

2026

RRSJ Call for Proposal Companion



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OMAHA, NEBRASKA

2026 RRSJ CFP Companion

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Theme: Art as Witness, Catalyst, and Calling Date: Thursday, June 11, 2026
Location: Tri-Faith Commons, Omaha, Nebraska

Conference Prospectus

Art moves us. It awakens the soul, disrupts the status quo, and dares us to imagine a world more just, more beautiful, and more free. In the face of oppression, silence, and invisibility, the arts have long served as vessels of resistance, resilience, and revelation.

The 2026 Race, Religion, and Social Justice Conference invites artists, scholars, faith leaders, activists, educators, and community practitioners to explore the enduring intersections of art, race, religion, and social justice. This year's theme, Art as Witness, Catalyst, and Calling, centers the arts as both sacred practice and social intervention—bearing witness to injustice, catalyzing transformation, and calling communities toward collective liberation.

Across religious traditions, cultural movements, and justice struggles, art has carried stories across generations, affirmed human dignity, challenged dominant narratives, and fostered empathy across differences. This conference creates space for reflection, dialogue, and creative practice rooted in those traditions.

Theme Overview

1. Race and Art: Telling Untold Stories

From the Harlem Renaissance to contemporary protest murals, artists of color have transformed canvases, performance spaces, and public walls into declarations of identity, dignity, and dissent. This strand explores how:

- Art challenges racist narratives and promotes truth-telling
- Creative expression affirms the visibility and humanity of marginalized communities
- Music, poetry, visual, and performing arts serve as tools of resistance and healing

2. Religion and Art: Expressing the Sacred

Art has always been central to religious expression—whether in the stained glass of cathedrals, the calligraphy of sacred texts, or the embodied rhythms of chant and dance. This strand examines:

- How religious traditions use art to convey the divine and foster communal identity
- The spiritual dimensions of contemporary art and artists' explorations of faith

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- Art as a medium for interfaith encounter, dialogue, and theological reflection

3. Art as a Vehicle for Social Justice

Art is not merely a mirror to society; it can be a force that shapes it. Throughout history, social movements have leveraged the arts to inspire, unify, and mobilize communities. This strand highlights:

- Protest art and creative activism as engines for social change
- Community-based arts initiatives that empower voices and build solidarity
 - The evolving role of artists as civic leaders and cultural organizers

4. Intersectional Creativity: The Art of Complexity

Justice work requires honest engagement with complexity. Intersectionality—recognizing how race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, and religion intersect—demands nuanced, layered expression. This strand explores:

- How art captures the lived realities of those navigating multiple identities
- The use of art therapy and expressive practices for community healing
- Innovative, interdisciplinary projects that challenge systems of oppression

Concept Statement

Art speaks when words fall short. It invites us to see, feel, and respond to the world—and to one another—with honesty and hope. Across centuries and cultures, art has been a powerful force in the struggle for racial equity, religious expression, and social justice. Whether painted on protest signs or echoed in sacred music, art has borne witness to suffering, served as a vessel for resistance, and nurtured resilience.

The 2026 Race, Religion, and Social Justice Conference explores how artistic expression—across theatre, music, dance, visual arts, spoken word, film, ritual, and multimedia—shapes our understanding of identity, faith, and justice. This gathering brings together artists, scholars, faith leaders, and community practitioners whose work bridges the sacred and the civic, the personal and the political.

Centered on the theme Art as Witness, Catalyst, and Calling, the conference examines how the arts:

- Illuminate marginalized truths and challenge dominant narratives
- Express spiritual longing, sacred meaning, and collective ritual
- Mobilize communities toward healing, solidarity, and transformation
 - Foster connection across lines of race, religion, culture, and experience

This conference is not only a space for learning, but an invitation to imagine, create, and co-author a more just and beautiful world.

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Who This Conference Is For

The Race, Religion, and Social Justice Conference is intentionally interdisciplinary and interfaith. It welcomes a wide range of voices and experiences, including:

- Artists and cultural workers
- Faith leaders, theologians, and spiritual practitioners
- Scholars and educators
- Activists, organizers, and advocates
- Community-based practitioners and tradition bearers

Both experienced presenters and first-time contributors are encouraged to participate. We value academic, artistic, spiritual, and lived knowledge equally, and we welcome proposals rooted in community practice as well as scholarly inquiry.

What We Mean by “Art”

For this conference, art is understood broadly and inclusively. We welcome creative expression across diverse mediums, traditions, and cultural contexts. Art may be polished or process-based, individual or collective, formal or emergent.

Artistic expressions may include, but are not limited to:

- Visual art, installation, and design
- Music, dance, and theatre
- Poetry, spoken word, and storytelling
- Film and multimedia
- Ritual, embodied practice, and community-based creative work

If your work engages creativity as expression, inquiry, resistance, healing, or spiritual practice, it belongs in this conversation.

Conference Values and Approach

The conference is grounded in the following commitments:

- Centering marginalized voices and lived experience
- Honoring multiple ways of knowing and creating
 - Encouraging dialogue across differences rather than debate
- Valuing participation, accessibility, care, and community accountability
- Bridging theory and practice in meaningful and embodied ways

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These values shape both the selection of sessions and the overall conference experience.

Sample Agenda (Overview)

All session titles and presenters are placeholders. The agenda is provided to help prospective presenters understand the flow, scale, and variety of session formats.

Morning: Registration, opening ritual, and keynote

Midday: Concurrent breakout sessions with staggered lunch periods across campus. Several breakout sessions repeat to ensure participants can attend both lunch and high-demand sessions.

Afternoon: Additional breakout sessions followed by a closing plenary or keynote and communal ritual.

Sessions may include workshops, panels, performances, film screenings, participatory practices, and facilitated dialogue.

How to Use This Prospectus

This prospectus is designed as a companion to the Call for Proposals. It provides thematic context, conference values, and a sample program structure to support discernment as you consider submitting a proposal.

Detailed submission guidelines, proposal formats, technical requirements, deadlines, and review criteria are outlined in the Call for Proposals.