Whatever Happened to the Negro Question? Educational Discourse and the Lost Question of Race

To what extent has thinking about education and the making of education policy substantively engaged issues of race and racism? From 1930s radicals debating whether the “class question” trumped the “Negro question,” to *Brown v. Board of Education*’s focus on segregation, but not unequal power and exploitation, Charles Payne argues that there has been an historic avoidance of thinking directly about race and education. Both an esteemed voice on American civil rights movements and a keen observer of contemporary school reform efforts, Payne will discuss how historical accounts provoke key questions for educators today.

Charles M. Payne is the Frank P. Hixon Distinguished Service Professor in the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago, where he is also an affiliate of the Urban Education Institute. His interests include urban education and school reform, social inequality, social change and modern African American history. He is the author of *Getting What We Ask For: The Ambiguity of Success and Failure In Urban Education* (1984) and *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement* (1995). The latter has won awards from the Southern Regional Council, Choice Magazine, the Simon Wisenthal Center and the Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Human Rights in North America. He is co-author of *Debating the Civil Rights Movement* (1999) and co-editor of *Time Longer Than Rope: A Century of African American Activism, 1850-1950* (2003). He recently published *So Much Reform, So Little Change* (Harvard Education Publishing Group) which is concerned with what we have learned about the persistence of failure in urban districts, and an anthology, *Teach Freedom: The African American Tradition of Education For Liberation* (Teachers College Press), which is concerned with Freedom School-like education. He was the recipient of a Senior Scholar grant from the Spencer Foundation and was a Resident Fellow at the foundation for 2006-07.