

A Burdensome Experiment: Race, Labor, and Schools in New Orleans after Katrina

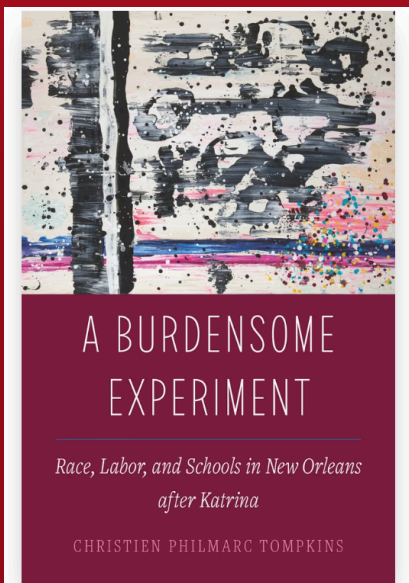
Education, Culture & Society
Race & Education Lecture Series

R | RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK
Graduate School of Education

About the Speaker

Christien Philmarc Tompkins is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology and black studies scholar at Rutgers University New Brunswick and the author of *A Burdensome Experiment: Race, Labor, and Schools in New Orleans after Katrina* (2024, University of California Press).

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, many powerful constituencies across the United States viewed the city of New Orleans as an alluring blank slate for ambitious political and ideological experiments, including the total remaking of housing, public education, and the local and regional economy. Drawing from a broader labor ethnography on the transformation of education work in the city as racialized labor, this talk examines two sites of innovation in schooling. First it explores how contrary to depictions of a purely white takeover of the schools, black education reformers are conducting forms of "racial arbitrage" through expert interventions in the breaches between schools and communities opened up by the conversion to charter schools. Second, the talk shows how a splinter group of repentant education entrepreneurs inspired by design thinking and lean startup methodologies established design communities through ritualized "pitches" and protocols with deceptively egalitarian aspirations. Together, these experiments in racial expertise demonstrate the grounds upon which a multi-racial technocratic elite is determining the future of schools in New Orleans.



February 4th, 2025
4pm - GSE Lecture Hall

