

RURAL STUDIES INSTITUTE
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RSI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PROBES URBAN-RURAL DIVIDE AT OTHERING & BELONGING CONFERENCE 2021

MILLEDGEVILLE, GEORGIA (Oct. 18-19, 2021) — Dr. Veronica Womack, executive director of The Rural Studies Institute (RSI) at Georgia College, will discuss the interdependence of rural and urban communities during the Othering & Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley's virtual conference.

Themed "Risk and the Courage to Bridge," the Oct. 18 and 19 online gathering will feature researchers, scholars and organizers like Womack who will share case studies, personal stories and possible answers to transform systems.

"It's a great opportunity to look at how urban and rural communities can work together," said Womack, who has dedicated more than 20 years of research to addressing the disparities of rural communities in America's Black Belt Region. "I'm always talking about building collaboration, networks and systems to move us forward because this strategy can work."

Womack will participate in a Tuesday, Oct. 19, breakout session titled "Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide: Unveiling our interdependence to transform our systems" since these two groups often feel worlds apart. And oftentimes keep barriers up because of misinformation and fear.

The political scientist and rural researcher will explore rebuilding models like education and agriculture to ensure current systems are working equitably between rural and urban spaces. An uncomfortable conversation. Exactly what Othering & Belonging encourages.



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Since 2012, Othering & Belonging Institute has been an innovative hub for scholarship, research and community partnerships. Taking an interdisciplinary approach to figuring out solutions to global problems. Working to eliminate obstacles to an inclusive, sustainable and just world.

John A. Powell serves as the institute's director. Powell is an internationally recognized expert in civil liberties, civil rights, structural racism, poverty, housing and democracy. He collaborates with faculty, staff, researchers and affiliates to confront pressing issues through transformative initiatives and programs.

"Othering & Belonging Institute does a brilliant job of facilitating these tough discussions," said Womack. "We have to identify our communities' challenges and opportunities, truly acknowledging and embracing strengths and weaknesses if we want these environments to sustain."

Visit **belonging.berkeley.edu** to learn more about this scholarly network hub. Go to **ruralstudiesinstitute.com** for the institute's mission to developing sustainable 21st-century communities.

ABOUT RURAL STUDIES INSTITUTE (RSI)

The first of its kind, RSI is a national, preeminent institute created to equip and sustain rural communities in an ever-changing tech economy. The institute launched January 2020 at Georgia's designated public liberal arts institution, Georgia College & State University. Located in the nation's Black Belt Region, RSI is surrounded by rural influencers and experts to help address the ongoing struggles of Small Town USA and to identify opportunities for success in rural communities. Its mission: establish best practices and solutions that help strengthen rural communities for the future.