
Social Justice and Lasallian Higher Education Today: Introduction and Overview

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On January 31, 2018, faculty and staff from several Lasallian institutions met at the Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center in Maryland for a Lasallian Higher Education Colloquy titled "Exploring the Intersection: Racial Justice, Our Lasallian Heritage, and Catholic Tradition." For three days and through short panel presentations, workshops, and collaborative discussions, the colloquy worked toward unpacking the ways in which Lasallian institutions seek racial justice in our conflicted and contentious contemporary moment. We discussed current initiatives, workshopped ideas for new ones, and brainstormed structures to make it more possible for us to work toward racial justice. Faculty and staff left the colloquy to return to their own institutions in order to address how our collective mission can further serve – and be more widely employed – in a way that prepares our students for positions of leadership in a world where social injustice, and specifically racial injustice, threaten to undermine who we are.

This special issue of *Axis: A Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* is, in this section entitled "Social Justice and Lasallian Higher Education Today," the product of that colloquy. The intent of the special issue is to examine how the interplay between research addressing some facet of social inequality is shaped, influenced, or comes to fruition within the context of Catholic social teaching or a university's mission to address social injustice. To that end, we have collected research that examines a range of concerns from a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Cory Blad and Justin Peralta examine the sociological relationship between race and class as those issues are addressed within "the Lasallian legacy of social justice." Inspired by "One La Salle" – a global initiative for collaboration among Lasallian institutions to strengthen the effectiveness of our mission – members from Manhattan College in New York City and Universidad de La Salle in Bogotá and Yopal, Colombia, Shawna BuShell, Jimena González-Ramírez, Bryan Wilkins, Natalia Boliari, Mohab El-Hakim, Sandra Verónica López, Mary Michel, and Brother Carlos Gómez-Restrepo collaborate in their article to outline and strengthen our joint mission in research and teaching opportunities connected to social justice. Sarah Scott and Jordan Pascoe work together to tease out what a Lasallian response to rape culture looks like on college campuses.

With these and several other projects from a variety of disciplines and by colleagues from Manhattan College, La Salle University in Philadelphia, Lewis University in Romeoville, and Christian Brothers University in Memphis, we hope to provide a starting place for faculty at Lasallian tertiary institutions to understand the intellectual range of our Lasallian mission and how matters of social justice, inextricably bound up with that mission, can be further attended to through our work as researchers. It is also a snapshot of where we are collectively, the programs we have made together, the course work we have built together, and the students we teach together, which demonstrates – and begins to define – what it means to be Lasallian together.

Endnote

1. Adam Koehler, who earned his PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is an associate professor of English at Manhattan College in New York City.