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**in the contemporary  
community college**

## Public Storytelling Research Forum Friday, October 23, 2015

*Narrating America in the Contemporary Community College* will be a one-day workshop with key participants defining the public role of community college as an inclusive democratic space. Educators and researchers at the Graduate Center, CUNY are organizing this forum for increased public engagement and collaborative research in higher education.

President Barack Obama heightened attention to the contemporary community college as a public American project when he mentioned it in his 2015 State of the Union Address. The President announced a plan to make community college attendance free for all students “willing to work for it”. This announcement extended ongoing debates in the public media, and scholarship about the community college as an institution of opportunity and challenge for millions who want to improve their lives by obtaining vocational training, English language skills, and, perhaps most importantly, affordable higher education. The community college has been described as a potential access space for millions of immigrants, academically under-prepared students, older students, parents,

and job seekers, but is reported to be failing to deliver on its potential, because too few students graduate. The President’s opponents have questioned the goal to provide affordable education for American’s poor, by arguing that States and municipalities have scant resources to support this project. These and other conflicting narratives indicate the evolving meaning of the community college. But, what are the meanings of the community college for those most involved—for students, faculty, college administrators, parents, community leaders, and local public officials?

A collective of scholars, activists, and community participants announces the *Narrating America* forum to find out. This one-day workshop will take place on Friday, October 23, 2015, with follow-up in communities across CUNY. The forum will begin with students’ voices and research findings foregrounding the meaning of community college from the critical and creative perspectives of those at the center. The forum will extend and, ideally, transform research with diverse stakeholders to diverse publics in the ongoing development of the community college.



At the forum, research with students' stories will be the basis for collaborative working groups of students, faculty, administrators, community leaders, and public officials to interpret and extend these stories into new narratives that are useful for community college missions, curricula, and policies. The goal of the day is to use this public forum to take students' voices seriously as the basis for collaborative reflection and action. What is at stake is public reflection on a transforming site of American participation.

**Contact for more information:**

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## Schedule for Friday, October 23 Graduate Center, Room 9205

(Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided.)

- 9:30 a.m. Gather and Continental breakfast
- 10:00 a.m. Welcome, Keynote & Research Presentations
- 11:00 a.m. 1st Breakout Session & Reports
- 12:15 p.m. 2nd Breakout Session & Reports
- 1:00 p.m. Lunch, Digital Summary, & Future Collaborations
- 2:00 p.m. End of formal session



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