

the future of minority studies

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THE FUTURE OF MINORITY STUDIES RESEARCH PROJECT



I have been an academic for many years. I have heard many pledges about the importance of interdisciplinary work, and about the importance of interdisciplinary work in the area of minority studies. **I haven't seen any effort as**

successful as the FMS project. Each of the guiding faculty is an exciting scholar in his or her own right. And the whole they make is especially stellar. A recent article in *Science* magazine documented the fact that in all areas of scholarship, over the past 50 years, the production of knowledge has become more of a team-driven enterprise. More scholarship is done by teams and the scholarship that teams do has greater impact than solo-authored scholarship. FMS is, I believe, an important example of this development. Its summer institutes are a chief mechanism by which this approach is fostered. It brings people together, creates important networks, and elevates the scholarship in this area—both in quantity and quality—far beyond that which the individual scholars involved would be able to produce on their own. The cross-university feature of FMS is also distinctive. It is simply the most generative effort of its kind that I know of.”

—**CLAUDE STEELE**, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR
ADVANCED STUDY IN THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES, LUCY
STERN PROFESSOR, STANFORD UNIVERSITY (PSYCHOLOGY)



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about fms

The FMS Project involves scholars and academic institutions with a primary interest in minority identities, education, and social transformation. Originally conceived in 2000 as a year-long research initiative, FMS has evolved to become a mobile “think tank” facilitating discussions across disciplines about the democratizing role of minority identities, the changing function of higher education, and the need for an adequate conception of identities as the basis for progressive social change (minority is defined here not numerically but in terms of relation and access to power, in particular of such factors as race, gender, class, sexuality, and disability).

A distinctive feature of the FMS Project is that it is interinstitutional, interdisciplinary, and multi-generational. To date, FMS scholars have come from over eighty institutions of varying sizes: private research universities (e.g., Brown, Cornell, Stanford, Syracuse) liberal arts colleges (e.g. Hamilton, Moravian, Smith), major state universities (e.g. Indiana, Michigan, UCLA, Wisconsin) as well as HBCUs (e.g., Spelman, Howard) and smaller state and community colleges. Moreover, FMS scholars come from a variety of disciplines in the humanities and the humanistic social sciences, and range from undergraduate students to senior administrators.

FMS has generated a variety of collaborative and semi-autonomous projects involving different types of meetings—from formal conferences to informal discussion forums. It provides a unique model of collaborative intellectual work in the humanities, demonstrating that intellectual creativity and rigor can be enhanced by working with others, and that collaboration is often essential for sustained intellectual productivity. Two examples of FMS collaboration activity are *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism* (U California P, 2000) and *Identity Politics Reconsidered* (Palgrave, 2006).



It is significant to me that this community, though funded through foundation grants and institutions of higher education, is NOT in the first case "institutional." FMS is a much more fluid and vibrant space, less concerned with "professionalization" of minority academics than it is with creating the conditions in which minorities might thrive in the academy. This means **transforming academic culture** when possible, and if not, then creating smaller institutional sites where minority academics can come together and share their work."

—**MARIA COTERA**, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-ANN ARBOR (PROGRAM IN AMERICAN CULTURE-LATINA/O STUDIES & DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S STUDIES). 2005 FMS-MELLON FELLOW AND SEMINAR PARTICIPANT.



The FMS Summer Institute was **a valuable and unique experience** for me. As a junior woman-of-color scholar in the U.S. academy, I found it inspiring to be part of a collective that is deeply invested in mentoring, collaboration, and building a more equitable and supportive academic culture. Moreover, I found a community interested in broadly defined issues of social justice, and engaging in rigorous transnational and feminist analysis and action. I am energized by fresh ideas, and all the more committed to global transformations. Unlike the mentoring junior faculty often receive from senior faculty at their own institutions, which focuses exclusively on how to get tenure, FMS has a more comprehensive outlook. Junior faculty, I believe, are as interested in fostering a collegial, respectful environment to further their work as much as they are interested in securing tenure. In that regard, FMS offers a vision and concrete strategies to transform academic culture so that faculty—particularly junior and minority faculty—are able to thrive and do meaningful work. This enabling space of FMS and the empowering mentorship from senior scholars, is extremely critical for the kind of transformative work that interests me."

—**ELORA CHOWDHURY**, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS-BOSTON (WOMEN'S STUDIES). 2005 FMS-MELLON FELLOW AND SEMINAR PARTICIPANT; 2006 FMS POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY.

I had the honor and the privilege of participating in the 2006 FMS Summer Institute and the 2006 FMS Summer Colloquium. I can honestly say that **the experience was life-changing, both professionally and personally**. Perhaps the greatest benefit from my participation in these FMS events was the opportunity they gave me to interact with amazing people who share common interests and values. The community of scholars and activists that FMS has developed and continues to cultivate is unparalleled. FMS has managed to create the most inclusive and intellectually stimulating academic environment that I have ever experienced. I came away from the seminar and the colloquium with personal contacts that I highly cherish, a significant support network, a theoretical framework that will shape my scholarship considerably, multiple ideas for research projects, and a greater sense of what my role is and can be as a scholar and activist. I am grateful I have had this experience and I look forward to being actively involved with the FMS community in its future endeavors."

—**DANIEL ENRIQUE PÉREZ**, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO (CHICANA/O AND LATINA/O STUDIES). 2006 FMS-MELLON FELLOW AND SEMINAR PARTICIPANT.

I wanted to take a moment to express my deep gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the 2006 FMS two-day colloquium. The two days were intense and provocative and ultimately necessary for me at this very time in my own life. **To be among those whose hearts, minds and spirits are engaged in efforts for social equity and justice** was meaningful and profound. And, frankly, it's a privilege I do not take for granted. I am inspired. Re-inspired. And still thinking through it all.... I look forward to being actively engaged with FMS."

—**ADELA C. LICONA**, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA (ENGLISH/RHETORIC).



I have been able to get quite a vivid impression of the vitality and impact of the seminars through participation in the companion FMS events (the summer colloquia and related conferences and workshops) in the past few years.

Several impressions are particularly strong. First is the quality and diversity of the participants. Each year I have felt that these are some of the really original scholars in their cohort. And they are passionate in their concern to make a difference in their research and teaching. There is obviously a lot of synergy that comes out of the Institute.

Second is the **fullness of the intellectual connections between participating faculty and fellows**. FMS has emphasized mentorship and a deep egalitarianism within its community since the start. This is a primary source of the multi-discipline, multi-institution impact that FMS is creating. And it creates an ideal learning environment for the Institute.

And third is a confident sense of the intellectual impact of the content of the program. It is visible that the participating seminar members have been powerfully affected by their experience. Like FMS itself, the summer program is stimulating strikingly innovative approaches to the ways in which we think and teach about identities.

In short, I believe the Summer Institute has succeeded in becoming a nationally unique location for transformative learning, especially for junior scholars."

—**DANIEL LITTLE**, CHANCELLOR, PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN (PHILOSOPHY).

I can think of no other forum in academe that so powerfully addresses the needs and concerns of the current generation of junior scholars who are wrestling theoretically and empirically with issues of representation, identity, and subaltern relationships. In a passionate and refreshingly compassionate way, the FMS experience develops a true sense of cohort among intellectuals as they engage and re-write the script of minority discourse, using the highest standards of scholarly rigor. The FMS Summer Institute strives for nothing less than charting a radical new means by which we can approach and execute minority studies, particularly through exposing the connective interstices between disciplines and subfields. But it is the endearing relationships that emerge in the collective enterprise of arriving at new knowledge that may be most rewarding. FMS is a remarkably fruitful and fulfilling space within our academic lives. This is like no other scholarly group or conference that I've ever known."

—**BEN VINSON III**, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR AFRICANA STUDIES, PROFESSOR, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY (LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY).



connect

FMS

affords a wonderful, research-centered community of mutual professional and scholarly support among junior and senior academics engaged in research on marginalized groups in a cross-national context. It provides a rare space where scholars



ranging from quantitative social scientists to critical theorists in the humanities listen and learn from one another—and subsequently enhance or even redirect their own research. Occasionally, FMS even is the site of genesis for collaboration between scholars from these intellectual worlds that conventionally are treated as wholly separate. It is a haven for promoting the development of inquiry on group formation, identity, inequalities, race, and ethnicity.”

—**WILLIAM DARITY, JR.**, PROFESSOR, DUKE UNIVERSITY (PUBLIC POLICY STUDIES, AFRICAN AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES, ECONOMICS). 2007 SEMINAR WORKSHOP LEADER.

I found the FMS workshop most helpful due to its reaffirming and positive spirit. It made us feel that we belonged in the academy and that our presence and insight are deeply needed and felt. At the same time, it was challenging. It pushed us to think long-term, to think about sustainability. It taught us to be strategic and to rise to be the best in our fields. Not only did it encourage us but it also gave us concrete guidelines for how we can do this. I loved the emphasis on collaboration. I now know how to make a bigger impact and realize that it's not all about me as an individual.”

—**JAMILLAH A. KARIM**, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, SPELMAN COLLEGE (PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES). '07 FMS-SPELMAN WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT.

The 2-day FMS-Spelman Workshop represented a warm and safe “incubator” where junior minority faculty members were immersed in a protective environment for sharing, empowerment, motivation, support, development, and growth, vital ingredients on the journey to becoming tenured faculty members. It created “a new space” and a world of opportunities. Pre-FMS, mentally, I was struggling as a junior faculty member where seasonal support had created a silo of isolation. The dialogue, intellectual exchange and wealth of experiences and information shared through this forum invigorated my passion for teaching and research.”

—**KRISTIE ROBERTS**, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION). '07 FMS-SPELMAN WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT.



“QUEREMOS UN MUNDO
DONDE QUEPAN
MUCHOS MUNDOS.”

“WE WANT ONE WORLD,
ONE THAT CAN ACCOMMODATE
MANY WORLDS.”

—THE ZAPATISTAS, CHIAPAS, MEXICO

The FMS Summer Institute is provocative, risky and entirely exhilarating. **The Institute is, in many ways, an infrastructure that provides the necessary support for emerging scholars in minority studies.** As a scholarly enterprise, the Institute is an attempt to create sustained forums for engagement among scholars across disciplines, and it represents the best tenets of multiculturalism, tenets that go beyond the simple accounting, and prurient consumption, of diversity. The promise that FMS embodies through the Summer Institute is one that we, as concerned students and scholars of minority studies, simply cannot afford to pass up."

—**HELEN L. T. QUAN**, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY (SCHOOL OF JUSTICE AND SOCIAL INQUIRY). '07 FMS-MELLON FELLOW AND SEMINAR PARTICIPANT.



I have never been part of a more intellectually rigorous, personally rewarding experience, and **I cannot praise highly enough the intellectual and personal camaraderie of the fellows and the seminar leaders.** The summer seminar pushed my ideas on the issues raised through the FMS project in two directions simultaneously: it made me rethink many of the assumptions and goals of my own research; and it reaffirmed my commitment to the kind of work I find most important—namely, that which refuses to separate the political from the academic, the personal from the social. Hands down, this is the best seminar of its kind anywhere in the academy. I know I will benefit from my participation in it for many years to come."



—**MICHAEL BORGSTROM**, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY (ENGLISH). '07 FMS-MELLON FELLOW AND SEMINAR PARTICIPANT.

The 2007 FMS summer colloquium was among the most impressive academic conferences I've ever attended. Three things most impressed me. In the first place, there was a very high level of intellectual seriousness: people from different disciplines and backgrounds had serious, sustained conversations, many of which were clearly going to continue beyond the conference.

Second, this intellectual seriousness was clearly occasioned in large part by the moral and political seriousness of the participants. It was wonderful to see how the intellectual interests of the participants were systematically related to their moral concerns, both about the oppression of minority populations and about the effects of racism, sexism and similar ideologies on societies as a whole.

Finally, I was very favorably impressed by (and extremely happy about) the ways in which participants from different disciplines seemed interested in learning about one another's methods and findings. For a long time there has been real tension in many colleges and universities between scholars in the literary humanities and philosophers in the analytic tradition, with many social scientists drawn to one

approach or the other. At the FMS conference, by contrast, there was really fruitful interaction between analytic philosophers and literary theorists. This was the first time I've seen such fruitful interaction in a large group. I learned a lot from it and left the conference really encouraged about future interactions."



—**RICHARD BOYD**, SUSAN LINN SAGE PROFESSOR, CORNELL UNIVERSITY (PHILOSOPHY). '07 FMS COLLOQUIUM SPEAKER AND SEMINAR WORKSHOP LEADER.

collaborate

FMS

is unique in the way in which it is trying to embed reconfigured notions of



mentoring into a wider intellectual project that raises questions about how we form coalitions and create new pedagogies that ... build links within the institution as well as outside the institution. It is an agenda for social transformation and an epistemological project. Now we will go back to our respective institutions and form new connections with people of color around the world – in that way, FMS is an intellectual project with tram lines across the globe.”

—**GAIL LEWIS**, READER, OPEN UNIVERSITY, U.K. (SOCIAL SCIENCES). 2005 FMS COLLOQUIUM SPEAKER.



It is just so moving, productive, exciting to be with so many others who share similar intellectual and political commitments, and to feel like we can move beyond the usual space-clearing and actually begin to advance change (in the academy, in the world, in our own work, whatever that looks like). It was a terrifically stimulating and satisfying few days for me. I am so grateful that FMS exists, that it has brought me in contact with a community so invigorating, and that I am able to participate in it.”

—**MICHELE ELAM**, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND DIRECTOR OF THE PROGRAM IN AFRICAN & AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES, STANFORD UNIVERSITY. 2005 FMS COLLOQUIUM SPEAKER.

summer institute

The FMS Summer Institute was established in 2005 to help bring about a more genuinely diverse and democratic academy. Funded through a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Institute selects 12-15 postdoctoral faculty and Ph.D. candidates to participate in an intensive two-week session with internationally recognized scholars and activists. Institute participants have the opportunity to attend a core seminar led by two senior professors on the topic selected for that year. Related workshops are led by visiting scholars, and Institute participants have opportunities to present their own work as well. The general rubrics for previous seminars have been:

Feminist Identities, Global Struggles (2005)
Theory from the Periphery: Minority Struggles for Social Justice (2006)
Intersecting Identities and Social Justice: Realist Explorations (2007)

The Summer Institute also sponsors an annual FMS Colloquium, which provides Institute participants the opportunity to interact with FMS scholars from all over the country. The colloquia are organized around one or two keynote talks as well as presentations on major themes related to minority identities, democratic culture, and social justice. Panels and workshops are also devoted to mentoring scholars at all levels and discussing publication projects.

Informal social get-togethers and other opportunities for developing mentoring and collaborative relationships are scheduled throughout the two-week session. Semi-formal communication across generations and the disciplines has been a valuable aspect of all FMS events, and it is a major feature of our Summer Institutes.

Alumni of the Summer Institutes have gone on to secure both tenure-track appointments and tenure at institutions all across the country. All of the Ph.D. candidates who participated in the first three summer institutes and completed their Ph.D.s have subsequently achieved this crucial milestone. All of our Fellows and core members who came up for tenure during these three years have been successful in securing tenure.



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The FMS Summer Institute fosters the kind of awareness needed in 21st century higher education Minority studies, minority faculty, and faculty engaged in minority studies are situated at the crossroads of rapidly evolving fields and pedagogies, and FMS provides opportunities and a supportive environment for junior faculty to explore the dynamics of the profession as it changes to meet the challenges of our times.”

—**JOHNNELLA E. BUTLER**, PROVOST AND VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, PROFESSOR, COMPARATIVE WOMEN’S STUDIES, SPELMAN COLLEGE

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