

Volume 3 Number 11: November 2009

Dear Friends of RFA,

As of December, our new Executive Director, Kate Shaw, will be delivering RFA's newsletter to you to keep you informed about RFA's most recent research findings. Eva will assume the new role of Senior Research Fellow and Jolley will retire. We are delighted to welcome Kate as the organization's new leader. We are confident that she will uphold RFA's commitment to improving the educational opportunities for urban youth, excited for the future of RFA under her leadership, and proud to be handing the organization to such a capable and committed individual.

As RFA's founders, we set out to create an organization that provided credible research about the enduring problems of urban education. We believed that positive educational change requires the efforts of those inside schools as well as those outside. We committed to making the products of our research accessible to not only educators, but also to citizens, community leaders, and public officials who can both demand that our schools improve and mobilize the human, social, and financial supports needed for improvement. Our hope was that our research findings would fuel vigorous policy debates, contribute to a well-informed public, and strengthen the political will to improve urban public education. We are proud of all that RFA has accomplished in collaboration with its many partners in urban school reform during its first 18 years. And we are grateful to the many wonderful people who have supported us along the way.

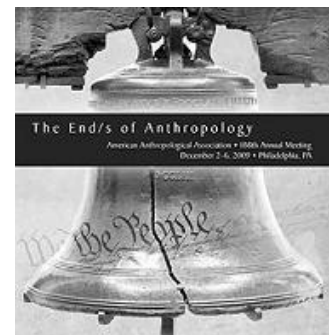
Jolley Bruce Christman, Ph.D. and Eva Gold, Ph.D. - Founders and Principals

RFA at the 108th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association

We are pleased to announce that RFA researchers will be presenting as part of the [108th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association](#), scheduled for December 2-6 at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown. We hope you will join us there, and attend the session hosted by RFA at 2:00PM on Wednesday, December 3rd. The presentation, titled *High School Reform in Philadelphia: School Choice, Transition Supports, and Small High Schools*, will spotlight research in a number of areas relating to high schools, including findings from RFA's upcoming report, *Transition to High School: School "Choice" and Freshman Year in Philadelphia*, as well as RFA's recent report, [Going Small: Progress and Challenges of Philadelphia's Small High Schools](#).

Charles Payne lecture: audio now available online

On October 27th, RFA hosted [Dr. Charles Payne](#) of the University of Chicago. Dr. Payne's lecture, *Missing the Point: The State of the National Discussion of Urban Schools*, is now available online. To listen to the lecture, visit the [website for our October 27th event](#).



RFA researchers will also be presenting as a part of *Power, Politics, and Inequality in Urban and Regional Economies: A Festschrift in Honor of Judith Goode*. Suzanne Blanc and Elaine Simon will be presenting examples from their early work with Dr. Goode, and will reflect on how their research with RFA on school privatization in Philadelphia has been a valuable resource for public school advocates. See below for more information on these sessions.

**High School Reform in Philadelphia:
School Choice, Transition Supports, and Small High Schools
RFA presentation for 108th AAA Annual Meeting
Wednesday, December 2, 2009, 2:00PM-3:45PM
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, 1201 Market St.
Grand Ballroom, Salon B (tentative)**

Elaine Simon - Introduction

Shani Evans - *Philadelphia's High School Choice System: The Challenge of Equitable Access*

Clarisse Haxton - *Who Decides?: Parent Versus Student Management of the High School Application Process in Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Families*

Holly Maluk - *High School Reform in a Multi-Tiered System of High Schools: The Transition to Ninth Grade in Philadelphia*

Eva Gold - *Student Activism and Philadelphia's Small High Schools*

Rebecca Reumann-Moore - *Going Small in Philadelphia: A Study of the Start-up of Small High Schools*

**Power, Politics, and Inequality in Urban and Regional Economies:
A Festschrift in Honor of Judith Goode
Session featuring RFA researchers at 108th AAA Annual Meeting
Friday, December 4, 2009, 8:00AM-9:45AM
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, 1201 Market St.
Liberty Ballroom B (tentative)**

Transitions and Transformations: Research for Action Celebrates Its Founders

On October 27th, 2009, Research for Action hosted an event paying tribute to founders Eva Gold and Jolley Bruce Christman, honoring the work and history of RFA, and welcoming new Executive Director Kate Shaw. *Transitions and Transformations* was a tremendous success, bringing together hundreds of education advocates, activists, practitioners, and others interested in urban education reform.

Proceeds from the event will be devoted to establishing a Founders Fellowship as a way of honoring the continuing commitment of Dr. Gold and Dr. Christman to mentoring new education researchers and fostering their dedication to rigorous research and educational equity. The Fellowship will be awarded annually to a doctoral candidate interested in actionable education research, beginning in the summer 2010. If you would like to make a contribution to the Founders Fellowship, you may do so [online here](#) or by check made out to Research for Action, mailed to our office at 3701 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104.

RFA is particularly grateful to Dr. Charles Payne of the University of Chicago, who kicked off the celebration with an engaging and thought-provoking lecture, *Missing the Point: The State of the National Discussion of Urban Schools*. You can [listen to an MP3 of the lecture on our website](#).

Research for Action congratulates Jolley Bruce Christman

Congratulations to Dr. Christman, recipient of the Helen C. Bailey Award from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education. The description of the award, as presented by the PennGSE Education Alumni Association, is as follows:

"This award recognizes an outstanding education alumnus or alumna of the University of Pennsylvania who has brought recognition and status to the Graduate School of Education and the University of Pennsylvania. This individual has made a distinctive contribution to the field of education and to the Graduate School of Education."

RFA in the News

RFA's "[The Five School Study: Restructuring Philadelphia's Comprehensive High Schools](#)" will serve as the basis for some professional development at West High School, writes Dale Mezzacappa in "[Activists seek more than a new building for West Philly High](#)" (*Philadelphia Public School Notebook NEWSFLASH*, November 2009). RFA principal Jolley Bruce Christman is quoted explaining the importance of studying the history and evolution of Philadelphia high schools.

[Community Groups Turn Up Heat on Philadelphia Contract Talks](#), write *Education Week* authors Lesli A. Maxwell and Dakarai I. Aarons on their blog, *District Dossier* (November 3, 2009). The article links to RFA's recent publication, [Philadelphia's Teacher Appraisal System: Needs Improvement](#), and features Betsey Useem discussing the work of the [Effective Teaching Campaign](#), of which RFA is an endorser.

Eva Gold discusses the difficulties District eighth graders face in gaining admission to their preferred high schools in "[Dash for the right high school: As Oct. 30 nears, 8th-graders weigh choices for next year](#)," by Dafney Tales (*Philadelphia Daily News*, October 14, 2009).

"[Math proficiency is ahead of the curve](#)," by Connie Langland (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 11, 2009), quotes RFA Senior Research Consultant Suzanne Blanc on the role of staff professional development in improving student outcomes.

In "[Teacher campaign takes platform to the mayor](#)" (*Philadelphia Public School Notebook BLOG*, October 9, 2009), Dale Mezzacappa discusses RFA's recent report, [Philadelphia's Teacher Appraisal System: Needs Improvement](#), as well as the [Effective Teaching Campaign](#), of which RFA is an endorser.

"[Selecting a high school: Not a level playing field](#)," by RFA's Shani Adia Evans and Dale Mezzacappa (*Philadelphia Public School Notebook*, Fall Guide 2009), discusses the School District of Philadelphia's high school selection system, and the elements of that system which inhibit many students from attending the schools of their choice. (Look for *Transition to High School: School "Choice" and Freshman Year in Philadelphia* -- an upcoming report from RFA that builds on and expands these themes.)

Editor's Note

RFA eNews is a publication of Research for Action. Please email us your thoughts and comments at info@researchforaction.org. We respect your privacy and will not share your contact information.

Editor
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