

**PROPOSAL TO THE PROVOST'S 2004-2005 COMMON FUND  
FOR THIRD RECONSTRUCTION INSTITUTE**

**Proposal Drafted and Submitted by  
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**Background and Vision:**

The Third Reconstruction Institute (TRI) is intended to be a regular gathering between academics from a wide range of disciplines and grassroots leaders and organizers from across the southeastern U.S. TRI was designed by several faculty at Duke (including Rom Coles (Political Science), Mary McClintock Fulkerson (Divinity), Susan Thorne (History), Teresa Berger (Divinity), Alma Blount (Public Policy Studies), William Hart (then in Religion, currently a participant in DECC, see below), and grassroots democracy organizers Gerald Taylor (Southeastern Regional Organizer for Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF)), and Christopher Bishop (Lead Organizer in the Triangle IAF). We call this effort the Third Reconstruction Institute with the idea that, following the 'second reconstruction' that ensued with the civil rights movement, our region is in dire need of a 'third reconstruction' to enhance democracy and justice for all of our region's inhabitants. This reconstruction centrally involves not only transformations of political, social, and economic power, but also a reconstruction of some of the ways in which academics generate knowledge. We seek modes of knowledge that develop in the interchange of ideas and experiences between academics and grassroots democratic leaders. We think that TRI can make a central contribution to this effort.

The Third Reconstruction Institute had its inaugural two-day meeting in September 2003. We invited Glenn Loury to discuss his book, *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*, with a group of about 15 Duke academics and 35 grassroots leaders from across the southeastern U.S. (from Mississippi to North Carolina) at the John Hope Franklin Institute. Virtually all involved concur that this was an enormously successful first effort. Both academics and organizers were afforded new ways of thinking about problems of race. During 2004-2005 we hope to extend our efforts with several more meetings. Our aim is to secure foundation support for this endeavor at Duke over the next couple of years and then to work toward developing a consortium of host academic institutions across the southeast, perhaps taking the next step at Vanderbilt. Democratic organizers associated with the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation have funded an institute that has been meeting every couple of months with academics from across the country for the past fifteen years, and they have received substantial support from foundations, businesses, and universities. We believe there is a strong likelihood that we can obtain long-term funding from several sources. Our institute will be different from the Texas institute insofar as reconfiguring academic engagement and scholarship is one of our central aims in a way that it is not in the Texas effort.

From the academic side, the aims of TRI are three-fold:

- 1) We seek to fashion *new modes of generating knowledge* by participating in a working group with diverse people engaged in democratic political life and the production of more experientially based knowledge ‘beyond the walls’ of the institutions of higher education. We aim to generate deeper forms of ‘*public scholarship*’ that are not only *aimed*, in part, at publics that exceed disciplinary and academic boundaries, but are generated through intellectual engagement *with* these publics around public issues and purposes that emerge in these ongoing conversations.
- 2) We seek to *create innovative interdisciplinary research*, not around some abstract vision of ‘inter-disciplinarity’, but by drawing academics from across Duke University into an ongoing series of discussions with those engaged in democratic practices that involve issues of democratic theory, race, immigration, religion and political life, political economy, history, and so forth. It is our conviction that the manifold world calls for modes of inquiry that exceed disciplinary bounds, and that one of the best ways to develop new modes of scholarship appropriate to such a world is to create them in discussions between academics and those engaged in the concrete tasks of democratic organizing amidst the messy complexity of urban areas across the southeastern U.S.
- 3) We seek to nurture - in what ways we can – the intellectual lives of people who are devoting their lives to the concrete and highly demanding tasks of practicing democracy. Typically, it is difficult for people involved in this kind of activity to find the time and opportunity to step back and engage in wide-ranging reflective intellectual life. TRI seeks to function as a ‘watering hole’, similar to the workshops spawned during the civil rights movement in the 1960’s, where activists can reflect with academics with the aim of exchanging and generating knowledge that can better contribute to the multi-faceted tasks of enhancing grassroots democratic vision, leadership, and engagement in order to build a more just and inclusive democratic polity.

### **Specifying our Project:**

During the academic year 2004-2005, we will host two major events (one each semester) similar to our first meeting last Fall. The first will focus on democratic theory and practice, while the second will focus on issues pertaining to immigration into the South. In each case we will invite a major speaker to engage our group during a two day period. Hence, for example, in the Fall we will invite Sheldon Wolin, one of the foremost political theorists of democracy, to present and discuss his recent work. Similar to our meeting last Fall, we will discuss themes pertaining to this work in a variety of

settings: lectures, whole group discussions, break-out small group sessions, panel discussions where academics and grassroots leaders reflect upon the work, etc. We plan to invite about 35 grassroots organizers and 15-20 academics, constituencies greatly overlapping with those we invited to the Fall 2004 workshop, most of whom have expressed a long-term commitment to this effort.

Each of these events will occur during the early part of the semester and will be followed up with a variety of events to deepen and expand the conversation. First, about a month after the initial meeting, we will gather the scholars and grassroots leaders in the Duke-Durham community for an afternoon to discuss both the initial event and the issues raised, the kinds of knowledge generated, and some related reading material and presentations. Then, later in the semester, this work will be further embellished and analyzed in at least three different settings, each of which constitutes an important constituency of the Third Reconstruction Institute project.

Though there will be scholars involved in the TRI who are not connected to the following ongoing groups of scholars at Duke, these (some already interdisciplinary) constituencies will play an important role in the institute:

- 1) The Dialogical Ethics and Critical Cosmopolitan (DECC) working group housed in the John Hope Franklin Institute (co-convened by Walter Mignolo and Rom Coles). DECC initially grew out of the interests of several faculty members who first collaborated in the "Race, Religion, and Globalization" faculty seminar that was sponsored by the Franklin Institute four years ago. DECC has been meeting monthly for the past three years, drawing together about 15 faculty and graduate students from the Political Science, Romance Studies, Religion, and Literature Departments (these meetings have generated joint research projects, co-teaching, and an excellent forum for developing research agendas). One of the growing ambitions of this group is to engage in and reflect upon democratic and cosmopolitan forms of knowledge production in ways that contribute to reforming the University. We view conversations with those beyond the walls of our institutions as integral to moving universities in cosmopolitan directions more engaged with the purposes of diverse communities. Some of our members are doing research and institutional work in relation to several universities in Latin American that are embarking upon such efforts. We wish to connect this scholarship and reflection to more local democratic cosmopolitan efforts as well. Insofar as the lines that are being bridged in grassroots organizing in the Southeast involve race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, and class, we view such efforts as microcosms in which many issues of globalization are being articulated in cities across our region. The opportunity to participate in TRI is thus directly in line with the directions DECC seeks to pursue.
- 2) The many faculty in the Divinity School and Department of Religion who have been involved in local IAF organizing since its inception (convened by Mary McClintock Fulkerson). Faculty from the Divinity School have a great

investment in the kinds of knowledge generated in TRI. Religious traditions typically have ways of commending social justice to their communities, yet training for professional religious leadership rarely explores the shape of the political terrain in which every church, synagogue and mosque is situated. The TRI conversations will give shape to the specifics of democratic participation for religiously motivated communities that wish to contribute toward the common good in society.

- 3) The Service Opportunities in Leadership (SOL) program directed by Alma Blount. SOL is an intensive, year-long leadership initiative for Duke undergraduates that combines academic study, experiential learning and mentoring. Though we realize that the common fund is primarily committed to supporting faculty research, we think it is valuable and important to add that we seek to cultivate future scholars and leaders who are civically engaged. SOL provides a vital avenue to vertically integrate knowledge between faculty and students.

Each of these groups has an ongoing agenda that intersects with and can vitally benefit from working with TRI. One of the formal ways in which this relationship will be cultivated is that each of these groups will convene for an additional meeting in which they autonomously reflect upon the knowledge and practices of the first two events in relation to their respective ongoing work and concerns. The purpose of these meetings will be to refract the experiences of TRI through different lenses and research projects.

The groups mentioned above will form the core of our initial efforts. Yet our aim during this first year is to draw additional faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates into this project. (Hence, for example, there are numerous faculty in History, Public Policy, and Political Science whose academic work intersects with the themes and spirit of TRI. Similarly the faculty involved in the Research Service Learning Initiative are committed to doing scholarship with a civic mission and plan a project on Latino Immigration Issues next year. Some have already expressed strong interest in TRI.) \

Among the faculty to be involved at the outset: Romand Coles (Political Science), Mary Fulkerson (Divinity), Peter Euben (Political Science), Walter Mignolo (Romance Studies), Alma Blount (Public Policy), Amy Laura Hall (Religion), Susan Thorne (History), William Hart (Religion, UNC-G), Teresa Berger (Divinity), and numerous others in the Divinity School and DECC.

### **Future Funding Possibilities:**

As mentioned above, we are confident that TRI will be able to obtain significant funding for future ongoing efforts. Based on recent fund raising history, we will target the following sources for support: In North Carolina: \*Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation (support for NC IAF organizing projects since mid-1990's); \*Mary Reynolds Babcock

Foundation (support for NC IAF organizing projects since mid-1990's); \*Triangle Community Foundation (support for Triangle IAF organizing projects since 2000)  
\*Fenwick Foundation (support for Third Reconstruction Institute since 2003); \*Winston-Salem Foundation (support for Piedmont Triad IAF organizing projects since 2002);  
\*Hispanics in Philanthropy (support for NC IAF Statewide Latino Organizing Strategy since 2003, committed to fund project for 3 years); \*Foundation for the Carolinas (potential funder), Charlotte, NC; \*Grassroots Fund (potential funder), Durham, NC, \*Mary Duke Biddle Foundation (potential funder), Durham, NC. In the Southeast:  
\*Fund for Southern Communities (potential funder); \*Foundation for the Mid-South (potential funder). Additionally, we will seek to build individual donor support for Third Reconstruction Institute. The IAF has an excellent fund raising track record and local and regional organizers are fully committed to working with faculty and gaining broad financial support for TRI.