

Clashes Over Citizenship: Webinar Series on Promoting Listening, Learning, and Engagement

From Fractious Differences to Engaged Dialogues

October 13, 2016 from 3:00–4:00 p.m. Eastern Time



Verdis LeVar Robinson is the new interim National Manager of The Democracy Commitment (TDC) after having served as a tenured Assistant Professor of History and African-American at Monroe Community College (MCC) in Rochester, New York, for ten years. In addition to serving as MCC's TDC Campus Coordinator since the beginning of the initiative, he has served on TDC National Steering Committee and on the Advisory Council for its Economic Inequality Initiative. Professionally, Verdis is a fellow of the Aspen Institute's Faculty Seminar on *Citizenship and the American and Global Polity*, and the National Endowment for the Humanities' Faculty Seminar on *Rethinking Black Freedom Studies: The Jim Crow North and West*. He is also a Public Scholar of the New York Council for the Humanities. Additionally, Verdis is the founder of the Rochester Neighborhood Oral History Project that created a walking tour of the community most impacted by the 1964 Race Riots, which has engaged over 300 members of Rochester community in walking, discussing, and learning about the legacy of Jim Crow Rochester. He holds a B.M. in Voice Performance from Boston University, a B.S. and an M.A. in History from SUNY College at Brockport, and an M.A. in African-American Studies from SUNY University at Buffalo.



Caryn McTighe Musil is Senior Scholar and Director of Civic Learning and Democracy Initiatives at the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), where she had served as Senior Vice President of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives for fourteen years. A director of over twenty national projects, she also wrote *A Crucible Moment: Civic Learning and Democracy's Future (2012)*, which represents the collective wisdom of a broad constituency and seeks to move civic learning from niches to norms. Her project publication, *Rethinking Preparation for Work: A Civic-Enriched Liberal Education (2015)*, argues that enhancing students' commitment to the common good should be a prerequisite for preparing for work. In *Civic Prompts: Making Civic Learning Routine Across the Disciplines*, she suggests how departments can integrate civic inquiries, issues, pedagogies, and assignments to teach their subject matter more effectively. She currently directs a National Endowment for the Humanities Project, *Citizenship Under Siege*, with seven community colleges to bring the power of the humanities into the public square in the face of contentious issues. Before national level positions, Dr. Musil was a faculty member for sixteen years. She received her B.A. from Duke University and her M.A. and Ph.D. in English from Northwestern University.



John Soltes teaches journalism in the Communication Department at County College of Morris. He also co-chairs the Legacy Project, an interdisciplinary initiative built on engaging students and the public on academic topics that cut across the Liberal Arts. Soltes was selected as a fellow in the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education. His work in the program resulted in a published freelance piece on the obstacles of the Nigerian Catholic community in both *The New York Times* and *The Brooklyn Rail*. While interning at Time Asia in Hong Kong, Soltes reported, blogged and wrote stories for *Time.com*. Other articles have been published by *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, *Earth Island Journal*, *The Guardian (online)* and *New Jersey Monthly*, among other publications. His most recent writing focuses on wildlife stories, including articles on bats, ospreys, wolves and Yellowstone. He is the publisher of *Hollywood Soapbox*, an online entertainment magazine. He holds a B.A. in Journalism/Media Studies, Political Science from Rutgers University, and an M.S. in Journalism from Columbia University - Graduate School of Journalism



Jason Zelesky currently serves as the Dean of Students at Mount Wachusett Community College. Jason has been working on college campuses for the past 22 years. Prior to his appointment as dean at MWCC, Jason worked at Clark University and served as a "Dialogue Fellow" for the Ford Foundation funded "Difficulty Dialogue" project. In that capacity, Jason facilitated dialogues on the "wicked problems" of our world and taught dialogue seminars on topics including "Freedom", "Extinction", "Power" and "Liberal Education". Trained as a dialogue facilitator, Jason has worked to bring the "art of dialogue" into his daily practice and work with college students. He holds a B.A. in English Literature from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, and an M. Ed. In Higher Education from the University of Vermont.