

# Science for the People and The Truth School Present MAKING SCIENCE WORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: BUILDING A COMMUNITY AGENDA FOR STEM

April 10,  
2021

**\*Solidarity Science\***



# Plan for this Workshop

- ✓ Introductions (3:00)
- ✓ Intro to Concepts (~3:10)
- ✓ Shares from Community Organizers (~3:25)
- ✓ First Breakouts: Building a Community Agenda (~3:45)
  - Return to Synthesize in the Big Group (~4:15)
- ✓ Second Breakouts: Envisioning a Just Future for STEMM (~4:30)
  - Return to Synthesize in the Big Group (~4:50)

# **Introductions**

## **Science for the People**

**Adrienne Saums**

**Brian Schultz**

**Daniel Ko**

**Danielle Larrabee**

**Emma Harnisch**

**Kimberly Medeiros**

**Rafael Burgos-Mirabal**

**Seth Tuler**

**Stephen Fernandez**

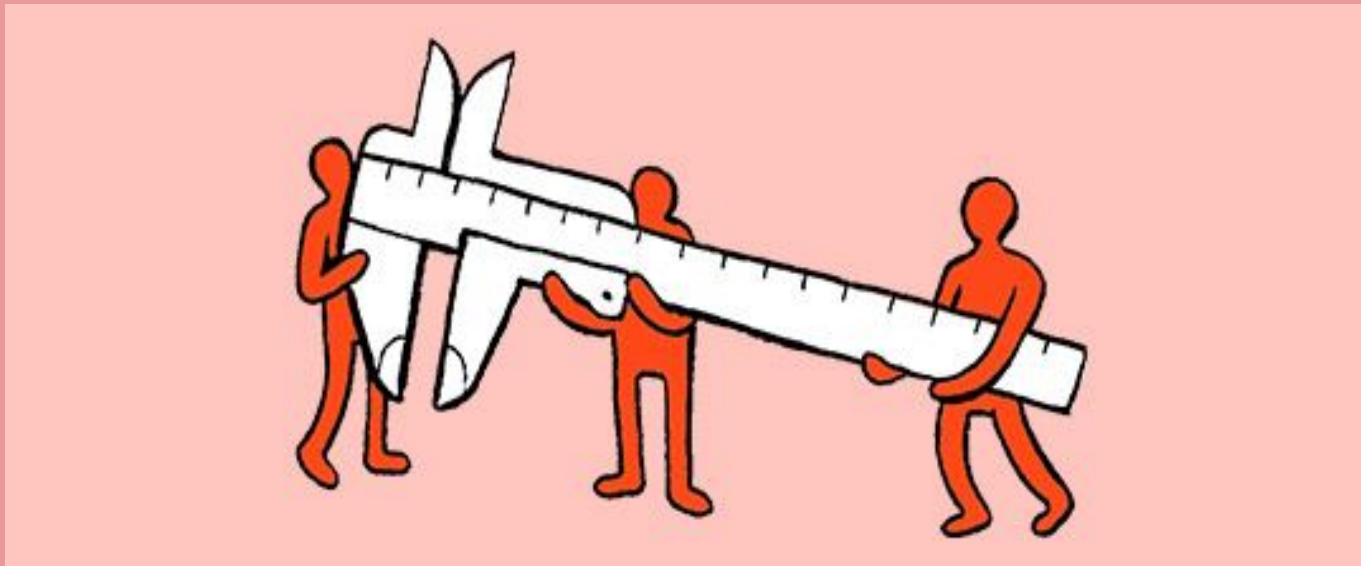
**Sigrid Schmalzer**

**Tatiana Cheeks**

# Solidarity Science:

Everyone has expertise based on their experience and social location.

Scientific knowledge is more robust when people with different experiences and perspectives participate.



When people come together with mutual respect to share their different forms of expertise in a collective effort to achieve justice, we call that **solidarity science**.

But this doesn't happen without conscious effort to subvert social hierarchies!

# Science does not happen in a vacuum

To advance solidarity science, we need to constantly reframe scientific work from being an isolated technical activity to being a deeply social one

•How: By making visible the other dimensions of life connected to scientific activity; how the know-how of community members ought to be accounted for for a people-centered scientific activity.

•Ex: isolated v. contextualized scientific and technical applications in the lumber industries.



# Valuing Community Ideas

Science is often a very top-down enterprise, and too often driven by profits, such as seeking products to sell (e.g., drugs, pesticides, nuclear power plants...).



But there has long been some recognition of the value of more egalitarian, democratic, and bottom-up science, such as **traditional medicines, working with farmers, popular epidemiology, and science shops** (all stakeholders work on methods).

Still, more science **with community ideas and input** (with community groups, unions, etc., where they have real power) is needed now more than ever as scientific technologies become even more powerful and pervasive.

Recent examples include: **locating factories** (e.g., plastics; nuclear or biomass energy), the wider use of **genetic modification** (e.g., releasing altered mosquitoes; human genes), **geoengineering** (e.g., atmospheric alterations to slow climate change?!), or methods on the horizon for **reading or even manipulating human thoughts....**

Even mainstream science periodicals have begun to include articles and poll readers about such issues.



“Imagine walking into McDonald’s and suddenly you have an irresistible urge for a cheeseburger (or 10).”

# Speculative Science: Prioritizing Community Imagination

“Whenever we try to envision a world without war, without violence, without prisons, without capitalism, we are engaging in speculative fiction.... Organizers and activists dedicate their lives to creating and envisioning another world, or many other worlds-- so what better venue for organizers to explore their work than science fiction stories?”

-- Walidah Imarisha, Introduction to Octavia's Brood (2015)

**We take the same approach. We see STEM as a tool to dismantle capitalism and look to community members and grassroots organizers to build our agenda and priorities, and make science work for social justice.**



# Community Leadership

- Working in Solidarity with Community
- Creating a Space for Community Voices
- Ensuring that Community Members have Voice and Agency in STEMM
- Creating a Community Agenda
- Getting STEMM practitioners to embrace the Community Agenda

# Concrete Examples

- Mold Action Committee
- Citizens Awareness Network
- Wildfire Alliance
- Community Science Centers
- Climate Action Now
- Defiance Science
- Racial Equity Work Group
- 





# **A Community Agenda...**

- is what the community wants from STEMM
- identifies STEMM work that is harmful to the community
- is developed and owned by community
- uplifts existing community STEMM initiatives

## **STEMM Contract**

- STEMM knowledge is public knowledge
- STEMM knowledge must be made accessible and approachable
- STEMM workers are accountable to community
- Community-engaged research should benefit the participants and larger community



# **VOICES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS**

- ★ **Tatiana Cheeks, Arise / Mold Action Committee**
- ★ **Deb Katz, Citizens Awareness Network**
- ★ **Sean Donovan, Wildflower Alliance**
- ★ **Tavar Jones, Wildflower Alliance**
- ★ **Susan Theberge, Climate Action Now**
- ★ **Ada Rodriguez representing Defiance Science**
- ★ **Rafael Burgos-Mirabal, Racial Equity Work Group**
- ★ **Voices from Street Medics**

# **First Breakouts: Building a Community Agenda for STEMM**

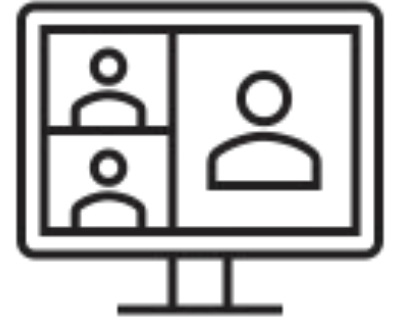
- 1) What problems do you see in your communities?
- 2) What knowledge do you need to address these problems?
- 3) How might scientists and engineers work in solidarity with you to create and share that knowledge?
- 4) What kinds of activities that STEMM workers do are detrimental to community interests?
- 5) What barriers do you face to access the tools / knowledge that you need?

## **CHOOSE YOUR BREAKOUT ROOM NOW**

1. Tatiana Cheeks, Arise / Mold Action Committee
2. Deb Katz, Citizens Awareness Network
3. Sean Donovan, Wildflower Alliance
4. Tavar Jones, Wildflower Alliance
5. Susan Theberge, Climate Action Now
6. Springfield Public School students, Defiance Science
7. Rafael Burgos-Mirabal, Racial Equity Work Group
8. Voices from Street Medics

# Breakout Room Discussions

- ✓ STEP 1: take 2 minutes total to introduce yourselves to each other
- ✓ STEP 2: Talk about Questions 1 through 5 (15 minutes)
- ✓ STEP 3: Build Your Community Agenda (10 minutes)



# **Community Agenda: Synthesis**

# **Breakout Room 2: Envisioning a Just Future for STEMM**

***Speculative Science: STEMM that is disentangled from colonialism, imperialism, xenophobia, racism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and systems of oppression.***

**You will be placed in a random breakout room. Once there:**

**STEP 1: take 2 minutes total to introduce yourselves to each other**

**STEP 2: Discuss these questions:**

- 1. What would a world that wasn't constrained by these pathologies look like?**
- 2. What role could STEMM play in getting us there?**
- 3. What will STEMM look like in such a society once we're there?**

**Make sure everyone has a chance to speak!**

**Breakout group members can jot down notes in the chat or on a piece of paper.**

**Please be ready to share some highlights in our report back**

# Report back



# **Thank yous!!!**

**best,**

**Adrienne Saums**

**Brian Schultz**

**Daniel Ko**

**Danielle Larrabee**

**Emma Harnisch**

**Kimberly Medeiros**

**Rafael Burgos-Mirabal**

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