

Constellations of Legacy and Possibility

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WHEN WE GATHERED ONCE AGAIN IN DAYTON, OHIO, IN OCTOBER 2024 for the *Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice*, the forty-fourth anniversary of this annual meeting, there was a familiar sense of return. The Bergamo Retreat Center has long been the place where curriculum theorists converge, not simply to present research but to reimagine together what curriculum theory is and what it might become. It is here that *JCT* was born, where traditions have been nurtured and renewed, and where generations of scholars have come to test the limits of what education can mean. The 2024 Town Hall, held in the Darby room, was a moment for pause, reflection, and recommitment. Entitled *Charting New Horizons: A Dialogue with the Future Stewards of JCT*, it marked a significant transition in our community, with new editorial leadership for the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* and new leadership for the Foundation for Curriculum Theory.

More than an administrative update, the Town Hall was a collective ritual reminding us that *JCT* and Bergamo are not merely institutions but fragile and interdependent communities in need of care. In 2024, this felt especially urgent. As we stepped into editorial and organizational stewardship, the question was not only how to preserve a legacy, but also how to imagine future possibilities. We spoke about *honoring the radical edge* that has always defined *JCT*, about *sustaining community* as the true center of the work, and about *facing head-on the crises of our present moment*: climate collapse, rising authoritarianism, anti-trans and anti-immigrant legislation, the banning of books, and suppression of knowledge. The Town Hall reminded us that stewardship is less about guarding an archive than about cultivating conditions for new growth, more about possibility than possession. This sense of legacy intertwined with future-making is not new at Bergamo. From its founding, the conference has been characterized by traditions that braid past, present, and future. Among the most cherished of these is the practice of publishing keynote addresses in *JCT*. The words spoken in Bergamo's chapel do not remain bound to that room but circulate outward, becoming part of our collective scholarly record. These keynote essays, whether deeply autobiographical, urgent political interventions, or methodological provocations, have

shaped curriculum theory's trajectory. They demonstrate how theory here is not abstract detachment but situated, embodied, and dialogical.

Another tradition that underscores this ethos of intergenerational continuity is the publication of the award-winning Graduate Student Paper. For many emerging scholars, Bergamo is the first space where their voices are not peripheral but central, where their writing is not treated as a promise of future scholarship but as scholarship in its own right. Publishing graduate student work in *JCT* enacts what our Town Hall conversations called for: community at the center, renewal through recognition, sustaining a field not by conserving its boundaries but by inviting new energies. These traditions also remind us of the figures who first imagined Bergamo and *JCT*. Central among them is *William F. Pinar*, whose role in the reconceptualization of curriculum studies and in the founding of both the journal and the conference is inestimable. Pinar's (virtual) presence at the 2024 conference was a living reminder of this genealogy. His keynote, *The Subjective Necessity of Nonviolence*, published in this issue, is not a nostalgic return but a reinvestment in themes that continue to animate curriculum studies, such as interdependence, psychoanalytic detachment, and political urgency.

Pinar demonstrates the eclectic and omnivorous relationship between curriculum studies and theory in its myriad forms, weaving together Bayard Rustin and Judith Butler to conceptualize nonviolence not only as an ethical stance but a subjective practice, a way of inhabiting self and world amid violence. His address exemplifies how Bergamo and *JCT* insist that theoretical reflection is simultaneously personal, political, and pedagogical.

Placed alongside Pinar's return, the 2024 Town Hall took on an added resonance. We spoke about honoring legacy, not as mere preservation but as fidelity to the aforementioned radical edge of this scholarly community. We affirmed that *JCT* has always been a home for ideas too unruly for other journals, including arts-based inquiries, queer pedagogies, decolonial imaginings, and postqualitative inquiry. We recognized that these once-marginal approaches have influenced broader educational discourses precisely because *JCT* offered them space to grow. To honor legacy, then, is to keep that space open, to continue taking risks. We also spoke of community at the center. Bergamo and *JCT* have never been only about the circulation of articles; they engender relationships, nurture emerging scholars, and cultivate mutual aid in an academy that too often isolates and commodifies. This is why the Graduate Student Award matters, why Town Halls matter, and why we gather in Dayton year after year. Ours is a community that insists scholarship is not only the production of knowledge but the creation of conditions under which people can thrive.

And, inevitably, we spoke about looking ahead. We cannot theorize curriculum as if the world were not burning, as if books were not being banned, as if trans children were not under attack, as if fascism were not rising. The Town Hall named these crises *and* provoked generative questions. How can curriculum theory analyze *and intervene*? How can the field of curriculum studies align itself with, contribute to, or lead justice movements? How might it both imagine and enact liberatory futures? These themes and provocations resonate across the articles gathered in this issue of *JCT*, which themselves form a constellation of legacy and possibility.

Pinar's essay on nonviolence offers one anchor, reminding us of the subjective practices necessary for resisting violence. From there, other stars emerge. *Cathryn van Kessel and Kevin J. Burke's* essay, "A Curriculum of Illusion and the Miraculous," invites us to consider illusion not as deception but as a mode of radical hope. Drawing on Baudrillard and Orsi, they suggest that amid dread and collapse, it is precisely illusion and the miraculous that might allow us to glimpse

possibility. Their essay extends our Town Hall theme: looking ahead requires not only critique but imagination, not only demystifying structures but conjuring miracles.

Reyila Hadeer's “A Letter to a First-Year K–8 Classroom Teacher,” whose self-portrait is the image for this issue, embodies community at the center, and the radical possibilities that come from embracing complex notions of curriculum. Written from a Uyghur scholar’s transnational and autobiographical perspective, the letter challenges Eurocentric curriculum frames and models pedagogy as relational, dialogic, and caring. It enacts the very mentoring and mutual aid our Town Hall called for, transforming scholarship into a form of correspondence and companionship. Moreover, Hadeer’s writing demonstrates how theory and practice are neither antagonistic nor antithetical. Instead, bringing the capaciousness of curriculum studies to bear on the seemingly quotidian experiences of classrooms serves to amplify, complicate, and reimagine the radical possibilities of teaching and learning. As educators who began our journeys in K-12 classrooms, Hadeer’s letter reminds us how curriculum theorizing honors the complexity and joy that come from refusing the currents of standardization and dehumanization that so often accompany contemporary educational policies and the narratives that drive them.

Rouhollah Aghasaleh and Zari Aghajani's “Not a Virtual Education” returns us to the entanglements of public and private, documenting Iranian women teachers’ experiences during COVID. Here we see how patriarchy and neoliberalism converged in virtual education, producing new inequities. But we also see the refusal of women teachers, their persistence in caring and teaching under impossible conditions. This essay resonates with Pinar’s theme of subjective necessity: survival itself becomes a pedagogy.

Amanda M. Kingston's work on the Oklahoma Land Runs interrogates how curricular reenactments reproduce settler colonial memory and whiteness. By unpacking the ways schools stage colonial conquest as harmless play, the essay insists on a curriculum that confronts rather than reenacts violence. In conversation with Hadeer’s decolonial critique, Kingston’s essay shows how curriculum is always implicated in the reproduction—or disruption—of historical erasure.

Together, these essays extend the conversations of the 2024 Town Hall. They honor legacy by deepening long-standing commitments: to autobiography, to decolonial critique, to radical imagination. They place community at the center, modeling scholarship as relational, caring, and dialogical. And they look ahead by confronting our most urgent crises—patriarchy, colonialism, authoritarianism, climate collapse—while insisting that curriculum theory is not powerless in the face of them. To read this issue, then, is to see a constellation emerge. At one end shines Pinar, a founding figure whose voice continues to anchor our field. At another glimmer, the sparks of emerging scholars, graduate students, and early-career thinkers whose work refracts new light into our community. Between them stretch myriad other stars, each article shining on its own but also illuminating connections when read together. This is what Bergamo has always done: made visible the constellations that link legacy and possibility, past and future, analysis and imagination.

As we move forward in our stewardship of *JCT* and *FCT*, we are mindful that our work is not only about editing articles or convening conferences. It is about sustaining a constellation, cherishing the lights that have come before even as we remain open to new polestars and novel orientations. It is about ensuring that no one shines alone, that the sky remains open for future mapping. The 2024 Town Hall reminded us of this. The essays in this issue embody it. And the traditions of Bergamo—publishing keynotes, honoring graduate student work, gathering year after year—enact it.

We invite our readers, then, to see themselves as part of this constellation: inheritors of legacy, builders of community, and imaginers of futures. Together, we chart new horizons.

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