

Big Picture Questions Need to Drive our Collective Inquiry
(excerpt from Welcoming Day Address)

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11 September 2017

We are living in a time when those who ask questions are viewed by the powerful as dangerous. The basic ingredients of social inquiry—evidence, insight, social facts, truth, art—are regarded with suspicion.

We must keep asking. Our questions cannot be silenced. We must probe, urgently.

We need conviction, determination, good questions, courage, networks of people, feedback, and evidence to inform that inquiry, whatever form it takes.

And we need resources.

We have a lot with which to begin. We have this beautiful building and we have each other. **At the WSRC, we have:**

--commitment to feminisms

--creative and accomplished interdisciplinary scholars and artists

--a vibrant community that is action oriented, motivated to reach beyond the academy

I propose that going forward, we ask a set of connected questions, using intersectional theory and analysis. And that we do that in conversation with each other.

1. How can the feminist project carry its work forward in a time of reaction and hostility to women and girls?

2. What's going on in **feminisms** today -- established, emerging, imagined? What does the intellectual and activist map look like? Whose inquiries are penetrating to new levels of critical insight? What tools of analysis are they using? Who is pursuing the most infectious forms of resistance and activism? and how can we learn from them, and help them?

3. What can we learn, theoretically and strategically, from movements for racial justice, labor, immigrant and refugee rights and others? What successes can we look to, and what lessons can we draw from our setbacks?

4. What can we learn about the resurgence of right wing movements internationally as well as in the U.S.? What is the role of women in promoting and participating in these movements? What gender politics—including the politics of masculinity—are at play?

More than anything, my hope for the WSRC is that we will elect to ask questions of people whose answers may anger or distress us, or others. Sometimes our questions reveal our ignorance or biased assumptions.

We have to ask: How does our work extend beyond the academy and make itself useful to our allies down the street and across the globe?