The 2018 ATHE Conference focuses on revolution, resistance, and protest, and the multiple ways these ideas – and the actions that spring from them – impact theatre in higher education. Drawing on the city of Boston for its historical significance in the American Revolution, and as a site of both academic excellence and artistic innovation, we aim to explore revolutions at the multiple intersections of politics, theatre education, and professional practice.

Revolution and resistance are tools employed to combat injustice and inequality. However, these tools can be used to effect change in any direction, to create more open and equitable societies, or less. In the 2016 US presidential election and its wake, and heading into 2018 midterm elections, the concept of revolution has been used by both left and right. We will consider various meanings of revolution, in scholarship and performance as well as in our work as educators with students in the classroom, rehearsal hall, and in the larger context of college campuses.

The conference theme invites examination of ways in which electoral representation resonates with theory and practice in theatre-making: How does representation in politics relate to equitable and fair casting and employment practices? How do changing practices require revolutions in production methods and pedagogies? How might theatre scholarship serve a meaningful public function, engaging with performances – both artistic and civic – that surround us? How might we create art that is aesthetically revolutionary and that at the same time activates audiences to make lasting social change?

Boston’s history allows us to consider performance and revolution in uniquely complicated ways. Events of the American Revolution are memorialized throughout the city in museums and public monuments, many involving performed reenactments. The site of the Boston Tea Party, a protest by white men who masqueraded as Native Americans to resist “taxation without representation” by the British, is marked by a museum only a short distance from the conference hotel. However, other revolutions remain unmarked, such as the systematic and violent dispossession of the Wampanoag, Nipmuc, Massachusett and other nations of the Dawnland by European colonists. In contemporary US politics, the Tea Party has itself become a kind of costume for protest. Groups claiming its ethos arguably play with tropes of revolution alongside those of racial superiority, misogyny, and nativism. Consideration of how contemporary and historical enactments of US foundational stories perform race and gender, as well as erasure of the land’s history before colonization, raises complex questions concerning representation and revolution in this context. These questions
resonate in turn with debates prompted by popular theatrical productions like *Hamilton*, which not only evidences revolutions in storytelling and casting practices, but famously inspired a twitter war between artists and politicians about the role of theatre as “safe space” or platform for protest.

We see questions about safe space and protest rising on college campuses: demonstrations and counter-demonstrations by right and left, changing policies regarding academic freedom, the development of professor watch lists, conceal and carry laws, designation of sanctuary campuses, and the ongoing impact to students especially vulnerable under new policies, including undocumented and transgender students. These concerns intersect with urgent questions over funding for the arts and for higher education, the cost of education, and perpetuation of economic and institutional inequities on racial, ethnic, and gender lines.

Join us in Boston in 2018 to explore the precarity and potency of theatre in higher education to protest oppression and advance revolutionary change.

Ann M. Shanahan, Vice President for Conference 2018

[Photography credit (top to bottom) Kyle Klein, reprinted with permission from bostonusa.com; Nicolas Woolf, reprinted with license CC 2.0 from creativecommons.org; Cydney Scott, permission to use in this handout courtesy of Boston University Photography.]

2018 CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

David Callaghan, University of Montevallo
Bethany Hughes, Northwestern University
David Kaye, University of New Hampshire
Baron Kelly, University of Louisville
Kareem Khubchandani, Tufts University
Monica White Ndounou, Dartmouth College
Karen Jean Martinsen, Chicago State University
Kathleen McGeever, Northern Arizona University
Ruth Pe Palileo, Current Theatrics and Pintig Cultural Group
Becky Prophet, Alfred University
Emily Rollie, Central Washington University
Rodger Sorensen, Brigham Young University
Megan Shea, New York University
Andrew Gibb, Texas Tech University, ATHE Vice President for Conference 2019
Harvey Young, Northwestern University, ATHE President, *ex officio* member

PROPOSALS & INFO:  http://www.athe.org/?page=18_proposal
QUESTIONS? EMAIL: Conf2018@athe.org

PROPOSALS DUE NOVEMBER 1, 2017 AT ATHE.ORG