the Third World and the Global North, but in particular we draw connections between this event, and the "Rodney Riots" in Jamaica, 1968 and Trinidad's Black Power Revolution in 1970. In locating the students who were part of the Sir George Williams affair as part of this wider trajectory, we further ask what is the decolonizing role of the student intellectual both historically and in our current global moment? What are the unfinished legacies of this moment in the Canadian context and beyond? How is it remembered, forgotten or contested in different spaces? How did it connect or contribute to wider circuits of activism, protest and resistance? How is blackness included or occluded in decolonizing dialogues (particularly relating to curriculum and pedagogy)? What

are the lessons of the occupation of the computer centre to current forms of resistance, such as Black Lives Matter or Rhodes Must Fall?

Proposed Themes:

Pedagogy, Race, and Resistance
Caribbean Diasporas and Decolonization
Global Black Social revolutions
Student Activism and the Role of the Student Intellectual
Decolonizing the Academy
Textual and Visual Representations of the “Sir George Williams affair”
Theorizing campus spaces and campus geographies
Cultures of Surveillance
Protests and Policing
Black Canadian Geographies
Black Montreal
Politics of liberation and anti-racism
Visions of reparatory justice
Black Education Initiatives
Black Intellectual Traditions

We welcome abstracts of 150 words. Please also include a brief bio (no more than 50 words) in your submission. Abstracts should be sent to: protestsandpedagogy@gmail.com Notifications will be sent out by the end of July.

Organizers:

Nalini Mohabir (Concordia University, Quebec)
Ronald Cummings (Brock University, Ontario)

Ronald Cummings

Assistant Professor, Department of English Language & Literature
Affiliated Faculty, Social Justice and Equity Studies
Brock University | Niagara Region | St. Catharines, ON L2S 3A1
brocku.ca | Tel: 905 688 5550 x3739 | Office: GLN 147