

**ERIK WRIGHT:** Welcome everybody to the opening plenary of the 2012 American Sociological Association. We have this evening in store for you I think something unusual, certainly unusual for academic association meetings. We are going to begin with a performance by a group, a young -- a group of young performers from the University of Wisconsin, the First Wave, Spoken Word, and Urban Arts program. They are a program of performing arts centered around hip hop inflected spoken word and dance and other forms of artistic expression.

I thought it would be wonderful in the context of a conference whose theme is Real Utopia to bring arts and performance to bear on the theme, and was a great admirer of the real -- of the First Wave program in Madison. So I suggested to the director that this would be a good idea. He said that was fine, but I should teach a seminar on real utopias to the students involved, which I did last semester. And what you will see this evening is basically the term project of students in the First Wave Real Utopias seminar.

The way the evening will proceed then is we will begin with the performance. Chris Walker, who's the artistic director of the program, and on the dance faculty of the University of Wisconsin, he will introduce the students from the First Wave program and the performance. Then there will be a very brief hiatus as the tables get moved. And after the lights come back up, I will introduce our three speakers for this first plenary. So without further introduction so we can get this going, Chris Walker, wherever he is. It's impossible to see anybody from -- here's Chris.

**CHRIS WALKER:** Good evening. Wow, what a full room. So really quickly because I want us to get into these performances. They're exciting; they're powerful. Founded by the UW-Madison's Office of Multicultural Arts Initiatives, First Wave Hip Hop Theatre Ensemble is a groundbreaking collective of spoken word poets, emcees, dancers, singers, actors, and activists from across the United States. They have performed in England, Mexico, Panama, and Jamaica, as well as across the USA, including annual feature performances on Broadway.

The ensemble is an outgrowth of the first wave hip hop and urban arts learning community, made up of 15 member cohorts on full-tuition scholarships at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The program is in its sixth year. And collaboratively, we continue to engage the personal narrative as a route to academic engagement. It is our philosophy that the arts are central to the education process. In that regard, we collaborate with faculty from various disciplines that represent the broad range of majors in which our scholars are engaged. Today's program is Real Begets Real, and speak to experiences and challenge -- experiences that challenge the concept of a real utopia, as well as speak to our roles and our

aspiration to make such a thing real. Please help me welcome to the stage First Wave with Real Begets Real.

**STEVEN RODRIGUEZ:** There's gotta be something better man, there's gotta be something different. There's gotta be something better man, there's gotta be something different. There's gotta be something better man, there's gotta be something different. There's gotta be something different, there's gotta be something different.

I would like to dedicate this to my little brother, Justin Vallejo. They say public schools are pipelined to prisons, and that crack addicted mothers are puff puff pipelined to infants. My brother was born with a tumor and my mother's addiction, but none of that was ever his decision. I feel like I'm losing my little brother, and I don't know if I can help him. He just looked at me and told me, Steven, you really just don't know shit about that I be going through, when there ain't nobody at school who was close to you. I mean, what am I supposed to do? These kids is calling me a bitch, telling me my face looks retarded as shit. I hit him hard in his ribs and straight stuck him in his jaw. But they arrested me.

See, I don't trust these teachers at all because they're just like police, the kind that kicked down our door. While you were in college, they threw our mom to the floor. It feels like I'm living in war, Steven. I can't take it. I was given this world; I didn't make it. You can't save shit. School don't mean nothing to me.

Get your college degree, I ain't got money to eat. And you be asking why I'm smoking shit, I'm also selling it. I'm stressing out, but I don't regret trying to tell you this. Look at this money. I know it's not a lot, but life is so much better paid. I could give a fuck if I don't make it out the seventh grade.

I've been round trip bus ride all semester, Madison to Milwaukee to Madison to Milwaukee to Madison to Milwaukee, to what do you do when you're the only person who can be a parent to your little brother? I am emergency contact form, every day phone calls with the teacher, transition to principal, transition to social worker, transition to P.O. I am college hustler. Failing one class -- I mean failing one quiz, transition to missing two classes, transition to dropping three letter grades, transition to what am I even here for? See, what the bubble of UW Madison doesn't understand is that if I'm not there to help out my little brother, nobody else will be.

So I tried to tell him, little man, America would not lose a dream if they confined you. This country might not give a fuck, but I do. Because little man, you're my little brother. I'm sorry I can't be there, but I you need to think about the struggle. Police won't see a kid if you're out on these streets. I

mean, little man, you taller than me, so what they'll outwardly see is another Mexican man. And that might get you more than handcuffed and forced to step in the van. You got to be intelligent and understand the world we live in. Corporations make decisions based on how many of us can fit in a privatized prison, and then spend those profits supporting presidential candidates. Poverty is made to be perpetual. This shit is no accident. Statistics already have an inmate number and a casket for you. I've watched it happen to my friends, so I'll be damned if I let it happen to you. Justin, just listen because you can be so much more than this. You just gotta try ten times harder than the average suburban kid. It's easy, right?

They say that public schools are pipelines to prisons, and that crack addicted mothers are puff puff pipelines to infants. My brother was born with a tumor and my mother's addiction, but none of that was ever his decision. The tumor clinched his spinal cord and almost put him to sleep. Does this count as equal access to the American Dream? Never.

There's gotta be something better man, there's gotta be something different. There's gotta be something better man, there's gotta be something different. There's gotta be something better man, there's gotta be something different. There's gotta be something different, there's gotta be something different.

**JANEL HERRERA:** Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah. Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah. Where there are diamonds, there's our people in caves. Ready to be chipped, my Lord, ready to be saved. Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah. Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah.

**NATALIE COOK:** Songs have always been all we ever had. Slaves to a system, chained together by feet. Brown backs over to look like stands, hammers bore like gavels, no onus probandi necessary. Skin is enough proof we are burdens. Must keep us chained, must keep sending out to work in fields with rifles aimed at chests. We speak of slavery as if it has been abolished, but we hit our ancestors' caskets every time we drill our hammers into soil.

**JANEL HERRERA:** Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah.

**NATALIE COOK:** Friday the 13th Amendment, our curses are documented. How can we speak of slavery if it doesn't exist? It still exists. Black and white stripes, our uniforms. Blacks and whites, no uniformity. We are not the zebras to be eaten by the king of the jungle.

**JANEL HERRERA:** Where there are diamonds, there's our people in caves, ready to be chipped my Lord, ready to be saved.

**NATALIE COOK:** We are referred to as a chain gang. We are referred to as a chain gang. We hold onto songs the way chains grasp our ankles. Give us back the freedom to move.

**JANEL HERRERA:** Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah. Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord. Hey, we can hear the clinks as soon as her heart beats. We still fear the clinks when we're marching with bare feet. America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah. Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah.

**DOMINIQUE RICKS:** In high school, I hated black history month. It always felt like a quick fix to the problem that history doesn't support our history, that the history we subscribe to doesn't bind black pages. There's no renaissance in its spine, not enough reconstruction in its structure, though Slaves built the infrastructure. What history do you subscribe to?

When I picture black history month, all I see is how far we've come and how tired we are now that we've made it. Minds raped, culture stolen, the first born slave's birth certificates for written copies of death wishes. Someone explain to me the difference between death and not knowing. When we were young in this nation, master kept us from written word, afraid we'd learn our story, afraid we'd read the bible and feel like Moses. He'd have to part the seas of black on our flesh to separate the of passion from the skin. When you separate the cause from the effect, all you project is broken.

In Texas, they use 4th grade reading scores to project the number of prison cells they're going to need. The crime is not the crime. It's the society that created the mind. The cause sounds like freedom that doesn't ring three-fifths of the time. Sounds like African wind chimes on the old Virginia road. Sounds like Willy Lynch was Hitler's ghost writer. If you want to kill the spirit, separate it from its body.

Take the Kuntas from the Tobys. Take the men from the women. Take the women from the children, put them in school. Celebrate what they've done, but make it harder for them to do it again. I heard someone say racism doesn't exist because blacks are going to college. I told them racism exists because our schools aren't designed for us to succeed once we make it there. They asked me why I'm so mad, why I talk with so much salt on my voice. If I hold my tongue, my throat will be the same, little passage that kept slavery alive like a teenage girl's secret. My people have learned to tell their story in a cadence that matches their offshore heartbeat. As long as we're broken, you will hear this breathing.

This is street politics. You make it out to heaven-sent. Our girls ain't celibate. Our girls just sell a bit. Our streets are paved with blood stains and dirty faces, dried tears and chalk lines, hop scotch for bullet cases. Never knew what love was, but realize what pain is. Choked by dope don't give a -- what hope is, the young and the restless, the broke arrested giving blacks 100 years for crimes confessed it. Black on black crime just coded genocide. The taking of black lives, the loss of black pride. We lost the dark side; recovery, there's no time. Bullets shaking, bodies shaking, towns we wasting time and young lives preaching lies and hating. Lyrics are like liquor for the fallen soldier. I feed my people rum by the case like Corona.

This is a declaration. The crime is not the crime. It's the society that created the mind. Fallen bodies are forming an SOS full of double entendre on the sidewalk. Looks like low income, looks like my brother. Homonyms shouldn't look so familiar. How long will they create doors for my people without making the keys to open them? How long will we separate the cause from the effect and project us as broken? Open the doors. One month, blacks won't have to be history.

**TAYLOR SCOTT:** Angels have no wings. They follow broken dreams. Haloes all dimming. The proud kill their king. The harlot she screams. City lights they beam. But the ghettos are unseen. Spotlight's on the edge of a star. Don't know how we got so far.

There are no American flags in the ghettos of my city. Katrina must've swallowed and regurgitated them onto picket fences, rightfully. They say I got Judas breath. A child not snipped by the scissors of systemic sanctions, but I have no apples to sneak your eve, and no reason to possess your pigs. I am fascinated in trying to see myself in the dark. Poverty wears a red fedora hat, a buttoned down shirt, khaki slacks, and busted Jordan's.

**JANEL HERRERA:** Dig her up, don't shovel her down. Her words are dirt beneath the ground. Dig her up, don't shovel her down. Her words are worth more than the ground. Oh Lord America, America. Oh lord, gal, oh ah. Oh Lord America, America. Oh lord, gal, oh ah.

**SHAMEACA MOORE:** Just give me a pill to pop, I let it drop like hopes for equality. Even though we know it won't stop, the watch of the cops from following. But I rather be pain free than to watch my slavery. I got a false sense of the top, delusional shock. I'm swallowing.

My mother always taught me how to handle the screwdriver of a headache very well. One simple sentence can turn her dust storm of a cranium into the epitome of serene. She says, Shameaca, go get

me my ibuprofen. I've watched her tightened forehead unravel itself within a half an hour, yet return the next day at the same time like the bill collector that never says her name right. My mother doesn't have a common cold. She's just tired of the only options for a meal being between chicken and beef flavored noodles. That's more like a ramen cold.

Sometimes you can only heal hunger pains over the counter, but a growling belly is more of a warning than a symptom. At least for now she doesn't feel so bad. Even if her sickness is a disease, she believes it's normal.

The first thing my mother taught me about my country was its cruelty. She taught me that politics were more demonic than democratic, but that's just the way things are. My mother has been trained by this country well, just like the rest of us. We've been equipped to believe that this migraine of a nation is normal. We just take a dose of election speech, charity drive, and soup kitchen volunteering and the symptoms will go away.

My mom is up to six doses a day, yet she still takes each pill like pharmaceutical prayers for her body not to break down just yet. The Mass Baptist Choir in her head is more difficult to quiet these days. My mom, she yells at the TV sometimes. She has to keep pain reliever close with each flick to the news, but she knows this is just the way things are, right? Does dismissing an alarm make waking up easier? Dismissing seems to be the American way, but what will we do when this pill popping nations finally salutes to an overdose? Or will we be too sedated to even notice it?

They just give me a pill to pop, I let it drop like hopes for equality. Even though we know it won't stop, the watch of the cops from following. But I rather be pain free than to watch my slavery. I got a false sense of the top, delusional shock. I'm swallowing.

**JANEL HERRERA:** Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah. Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah. Now we still wear our diamonds like we wearing old skin. There's a way to break a chain 'cause there is soul where coal begins. Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah. Oh Lord, America, America.

**DANEZ SMITH:** Sean Bell got filled with a war's worth of bullets and the marriage rates went up. Bo Morrison got killed with his hands up and people invested in garages. Trayvon Martin was black at the wrong time and JC Penny ran out of hoodies. Got his light drained and we all tasted the rainbow. Latasha Harlins died over OJ and I still need my pack of cigarettes from the store. Matthew Shepard was

made scarecrow and white picket fences made a comeback. King got it and your mama wanted a house with a view. X caught it and your uncle took up public speaking classes at the community college. Jamey Rodemeyer killed himself and you watched Home Alone 2. Jesus hung cold and folks wanted more houses out of wood. Ten black girls went missing and you found your keys. Ten black boys died and your mama said, keys these days. Ten black boys got shot outside the schoolhouse and everybody got one extra fry at lunch.

Two. When half my senior class didn't graduate, the math department threw a pizza party for themselves. It wasn't their fault. It was the System did it, not them. When Trayvon Martin tagged the sidewalk with blood and sweet tea, George Zimmerman took a long nap, dreamed about women and football, woke up, and washed his hands of the system's work, went about his day whistling like the sun was just shining, and not mourning another child who smelt of dirt too soon.

When your grandfather went to the lynching, he only went for the sandwiches. It wasn't his fault. It was the System. It was the System who made them boys hear no when them girl's hands said no. And maybe if we had spent more time on alphabets than detention slips, then we wouldn't be sitting here trying to convince people it's not a coincidence that N and O sit next to each other in line, but that's the system's fault.

It's the System that thinks brown boys look really good in orange. The system thinks Allah and fire and boom are synonyms. The system starts the search when no one's seen Amanda for two hours, doesn't flinch when nobody's seen Akeisha for two months. It's sad how cruel the system seems to be. You seen the system lately? Someone told me they saw the system round the corner, but when I went, all I saw were mirrors and people. Everybody acted like they ain't know where the system went, but my hands? Why they got all this dry red? Look! It's on yours too!

**TAYLOR SCOTT::** I've never heard the sun. I've never grabbed the wind, but she did, so she says. I've never seen Venus, never kissed the rings of Saturn. I've seen the rapture occur. You were a lesson learned.

**JASMINE MANS:** Dear First Lady. I watched as my 4-year-old cousin sat in the mirror, placed my grandmother's pearls around her neck and said, Jas, do I look like Michelle Obama? This little girl who does not know how to say rice crispy, or macaroni and cheese, properly said your name, as if it existed on her long list of heroes in-between Snow White and Santa Claus. My little cousin does not know about Jim Crow. She does not know your view on the healthcare reform, your Princeton education, nor can she

point to Chicago on a map. But she knows black Barbie dolls and naptime, how to identify your face in a land field of misrepresented women who share our skin color like a sequenced revolution.

She knows your smile, Michelle. She knows the day that her mother jumped up and down crying, November 4th's black and red dresses, how to say African American better than her own first name. You proved that her identity belongs somewhere in this American dream. She knows that if she can find your face in the jumbled channels on television, that there's a possibility she can stay up past her bedtime. You are everything her mother never got a chance to be, post-traumatic slave syndrome breaking free, Cover Girl's Beauty of the week, a love story sprinkled in an inaugural speech, and someone she can mistake for her mommy.

Do you know what that means? It means that she traded her Dora the Explorer costume for a brooch of the American flag And a t-shirt with your husband's face on it. And for the first time, I could identify the revolution that would actually change the world. And it is not in how many Barack and Martin comparisons we can make, but the idea of little boys jumping off their beds with an American flag tied around their necks and actually believing that they can fly. It's in little girls with the dreams and their grandmother's pearls.

My little cousin, she doesn't know about the war in Iraq. She just wonders if Sasha and Malia like to hula-hoop, and if you force them to eat their Flintstone vitamins too. I guess this poem is simply a thank you. Thank you for being a brown girl's dream come true, something tangible to look up to. Because I know that our skin colors holds timelines of women whom had craters engraved in their backs, stretch marks similar to maps of underground railroads, grandmothers who couldn't afford all the ingredients to the recipe of the American pie, women who laid down their lives strutted with chips and cracks in their spines, dying to inject more estrogen in man's kind, creating tradition under the idea that if I can't afford my daughter the world, a college degree, or at-least a decent meal tonight, I will wrap my grandmother's pearls around her neck like a gravity stricken halo. And I will whisper in her ear, baby, if I can't, you will. She did.

**TAYLOR SCOTT:** I knew peace when I was a child. She was a woman who carried a pouch full of seeds and never watered them. I told her what war was and she wept for three days. I have never seen such enlightenment as she mourned for herself. But I held her like it was my fault. She found herself in stories about 'round the way.

**JANEL HERRERA:** There is a local paradise waiting to remind us that our great grandparents are not too



far away. Their dust still lays in our shed. We just need the tools to dig up the beginning of an already-told story.

**DANEZ SMITH:** Around the way, there is a place that's ran by the people who live there, where people work on and in the land they live, where the people decide what's best for the land and themselves, where you can't tell where the land ends and the people begin.

**TAYLOR SCOTT:** I knew a man who died at 300, but was as smooth as tumbled beach rock. The perspirations of a birthing woman is thick in the air. Love was born bare and here and now swelled with the riches amber and elephant hide.

**DOMINIQUE RICKS:** I know we're hungry now, but if we plant our seeds now, tonight we'll have roots. If we water them, in the morning our saplings will have petals, and that night we'll have plenty.

**TAYLOR SCOTT:** 'Round the way, there is a stone that can turn dust to food, a process by which paradoxical results are achieved with no rational explanation. Therefore there is an abundance of succotash and rice, of finger licking apple pie.

**NATALIE COOK:** With knowledge comes responsibility. We must know our past, but we also find its interconnectedness with the present. That is when we will begin to see an evolved, unmasked future. But the change begins now, in this space first. Learn, recognize, know your history. Go.

**TAYLOR SCOTT:** 'Round the way, leaders seek wisdom before knowledge, and knowledge before self.

**SHAMEACA MOORE:** Round the way, our conversation with Earth is not one-sided. It is understood when our breath retires, we will one day be that dirt. When we grip soil, we know that life and death is truly in our hands.

**TAYLOR SCOTT:** 'Round the way, a man will tell his age by how tall his first tree is. 'Round the way, there is always enough.

**STEVEN RODRIGUEZ:** But there we endure the conditions caused by capitalism. Dividing is unnecessary. Conquering is unnecessary. But 'round the way, the will of the people rising together is all we need for

tomorrow.

**JASMINE MANS:** Granddaddy told me, girl, you've never heard of a rose growing from concrete? Roses don't grow from concrete. 'Round the way, they poured concrete around the roses. God gave roses thorns to break through.

**TAYLOR SCOTT:** I wish to lie down 'round the way, and rest after the work has been done. I wish to watch the people as they grow and plant more fruit. I wish to stand by the people till the morning. And even though it's not the morning that I imagined or the morning that you dreamed, it is real, and it is what makes us human.

**ALL:** Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah. Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah. Oh Lord, America, America. Oh Lord, gal, oh ah. Oh Lord, America, America.

**[MUSIC PLAYS]**

**PRESENTER:** This evening's plenary is the first of three. The first plenary tonight is on equality. Tomorrow, the plenary panel will discuss democracy. And on Sunday, sustainability. Equality, democracy, and sustainability are three of the core problems which we face in the contemporary world, and which the real utopias perspective, which we will be exploring throughout this weekend, provide us a way of coming -- of providing a new way of understanding and analyzing these issues.

Equality, of the three, of course is the one -- is the topic which has its strongest home base inside of sociology. For many sociologists, the core normative basis which has animated their engagement with sociology centers around different questions connected to social justice. And at the heart of social justice is questions of equality. When sociologists think about what a just and fair world would be, the issues of race, class, and gender, and the inequality structured around them, are at the very core. And these are issues then which we will be exploring this evening.

We have three speakers: Philippe van Parijs, Judith Lorber, and Kimberlé Crenshaw. Philippe will address the class dimension of equality, Judith Lorber the gender dimension, and Kimberlé Crenshaw race. This triplet, of course, does not imply that these are distinct and unconnected, but I felt that it would be useful for us to begin our discussion by focusing around the issue of alternatives to existing structures, with these three core forms of inequality being the grounding for the exploration of possibilities for equality.

Let me first -- let me now just briefly introduce each of our speakers. They will each speak for 25 or 30 minutes. We probably will not have time for as much as question and answer as we do normally at these events, but each of them will be involved in a session that's a complement to their presentations today. Philippe van Parijs will be doing a session on basic income as a real utopian proposal for redesigning the system of distribution tomorrow at 10:30. Judith Lorber will be presenting with colleagues a proposal around the issue of -- the idea of a world beyond gender. And Kimberlé Crenshaw will be a discussant in a real utopia session on race tomorrow morning at 8:30. So for those of you who find their presentations interesting and want to follow up with more discussion, I encourage you to attend the complementary session to this plenary.

Philippe van Parijs is professor at the faculty of economic, social, and political sciences of the University of Louvain in Belgium, where he directs the Hoover Chair of Economic and Social Ethics since its creation in 1991. He also currently teaches at Nuffield College, Oxford. He is one of the founders of the Basic Income European Network, which became in 2004 the Basic Income Earth Network. And he chairs its international board. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he is the world's leading theorist and advocate for unconditional basic income as a way of transforming the structures of inequality in contemporary society.

He has received many awards, including in 2001 the Francqui prize, Belgium's most generous scientific prize. Among his many books are *Real Freedom for All*, *What's Wrong with a Free Lunch?*, and *Linguistic Justice for Europe and the World*. He is also one of the authors, along with Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott of a book in the Real Utopias project, *Redesigning Distribution*.

Judith Lorber, our second speaker, is professor emerita of sociology and women's studies at the Graduate Center at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. She was the first coordinator of the CUNY Graduate Center's Women's Studies certificate program, and was a founding editor of *Gender and Society*, the official publication of Sociologists for Women in Society. She's a recipient of the ASA's Jessie Bernard Career Award in 1996 for scholarly work that has enlarged the horizons of sociology to encompass fully the role of women in society.

She is author of a number of very influential books, including, to name only three, *Breaking the Bowls: Degendering and Feminist Change*; *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*; and *Paradoxes of Gender*.

Kimberlé Crenshaw, our third speaker, is professor of law at UCLA and Columbia Law School, and is a leading authority in the area of civil rights, black feminist legal theory, and race, racism, and the law. She is the founding coordinator of the Critical Race Theory workshop, and co-editor of the volume *Critical Race Theory: Key Documents that Shaped the Movement*. She has facilitated workshops on race and gender equality for human rights activists in Brazil and in India, and for the constitutional court judges in South Africa. Her work in intersectionality was influential in the drafting of the equality clause in the South African constitution.

She authored the background paper on race and gender discrimination for the United Nations world conference on racism, served as a rapporteur for the conference's expert group on gender and race discrimination, and coordinated NGO efforts to ensure the inclusion of gender in the conference declaration. In 1996, she co-founded the African American Policy Forum to house a variety of projects designed to deliver research-based strategies to better advance social inclusion.

So without further introductions, let us begin with Philippe van Parijs.

**PHILIPPE VAN PARIJS:** In December 1516, nearly 500 years ago, a strange little book was published in the university town of Louvain thanks to the intervention of the least conformist, yet most respected among the local scholars, Desiderius Erasmus. The little book contained many weird stories and arguments attributed to a Portuguese traveler just as perceptive, it seemed, as Alexis de Tocqueville would be centuries later.

Why is it the traveled asked himself, for example, that there are in England so many thefts and so many murders, in spite of the fact that both theft and murder are punished by the death penalty? Very simple, he said, in the case of murders, if a thief is seen while he's stealing, he might as well kill the person who saw him. The penalty will be the same if he's caught, and the chance of being caught is reduced if he kills whoever saw him. So if you want to have less murders, the best thing you can do is to reduce the penalty for theft.

But what about having less thefts then? Well, he says, first look for the cause. I quote, no punishment, however severe, is able to restrain from robbing those who can find no other way of livelihood. And he says, he explains at length, there were many of those, of people in those conditions at the time, as a result of the enclosure of the commons. Hence, quote, instead of inflicting dreadful punishments to the thieves, it would be much better to provide everyone with some means of subsistence. In other words, think out of the box, think radical, think utopian.

As most of you may have guessed, this little book published in Louvain in 1516 is Thomas More's Utopia. Had it never been published, or had it been given another title, we wouldn't now see Real Utopia stuck all over the walls in Denver, Colorado 500 years later. I picked this particular argument in the book because of its substantive connection with a specific real utopia I was invited to briefly present to you today. But I want to first say a few words about the relationship between utopia and sociology, more precisely about why I believe that utopian thinking is not just a slightly embarrassing hobby indulged in by a handful of marginal members of the profession, but that it can claim to be a central dimension in every respectable sociologist's job.

There is, of course, an old and not so promising relationship between sociology and utopia. Take Auguste Comte, the man who gave the discipline its name. Among his many ideas, he concocted a wonderful plan for a European union, consisting of 60 republics of the size of Burgundy or Normandy, each of those ruled by a triumvirate, a team of three bankers. Bankers, respectively specialized in agriculture, industry, and trade, but at least 42 years old, he insisted, so that they would have had time to prove their trustworthiness.

Or take another founding father whose ideas are not unanimously regarded as equally ludicrous, Karl Marx. Isn't the blatant failure of all tried variants of the socialist utopia by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the decisive proof that utopian thinking is not what decent social scientists should spend their time on? Absolutely not. Indeed, quite the contrary. For the problem with Marx, and there is a big problem with Marx, is not too much utopian thinking, but not enough utopian thinking. What institutions a socialist society should have, what problems these institutions may create, what solutions there may be for these problems, these utopian questions occupy a very, very small space in Marxist work, essentially the marginal notes on the [inaudible], the program of the first social democratic party.

I was in London two weeks ago, and took my granddaughter for a walk to Marx's grave in Highgate Cemetery. Between the huge bronze head at the top of the monument and a bouquet of flowers at the bottom, which was the only thing that interested my granddaughter, in between there was -- there is a big inscription that is a translation of a famous sentence which Marx scribbled on a scrap of paper when he was living in Brussels, just around the corner from where I live. That sentence says, the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point, however, is to change it.

Yes, absolutely, Herr Marx. But if you want to be equipped to change the world for the better, it's not enough to be -- it's not enough to interpret the world in various ways, to describe, to analyze, to

measure, to explain, to criticize. It's also important to stick your neck out with more than a couple of slogans, to spell out the contours of what would be a good society or better society, just society, a more just society. To engage, in other words, in utopian thinking. In this enterprise, there is room -- indeed, there is absolute need for normative, ethical, philosophical thinking.

But philosophers must not try to do that on their own, by themselves. Nor should they subcontract the whole job to the economic profession. Bizarrely perhaps, economics is the only social science profession which developed explicitly a significant normative grounds, welfare economics and then the theory of social choice.

But there is no fundamental reason for this asymmetric -- for this asymmetry between economics and the other social sciences. And one must endeavor to reduce it. Not, however, through each social science developing its own normative appendix, but by all getting involved with their specific methodological tools, their specific explanation patterns in the collective, multi-disciplinary enterprise which utopian thinking must of necessity be.

The objective must not be to specify all minute details of what the perfect society would look like. It must be, one, to formulate proposals for radical reforms to the present social order. Two, to justify these by reference to values and principles to which, on reflection, one is willing to commit, combined with the best possible scientific analysis of the root causes of the problems the reform is meant to address. And three, to subject the proposals to unindulgent critical scrutiny, scanning relentlessly for all possible perverse effects, all to be evaluated in the light of an explicit normative standards.

Obviously, such utopian thinking is not meant to be value neutral, but it does not make social scientific truth depend on value judgments. Utopian thinking requires answers to many factual questions about the likely effects, about sustainability. It is perfectly legitimate for choice of these questions to be guided by value judgments, but it is essential that the answers to those factual questions be shielded from the influence of both our interests and our values.

Utopian thinking is not to be confused with wishful thinking. It requires tough disciplining by a demanding, multi-disciplinary scientific community in order to refrain us -- sorry, in order to restrain us from believing what we would like to be true, but is not. The crucial demands of -- these crucial demands of intellectual integrity, however, should never make us give up our collective mission of

helping design a better, yet feasible future of fashioning realistic utopias, of helping give hope, reasonable hope to our generation and generations to come.

To illustrate, I shall now turn to one very simple real utopia, the unconditional basic income that is an income unconditionally paid to every member of a society on an individual basis without means tests and without a work requirement. This idea is related, but not quite the same, as what Thomas More suggested in the passage which I quoted at the start. The guaranteed subsistence he had in mind is more likely to resemble the scheme developed by his friend and fellow humanist, one Luis Vives, in a booklet published ten years later under the title *De Subventionem Pauperum, On the Assistance to the Poor*. That is minimum income provided by the local government, that's what Vives advocated, but exclusively to the poor and on the strict condition of their agreeing to be put to work.

This was a utopia at the time, something unrealized anywhere in the world, but of course it is no longer one today, as all existing public assistance schemes in the world can be regarded as more or less mild versions of Vives' scheme. An unconditional basic income is similar to this. It's also a cash transfer irreducible to social insurance, but it is also crucially different from this because it is paid irrespective of who one lives with, irrespective of how much income one earns, irrespective of whether one is willing to work.

Crazy idea? No, great idea. Or at least an idea that must be extremely appealing to anyone committed to both freedom and equality, committed to freedom understood not as a sheer right or purely formal freedom, but as an effective possibility of a real freedom, committed to equality in the sense that this real freedom must not be the preserve of the wealthy, but be distributed if not equally, which may be counter-productive, at least in such a way that those with least real freedom should have as much of it as possible.

Note that contrary to the More-Vives minimum scheme, a non-conditional basic income is not exclusively, not indeed ultimately, about the distribution of income. It is of consumption power. It is about the power to decide what sort of life one wants to live. It's about the power to say no to the dictates of a boss, of a bureaucrat, or of a spouse. It is also about the power to say yes to activities that are poorly paid, not paid at all, but are nonetheless attractive either in themselves or because of the training and the contacts they provide.

The expectation is that spreading more evenly this bargaining power, this power to say yes and to say no, will not only make our societies more equal, but that it will also systematically improve the

quality of work and thereby the quality of life generally through the very operation of the capitalist labor market subjected to different structural constraints. Even though everyone would be getting as a right some unearned income, the introduction of a basic income would not exactly make a capitalist society classless. Class cleavages in several senses will subsist, but it could be interpreted as a capitalist world to Marx's realm of freedom to the idea of a world freed of drudgery, an ideal which Marx shared with those like Charles Fourier, who he dismissed as utopian socialists.

Wonderful, terrific. But don't worry, I'm not going to waste any of your time describing the idyllic life of the inhabitants of basic income utopia, nor shall I try to survey the huge philosophical literature developed in the last 20 years on whether a non-conditional basic income is implied, or on the contrary is incompatible with a plausible conception of social justice. Instead, I want first to mention four facts that suggest that universal basic income is already now far more than just a philosophical pipe dream. And two -- and next mention some issues raised by basic income proposals where serious utopian thinking badly needs the contribution of sociologists. How many minutes do I have?

**PRESENTER:** 12 more minutes.

**PHILIPPE VAN PARIJS:** Okay. And can I have some water too? Thank you. Four facts then. Moving from the local to the global. One, as most of you know, there is one place in the world where low but genuine individual, unconditional basic income has been in place for 30 years. It is the dividend paid annually to every resident of Alaska by the Alaska Permanent Fund as a way of making all generations of Alaskans benefit from Alaska's oil revenues.

Two, as fewer of you know, one country introduced in September 2010 an even lower level, but on a much larger scale, what can also be regarded as an unconditional basic income, Iran. It is again related to oil, but the logic is quite different. The Iranian government realized some years ago that it was economically absurd to have oil priced on the domestic market at a level far lower than on the international market, and therefore decided to gradually lift the domestic price to the international level. In order to offset the effect on the livelihood of the population, especially the poorest, it decided to distribute part of the additional oil revenues in the form of cash benefits. With the large informal economy they have, the Iranian authorities soon realized that the only workable way of doing so was in the form of a universal, individual, non-means tested benefit, free.

Moving from a single country to a set of countries, the European Union. People in Europe are slowly beginning to realize that beyond the immediate triggers, the fundamental cause of the



unsustainability of the Euro, the Euro Zone, in contrast to the stability of the currency union formed by the 50 states of the United States, is the absence of two major buffer mechanisms. One, interstate migration, which is about seven times greater in the United States than in the European Union. And two, trans-state transfers, which are between 20 and 40 times greater in the US than in the EU, depending on the indicator chosen.

Because of language differences, there is little chance of the first buffer, migration, becoming much stronger in the EU. The only serious hope for the sustainability of the Euro is therefore a strengthening of the second buffer, transfers. But the European Union will never manage to integrate its many very different welfare states into a unified, EU-wide mega-welfare state. The only form this buffer could take is therefore a very simple one. Once you exclude a number of schemes that are plagued with intrinsic perversities, there is not much left apart from an EU-wide basic income. Not as a substitute for existing national welfare states, but as a [inaudible] to be fitted under them in order to secure their viability.

Fourth, at the world level, climate change is now generally admitted, even in this country, as a serious problem. And to address it, we need to cap the global emission of carbon dioxide. Many people now agree that the best way of doing so, which combines very simply fairness and efficiency, consists in selling to the highest bidders all emission rights compatible with the global threshold level that should not be exceeded, and in distributing the huge proceeds of this sale equally to all those equally entitled to the natural resources of the earth, and therefore in particular to the absorption power of our atmosphere, that is to all human beings.

I could mention many more facts of this sort, but these should suffice to indicate that universal basic income is now more than the sheer dream it was when it was first formulated, for example, by Thomas Paine or by John Stuart Mill. It remains a utopia, however, because, as in my last two facts, it remains at this stage a proposal without any immediate political feasibility. Or because, as in the first two facts, the level of the basic income remains quite modest. At the level of the Alaska dividend, for example, only at its peak never exceeded much more than \$2,000 per year. Like other utopias, this one requires intelligent, multi-disciplinary speculation.

And I shall then close this presentation by mentioning a few interesting issues, some of them worrying and crucial, on which the voice of sociologists needs to be heard, some bearing on the economic sustainability of a significant, universal basic income, and others on its political sustainability. In order to stick to my time, I'll give only some of the examples I could give.

Economic sustainability. No precise speculation can get off the ground without a specification of the level of the universal basic income, of what it is meant to replace, and of the way it's going to be funded. But whatever the level and other features of the scheme, the core of the exploration of its economic sustainability tends to take the form of simple economic models, which try to capture the so-called income effects and substitution effects of the proposed scheme on the supply of labor and sometimes on the acquisition of skills of various types of workers.

This simple modeling is useful, but misses some important issues where some sociological sensitivity could contribute to intelligent utopian thinking, sometimes by strengthening the case for economic sustainability -- for the economic sustainability of a decent, basic income, sometimes by strengthening the case against it.

Let me just say this straight that in one way, arguably the main economic argument in favor of a universal basic income has to do not with the labor supply of the lower skilled, so related to the abolition of the reduction of the so-called poverty trap, but with the flourishing of human capital. A universal basic income facilitates the take-up of unpaid or hardly paid internships, apprenticeships by all young people, not only by those whose parents can keep supporting them. A universal basic income makes it easier for people to reduce their working time or to interrupt their career in order to acquire further training. A universal basic income also makes it easier to reduce one's working time or take a career break in order to spend more time with one's children when they're most needed.

Should the fact that more women than men can be predicted to avail themselves of this last possibility be regarded as a problem? If so, does it provide a decisive objection in the light of the conception of social justice on which the case for a universal basic income rests? Or can the basic income utopia be supplemented, enriched by side measures that would alleviate the problem, if it is one, sufficiently?

All I've said so far about economic sustainability takes no account of the fact that political entities that may consider introducing a universal basic income are subject to immigration and emigration. There again in this dimension, a more subtle analogy than the ones usually provided by economists would be most useful.

A word finally on the political sustainability dimension. Utopian thinking should not be bridled by constraints of political achievability. Is there or is there not a political majority in favor of the proposed utopia? Is there or not a significant support for it in public opinion surveys? These questions

are of little relevant to utopian thinking. For utopian thinking is a central component of the democratic process through which the collective will is built. It must not regard as a constraint what it is they have to shape. However, it does not follow that utopian thinking can ignore the possibility that the proposal it investigates, once in place, may prove politically unsustainable. And here again, sociological insights would be most useful.

Just one example. It may be argued that the economic sustainability of universal basic income increases with the scale at which it is distributed and funded. However, as the current European debate illustrates, incorporating several countries in a redistributive scheme quickly generates a self-serving use of negative national clichés by the public opinion of the net contributor countries. For example, I bet that nearly all Germans are convinced that the Greeks are lazy, even though the statistics say that working time in Greece is longer than in other European countries.

But even if one could abstract from simplistic clichés, are transnational transfers -- transfer schemes not vulnerable to the exhibition of economically relevant cultural differences? For example, a country could be less of a net beneficiary than it currently is if it didn't regard some of its land as sacred, as the Greeks do, by protecting from touristic exploitation the monk's sanctuary of Mount Athos. Or if its population didn't spend one month a year fasting. It's the political dynamics in that country, but the country is not doomed to take this form and thereby to threaten the political sustainability of transnational schemes. Or are these conditions under which this will not happen, or ways in which it can be avoided?

I could mention more questions, but this will suffice to illustrate the way in which the basic income real utopia could do with the help of -- with more help from people like you. To conclude then, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, dear students, our world is in a mess. Admittedly, not as much in a mess in some parts as it was in the past, could be worse, but it can also be better. There's got to be -- to be something better, man. There's got to be something different, I heard today. Well, yes, especially for those who suffer most from the way things are now.

It is, therefore, our duty to keep dreaming, but to dream intelligently, critically by mobilizing the insights of all the social sciences, not least those of the broadest among them, sociology. Intelligent dreams, real utopias will not be enough to make our world a better world. They need close collaboration with grassroots indignation and opportunistic thinking. Real utopias are not enough, but they are indispensable. Dear colleagues and especially the students, let us dream on.

**JUDITH LORBER:** Supposed to change the --

**PRESENTER:** I think you have a PowerPoint coming on.

**JUDITH LORBER:** Yeah.

**PRESENER:** I think they'll put it on once you start.

**JUDITH LORBER:** Okay, it's on. With me, you get PowerPoint.

**PRESENTER:** It's not -- the PowerPoint isn't on the screen.

**JUDITH LORBER:** Ah, just me. I'd rather you have PowerPoint up there. Thank you. Okay, talking about gender equality is tricky. What do we mean by it? Equal numbers of women and men at all levels of governments and other major institutions? In the workplace, equal salaries and open access to all jobs? In the family, shared parenting? Must we add cultural productions and media that feature women's perspectives and values as often as men's? Do we mean the protection of women and children from sexual exploitation and domestic violence? Do we mean political participation, economic access, and reproductive rights for women throughout the world?

Does gender equality refer only to women, or to perfect equality between women and men, which might mean in fact some men? Which women and men are not equal? Who gets compared? Do we want gender equality or gender transformation? Might we go so far as to mean doing away with the gender binary entirely, eradicating the division of so much of society into men's spheres and women's spheres, and the devaluation of women's spheres? Could we mean dismantling the legal and bureaucratic structure of gender? Or would it be enough to accept and even encourage multiple genders and sexualities?

Since 1975, I've been writing beyond articles, culminating in my book, *Breaking the Bowls: Degendering and Feminist Change*, which goes beyond beyond and calls for doing away with gender altogether. I think it's a utopian vision, but others might think a world without gender would be a dystopia. For others, it is just impossible to imagine. So what is realistic when it comes to gender equality?

Assuming that less gendering would be a good thing, most of *Breaking the Bowls* lays out the plausible, doable degendering practices, such as structuring work organizations with gender neutrality, and also consciously countering the informal denigration of women on work teams. Parenting that scrupulously divides childcare and household work evenly between the responsible adults of the

household. Interaction that doesn't start with gender division. Socialization of children that isn't based on feminization and masculinization.

We have to start by recognizing that the pillars of gender inequality are built into gender as a social institution, a legal and bureaucratic means of dividing the populace into two categories, men and women, and treating them differently. So most social institutions, schools, governments, work organizations, the military, religion, the family are gendered with practices that privilege the men over the women in the same racial and social class group. Even if social institutions approach gender neutrality in their formal policies and practices, gendered interactions on a face to face, informal level tend to disadvantage women. Men assume authority; women have to fight to have their opinions heard. Men mentor each other in homosocial groups, leaving women out of their social gatherings.

Finally, from birth -- I think I skipped one. Finally, from birth, individuals are intensely gendered, feminized and masculinized, so they usually incorporate the social meanings of their gender categories into their personalities and behavior in order to be proper members of their social groups. Then by continual -- constantly doing gender as they've learned, they legitimize and perpetuate the gendered social order.

This tightly woven structure of inequality has been breached most notably by women in positions of authority; by a movement for homosexual equality, especially marriage; and parenthood, which upends traditional expectations of gendered family behavior; and by gendered queers who refuse to abide by the conventional gender norms and expectations. Yet we are still left with a social order that is generally gender unequal.

I asked myself what one thing I would like to see accomplished or done away with that would mean gender equality had been achieved in my lifetime. I would like to see a woman president of the United States to break the male hegemony over the power and prestige of that office. In fact, I'd like to see a woman prime minister of Russia and China. But given the experience other countries have had with women leaders who are iron ladies and who rule just like men, I want more. I want a woman leader who would be a feminist. But what kind of feminist?

Feminists who want to reform the current gendered social order use tactics of gender balance and gender mainstreaming, creating policies for the governments to take gender into account to make sure that women are not shortchanged by them. This is a practical feminism, and perhaps the best way to redress gender inequality in workplaces and government agencies. It's also being done right now.

Other problems need more of a counteraction, confronting current policies of gender segregation in the workplace and lower pay for women's work by affirmative action. The global economy exploits poor women as cheap labor, and economic restructuring often reduces social service benefits to mothers and children. These economic problems are an arena for transnational feminist gender politics.

Another major area for a different kind of gender politics is one that protects women's bodies against unwanted pregnancies and sterilizations, abortions of female fetuses, genital mutilation, rape, beatings, and honor murder. The sexual integrity of women and girls needs protection from forced prostitution, exploitative sex work in pornographic productions, and in strip clubs, and in unwanted arranged marriages.

Lesbian, gay, and transgendered people need to be able -- need to be able to live free of discrimination and violent attacks. But many lesbian women also want their own physical space in cultural communities where they can be safe from sexual harassment and men's domination, nourish their loves and friendships, and produce books, music, art, and drama that reflects their different ways of thinking and feeling, although separatism is something that I think is going by the board.

Standpoint feminists argue that women's experiences and distinctive outlooks on life have to be included in the production of knowledge, especially in science and social science research. There it is not enough to just add women subjects to research designs. Questions have to be asked from a critical feminist perspective. Data have to include women's voices and analysis has to reflect the viewpoints of those who have been marginalized and silenced.

Multi-racial, multi-ethnic feminisms are part of a powerful political movement to redress past and present legal and social discrimination of disadvantaged women in many societies. These are the direct action feminist politics we have been using for the past 40 years, and a great deal has been accomplished to increase gender equality. But the revolution that would make women and men truly equal has not yet occurred. The question that puzzles me is why, with regard to pervasive gender inequality, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

The answer I suggest is that gender divisions still deeply divide modern society, and it is this automatic division of people into what becomes two unequally valued categories that causes the persistence of gender inequality. So I argue that it is this gendering that needs to be challenged for lasting social change, with the long-term goal of not just minimizing, but of doing away with binary

gender divisions completely. That means the dismantling -- that means dismantling the matrix of domination embedded in the major social statuses: gender, social class, racial, ethnic, and sexual identity.

In *Paradox of Gender*, I argued that -- I argued that with regard that -- in *Paradoxes of Gender*, I argued that the construction and maintenance of two genders that were made to be different also meant they were made to allow one gender to exploit the other. So logically, it follows that if we want to do away with the bedrock underpinnings of gender inequality, we need to do away with the binary gender system.

Feminists have tried to restructure and change the dynamics of interaction between women and men to redress gender imbalances in politics and control of valued resources, to alter gender discriminatory social practices, and to change the invisibility and naturalness of what is taken for granted about women and men. But they have not pushed these agendas to the point of calling for the abolition of gender divisions with the goal of doing away with them altogether. I am arguing here that if gender inequality is to be finally eradicated, legal and bureaucratic degendering must be the ultimate goal.

Degendering doesn't mean not thinking about gender. Rather, it's thoughts with the recognition that gender is a binary system of social organization that creates inequality because of the ways women and men are differently treated. Therefore, degendering attacks the structure and the process of gender, the division of people into two social statuses and the social construction of gender differences that make them different and unequal.

In methodological terms, degendering is a counter-factual heuristic posing the challenge of what if? I ask, what if we did not divide people by gender? What would and would not change in the society? What if we did not divide household tasks and childcare by gender? How do same-gender couple structure family duties? What if we did not allocate positions in the workforce by gender? How do organizations of all women or all men allocate their jobs? What if we did not form personal and group identities by gender? Don't we all have individualized characteristics and multiple group membership?

An easy place to start degendering is to recognize that the two genders are not at all homogenous categories since they are intersected by other major social statuses: racial identity, ethnic group, social class, national citizenship, religious affiliation, and by individual variations such as age, sexual orientation, relational and parental statuses, and physical status. All these social statuses may or

may not be major identities, but when they are, they create multiplicities of gender. Recognizing the complexity of social hierarchies and statuses helps to undercut the strength of the constant gendering that maintains the two-gender structure.

The other important process of degendering, in addition to recognizing gender complexity, is recognizing and building on the similarities of women and men in behavior and thinking and emotions, blurring the gender boundaries. We already have women combat pilots, astronauts, firefighters, and men nurses, secretaries, and nursery school teachers. Such melding of women's and men's work can be expanded into many more workplaces and into the family as well. And some degendering recognizes that any grouping of women and men will be intersected by other major social statuses, and that there will be significant overlaps in behavior and attitudes among the women and men of any particular group.

One ubiquitous social practice is comparisons of women and men. These constant comparisons are insidious because they assume essential male and female natures. They do not recognize the extent to which masculine and feminine characteristics are situational, interactive, or simply stereotypes. They also fail to see that gender is part of the intersectionality of multiple and simultaneous sources of privilege and disadvantage.

It takes deliberate action to degender practices and thought processes. It's a lot harder than simply putting an equal number of women and men into a group. As pervasive as gender is, because it is constructed and maintained through daily interaction, it can be resisted and reshaped. The question is, how much? Gendered practices have been questioned, but the overall legitimacy of the gendered social order is deeply ingrained and currently boosted by scientific studies on supposed inborn differences between females and males. The ultimate touchstone is pregnancy and childbirth, but biologic sex is not gender.

Appropriative and other biological differences are themselves part of the gendered social order, which socially constructs how women give birth and how they mother. Female and male bodies are socially constructed to be feminine and masculine, another order of opposites. Degendering would diminish the social construction of sex differences. It won't affect truly natural physiological differences. It would mean not building a gender order on these physiological differences.

What about sexuality? Won't degendering flounder on sexual desire for a member of the opposite or the same gender? My argument is twofold. Sexuality is also not so clearly binary, and



sexuality is deeply intertwined with the social aspect of gender. The complexities of the gender system, it is a hierarchy of race and ethnicity and social class as well, complicate the categories of biological sex. Sexual identity isn't sexual desire. None of these are binary, and none produce gender. What produces gender are the legal and bureaucratic divisions, and subsequent gendered practices that follow.

Since dismantling the legal and bureaucratic gender order is a truly revolutionary and utopian vision, I suggest tackling gendered practices in everyday life by practicing degendering. Degendering needs to be focused on how people are sorted and allocated for tasks and work organizations, schools, small groups, families, and other social groupings. Degendering means simply not assigning tasks in the home and workplace by gender. Degendering means not grouping children by gender in schools. Degendering means confronting gender expectations in face-to-face interaction, and underplaying gender categories in language: not saying ladies and gentlemen, but colleagues and friends.

As degendering agents in our everyday lives, we can confront the bureaucratic and public gender binaries just as transgenders do, by thinking about whether we want to conform or challenge. We could stop ticking off the male/female boxes at the top of every form we fill out, or ask about the need for them, or putting in the opposite gender on the Internet, which don't allow you to skip that category.

Shannon Faulkner, a girl with a gender ambiguous name, got into the Citadel, an all-boy military school, because the admission form did not have an M/F checkbox, check-off box. It was assumed only boys would apply. All her credentials and biographical information qualified her for admission, but when the citadel administration found out she was a girl, she was immediately disqualified. The person didn't change. Her qualifications remained the same. The legal status and all the stereotypical baggage about capabilities that comes with it changed. It was on that basis that she successfully claimed gender discrimination and challenged the all-male status of the Citadel, and that is precisely what degendering would do.

I need a little more -- degendering won't do certain things. In societies where women are severely disadvantaged, degendering may not be the best strategy to achieve women's rights. Gender sensitivity may be necessary to bring attention to how seemingly neutral policies are insidious for women. It may also be necessary to compare women and men in the economic sphere. But here, the effects of education, income, and social class standing often means that women and men cannot be treated as homogeneous, global categories. Degendering will not do away with wars and hunger and economic disparities, but I do think that degendering will undercut the patriarchal and oppressive

specter of western societies and social institutions, and give all of us the space to use our energies to demilitarize work for peaceable solutions to conflicts, grow and distribute food, level the gaps between social classes.

The task of gaining citizenship rights and economic equality for most of the world's women is undeniably a first priority, but I will suggest a second task that can be done where women are not so terribly unequal: challenging the binary structures just a little bit more by asking why they are necessary at all. I think that it is only by undercutting the gender system of legal statuses, bureaucratic categories, and official and private allocation of tasks and roles that gender equality can be permanently achieved.

We do tend to without reflection -- without awareness of how much we do gender, we cannot degender. We need to reflect on how we are gendering and do the opposite. The hardest thought experiment is to imagine a world without gender. What would a world without gender be like? Can we think the impossible and envisage societies where people come in all colors, shapes, and sizes, and where body characteristics are not markers for status, identification, or for predetermined allocation to any kind of activity? There would be no women or men, boys or girls, just parents and children, siblings and cousins, and other newly-named kin, and partners and lovers, friends and enemies, managers and workers, rulers and ruled, conformists and rebels. People would form social groups and have statuses and positions and rights and responsibilities and no gender.

The world would go on quite familiarly, but would be radically changed. Gender would no longer determine an infant's upbringing, a child's education, an adult's occupation, a parent's care, and an economy's distribution of wealth, a country's politicians, the world's power brokers. It would be more than a world of multiple genders. It would be a world without gender. Would it be utopia or a dystopia? Thank you.

**KIMBERLE CRENSHAW:** Good evening. I'm grateful to the organizing committee and to Erik Wright for providing me with this platform, and for presenting me with, quite frankly, a challenging task. So my charge, as I've understood it from the president, is to share some thoughts about how the idea of real utopias connects to the racial aspects of social justice. I'm giddy about the fact that I wasn't asked to talk about this in the context of intersectionality, so thank you for at least mentioning that in this panel.

The task seemed easy enough when I was first approached by it. Racial justice, yeah, I think about that a lot. Utopias, well, you know, not so much, but surely these things could be bridged, I though. So then I got Erik's book, and then his other books, and then I checked out the website, and

then I watched the videos. And then we did a little mini-dialogue last year at UCLA. And then I read the proposal submitted for consideration at this event and realized that, well, maybe the question isn't so much a what question, as in the utopian dimensions of racial justice what are they, but a how question. As in, how do I relate?

So I mean this both in the sense that my brother and his friends used to rap like, so the way I see it is this; can you dig? And the answer would be, yeah mean, I can relate. But also in the sense of, are we related? Is there a family resemblance between the Real Utopias project and the discourses that I travel within and on.

So in thinking about the how to relate question, the image lately of that Mars mission little thing that's planted now on Mars kind of reminds me a little bit of how I feel myself coming into this space. So consider critical race theory as my little hovercraft that I'm bringing into this uncharted terrain. And on my dashboard are hailing frequencies that I'm going to throw out to see if I can get a response from this project. There are maps. They're basically intuitive ideas that help me think about where there may be convergences in the way our projects think about race equality and the way these issues might be raised in the context of this project.

So my first confession here is that the utopian frame has signaled initially some investments in ideologies against which the project that I travel in, critical race theory, has traditionally run up against. Now this isn't inherently a part of this utopian discourse, but it tends to be one of the first places that people think when they think about race in a utopian context.

So for example, for a complex set of reasons, including perhaps the words that ring in our generation's ears when we think about race and utopia together, is utopian discourses of race that posit the idea of a future where children of all races are joined hand in hand in a space somewhere where racial power has withered away, and where people are judged not on the basis of their skin, but on the content of their character. This is a modern embodiment of an old idea, frankly not a transformative idea when it was initially articulated in Plessy versus Ferguson, of colorblindness.

Now this vision of a future where race has withered away quite frankly was one that was more fully transformative and uplifting when it was uttered by Martin Luther King on the March on Washington. However, we have to be frank in admitting that it has been repurposed and pressed into service to counter the reach and the scope and even the existence of some of the practices that were adopted by actors and institutions under the rubric of racial justice.

Now all too often, Martin Luther King's interpretation of a utopian view of racial justice is drowned out by those who adopt this view and suppress other things that he had to say about racial justice in the very speech where he embraced this vision of racial utopia. So one of the first reservations is that tension, the tension between how we imagine this utopic space and the elimination of particular interventions that are meant to bring about precisely those visions that we talk about.

Absent in the repurposing of the colorblind vision is a more complicated vision, an assessment of racial subordination that is tied to institutions, to structures, to histories: an analysis built around the notion of repair, an analysis built around the idea of deficit with an implied call for broad-scale social investment to alter the baselines, to alter the idea that there is actually debt to be paid. So elsewhere in Dr. King's speech, for example, one encounters his framing of deficit in terms of the idea that the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment constituted a promissory note that has come back marked insufficient funds.

But in contemporary discourse, the response is more likely to be the future is now. We are post-race, post-civil rights, post debt. The co-optation then of utopian discourse is packaged as a reversal of the racial justice agenda. Now, of course this repurposing doesn't inspire the warmest embrace of the idea of colorblindness with its utopian dimensions to it, so I wouldn't be overstating the case to posit that within critical race theory, there's a mild allergy to a certain way of engaging in utopic thinking about race.

This allergy I'd have to say is also reinforced by the utopian visions of race that we encounter in our entertainment worlds, in our social worlds, visions that never quite seem to grapple with what happened to the power question. So my earliest recollections of the somewhat heavy-handed efforts to impose a lesson around colorblindness was on Star Trek. The first version of Star Trek, the first series, I don't know how many of you in the room are my age or older and were Trekkies, but one of the series episodes that dealt with race was where there were these two people from another species on another planet, and they were locked into racial contestation. Now, one had black on one side of his face and white on the other, and the other one had white on the side where the other one had black, and black on the side where the other one had white.

And in this story, for all intents and purposes to Captain Kirk, they seemed to be exactly the same, right? They were symmetrical. Yet in their internal struggle over a difference that made no difference, the Star Trek crew was able to gaze upon this long-standing internal conflict with the moral superiority of a crew that had somehow transcended precisely these kind of irrelevant conflicts. So looking at the primitive struggle between these individuals that he saw as essentially the same with a

bemused look, we see a crew projected by contemporary writers as the embodiment of this post-racial world in which race doesn't matter. The crew is multi-racial, it's international. I don't know if I can use this word. It's intergalaxial. It's a marvel of diversity and it never devolves into or generates any evidence that their differences are related to anything structural or institutional or performative.

Now for obvious reasons, I was always fascinated by Uhuru, who never complains that she's basically the secretary on the ship, which I suppose from the vantage point of the 60s, when black women couldn't even get those jobs, seemed pretty darn utopian to the writers. She never gets hooked up, which reading Averil Clarke's *Inequalities of Love* is a condition not unrecognizable today. Unless, of course, she is under the spell by powerful beings in which she and Kirk are forced to embrace and share an uncomfortable intimacy. And of course there's the nurse who's demoted, for those of us who are Trekkies who really care, from the role of the first officer in the pilot to the nurse who's just pretty happy to be there.

And then finally, there's Spock, clearly superior to Kirk in every way, except interestingly enough for us, he's overly rational. And he doesn't seem to mind that the Earth dude with the big ego is the boss, gets all the women, and makes all the important speeches. They're just people on a ship united by a collective mission to go where no man has gone before. There are no structured relations associated with the bodies that these characters inhabit, no patterns of power that at least the characters seem to notice, and no need for interventions to monitor or adjust these relationships. And interestingly, there's no backstory about how this all came to be. If there is a story, it's relegated to the liner notes in the script, not particularly worth telling.

Now one key observation that might be inferred from this particular utopian vision, and one that underscores some of the reservations that we might have, is that there's a vision of a racial future in which racial discourse is embargoed, but racial power continues relatively unmarked. As it turns out, this notion of dispersive transcendence of race in the face of continuous racial power is not limited to bad, but beloved television. It typifies legal, political, and academic discourses on racial equality, and runs the risk, if not more carefully delineated, of limiting the potential of utopian projects as we are addressing over the course of these next couple days.

So I want to suggest that one of the problems of utopian visions of race is the ready thinking about transcendence, the ready embrace of the idea of colorblindness without an attendant set of practices to ensure that that colorblind vision is not simply a world where race is now embargoed, yet race still manages to exist. So one of the suggestion that I'll take up in a bit is what kind of practices we

might amend to the practice of thinking in utopic terms, to ask questions not just about where is the race or where are the people of color, but more importantly, where is the whiteness in the projects that we're talking about?

Now closer to home, particularly among legal scholars, we have another set of writers who extend the allergens pertaining to racial utopias, and that would be the Supreme Court. It engages in a little bit of its own utopias. You can see it sometimes with their answer to, how do we get there? With an exasperating, isn't it abundantly obvious, response. So for example, in the landmark case in 2007, which effectively ended this nation's experiment with state-sponsored integration, Chief Justice Roberts essentially collapsed the history of segregation onto the history of integration and said, the way we get there is to stop race discrimination. The way to stop race discrimination is to stop discriminating on the basis of race.

In this view, our utopia is right here for the taking if we only realize that Linda Brown walking that perilous path to her grossly underfunded and stigmatized school was harmed in precisely the same way as the white children whom she passed on the way were harmed by racial segregation. They were all stuffed into racial boxes not of their own making by a state set on social engineering around characteristics that are morally irrelevant and not their right to make. By these lights, the ways to solve the problem, the road to the promised land is stop doing that. Which means stop racial classification, whether to promote segregation or integration. It's equally incompatible with our notion of racial utopia.

Now Justice O'Connor also pitched a utopian vision within a [inaudible] frame a few years later - earlier in refusing to stop the University of Michigan from engaging in race-conscious review of applicants. Now she broadened her usual symmetrical vision of equality to incorporate its corollary. So trading the old symmetrical vision that equality consists of treating like for like, O'Connor recognized the corollary to that, that unlikes need not be treated as though they were alike. So it was an obligation that Michigan law was not bound to perform. People of color were differently situated. Recognizing this difference would facilitate their bringing different characteristics into the classroom. Moreover, their inclusion in the leadership class in the US would signal different democracy-enhancing benefits.

Now so far, so good, but here comes the science fiction. In 25 years, presumably these differences would no longer warrant race-conscious admissions. Somewhere between now and then, something supposedly happens in the institutional design of American society, something that will bring about this moment 25 years later where these racial differences are no longer relevant and Michigan

Law School won't have to engage in race-conscious decision-making to gain the benefits of a racially diverse student body.

Now here are the questions of achievability that Erik frames as one of the central inquiries of this project. It's really imponderable because there's no mechanism in place in the here and now that this vision remotely relates to. Given that the applicants to the University of Michigan in 2028, 25 years later, were actually here, born and embedded, in the very social system that would produce the applicant pool in 2028, one would think that the 25-year moratorium would somehow be tied to a set of policies or interventions or incentives or actions that would bear upon the lives of this cohort in the here and now. Yet nothing at all changed between the day before and the day after Justice O'Connor wrote the 25-year sunset rule.

So her vision functions more or less like that Star Trek vision. Something magical happens somewhere between here and now, but the job of specifying the what, the when, the who, the how is left up to someone else, presumably the racialized people in the here and now who, after all, had the incentives to change the future.

So these mantras: we are living in the world that we hope to create, eventually it will come about, these are all part of a colorblind common denominator, one that I would suggest is a hallmark of conservative thinking about race, but also a hallmark of liberal and progressive thinking about race. So let me come back around to a set of suggestions that I hinted at earlier that I want to build out of our own development of critical race theory. I'll have much more to say about this in response to Dr. Bonilla-Silva's thoughtful paper on Saturday morning, but the main point is that as critical race theory more or less developed out of a similar kind of formation, namely progressive legal thinkers in the legal academy in the late 80s, one of the serious questions was, how do we locate and think about questions of racial power? How do we take up the reality that all forms of power are social constructed, yet they create a materiality? That's how we talked about class. Why can't we talk about race in the same way?

I framed the tension that we encountered as one of frame misalignment and alignment. We were on the same page in terms of the importance of thinking about the ideological and structural development and construction of power. We were on completely different pages on whether we could talk about race in the same way. So here's a quick example. As we engaged in many of these debates, one of the themes of critical legal studies was power is to be contested in the here and now: where you are, where you sit, where you live, where you work. So critical legal studies was a place of active

contestation, many challenges that moved from the class question to the gender question. And as we people of color started coming, we were thinking eventually the race question would come about.

So taking seriously the idea that we challenge power in the here and now, we asked in a plenary session somewhat like this, what is it about the whiteness of this project that keeps people of color at bay? What is it about the whiteness of critical legal studies that fails to engage the way that racial power is constituted in law? What is it about the whiteness that erases itself in the broad-scale process of countering critical thinking about how power is constituted?

Needless to say, our efforts labeled us as the enfants terribles of the movement. It was not well-received. The long story made short is that these contestations were contestations that revealed that one can have a utopian, radical set of ideas about class or perhaps even about gender and still be quite liberal in one's conceptualization of race. Any number of reasons might explain how our critical allies had difficulties in thinking about race. They may have seen racial hierarchy as a reflection of bias, which was a traditional liberal way of thinking. They may have seen racial bias as constituted in the past, which was again a particular conservative way of thinking about it. Or they may have located those dynamics out there in the social universe and not inside in safe space, where we're all presumably committed to the same ideas.

I lined this up to make just a couple of points, and then I'll conclude. One is it is important to think in utopian ways about how we might want to reimagine our world, but our world isn't just out there. It's in the in here as well. We might ask questions about what kind of protocols, what kind of interventions, what kind of attentiveness to race might make sense not in the economy, but in the hiring market, not necessarily in political formations out there, but in the political formation of the ASA, not necessarily in the halls of Congress, but where we engage in deliberation every day, and that is in our law faculties. So one part of that history is raising up questions about asking about whiteness, about interrogating it, about figuring out how it becomes naturalized and normalized in many of our discourses.

The last thing that I'll suggest is that utopian thinking that looks to the future may in fact cause us not to pay attention to the utopian thinking that helped constitute our institutions in the here and now, and that are under assault and need to be bolstered and shored up. In that, I'll just make one quick analogy. Many of the ways in which the civil rights movement became taken up in the law were utopian ways in which the court rethought how the status quo should be thought about.



One of the first affirmative action cases that isn't formally framed as an affirmative action case is a school desegregation case called *Green versus New Kent County*. The story is this. Like many southern school districts that initially resisted the constitutional duties to desegregate, New Kent County just repealed its school assignment policy and didn't institute a new one that would require active integration in the schools. It relied instead on what it called freedom of choice plans in which parents and families would simply decide what school they wanted to send their children to. Not surprisingly, freedom of choice plans reconstituted the same segregated attendance patterns that the *de jure* system had at one time mandated. Why? No white family opted to send their children to a black school, and those few black families that did quickly found their jobs lost, their mortgages lost, or their homes damaged, or their lives threatened.

Now this is the realm of private, aggregate power, injuries that the law would have otherwise seen as operating outside of the constitutional scope of equality. Yet in what I would frame a utopic moment, the Supreme Court broadened the notion of responsibility and remediation, placing upon the school system the responsibility to create the school system that might have been were it not for past discrimination, to eliminate a dual school system root and branch. So this dismantling went beyond the typical right remediation frame of the law, in part because it was infused with a speculative utopian vision. What would our institutions look like if we were to reimagine the past, right?

So it wasn't so much reimagining the future. It was reimagining the here and now as if the past hadn't happened. So it was an interrogation of the status quo baseline, a substitution of that baseline for another world, a world that hadn't been completely circumscribed by race discrimination in the past.

Now this basic instinct of the Supreme Court is a utopian rethinking of the baseline that characterizes a whole range of interventions that were meant to bring about racial equality. It characterizes the Voting Rights Act, recognizing that we can't simply create opportunities for political participation simply by eliminating any number of rules that have the effect of marginalizing racial groups. That had been the strategy that had been pursued for 100 years, and it never worked. From poll tax to grandfather clause to white primaries to other kind of primaries, the idea about how to maintain disenfranchisement never exhausted itself. So the Voting Right Act was a particular kind of prophylactic intervention that was a product of utopian thinking.

We'll imagine a baseline of full participation. We'll identify particular jurisdictions that we think are precisely those who are most likely not to embrace this idea, and we're going to limit their ability to change things so that that underlying baseline of participation is never lost. That's a particular creative

way of intervening by imagining a different baseline in the here and now. So it's reimagining the past, moving it to a contemporary period.

I used these two examples of affirmative action basically to get to where we're most familiar, and that is the use of affirmative efforts to bring into our institutions and into our various political spaces those who have historically been excluded. And I want to frame it as a rethinking of the baseline because for the most part, affirmative action in all of our institutions is seen as preferential treatment, and it's seen as preferential treatment as long as the baselines that we operate under are never interrogated.

So part of what I'm suggesting is that there are a whole range of programs, a whole range of interventions that constitute the technology for bringing about greater participation, greater ability to embrace our ideas and our ideals about racial utopias, that we may unfortunately distance ourselves from because they come with stigmas of being racial, they come with stigmas of being a product of state intervention, they come with stigmas of being essential. I want to reframe those and think about them differently, as efforts to rethink the baseline, to challenge what counts as qualifications, to challenge what counts as the status quo, to challenge the colorblindness in which we operate.

I'm going to conclude with one proposal, and that is towards a critical race sociology, a critical race interdisciplinarity. I'm going to highlight one project that came out of the Center for Advanced Studies on Behavioral Sciences called Unmasking Colorblindness. It's a project that I've engaged with with George Lipsitz, Lou Kerrisdale, and Devon Carbado, Bob Tomlinson, several others. And our objectives there were quite frankly to build -- pull together our counterparts in different disciplines who understood that the ideology of colorblindness is not simply an imposition of an ideology sold by the courts and politicians, but in many ways it's embedded in our disciplines. It's a set of contradictory research practices that both stabilize race and obscure the production of racial power.

We thought, each of us, that in the same way that critical race theory came together by aggregating various projects into a common conversation about how institutions such as law produced and insulated racial power, we could wear our various disciplinary hats and tell a tale about how our disciplines have contributed to the normalcy around racial inequality. As Claude Steele famously quipped, we looked for and attracted not so much the heretics in our profession or the true believers, but those who pray to their disciplinary gods with one eye open.

So praying to our gods with one eye open gives us a way of relating our projects to one another, to answer the question, how do we relate? To understand that ours is a project of lining up interests, reducing the boundaries between us, and joining in a spirit of utopian possibility. So in that spirit, I want to end by calling for more of a crisp exchange of ideas, of tools, of histories, of gathering in spaces beyond post-racialism's pragmatic silence, imagining ourselves as being far more transgressive and transformative, deconstructive and interventionist. Broadening a project can and should disrupt the racial settlement around colorblindness and push for conceptual tools that may, for a short time, push things in a different direction. Thank you.

**ERIK WRIGHT:** Excuse me. I think because of the time, it's already ten after nine, we will -- we don't really have time for question and answer in this session. As I said, there are three complementary sessions featuring the speakers tonight, where you'll have -- which are designed for discussion, where you'll have an opportunity for much more intensive discussion on the themes and issues raised here.

One other thing I forgot to announce. The performers in the First Wave group would like to have a talk-back with anyone who's interested in discussing their work, the kind of pedagogy they've been doing, and the organization of the First Wave program. They will be coming back into this room and there's Native American drums and dancing in the foyer. They will be coming back into this room as soon as we end this session, and anyone who would like to meet and discuss with them should stay for as long as you would like. I will see, I hope, many of you tomorrow in the plenary at noon on democracy. Thank you very much.