

The Courageous Conversations Project: An Interrogation of Perspectives and Perceptions of Race, Poverty and Schooling in South Africa and the United States

The **Courageous Conversations Project** attempts to elicit frank discourse on the subject of race, poverty and schooling, understanding that present day educational matters reside within the larger context of historical narratives. The project, coordinated by educational leaders in the United States and South Africa, is committed to moving in a positive direction and is fueled by the courage of the participants to be actors in uncharted territory. The participants are creating an “aspirational space” to motivate others to join in these conversations. This “space” bestrides the twin phenomena of poverty and race and attempts to unpack the economic forces at work as well as the family and social capital inheritances of youngsters in South African and US schools. The school leaders involved have all pledged to contribute to the project in the spirit of social change.

The project has a multi-layered design. Working with the imprimatur of The University of Stellenbosch in South Africa and LIU-Post in the United States, professors from both universities have been meeting for the last five years to share ideas and their own perspectives on the themes of the initiative. A chapter in the *Handbook of Educational Leadership and Social (In)Justice* (Springer, 2013) written by Dr. Arnold Dodge from LIU-Post and Dr. Berte van Wyk from the University of Stellenbosch (the directors of the program) provides the backdrop for the work. Principals from schools in South Africa and the United States have attended ongoing workshops in their home countries with professors from both universities. A donation of 34 iPADS from LIU-Post was made to South African township schools to provide the technical resources for an ongoing partnership. Partner schools from Long Island will be engaging in exchanges with schools in South Africa, including narratives of home life, photo galleries, audio archives, and live conversations. In the fall of 2013 a delegation of educators, including two Long Island principals, two technology experts and several representatives from higher ed traveled to South Africa and met with their counterparts. Live webcasts are planned and a broad network of communications amongst all the partner schools is anticipated.