

E Pluribus Unum: The Challenge and Opportunities of “Diversity” for Classics and for CAMWS

The famous phrase *E pluribus unum* provides an appropriate title for a panel on diversity and inclusion proposed for the 2020 CAMWS meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, a city with its own turbulent history with the topic.

It is impossible for a single panel, or even multiple ones, to touch on all the questions and issues which “diversity and inclusion” legitimately raises: who are our students? How might we foster a more inclusive student population? Who will be the next generation of teachers, at any level, in an America clearly more diverse in its demographics and its expectations? What new challenges will a Classics curriculum face, focused as it currently is on the voices of dead white men? How should the profession as a whole, including its minority members, respond to these questions?

The panel will focus on four of these broader questions:

The first paper is historical in nature, and looks at three African members of CAMWS from a century ago. With reference to teachers from three different states, Georgia, North Carolina, and Ohio, whose careers are important parts of our own past, it asks: how were they trained? Whom did they teach? Who took their classes? For what purposes? What texts did they use? What vocabulary or texts did they stress? What impact did any of these individuals have on classics in their states or regions? On the profession? How were they treated by colleagues? By students?

The second presenter focuses on reading, and misreading, of selected classical texts and iconography—for their own political purposes—by extremist and racist groups. Both historical and more recent misappropriations are considered, as are the consequences for misunderstanding

the Greco-Roman past and the American present. What should present day students of the classics learn about how materials have been, and can be, used?

In the third paper the presenter offers a careful look at one author, Juvenal, a strident and vitriolic spokesman about numerous hot-button topics and simultaneously a master of the art of poetic satire. How can our canonical texts help us teach both our subjects responsibly and simultaneously help our students participate in our times? Should both of these objectives be a goal? The poet's comments about foreigners (*Sat.* 3.62-65), Jews (*Sat.* 14.96-106), homosexuals (*Sat.* 2, 9), and women (*Sat.* 6) are the starting point for an examination of how allowing, but also responding to, hate-speech, too, is part of our debt to the ancient Mediterranean peoples we study.

The author of the fourth paper focuses on Howard University's creation of a two-semester course, required of all students, that promotes both the education and the achievements of the peoples of the African diaspora. The course sequence brings into alignment oral traditional genres such as epic, dialogue, story-telling, and folklore as performed by societies in the ancient Mediterranean, pre-modern Africa, and twentieth century America. Texts ranging from the *Iliad* and the *Apology*, to the West African *Sundiata*, to Frederick Douglass' memoirs and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* are discussed thematically through the application of societal, material, genealogical, ethical, and philosophical concepts deemed to be critical for assessing the texts fairly and equitably. All students in the twenty-first century can benefit from such discussions.