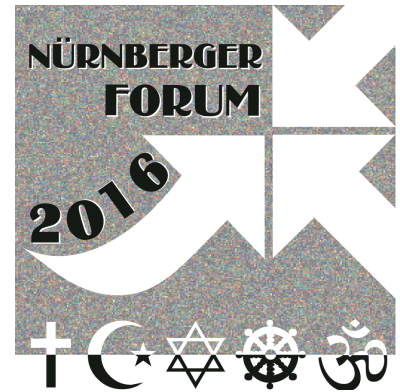


Katie Day

Public Theology and Public Education in the City: a U.S. Perspective



ABSTRACT

Despite the national aspirations of egalitarianism, public education in impoverished urban spaces in the U.S. is starkly inferior to that provided for school children in more affluent areas. This paper explores the causes for the maldistribution of resources in public education, the impacts on educational achievement and earning capacity, and the relationship of education policies and race. The knowledge gap created by underfunded urban public schools perpetuates the growing disparity between the “haves and the have-nots” in American society. This is not unintentional: the impact of public education as an anti-poverty program has been recognized since the founding of the country. With one of every three children living in poverty in the U.S.—among the highest level of developed countries—the under-education of one third of the population contributes to mass incarceration, greatly decreased quality of life, and, without an informed and educated electorate, represents a threat to a democratic society. I will argue that this is an issue which public theology needs to engage; with few exceptions the voices of public theologians have been largely absent. Based in an anthropology of personhood and human community rooted in creation theology, there is a theological framework in which an argument for distributive justice of public resources can be made.

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