

## SETH A. McCALL

### Diversity Statement

I grew up on the edge of a city known for airplane manufacturing, following my Mom to daycares and YMCAs where she taught gymnastics to children. In high school, I chose to take courses in the vocational department because college seemed more likely for my wealthier classmates who lived across the street in houses built around a golf course. Then, I took an honors government course and after getting to know students from the honors program, college seemed more attainable. Although attending college presented challenges my family was not prepared to support me through, I still remember those years fondly, finding my place in a complex institution among people with shared interests. As a white man, I certainly had a lot to learn about how I fit into an unequal society. These experiences troubled the taken-for-granted knowledge of my youth and informed my teaching in four different cities: Kansas City, Austin, Saint Louis, and Harlem. My experiences along the way also inspire my research, teaching, mentoring, and service. In this document, I will address each in turn.

My research agenda examines archives as depositories that carry excess potential, an interest that emerged from an examination of dilemmas in the Schomburg archive created to address the historical gaps fomented by white supremacy and the African Diaspora. In addition, interlocking oppressions contribute to even more archival dilemmas for Black women. Through their scholarship, many Black women turn these archival dilemmas into archival inventiveness. For example, in the midst of the turmoil of summer 2020, my research considered how Alison Saar's *Swing Low: Harriet Tubman Memorial* constructed a different kind of monument that invited engagement with the world. I also led "Building Connections," a multimodal participatory action research project. Through open calls for visual contributions, participants responded to prompts related to the lived experiences of diversity around the Curriculum & Teaching (C&T) department. In interviews and focus groups, participants unpacked their experiences and discussed initial interpretations of the photography. Through this collaboration, I found diversity within diversity and exclusion intertwined with inclusion. My first book, *A Troubling Inheritance*, addresses how archives can constrain, dictating what qualifies as legitimate research or curriculum. I create assemblage art installations out of a problematic curriculum, experimenting with how we might rework it to address its anti-Blackness and settler colonialism.

As a teacher with a background in adaptive special education, I use approaches that ensure all students can succeed. For example, in my graduate and undergraduate classes, I use co-generative dialogue with a small group of students from diverse perspectives to stay plugged into their experience of how the course is developing. These conversations often address their anxieties related to the course, how we can improve their experience in the course, and other challenges they face in their program. My assignments ask students to consider different forms of knowledge and different approaches to learning. For example, the "Thinking Place" assignment asks pre-service teachers to choose a place, often a school where they would like to teach. Then they consider the learning that occurs in this place beyond that sanctioned within classrooms, paying careful attention to how nontraditional learning unfolds. In comparing this learning to that which is typically found in schools, students address how the learner relates to the teacher in these experiences. The assignment asks teachers to grapple with different forms of knowledge and different modes of knowledge generation to rethink their own assumptions about how learning occurs.

During a town hall meeting I co-organized in the aftermath of the acquittal of Eric Garner's killer, graduate students identified a need for mentoring, so that became a focus in my work. While at the Center for Technology and School Change, I mentored research interns and

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international students. Most of our time revolved around qualitative research, especially data analysis through coding and memoing, linguistically demanding practices. On occasion, language presented challenges, specifically navigating the socio-cultural understandings of data and language. We worked through these challenges together, developing a deeper sense of qualitative data analysis and getting closer to the data. I also mentored doctoral students within the Curriculum & Teaching (C&T) department. We developed the doctoral peer mentoring program to create support structures beyond the exclusive networks of privilege, based on unspoken customs, that thrive in higher education. Through the C&T Collaborative, we established the annual C&T Conference. Funded by the Vice President's Grant for Diversity and Community Initiatives, the conference provides a range of mentoring around attending conferences, presenting research, reviewing submissions, developing affinity groups, writing grants, and organizing conferences.

Finally, diversity, equity, and inclusion inform my service. In the aftermath of the killing of Eric Garner and decision not to indict the officers involved, some of us noticed a lack of attention to the topic in classes. As it turns out, many felt unprepared to lead these conversations. Students who voiced a disconnect between the curriculum presented in the classroom and the curriculum of their day-to-day existence sparked inter-departmental discussions, a series of die-ins, and an ad hoc student organization. In an effort to address these concerns, the organization met with the school's provost, who encouraged us to work within each academic department. Over the years, I found the work around diversity skewed toward general initiatives, guided by interest convergence (i.e., when minoritized perspectives align with white perspectives), rather than focused on the needs of specific marginalized or underrepresented groups. In the end, I noticed a tendency to silo these discussions, which stifled inter-departmental conversations. As a result, we branched out into individual departments. Within C&T, we hosted a town hall with students and faculty to discuss issues related to diversity. The "Building Connections" research project, mentioned previously, developed out of that town hall. We created new mentoring opportunities for masters and doctoral students by launching the annual C&T Conference.