No. 111

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

POST ELECTION DEMONSTRATION IN LOS ANGELES, CA | NOVEMBER 2017. PHOTO BY ALEX RADELICH

Teaching and Resistance in the Time of Trumpism

ISSN: 1941-0832

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Introduction: Teaching and Resistance in the Time of Trumpism

by Sarah Chinn and Joseph Entin

DEMONSTRATION IN LOS ANGELES, CA | NOVEMBER 2017. PHOTO BY ALEX RADELICH

The 2016 election of Donald Trump did not bring with it anything that sounded new, but it did turn the volume knob all the way up. As part of a backlash against the measured neoliberalism of the Obama era, Trumpism has been defined by an emboldened white supremacy; brazen sexism; a belligerent foreign policy posture; an ever-more punitive stance on "law and order"; openly racist, xenophobic immigration and border policies; the denial of scientifically-proven climate change; a hypertrophied "business" approach to social problems; an assault on truth in favor of "alternative facts" and outright lies; the elevation of hate and bigotry in public discourse and attitude; and more. Most recently, it has resulted in outright cruelty, as children -- from babies to teenagers – have been forcibly removed from their families as they cross the US border. While many liberals were shocked by the election results, radicals were hardly surprised by the Alt-Right, authoritarian forces, and sharply regressive ideas that carried Trump into office. Those forces and ideas have deep historic roots and broad support.

In education, the Trump administration has doubled down on the trend towards neoliberal, market-based, anti-public school policies that have been gaining momentum in recent decades.

Trump's strategy, if one can call it that, has been to staff cabinet posts with barely competent, if not actually corrupt, business and military figures who have in the past been openly opposed to the mandate of that office (for example, Scott Pruitt in the EPA, Nikki Haley at the UN, Ben Carson at HUD). In education, the Trump administration has doubled down on the trend towards neoliberal, market-based, anti-public school policies that have been gaining momentum in recent decades. His education secretary, Betsy DeVos, is well versed in the privatization of public agencies: a billionaire who never attended a public school, she is the sister of the founder of Blackwater, the shadowy security firm that has served as a private extension of the US military in strategic locations around the world. No wonder she has proposed devastating funding cuts ($7.1 Billion, over 10% of the DOE budget, in 2019) to the very agency she runs. Such cuts would be accompanied by an infusion of federal money to support school "choice" vouchers for students to leave public schools for charters and private institutions. In higher education, DeVos has supported loan policies that smooth the way for the ongoing scandal of for-profit colleges which, as even as liberal-centrist an organ as *The New York Times* editorial board has argued, "has saddled working-class students with crushing debt while providing useless degrees, or no degrees at all."[1] As the Center for American Progress puts it: "Trump and DeVos have made their priorities clear: Starve public schools to fund private school schemes that benefit the wealthy."[2]

Given the dramatic ramping up of social inequity, political Know-Nothing-ism, and intensifying persecution of undocumented immigrants, it did not take long for *Radical Teacher* to determine that we needed an issue that would address how these changes are affecting, and being resisted in, education. But our goals and methods were still inchoate. In devising this issue, we debated whether or not to use #45's name in framing the contemporary moment. Moreover, we asked ourselves, how much of a rupture *does* Trump's election represent? Do we want to put stress on the break his proto-fascist policies represent, or emphasize the continuities with long-standing traditions in US social and political culture? What is at stake in referring to the present conjuncture as the "Age of Trumpism"? There was disagreement on the editorial board of *RT* about the right approach to this urgent topic and how we should identify the kinds of work we were looking for. Fellow board member Richard Ohmann raised two objections to the overarching rubric of "Trumpism":

> First, I take the dynamics of this period to be largely results of the neoliberal plot against America and democracy, launched by wealthy right-wingers 50 years ago (when Trump was just the worst college student in the history of the Wharton School, according to one of his professors). From that point of view, although the Republican president they got is what they deserved, he wasn't their chosen leader, and his clownish ways are not what they wanted. So I think "age of Trumpism" embodies an interpretation of history that should be critically questioned, in radical teaching.
>
> Second, Trump(ism) can be too easy and tempting a diversion for both students and teachers. The guy's wacky wickedness tends to sop up everyone's attention, as the media have shown.

We agree with the cautionary note Ohmann sounds, but also want to signal that Trump's election *does* represent something new, or at least a newly dramatic intensification: a heightening of the reactionary rhetoric and policies against vulnerable populations and social justice movements. This rhetoric and these politics have been increasingly hegemonic under post-1970 neoliberalism, and in fact have always been integral to the US as a racist, capitalist, sexist, settler-colonial society. To put it bluntly, Trump is a symptom rather than a cause. Yet we think it is important to honor the new, justifiable fears raised by Trump's openly racist campaign as well as his near-total absence of concern about media and public critique—his disparagement of immigrants from "shithole countries"; the equivalence he drew between white supremacist violence and non-violent anti-racist protestors in Charlottesville, VA in August 2017; his avowedly Islamophobic remarks and immigration bans; his xenophobic description, proclaimed during the news conference announcing his run for the presidency, of Mexican immigrants as "criminals and rapists"; his termination of DACA and suspension of Temporary Protected Status for many Central Americans; the anti-LGBTQ and especially anti-transgender policies and administrators he has brought to Washington [3]; his characterization of the mainstream media as "enemies of the people"; his denial of the human causes of global warming and undermining of federal climate change policy via the appointment of Scott Pruitt to head the EPA; his

rupture of the *données* of foreign policy and diplomacy, to name only some.

There's certainly nothing new about racism, which has been woven into the deepest and most pervasive structures of US culture even before the official founding of the nation. Yet for those persons and communities targeted by Trump's rhetoric and policies—many of whom are students in our schools—these are especially frightening times. We use the term "Trumpism," rather than Trump, to de-emphasize the President himself, while acknowledging the particular, and to some extent unprecedented, alliance of forces that have coalesced around his campaign and his administration to craft deeply regressive and authoritarian policy initiatives. A radical analysis entails going to the root to understand the deep, historical and political structures that shape a particular moment, and our understanding of Trump's rise and power requires such systemic, long-term thinking. At the same time, the ascendance of the Trump administration, and the policies and attitudes that it is advancing, represent, as Noam Chomsky puts it bluntly, "a disaster" with its own particular contours.[4]

So this is the balance we and the authors in this issue have tried to maintain: while much in this political moment *is* new, the continuities are crucial to acknowledge and understand. On several fronts, Trump is merely continuing policy directions set by the Obama administration, and indeed all the US presidents since at least Nixon, who have largely advanced a market-based, neoliberal agenda -- from specific visas for "high value" migrants, to the development of an "invisible" undocumented workforce in the service industry, to social problems exacerbated by defunded public education and the racial economics of mass incarceration. Trump may have declared his intention to build a border wall between the US and Mexico, but Obama's border policy was itself draconian: as "deporter in chief," he expelled over 2 million immigrants. While Trump sounds a muscular foreign policy tone, Obama sent 10 times as many military drones around the world as George Bush.[5] While Trump celebrates economic competition, and the amassing of wealth in the hands of a few, George W. Bush bailed out the banks in the wake of the 2008 recession and Obama continued that policy, without jailing a single executive, and did virtually nothing to close the racial wealth gap, or roll back the nation's astounding economic inequality, which was as severe at the end of his term as it ever had been. Trump may have taken the unprecedented step of moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, but the move is merely an extension of the unwaveringly pro-Israel, anti-Palestinian stance that all recent administrations have held in lockstep. DeVos may be an especially egregious head of the DOE, but the cynical rationale behind her approach is of a piece with the competitive, market-derived model of education funding of Arne Duncan's Obama-era "Race to the Top" and the Bush-era focus on testing and "accountability" in "No Child Left Behind."

For many people, including the electoral majority who voted against Trump and those who are targeted by Trumpism, these are dark, distressing times. And yet, resistance to authoritarianism, misogyny, and racism has flourished—from Black Lives Matter and NoDAPL to the 2017 Women's March on Washington (and affiliate marches around the country and the world) and nationwide demonstrations against the new administration's bigoted immigration restrictions, among others. Left educators at all levels are active in the struggle, and have created networks to share pedagogical and activist strategies (see for instance: http://www.radicalteacher.net/trumpism/).

On the education front, 2018 has witnessed dramatic push back against austerity politics from public school teachers, who conducted massive (in some cases wildcat) strikes in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Kentucky. To observers outside (and perhaps even inside) those states, the eruption of collective action, in the form of mass work stoppages, was surprising, but it represents a rational response to years of cuts to public education, and the "right to work" conditions that prevent teachers from bargaining collectively. Oppression breeds resistance, and the punishing cuts implemented under the veil of economic austerity in recent years have generated righteous anger and a desire to fight among school teachers in these notably Red states.

As the essays in this issue indicate so powerfully, educators' resistance to Trumpism, and to the much longer histories of injustice, inequality, racism, and anti-student policies, is also taking a wide range of forms beyond the picket lines.

As the essays in this issue indicate so powerfully, educators' resistance to Trumpism, and to the much longer histories of injustice, inequality, racism, and anti-student policies, is also taking a wide range of forms beyond the picket lines. Many of our authors chronicle their own experiences in making classrooms spaces for students to articulate the effects of the current political moment on them, and to imagine creative responses. Jesse Schwartz finds in his composition classroom at LaGuardia Community College -- one of the most ethnically and racially mixed educational institutions in the country -- students whose lived experiences of undocumented immigration, police harassment, and collective action give them the raw materials with which to craft their writing. To help his students channel their post-election feelings of anxiety and rage into action, Schwartz designed an assignment that asked students to link the critical writing and thinking they were doing to forms of activist engagement outside the classroom. Similarly, Emily Price and Susan Jurow discuss how they helped the primarily Mexican-American children in an after school program use play to express their fears about, and ways of coping with, the 2016 election and its aftermath. They show us that, if given the space, kids engage in play to both act out and find possible solutions to a political environment in which they have no power.

The precarious, volatile political climate has also required new and imaginative modes of addressing pedagogy itself. Alexandra Juhasz and Clelia Rodriguez both took familiar genres -- the syllabus and the literacy

primer -- and remade them to serve our current moment. Rodriguez's "#shitholes syllabus" both imitates the generic college syllabus and echoes the phenomenon of online aggregated syllabi that formed around specific issues connected to the histories of racial violence in the United States (most notably the #Charlestonsyllabus after the 2015 murder of nine parishioners of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church by a white supremacist and the #Fergusonsyllabus, which contextualized the murder of an unarmed black teenager by a police officer and the subsequent protests in Ferguson, MO in 2014). At the same time, it does not select readings or lay out a schedule of classes. Rather, Rodriguez offers her readers a lyrical meditation on race and racialization, and resists the normalization of white supremacy. Juhasz reimagines a media literacy primer through poetry, images, and a parliamentary-style "resolution" to offer a variety of avenues teachers and students can take to counter the ultimate Trumpian formulation: fake news. She traces the long history of mis- and dis-information from both government and media and introduces her readers to "#hardtruths," locating poetry as a possible site of real truth-telling. Working within a very different educational context--a charter high school in Chicago--DJ Cashmere describes his efforts to design and teach a course in liberatory cultural studies to tenth graders. Aiming to move beyond a liberal, white-teacher-as-savior model, Cashmere and his co-teacher developed a unit on social biography, in which the Black and Latinx students researched and narrated the challenges and successes of their lives in political context. The class culminated with a community sharing night, where students presented their stories to their families and each another, forging an environment of solidarity and collective struggle.

A number of the articles here describe the challenges of educating students who are unaware of or possibly hostile to the histories that made Trump's election possible, as well as having to negotiate timid administrators and conservative environments. Travis Boyce does the difficult work of showing his University of North Colorado students the interconnections between the anti-black racism that hovered barely under the surface of the campus and the regional embrace of the Confederacy and the myth of the Lost Cause. Ultimately, he argues, it is impossible to separate what he calls "the collegiate idea" from the history of Confederate sympathizing, given how deeply rooted college institutions such as fraternities and sports teams have been in perpetuating the romance of the antebellum South. Bill Beutel describes his efforts to engage his middle school students in civic action and political self-examination in the context of a school board and administration that keep a close eye on any pedagogical content deemed too radical (such as teaching the histories of Christianity and Islam in similar ways). To give his students a context to think about current political events, he constructed a civics class that assigned students the task of comparing the United States of 2018 with the Roman empire -- its foreign policy, political structures, and social hierarchies. Through this scheme, he made space for critique that was student-generated and inquiry based. Erika Kitzmiller designed a graduate education course that asked the mostly white, middle-class teachers-in-training in her classroom to investigate the long history of white supremacy that paved the way for Trump's election. Inspired by the collectively formulated Trump 2.0 syllabus published on the *Public Books* website, Kitzmiller's course, structured by a range of intersectional topics connecting race, sexuality, housing, citizenship and capitalism in the US, was designed to counter the silence and evasiveness around the history of structural racism that continues to prevail in most public schools. Tristan Josephson's essay describes teaching conservative students in women's and gender studies classes who have mobilized the discourse of college as a "safe space" to ward off potential challenges to what Josephson calls "Trump feminism." Realizing that it was productive neither to put conservative students on the defensive nor to let their use of a rhetoric of victimhood slide, Josephson developed creative modes of pedagogical engagement that asked students to grapple with the material power differentials that shape identity and politics.

On some campuses, faculty and students worked together to come up with strategies of resistance. Ann Cahill and Tom Mould had the full support of their institution's administration and the enthusiastic participation of students and faculty to run a new one-credit course they called "Refusing to Wait: Intellectual and Practical Resources for Troubling Times." Their article explores the achievements of this exciting collaborative project, and also its challenges. While they were successful in putting together an innovative syllabus, and discussions were lively, they had more trouble marshalling their collective political energies for concrete action, even though that was an explicit element of the course. Their essay shows us that the gap between theory and praxis is a difficult one to bridge, even in the comparatively contained environment of the college classroom. And as Audrey Fisch's essay demonstrates, sometimes the theory can be elusive as well. She describes an exercise she used with first-year composition students in which she framed and then reframed a video clip and the responses it elicited in social media to illustrate how thin the line between news sources, social media, and "fake news" can be for some students, whose primary source of news can often be their social media feeds. But rather than simply condemning college-age students for their naiveté or apathy -- a common strategy in political and media circles -- Fisch introduced her students to various modes of media critique and information literacy. At the same time, even a consciously crafted exercise in media savvy could, she feared, "further my students' distrust of the media and not in a healthy or productive way." Just as Cahill's and Mould's students struggled to make connections between theorizing political resistance and actualizing it, Fisch's students had to work hard to sort out which media were worth believing even as they engaged in critique.

Hannah Ashley and Katie Solic stepped outside the classroom in order to make those connections. In their essay, they describe the process of using an institutional emphasis on urban education to create an insurgent, collaborative project, the Rustin Urban Community Change Axis, or RUCCAS. Bringing together students, faculty, staff and community organization leaders, RUCCAS aims not merely to teach, but also to build local grassroots power for

racial and economic justice. RUCCAS is housed in a university, but clearly exceeds academic boundaries as a hub and incubator for urban change-makers that links students with an array of community groups through organizing and participatory action projects. Ashley and Solic discuss substantial challenges, but also offer a powerful model for democratic educational counter-institution building. Working within a more conventional educational setting--a college art classroom--Heath Schultz describes his efforts to help a diverse group of Texas public university students confront their feelings of helplessness and despair in the wake of the 2016 election and challenge racist ideologies circulating in public visual culture. Schultz and his students researched the long history of imperial policing and surveillance of the US-Mexico border, as well as radical responses to it by artists such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Teresa Fernández, Margarita Cabrera and others. To conclude the semester, Schultz's students created their own collective artistic response to the current moment: a sculptural anti-border-wall which they installed in the college's art building, and which asked viewers to think critically about the racist cultural and social implications of US immigration policies.

Even as we write this introduction, the political and pedagogical climate that this issue's authors are trying to negotiate, resist, grapple with, and teach within is changing rapidly -- and not for the better. In the final couple of weeks of editing, the world seemed to flip over several times. Trump's repudiation of familiar allies in favor of cuddling up to North Korea; the administration's open embrace then unconvincing denials and finally smug retraction of the racist and inhumane policy of separating parents and children at the southern US border; the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the ban on visitors from several Muslim-majority countries; and the ongoing characterization of Latin American immigrants as an infestation: it is hard not to imagine that the worst is yet to come or even predict a deeper slide into authoritarianism or even crypto (or not so crypto) fascism. These articles provide us with lesson plans in resistance, plans we will sorely need as we move into an uncertain future.

Notes

[1] New York Times Editorial Board, "Predatory Colleges, Freed to Fleece Students," *The New York Times*, May 22, 2018: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/22/opinion/predatory-colleges-students-devos.html

[2] Stephenie Johnson, Neil Campbell, and Scott Sargrad, "Trump and DeVos Continue to Undermine Public Education with Their Proposed Fiscal Year 2019 Budget," *Center for American Progress*, February 12, 2018. https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/news/2018/02/12/446423/trump-devos-continue-undermine-public-education-proposed-fiscal-year-2019-budget/

[3] The National Center for Transgender Equality describes Trump as "the most anti-transgender President in American history." For details, see: https://transequality.org/the-discrimination-administration

[4] For Chomsky on Trump as a "disaster" on the environment, military spending, immigration and more, see: http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/44261-a-complete-disaster-noam-chomsky-on-trump-and-the-future-of-us-politic

[5] Jessica Purkiss and Jack Searle, "Obama's Covert Drone War in Numbers: Ten Times More Strikes than Bush," *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, January 1, 2017: https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2017-01-17/obamas-covert-drone-war-in-numbers-ten-times-more-strikes-than-bush

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Preaching to the Choir: Turning Anger Into Engagement at Urban Community Colleges

by Jesse W. Schwartz

STUDENTS AT LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTHOR

In the wake of the last presidential election, and like so many of my fellow educators, I was uncertain what to expect when I entered the classroom the morning after November 8th. And, indeed, the horrific and all-too-believable accounts of students and teachers alike being harassed in school by emboldened bigots of all hate-filled persuasions rapidly started to flood my social media. Personally, I was in an enviable situation when it came to the possibility of threat: As a cis-gendered straight white male with gainful employment, I wasn't exactly a prime target for any of the increased vitriol being unleashed upon the millions of people that didn't inhabit such a socially fortunate combination of identity positions.[1] Professionally, however, my situation was far more complicated even though (once again) I did not feel at risk myself: As an assistant professor of English at LaGuardia Community College, one of twenty-four schools within the City University of New York (CUNY) system, I knew that the overwhelming majority of my students were overdetermined targets for the sexism, homophobia, immigrant-bashing, and race-baiting that had characterized the campaign—while the subsequent policies unleashed by this new administration seemed almost tailor-made to inflict maximum damage to the lives and loved ones of the people in my classroom.

First, some context: CUNY is the largest and most diverse urban university system in the country, and LaGuardia is the most diverse school within that system (our unofficial motto, "The World's Community College," is a rarity in higher ed: a tagline closer to fact than aspiration). As of 2016, our student body of over 19,000 was nearly 60% women, was an astonishing 89% non-white, and spoke over 125 languages. 71% of the entire student body come from families making less than $30K per year, half are Latinx, and an incredible 57% are foreign-born. Needless to say, the [1] pallor afflicting my usually ebullient classes was palpable, and, for nearly two full weeks after the election, I discarded my lesson plans almost entirely—as my students and I discussed more pressing existential concerns, such as what to do for an undocumented family member or where to get legal help for students that no longer felt comfortable (if, indeed, they ever did) about contacting police in the wake of a crime.

After we addressed the most dire problems that had arisen, my classes and I spent much of the rest of that semester attempting to provide historical context to the broad social changes that, for many of my students, had occurred seemingly overnight. We also endeavored to codify what "Trumpism" was (or even if, in fact, such a term could be organized into an even loose collection of monstrously related ideologies). From a campaign season that began with the suddenly real prospect of free community college for all (à la Sanders) and then ended with the Trump administration's Muslim ban, my students expressed the same shock and vertigo I heard about from many of my colleagues—so I was happy to use the classroom as a place where the students could, in part, attempt to process some of their anger, sadness, confusion, and fear.

For the following fall 2017 semester—and while I hesitate to call it a silver lining exactly—I will admit that my students in general (and in most cases by necessity) seemed to arrive in my class more politically conscious than ever before. And the conversations in class seemed to be of the same tenor as the previous term, if perhaps at a slightly less feverish pitch—as many of the Trump Administration's most horrific attempts at racist policies continued to be stayed by the courts. Though I was happy to continue giving my students a space to read about, critically think on, and write about the administration's policies and their rage, I began to experience an increasing dissatisfaction at using the class merely as a pressure valve for their very understandable anxiety and anger. Or, rather, in the midst of such a vulnerable yet conscious population of students that continued to express a sense of powerlessness overall, I wanted help them channel their political concerns into action—as one of the most common questions my students asked during those first few months was: "But what can we *do* about it?" So I decided to take their query seriously, designing an English 101 class wherein all the readings and writing would be oriented around some kind of rights-based activism in order to help them understand what was happening, apprehend the deep and imbricated histories that had brought us to this point, assist them in researching possible opportunities for involvement—and then, most importantly, take part in what they found in whatever ways were both achievable and made sense for their particular political engagements. And, as with so many well-meaning educational designs, it is here that my problems began.

Though I was happy to continue giving my students a space to read about, critically think on, and write about the administration's policies and their rage, I began to experience an increasing dissatisfaction at using the class merely as a pressure valve for their very understandable anxiety and anger.

In short, after a semester and a half of helping my students manage their anger and fear, I developed a syllabus with a component of outside social engagement built in. Obviously, I was not assigning a single political viewpoint, issue, or position, and would certainly not want to dictate where they went and what they did there—so from the very beginning I decided to leave everything but the actual fact of attending some type of event, discussion, action, etc. entirely up to them. My first question, then, was what a syllabus of praxis might look like, and where I might find some examples. Frankly, after some initial online searches, I was somewhat surprised to find so few lesson plans and assignments that asked for real engagement outside the classroom (though perhaps it was my own misunderstanding of the search terms). Certainly,

and since at least the tragedy of Ferguson, plenty of excellent reading lists and lesson plans exist for in-class practice, but otherwise inspired syllabi organized around such topics as Black Lives Matter, Charlottesville, and Beyoncé's "Lemonade" provided outstanding materials but little based outside the boundaries of the classroom. And what few assignments I did find struck me as overwhelmingly conceived for privileged students at small residential colleges—young people usually already imbued with the sense of belonging (not to mention also the time, money, and US citizenship) that would make such outings far easier to accomplish than for my own students. This lack of materials applicable for the people in my classrooms—ironically the very groups that ostensibly had the most to "lose" from the new administration—demanded that I try to create a form of engagement that could be built in with relative ease to any research-based writing component of an introductory-level class at any urban school and for any student body.

My point of departure for the class was the Gramscian contention that "'everyone' is a philosopher and that it is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone's individual life, but of renovating and making 'critical' an already existing activity."[2] I also advertised my intentions as such: A composition course based on rights-based movements that would hopefully be filled by students at least mildly interested in the topic, and looking to channel their anger, interest, and convictions into action. Luckily, I had a better turnout than expected and the class seemed to be equally divided by thirds: About six students arrived already politically active and engaged, another six were politically curious but had no previous experience with "activism" (broadly conceived), and another six were admittedly just there because the class fit their schedule.

As we discussed the content of the course and expectations of outside engagement—and though I was constantly buoyed by most of my students' desire to protect their families as well as fight back in solidarity with other groups under threat—when we discussed the practical nature of "getting involved," three distinct categories of difficulty, confusion, and resistance emerged: 1. Either the systems and structures they wanted to fight against seemed impossibly vast, powerful, and diffuse or they simply had very little understanding of the organizations and groups that already existed to combat such entities (with emblematic questions like "how do I fight a federal policy?" or "what can I do to stop police violence?"); 2. Students expressed a concern that they wouldn't necessarily feel welcome in more local settings focused on political and social change (they usually viewed such groups in NYC—and, frankly, often with good reason—as what one student called "white spaces"); or 3. In the age of Black Lives Matter— whose public-facing members both inspired and intimidated many of my students with their deep historical knowledge, theoretical sophistication, and uncompromising fervor—they thought all "activism" meant some kind of public protest that often led to dramatic confrontations with law enforcement (and though many expressed a desire to take part in such actions, they were understandably concerned that such involvement might jeopardize their own lives as well as their families' immigration status). After several valuable conversations with my students around these issues, my first goal was to help dispel some of these misconceptions (and, of course, also agree with a number of their suspicions)—and to also facilitate their understanding that there is a vast space of possible engagement between simply "liking" a friend's political Facebook post and getting tear-gassed by cops.

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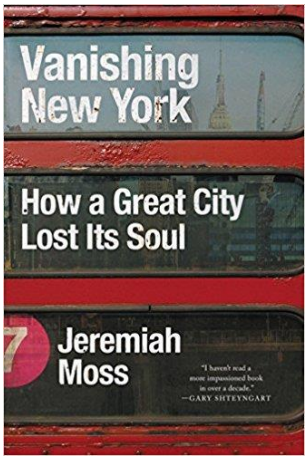
Emerging out of these concerns and contradictions, it seemed important to first come up with a working definition of activism itself that encompassed as many of the various forms of engagement we could think of, which we produced together as a class using an amalgam of the Wikipedia entry and a few online dictionaries: "Activism is simply *any* activity and engagement in the service of social change." With this as our guide, we then made a list on the board of all the possible actions that could fall under such a capacious definition, hoping to demystify what for many was a previously imposing term. Within this characterization, many students immediately recognized that they had already been involved in such activities, like the student who quickly raised her hand and asked, "So when the families on my block all let each other know when ICE is patrolling, that's activism too?" My students, armed with the new definition they had come up with, assured her—much to her delight— that she was already very much an activist.

As a corollary writing assignment to this definition-making, I wanted to help them understand the rubrics of what the humanities and social sciences conceive of as "identity categories" in order for them to articulate their own positionality based on these groupings, and then to analyze how their life experiences may be explained at least in part by how they locate themselves within such formations—not, of course, as a destiny preordained but rather as contours of possibility. To this end, after a brief discussion of the concepts, we listed on the board all the identity categories we could think of (with one particularly prepared student asking, "And what about intersectionality?"—and then eagerly explaining to the class [2] what she meant by that term). I then asked all the students to adopt whichever categories they thought defined them best, and to write down a personal story they thought was only possible due to the categories they chose. As we went around the room sharing our work, the

sadly unsurprising instances of homophobia, transphobia, racism, and sexism by family members, employers, the police, etc. soon emerged. In fact, the only two cis-gendered straight white male students in the class provided accidental and good-natured foils to the previous stories: Both explained a narrative about how their identity categories helped them *avoid* being affected when law enforcement had discovered them using cannabis in a local park and allowed them to leave—only to then detain and arrest their darker-skinned friends.

This centrality of identity categories helped them make more sense of the texts I had mapped out for the class. In fact, the path I'd hoped to take was relatively simple: First to understand themselves and their experiences as in part corralled by systems, institutions, and ideologies that had long preceded them; then to make sense of the loose amalgamation of both spectacular and quotidian horrors alongside the triumphantly cruel venality that comprised the baggy doctrine of Trumpism; next to read case studies around some issues that affected them directly; and finally to engage in some kind of scaffolded research project that comprised at least in part some kind of activity outside the classroom in the service of social change (as they themselves understood the phrase). We soon set about reading any number of the seemingly infinite "think pieces" on Trumpism, its effects, and the histories that engendered it. We also read short pieces from the Black Lives Matter website that characterized the movement in its own words and on its own terms. Added to that were longer-form works such as Ta-Nehisi Coates' sweeping "The Case For Reparations" (also a profound model of insight, analysis, and argumentation for the classes' upcoming research projects). And all of their writing assignments, both long-form and low-stakes, were in some way investigations of these topics. For the broader case study, I chose New York City itself—a cliché (to my mind at least) precisely because it's so fecund. In particular, I thought the topic of gentrification seemed a sadly ideal site to help my students understand how such seemingly abstract concepts as "global finance" could forcefully combine with previously existing legacies of racism, sexism, classism, and other ideologies of exclusion to transform my students' very neighborhoods—and, indeed, often force them and their families to move multiple times in its wake (or, in some cases, to become unhomed entirely)—while also providing a number of possibilities for local engagement. Jeremiah Moss's recent *Vanishing New York* did an excellent job of breaking down complicated topics and terms such as neoliberalism (relying in large part on CUNY's own David Harvey and his greatly missed student, Neil Smith) and explaining how seemingly abstract forces like "global capital" relate directly to NYC real estate and politics—particularly when it comes to such unmistakably imbricated and implicated practices such as food deserts and stop & frisk.



VANISHING NEW YORK: HOW A GREAT CITY LOST ITS SOUL BY JEREMIAH MOSS, DEY STREET BOOKS (2017)

This extensive framing took us about halfway through the semester, and it was then time for them to choose their own topics as well as their sites of outside engagement. Fortunately, we have a pretty politically active campus, so the class and I were able to attend several events organized at LaGuardia to help them dispel some of the anxiety around preparedness and inclusion: A symposium on Black Lives Matter, an event on immigration rights, and a forum on the "right to the city"—all about which my students reported an enormous sense of relief and excitement to see rooms full of young people that looked just like them already engaged in this kind of work. Their final projects would be a combination of the entire semester so far: Their identities as they saw them in the wake of Trump combined with a powerful and specific case study of whatever social issue they wanted to learn more about, which would then also be the subject of—or at least related to—their outside activism. As that extracurricular phase approached, my students once again evinced the anxiety they had expressed on the first day of class about what to do, where to do it, and how they would be received. I tried to counter some of this worry by detailing my own engagements over the years, and how varied the experiences had been—from helping plan direct actions as an undergrad to protesting various causes in the streets over the years to hyperlocal concerns such as forming a "friends" group for my local dog park. Much more effectively than my own recollections, I used some humor to defuse their discomfort, showing the class some short clips from the recent sitcom "Parks & Recreation," wherein the lead characters hold town-hall meetings filled with humorously exaggerated versions of the "types" such gatherings often attract. My students were certain that *actual* meetings couldn't possibly be quite as strange or as focused on seemingly meaningless minutiae. Luckily, my own community board in Brooklyn posts all their own meetings online in full, so I had several of these clips also ready to go. While these events are often only comical in how dry they can be, my students were fascinated as local residents took to the microphones to complain—sometimes in lengthy and heated diatribes—about such seemingly minor concerns as loud feral cats and the style of new garbage cans, but also about more pressing local issues like dangerous construction, the lack of affordable housing, and, in the particular case of North Brooklyn, the recent disastrous handling by a local police precinct of a string of sexual-assault allegations. In a more moderate instance, one local resident began peppering the would-be proprietor of a new bar with demands for noise diminution as well as promises of security to manage the crowds. One student who lived above an apparently raucous establishment in her own neighborhood was excited to see someone publicly demanding from business owners exactly the respect and accountability she wished her downstairs neighbor would offer her own block. My students were also happy to see

that the faces running the [3]meeting looked much like New York itself: An older Black woman sitting next to an Orthodox Jewish man sitting next to a young Latinx woman sitting next to a Southeast Asian man wearing a rainbow flag on his shirt. Perhaps a little unfairly, I also showed a full and monstrously boring ten-minute clip of one local contractor detailing all the safety protocols for large-scale construction after a local zoning change, hoping to mitigate my students' unease with the very real tedium that can at times characterize local involvement.

Obviously, for the typical community-college student, both time and money are at a premium. Nearly all of my students had at least part-time jobs, and in addition either took care of their own children or another family member (and, not that infrequently, both) while also taking a full load of courses to qualify for financial aid. So while I was adamant that they needed to attend at least one outside meeting, event, action, etc., I also wanted to stay mindful of their previous obligations and complicated lives. I decided, and only if absolutely necessary, they could attend one of the politically themed meetings at school in order to save time and travel—and I am happy to say that only one of sixteen students took me up on that offer.

So, to decide what they might do off-campus, I first had them do a freewrite in class on their interests in general, their political positions in particular, and their identity categories, and then look for any kind of theme that might run through all three. For example, one student interested in history and anti-gentrification movements, and who identified as a queer woman, began looking for groups that helped LGBTQIA+ groups find affordable housing. In her searches, she found an organization that helped homeless queer youth find shelter, with an open call for volunteers. As we began researching other organizations that fit their interests (such as Make The Road New York and the Doe Fund), and because concerns around time were such an issue, I had them make a list of at least five possible groups and meeting times they were interested in, and then decide which meeting at what time and location made the most sense for them. I also asked them to do this about a month in advance in order to have plenty of time to organize their schedule around the upcoming event. This light "contract" was then written into the assignment itself (as one of the many staged blog posts related to the final project). Obviously, if any changes needed to be made at a later date, a simple email or talking to me about it after class would be fine. I also had them—as much as was possible—try to organize all their off-campus meetings over the same three-week span so we could spend a little time in each class discussing what they had done and reflecting on how the students might use such experiences in their finished project. The very first report—told in excited terms to her classmates—merely helped beget a virtuous circle, and only two students had to reschedule their meetings due to last-minute conflicts.

After all the meetings had been attended and the projects completed, my students' final requirement was a presentation to the class. And not only were the presentations an exciting way for them to share their work with their peers, but they also cross-pollinated rather quickly: Students not only saw connections between the work of anti-racist groups and affordable-housing organizations, but they also learned from one another about other meetings they might want to attend—and indeed some declared with enthusiasm that they planned to do exactly that. The projects included the gentrification of the East Village (with time spent by the reporting student at the Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space), Russia's military and stealth incursions into former territories and spheres of influence (by an immigrant from the Republic of Georgia who attended a meeting at the UN, with access granted by his diplomat father), and state-sanctioned homophobia in Jamaica (by a queer immigrant from that nation's capital who spent her time at a meeting in Queens dedicated to spotlighting the increasing rates of violence suffered by queer women of color). Most surprisingly (and perhaps due in part to their targeted research ahead of time), not a single student expressed any sense of exclusion during their meetings, and several went out of their way to express how warm, welcoming, and grateful a number of organizations were to have them there. In a particularly poignant combination of school and life, one student, who had to miss two weeks of class in order for her whole family to fly to Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria to locate one of her aunts, attended an organizational meeting in Brooklyn focused on outreach to that island—and she has since remained deeply involved. Indeed, that was not an unlikely result: One of my students is now a member of Students for Justice in Palestine at Hunter College, where he plans to transfer next year, and another student is still involved in homeless outreach in her neighborhood of Woodhaven, Queens. In fact, I was frankly a bit shocked at how excited my students declared themselves to be to remain engaged with their work outside the school (and, by way of anecdotal run-ins with several of them in the halls, they remain so).

In fact, I was frankly a bit shocked at how excited my students declared themselves to be to remain engaged with their work outside the school (and, by way of anecdotal run-ins with several of them in the halls, they remain so).

In short, and most immediately, an assignment that asks for this kind of engagement seems to help them understand that multiple networks already exist to combat exactly the kinds of policies and ideologies they had already expressed such understandable concern about while also helping dispel some of the misconceptions they had about engagement in the first place. And, after several conversations with other interested faculty, I would think that most urban community colleges provide a similarly ideal site through which to demystify and thereby increase the level of local engagement for a population of students—

at least in my experience—eager to get involved. In terms of grading, I found it relatively easy to separate my own obvious delight with their out-of-class events from the more nuts-and-bolts needs of an English composition class. I assessed students' final projects holistically as I usually do: Attempting to gauge their ability to synthesize vast and various materials into a coherent argument (after all, this was still 101), but also through their ability to integrate the materials we covered in class into a coherent argumentative whole. Of course, I didn't grade them on their activistic enthusiasm, but I did see a strong and perhaps unsurprising link between their efforts in class and their efforts outside.

Most importantly (for myself as an educator, at least), this approach confirmed a hunch I had about the apathy supposedly afflicting that oft-maligned group, so general as to be nearly imaginary: "college students today." Rather than prodding or prompting, most of my own students simply needed a light introduction to the possibilities for action—and then for me to get out of the way. What's more, while I have great latitude as to the thematic focus for ENG101, I could easily see myself building similar assignments into any of my literature classes that have political components, especially "ethnic" and immigrant American literatures. But composition does seem like an ideal site to engage most students right as they arrive—so, ideally, I would teach this class again in a similar fashion, swapping out certain readings for more current ones (indeed, this semester I've included a piece about and a few videos of the Parkland activists, particularly Emma Gonzalez, the queer Latinx woman from Florida, who has offered my students so much in the way of both identity politics and a model of youthful political engagement). I'm also mindful of the potential difficulties of using such an approach in other locations: I teach in an area rather hostile to the current administration (on average, districts in Brooklyn and Queens voted for Clinton by about 80-93%), and I also have a very supportive and outspoken set of administrators at LaGuardia, so I might suggest to other educators in less favorable climes to focus as much as possible on the engagement itself rather than any particular political position or desire. And whatever pedagogical challenges that remain are not specific to this class but are familiar to anyone teaching first-year students at community colleges: A lack of preparation, complicated personal situations, and the ever-present exigencies of poverty. None of this, of course, minimizes my desire to teach this way again, and my goal would be to use such assignments until there's no longer any need to—though, to paraphrase the old Soviet joke, such titanic social transformation appears always to be "just" over the horizon. However, even without any idealistic fantasies, at the very least this course helped my students understand that such outside engagement was not only possible but, in an urban area, relatively easy to find—and often even enjoyable. Or, as one of my students poignantly said during his presentation: "Going to this meeting and hearing what they were doing was the first time I didn't feel hopeless since the election. It was the first time I actually believed Kendrick when he said, 'We gon' be alright'—and now I was one of the people helping to get us there."

Notes

[1] I'm Jewish—but, as a secular Jew living in New York City, I feel (perhaps naively) insulated from much of the brunt of the recent rise of anti-Semitism.

[2] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 2005) 330-331.

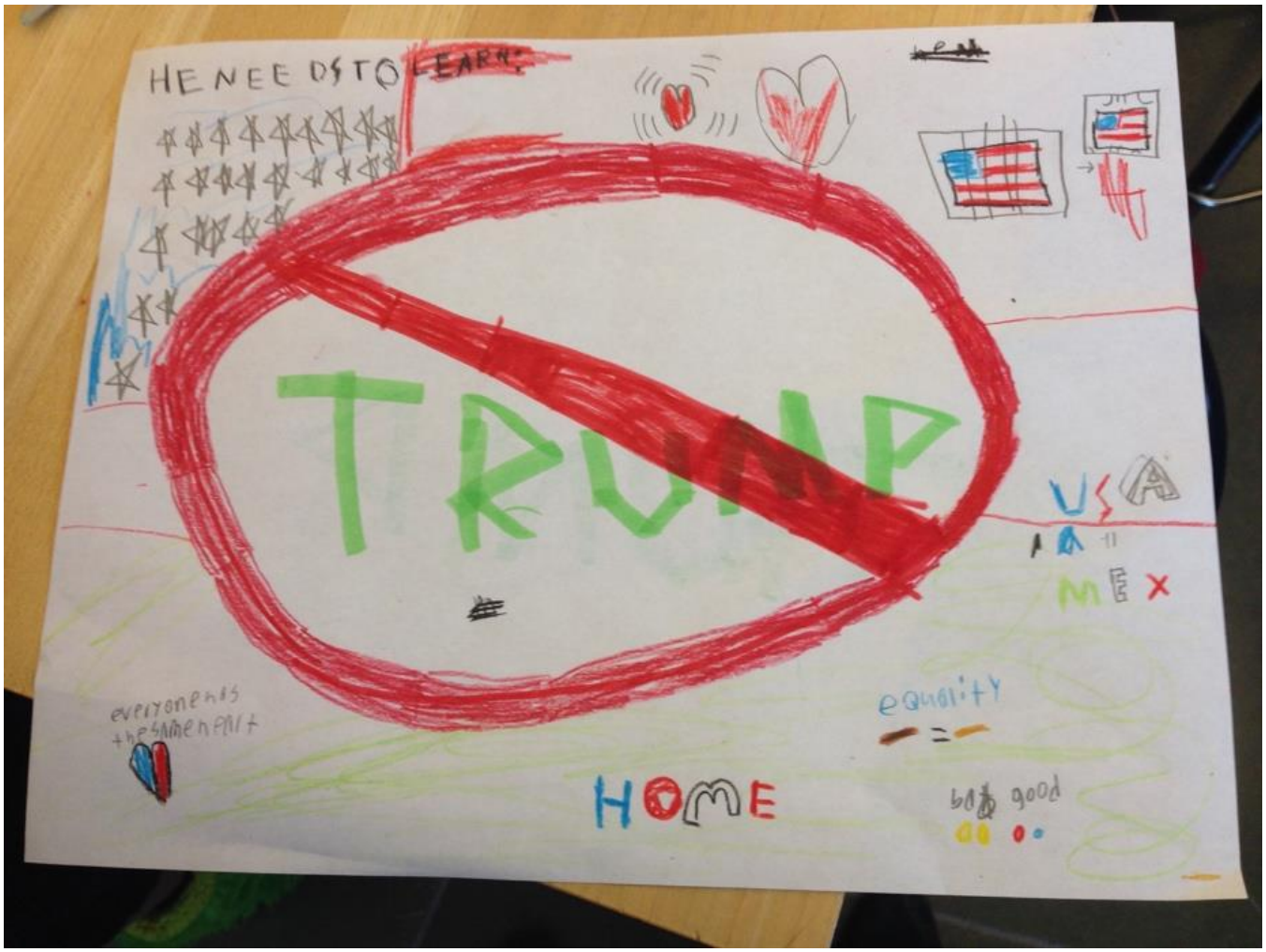
ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

On Belonging: Children Respond to Trump through Play and Imagination

by Emily Claire Price and A. Susan Jurow



CHILD'S PROTEST SIGN, COURTESY AUTHORS

Donald Trump's words and actions have emboldened a new generation of racist, sexist, and xenophobic individuals to speak out without fear of being ostracized by the larger society, and to commit horrific acts of violence against people whose skin, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or ability does not align with the dominant group. His proposed policies attack the rights of nearly every group that is not white, male, Christian, and wealthy, and we have seen these attitudes and actions embodied in our schools as well. While the campaign and election of Donald Trump has led to dangerous levels of discriminatory language, actions, and policies in our society, systems of oppression and structures of privilege were not created during the campaign, but were granted a renewed legitimacy in its wake. Our ability to stratify and segregate, to conquer and to oppress, is inherent to the very fabric of our country; it is a part of our collective historical identity. Although the stakes have greatly increased since the election, divisive rhetoric and prejudicial policies are not something new to American society, nor are they new to the children enrolled in the public schools that are tasked with preparing them to be full participants in this society.

Despite this, in our combined 30 years of teaching in early childhood and elementary classrooms, afterschool programs, and university-based teacher education courses leading up until the 2016 election, we have encountered educators, caregivers, administrators, and policymakers who did not feel it was necessary or appropriate to discuss issues of equity and identity with students in primary schools. This stance was informed by a number of assumptions, including, for example, the mistaken belief that we had already "solved" racism as well as the belief that attending to issues of equity is beyond the purpose of public education, which should concentrate on the transmission and acquisition of academic skills. The assumption that has proved most pervasive in relegating critical discussions of power and privilege to the secondary domain, and the one that we centrally respond to in this paper, is the belief that children are largely unaware of issues of equity. Following from this, if we were to introduce these topics into the early childhood or elementary classroom, some argue that we would effectively be burdening our students with material that is neither developmentally appropriate or relevant to their lives.

In this article, we trace this assumption to the framing of children as innocent and our perceived societal need to preserve and protect that innocence. If we are to attend to issues of inequity that young students are contending with, we need to develop a view of children that does not position them as passive recipients of knowledge, but active constructors of it. We draw from childhood studies, feminist theories, and queer theories in contending that children are not only affected by inequalities in our larger society, but are actively working to make sense of them. We argue that one of the primary tasks of childhood is making sense of the often unspoken norms, hierarchies, and structures that characterize the adult world they have come to inhabit. In this regard, our argument goes beyond the contention that children are simply capable of attending to issues of equity. Although we agree that they are absolutely capable, we take the argument a step further in asserting that children *already are* contending with issues of equity, relative to their local community and context. To ignore this fact is to do a disservice to both the students themselves and to our larger society. As educators, we believe that we should be listening for, taking seriously, and attending to issues of equity that children are contending with, which will vary greatly depending on the local community and context. This positioning of children as agentic, empowered, full beings in their own right is a radical approach to teaching, as early childhood and elementary education traditionally positions children as recipients of knowledge, rather than as active constructors of it.

Although equity-oriented teaching has taken on a sense of urgency during this presidential term, we hold that its application extends beyond this immediate political moment, as examinations of power, privilege, and identity are central to a comprehensive public school experience.

Although equity-oriented teaching has taken on a sense of urgency during this presidential term, we hold that its application extends beyond this immediate political moment, as examinations of power, privilege, and identity are central to a comprehensive public school experience. Our approach to equity-oriented teaching is radical in both its positioning of investigations of power as central to the learning process, and its focus on transformative action. Specifically, how we organize our teaching facilitates and advocates for the transformation of institutional practices over adaptation to them. It is our duty as educators to respond honestly to the issues all of our students are contending with, including our youngest ones. In this article, we aim to illuminate the critical role of play in exploring issues of equity with young children. We provide examples of how we designed for play-based explorations of privilege and power in a low-income afterschool program with majority Latino students in the months before, during, and after the election of Donald Trump. In examining the play that resulted, we describe how the children explored themes of identity and belonging as a means of interrogating, interrupting, and responding to Trump's characterizations of Mexicans in particular.

Introducing the Players and the Play

EPIC is an afterschool literacy, arts, and technology design club co-facilitated by the University of Colorado at Boulder's School of Education and Alicia Sanchez International Elementary School. In its eighth year, the club meets three days a week and offers free afterschool programming for children ages 7 to 11. The club is dedicated to (1) improving the academic, social, and emotional learning opportunities for the elementary

students, a significant percentage of whom are racial and ethnic minorities living in poverty; and (2) preparing a majority middle-class, white female population of pre-service teachers, with limited experience working with historically marginalized communities effectively (Cole & the Distributed Literacy Consortium, 2006; Freeman & Jurow, in press). Pre-service teachers participate in the club as a requirement of a university course in which they are enrolled on theories of learning.

The demographics of the elementary students who attend the afterschool club reflect that of the general school population, with the exception that a growing percentage of Mexican-identifying students have opted into the club as it has continued to operate. Approximately 66% of the school's student population identify as Latinx, and over 80% of the students who attend our club do. Additionally, many of the students whom we serve are first or second generation immigrants. Although almost all of the student participants are fluent English speakers, many also speak Spanish with various degrees of fluency. Approximately 74% of students live in households experiencing high-poverty, making the population of the school unique from the school district it is a part of, which is largely affluent, white, and high-achieving as measured by standardized tests.

The first author is a white Ph.D. candidate whose teaching background is in urban early childhood education. She now works in teacher education at the university level, and works with the second author in designing, facilitating, and researching equity-oriented learning for both children and pre-service teachers at the afterschool program described in this article. She is the primary project designer and on-site coordinator. The second author is an Indian-American professor of Education and the Director of the EPIC afterschool club and teacher education program. As the Director, she is responsible for designing a university-school partnership that is mutually beneficial for all stakeholders, including the elementary students. She has designed curriculum units to support equity-oriented learning at the club and conducted research on children's and pre-service teachers' learning through club activities.

Engaging Inequities and Imagining More Equitable Futures through Play

In an effort to support culturally relevant and meaningful learning and teaching, we privilege play as a central means for engaging issues of equity at EPIC. Play is the language children speak to make sense of their world, and to begin to develop answers to questions about their role in it (Davies, 2003; Gallas, 1998; Lindqvist, 1995, 2001; Paley, 2010, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). When children are faced with a tension in their social order, or an upsetting event that they need to process, they turn to play as a way to work through problems and imagine new possibilities for themselves. We view play as a form of improvised storytelling, in which children develop characters, take on identities and roles, and experiment with multiple storylines and endings (Galman, 2017; Paley, 1984; Wohlwend, 2012, 2009). Children's play includes both recurring and improvised elements that allow them to create imaginary worlds in which "new metaphors, new forms of social relations, and new patterns of power and desire are explored" (Davies, 2003, p. 167). At EPIC, we encourage children to play through familiar media narratives so that they can embody and feel the constraints of stereotypical characters, actions, and plot lines and improvise ways to play around these obstacles (Ferholt, 2009, 2010; Wohlwend, 2013). In this regard, play is not a means of escaping reality; rather, it is a means of making sense of it.

Our positioning of play as a form of equity-oriented learning has roots in an agentic framing of who children are, and what childhood is.

Our positioning of play as a form of equity-oriented learning has roots in an agentic framing of who children are, and what childhood is. The conception of children as human *beings* rather than human *becomings* is a fairly recent development (Corsaro, 2005; James, 2009). Prior to this, the predominant view was that children were worthy of study insofar as they were able to provide insight into adult life and specifically, the transition into adulthood (Christensen & James, 2008; Piaget, 1969; Woodhead, 2009; Woodhead & Faulkner 2008). Despite a shift in the academic theorization of childhood, the dominant paradigm is still hugely influential in popular understanding and in practice (Casteñeda, 2010; James, 1993; Stockton, 2009).

One of the primary tasks of childhood is making sense of, problematizing, deconstructing, and reinventing the social norms and constructs of the adult world that children have come to inhabit, including the construction of their own existence as children. We theorize this process largely through *interpretive reproduction*, a term developed by Corsaro (2005) to capture both the innovative and creative aspects of children in society, as well as the idea that children are not simply internalizing society and culture, but are actively contributing to cultural production and change. Interpretive reproduction provides a means of theorizing children's social development as neither linear nor as an exact copy of existing structures, but rather, as a process of reproduction that includes children's contention with ambiguities, tensions, and difficulties, as well as their resolutions, reconstructions, and reinterpretations of existing norms and ways of being. In our analysis of how children's play mediates their equity-oriented explorations, we look at how interpretive reproduction is enacted through children's storytelling that is occurring inside the playworlds and structures we have designed.

Designing for Play-Based Explorations of Equity

At EPIC, we design semester-long theme-based units that promote the exploration of issues of equity with which students are actively contending. We invite children to play in fantasy worlds that raise current social injustices that

students have indicated are of concern to them through conversation, writing, art, and play. With each theme, we develop both real-world and fantasy realm entry points and guiding questions that bridge these two domains.

In one unit, we drew on students' expertise in identifying the messages that Disney fairytales and their associated books, movies, toys, and other media products present to us about who we are, what we can do, and who we can be. We sought to encourage students' critical awareness of implicit messages about race, gender, class, language, and other social constructs in books, movies, and in commercial products more broadly, and to see these texts as both pliable and revisable (Davies, 2003; Gallas, 1998; Wohlwend, 2012, 2009). We developed this particular project to help the children make sense of the negative narratives and messages that were circulating during Trump's campaign in the fall of 2016. We had heard the children voice strong emotional reactions and sharp intellectual critiques to Trump's portrayals of their communities and themselves with us - as Mexicans, as immigrants, as girls, as emergent bilinguals, as being or having undocumented family members. As part of how we approach curriculum design, we used the children's reactions as the basis for organizing a personally-meaningful context for play and exploration.

In designing all of our project units, we rely on a set of norms and routines that facilitate playful engagement with real world problems. In order for us to be able to play through issues of injustice in either real world or fantasy realms, we need to establish trust among the players. Towards this end, we incorporate time each day for informal conversations where adults are able to check in with individual children and get to know each other's interests and lives outside of school. Children have learned that this is a time when they can talk about their families and the struggles they may be facing due to a sibling's illness, a parent's loss of a job, or they may share about their friends and their plans for upcoming holidays. No topics are off-limits and all topics are viewed as ways of getting to appreciate the richness of the children's lives. These unscripted conversations are met with care, concern, and respect for the child and their experiences. They also provide the basis for curriculum design and responsiveness. Further, our emphasis on relational trust establishes the groundwork for taking risks, exploring ideas, and generating new ways of approaching problems through play (Gee, 2007).

A key dimension of our approach to curriculum design is that we plan for emergence. When we design project arcs, we have a vision in mind for how we anticipate that the semester will progress. However, these projected arcs are exactly that - a projection. They are flexible and are constantly being renegotiated based on what children are bringing to us. Each week, we reflect on what issues the children are contending with in the real world, what activities or topics they are or are not engaging with in the fantasy realm, and the relationships developing between players, all of which inform how we design for the next week. The responsiveness of our designs is critical for attending to what is consequential to the children and their communities. The guiding questions and learning goals for each unit serve as a central guiding point, as a semester may end with a very different project that the one originally designed anticipated. The capacity of our curriculum to shift as a result of the children's concerns and questions allows the club to become a space where children can solve meaningful problems together with the support of peers and adult collaborators.

Who Belongs, and Who Gets to Decide?

In the months leading up to Trump's election, issues of identity and belonging were consistent themes in the children's play. In play scenes representing both their current reality and imagined futures, children explored questions such as: Who belongs? Who gets to decide? And, what types of inclusion and exclusion are best for a community? As children of Mexican immigrants who were largely portrayed as a problem for the United States, belonging and deserving to belong in the country were central and consequential issues. In the following, we share two examples that illustrate how the children took up the question of who belongs through collaborative play. The examples underscore how the children engaged with interpretive reproduction in order to make sense of the way they, their families, and their community were being positioned. They were selected because of how they illuminated the children's sustained interest in questions about what it means to belong and organize fair systems of inclusion/exclusion. As we show, the children were also using play to imagine and develop more inclusive and diverse futures.

"U.S. is the home of Mexicans too"

In a project on mural arts in the spring of 2016, children explored the purposes of murals, and developed group murals about issues of equity to which they wanted to bring awareness. In the early stages of the process when we were talking about and sketching initial ideas, an artistic, thoughtful, and energetic nine year-old male student named Camden developed two similar drawings. In the first, then-candidate Donald Trump was drawn speaking to a crowd and in the next, then-candidate Hillary Clinton was accepting the presidency (see Figures 1 and 2). There were elements of both fantasy and reality in the drawings in that they depicted a pressing and significant issue of equity that was directly impacting the individual student and his family, but also referenced an imagined future in which Clinton would win the election. In the first image, Donald Trump stands at a podium in a room with three rows of chairs, one window, and a door. His sharp eyebrows are pointed downward and he wears a scowl, with a speech bubble above his head that reads, "I want to be presint (president)." In the rows of seats, a single person stands with a scared look on their face, and responds "No Trump presint (president)." Written underneath the image are the words "Because Donald Trump doesn't have freedom." When Camden presented the image to a group of other children and Emily (the first author), he explained this statement further, saying that Trump does not believe everyone should have freedom,

and that Mexicans should leave (fieldnotes, 3/9/16). In the next image, Clinton appears in the same setting, standing at the same podium. Her eyes are wide and she has a large smile on her face, as does the sole audience member, who is saying, "You are presint." The speech bubble above Clinton says, "Yaha" and the words underneath the image read "Because Hillary is going to give freedom to everybody." In both images, the presidential candidates are drawn at twice the scale as the lone audience member, and are fully clothed, whereas the lone audience member is a fully anonymous, small scale stick figure. The style in which Camden depicted the characters in this imagined scene suggest that the candidates were more powerful than the audience member. Without a body, without a face, the sole audience member is speaking, but without the impression of great weight. This, we might interpret as representing the child's feelings in light of the election process and the uncertainty of their future.

FIGURE 1. CHILD'S DEPICTION OF A CAMPAIGN SPEECH BY THEN-CANDIDATE DONALD TRUMP.

FIGURE 2. CHILD'S DEPICTION OF A PRESIDENTIAL ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY THEN-CANDIDATE HILLARY CLINTON.

As one of the older and veteran members of the club, Camden had soon inspired a small group of children to act out what they would want to say to Donald Trump if they were in the depicted scene. In the play world created by Camden, the other children were able to act "as if" they could speak back to Trump, which supported them in constructing themselves as agentive and powerful (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). They tried out different approaches as different speakers with different concerns. One seven year-old stated with a generosity of heart, "He needs to learn." His older cousin nodded and then, referencing the potential critical consequences to their lives said that, "he wants to send all us Mexicans back to Mexico." They both began to chant quietly, "No Trump, No Trump."

Referencing other forms of political resistance that the children had studied in addition to murals, Emily remarked that the chant sounded like something one would hear at a protest. This prompted some children to begin making actual signs to carry with them in the real world. One showed four stick figures holding hands with the word "freedom" beside it. Above them, the word "Trump" was written in bright orange marker, with a circle around it and an **X** going through the middle. In another sign, Trump's name was written in large green capital letters with a red circle around it and a red line across it. Surrounding the central image were American flags, hearts, stars, and words including "home," "equality," "bad," and "good." The image also incorporated phrases that they had used in their play, such as "he needs to learn" and "everyone has the same heart" (see Figure 3). Another group of children began writing a letter with bulleted ideas representing what they would want say to him, including "US is the home of Mexicans too" and "People have the same hart (heart)."

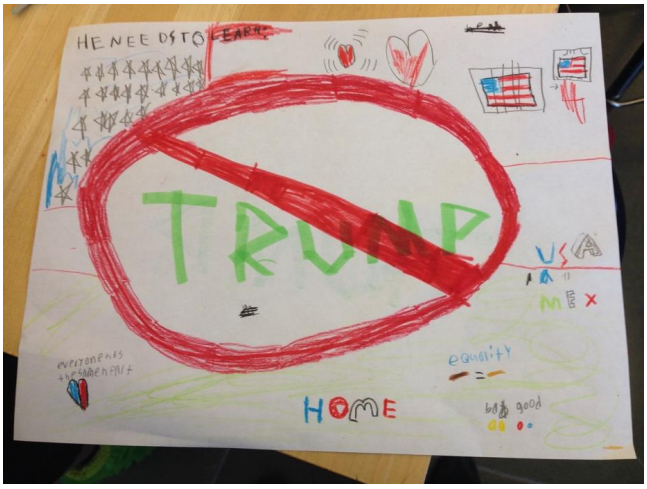
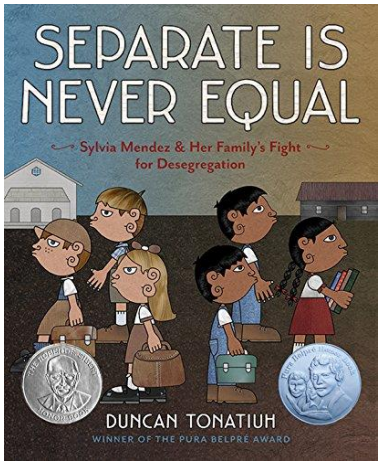


FIGURE 3. CHILD'S PROTEST SIGN.

In this example, play was a direct response to a prompt we, as designers and facilitators, developed and helped sustain with the children. It built on previous activities meant to bring in histories and stories of confronting and overcoming oppression as a community. For instance, the children had participated in multiple read-alouds of the award winning children's book *Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for*

Desegregation (Tonatiuh, 2014), which focused on a young girl named Sylvia and her family's legal battle for desegregation in California schools. The story resonated with the children who realized that they, like Sylvia, were U.S. citizens who were not being treated as equals to other racial groups, namely Whites. We also supported the children in exploring how murals can be created to convey and organize political action. The focus on murals and the book were intentional ways of linking to Mexican cultural practices of resistance and political organizing. It was approximately nine months before the election and the topic of Donald Trump was bubbling up in small group conversations. We knew and were planning for the likelihood of helping the children to articulate and develop their counternarratives or other responses to Trump's racist and xenophobic campaign rhetoric.



SEPARATE IS NEVER EQUAL: SYLVIA MENDEZ AND HER FAMILY'S FIGHT FOR DESEGREGATION BY DUNCAN TONATIUH, HARRY N. ABRAMS (2014).

In Camden's original drawing as well as in the play and the writing that it inspired, children brought in messages they were receiving about themselves and their communities that they were actively working to make sense of. As children who identified largely as Mexican and American, Trump's campaign speeches and social media posts were spreading the message that these two identities were mutually exclusive. This generated questions of identity and belonging for the students. Who were they if they couldn't be both? To which community did they belong? In falsely presenting these identifications as incompatible with one another, Trump's campaign was directly contradicting the children's lived experiences and denying their very existence as Mexican and American. Not only were these identities presented as incompatible with one another, but they were each ascribed qualities and characteristics that resulted in value-laden caricatures of the good American and the bad Mexican. Mexicans were depicted as villainous, as criminals who were sneaking into a place where they did not belong, so that they could hurt, steal from, and displace white Americans, who were alternatively positioned as innocent and heroic. Entirely ignoring our history as colonizers, policies and physical boundaries such as the proposed Wall were explained as necessary in order to preserve the innocence of Americans and prevent them from falling victim to the deviant behavior of the usurping Mexicans.

The children engaged in interpretive reproduction to respond to these unjust characterizations in their play, and ultimately, to assert their right to belong. In their illustrations, writing, acting, and conversation, they presented the conditions of their current reality. Donald Trump wanted to be president, and in the process of his campaigning, he described the children and their families as interlopers who were trying to hurt good, white Americans. They highlighted this reality in the physical portrayal of Trump as large and imposing, with heavily drawn eyebrows and a scowl, and in their surrounding conversations, where a repeated refrain was that Trump wants to send us back to Mexico. Yet, the children did not accept the narrative that was given. The children worked together to dissect and disrupt his positioning of them as bad Mexicans. They openly resisted his bid for candidacy through the creation of protest imagery and vocabulary, as well as by calls to educate Trump as to who Mexicans really are. They worked collectively to develop a vision of a hopeful future in which Hillary wins the election. Beyond this win, the children also imagined that Trump could learn "respect" and come to appreciate that "unique is good." In this future, the children would be able to maintain their expansive identities as being from both Mexico and the United States.

Determining Essential Goodness at the Border

Like the previous example, the play scene described in this section highlights how children engaged in interpretive reproduction as a means of examining what it means to belong. In the previous example, the play represented reality; they were directly contending with, responding to, and resisting Trump's campaign rhetoric. In this example, the scene is in the fantasy realm, but one that mirrors the issues that the children are contending with during the Trump presidency.

Approximately one year following the election of Donald Trump, we were nearing the end of a project in which the children were designing and building their own cities in response to a perceived social problem or need. A nine year-old male student named Sam with a love of horror stories and a penchant for plaid flannel was standing off to the side of the children gathered on the floor. He was looking towards the empty half of the cafeteria, and declared out loud that it was heaven, and asked if Emily (Author 1) would like to explore it. He walked her through what he saw in his heaven, including clouds and angels, but told her that it could be anything she wanted it it to be, adding that "it's most like heaven if you close your eyes." She asked if she could enter if she was still alive, and Sam said yes, but only for six minutes, after which point she would be unable to return to the living world. To make the distinction between worlds clear, he declared that he was going to make a gate, which would be called "Heaven's Gate."

As he began gathering materials and draping blankets over the open space between two cafeteria tables, other children became curious, and came over to ask questions and contribute to the scene. One child asked if everyone could go to heaven, and Sam thoughtfully replied that yes, if you are "essentially good." He continued to explain that you cannot come in if you are "essentially bad," and pointed to a different corner of the room, which he referred to as "the banished lands."

Back in heaven, an eight year-old female student with a keen eye for detail declared herself the gatekeeper, and began constructing a chain link rope out of paper, a

costume that included a long, shiny green robe, and a staff with a hook on the end so she could open and close the entrance rope. Consequential questions began to emerge about what it means to be essentially good or bad, and who gets to decide. The children thought God should decide, and elected a female pre-service teacher with long, dark hair to be the first to play God, and constructed a robe for her to wear. One energetic seven year-old said he would build a computer system in which your goodness or badness is recorded, and a construction-minded female student interested in technology built a hand scanner to expedite the process of locating your records. All of the children who applied for entry to Heaven used the hand scanner and the computer system deemed them "good." With this evaluation, they received a yellow ticket labeled with the words "Heaven" and "yes" or "no" checkboxes, with an X in the yes box. They were then permitted to go to the gate, where they turned over their ticket to the gatekeeper. One particularly enthusiastic student named José sought to seek out an answer to the question, can you be kicked out of heaven? He shouted nonsense words and ran from group to group, eventually stealing a pretend bottle of holy water, labeled with its imagined Gatorade sponsorship, in order to garner the attention of God and God's assistant Sam. They asked him over to a table and they spoke with eyes closed, where José explained that he just wanted to drink the holy water. God, nodding, said that she knew José was "innocent" and asked him to try not to disrupt the other members of heaven before telling him how much she cared for him and everyone in heaven. For today at least, it was determined that heaven was not a place that you could be removed from. By the end of the afternoon, all but one small group of students had abandoned the towns and cities they had been building to assist in the creation of Heaven's Gate. They were deeply engaged in a collective sensemaking experience, as they built a community and negotiated who belonged and under what conditions.

Although Trump's name was never explicitly stated, the parallels to the proposed border wall, and the characterizations of the Mexicans and Americans on either side, were difficult to ignore.

Although Trump's name was never explicitly stated, the parallels to the proposed border wall, and the characterizations of the Mexicans and Americans on either side, were difficult to ignore. Upon its creation, heaven was immediately designated as a space for individuals who are "essentially good," mirroring the campaign's presentation of white Americans. Like the U.S., it was positioned as a desirable place to be, and as such, it and the people within its borders, needed to be protected from possible infiltration. The gate defined the borders of heaven and a gatekeeper was posted to secure it from unapproved entry. An elaborate technological system was developed to enforce border security and ensure that only people whose documentation verified their essential goodness would be allowed to enter, mirroring the uncertainty that many of the children's extended family members were facing as immigrants without documentation.

Within minutes of designating heaven as a community for the "essentially good," a place for those who were turned away from heaven for not being "good enough" was created. The "banished lands" were located just outside of the gate to heaven, and its name was significant. It was not labeled simply as hell, which is commonly considered to be the antithesis of heaven, but instead referenced banishment, a process of being removed from and forbidden from returning to a place in which you were formerly welcome. Again, this process of being forcibly removed from, and unable to return to, a place that one considers to be their home, resonated with the children's fears about who belongs in America and what might lead to banishment. What actions or behaviors could result in removal from the community, if any? What does it mean to be a community if your membership is contingent upon continued adherence to preferred norms and ways of being? What would it take to be banished from home?

In their play, the children demonstrated their deep and informed awareness of Mexican and Mexican-Americans' uncertain future in the U.S. The children's play reproduced the situations and constraints they and their families were facing. At the same time, the children's play was also transformative. In their version, everyone was approved for entrance to heaven, determined to be essentially good. While the banished lands existed, they were devoid of any inhabitants. If your paperwork was lost between when you received your approval to enter Heaven and when you presented it at the gate, you could simply return to the computer and hand scanner and repeat the process. Heaven was an inclusive community, and while it remains to be seen if there is anything that can get you banished from heaven, it was clear that the immediate consequence for causing a perceived disruption was not eviction, but a conversation with the chosen leader, God.

Discussion

As educators, it is imperative for us to take seriously the issues with which our students are contending. In the current political moment, when elements of students' identities and experience are at an increased risk of being dismissed by the President himself, this is all the more necessary. Young children should not be exempt from these conversations for the sake of preserving their presumed innocence. Children are acutely aware of their surroundings and are working to make sense of the largely unspoken rules that govern society. When we ignore this reality, it harms children from non-dominant communities the most. They are positioned as being too young to discuss the very injustices they may be experiencing. When we do not provide children space to discuss what they are experiencing or seeing, they are deprived of the opportunity to process their experience, effectively marginalizing them a second time.

In our examination of the role of play in exploring issues of equity and justice at EPIC, we examined when

play occurred, and what topics or themes were being explored. We found that while children's play sometimes formed as a direct response to the projects that we had intentionally designed, there were other moments when children's play occurred in spite of our planned activities. For example, the Heaven's Gate play scene emerged when students were supposed to be working on building one part of the city they had designed in response to a perceived social injustice. Instead, Sam began an exploration of what heaven is that other children became intrigued by, and they began abandoning their projects to support his. These moments of resistance were informative, as the children signaled that they had consequential issues to explore, but that they were proposing a different framework for its exploration. In those moments, it was our job as educators to listen to what they were telling us they needed to investigate, and the means by which they needed to do it. While this could be labeled as a form of resistance, our positioning of children as experts on their own lives reframed it as a form of inquiry and communication.

In the semesters leading up to, during, and following the election, children's play centered on explorations of identity, belonging, and what it means to be a deserving member of a community. The journey for each child was unique, where some held strongly to one emotional response throughout the stages of the election, and others cycled through anger, sadness, frustration, and empowerment. Overwhelmingly, the children responded to and resisted Trump's positioning of them in generous and agentic ways, simultaneously rejecting his negative characterizations of them as Mexicans and creating space for teaching him about who they truly were. Contrary to his characterizations of them, the children positioned Trump as capable of change and transformation. He was simply misinformed and "needed to learn," and they expressed their willingness to teach him.

Children used both dramatic play and art as means of responding to Trump's campaign as well as to explore broader questions of what it means to live in a pluralistic society.

Children used both dramatic play and art as means of responding to Trump's campaign as well as to explore broader questions of what it means to live in a pluralistic society. Drawing provided a means of taking up and responding directly to Trump's characterizations of Mexicans, as well as to voice their support for other candidates, such as Hillary Clinton, whose message they deemed to be more inclusive. The children took a number of actions to respond directly to the messages they were receiving about themselves and their place in the country. These included designing and creating posters that advocated for a particular candidate, responding to a candidate whose views positioned them negatively, and encouraging the adults in their life to vote. Creating these posters acknowledged both their awareness of the issue, the real implications it held for their lives, and the validity of their cognitive and emotional responses, even as children. At EPIC, drawing primarily served as a means of taking up and responding to real-life issues of inequity and injustice. Dramatic play, on the other hand, provided a way for students to take up the same issues at a distance, through the lens of fantasy. In their dramatic play, children responded to the same themes as those who were making posters, but in a fantasy world. In both drawing and play, children were attending to consequential, equity-oriented, issues, most notably the question of what it means to belong, and who gets to decide. However, in the case of dramatic play, the question of belonging was placed in a new and different context – that of an imagined heaven. This allowed children to experiment with different outcomes without real-life consequences. José could try out different behaviors and ways of being to see what would and would not result in his dismissal from heaven, knowing that when the play began again, he could return and begin again without consequence. His condition was impermanent, in a way that it is not in real life when it comes to enforcement of discriminatory immigration practices. It is important that both of these activities – fantasy or dramatic play and art or, more specifically, drawing – were used in conjunction with one another, as drawing was taken up predominantly as a direct response to injustice by older students, and dramatic play was taken up as a way to investigate injustice in a fantasy realm by our younger students. Play and imagination were distinctive features of both, in that children considered, investigated, experimented with, and advocated for different possible futures.

While our intention in sharing our process of design and reflection is to provide a model others might use when considering how to approach issues of inequity and injustice with young children, we also want to acknowledge the very real constraints that are placed on classroom teachers. We know that we were able to immerse ourselves so thoroughly in children's playworlds and our investigation of them because our afterschool program was a site for both equity-oriented teaching and research. We know that this kind of flexibility is rare, particularly with the emphasis on standardization and accountability in current educational reform movements. Our hope is that even in the most constrained environment where children's time, attention, and behavior are highly regulated, we as educators can look for moments when children's play cannot be quelled, when it resists containment, and provides insight into the issues of equity children are contending with. If we are to resist Trumpism through transformative education, we need to listen to, honor, and create space for children's own language of resistance – play and imagination.

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ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Poem
Kill and Drill

by Jennifer Hernandez

JENNIFER HERNANDEZ, PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTHOR

Kill and Drill

Today I actively monitor
a standardized test.
MAP, NAEP, ACCESS, MCA,
a new one every month.
I must walk around the classroom,
pace like a tiger in a cage.
I must be able to see the students'
Chromebook screens at all times.
I must not read test items aloud.
I must not explain test items,
even if students don't speak English.
I must not translate test items.
I must not give my opinion
if students say that the test items
are missing information or answer options.
I must not give students any encouragement
or tell them to try their best.
I must not look directly at test items.
I must not take pictures of the test items.
I must not use my cell phone in any way.
I must not have my cell phone in the room.
I must not check my email.
I must not be on my computer
(except to perform test proctor functions).
I must not grade papers.
I must not plan lessons.
I must not read books or articles.
I must not allow students to speak,
gesture, leave their seats,
or walk to the restroom
without an escort.
I must be prepared to lock the door,
turn off the lights, wordlessly direct
my students to crouch,
backs against the wall
behind the wooden cabinet,
not speaking, hearts beating,
anxiety screaming in our ears,
even when we know it's a drill
– it *is* a drill, isn't it? –
until we get an "all clear".
Good thing we have so much practice
sitting still and quiet.

ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Radical Digital Media Literacy in a Post-Truth Anti-Trump Era

by Alexandra Juhasz

RACE AND RACISM POETRY WORKSHOP, PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTHOR

I have engaged, over the duration of the Trump administration, in a series of linked pedagogical experiments: one woman's pedagogic resistance, albeit aligned with many others through making poetry together by way of digital media literacy. These have been acts of engaged, enraged intellectual citizenship in three parts: 1. an online digital media primer about fakenews, #100hardtruths-#fakenews[1], produced over the first 100 days of the administration; 2. nine Fake News Poetry Workshops held over the spring semester of 2018 making use of that online primer (these are each co-facilitated by poets in different locations and communities), and 3. an action plan to further mobilize the primer, poems, and workshops to a scale larger than my own personal pedagogy, this still in process.

These experiments are first and foremost acts of civic engagement qua pedagogy, art-making, and community-building. They are organized to create and make use of responsive formats, processes, and places to better express our keen knowledge, concern, and curiosity about a host of inter-related phenomena and in response to the current crisis of fake news: self, community, and the world; the fake and real and true; our own power and that of (social) media. The workshops allow small groups of people to learn and listen together. We think about and then communicate our own internet truths in a shared context where we take on the permissions allowed by poetic license: vernaculars and modes of being outside of internet-speak and our internet-home. This is the pedagogy: engaging small groups of participants in local, embodied art making about their individual and community truths about social media and fake news. The process of making poetry, together, in situ, concerning what we know and want to share with others is the key product (over the poetry itself): fake news poetry workshops as radical digital media literacy centers working together to model better conversation, interaction, understanding and communication in our post-truth anti-Trump era.

Don't Look, By Kiy Gentle[2]

Shhhhh
can you hear that
I think you've made them angry
Shhhhh
Don't look, they're watching us
Wanting us to keep believing

I heard a survivor type once that skepticism is just a side affect of reality

But then again
I haven't heard from her lately

Let's just keep going

Stopping is a place of growth
And when they feel they are getting small
They teach us new ways to survive

My quest for useful formats, compelling processes, other kids of words and healing engagements—in the time of Trump and Trump's time of social media-powered deception—is part of my own ongoing education as educator and media activist. Here, I share some of my own processes as I continue to try to figure out *what to do about the crisis of fake news*, given what I know (and do not!) as longtime scholar, activist, and educator focusing on activist, and also fake, media. I have made and taught about radical media for nearly thirty years; at one time, I thought about (and made use of) fake documentary as a potential tool for challenging identity, truth, and power.[3]Arming communities with "media literacy" (whether they be college students, AIDS activists, QPOCs, or youth poets from LA) has always been part of my process: sharing strategies to read, make, distribute, and challenge both our own media and the images and ideas circulated in large volume by corporate media. The powerful linking of social media and fake news—particularly in how it justifies and enables real world violence—has thrown these tried-and-true methods, analyses, and beliefs into crisis.

Thus, this piece tracks my movements in a still-forming response to rethinking and remaking digital media literacy. It begins with my "resolution toward radical digital media literacy in a post-truth era," a short piece of writing that travelled in December 2017 from my blog, to a video, to a scholarly meeting, to a podcast, to finish here.[4]The resolution's movement across registers, platforms, and audiences evidences one strategy of this radical pedagogy: testing and trading formats, vernaculars, and communities so as to be responsive and inventive during this moment of increasing representational crisis.[5] How do we reach and teach different learners differently making the most of the many media formats available to us while staying critical of them? Here, I offer a brief description of some of the nine Fake News Poetry Workshops that I held in the Spring of 2018 attempting to teach and write newly. The third and next part of the project, about to begin in Summer 2018, will be to conceive and enact a considered use of these poems and the primer given my primary commitment to better understanding and undoing fake news.

do not be distracted from the truth
that you make with your own body

Solidity is a useful illusion
It gets us through the day

solidity (gets us) resists us
tectonic assurance is fragile ground

the truth is the emptiness in the middle of the atom
the truth is the impressionability of matter, of us,
the truth is the space we fight to shape

-M. Astley[6]

Resolution toward radical digital media literacy in a post-truth era[7]

Given that scholars and makers of documentary, visual anthropology, journalism, and autobiography have been investigating the construction, forms, and circulation of reality-based truth claims in their fields of practice since the invention of these disciplines.

Given that these forms vary across time, culture, media, convention, and discipline.

Given that teachers have attempted, for as long as such claims have been made, to educate about the traditions, forms, and conditions that produce, authorize, circulate, and challenge mediated truth claims because such a "media literacy" is closely connected to citizenship, power, and knowledge.

Given that the mobilization of powerful, loose, and adapting theories and practices of mediated truth claims, under the nomenclature "fake news," took by surprise even the most committed practitioners, scholars, and educators signaled above.

Let it hereby be resolved that our previous practices of "digital media literacy," while useful and relevant for the previous epoch, are no longer equipped for our emergent reality.

Radical digital media literacy is required in a post-truth anti-Trump era.

Given that I was just one within a vast community of scholars, media makers, teachers, and students, over time and across disciplines, who drew on "anti-essentialist theories to show the relationship between power, knowledge, and the construction of truth," particularly in my earlier work on the productive possibilities of fake documentaries (in the 1990s[8]), and the insidious, definitive "increasingly unproductive" dangers of the destabilization of the fake/real binary as definitive of the forms and platforms of internet culture,[9] most definitively of videos on YouTube[10] (in the 2000s). When our current president and the broader culture became fixated on the problem of "fake news," especially during the first 100 days of the new administration when this felt the most rabid and destabilizing, I felt compelled and qualified to act in this time of confusion, despair, and self-criticism.

I pledged: "For 100 days, aligning and twinned with the new President's opening timeline, to blog every day about fake news and in so doing produce an online primer of digital media literacy."[11]

Given that my painful if productive effort of informed, desperate citizenship eventually took the form of a digital tower of 100 blog posts, #100hardtruths-#fakenews, each cell holding either my efforts or those of a great many others across a range of fields who were also contemporaneously attempting to understand, combat, respond to, and teach about the crisis of fake news as it was unfolding.

Given that this high and vast monolith itself holds an immensity of deep efforts, inter-disciplinary knowledge, diverse resources and thoughtful tools but that, in this form, these many useful things remain hard to navigate and needing of literacy efforts in their own right so as to make them the most useful for the many people interested in this crisis.

Let it hereby be resolved that I will transform my own preliminary efforts at "an online primer of digital media literacy" to become something even more useful, responsive, thoughtful and focused on educating about, and working against, the enduring and complex crisis at hand by experimenting (with others) with new formats and practices for **radical digital media literacy.**

I will work with poets in their local communities to adapt, transform, extend, translate and all-in-all make more usable my original "online digital media primer." I will experiment with others in place-based, local, embodied poetry workshops that begin with my #100hardtruths-#fakenews primer as itself a set of resources toward new forms of **radical digital media literacy.** In so doing, we will engage together in place-based, people-made, word-bound expressions of individual and community truths about social media, fake news, and post-truth outside of the indexical, evidentiary traditions that currently bind us and the technologies that are built upon, reinforce, and monetize such expression.

In an ABSOLUT world/ Notes on the real thing
by Angus Walker

Sifting transcendence on the shop-
floor, max out on red
carpet talk in the latest spirit
engagement, lacquer lips rainbow and
say "equality". No really say
it.

Eyes-closed dance: a platform for silent
withdrawal, redeeming chaebol
payouts down in pledge-
making, cover(t), nothing

to hide – Moon smears refresh –
official sponsors of Seoul sunrise
bloated dangle need over
waiting. Distorted marches shape
bottle and crop
barriers, fermented.[12]

Fake News Poetry Workshops as radical digital media literacy

Here are five alternatives #hardtruths that I hold as self-evident:

1. fake news r us: we are implicated by, produce, and circulate this crisis whenever we study, teach, or try to fix it.
2. virality is virility: a potent mix of internet-fueled falsity, masculine grandiosity, and resulting real-world bellicosity undergirds fake news and our efforts to understand it.[13]
3. art answers to fake questions: departures from evidence-based, indexically-linked practices into realms of truth-telling verifiable by different logics might get us out of the he-said/he-said rabbit-hole where we currently find ourselves.
4. our internet truths trump media lies: we must name, share, and honor our own lived experiences within social media as another form of honesty in desperate times. Let's first do this offline, together where we live, work, struggle or learn.
5. heed the poet's call: poetry, a time-honored word-based form of truth-telling outside the logics of indexical mediation might be one well-honed literacy practice well-suited to this crisis.

Using these five hardtruths as both motivation and preliminary action plan, I embarked on a series of nine poetry workshops in the Spring of 2018. I worked with digital artists, community college students, queer media studies scholars and artists, poets, teachers, professors, and a youth poetry troupe[14]; we wrote poetry about our local internet truths felt and lived in New London CT, Queens NYC, Toronto Ontario, and Brighton England. In England I engaged with a classroom of undergrads studying writing. Their teacher, Sam Solomon, led the session. Later that week I found myself writing with an already extant feminist collective, Devil's Dyke, that made use of their own practices of facilitation and power-sharing to organize the session.

In May, I participated in three workshops: one, facilitated by the women of color poets, Margaret Rhee and Chet'la Sebree, about race and racism online. This workshop was peopled by interested local poets. A week later, I participated in a workshop focusing on somatic expression led by the artist, scholar, and publisher, Lynne DeSilva-Johnson, and then quickly raced cross-country to another where we built a collective exquisite corpse poem with media scholars led by the video artist Orr Menirom. I could go on about the different approaches, tactics, interests and outcomes of each workshop—as diverse as are the poets and the communities in which we engaged—but this work has already been done in another context: each poet has written a blog post published on the

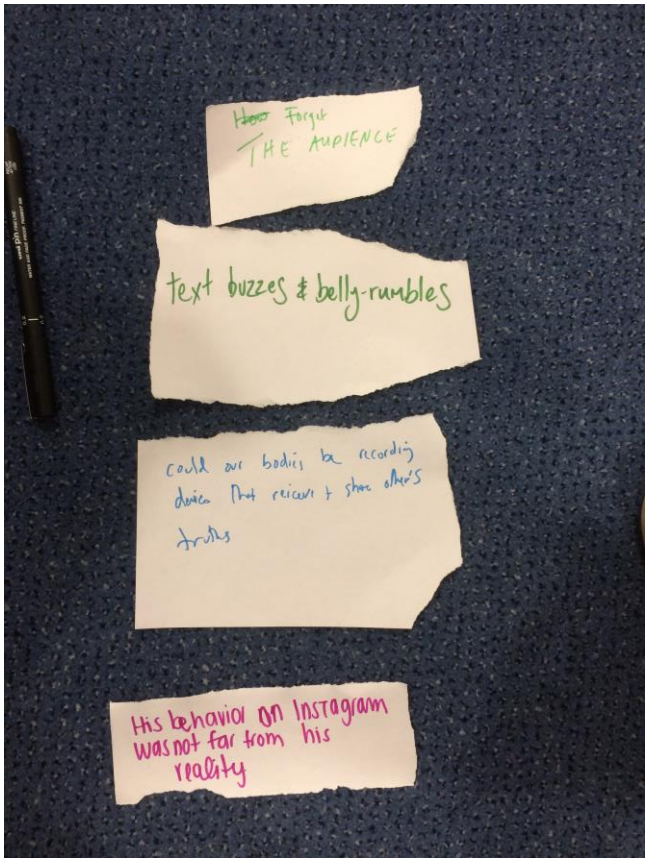

FIGURE 1: FROM DEVIL'S DYKE COLLECTIVE

Operating System, "an [online] equitable space for art access" of which Lynne is the creative director and founder. You can read those details, and many more poems, there.[15]

Resist how we are framed[16]

thoughts
are from the mind
We believe no one should have to face a
mental health problem
alone
Feel lonely as I seek truth

truth[17]

Despite their many local and personnel differences, what the workshops share is a set of opening exercises, often led by me, where participants reveal "truths" about themselves and the world, tying to understand where these might be found, learned, and shared with others, how they might be verified, and which technologies might play a part: from the digital to the family; from photos on a wall in a house to those on an Instagram feed; from the body to its notarized governmental records. In these opening conversations, we always seem to learn just how leery we actually are online, how guarded, how distrustful, and not just of fake news, or of Trump, but of ourselves. We learn how good it feels to admit and disclose *these* facts, with others, about ourselves, online: how we are always there and ever facing and guarding against deception. We then take some time for people to engage with the primer, finding one "hardtruth" that resonates with ideas already

now live in their minds from the previous conversation. This respects each participant's personal knowledge while taking into account that there is still much more to be learned about these issues, and some of it can be found in the primer. We ask them to find something in the primer that speaks to them: a hardtruth or some writing or art. From this, and the conversation, a poem might be inspired. Then, my collaborating poets take over and share other, linked resources—readings, poems, writing prompts or exercises— and then, poems might be written. Some of these are shared with the project. Others stay private.

Call the man of the year a liar, Mika Judge

Gladly!
I would be first in line.
From the first moment of his presidency, he inflated a scraggly cloud to mammoth proportions.
It was the largest audience to witness an inauguration, period.
He is beloved, he is the prophet of all things true, period.
Some people are haters--sad!--but those who know best know him, period.

There are a lot of small things about him, but his lies are enormous. like his crowds. like his supporters. like his heart. like the coal mine he's reopening right under our feet--America, how does black lung feel?
How does it feel being cheated by a cheesy smile balanced on an emergency red tie?
How did a small loan of a million dollars become the ruining of billions of lives?
How does it feel to be led by the lovechild of racist comments on Facebook and *unimaginable* power?

America, get your heads out of your echo chambers.
There is more to politics than what you want to believe. There is more to know than what they show you.
Do not mistake easily obtainable for true. Do not mistake your agreement for divine approval.

Where there is doubt, there is still hope.
Period.[18]

While we do seek and make poems, as I've been sharing throughout, even better yet we find ourselves in community-based conversations about the truth of our own internet experiences communicated and shared with artistic license: a poetry solution for resistance, knowledge production, and better literacy given the truth of fake news in the Age of Trumpism.

Conclusions: From online primer to in-person poetry to what?

Over the first 100 days of the Trump administration, I built an online media primer. It held an enormous number of resources made by myself and others during this time. I quickly came to believe, however, that the primer, as it is—an online, well-designed receptacle holding a great deal of information—*can* be used for teaching and learning, but its online form leaves it (and us) complicit in the larger problem: mining and getting lost in digital minutiae

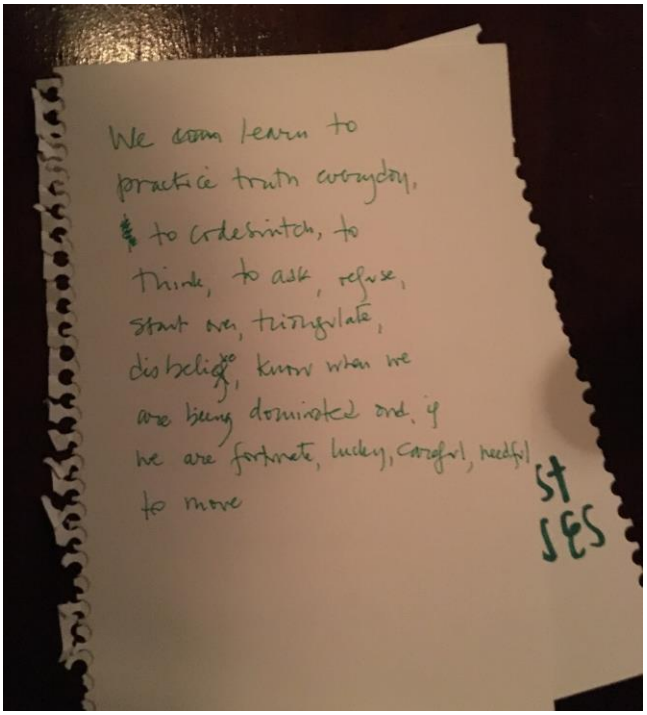

FIGURE 2: FROM TORONTO WORKSHOP

(written by others), using digital formats for exchange (which tend to get nasty or stupid), engaging in digital ways of being (which move us toward isolation or self-hatred or doubt), all the while seeking out short-term (word- or image-bound) fixes to problems that can't be thought or answered in this way.

Activity alert at 5:27 p.m.: gather 13 social network comments. **By Kyle Booten**

1. I used to spend half my life chasing networks. Now with YouTube, I've swapped that time for time to create.
2. Started from 0, now I'm at 19k. Next I'll be at 100k.
3. …even a whit the beauty she leaves behind like her eternal, up to now, shadow.
4. Dude I have no idea how I got here but I'm glad I did
5. Only Beethoven and Bach come close.
6. Context: a knightship is a glider (a structure that translates itself across the Life grid periodically)
[ran out of time]

Accumulating, and even sharing information, can be a step towards pedagogy, but only as a resource. Rather than chasing networks, we need time and place to create them, together.

The poems, and processes, collected from the workshops and shared here are in this vein: compliments to, extensions of, contributions about, exclamations concerning, thoughtful deliberations focused upon the deluge of digital information, and experience, about fake news (including the primer). While I work with poets to

teach from the primer, and encourage more writing from its ideas, the participants in the workshops also understand that they too are part of the larger pedagogic (and political) project: talking and listening to each other about our truths; making poetic sense of our thoughts and feeling; flexible claim-making that accounts for listening and learning.

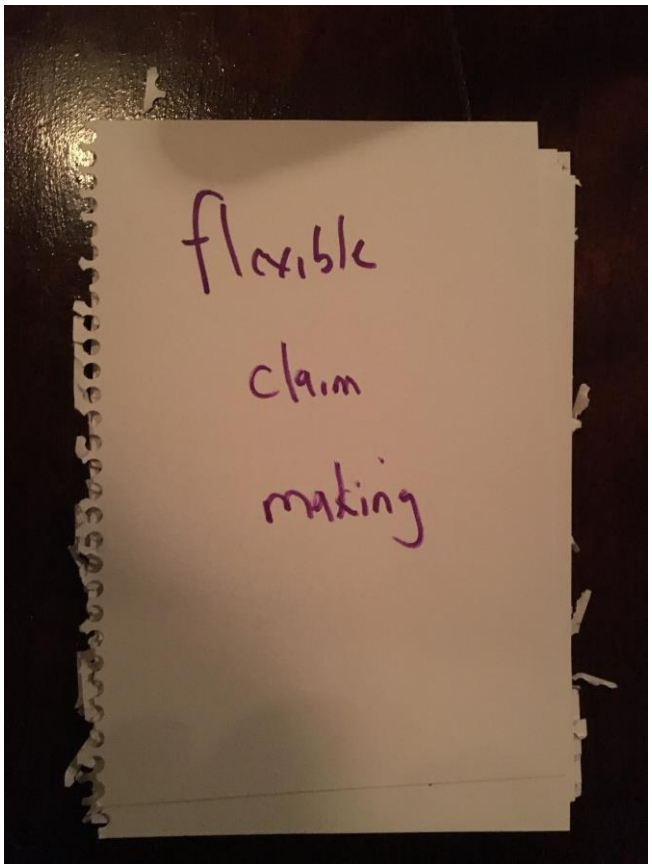

FIGURE 3: ONE OF MY OWN POETIC REFLECTIONS, TORONTO WORKSHOP

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Notes

[2] From Get Lit Workshop, LA, CA, March 2018.

[3] Alexandra Juhasz and Jesse Lerner, eds., *F is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing* (Minnesota, 2001).

[4] "Resolution toward radical digital media literacy in a post-truth era" was first presented on my blog, MEDIA PRAXIS, on November 20, 2017: https://aljean.wordpress.com/2017/11/20/resolution-toward-radical-digital-media-literacy-in-a-post-truth-era-draft. It appeared as a video with the same name on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLcIN0RfQWc. The video was presented in my absence at the panel "Ex-Post-Facto? The Anthropology of Media and Journalism in a Post-Truth Era," at the American Anthropological Aassociation meetings on December 1, 2017. This was recorded and transformed into the podcast "The Anthropology of Media in a Post Truth Era," by K. Sacco for AnthroPod: https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1276-the-anthropology-of-media-in-a-post-truth-era.

[5] The project is also available as a paper "companion" that can be accessed as a PDF or on paper: http://www.blurb.com/b/8446148-100hardtruths-fakenews. I first produced this version for the art show, Manifesto: A Moderate Proposal, at the Pitzer Art Galleries, January 2018. It allows for the #100hardtruths to be something a person can hold to read.

[6] From workshop at the University of Sussex, March 2018.

[7] https://aljean.wordpress.com/2017/11/20/resolution-toward-radical-digital-media-literacy-in-a-post-truth-era-draft.

[8] See the film I produced and starred in, *The Watermelon Woman* (Cheryl Dunye, 1996) and the book I co-edited with Jesse Lerner about it and other fake documentaries, *F is for Phony*.

[9] "The Increasingly UnProductive Fake," *No More Potlucks* 4 (July-August 2009): http://nomorepotlucks.org.

[10] *Learning from YouTube* (MIT Press, 2011): https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/learning-youtube.

[11] "My Pledge," February 18, 2017: http://scalar.usc.edu/nehvectors/100hardtruths-fakenews/about.

[12] From University of Sussex workshop, March 2018.

[13] Alexandra Juhasz, "Trump's Alpha Male Posturing was Made for our Social Media," *DAME*, September 2017: https://shar.es/1VXnu5.

[14] My nine collaborators were: 1. Kyle Booten at the Ammerman Symposium on Art and Technology, New London, CT (February 2018); 2. Kelly Grace Thomas, with the Get Lit Players, in LA, CA (March 2018); 3. TL Cowan, with queer feminist scholars and artists in Toronto, Ontario (March 2018); 4. Sam Soloman with undergraduates at the University of Sussex, England (March 2018); 5. Linda Paoli and Claudia Treacher with the Dyke's Ditch Poetry Collective in Brighton, England (March 2018); 6. Lisa Cohen with three professors and their distinct classes (poetry, intro to writing, a poetry club) at LaGuardia Community College, Queens, NY; 7. Margaret Rhee and Chet'la Sebree with local poets, Brooklyn NY (May 2018); 8. Lynne DeSilva-Johnson, with local poets in Los Angeles, CA (May 2018); 9. Orr Menirom, with participants at the Digital EngAGEment Conference, CUNY, Manhattan, NY (May 2018)

[15] 10 Tries, 100 Poems, the Operating System: https://medium.com/the-operating-system/10-tries-100-poems-alexandra-juhasz-field-notes-fake-news-poetry-workshops-as-radical-ee2408808403.

[16]http://scalar.usc.edu/nehvectors/100hardtruths-fakenews/86-resist-how-we-are-framed

[17] Exquisite Corpse Poem from NYC, May 2018.

[18] From Get Lit, LA, March 2018.

ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

The #shitholes Syllabus: Undoing His(Story)

by Clelia O. Rodríguez

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF AUTHOR

About This Course

The genesis of this hypothetical higher learning syllabus is to get down to lower terrains where a) geography reads like the anatomy of dissected cadavers, b) politics smells like forgotten infected pus, and c) history is blended eternally with the same DNA. It is an outline towards an ocean that is far from the Pacific as it makes unpleasant bodily contact with the feet of learners coming from the privileged North. The ubiquitous nature of poetry makes this curriculum one that stretches more than 100,000 miles, exceeding the average length of an adult's blood vessels. It is a program that is expected to be destroyed the very first day of class. Last but not least, it is a review to undo viewing based on regulated teachings of what #1 to #45 have proclaimed as notions of Truth as opposed to eradicated stories. The couple to honor our journey is: imperialism and racism. Other guests who have confirmed their presence so far are: violence and culture.

The making of this syllabus crawled out from a wounded fetus. One that was alerted before it came out that shit was real out in the world. Its delivery dates back to broken moons waiting to be repaired. The latest one, as a case study, results from a toxic explosion marked under the radar of #45 under the red-blue-white banner that has to do with making something "great" again. The implication of #shitholes in relationship to immigrants and non-first-world-countries by #45 begs for a critical look at the mirroring effect required by those seeking democracy. The explosive effect of his words triggered transgenerational flows of anger marked by layers of overt violence inscribed in ink by citizens of the free world. The level of absurdity, convenient amnesia, and casual forgetfulness showcased by #45 in his language derives from decades of regulated and military violence seeking to construct the optical illusion of greatness, choosing to ignore the #shitholes underneath their soles.

Course Description

There is a pressing tick in my soul to allow my fingertips to ink an agonizing yet crucial lesson. It is an intuition weaved with yarn under the constellation of radical love. It is a course aligned with three water-based ingredients: tears, sweat and blood. When the trio is combined in a clay pot, what I witness through touch is a one-of-a-kind text that continues to be obscured and censored. How do I, as a survivor of a civil war in El Salvador, tainted by each of those ingredients, integrate them as part of what I do as educator in the Humanities in higher learning spaces in the North?

My grandfather used to speak of a strange love after looking at cadavers of innocent people outside of the house or whenever we attended funerals of assassinated peasants as we crawled into the holes of darkness. His guidance embodied what some speak of these days: decolonial love. So how does one grasp teaching decolonial love in hateful times? And these thoughts come to my rescue as I pause to reflect on the question:

> "*La madre tierra nos da de comer. Hay que respetarla y cuidarla como a los seres que viven en ella*." -- My grandfather

> "I am talking of millions of men who have been skillfully injected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement." -- Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le Colonialisme*

> "You have to learn to love yourself before you can love me or accept my loving." -- Audre Lorde, "Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger" in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*

So I guess decolonial love cannot be defined, conceptualized, described... it's like the first smile that's drawn in my mother's face when she hears her favorite bolero after waking up from a recurring nightmare caused by trauma, it's the rain that washes away remnants of deadly encounters remembered by an invisible rainbow, it's the illusion of maracas dismantling endless silence, it's the memory of my fingers tapping my legs as I imagine happy drums making their way from a nearby beach, it's the possibility of forgiving those who uprooted us from our homes after being censored from saying goodbye, it's adapting the beat of my wings to capture a balanced take-off during a storm, it's caressing gently the religious markers without wanting to break them, it's finding joy in anger, it's breathing hope when others see danger in my skin color, it's pollinating forgiveness as a remedy to heal colonial wounds, it's washing toxic tongues with the power of fire guarded by ancestral wisdom, it's saluting the sun inside me, it's a snail playing hide-and-seek without ever being found by predators, it's running freely without dragging the weight of fear, it's letting my sorrow take a deserving break in the weaving power of my grandfather's *petate*, it's taking a leap of faith in the currents of a clean river knowing I'm surrounded by creatures whose spirits protect me, it's letting my lungs scream my thirst for living unregistered… it's delving into the affirmation of an "I do" as I uncover colonial layers of violent baggage, it's integrating the complexities of my bodily textualities without footing them, it's praying for the tiniest creatures living under the mantle of earth, it's vibrating when the clouds carry life to the desserts, it's knitting untranslatable words only known to my heart, it's crawling backwards to empower other women, it's letting my fingers stand in an altar made of *maiz*… It is the act of loving radically the spirit of the person whose ruling continues to colonize me while resisting their violence.

Despite the sounds of broken bones, horrendous cries, and agonizing words, our ears contemplated the possibility of seeking refuge in hope that was always passed on to us through my grandfather's schooling. The first text he handed to me came from the belly of a Douglas AC-47 Spooky as it flew over our homes, nicknamed "Puff, the Magic Dragon," as I learned later on in life, manufactured by the Douglas Aircraft Company in Santa Monica,

California. The grotesque-like images printed in that text evoked fear and anger. Years later, as a student of E.S.L., I learned about the compound word "shithole." It embodied a distant yet raw memory and thought of the place where the planes that bombarded thousands of innocent civilians in El Salvador had been made. "What a shithole!" I wrote down in a journal.

My grandfather taught me lessons about propaganda. "Language," he would say, "is like the undercurrent masking an accelerated and dangerous speed. When the time comes, you'll be able to plant seeds where you now see burnt bushes." What strikes me the most, like lighting on a sunny day, about the violence we, as people of color, face on a 24-7 basis are the lessons of resilience our ancestors are constantly sending us: the full moon caressing the sleep of birds, the lakes housing flames of hope, the mountains crawling underneath the universe, and the humility to let our veins do the talking during inquisitorial times. For these reasons, engaging with "shitholes" requires a compass whose needle points towards the "great" north.

I have engaged in a thinking process about the politics of #shitholes. My proposed questions to students are: How are they made? Who has created them? Do you know where they are located? If you looked at a map, can you point them out? What are they? When do they appear? If you sign-up for this hypothetical course, you are expected to engage c-r-i-t-i-c-a-l-l-y with discourses of power from 1492 to the present in the United States (if I was teaching it there, for instance). The stories and narratives we read everywhere seem to fit more in a novel taking place during the Spanish Inquisition. Know this: This ambitious unlearning plan will take a lifetime and that's exactly what we're up against: A lifelong battle. We also know that pretending that the tentacles of racism, classism and gender-based discrimination haven't touched us is simply to live in one of those castles built-in for optical illusion seekers in the orange state where the sun is always gracious.

When dirt becomes the canvas for one's ideas, the hypothetical then turns into certainty. And those are the bones of unlearning.

And this is what I mean by unlearning: Civil wars shrink playgrounds leaving children to sketch their imagination on dirt. When dirt becomes the canvas for one's ideas, the hypothetical then turns into certainty. And those are the bones of unlearning. As a toddler, I learnt rapidly to remain within limited spaces in order to continue breathing because stepping outside of the box meant encountering the deafening sounds of foreign landmines made in some shithole place. And that's the beginning of a long-term relationship with lines and time. Until death do us apart.

The journey starts unpacking what Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw teaches us regarding i-n-t-e-r-s-e-c-t-i-o-n-a-l-i-t-y. You are invited to sit in a front row seat in order to repeat the word several times letting the resonance of gender, class, race, ethnicity, religions, etc., grow roots into air we can actually breathe without getting choked under policing bodies. No #shithole will be discussed without that framework. The tunnel vision of #45 & Co. happens to be one-dimensional and unilateral, grounded on the mucky nuisance of quicksand patched by bricks fabricated in a Magic Kingdom. In order to critically engage with the opposite of this loose linearity, there is a type of multi-purpose gear made up of core elements to help you stay afloat: Race, Gender, Class, Ethnicity, among others, which you will all slowly identify as you crawl out of your privileged unchecked zones. The essence of their existence lies precisely in this connection. Whether they come in contact in an obscure corner of a nameless street or they intersect in a public arena populated by people of the same skin color, the strings carry an active connective. It is going to be our duty, yours and mine, to acknowledge these sections through the act of introspection. Why? Because nothing in criticism is passive; nothing in engaging is static. Jumping these ropes simultaneously will test our endurance for the taste of hot peppers as we chant: "All oppression is connected!" Yarn of different colors will teach us visually how intersectionality works. So, for #45 & Co., basic lessons on tolerance and patience never really made it to their table due, perhaps, to brief attention gaps filled with one hundred and forty twitter-like characters? When one spends their life run by the Politics of Quick Books, it results in processing human beings as cartoon and chewable gummy bear figures.

The luggage to bring to class will be your own historical relationships to the making of #shitholes and how your families and their ancestors have benefitted for generations from their fabrication, how they have built comfortable lives by simply ignoring the violence and social injustice taking place in your own backyard as you turn up the volume on football and basketball and hockey and wrestling and baseball and soccer weekends and how you have actively gotten rid of innocent people to continue sustaining structures of power because it fits your notion of safety, security and economic agenda.

I, as a woman of color, do not care about white tears. Everyone is accountable for bringing Kleenex to class because providing emotional labor is too expensive and my tears know no currency value. We will attempt to unpack how we have been indoctrinated to perceive aggressions. Ever since Christopher Columbus and his crew spotted land, we have been taught to believe we are the aggressors. It is often more efficient and cost-effective to insert concepts like "safe space" into curricula mainly because universities are worried about their clients. In this course, we will swim with linguistic sharks who will once again try to make us look like aggressors. We will peel the layers of the sheep whose beautiful skin hides what real aggression looks and feels like. In times when the client is always right, the student has been catered to feel entitled to everything not realizing that the chosen material excludes non-conventional texts found in the natural environment.

Learning to use our bodies in the course is not only pivotal but mandatory: We will stare at the color of our

skin, read the swimming textuality of our hair and vision other worlds looking at what's behind our eyes to unload the burdens of violence we sustain to get us an inch closer to understanding how notions of displacement, citizenship rights, lack of autonomy and passports operate in the #shitholes in relation to bananas, coffee, oil, gold, uranium, copper, cacao, tea, lithium, among other goodies.

Because I have always been an exemplary citizen of El Salvador to the eyes of people who feed racism to hungry lions, the academic narrative goes like this: "Oh, wow! You have a PhD? Look at you! You're doing well for your people. Good for you!" My humanity has been approved, sealed, proven, and fully accepted as per academic requirements.

Also, we will be holding ourselves accountable for (HIS)story. There is no such thing as an ideal student to unlearn. Lawyers, politicians, hippies, educators, doctors, nurses, therapists, lab technicians, carpenters, nuns, janitors, judges, administrators, soldiers, domestic workers, flight attendants, UN coordinators, strippers, policy makers, journalists, stay-home dads, cardinals, activists, grandmothers, painters, knitters, bloggers, correctional officers, TV personalities, sex workers, butchers, hygienists, and even those who speak of alternative facts are welcome.

Organization of the Course

There is no one single methodology to this unlearning journey because the narratives of #shithole spaces vary. Here are just a few examples of what could be included: visiting the School of the Americas in Columbus, Georgia, shining to the pace of the World Diamond Council in New York City, transforming radiant energy at the Caracol Industrial Park in Haiti, making some form of sense of the United States leadership in mass incarceration, following the Chicago Boys and their Chilean tales (not peppers, the country), daydreaming of the endless camps of U.S. Marines in the Dominican Republic, peeling ripe bananas inspired by the Monroe doctrine, sipping fresh coffee as you taste fresh blood from American-owned land in Guatemala courtesy of the American United Fruit Company, washing one's hands with bleach to remove the 'dirt' from Argentina, undoing the words "barbaric" and "uncivilized" as we tip-toe through the Reagan years in El Salvador, pacifying thirst with poisoned-flavored water packaged carefully in Flint, Michigan, freezing very slowly in elementary schools in Baltimore because there are no heaters, handing out used clothing at the Otay Mesa Detention Center in San Diego, knocking doors in the Mid-West to speak of why Muslim is not a synonym to terrorist, explaining to elders why wheelchairs are not a necessity but an affordable luxury item, thinking of unrestricted clear skies as we write down "Back the Blue Act," daydreaming of what it would be like to not be dependent on Opioid, planning a semi-decent parenthood life sketched around Title X, etc., etc., etc. As the course advances (if it does), it is expected that students contribute their own methodological approaches. Note: It's important to identify the birthplace of torture methods in the #shitholes. This can be quite illuminating. Google maps will come in handy.

What you will need

Patience, reliable insurance for self-care purposes, and lots of clean water! (If your preference is chocolate, make sure to trace the #shithole place that enslaves children to satisfy any Halloween trick-or-treating festivity). You may have gone backpacking there during your Summer Abroad experience.

The Politics of Assessments (fill-in the blanks as per your own experience)

A is for _____

B is for _____

C is for _____

D is for _____

E is for _____

F is for Ferguson

In my experience teaching under capitalist-driven higher learning institutions in North America, students pay A LOT of money to get an education. Receiving an "A" in this course is up for grabs. #45 & Co. measure everyone in terms of monetary value getting to decide who is worth it and who is not. You paid for the course. You get an A if you want. As we wrap up the institutional hours allotted to us, however, you will have an opportunity to reflect on your unlearning. You will then choose what you have earned after unlearning a thing or two about the politics of competition in the rat race caves. This in itself can be interpreted as an assignment as we re-think on how some of our personal histories have been downgraded to minus "0."

Assignment(s)

Noun, late 14c., "an order, request, directive," from Old French *assignement* "(legal) assignment (of dower, etc.)," from Late Latin *assignamentum*, noun of action from Latin *assignare/adsignare* "to allot, assign, award" (see assign). Meaning "appointment to office" is mid-15c.; that of "a task assigned (to someone), commission" is by 1848.

Questions to ponder:

- Who orders? Whose requests matter? Whose direction are we following? Where does the word come from? What's the concept got to do with colonialism? What are the legal implications in the making of shitholes? Who gets the awards? What's behind the history of awards? Who gets to appoint #45 to office?
- To expose existing shitholes in places where race determines assigned seats, we are encouraged to create our own tasks as per our own distinct abilities.
- Note: No assignment will ever capture the impact of the violent legacy of colonialism and other –

isms. It's important to acknowledge that whatever tangible piece of reflection you turn in, it resembles a glimpse into beautiful minds. And that's okay. Let's remember that part of learning, teaching, unlearning and unteaching under #45 is that creativity is being killed slowly. And we will create activities that reflect other ways of reading, writing, walking, breathing, speaking, and unpacking, among other gerund-like sounding actions.

My expectations

I expect you to: a) be present through the senses: seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting, b) identify in a Eurocentric map by the end of the course where the #shitholes in your own backyard are, c) who operates them, d) how you continue to benefit from the system that fabricates false notions of #shitholes and e) be aware of the space you take up in class. If you, for example, are a male who is doing all the talking, you will learn how to listen. You can bring your own masking tape if the latter becomes challenging to do.

You are responsible for your own unlearning. No one will be checking if you have done the academic work. Capitalism has taught us that everything is for sale, including human beings. Remember, #WeAreNotEquals

This introductory course is that, an introduction. You will never be an expert nor should you call yourself that. Even if you visited the invented version of #shitholes for two weeks to build a school or something, you don't get to call yourself an expert. Last by not least, this is a life-long unlearning project nourished by the sacred beauty of questions, deep reflection, undoing (HIS)story and the commitment to the liberation of ourselves and others, as pointed out by Paulo Freire.

Readings

You don't get to "possess" them. You are encouraged, instead, to start pondering the concept of "censorship" by staring at a black page instead to begin the course. Decolonial love in the pedagogy I learned from my grandfather and my relationship with the land requires us to let go of deadlines, time, scholarly notions of productivity and the feeling to compete for grades. The readings that often stay lingering around our heart are those that are not often published but that have been cared for by the hands of elders. Contemplating the dance of a bee or the march of an ant will teach us, for instance, endless lessons of what aggression is not. I am not your babysitter. You are not my babies. Let's leave the patronizing to #45 & Co.

In this course we will experience decolonial love through transformative lessons to teach us how to liberate ourselves from colonial notions of what violence is and who is violent. You won't get to see readings from the start because it is what you're expecting as a customer. Instead, we will dive into a journey of feeling them. We will connect, intersect and encounter with different elements utilizing metaphors like yarn and strings, just to name some. Reconfiguring personal cartographies utilizing an intersectional approach will be messy at first yet it will allow us to learn ways to be joyful. As unlearners-in-the-making, we will uplift each other when undoing the personal histories of violence we have inherited as we map out the #shitholes we have missed, ignored and erased in the name of "greatness" and progress.

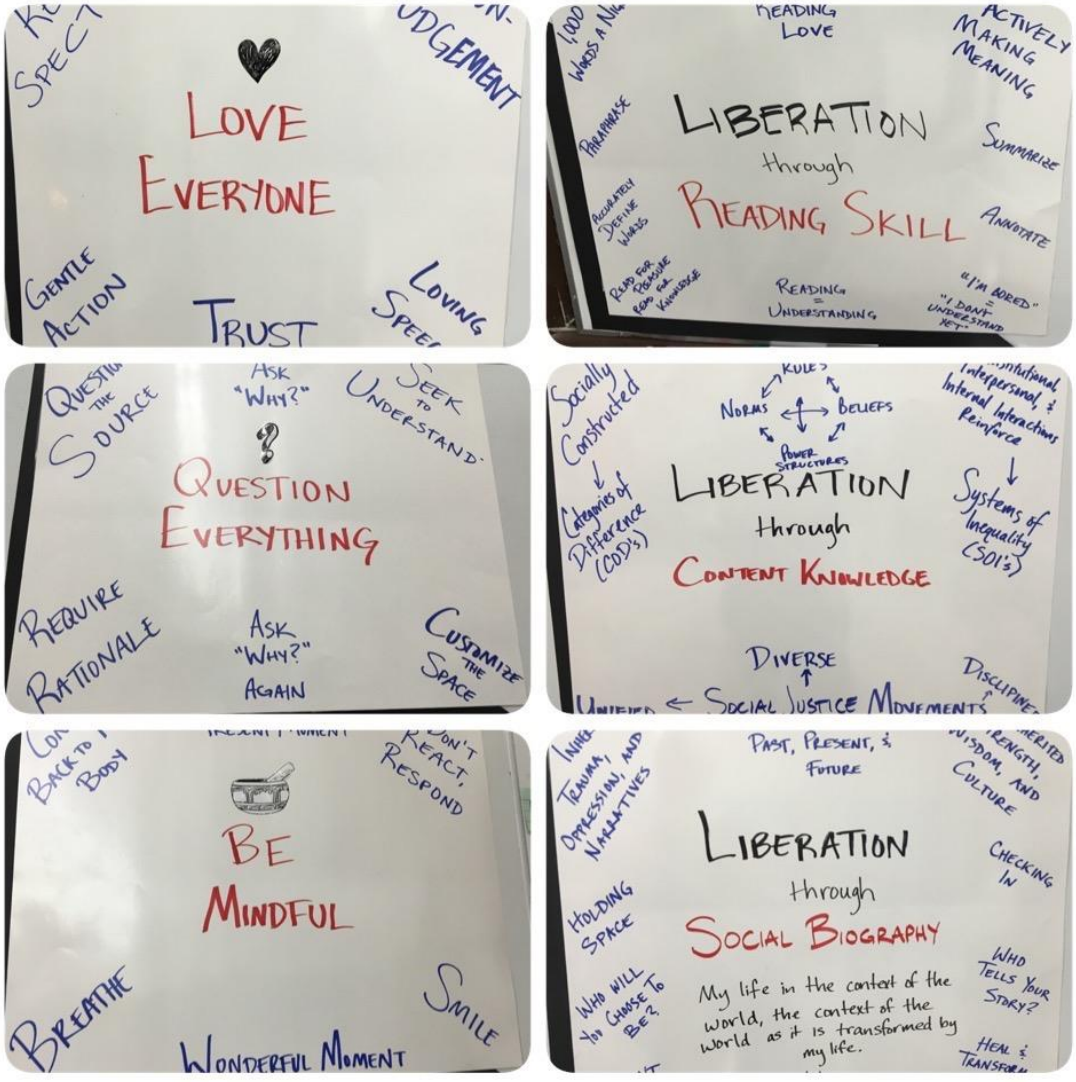
ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Teaching High School Cultural Studies in the Age of Trump

by DJ Cashmere

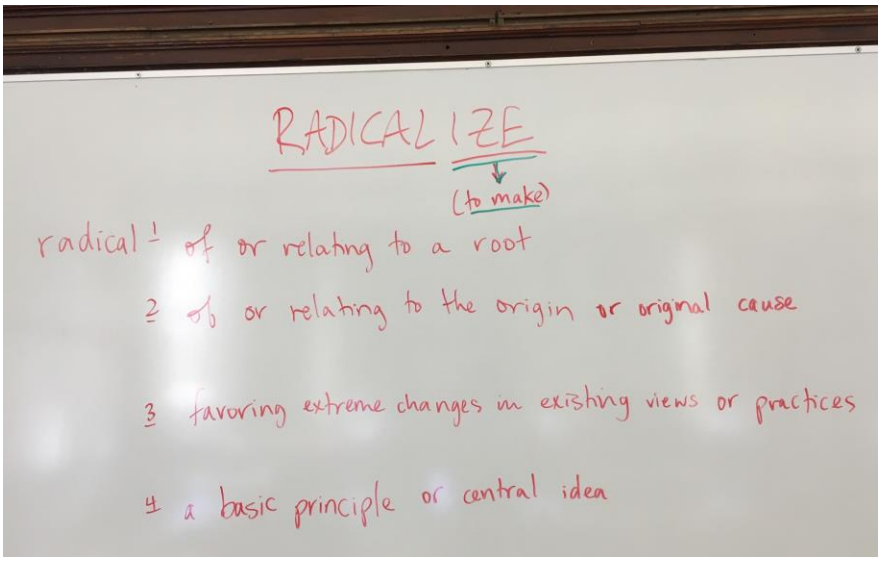


A COLLECTION OF CLASSROOM ANCHOR CHARTS

"Certain members of the oppressor class join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation… They talk about the people, but they do not trust them: and trusting the people is the indisputable precondition for revolutionary change. A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without that trust."

-Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

In the high school Cultural Studies Seminar I co-taught in 2016-2017, my students knew that when we didn't know what a word meant, we looked it up. One day during the school year, a few weeks after President Trump's inauguration, we came across the word "radicalize" in an article about DeRay Mckesson and other Black Lives Matter activists.



A SERIES OF POSSIBLE DEFINITIONS DISPLAYED ON THE CLASS WHITEBOARD ON FEBRUARY 9, 2017

According to the article's author, Jay Caspian Kang, Mckesson was radicalized during a tear gas-laden protest in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. "Radicalize," in the context of the article, meant "to make one favor extreme changes in existing views or practices."

This was a bit of a "meta" moment because the class itself also favored such changes. In Cultural Studies, my co-teachers and I sought to empower students to transform negative views they had about themselves and the self-sabotaging habits those views sometimes engendered. We also sought to provide students with language and tools for understanding their own oppression (and privilege), analyzing social justice movements past and present, and transforming the world. We sought, in both pedagogy and curriculum, to be intentionally antiracist, anti-sexist, anti-classist, and anti-heterosexist, even as the new presidential administration was proving itself to be quite the opposite.

In other words, Cultural Studies was a class specifically designed to radicalize. So, it was particularly important to look up this word.

Developing Cultural Studies Seminar

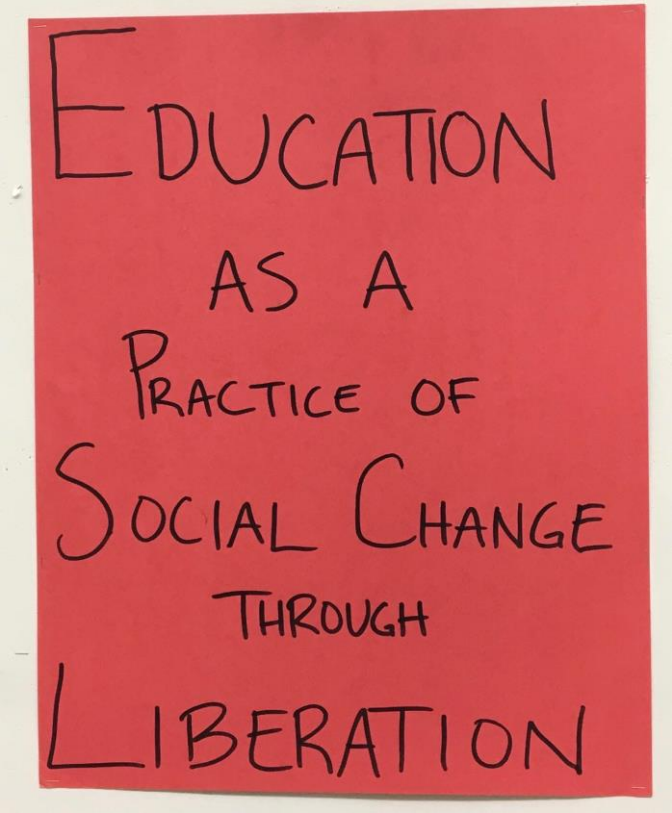
In the fall of 2016, I began my third year teaching Cultural Studies Seminar at Chicago Bulls College Prep (CBCP), where I'd been working as a teacher since 2010. CBCP is a campus of the Noble Network of Charter Schools and is located on Chicago's Near West Side.[1] The school serves a population of students that is roughly 2/3 Latino and 1/3 African American, and about 90% of CBCP's students receive free or reduced-price lunch. Every year, 100% of seniors are accepted to college. This year, I would be teaching ninth-graders.

I had first devised the course in the fall of 2014, when my principal and assistant principal gave me permission to re-focus the 11th-grade literacy class I was teaching. I wanted to specifically study racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism in America, with an eye toward how those systems operate and how they can be—and have been—resisted. We put our heads together and came up with the name "Cultural Studies Seminar."

I'm not sure I was the right person for this job. At the time, I was just beginning to come to terms with what it meant to be a straight White able-bodied cisgender male from a middle-class Judeo-Christian household. I had not even begun to understand what it meant to carry that identity into a classroom with students whose identities were quite different than my own. I was still deeply individualistic, an attribute that had been subconsciously reinforced throughout my life, and I asked for little help or guidance from the people around me. I was extremely privileged, having experienced virtually none of the traumas many of my students had survived (and in some cases were continuing to survive on a daily basis). And I hadn't yet confronted the socialization which caused me, on a subconscious level, not to fully trust my students.

As a result of all this, the first year of Cultural Studies Seminar was a difficult one. My individualism left me groping in the dark, not realizing, for example, that exploring narratives of oppression without also exploring counter-narratives of resistance was ultimately re-traumatizing, not empowering. My privilege made it difficult for me to respond to student struggles in trauma-responsive ways. My lack of trust undermined the goals I set out to accomplish. To put it another way: during that first year, my class was not radical. It was rooted in liberal values, not liberationist values, and as a result, authentic empowerment was not possible.

Thankfully, my community lifted me up. In my second year of teaching Cultural Studies, this time with sophomores, a native Chicagoan and veteran educator at CBCP named Christine Peralta agreed to co-teach the class with me. Her brilliant mind for data, sharp organizational systems, and deep understanding of student psychology filled significant gaps in my skill set. The perspective she brought as a daughter of immigrants of color, and her willingness to share that perspective with me, led to deep and difficult conversation and reflection on the nature of our curriculum and our interaction with students.



A CLASSROOM SIGN AT THE START OF THE 2016-2017 SCHOOL YEAR, INSPIRED BY THE WORK OF MICHAEL JAMES.

By that time, I had also begun learning from elders. At the University of Puget Sound's Race & Pedagogy National Conference in September 2014, I heard Dr. Robin DiAngelo explain that racism was always at work in our society: it was never a matter of *if*, but only ever a matter of *how.* Other speakers, such as Dr. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Dr. Angela Davis, pushed my thinking further, giving me a greater sense of how much I did not know.

In February 2016, I saw Dr. Jeff Duncan-Andrade speak twice in Washington, D.C. Ms. Peralta and I then visited him at his school in Oakland, California, called Roses in Concrete. He was generous with his time, touring us around the school and answering our questions, transforming our understanding of what an educational space could be. At Roses, there was a focus on both educational excellence *and* healing, a belief in people over process, a trust in students to create rituals, and a deep intentionality around physical spaces.

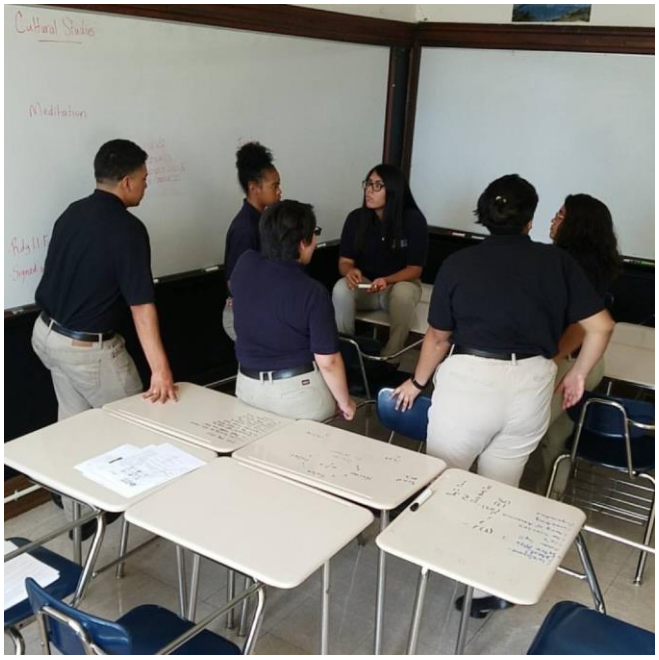
We also visited with Michael James, a long-time educator who worked directly with Paulo Freire years ago. He, too, was wildly generous with his time, driving us around San Francisco and inviting us to a session of his high school leadership fellowship. There, we learned about the power of students learning to construct their own "social biographies," in which they contextualized the story of their lives using their understanding of systemic inequality, then continued on to also explain the ways in which they would use their lives to disrupt the status quo.

Each of these elders had a direct impact on my practice in the classroom. I still can't believe it took me so long to seek them out.

Getting Started

A few days before classes started for my incoming ninth-graders in the fall of 2016, a group of juniors who had taken Cultural Studies with Ms. Peralta and I the year before came up to the school to help plan the first week's agenda. They were volunteering some of their last hours of summer vacation, and they worked largely on their own. The following week, they came once again, this time to welcome the ninth-graders and implement the agenda they'd created.

On the first day of class, my new students walked by a sign on the door reading, "I Love You. I Trust You. I Believe in You." I said these words aloud at the beginning of class on day one and repeated them regularly throughout the school year. Then, when I found myself resorting to years of socialization that had taught me not to trust young people of color, my own words would ring in my head or call out from the classroom door. *You said you trusted them. You have to trust them. It's right there on the door!*



JUNIORS MEETING IN AUGUST 2016 TO HELP PLAN THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASS FOR NINTH-GRADERS.

Empowering my former students to be front and center during the opening days of class sent a number of important messages. For one thing, this was going to be a classroom in which discussion between students was the main event.

For another, we were going to value diverse voices beyond those which were in the classroom every day. Over the months to come, I would invite staff members of color from the teaching, discipline, and custodial/maintenance teams to speak to the students. I also welcomed alumni into the classroom and gave them the floor to talk about their experiences in college. One alumnus, Daniel Ibarra, a 2013 CBCP graduate, took over for Ms. Peralta and became the second teacher in the room for the duration of the 2016-2017 school year. (Ms. Peralta continued supporting behind the scenes.) Mr. Ibarra's tireless consistency, cheerful demeanor, and intelligence benefited our students immensely. As someone who'd been in the students' seats just a few years prior, he had a unique ability to connect and inspire.

Ms. Peralta, Mr. Ibarra, and I made another important choice at the beginning of the year: we hosted a family barbecue for current and former Cultural Studies students and their families. This gave our juniors another chance to mentor the incoming ninth-graders, which they would continue to do in office hours during the school year. It also gave us a chance to build community.

Finally, I took the time, at long last, to intentionally decorate our classroom. Inspired by Roses in Concrete, I made sure that our walls reflected back the identity of our students and the philosophy of our class.

THE CLASSROOM PRIOR TO THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL. DECORATIONS INCLUDED AN "UPSIDE DOWN" MAP, A "MIGRATION IS BEAUTIFUL" POSTER, AND IMAGES OF VARIOUS ACTIVISTS. WE WOULD GO ON TO FILL THE RED AND BLUE BULLETIN BOARD WITH PHOTOS OF STUDENTS' ANCESTORS.

Throughout the year, most days followed a familiar pattern. When the bell rang, students were required to be sitting silently in their seats, as they were across the school. Once we said hello to each other, however, we'd have a meet-and-greet. This was an informal practice taken from LaVaughn Cain, another colleague and a trusted elder, during which students would mill about and greet each other and catch up on life. The only expectation was that they greet expansively, as opposed to sticking to cliques or self-segregating along lines of race and gender. If we were going to "Love Everyone"—one of our three classroom core values—it had to start in the opening minutes.

After the meet-and-greet, we'd all take part in a guided meditation. Usually, either myself or Mr. Ibarra would lead, though sometimes a student would take the responsibility. The idea here was to become fully present in the room, clearing our heads and coming back to our bodies. (Another core value was "Be Mindful.")

If students came in with a lot of stress, we'd also take a few minutes to talk in whole-group about what was on their minds. Some days this wasn't necessary, but often, especially on Mondays, it was. Students shared everything from shopping trips they'd taken with their parents to personal experiences with gun violence they'd had over the weekend. When a student had experienced something particularly traumatic, they always knew they could share, though they were never forced to. The rest of the room slowly learned to hold the emotional space for the person sharing. They did this by listening closely, expressing sympathy and concern, and sometimes relating their own experiences which were similar to the one that was shared. If the room got heavy, we'd acknowledge this and sit with it for a moment before intentionally putting it away and moving on with our agenda.

Sometimes, it took a long time to put things away, and on rare occasions, we never did move on to the agenda. One such day was November 9, 2016, the day after the presidential election. In each class period, the fear and disappointment were palpable, and we spent as much time as was needed allowing students to process their feelings and clear up their misunderstandings about what was and wasn't happening in the country. It was a crucial time to uphold and act out our third core value, "Question Everything." It was also a time in which I was grateful to be in the classroom. Where better to be on that day than amongst my students, working toward social change together?

The current political climate continued to shape our lives in the classroom. When students decided to stay home on the Day Without Immigrants, we made sure they felt validated in their choice. We also connected students who were undocumented or had undocumented family members with emotional support and information about legal resources.

On most days, though, we didn't spend too much time on the news. The best way to arm our students against the indignities of the new administration wasn't to digest each new assault on cultural norms and marginalized groups.

The best way was to remember why we were here: liberation. Not from Trump, but from oppressive systems which pre-dated him by centuries.

We'd move from meditation into our daily quiz, an open-note eight-question affair designed to give students an opportunity to prove their comprehension of the previous night's reading. From there, now about 20 minutes into the period, we'd transition into our discussion groups.

Students were grouped into five tables of roughly six students each. Sometimes, they'd spend the rest of the class working on question sets with their entire table. Other times, they'd split further into pairs, and work that way. Our class discussions lasted the remainder of the period, roughly 50 minutes.

Class work on question sets alternated between small-group work and whole-group check-in. Students would work together with their partners or groups for a few minutes, then I'd ring a bell and center the attention on a single speaker. If I noticed a common error being made, I'd note it and send them back to work. If I thought we were ready to hear an answer, I'd call on someone and then others would give them feedback on their response.

If a student was stuck during their small-group work, they could go to another table or ring the bell and ask the whole class for help. Students had free reign of the classroom, so whether they needed to get a tissue, a dictionary, a writing utensil, a laptop, or a clarification, they knew they were trusted to do so without needing to ask for permission. *You said you trusted them. You have to trust them.* Eventually, students ran virtually the entire discussion by themselves.[2]

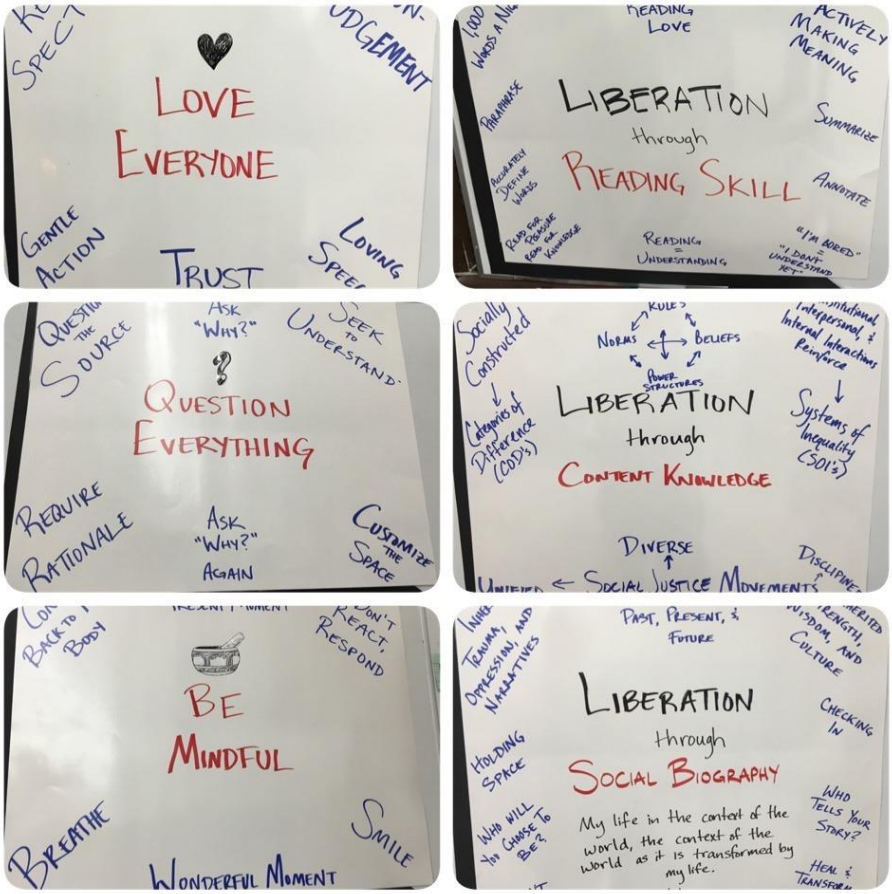
Our question sets were always comprised of three types of questions: reading skill, content knowledge, and social biography.

Reading Skill

My students came in at an 11.4 on the Reading ACT. This was about ten points below the national average for high school juniors. It was also slightly worse than what they would receive by bubbling in "B" for every question and closing the book.

Granted, they had nearly three years to make up the ground, but the median historic growth for ninth-graders across the Noble Network was 2.76 points—and the Noble Network was getting some of the best results in the entire city of Chicago. Even reaching the 75th percentile for historic network growth would get us only 2.91 points.

The ACT Reading test is an imperfect measure of reading ability, let alone intelligence. It is not an adaptive test, it is administered under a severe time constraint, and its passages rarely reflect the language or culture of millions of students who take it every year. It measures neither creativity nor character. Nonetheless, the ACT—or a similar test—would play a huge role in my students' college admission and, by extension, their future. And in a high-stakes charter school environment, I was directly accountable to my students' results. Test score growth became a sort of currency with which to justify radical spaces within the institution.



A COLLECTION OF CLASSROOM ANCHOR CHARTS.

We spent only twelve days on test prep over the course of the school year, and even those days were less about the test and more about coming to see stamina and positivity as direct challenges to the status quo. As one student reflected, doing well on the test would challenge "beliefs and power structures, because the system was set up for students of color to fail." Another student added, "most of the class believes they can't do the ACT, but they can… we as a family just have to have a positive mindset and support each other through everything." A third argued that improving would move "our brains one step closer to liberation."

We spent the bulk of our time reading and discussing high-level

non-fiction texts by authors such as Audre Lorde, Eric Schlosser, Malcolm Gladwell, James Baldwin, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, John Eligon, Mary Crow Dog, and Richard Rodriguez. Each night, students read and closely annotated 1,000 words, meaning that some longer articles took us more than a week to read.

In Cultural Studies, reading was equated with understanding. Our "reading skill" discussion questions were focused on comprehension above all else. Time and again, we explained what individual words meant, paraphrased sentences, and summarized short passages. If we needed to spend a whole class period on a single sentence, then that's what we did.

NINTH-GRADERS IN AFTER-SCHOOL OFFICE HOURS BEING ASSISTED BY ELEVENTH-GRADERS.

This is why our core values of Loving Everyone, Being Mindful, and Questioning Everything were so important in the classroom. Students who had gotten away with wrong answers and incomplete understandings for years were often visibly frustrated when told over and over again that they were not, actually, correct. Without loving speech, respect, and gentle action, the criticism would have been disheartening instead of empowering. Without breathing, smiling, and pausing often to praise all the wonderful aspects of the work being done, relentlessness would have become drudgery. Without constantly asking why, requiring rationale, and allowing students to customize their space, the right answers would have remained forever lost.

Still, it was extremely difficult. Many students struggled to follow through on their homework, and some struggled with staying disciplined and focused in class. I did my best to work within our school's discipline system to be both consistent and sympathetic, firm and loving. The students who got in trouble the most also got the most one-on-one support and encouragement. It wasn't always enough.

I knew that it was going to take a while for the hard work to pay off. I made sure never to give a student less than 50% on any assignment. That way, the grade book had a bottom, and students could always bounce back. As the year progressed, I weighted assignments more and more heavily, so that students who struggled early on had a chance at redemption as they grew, and students who were already doing well were incentivized to stay focused.

Of course, once we had done the hard work, we could put comprehension exercises aside and creatively reflect on what we now understood. Here, for example, are some excerpts of students' letters to James Baldwin, in response to his 1963 speech "A Talk to Teachers," which we read a few weeks after the election.

"Your speech was very empowering to me because you opened my eyes to know that just because I'm a child, I don't have to take the injustice. You also made me realize that I don't have to be White in order to change something that I don't like about society…"

"History is repeating itself as people who are not liberated keep quiet. History repeats itself when Blacks and Whites don't even know who we are, what we have been through, what we have accomplished…"

"You taught me that it's up to me to change things in the world—but the only way I will be able to do that is to get liberated and find my self-worth…"

Content Knowledge

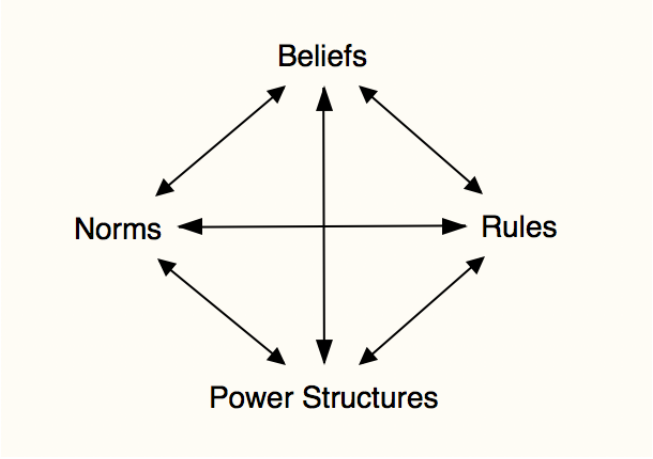
Content knowledge was our second pillar, because our students needed to learn *things*, not just *skills*. They needed to navigate between texts and units with a common vocabulary and a set of references that grew and deepened over time.

Inspired by the explanation of institutions in Tracy E. Ore's *The Social Construction of Difference and Inequality,* we created four units: Social Justice in the Media, Social Justice in Education, Social Justice in the State, and Social Justice in the Economy and in the Family.

In each unit, we focused on two main pieces of content knowledge: understanding how systems of inequality worked within a given institution and understanding how social justice movements fought back against that inequality.

We taught four systems of inequality: racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism. A system of inequality was defined as a collection of rules, norms, beliefs, and power structures that worked together to privilege one group and oppress another group. After mastering these four elements, in order to understand each individual

system, students simply had to plug in the proper privileged and oppressed group. This meant that later ideas, such as Audre Lorde's "no hierarchy of oppressions" and the concept of intersectionality, made a certain kind of organic sense.



"THE DIAMOND" WE USED TO DISCUSS SYSTEMS OF INEQUALITY.

We drew these four elements—rules, norms, beliefs, and power structures—in an interconnecting diamond shape. "The Diamond" then became an analytical tool we used to unpack oppression in both written and multimedia texts. In studying *Selma*, for example, we were able to identify rules (the poll tax, the literacy test), beliefs (White supremacy), power structures (elected officials, court clerks), and norms (unchecked violence against people of color) that worked together to privilege Whites and oppress people of color.

Indeed, in one of our quarterly parent meetings, students formed circles with their peers and family members and taught their family members "the Diamond." We then watched clips from *Selma* and the parents and students worked together to identify examples of rules, norms, beliefs, and power structures in action.

We had another mechanism for understanding social justice movements called "the Triangle," which consisted of three elements: diversity, unity, and discipline. Over and over, whether reading about Black Lives Matter or watching *How to Survive a Plague*, we searched for evidence of these three things. We noticed that homogeneity, discord, and impetuousness among activist groups impeded progress. But when they brought on allies, worked together, and carefully crafted and followed plans, they brought about significant change.

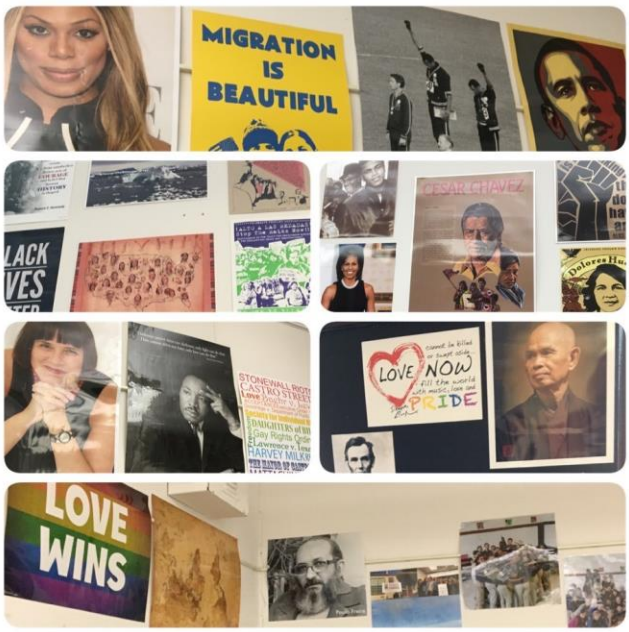
As current and former Cultural Studies students started expressing interest in, and even participating in, activism themselves—such as attending the Chicago protest which shut down a planned Trump rally or participating in the Women's March—the immediacy of these ideas became ever greater.

Social Biography

A MARCH 2016 PARENT MEETING IN WHICH STUDENTS AND PARENTS DISCUSSED "THE DIAMOND" AND APPLIED IT TO *SELMA*. WE REPEATED THE EVENT THE FOLLOWING YEAR.

A social biography is an intentionally radical retelling of a life story in connection to the wider world. We first learned about social biographies from Michael James and came to define them for students in the following way: *my life in the context of the world, and the context of the world as it is transformed by my life.*

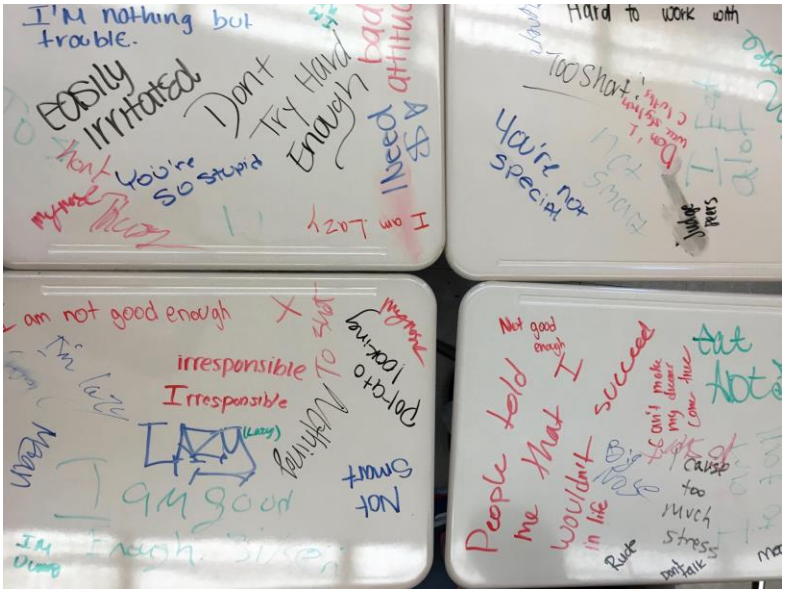
The social biography questions provided a space for personal reflection and academic application. They started off quite simple. Students were asked to discuss how they felt when they first walked into the classroom, for example,



OUR CLASSROOM WALLS REFLECTED SOME OF THE ACTIVISTS AND ACTIVIST GROUPS WE STUDIED, INCLUDING ACT UP, BLM, AND THE UFW

or whether reading Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "We Should All Be Feminists" had changed their own relationship with the notion of feminism. As we got deeper into the year, the questions became more personal.

At the end of each quarter, students were asked to write a social biography essay. For example, at the end of Unit 2, Social Justice in Education, students were given 8-10 paragraphs to write a three-part essay. In Part 1, they were asked to tell specific stories about their own pre-high school educations. In Part II, they drew direct connections between their stories and our texts from the unit. Using direct quotations and classroom language (rules, norms, beliefs, power structures), students contextualized their experiences. In Part III, they reflected on what mindsets or habits they'd developed about themselves as a result of these experiences, and whether transforming these might have a positive impact, both personally and on the wider world.



AN ANONYMOUS STUDENT BRAINSTORM ABOUT NEGATIVE BELIEFS THEY INHERITED ABOUT THEMSELVES FROM THEIR FAMILIES AND/OR OTHER SOURCES.

Each of these parts proved crucial. Students personally reflected on failing to get into selective schools, being bullied by classmates, and even being called names or physically abused by former teachers. By contextualizing these experiences through the application of their academic understanding, they were able to discover hidden truths about some of the things they had survived. All of a sudden, what had seemed like a personal failure was re-cast as an oppressive norm. A silenced moment of danger was revealed to be a systemic lack of rules. A personal attack was re-understood as an abusive power structure with harmful beliefs.

It was through this contextualizing that the class rescued itself from being group therapy. Before I learned how to help students contextualize—before the trip Ms. Peralta and I took to the Bay—personal reflections had been extremely ineffective in Cultural Studies. Some students would reveal deep wounds, going through a process of re-traumatization that may have been cathartic, but wasn't truly *healing*. Other students, sensing the lack of emotional safety, would put up walls, finding ways to distance themselves from the material, noting little details in a story that would allow them to claim, "that's not about me."

What eventually made it a radical space was not that students were free to share their trauma—though they were, and they did. What made it a radical space (for our final weeks with the tenth-graders and for the ninth-graders after them) was that they spent time learning about the systemic roots of their struggle. In so doing, they learned that they were connected to the world around them. As James Baldwin said, "You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world. But then you read."

One of our students reflected on his oppression as a person of color whose family was low-income, but *also* reflected on his own sexism, and his expectations of submissiveness from his girlfriend. Another got fired up over the racist and classist education system that had allowed him to get to high school without learning the names of the world's continents. Multiple students worked through their experiences with sexual assault.

We had a student who struggled mightily with both grades and discipline share a story about being sexually harassed in middle school. At the time, she'd been punished for the incident along with her harasser, and she had internalized a sense of guilt and shame. Over the course of many conversations and assignments, she was able to analyze her own story using the diamond—realizing, for example, that such assaults were a sexist norm—which helped her understand she was not alone.

Another student who struggled with grades and discipline shared a story about his encounter with racial profiling at the hands of the police. In the middle of class one day, he was able to move from a place of barely-restrained anger ("cops are pigs") to a place of intellectual analysis ("that was an example of a racist power structure").

The radical nature of the reflection did not stop there. Students were encouraged to go a step further and imagine transformation, both personal and systemic. It wasn't just "my life in the context of the world," but also "the context of the world as it is transformed by my life."

The student who had been struggling since her middle school harassment started bringing up her grades and stopped getting detentions. The student who had been mistreated by police did the same. He also became a mentor to a younger student who was dealing with similar academic and behavioral struggles. Eventually, a large group of our students were asked by the assistant principal to share their contextualized stories in other classrooms in

order to bring a higher level of consciousness and authenticity to their peers.

It wasn't just trauma, but healing.

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STUDENTS LED DISCUSSION CIRCLES WITH THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS DURING THE FINAL CULTURAL STUDIES PARENT MEETING OF THE YEAR.

It took a student asking me about my own social biography for me to realize that I didn't have one. Pretty soon, I was forcing myself to answer the same questions as my students. With their help and the help of my colleagues, I came to realize that my ancestors, like those of my students, had experienced oppression when they arrived in America. Many of their stories, like those of my students' ancestors, had been silenced or lost. Their suffering had been transmitted, in different forms, from generation to generation. And now, in place of the identity with which they arrived, I possessed a dehumanizing privilege that had been impeding my personal relationships and making me a less effective teacher.

This set of realizations led me to finally understand the words of the indigenous activist Lilla Watson, who famously said, "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." In other words, I had skin in the game. For years, I had fallen into the "White savior" trap of "coming to help" my students. As it turned out, I needed liberation, too.

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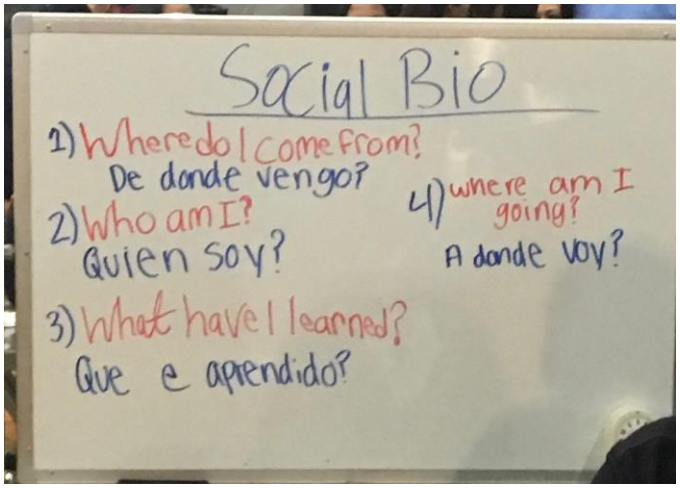
I have no doubt that the Cultural Studies students will go on to lead transformational lives. They certainly didn't wait for the future in order to get started. I watched the Cultural Studies tenth-graders do so well at the end of the 2015-2016 school year that an extra section of AP US History had to be added to the 11th-grade course offerings in order to accommodate them. I watched the Cultural Studies ninth-graders outpace their predecessors, reaching 3.96 points of growth on the Reading ACT—just 0.16 points shy of beating the historic record across the network. I watched students in both classes sit down with their parents at the end of their respective school years and share their final social biographies.

They were stories of survival: of border crossings, sexual assaults, and run-ins with the police. They were stories of awakening: of learning family history, of owning up to privilege, of caring more about the world. They were stories of liberation.

For over an hour, students led their families in a discussion in which they actively contextualized their pasts and talked about their futures. One student was in tears talking about not having enough food on the table at home. Another came out of the closet to her parents, protected by the students in her group—and their families, too, who were all in the circle together. Parents hugged other parents' children.

These were the most radical nights of the entire course.

The ninth-graders' gathering was on May 31, 2017, four months into the Trump presidency. Young students of color from Chicago's inner city were leading their own meeting, surrounded by their families, un-silencing their stories and their identities and talking openly about what they hoped to do to change the world.



CUSTOMIZING THEIR SPACE, A GROUP OF STUDENTS GRABBED AN AVAILABLE WHITEBOARD AND OUTLINED THE FOUR BASIC QUESTIONS OF THEIR FINAL SOCIAL BIOGRAPHY ASSIGNMENT IN BOTH ENGLISH AND SPANISH. THIS SERVED AS A VISUAL AID AS THEY SHARED THEIR STORIES WITH THEIR FAMILIES AT THE FINAL PARENT MEETING.

Ending the Year

After graduating from Chicago Bulls College Prep in 2013, Mr. Ibarra had tried his hand at a four-year university, but hadn't made it. When he started co-teaching with me, he was taking community college classes and was unsure about his path forward.

One day, he told our students the story of his college experience. He talked about not being properly counseled about course selection, not being assigned an engaged advisor, and not feeling comfortable with the clear class differential between him and some of his peers. The students helped him contextualize this and other struggles using "the Diamond." Before the year was out, he was once again enrolled in a four-year school, and is now on track to earn his bachelor's degree in 2020—the same year the students we taught together will enter college.

The last two weeks of class were made up of a student-run "final exam." After receiving a set of criteria and creating their own class agenda, they watched and discussed *Viva la Causa*, a film about the United Farm Workers. They switched back and forth between the film, their partners, and the whole-group setting, employing the class vocabulary of "the Diamond" and "the Triangle" to analyze what they were seeing. They also reflected, individually and collectively, on their growth in reading skill, content knowledge, and social biography, and explored what liberation meant to them. Their rubric was based on three criteria: diversity, unity, and discipline.

I disappeared as fully as possible. *You have to trust them.*

They crushed it.

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Notes

[1] I realize *Radical Teacher* readers may have strong reservations about charter schools. I believe there are inherent flaws in both traditional public and public charter school models, just as there are examples of both excellent traditional public schools and excellent public charter schools. In my experience at CBCP, I was surrounded by compassionate, driven, high-performing colleagues. The school's emphasis on autonomy and innovation was what empowered the creation of Cultural Studies.

[2] Our discussion system was a variation on a school-wide instructional model, which made implementing such a student-focused structure much easier—they were used to taking the lead in their other classes, as well.

ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Poems
Fasces Americae and Walt Whitman's House

by Fred Marchant

FRED MARCHANT, PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTHOR

Fasces Americae

we are party to the sham,
endless weather reports,
each of us convinced
no harm will come if only,
if only, if only, and
nothing too cruel or violent
should ever touch us,
not really, not here, not now,
not in the midst of our
land of good and plenty,
yet as in the dry heat
of this August afternoon,
a moment's chill point
penetrates, you feel it
come in over the air-
waves and settle in as
if poison has found
the place in the body
it had been looking
for all along, thus the heart
seizes in on itself and
the brain's own round of
symmetry, reverts,
descends into a series of
crude punctuations,
an exclamation now!
like a stake in the heart
ellipsis points that become
. . . nothing but a trail
down the wash leading
nowhere, while the real
questions sway before
our eyes like snakes
that refuse to be charmed
? ? ?
and are bound together around
each other and under
the honed head of an axe.

Walt Whitman's House

Camden

His last one, two floors, two granite slabs
for his doorstep, empty lots and snowy vastness
surrounding, rows of row-houses torn down.

Across the street the beige bricks of the jail,
a bus-stop, a few metallic window-slots five
or six floors up. I think mostly of his kind eyes,

how they would have taken in the jail, the jailers,
the inmates, the friends and lovers at the bus-stop
waiting for the bus, the snow falling, going home all.

How in their sleep he might visit, touch their lips
and try to keep them warm with feelings no one,
not even the poets of then or now, know the name of.

Outside his house in the white snow, on the drifts
rising like waves frozen, a vast stone ship of state
is lit up, its hold filled to the limit, and about to sink.

ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

After #Charlottesville: Interrogating our Racist Past in the Trump Era

by Travis Boyce

HUNDREDS OF WHITE NATIONALISTS RALLY AT THE THOMAS JEFFERSON STATUE ON THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA (AUGUST 11, 2017). PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPHANIE KEITH OF THE DAILY MAIL

Introduction

In 2017, this nation's discussion about the Confederate flag, monuments, and other racist structures reached a deadly but pivotal moment. On the weekend of August 11th to the 12th, 2017, far right and hate groups held a rally ("Unite the Right") in Charlottesville, Virginia to protest the city council's ruling to remove the Robert E. Lee monument located at Emancipation Park. Carrying tiki torches, on Friday evening, hundreds of neo-Nazis and White nationalists marched through the city as well as the campus of University of Virginia chanting racist and nationalistic slogans (See Image 1).

IMAGE 1. HUNDREDS OF WHITE NATIONALISTS RALLY AT THE THOMAS JEFFERSON STATUE ON THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA (FRIDAY AUGUST 11, 2017). PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPHANIE KEITH OF THE DAILY MAIL.

The following day, the rally turned violent and deadly with the murder of local anti-racist activist Heather Heyer by James Alex Fields, Jr., an alleged member or associate of the White nationalist group Vanguard America. President Donald Trump used the Charlottesville rally as an opportunity to stir division, stating there were "very fine people on both sides" (Gray, 2017) and later tweeting his support for the preservation of Confederate monuments (see Image 2).

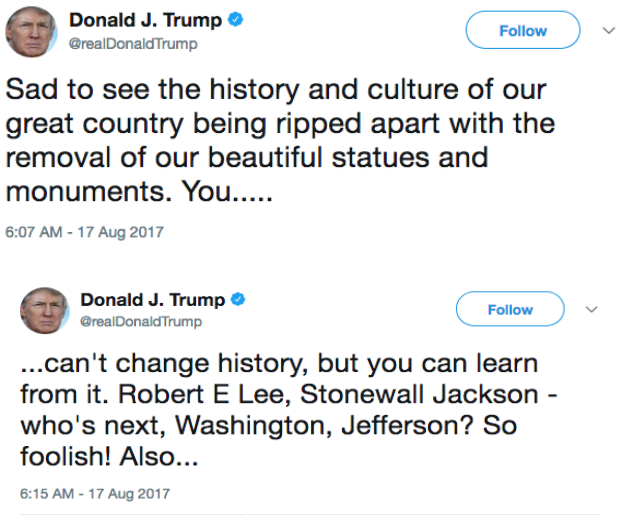

IMAGE 2. PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP SENT TWEETS IN SUPPORT OF THE PRESERVATION OF CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS

To Trump (as noted in his tweets), such monuments enhance the beauty of parks and public spaces, and his opinion was an obvious dog whistle to White supremacists. But to those who oppose these monuments, Confederate statues and monuments represent the preservation of White supremacy. The statues are a reminder of the "Lost Cause" ideology in U.S. institutions and policies (a revisionist narrative that puts our country's slave history and the Confederacy in a positive light).

David Duke, a White nationalist politician and a former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan who attended the rally, referenced the importance of the event. He stated,

> This represents a turning point for the people of this country. We are determined to take our country back. We are going to fulfill the promises of Donald Trump. That's what we believed in, that's why we voted for Donald Trump. Because he said he's going to take our country back. That's what we gotta do. (Hanson, 2017)

Duke heard Trump's message loud and clear. Trump's rhetoric and policies had emboldened David Duke, Richard Spencer, neo-Nazis, and other White nationalists to rally in Charlottesville. During the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump ran on a platform that included racist, sexist, xenophobic, and nationalistic rhetoric and policies. Most notably, he emerged on the campaign scene vilifying Mexican immigrants and promising to build a wall along the U.S.–Mexican border. Upon winning the presidency and taking office, he pushed for immigration reform that solely benefited White European immigrants. He spoke disparagingly about Muslims and African Americans (particularly Black Lives Matter protestors and African American activists athletes, such as Colin Kaepernick). He issued a travel ban to the United States (in the form of an executive order) for six predominately Muslim countries. Later he referred to the predominantly Black nation Haiti as well as African countries as "shitholes." In his first year, he railed against violent or terrorist attacks committed by Muslims or people of color while usually ignoring those acts committed by Whites. Furthermore, in a July, 2017 speech to members of law enforcement in Long Island, he encouraged the use of excessive force, an ongoing and serious issue among communities of color.

What should students understand about the Lost Cause movement? College instructors might want to examine the building of Confederate monuments, why these statues are controversial today, and their impact on college campuses. For example, prior to the start of the 2017 fall semester, I revised my course syllabus AFS 310—African Americans and U.S. Education. During the first five weeks of the

semester, we examined the aftermath of Charlottesville, including the political discourse surrounding it. We looked at this nation's Confederate legacy (monuments, emblems, mascots, and the like) on college campuses. This article will explore the unit I taught, "The Lost Cause and the Collegiate Idea," including a discussion of the readings and other materials used. The unit includes a student assessment and outcomes upon completion of the unit.

Why Teach the Lost Cause?

The fall semester began just over a week after the deadly Unite the Right rally. I knew that this tragedy would be a major topic of discussion both on campus and in my classes. The climate on my campus, the University of Northern Colorado and especially in the community during the election season reflected the sentiments of those who sought to preserve Confederate monuments. UNC, which was originally the state's normal school founded in 1889, is now a public baccalaureate and graduate research university. The campus is located in Greeley, Colorado (Weld County), a historically conservative, rural, White community located approximately sixty miles north of Denver. According to the institution's fall 2017 census data, Black/African American students made up approximately 4.2% of a student body comprised of 13,087 students (this includes 3,076 graduate students). Weld County has a 1% Black/African American population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. During the 2016 presidential campaign cycle, Trump held a rally on my campus that resulted in high tension among the students. Prior to the start of the rally, a group mostly of African American male university students were racially profiled, confronted by law enforcement and security at the rally, and subsequently ejected from the arena (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMZsKq99hdk, Right Side Broadcasting Network, 2016; see 6:45–13:50). Trump won Weld County by 57% of the votes cast on Election Day.

Although I have had a relatively positive experience at this institution and in the community at large, there has been a long troubled history both on campus and in the community in which people of color (particularly Black/African American people) have been racially profiled and/or harassed. In the last fifteen years, there were incidents where UNC faculty, staff, and students of color have had death threats or threats of violence leveled at them, a case of workplace harassment, and/or the nonrenewal of administrative assistant's contract (George, 2007). Most recently, a then-UNC graduate student suffered a broken arm during an arrest after a party by Greeley police. The arresting officers charged the student with second-degree assault (a felony) when she apparently slipped on ice during the arrest, accidently elbowing the officer (Simmons, 2017). Furthermore, flyers promoting Identity Evropa have circulated around campus and a campus chapter of the right-wing student organization Turning Point USA has been established at my home institution.

As an African American from South Carolina who protested for the removal of the Confederate flag on the statehouse dome in college approximately 18 years ago, I am aware 1) that Confederate monuments, flags, mascots, etc. are not obscure symbols but are connected to a larger system designed to maintain White supremacy (in many ways), and 2) these Confederate symbols, monuments, and mascots are not bound by a region.

Even though Colorado was not even a state during the years of the Civil War, there are symbols throughout the state as well as Weld County, Colorado that reflect the preservation of White supremacy, the genocide of indigenous peoples, and the Confederate legacy. Colorado has a Confederate legacy with active chapters of the Sons of the Confederate Veterans. During the height of the Gold Rush during the 1850s, southerners migrated to southern Colorado for economic opportunities. When the Civil War commenced in 1861, many stayed and organized Confederate partisan companies participating in armed conflicts throughout the war in the territory and region. Furthermore, in wake of the battle of Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina in 1861 the stars and bars flag – the first national flag - flew over the Wallingford & Murphy store in Denver (Colton, 1959).

In concert with the monument building campaigns across the country during the turn of the century, a Confederate monument was erected in Greenwood Cemetery in Canon City Colorado in 1899. Most recently, the Sons of the Confederate veterans installed a memorial at Riverside Cemetery in Denver in 2003 (see Image 3).

IMAGE 3. COLORADO'S SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS MEMORIAL LOCATED AT RIVERSIDE CEMETERY (DENVER, CO) IS ON ONE OF SIX CONFEDERATE MEMORIALS IN THE STATE OF COLORADO. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR (MAY 27, 2018).

To date there are six Confederate monuments throughout the state. Two of them sit on public land that honors both sides: Pitkin County Courthouse near Aspen and in Beulah (Kovaleski, 2017). Moreover, in Kiowah County, lies the monument of the Sand Creek Massacre. In November of 1864, close to 700 U.S. soldiers massacred and mutilated at minimum 154 Native Americans; primarily Cheyenne and Arapaho women and children (Kelman, 2015). Furthermore, approximately ten miles north from my home institution is Eaton High School, known in interscholastic sports as "The Fighting Reds." Approximately thirty-four miles south is the Confederate-themed "Rebels" sports team of Weld Central High School (See Image 4).

IMAGE 4. THE EATON HIGH SCHOOL "FIGHTING REDS" & THE WELD CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL "REBELS" MASCOT. NOTE: THE WELD CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL "REBEL" REBEL MASCOT REPRESENTED IN FILE ABOVE IS ALSO THE MASCOT OF WELD CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GREELEY TRIBUNE.

In wake of the tragic events in Charlottesville, combined with the climate both on campus and in the community, I thought it was important to provide an intellectual space to interrogate the literature on the Lost Cause and Confederate symbols. Students would have a chance to see how this theme is embedded physically and culturally into college campuses across the country.

A class such as African Americans and U.S. Education is the ideal time to include a unit on the discussion of the Lost Cause and Confederate symbols on college campuses. In past classes, I have led brief discussions on the Lost Cause, particularly at the time the students learned about the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision and massive resistance movement. (For example, we covered the Little Rock School Crisis in 1957 and the desegregation of the University of Mississippi in 1962.) Thus discussing the aftermath of Charlottesville presented an opportunity to deeply explore what the Lost Cause means.

Unit: The Lost Cause and the Collegiate Idea

African Americans and U.S. Education is a 300-level/upper-division undergraduate course housed in the Africana Studies Program at UNC. This a required course for Africana Studies majors (BA: Liberal Arts and BA: Social Studies Secondary Teaching emphasis majors) and an optional elective for Africana Studies minors. Historically, elementary education majors who tended to be White and female took this class. Most recently, students enrolled in AFS 310 were predominately students of color and were either Africana Studies majors /minors or non-majors interested in the course title. Because my course covers the history of African Americans in U.S. education, I titled this unit's theme "The Lost Cause and the Collegiate Idea" because both issues are prominent within the African American educational experience. These issues are part of both the desegregation of schools and the White massive resistance movements.

The White nationalists and neo-Nazis who marched in Charlottesville fundamentally sought to preserve monuments, emblems, and traditions that upheld White supremacy. For this unit I was most interested in a similar issue: why do American colleges and universities seek to keep Confederate traditions that are divisive and inherently racist? Furthermore, what is the primary motivation for a sitting U.S. president or any elected official to support Confederate monuments?

Remembering Our Racist Past

The unit in each week was organized into subthemes. In the first week of the semester, the class reviewed a history of the Lost Cause movement and a definition of the collegiate idea. My students were familiar with the Confederate flag, monuments, and symbols, but not the Lost Cause movement and certainly not how it is embedded into the culture of many of our nation's colleges and universities. I used Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson's edited volume, *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*; Sanford Levison's *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Times*; and James Loewen's *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong*, among other scholarly books as references in lecture. We screened Vice News's provocative, 2018 Peabody Award-winning documentary, *Charlottesville: Race and Terror*, which I followed by an in-class discussion. My students were horrified yet highly interested in the film. I gave them an open forum to reflect on the news story and apply the events/aftermath of Charlottesville to their daily lives. They looked at the event's effect both on national politics (in terms of Trumpism) as well as on issues they have been grappling with on campus, particularly during the 2016 election season on campus.

In the next class meeting, I made connections to the Vice News documentary by grounding the Robert E. Lee protest within the historical context of the Lost Cause movement. I covered the rise and fall of the Reconstruction era, the Redemption movement, the age of Jim Crow, and ultimately the construction of Confederate monuments by the early twentieth century. Citing Levison (1998), I noted that the construction and erection of Confederate monuments across the country was the Lost Cause movement's greatest achievement. Furthermore, citing Loewen (1999) and Mills (2003), I provided the class with a definition of the Lost Cause movement. I indicated that the Lost Cause movement was specifically grounded in a revisionist historical narrative that portrayed the

Confederacy, the White South, and the institution of slavery in a positive light. I cited Carol Emberton's *Beyond Redemption: Race, Violence, and the American South after the Civil War*, concluding that White supremacy, racial reconciliation (between White Northerners and Southerners), and patriotism was used to support the Lost Cause narrative. I noted that often times, the Lost Cause narrative relies on slogans and chants. Most notably, the motto "The South Shall Rise Again" is popularly shouted during the playing of "From Dixie with Love" by the University of Mississippi's marching band.

Next I provided a definition of the "collegiate idea" and how it is connected to the Confederate legacy. My students found this part of lecture fairly interesting because it directly applied to their collegiate experiences (convocation time, the start of the college football season, Greek Life recruitment season, and the reintroduction to college traditions). Referencing historian J. Douglas Toma (2003), I defined the collegiate idea as "the combination of community and campus culture associated with the traditional American small college" (p. 5). I cited examples of the collegiate idea such as school mascots, songs, and traditions, among others. To humor my students, I showed a YouTube clip of Auburn University students toilet-papering or "rolling" the famous oak trees at the iconic Toomer's Corner, a tradition performed after major athletic victories. Although there are positive aspects of the collegiate idea that have evolved to be inclusive to all members of the student body, there are college traditions that are deeply rooted in the Lost Cause narrative.

We examined southern colleges and universities that had embedded the Lost Cause and Confederate symbols both physically and culturally within their traditions. This list included mascots (i.e. Ole Miss Rebel—Colonel Reb), the use of the Confederate battle flag as symbol at athletic events, the support of racist and exclusive institutional policies such as racial segregation, the longing for an ethnocentric campus (and subsequently society), and exclusive racist secret/Greek-lettered societies. My students were particularly intrigued by the troubled history of Greek Life on southern campuses where the Lost Cause culture was embedded in various aspects of collegiate life. Citing Anthony James's book chapter titled "Political Parties: College Social Fraternities, Manhood, and the Defense of Southern Traditionalism, 1945–1960," I noted that it was college fraternities on Southern campuses that brought the Lost Cause collegiate ideas to their respective schools. This was primarily in concert with the rise of the Dixiecrat (Southern Democrats) movement in 1948 and massive resistance to school desegregation. These organizations memorialized the Lost Cause, donning Confederate uniforms at fraternity formals as well as at on-campus events (James, 2008). I performed a Google image search ("Kappa Alpha Order" and "Confederate") and showed my students some provocative images. While there were many vintage photos of fraternity members in Kappa Alpha Order in Confederate uniforms and posing with the Confederate flag, my students were taken aback to find contemporary photos of Kappa Alpha Order reproducing the memorializing of the Lost Cause, similar to their predecessors. One image in particular is a photo of members of the fraternity that constructed a "Make America Great Again" wall around their fraternity house at Tulane University (see Image 5).

IMAGE 5. IN 2016 MEMBERS OF KAPPA ALPHA ORDER FRATERNITY AT TULANE UNIVERSITY (NEW ORLEANS) CONSTRUCTED "TRUMP'S WALL" ON THE FRONT PORCH OF THEIR FRATERNITY HOUSE. THIS PROVIDES AN INTERESTING JUXTAPOSITION OF KAPPA ALPHA ORDER BROTHERS AT A RALLY POSING WITH A CONFEDERATE FLAG ON THE CAMPUS OF EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY IN 1960. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE TULANE HULLABALOO AND EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY DIGITAL COLLECTIONS.

This image, in particular, helped my students see a historical connection that also had a contemporary perspective.

I cautioned my students that although Greek Life was historically at the helm of reproducing the Lost Cause culture on their respective campuses, there were other ways that schools maintained Lost Cause narratives, such as through non-Greek lettered organizations, institutional policies, and traditions such as songs, mascots, and athletic teams. To conclude week 1, students read and discussed Sandra Knispel's 2014 National Public Radio (NPR) article, "'Ole Miss' Debates Campus Traditions with Confederate Roots." As noted in the short article, by 2014 the university was in process of making major changes to many of its traditions (such as the Rebel Mascot). Based on my students' reactions both in class and on the discussion board, it is clear that Lost Cause culture is so normalized that it can be easily overlooked and accepted as neutral. The insidious normalization of symbols of historical racism is one reason why it is so important that students learn about the Lost Cause movement and why it is relevant today, especially on college campuses. Thus in laying out a framework for this unit, I made sure that students had three things to review: a definition of the Lost Cause and the Collegiate Idea; primary and secondary sources (via

Google image search); and the screening of a relevant documentary/investigative news report. These three things set the stage for a smooth introduction of the class and the semester. Over the next three weeks, we discussed case studies and examples of how the Lost Cause is embedded in college culture.

Normalizing the Lost Cause: "Ole Miss," and Campus Traditions

We devoted week 2 to examining the Confederate legacy of the University of Mississippi. We screened in class a documentary in ESPN's "30 for 30" series called *The Ghosts of Ole Miss*. Furthermore, as homework I required my class to watch the highly acclaimed Civil Rights documentary series *Eyes on the Prize: Fighting Back, 1957–1962*; specifically the section that covers James Meredith and the desegregation of the University of Mississippi. The footage of these films shows what it was like to be a student at the University of Mississippi during this era. Most notably, students took away from the documentary clear examples of how the Lost Cause was not only embedded in the institution's history, but also in Mississippi politics (similar to the present in national politics pertaining to the Lost Cause debate). For example, on September 29, 1962 Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett held a de facto rally at halftime of a Mississippi-Kentucky football game denouncing the Kennedy administration and the desegregation of the University of Mississippi (see Image 6).

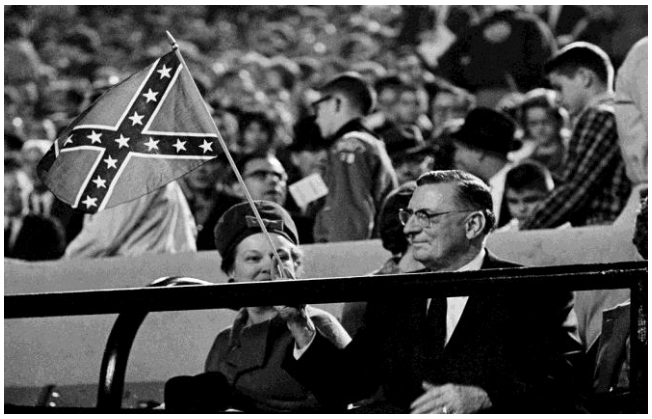

IMAGE 6. MISSISSIPPI GOVERNOR ROSS BARNETT ATTENDING A MISSISSIPPI-KENTUCKY FOOTBALL GAME IN JACKSON, MS (SEPT. 1962). PHOTO COURTESY OF JIM BOURDIER/ASSOCIATED PRESS.

To conclude the week, students read and discussed (on the online discussion board) W. Ralph Eubanks's "A Black Student Confronts the Racial Legacy of Ole Miss," published in The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education. One student noted on the discussion board that she realized how racism becomes institutionalized. The student explained,

> At one point the article said "the culture, heritage, and traditions of the school stood as barriers..." I think that is a problem that the entire nation faces when it comes to addressing racism. It's in everything. Racism is literally built into the foundation of the country, so it is really hard to find and address. Similarly, the campus of Ole Miss was struggling to figure out how to integrate students without giving up traditions. Predominately white establishments like Ole Miss in the South have histories that are closely connected to a deeply divided and racist past. As a result, the campus is more hostile for students of color. Things like confederate mascots and flags all contribute to a hostile environment.

Racism is not just part of daily human interaction, but it is also embedded in our social organizations. Concurring with that student, I reminded her, as well as the class, that it is important to not take lightly the events in Charlottesville and the current state of politics. Overall, I was pleased and excited to see my students taking ownership of this topic.

Fuzzy Memories

During week 3, we focused specifically on college mascots. While there is a Confederate legacy in terms of collegiate mascots, I focused the lecture, film screening (In Whose Honor, 1997), and required class reading to broader issues such as the exploitation of Native Americans as mascots in high school, collegiate, and professional sports. I emphasized to the class that the use of Native Americans as mascots by non-Native American schools is presumptuous. I cited examples in my lecture where some collegiate teams (Stanford, St. Johns, Marquette University) have changed their Native American mascots. But other universities continue to hang on to theirs (Florida State University, University of Illinois, University of Utah). This also includes high school interscholastic sports teams throughout the country such as the local Eaton High School (Colorado) "Fighting Reds," as well as the Riverside High School (Greer, South Carolina) Warriors, whose home football stadium is insensitively named "The Reservation."

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the collegiate idea is the university's identity in terms of their mascot. I cited examples of unknown or unusual collegiate team names. For instance, my home institution's original mascot was the Teachers for its identity as historically the state's normal school—and is now the Bears. In another example, there's the University of Kansas Jayhawks. That name can be traced back to the American Civil War, which led us to this week's required reading: Meagan Bever's "Fuzzy Memories: College Mascots and the Struggle to Find Appropriate Legacies of the Civil War," published in the Journal of Sport History. Bever (2011) examines the origins of the mascot names of the University of Kansas (Jayhawks), the University of Missouri (Tigers), and the University of Mississippi (Rebels), all connected to violence and the American Civil War. For better or for worse, my students took away from this article the importance of history in terms of location and of the collegiate idea. They were able to see the problem behind today's continued use of controversial mascots or mascot names, ones that refer to the Lost Cause and that reinforce White supremacy.

The Invented Tradition of the South

During week 4, we focused the discussion specifically on collegiate sports and the Lost Cause. Based on documentary screenings of *The Ghosts of Ole Miss* and *Eyes on the Prize*, my students had some visual references of Confederate symbols in connection with collegiate sports. Therefore, we spent part of this week interrogating Derrick White's "Desegregation to Integration: Race, Football, and 'Dixie' at the University of Florida," published in the Florida Historical Quarterly. We also did searches on Google and YouTube seeking primary and secondary sources of Confederate symbols in relationship to college sports. Directly related to this week's reading, we successfully uncovered a YouTube clip as well as images on a Google search of the University of Florida's 1962 football team when they wore Confederate flag decals on their helmets during a bowl game (the Gator Bowl) against Pennsylvania State University in a north versus south match up. As I mentioned in week 1, the memorializing of the Lost Cause narrative was not exclusively within Greek Life culture, but found its way into various groups at the university, most notably athletics and subsequently could be embedded in various aspects society.

At the close of week 4, I noted that it had been over a month since the disastrous Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville. While my students still found the topic interesting, it was indeed time for me to assess what they had learned and to move on to other topics in relationship to African Americans and U.S. education. The next section will briefly explore their assessment activity and its outcomes.

From Charlottesville to Weld County: Assessment, Outcomes, and Conclusion

Since African Americans and U.S. Education is a 300-level, upper-division undergraduate course, I was more interested in assessing what my students had learned in a form of a take-home writing assignment as opposed to an in-class exam. For their assessment, students were required to review the peer-reviewed journal article, "Flag-Waving Wahoos: Confederate Symbols at the University of Virginia, 1941–51" published in The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography. I purposely chose this article for two reasons. First, aspects of the Lost Cause and the collegiate idea are not solely exclusive to Deep South colleges and universities, but also affect elite, nationally ranked, selective universities such as the University of Virginia. Second, this article comes back full circle to Charlottesville, Virginia.

The purpose of this kind of intellectual exercise is to 1) help students critique scholarly work in an objective manner, and 2) get students in the habit of providing a unique perspective of a scholarly discussion of any given topic. The writing guidelines consisted of the following:

- At least 1,250 words in length
- Work is cited in APA citation style
- Double-spaced in a 12-point, Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins
- Reference page provided of all works cited
- Employ the readings we have read in class to cite your work and at least one relevant source (such as films, podcasts, newspaper articles, primary documents—speeches, writings, and so forth)

Overall, my students did an extraordinary job; granted this was their first assignment for the semester and in a writing format that required them to analyze and critique rather than regurgitate. One of my students, for example, situated her review through the lens of the unspoken history of Southern colleges. Another student reviewed the article through the lens of sports and the Lost Cause, as the article talked about the University of Virginia's football team. Perhaps one of the most interesting reviews was written by a student whose theme centered on institutional racism and White male fragility. That student successfully linked UVA's confederate history to the present, particularly connecting the images of predominately White men marching with tiki torches to protest their racial superiority (who subsequently became backed by the sitting president of the United States). This student's take on White male fragility is indeed relevant to history in terms of the Lost Cause movement and White supremacy as well as reinforcement of the current political discourse of Trumpism. As historian Trent Watts (2008) notes in his edited volume, *White Masculinity in the Recent South*, White masculinity has so long been embedded as the authority of political, social, and cultural norms of the South that racism appears to be natural and "sanctioned by history or by a higher authority" (p. 8). This ideology is indeed reinforced in the common narrative that White males in recent years are losing ground in terms of power. It subsequently resulted in the 63% White male vote for Trump in the 2016 election, the spike in membership in Neo Nazi and other White supremacists groups, and finally the images of predominately White men marching in Charlottesville.

Upon the completion of this unit, an ugly racial incident allegedly occurred. On Friday, September 22, the Weld Central High School (Rebels) traveled to Denver, Colorado to play a football game against Manual High School (Thunderbolts), a predominately Black/African American school. According to witnesses (including Manual High School's principal, Nick Dawkins), fans from Weld Central wore Confederate paraphernalia, flew the Confederate battle flag, and the players from Weld Central hurled racial slurs at their opponents (Finley, 2017). While the Weld Central camp denies the allegations, it is clear that they hold the Confederate-themed Rebel persona near and dear to their hearts. They are in concert with predecessors who supported the Lost Cause during the era of Jim Crow, as well as those who marched in Charlottesville in August. Although we were done with this unit, we briefly discussed this situation in class the following week as well as related issues throughout the semester such as Richard Spencer's October 7th "flash mob" rally in in Charlottesville where approximately 50 White nationalists rallied at the Robert E.

Lee monument. In agreement with the "The Lost Cause and the Collegiate Idea," the group sung Dixie-- the unofficial anthem of the Confederate States of America and the old fight song for the University of Mississippi--performed the "rebel yell" and finally chanted "The South Shall Rise Again" and "Russia is Our Friend" – a dog whistle noting their support for Donald Trump (Svrluga, 2017). By the semester's end, we covered interesting main topics that reflected the spirit of the course and its student-learning outcomes. These topics included "The Founding and Intellectual Missions of Black Institutions," "Brown v. Board of Education and its National Impact," "Elite Black Institutions, Organizations, and Secret Societies," and "Interscholastic Sports Teams." Although students found the class helpful and interesting, they enjoyed the most our interrogation of the Lost Cause, Confederate monuments/symbols, as well as the aftermath of Charlottesville. This unit gave them a clear understanding of how something as superficial as a flag or monument can serve as reminders of the racism and White supremacy that are deeply embedded in our institutions, laws, and schools. They now have the content knowledge to challenge these historical stones, even when a sitting president supports it.

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ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Pushing the Line: Teaching Suburban Seventh Graders to be Critically Conscious through Historical Inquiry and Civic Letter-Writing

by Andy Beutel

PHOTO BY RAWPIXEL

http://radicalteacher.library.pitt.edu No. 111 (Summer 2018) DOI 10.5195/rt.2018.472

Introduction

"This is as close to the line as you can get without crossing it." This was the response from my supervisor when I explained a new project I developed for my seventh grade social studies students. I teach in a high-achieving K-12 public school district located in an affluent, suburban and conservative town and this statement is instructive for understanding the challenges and envisioning the possibilities of critical teaching with non-marginalized students in the Age of Trumpism.

The ascendance of Trump to the presidency has created an urgent opportunity to engage students in a meaningful and critical analysis of our government, military, economy, and society. We have a president who has demonstrated a disturbing lack of knowledge regarding both US and world history (Le Miere, 2017) and a casual disregard for the facts (DePaulo, 2017). Trump's ahistorical and fact-less approach to the presidency threatens our democracy and democratic norms and calls for a pedagogy that focuses on justice-oriented content while placing an emphasis on evidence-based arguments.

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Education is not a neutral endeavor (Zinn, 1994). Students should be exposed to issues occurring in their school, town, state, country and world and understand why and how they are affected by these issues. Teachers can facilitate this process by seeking to elevate and transform the consciousness of students and help them see possibilities for change (hooks, 1994). Fortunately, students are more interested in current events and politics than I have seen in previous years, a trend that has been noted in schools across the country (Harris, 2017). However, there is also a legitimate concern among teachers of backlash by administrators and parents when broaching political topics with our students (Kenworthy, 2017). As such, while the need for critical education is clear, especially in the time of Trump, the means to practice such teaching is complicated.

In the inquiry-based learning project I will describe, I combine critical pedagogy theory with historical literacy pedagogy in order to enable seventh grade students in a world history course to critique current problems in the United States under Trump through the comparative analysis of different historical and modern sources and action-based letter-writing to the president.

Several questions guided this work: To what extent can a seventh grade world history course be an effective venue for students to consider and critique problems in the US under Trump? How can I navigate the current political climate and constraints of an affluent, suburban public school district while engaging in critical teaching? To what extent can I push non-marginalized students to think and write critically through a social justice lens while avoiding an indoctrinating style and maintaining space for student-centered inquiry?

Description of School District, Course, and Culture

Mountainview, New Jersey is an upper-middle class suburban community located about 25 miles from New York City with a population of 26,000 and a median household income of $106,875. The Mountainview Public School District serves students in the town from kindergarten through 12th grade. Mountainview Middle School currently has 753 students in grades 6-8 of which the students are 78% white, 10% Asian, 7% Hispanic, 3% Black, and 2% of two or more races.[i]

The Mountainview Public School District boasts high levels of student achievement. The high school graduation rate is 96% and half of the students there take Advanced Placement courses. Students at Mountainview Middle School outperform the state average each year on standardized assessments and go on to either attend the district high school or one of the nearby private or magnet schools. Students in seventh grade experience a broad and diverse curriculum which features core courses of math, science, social studies, language arts, and a foreign language as well as health and physical education and shorter cycle courses including art, public presentation, service learning, robotics, and Internet research. Within these classes, students are often engaged in student-centered, project-based learning and are expected to read, write and think analytically. The school would most closely resemble what Anyon (1980) classified as an "affluent professional school" in terms of both socioeconomic demographics as well as curricular and instructional approach. In this context, inquiry-based learning and a focus on higher-level analysis and critical thinking is encouraged; in fact, this philosophy is reflected throughout the social studies course description on the district's website.

However, in my experience, while this style of instruction is promoted, the content of that instruction is more scrutinized. For example, when teaching about Islam last year, a parent and member of the district's Board of Education, questioned the project I assigned about Islam even though students had completed a nearly identical project about Christianity earlier in the year. As part of that same unit, I developed a lesson focused on Trump's travel ban and the advice from my supervisor beforehand was: "Be careful and remember where you teach". Despite the fact that many teachers and administrators in the district are progressive in their individual politics, there is a general apprehension about combining politics with pedagogy.

This year I am teaching 92 students across four sections of the seventh grade social studies course. While the course ostensibly focuses on world history, geography and culture, I have used the historical content as a

platform for exposing students to contemporary issues and helping them think critically about social justice themes that transcend time and place like inequality, discrimination, and war and peace. This is where I find myself constantly flirting with "the line" referenced earlier. Using documents to drive instruction, encouraging students to develop and share their perspectives, creating a sense of balance in the content, and not explicitly sharing my political views, has generally been seen (based on feedback or lack thereof from students, parents and administrators) as not crossing the line. My current struggle is how to operate within these constraints, while pushing students to be more critically conscious and not falling prey to false equivalencies and normalization in the Age of Trumpism.

Description and Theory of the Inquiry-Based Learning Project

I designed this project as an inquiry-based study in which each day students would examine a different factor leading to the Roman Empire's decline and, in the same lesson, analyze how the United States is dealing with the parallel issue today. The culminating assignment for this project was writing and sending a letter to the president explaining the lessons he can learn from the fall of the Roman Empire in the context of comparable problems facing the country today. The inquiry model is the instructional approach embedded in critical pedagogy (Friere, 1997; hooks, 1994; Swalwell, 2013) but it is also reflective of a new understanding of historical literacy and history instruction that emphasizes skills such as analysis, synthesis and writing for understanding as part of teaching historical content (Downey & Long, 2016).

What lessons can the president and country learn from the fall of Rome?

The guiding question for this inquiry study was: What lessons can the president and country learn from the fall of Rome? In each lesson, students would end class by returning to that overarching question in the context of the specific problem that was the focus of that day (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998). These written reflections helped students synthesize their understanding of the topic and served as the content for their letters (Downey & Long, 2016). The letter-writing assignment was an attempt to have students politically engage with the world outside the classroom through their writing. (Christensen, 2000). Ultimately, this project was designed to help students synthesize historical content (Downey & Long, 2016), develop a critical awareness and understanding of issues in the US, and introduce them to concept of civic action (Freire, 1997; hooks, 1994).

Inquiry Project in Action: Lessons, Struggles and Successes

I began the project with an introductory lesson focused on how the decline and fall of the Roman Empire can serve as a cautionary tale for modern empires like the United States. After assigning a brief textual overview of the decline of Rome, I had students free-write and discuss the challenges they see facing the country today. This introduction served as the foundation for the next seven lessons, each of which focused on a different factor leading to Rome's fall and comparable problems in the US today: societal divisions, economic inequality, political instability and a lack of trust in government, taxation and economic policies, overexpansion and military spending, migration and refugees, and ongoing wars and military decline.

Over the course of the following lessons, two noteworthy trends emerged as I attempted to push students to be more critically conscious through document-based inquiry, discussion and writing. First, the students struggled to understand and/or resisted acknowledging these contemporary issues as systemic problems. This dynamic occurred for three reasons: a lack of experience and interaction with marginalized groups in society, only having lived during a time of endless war and widespread mistrust in government, and their collectively-advantaged socioeconomic position. Second, as students analyzed and discussed these issues in class, one of three reactions occurred: some were moved to embrace a critically-conscious position in their writing, some only moved a little but not to the point of supporting a systemic change in society, and some were completely unmoved. Due to the similarities in the class discussions, pedagogical challenges and student responses, I have grouped the lessons together as follows: 1) societal divisions with migration and refugees; 2) political instability and mistrust in government with overexpansion and military spending as well as ongoing war and military decline; and 3) economic inequality with taxation and economic policies.

Societal Divisions & Migration and Refugees

Students began the lesson on societal divisions by considering the importance of unity in a country. Students noted the value of people feeling connected to one another and that a country is stronger when people are not divided. Next, they analyzed a timeline illustrating the rise of Christianity in the context of Rome's decline and read an excerpt about internal conflicts that arose in Rome as a result of the growth of Christianity. Students then examined images reflecting societal divisions in the US including the violence at Charlottesville, NFL players taking a knee, Black Lives Matter protests, and vandalism of a Jewish cemetery and a Muslim mosque and charts featuring statistics on discrimination such as the perception of how Black Americans are treated, the reported levels of discrimination among American Muslims, and the percentage of LGBT youth who have heard negative messages about being LGBT.

The discussion that ensued across my classes was both interesting and frustrating. Of all the information presented, the most common topic of discussion was about

NFL players like Colin Kaepernick kneeling in protest during the national anthem. The students dominating the discussion expressed outrage over Kaepernick's actions and characterized him as disrespectful to the military, flag and country. I was careful not to explicitly share my own views but explained that Kaepernick was kneeling as an act of protest against racial injustice throughout the country and referred the students back to the data shared earlier. However, most students continued to focus on the action and individual as opposed to the issue of systemic racism in America. This inability or unwillingness to see the issue instead of the person exposed the difficulty non-marginalized students have with understanding a problem that doesn't affect them directly. The reality is that the overwhelming majority of students have a different lived experience than those who are affected by racial discrimination.

However, several students were moved by the data and discussion. For example, Aly, wrote: "In the U.S people are not accepted for their race, beliefs, color, or other people from their race. This is not good and can lead to something greater than riots and that will be very bad for the future of the U.S." Here, Aly recognized societal divisions as a problem but only insofar as it causes a disruption to the status quo. Ellie went further in her response, writing: "We need to please try to unite our country instead of dividing it by discrimination, racism and isolating minority groups. Humanity will always have its flaws but we can at least try to make this world a better place." This response reflects a sense of hopefulness and a vision that a society free of racism and discrimination is beneficial for all, including those who are not directly affected by its far-reaching effects.

A related discussion and dynamic developed in the lesson covering migration and refugees. In that lesson, students analyzed a map of migrations into Rome during the 4th and 5th centuries and watched a video clip about the migration of the Visigoths into Rome as refugees as well as the subsequent mistreatment by the Romans and rebellion by the Visigoths. Next, students examined a graph showing the numbers of undocumented immigrants in the US and a chart illustrating the increase in arrests of undocumented immigrants by Immigration and Customs Enforcement under Trump in 2017 compared to the same period in 2016 under Obama. Students then analyzed a map and chart showing the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis and how few refugees the US has taken in compared to other countries.

This data led to one of the more divisive discussions. Many sought to justify deportations because of the fact that undocumented immigrants came to the US illegally. On the other hand, some students expressed concern over the number of refugees caused by the war in Syria and the relatively low number the US has accepted. I was careful not to explicitly share my view and instead posed questions in an attempt to push the students further: Does the US have an increased responsibility to take in refugees if they are from a war we are fighting? And, what message does it send to other immigrants in the US when there is an increase in deportations?

The students' writing mirrored the divide evident in the class discussions. Some students, like Bryce, argued that Rome's problem stemmed from their mistreatment of migrants and refugees and therefore focused on the need for the US to treat immigrants and refugees better. He suggested: "The U.S. should relieve tension between undocumented immigrants and U.S. citizens by being a role model. They should also further develop a humane way to deal with undocumented immigrants that is agreed upon by the public." Here Bryce wrote about the importance of our government leading on this issue with humanity, thus demonstrating empathy for an oppressed and unfamiliar population.

The struggle for the students when learning about the plight of undocumented immigrants and refugees extends from the fact that they are culturally and geographically removed from the issue.

However, even when exposed to new information and pushed on this issue, there were students who remained unmoved from their position. Some, like Riley, understood Rome's mistake as taking in too many immigrants and refugees and therefore the lesson for the US is to deport more and take in less. She argued that Trump should "...not let illegal immigrants into the country. I think this because they could attack and bomb the country when they are not even supposed to be there. Another problem is that they could steal and take many things." This sentiment reveals what Seider (2008) warned about suburban students fearing the loss of their privilege and what Swalwell (2013) noted about the limitations of critical teaching with a non-marginalized population. The struggle for the students when learning about the plight of undocumented immigrants and refugees extends from the fact that they are culturally and geographically removed from the issue. For most, this topic doesn't connect with their lives in a personal way. These students do not know people who have been deported or experienced an ICE raid and this student's response reflects that lack of understanding as well as a disregard for people who live that reality.

Political Instability and Mistrust in Government, Overexpansion and Military Spending, & Ongoing War and Military Decline

Students began the lesson on political instability and mistrust in government by discussing the idea of trust, the value of people trusting the government and what leads citizens to lose trust in their government. There was broad consensus among the students that if people lose trust in the government it can lead to rebellions, chaos and a lack of protection and noted that people lose trust when government leaders abuse their power, make bad decisions and are dishonest. Students then analyzed a chart depicting the violent turnover of emperors in Rome followed by a text describing how one emperor came to power through bribery to understand why Romans lost

trust in their government. Next, students examined a poll tracking the declining level of Americans' trust in the federal government from 1958-2017. Students asked smart questions related to the chart and wanted to know what led to the specific periods of decline. Some pointed out that there were low levels of trust under Obama as well as Trump which led to a tangent about the political divide in the country between the two major parties. This is where I felt like I had to be particularly cautious about pushing the students to understand how Trump is uniquely eroding trust. The vast majority of my students do not have the political nuance to identify where I stand politically simply based on my teaching. To most, they understand political views in the context of Democrat or Republican and Hillary/Obama or Trump. Therefore, I was careful to avoid seeming explicitly critical of Trump and instead pushed only to the point of asking students to consider why there may be a lack of trust in Trump. However, by exercising this caution, it allowed some students to conclude that Trump was no worse in fostering mistrust than Obama.

As a result of the discussion, students were generally in agreement that trust is important but, for many, how they applied that idea to the US today varied. Billy was very direct in his suggestion to Trump about how to restore trust in the government: "...tell people the truth. Without honesty there is no trust. You can't expect anyone to listen and believe you if you always lie. If you lie it will come to haunt you when it comes out that you lied and less people will trust you as a leader." However, Paxton did not move from his original position and argued that the problem is with others in the government besides Trump: "The other problem that is arising among government positions below presidency such as in the secretary or governor positions is government corruption. Although it is not a huge problem (yet) in the U.S. many are running for governor in the fifty states of America in November who I personally believe, believe in lies and power for themselves." Importantly though, both responses reflect a limited vision of how the government can and should operate beyond simply being more honest and less corrupt.

This lesson exposed the challenge of teaching young people how to envision a government that instills trust when all they have known over their relatively short lifetimes is a country of people largely mistrustful of the federal government.

This lesson exposed the challenge of teaching young people how to envision a government that instills trust when all they have known over their relatively short lifetimes is a country of people largely mistrustful of the federal government. This struggle, combined with the risks of teaching explicitly about politics under the perceived constraints of the school, limited the extent to which some students moved on this issue.

A related challenge emerged in the lesson about overexpansion and military spending. In that lesson, the students read an article excerpt about Rome's attempt to control its large amount of territory by increasing military spending followed by an excerpt from a Germanic leader's speech illustrating the level of motivation Rome's enemies had to bring down the empire. Next, students analyzed a chart of Trump's proposed budget showing the military constituting the majority of the discretionary spending and a chart comparing US military spending to the next eight countries combined. These charts led to several students expressing concern about the amount the US spends on the military once they understood it in the context of the total budget and in relation to other countries. They also examined maps identifying the location of US military bases and US Special Forces around the world. Unfortunately, this information did not have the intended effect on most of the students. Several argued that having bases around the world is not the same as Rome's overexpansion and that it helps keep Americans safe. Some went further connecting back to military funding, claiming that the US should spend as much money as it takes to maintain the best military in the world. I tried to push students further by asking questions such as: How might other countries perceive this large US military presence? And, what are some other spending priorities of the government?

The result was that several students were critical of the military spending in their writing but stopped short of criticizing the overall imperialist approach of the US. For example, Ashley wrote: "...try to think of how much you are spending on the military. Do you really need to spend that much on the military or can you use that money for something else that the citizens may want or need?" It seems the charts on military spending resonated more with the students because they could see the disproportional amount of money spent compared to other aspects of the government as well as compared to other countries. However, the map of the bases and presence of US troops had far less of an impact. Again, like the government mistrust lesson, this connects back to the point that the students have only lived in a time when the US has been engaged in repeated foreign conflicts.

This theme reappeared in the lesson about ongoing wars and military decline. In this lesson, students began by analyzing a map and historical atlas depicting the multiple invasions faced by Rome in the 4th and 5th centuries. Next, they watched part of a video describing the invasions of Germanic tribes and the increased use of non-Roman soldiers in the Roman legions. I then shared a list of all of the countries in which the US is currently fighting a war, launching drone strikes and/or engaged in combat operations and had students analyze data showing the gradual decline in US military enrollment combined with the increased use of private contractors, particularly those who are non-US citizens. Students were generally not bothered by the extent to which the US is fighting wars, although several were concerned with the decline in participation and rise in use of contractors. Overall, most agreed that the US needs a strong military and it is problematic when that military is declining in any way. I

have found that students will often criticize historic empires, like Rome, but are less inclined to apply a similar critique to US imperialism.

The challenge here, as with previous topics, is the students have only known a post-9/11 world in which the US is engaged in ongoing military conflicts like the protracted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Equally significant is the fact that the students aren't personally affected by war. None of them have siblings or parents who fought in Iraq or Afghanistan and these wars are taking place far away where they don't see the deadly effects of drone strikes and bombings on civilians.

However, some students were moved to recognize this increasing US militarism as a problem. For example, Jeff suggested the following: "A solution to invasions of other countries is not abusing our power. If we abuse our power, it is almost definite that the country will turn on us." This point indicates a recognition of the negative effects of US imperial foreign policy but only insofar as it would affect Americans. What is left out here is any mention of how these policies impact the people who are victims of US wars and attacks.

Economic Inequality & Taxation and Economic Policies

For the lesson on economic inequality, students read a secondary source connecting the shift in Roman values with the concentration of wealth among the senatorial class and then a 4th century primary source featuring commentary on the moral decline of Rome's wealthy and poor. Students then examined charts and graphs illustrating the concentration of wealth and income in the US, wealth inequality disaggregated by race, and the lack of social mobility in the US. I intentionally had students examine the data in that order.

Many were surprised to see that the concentration of wealth is worse in the US today than Ancient Rome and even more surprised to learn that there is such a wide wealth gap between White and Black Americans. However, several students argued that this inequality is not a problem because people who are rich earned their money while people who are poor didn't work hard enough and made bad choices. I anticipated this argument as it's one I've heard from students throughout my career which is why I saved the chart illustrating the lack of social mobility for last. I was particularly careful in my explanation of the chart because I wanted students to understand that most people who are born poor stay poor and most who are born wealthy stay wealthy but I didn't want them to think that individual agency is irrelevant. The students' reactions ranged from quiet surprise to fierce skepticism. One student even questioned the validity of the source which led to an important exchange between me and the student where I explained the value of thinking about where information is coming from but not to the point of automatically dismissing information with which one disagrees. Ultimately, I think this data more than others challenged the students' understanding of American society and their collective standing within it as part of the socioeconomically-advantaged.

Through this discussion, several students moved on this issue. One interesting idea was offered by Krish, who saw this issue as threatening to the stability of the country: "A solution for economic inequality is to make taxes fair for everyone so the poor can support themselves. The reason it would be important that the poor can support themselves is so they can stay happy and will not rebel…" Most of the students may not embrace the argument that economic inequality is a moral failing but this quote illustrates the understanding that inequality creates a level of instability that could have a negative impact on the wealthy and poor alike.

A related lesson focused on taxation and economic policies. Students began by discussing different types of taxes and how tax revenue is used by the government. Many expressed negative views of taxes but at the same time didn't quite understand how taxes were used by the government. This initial conversation was useful because it helped students see the necessity of taxes in a society. They then analyzed a chart and primary and secondary source texts describing the policies of currency debasement and the abuse of taxation in Rome and how the rich and poor each reacted. Next, students examined a chart illustrating the amount of tax paid by large American corporations as well as a chart of Trump's original individual tax rate proposal. The individual tax rate proposal chart generated a lot of reactions among the students. Almost all agreed that the poorest people should not pay more in taxes but the students were much more divided on whether the wealthiest should pay less. A common suggestion was that everybody pay a lower tax rate. In an effort to push the students further, I explained how a flat tax rate affects people differently depending on their level of wealth although the complexity of this issue was a limiting factor for many students.

Despite not necessarily grasping all of the nuances of tax policy, I was pleased to see some students tie together the issue of taxes with economic inequality in their writing. For example, Sami wrote in her letter: "I think that you should see how it (taxes) affects everyone, not just the people that are wealthy." This is another example of a student moving a little but not completely to a more critical stance.

Student Reflections

After students wrote their letters, they reflected on what they liked about and learned from the project. Two prominent themes emerged in these responses. First, students identified how the past can help inform the present. For instance, John wrote: "I learned how lots of things from the fall of Rome could apply to the US" and Alexis shared: "I learned that people still make the same mistakes that they did a long time ago, and we just don't realize it". These statements reflect the value of connecting the past to the present to both better understand history as well as our current world (Downey & Long, 2016). This was the first exposure for most of these young students to contemporary issues like US imperial militarism and systemic social and economic inequality. These ideas are

now part of their collective vocabulary and burgeoning understanding of the country and world.

The second theme that emerged was how much the students liked the authenticity of the assignment by sending their letters to Trump. For example, Isabelle wrote: "I liked the fact that we got to share our opinion on what lessons we thought Donald Trump needed to learn." Similarly, Joe wrote: "I liked that we were able to send our letter to the president after we wrote it. It encouraged me to make sure my letter was the best it could be." And Shriya wrote: "I liked the fact that we were writing letters to the president and possibly get a real response." The notion of contacting an elected leader to express one's concerns was a foreign concept to most students before this project and that has now changed. This point was reinforced even more when the students received a response from the White House months later thanking and praising them for their letters.

Conclusions and Limitations

It is through critical inquiry, dialogue, writing, sharing and reflection, that students learn to think more critically and completely about their world with the goal of developing a sense of thoughtful and informed agency (hooks, 1994; Friere, 1997). In this project, seventh grade students grappled with contemporary issues, were pushed to think critically about their views, and then exercised their civic right in a democracy to speak truth to power by articulating their own ideas to the president.

Suburban public school teachers are constrained in many ways that make critical teaching difficult, especially in the current political climate. The unique challenge of engaging in critical teaching with non-marginalized students is finding the balance between pushing this pedagogy while avoiding the alienation of the students and accusations of indoctrination from parents and administrators (Swalwell, 2013). In my school in particular, I am constantly concerned about navigating the line and being mindful of every word I say to my students as well as the documents I select and questions I pose. I struggle with how far to push and how to help my students think about issues from different and more critical perspectives. In this context, inquiry-based activities that incorporate a diverse set of texts coupled with writing activities designed to help students synthesize information and develop their own ideas allowed me to increase the critical consciousness of my students while shielding myself from critique.

However, while some students embraced critical positions on these contemporary issues, others adopted only slightly more nuanced positions and still others' views remained completely unchanged. The overall age, life experience, and collective socioeconomic status of the students certainly influenced their ability and/or willingness to think critically about systemic issues in the US and the perceived constraints on me as the teacher definitely affected how far I was willing to push the students. That said, despite those limitations, I believe this learning experience was one step toward elevating the critical consciousness of these students and introducing them to the idea of civic action. "The line" is different at each school and for each teacher but, to me, teaching in the Age of Trumpism calls for pushing that line as far as possible under the existing constraints and helping students think critically about the world and their role in shaping that world.

Notes

i. The town data is from the United States Census Bureau and the school data is from the National Center for Education Statistics. The name of the town and school district are pseudonyms. All student names used have also been changed to ensure privacy.

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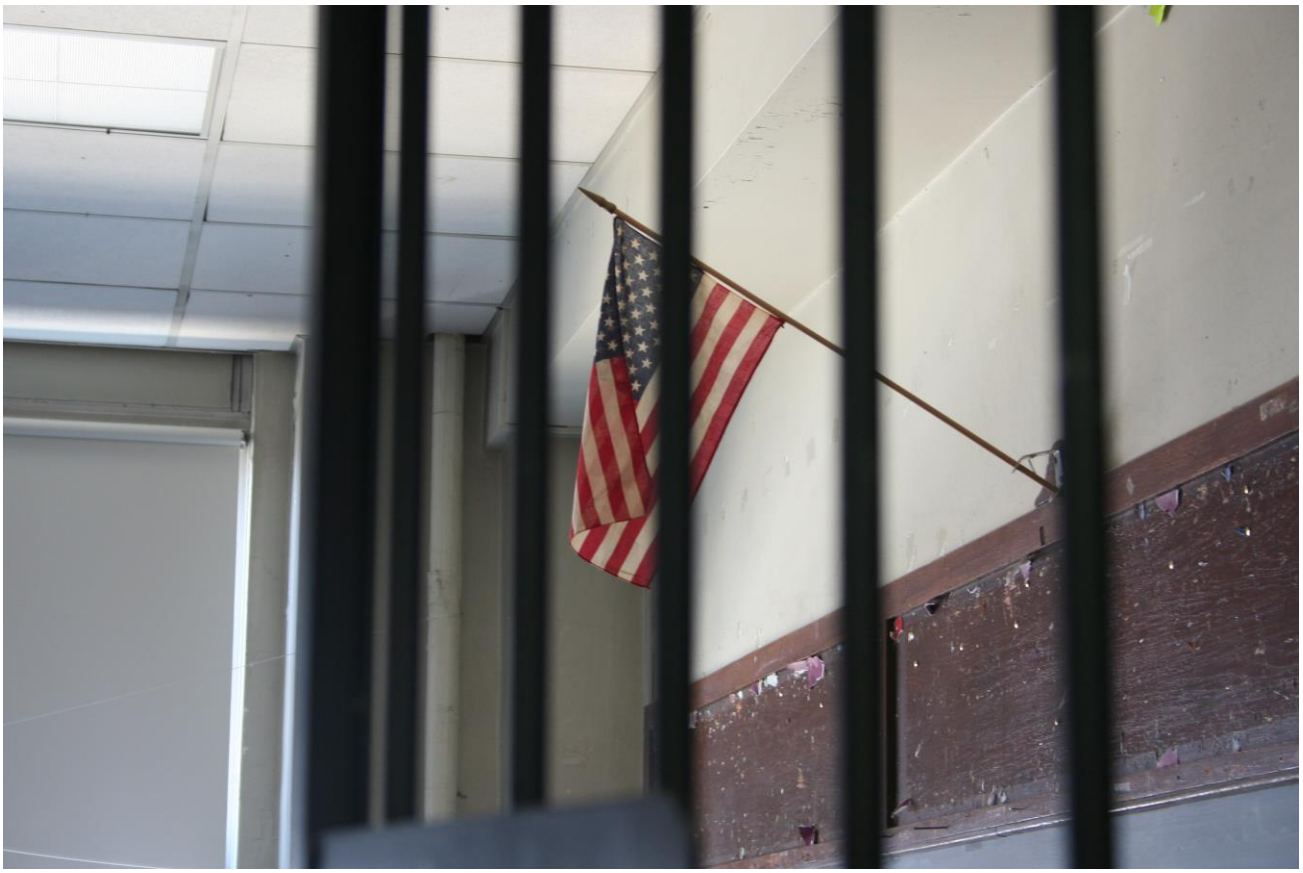
ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Educating Educators in the Age of Trump

by Erika Kitzmiller



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On January 11, 2018, the day that our president uttered his reprehensible comments about Haiti and Africa, I received an email from an investigative reporter affiliated with Campus Reform. Campus Reform is a conservative website under the direction of the Leadership Institute, a non-profit founded in 1979 to teach "conservatives of all ages how to succeed in politics, government, and the media."[1] Campus Reform has daily reports on what its authors claim to be incidents of liberal bias, political indoctrination, and restrictions on free speech in American college classrooms.[2] I was their new target. The reporter asked me to answer several questions about my upcoming course, "Education in the Age of Trump." In his email, the reporter asked me if my course might "alienate students who may have supported the current U.S. President." The reporter than asked me to expand on my personal views "on bias in academia" and whether I thought that "educators have a responsibility to exclude personal political opinions from the classroom" or whether "academia has a responsibility to oppose Trump and the social trends that led to his victory in 2016?"[3]

As an individual who has shifted between my rural, conservative Pennsylvania hometown and my adopted, urban New York City residence, initially I wanted to respond. I thought that the questions that the reporter had posed were important ones to discuss and deliberate the various challenges teaching under our nation's current political climate. However, about an hour after he sent me his initial email, the reporter had already posted his article without my input.[4]

As I read the article I was filled with several emotions. I felt angry that I honestly thought that this investigative reporter actually wanted to know what I thought about my course and pedagogy. Even though I have privileges that most bourgeois white women enjoy, I felt anxious that this article might jeopardize my job or cause harm to my family, particularly my young children. And I was furious that I lived in a country that felt more like the fascist Italy that my grandparents and mother had left than the democratic nation that I, as a first generation American, felt so fortunate to be part of. At the same time, I felt cheated that I had not had the opportunity to answer the questions that the reporter raised.

Through a careful examination of the reflections that my students wrote and the discussions that we had in class, this article addresses the questions that the reporter has posed and how my course, "Education in the Age of Trump," aimed to educate educators in the Age of Trump so that they, too, could use our nation's history as a way to name and address injustice. The course focused on the history of racism and white supremacy to push students, most of whom were white and middle class, to think critically about the ways that white conservatives *and* liberals have promoted policies and practices to uphold racial inequity and injustice throughout American history. The second aim of my course required us to think about how we might incorporate this history, which many of us (including myself) never learned in our public schools, into our own public-school classrooms as an act of racial and social justice. In other words, learning this history was step one; step two was the implementation of what we had learned in this course into our own classrooms. I wanted to teach this course to give students an opportunity to explore the history of racism and white supremacy that was visibly on display during and after the 2016 presidential campaign so that they, a group comprised primarily of white educators, could explore this history with their own students. This history is rarely, if ever covered in schools, because most white educators do not know it. I wanted to change that.

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The Origins of the Course: Trump 101 and Trump 2.0

"Education in the Age of Trump" was based on and inspired by the Trump 2.0 crowd-sourced syllabus that historians N.D.B. Connolly and Keisha N. Blain put together and published on the Public Books website.[5] These scholars called their syllabus the Trump 2.0 syllabus because it was assembled in reaction to the Trump 101 syllabus that the Chronicle of Education had published a few weeks earlier.[6] Many scholars, including Connolly and Blain, felt that the Trump 101 syllabus failed in its attempt to explain the roots of Trumpism, the fractures in America, and the future of politics. The Trump 101 syllabus's failures stemmed from the fact that none of the recommended readings on the Trump 101 syllabus analyzed the contemporary racial and gender inequalities that the Trump campaign exploited. The Trump 101 syllabus did not include any works by scholars of color, LGBTQ intellectuals, or scholars from other marginalized groups. The scholars who opposed the Trump 101 syllabus wrote a letter to *The Chronicle of Higher Education* which asserted that "by erasing the history of non-white scholarship, non-white political commentary on Trump, and its own history as a form meant for teaching, the 'Trump 101' syllabus failed to contextualize Donald Trump's rising political influence and becomes instead an extension of the racism that has come to define much about Trump's presidential campaign."[7]

As a historian of race, inequality, and education, I followed the debate on the Trump 101 syllabus and the subsequent publication of the Trump 2.0 syllabus with great interest. After the election, I decided to use the Trump 2.0 syllabus to educate myself on the roots of Trumpism, which the syllabus defined as, "personal and political gain marred by intolerance, derived from wealth, and rooted in the history of segregation, sexism, and exploitation."[8] The syllabus contained many books that I had already read, but it also contained many other books

that I hoped might push my thinking about the structural and historical roots of Trumpism in this country and around the globe. I wanted to learn, but I also wanted to support the practitioners and researchers that I taught and worked with at Teachers College.

The 2016 election ushered in a wave of anxiety and stress among teachers and students.[9] I listened and watched as conversations emerged among my personal networks of educators who were deeply concerned about the welfare of their students. I heard stories about students who were worried about their safety in this democracy. Black and brown students worried that they or their families might be deported.[10] Jewish and Black students were terrified when swastikas and racist epithets appeared on their school buildings and churches.[11] Administrators, teachers, and families felt paralyzed in their attempts to safeguard their children from xenophobic, misogynist, racist, and homophobic words and deeds in their communities and schools. My students at Teachers College, who were student teaching in New York City public schools after the 2016 election, struggled with many of these same questions and challenges. I wanted to find a way to support them.

In April of 2017, I asked my colleagues if it would be possible to create a course which I called "Education in the Age of Trump," based on Connolly and Blain's Trump 2.0 syllabus. They agreed. I submitted a draft of the syllabus to the curriculum committee, which reviews and approves new courses at Teachers College. In the summer of 2017, I learned that the committee had approved my class to run in the fall of 2017. I culled through the Trump 2.0 syllabus over the summer, again, and pulled the readings that I thought were most appropriate for the students I teach at Teachers College—students who want to become teachers, policymakers, and researchers. As I planned the course, I tried to be mindful that much of this history was new for my students, who were mostly upper and middle class white students. I had to balance my desires to support them as we explored this material together and push them to articulate the possibilities and fears of engaging with this material in their own classrooms. While this tension existed in many of the courses that I taught previously, this tension seemed stronger given the heightened level of surveillance of teachers who engaged in pedagogy for radical social justice in this current political climate.

Course Overview and Structure

The course largely followed the themes and included many of the readings in the Trump 2.0 syllabus, but it also deviated it from it in some ways. The Trump 2.0 syllabus was designed for historians and social scientists, and thus, I had to sift through the works on the syllabus to think about which works were and were not appropriate for educational practitioners. Historians are not secondary school teachers. I had to replace many of the historical works with works that were better suited to the kinds of questions that my students, who were training to become secondary school teachers, might have and the kinds of situations that they might face. My students at Teachers College were not working in archives; they were working in public middle and high schools. The readings had to reflect this difference.

Like most of the courses that I teach at Teachers College, "Education in the Age of Trump" was a seminar-style class organized around a weekly set of thematically-based readings. The class was capped at 15 students to allow for robust and deep discussion of the readings and the application of these readings to their own teaching and research practice. I had 15 students in my course—12 female and 3 male students; 12 white and 3 students of color. Fourteen of the 15 students in my course were training to become middle and high school social studies teachers. Most of these students were student teaching in high-needs, low-income public schools in New York City and taking coursework to earn a Master's degree in social studies education. Most of the students attended selective

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four-year colleges before attending Teachers College, a school of education, affiliated with Columbia University. Each week, I sent an email to my students that provided a detailed overview of the readings, why I selected the pieces, and what I hoped to get out of them. These emails included a list of questions to generate discussions. While these questions were not prescriptive, I thought it was important for students to understand *why* I picked the readings that I did and what I *planned* to discuss in class so that they can come prepared and ready to discuss these ideas in class.

At the same time, I wanted to give them voice and agency in my classroom, to discuss the ideas in the readings that resonated with them as scholars and teachers. In most of my courses, I usually asked students to write 1 – 2-page reflections every other week on the readings so that I had a better sense of what they were learning and thinking about. In this course, I required my

students to participate in in-person or virtual reading group meetings on a weekly basis. The reading groups included 3 – 4 individuals assigned randomly at the beginning of the semester. I verified that these random assignments had an even distribution of racial and gender categories. Even though I only had three students of color and three men in the class, the students of color and men were distributed evenly across these groups. The reading groups met for at least one hour a week outside of class. The students recorded these reading group meetings and submitted the recordings to me along with a 1 – 2-page reflection on what they had discussed in their meetings. Each student took turns writing these reflection papers. The recordings and reflections were due 24 hours before the class began so that I had time to read each one before class. The syllabus explicitly stated these procedures.

I structured the course this way for several reasons. First, I knew that the course reading load was heavier than most courses at the college. I wanted to give my students an incentive to do the readings in a timely manner. Second, I knew that the content made us all vulnerable; talking about racism, misogyny, homophobia, and xenophobia is difficult. Most of the students in my fall course were upper and upper-middle class white students, who despite their progressive political views, had grown up primarily in wealthy white suburban communities with limited racial, ethnic, and social economic diversity. The course materials forced them to take seriously the individuals who supported Trump and to confront their own biases about these issues. The reading groups gave students the space, time, and intimacy to work through these biases in a more honest and deeper way compared to a full class discussion. The reading reflections included insights about these conversations so that I understood where they were with the material and where I could push them in class.

Discussing "Trumpism" in the Ivory Tower

The first two weeks of the course focused on the antecedents of Trumpism in the recent past—the ways in which the 2008 and 2012 election set the stage for the 2016 campaign. The films and readings in these two weeks forced many of us to examine our own political blinders, to contend with what we did not see or know about the conservative side of American politics, and how we might be able to learn more about these perspectives.[12] The conversations in the classroom centered around the rise of the Tea Party in the United States and how in many ways this movement set the stage for the 2016 campaign.[13] In our discussions, we paid careful attention to the role that women, from Sarah Palin to stay-at-home suburban mothers, played in the Tea Party movement, and how in many ways, these same white women played a decisive role in the 2016 election.[14] We used the sources in these two weeks to interrogate how our own positions and biases due to our racial, social, and geographical positions often promoted a narrow view of the political and social contours of this country and why we needed to do more to push ourselves out of our comfort zones and learn from those with different political and social worldviews.

This was not always easy or comfortable. For example, one week we discussed comments from youth in one of my research sites about the resurgence of Confederate flags in their schools and communities following the 2016 election. One of my white middle class students asked me where the school was located. I told him Pennsylvania. He, along with several other people in the classroom, seemed somewhat shocked to learn that Confederate flags existed north of the Mason-Dixon Line. Like many white students in the classroom, he assumed that these objects proliferated in the South but not the North. As someone who has repeatedly seen Confederate flags and symbols throughout the North, I was somewhat taken back with his ideas and encouraged him and the others like him to get out in the world a bit more. In my course evaluations, my students remembered this moment as a contentious point in the semester. It was. I was frustrated that they thought these objects only appeared in the South—that racism was a Southern problem that they, as Northern-educated bourgeois white students, did not engage in. They were frustrated that I called them out on what they did not see.

Weeks 3 and 4 examined the widespread denial of racism and white supremacy in America and the ways that American capitalism sustains and promotes both of these ideals. The readings from week 3 provided us with the language to describe and examine how white power has been and still is amplified by and built on the denial of racism in this country. These readings also illuminated a shift from an overt to a more nuanced, covert form of racism. As the scholars that we read during these weeks suggest, this new form of racism relies on coded language to advance racism while it simultaneously downplays institutional and structural racism in American society.[15]

The students in my class, most of whom were white upper- and middle-class students from metropolitan areas, asserted that explicit discussions of race and racism were largely absent from their own educations and were often overlooked in the classrooms where they were student teaching.

The students in my class, most of whom were white upper- and middle-class students from metropolitan areas, asserted that explicit discussions of race and racism were largely absent from their own educations and were often overlooked in the classrooms where they were student teaching. The three students of color, one of whom was an international student, echoed this assertion. For these students, it was at home, not at school where incidents of racism were discussed. In one of the reading responses, students noted that they had been raised in a "colorblind society" where the promise of the first black president seemed to overshadow conversations about structural

racism in the nation. While they did not support this colorblind orientation, this group asserted that people often downplay the effects of structural and institutional racism because they firmly believe in the idea that everyone in America can "pull themselves up by their bootstraps." As one student suggested, white people rarely talk about racism because denying its existence upholds white privilege, power, and supremacy. Another group noted that in the rare cases where students are exposed to conversations about race, these conversations are often presented in discrete and sanitized formats, such as the decision by Rosa Parks to stay seated in the white section of the bus or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* speech. Students asserted that they never learned the long arc of the civil rights movement or the more radical ideas that civil rights leaders held.

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The students in my class articulated their commitment to discuss race and racism in their own classrooms, but they also recognized that schools silence and promote conversations about racial injustice and inequity in America.[16] Even though they did not necessarily support silence, they understood that they might be teaching in communities where anti-racist, anti-bias education might be an affront to those who believe that they have the most to lose from these conversations: privileged white youth and their families. In our classroom, we tried to tease out how they might be able to integrate conversations about race and racism into their classrooms and handle the backlash that they might receive from white youth, families, and perhaps, even other educators. One of the students of color suggested that teachers leverage the language of intersectionality to bring more nuance to the conversations about race in our classrooms. Another student, who grew up in a predominately white working-class town 60 miles north of New York City, urged us to consider the idea of stressing the commonalities between poor whites and poor people of color. Both of these students relied on their own experiences to push us to think more deeply about what we could do in our own classrooms to teach about racism, inequality, and poverty despite the opposition we might face.

Week 4, then, connected the language of white power and colorblind racism to capitalism and racialized political discourse.[17] These readings forced us to acknowledge and reckon with the ways that slavery and Black labor were tied to the accumulation of white capital in the Early Republic. In our discussions, we noted how this connection between blackness and white capital has been promoted and sustained today through mass incarceration and the school to prison pipeline. We also examined how the 2016 campaign rhetoric exemplified Lopez's notion of dogwhistle politics. According to Lopez, dogwhistle politics refers to individuals who use racially coded language that simultaneously promotes and denies racist views.[18] Even though we recognized the long history of dogwhistle politics in American history, in our discussions, we also highlighted the ways that social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, make the proliferation of dogwhistle politics more powerful, prevalent, and public than in the past. For example, when Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, the president tweeted that Puerto Ricans "want everything done for them."[19] Even though Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens and are entitled federal support, this message promotes the racist idea that Latinx individuals, whether in the U.S. or abroad, are dependent on U.S. support because they lack the capacity to help themselves. Students argued that they could use their classrooms to combat these messages in society by both pointing out the ways that the founding of this country solidified the connection between blackness and capitalism and that the expansion of our empire to places like Puerto Rico perpetuated these ideals.

The next few weeks built on these ideas through the history of xenophobia and security in the United States. In these weeks, we examined the historical roots of Islamophobia around the globe and its effects on children in the United States.[20] We also analyzed the historical roots of border control and xenophobia against Latinx individuals.[21] Even though no one resisted these ideas, the fact that many of these challenges can be traced to the 19th and early 20th centuries shocked many of my students. Most of my students had never heard about the Bracero Program or Operation Wetback, and now that they had exposure to these events, they actively sought ways to incorporate these topics into their own classrooms. These readings also reinforced and advanced the concerns that many of them already had about police surveillance and ICE raids in black and brown communities. The texts pushed us to consider how the United States has been engaged in a process of "othering" as a way to promote Islamophobia and xenophobia, and in turn, white power and supremacy. These readings and our class discussions

pushed us to identify times in American history when this process of othering occurred, such as Japanese internment during World War II, the Red and Lavender Scare in the 1950s, and the federal surveillance of black activists during the 1960s. Rather than argue that these acts only occurred under the current administration, these readings illustrate the historical and structural roots of anti-immigrant sentiment, and in doing so, allowed us to consider the long history of anti-immigrant policies and practices in our nation's history. Moreover, these readings helped us understand that the Democratic and Republican parties and leadership have been implicated in upholding and sustaining Islamophobia and xenophobia for decades, if not, centuries.

In the next few weeks, we examined the intersections of gender, sexuality, and power as well as the ways that the mass incarceration state and U.S. housing policies affect our schools and youth. Dorothy Roberts' *Killing the Black Body* allowed us to analyze how policies to alleviate poverty are generally written in way that targets the person in poverty rather than poverty itself. In our classroom discussions, we related this idea to the widely held belief in meritocracy in America, a belief that does not account for differences based on race, gender, or class. Many people believe that everyone in America is given an equal opportunity, which as my students noted in turn, promotes the idea that the poor are poor because they are lazy or incompetent. The students in my course, once again, viewed these widely held beliefs as ones both Democrats and Republicans uphold and searched for ways to address this idealized myth in their classrooms. The book helped them understand the gendered and racialized language around black motherhood. Roberts's insights helped us consider, as educational researchers and young teachers, how we might become more aware of own our racialized and gendered biases in our interactions and conversations with low-income Black mothers and their children in parent teacher conferences and in the front offices of our schools. These insights surfaced again when we discussed mass incarceration and housing evictions later in the course.[22]

In addition to examining the ways that inequality affects women and children, we also considered how toxic masculinity has shaped our nation's history and our public schools and how individuals have sustained and challenged this ideal in their communities today.[23] Students—both men and women—recalled their own experiences with toxic masculinity in their own schools. Most of my students asserted that toxic masculinity was tolerated, sometimes even promoted, in the schools that they attended. Having the language to describe what they had experienced and witnessed in their own learning gave them the opportunity to voice their concerns about toxic masculinity in the schools that they attended as well as the schools where they were student teaching. Educators, they asserted, had a responsibility to name and address toxic masculinity in their classrooms and schools as way of promoting equity, kindness, and humanity in their classrooms and schools.

While some of my students noted that they are still struggling with how to name and address toxic masculinity in their classrooms, one of the reading groups created a curriculum called, Chuck the Patriarchy, which centered on ways to deal with toxic masculinity in their classrooms. First, the students noted that it is important to recognize how masculinity in its various forms affects both content and classroom culture. My students noted that most of their curriculum and textbooks prioritize the history of wars, presidents, and generally aggressive white men. These stories and histories, as they said, are "rooted in the notion of assumed importance, an arrogant attitude that we see as akin to masculine notions of assumed dominance." They wanted to destabilize this. In this piece, they argued, that in order to deconstruct toxic masculinity, they, as teachers, must assess the content that they choose to highlight (uplifting previously ignored voices), how they frame traditional content, and draw important connections to that content and student's current environment. This, they noted, inevitably means facing complex social studies issues that can be difficult to unpack for secondary students in a social studies classroom, such as intersectional representation, coded language, and unpacking sentiment and facts.

They noted that addressing and ending toxic masculinity requires that teachers name, and in many cases change, the various power hierarchies that exist in and out of the class. Even though they had diverse student teaching experiences and opportunities, they noted that teachers routinely perpetuate toxic masculinity by prioritizing facts over sentiment or "hard evidence" over "soft sentiment." This not only promotes a masculine way of thinking, but as they noted, it also limits how a student interprets information. They argued that "soft sentiment" and expressing emotionality are commonly deemed more feminine practices but being able to incorporate feelings and values into discussions of current events and other social studies topics is important for holistic understanding. They felt that the course, Education in the Age of Trump, forced them to reexamine "our own values and understanding of history." They continued:

> The facts we have learned about nondominant histories have contributed to how we feel about our history and current state. Being able to reflect on this learning has been an inherent part of our learning in this class, and something we find important in dismantling dominating hierarchies that currently thrive in schools, content and culture.

In order to begin dismantling the norms of toxic masculinity that have run especially rampant in the post-Trump era, my students believed that they had an obligation to start this process of naming and ending toxic masculinity in their classrooms through their curriculum and pedagogy.

As someone who grew up in a rural part of America, it was very important to me to include a discussion of rural issues on the syllabus. We used Amy Goldstein's *Janesville* to frame our discussion of rural America around the ideas of gender, labor, and toxic masculinity that we had just examined in urban spaces. For many of my students, this was the first time that they had ever considered the plight of rural or at least non-urban America in their coursework. As they said, understanding the challenges in a place like Janesville, Wisconsin or Buckhannon, West Virginia, helped them develop empathy and compassion for individuals who might have different political and cultural outlooks in this nation.[24] They did not understand the economic hardship and deep poverty in these places because they had never studied them.

In her final reflection paper, a Latino woman who grew up in a small city in Pennsylvania noted that this course was the first time she had ever discussed rural America in the classroom. Before this course, she said that she had always associated the challenges of poverty, racism, and inequality with urban America. Reading *Janesville* and discussing the rise in poverty, people of color, and inequality in the rural America forced her to reckon with the ways that these challenges affect urban and rural Americans. The book and our discussion of it, she argued, gave her the chance "to expand not only my knowledge but also my way of thinking." This book and our conversations of progressive politics in rural West Virginia challenged her "to think about the differences in place, perspective and background that educators and others working in schools bring to the table, and how important it is to ensure we always make space for everyone's truths, not just our own." In other words, the course gave her content knowledge that she did not have, but perhaps more importantly, it pushed her to be open to differences that, as she suggested, she had not encountered or experienced in her own life.

In the remaining weeks in the course, we discussed LGBTQ rights and religion in schools.[25] I paired these themes together because often times the religious right uses sexuality to advance their agenda to push religious ideas and theories into our public schools. In these weeks, we examined the ways in which homophobic incidents have been on the rise under the Trump administration and how these hateful acts have spilled into our schools. My students shared emotional stories of their own experiences as queer youth and the effects that the election has had on queer youth today. We then moved to evangelical Christianity, which once again, many of my students said that they had never studied in school before. Taking seriously the viewpoints of evangelical Christians helped us articulate our own ideas in a deeper way. As one of my students said, I have to think about what others think so that I can understand and express my ideas in relationship to what I might disagree with. This course gave students the opportunity to deliberate and dialogue about their own beliefs so that they could more effectively advocate for social justice and change in their schools and lives.

Reflecting and Renaming the Course

In our last class, I asked my students to reflect on the course title, to consider if the course title actually described what we accomplished over the semester. I told them that I had my own concerns that the course title centered the challenges in our schools on one person and that this title promoted the idea that if this person was not our president, then these challenges might disappear. As a historian of race and inequality, I knew that was not true. Many of my students argued that they had signed up for the course because of the title, but that in fact, what we had discussed over the course of the semester centered around the ideas of racialized discourse, toxic masculinity, and American capitalism. In our discussion, they reasoned that the course was less about Trump and more about the role that white supremacy and power has played and continues to play in American history and society. The course, they argued, pushed them to be more aware of their own biases and to be more cognizant of their ability to use American history to address injustice in their classrooms and schools. It also helped us understand and acknowledge our own political blinders and to think about ideas and perspectives from multiple vantage points.

One student noted that she thought that the course title might be off-putting to students who supported the president and his political ideas—that often times the course focused on what many of them already believed to be true. She urged me to change the course name to attract conservative students to the course so that she and others could learn from their perspectives and ideas. In response to her ideas, I said that I am fine with individuals having different perspectives politically, that I had actually been raised in a household with two parents who had different political views from me. The problem is that I am not fine with individuals who use politics to justify Trumpism. In this class and my other classes, I do not tolerate any form of racism, misogyny, xenophobia, and homophobia in my classrooms. I explicitly state these standards on all of my syllabi.

I struggled with this feedback, but ultimately decided to change the course title from Education in the Age of Trump to Education in a Polarized and Unequal Society. On the one hand, I truly believed that the 2016 election had unleashed something in our schools that I had never witnessed, at least on this scale, in my lifetime. I told my students that we needed to acknowledge that education in the age of Trump was markedly different than education in the age of Obama, Bush, or Clinton, the presidents that had governed this nation during their lifetime. At the same time, it was not that different. If the reporter who emailed me about my course had read my syllabus or come to my class, he might have realized that we discussed the ways that Trumpism has existed since the founding of this country. I chose to teach this course, not to alienate or indoctrinate my students as the reporter suggested, but rather to equip them with the knowledge to teach about

Trumpism's myriad forms in our nation's history so that they when they have their own classrooms in a few months, they, too, can teach their students about the long history of Trumpism in this nation. For I firmly believe that one of the most effective ways to end these injustices is to educate our future teachers about the history of racism and white supremacy, so that they in turn, can explore this history with the youth in their classrooms and equip them with the knowledge to fight for social justice and racial equity in their own lives.

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Education in the Age of Trump Syllabus

by Erika Kitzmiller

Week 1: Course Introduction

PBS Frontline: Divided States of America (Part 1 in class, watch Part 2 this week)
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/divided-states-of-america/

Week 2: Antecedents

Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974 – 2008* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), Chapter 5, *The New Morning*

Christopher S. Parker and Matt A. Barreto, *Change They Can't Believe In: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), Introduction and Chapter 1

Melissa Deckman, *Tea Party Women: Mama Grizzlies, Grassroots Leaders, and the Changing Face of the American Right* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), Introduction

Week 3: White Power and Plausible Deniability

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2001), Chapter 4, "The New Racism: The Post-Civil Rights Racial Structure in the United States," Chapter 5, "Color-Blind Racism: Toward an Analysis of White Racial Ideology."

Nolan Leon Cabrera, "Exposing whiteness in higher education: white male college students minimizing racism, claiming victimization, and recreating white supremacy," *Race, Ethnicity, and Education,* 17:1, September 2012.

Park Avenue: Money, Power, and the American Dream: http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/park-avenue/

Week 4: The Intersections of Capitalism and Racism

Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy, and Society* (Boston: South End Press, 1983), *Introduction.*

Ian Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), *Introduction.*

Thomas Shapiro, *Toxic Inequality* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), *Chapters 1 and 5.*

Ben Smith and Byron Tau, "Birtherism: Where it All Began," Politico, April 22, 2011.

James Baldwin, "My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation," in *The Fire Next Time* (Dial Press, 1963).

Week 5: Immigration Policies and Islamophobia

Gallup, Islamophobia: Understanding Anti-Muslim Sentiment in the West

Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire.* Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012, *Chapter 8.*

Moustafa Bayoumi, *How Does it Feel to Be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America.* New York: Penguin, 2009, *Rami.*

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Week 6: Illusions of National Security and On Mexicans and Mexican Americans

Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra!: A History of the US Border Patrol*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2010., *selections*

Daniel Denvir, "Obama Created a Deportation Machine. Soon It Will Be Trump's," *The Guardian,* November 21, 2016.

Greg Grandin, "Why Trump Now? It's the Empire, Stupid," *The Nation*, June 9, 2016.

Wisconsin Students Rally to Support Sanctuary Schools, *The Circus,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMBLkNZ62Uw

Week 7: Misogyny, Sexism, and Shaming the Female Body

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ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Poem denvergoddamn

by Chris Steele

CHRIS STEELE, (PHOTO: SEAN GRUNO)

denvergoddamn

They made a gun and named it civilization
They told me I had a learning disorder and needed more patience
When i was young they said columbus was a hero for us
They never told me he was a genocidal maniac who killed and enslaved the Indigenous
I learned about not chewing gum and the "maybe true" greenhouse effect
Now I'm older and there's not much time left

Upon reflecting on how i woke up from my brainwashed lessons
It was hip hop who woke me and made me ask questions
When I first heard NWA my brother said never repeat what they say
So I memorized every word and repeat them to this day
No matter how good a pamphlet is it's read once and thrown away, but a song
Is memorized by the heart, that was said by Joe Hill
Rap shook me Kweli said why did 50 shots hit Sean Bell?

Rap taught me about MOVE being bombed by the Philly police in 85
The year I was born, white supremacy was erased, my history was a lie
A tree never grown, 41 shots hit Amadou Diallo when he was reaching for his wallet
They say he sold loosies, he stole cigarillos, but murder is what we call it
They make lies seem truthful and murder seem respectable as they collect more metals
While the memorials on street corners slowly decay as tears fall like marigold petals

Ras Kass told me about the nature of the threat
I started to reflect on privilege, capitalism, slavery, and debt
Dead Prez taught me about Nat Turner, my textbooks silent... propaganda is clever
I asked my teacher, he yelled wait in my ear until it fermented to never
In high school 9/11 happened
Gangstarr was my GURU, Marvin said war is not the answer
On our lunch break they would try to recruit us their lies were foolish
They said you got to fight for freedom, a fatigue wearing Judas

Now there's no yellow ribbon on the oak tree, you see
Cause We chopped it down to make more recruitment papers for the next war to be
Looking at yearbook photos, we were on a basketball team, now some are veterans
We were born good, Vonnegut called this original virtue
Our rage was learned, now truth has less limbs

All this from the muddy heart of denver, swimming in a tar pit of foreclosed bricks
Illegal to sleep outside, the shelters are full, pushing the rock of Sisyphus
The ghost of Nina, denver god damn
Lynchings in Limon, did my silence play a hand?
You could turn a tree into a club or a prison or you leave it be
I say let it grow and plant seeds
Because that's what hip hop was for me

ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Teaching 'Trump Feminists'

by Tristan Josephson

PHOTO BY TIM GOUW

This article takes up the question of how to develop effective strategies for engaging conservative students who feel under attack in feminist classrooms. Dealing with resistant and conservative students in women and gender studies is not a new phenomenon, especially in my position teaching at a diverse regional comprehensive public university in northern California. While the university administration is supportive of students of color and undocumented students, it is also heavily invested in discourses of civility and 'free speech.' The recent election cycle and the current Trump presidency have empowered the more conservative students in my classes to mobilize this language to claim that they feel 'unsafe' in class and on campus.

The appropriation of feminist and queer discourses of 'safe space' by students on the right to position themselves as being under attack and vulnerable presents a series of pedagogical challenges. As a professor, I directly confront explicitly racist, misogynist, homophobic, and transphobic comments in class and my course readings rigorously challenge these forms of bias. Personally and politically I am committed to making sure that my students who are actually being targeted by current political discourses and state policies – such as undocumented students, students of color, queer and trans students – are receiving the support that they need. However, I recognize that the mobilization of rhetorics of safety by conservative students is most likely motivated by feelings of unsafety. Students may very well feel unsafe, even if those feelings may not be grounded in material experiences or circumstances of unsafety and threat; that is, the feelings themselves are real and deserve attention. I am invested in challenging all of my students and trying to make my classrooms into spaces of transformational learning. This article explores the question of dissent in feminist classrooms through the problem of conservative students who deploy rhetorics of safety in ways that flatten out power relations and systemic oppression. I do this by thinking through a couple of moments in which I have encountered the ideological formation of 'Trump feminists' in the classroom. What are possible pedagogical strategies that actively engage conservative students rather than silencing and alienating them? How can students' declarations of feelings of unsafety serve as productive moments for examining definitions of safety and vulnerability and how these ideas and affects circulate? I am interested in thinking about how instructors can problematize the notion of 'safety' for conservative students in order to help them – and all students – develop more critical understandings of structural violence and precarity, and of what constitutes 'unsafe' environments.

This article explores the question of dissent in feminist classrooms through the problem of conservative students who deploy rhetorics of safety in ways that flatten out power relations and systemic oppression.

Some larger institutional context will be helpful. I am a faculty member in the Department of Women's Studies at Sacramento State University, which is part of the 23-campus California State University system, the largest (and supposedly the most affordable) public four-year university system in the United States. The University Administration likes to call Sacramento State "California's Capital University." The student population is about 30,000; the majority of students come from Sacramento and the surrounding regions, and almost half of all graduates stay in the area after graduation. My department is located in the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies and is one of the smallest of the 10 departments in the College. At the moment we have 3.5 full-time tenure-track and tenured faculty (one of our faculty has a joint appointment in Women's Studies and Ethnic Studies), two long term lecturers who teach three courses a year each, one administrative staff person who works 75%, and about 70 majors. The Women's Studies program has been in existence since the early 1970s in a variety of forms. It has been a department for the last 9 years or so, and like many Women's Studies departments and programs in the United States, we are constantly struggling for funds, resources, and legitimacy from the College and the University.

Every semester for the past three years I have been teaching a Women's Studies course that introduces students to the history and breadth of contemporary feminist social movements, which I focus on feminist struggles that center anti-racist, queer, and economic justice analytical frameworks. As an upper-division general education course, listed in the university course catalog under the rather generic title of "Introduction to Women's Movements," this class attracts students with a range of political perspectives from a variety of academic majors. Out of a class of 40-45 students, there are usually only 7-10 Women's Studies majors and minors. While the majority of the students tend to enter the class with relatively liberal analyses of gender and racial oppression, a significant minority of students have more conservative views. In my first few years teaching at Sacramento State, I was often surprised by some of the students' conservative perspectives on issues like reproductive justice, the inclusion of trans women in feminist movements and feminist spaces, and sex work, because I had assumed that students would be more progressive coming from the Sacramento area. The University Administration, in contrast, has been explicit in its resistance to the actions taken by the Trump Administration towards DACA recipients and trans students. The University President is extremely vocal about the need to protect undocumented students, and the University funds a Dreamer Resource Center and has been providing weekly free legal support and advice from local immigration attorneys to undocumented students and their families. It is this institutional context in which I have encountered conservative students mobilizing feminist discourses of safety and vulnerability to position themselves as under attack in the classroom.

Example one: unsafe on campus

When I was teaching this course on feminist social movements in fall 2016 to a group of about 40 students, I could feel some anxieties from students in this class and in my other classes leading up to the presidential election. At the same time, this particular group of students had been reticent to discuss political events during the first two months of class, despite the course's focus on contemporary feminist issues, and some of them had expressed rather conservative social and cultural perspectives during our class discussions. So while I wanted to open up some classroom space for students to discuss their reactions to the election, I was wary about predetermining the shape of the discussion in ways that might have a silencing effect on some students.

In the past I have been much less invested in bringing my more conservative students along, even as I know that ethically and pedagogically, I am responsible for all students' experiences in the classroom. During the two years in which I worked as a part-time lecturer at multiple campuses before getting my current position, I was much less concerned if the more radical material in my classes alienated some students. However, now as a tenure-track professor who is actively involved in developing and expanding my small department – and as a worker who is now paid adequately for my labor and time – I have been thinking more seriously about ways to reach out to conservative students. To be clear, this has not taken the form of compromising on the content or politics of the readings I assign or other course material. But it has meant thinking differently about how to frame the material, how to structure in-class discussions, and how to respond to students. This thinking differently is not motivated solely by my desire to improve my pedagogical strategies, but also by an institutional imperative. About one third of our Women's Studies courses fulfill one or more of the University's General Education requirements, so most of our FTEs each semester come from non-majors who are just taking one Women's Studies course. It is important for our department to meet the FTE targets set by the Dean's office every semester, in order to justify our continued existence and our constant push for more resources in the form of funds, more tenure lines, and so on. I now have an obligation to attract and keep enough students enrolled in my classes, as I am invested in the future growth of my department.

Since I was at a conference in the days immediately after the 2016 election, the first opportunity I had to talk with my students was one full week later. I brought blank notecards to class and asked students to write anonymously on them. I gave them five minutes or so to write down their feelings on one side of the notecard and their critical thoughts on the other side. I then collected the cards, redistributed them, and asked volunteers to read out what was on their card in order to start discussion. I was hoping this process would provide enough anonymity to at least open up some conversation in a more neutral way, although most of the sentiments expressed by the cards that were read were from students who were feeling stressed, anxious, and fearful of the implications of Trump's election. This makes sense given the racial and class demographics of the student body. More than two thirds of the student population at Sacramento State are students of color – 29% Latino, 20% Asian American, 12% multiracial, 6% African American, 1% Pacific Islander, 0.3% American Indian – and the University identifies half the students as low income and a little more than half as first generation students. The demographics of the faculty at Sacramento State are quite different: two thirds of the faculty is white (California State University, Sacramento).

While this notecard exercise only generated a conversation that lasted about 15 minutes, I felt that it provided students with an opportunity to write through some of their reactions and also to read and hear about a few other students' reactions. However, one student did take the opportunity in this discussion to talk (non-anonymously) about her own reactions. This white student proclaimed rather dramatically, near the end of the conversation, that she felt unsafe on campus given her own political views in this post-election moment. Intentionally vague, this student did not mention any political affiliation or whom she had voted for, but said that she felt like a minority on campus due to her political and social views and that she perceived most other students to be angry about the election. She tearfully described the ways she felt vulnerable and unsafe walking around on campus and how she was worried that someone was going to take a baseball bat to her car. Without having to explicitly identify as a Trump voter or as a Republican, this student claimed a minoritarian and persecuted position based on her alignment with the political party who controlled the election.

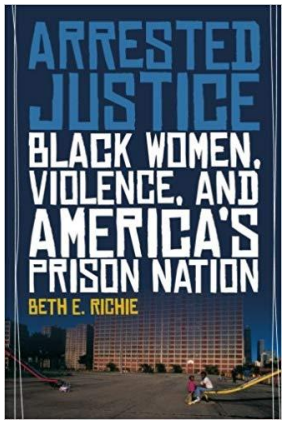
This student had leapt from a place of (political) identity to a position of oppression, and rhetorics of safety offered her a language to express her feelings of discomfort and presumed minoritarian status.

I must admit that I was somewhat flabbergasted by this confession in class, and felt stymied by her invocation of the language of safety and the manner of her delivery – on the verge of tears, voice trembling. I was vexed by her use of affect to craft an emotional admission that narrowed the range of possible responses; as the professor, I could not really tell her in the moment that her feelings were 'wrong.' Moreover, her words and mode of delivery did make it clear that, however ungrounded in actual risk her concerns may have been, she was definitely *feeling* unsafe on campus. Those feelings are significant. This student had leapt from a place of (political) identity to a position of oppression, and rhetorics of safety offered her a language to express her feelings of discomfort and presumed minoritarian status. Her affective response did particular work in that moment. As Sara Ahmed notes, "emotions *do things*, and they align individuals with communities – or bodily space with social space – through the very intensity of their attachments" (119). The student was participating

in an affective economy that constructed angry undocumented students and other students of color as the objects of fear, displacing critique of the actual systemic sources of threat, such as ICE, the future Trump Administration, and emboldened white supremacists.

I was also frustrated by her appropriation of the very same gendered discourses of vulnerability and safety that we had been discussing throughout the semester as important feminist critiques of gender and sexual oppression, institutionalized racism, and class exploitation. At the beginning of the semester, authors like Cherríe Moraga, Audre Lorde, and the Combahee River Collective had provided us with critical tools to think about feminist politics, and our subsequent units on reproductive justice, immigration enforcement, health care, and domestic labor had made clear how women of color, poor women, immigrants, and trans people are especially vulnerable to forms of state regulation and violence. The student's use of these discourses of vulnerability and safety flattened out the real material differences in power and privilege she has as a white person. In that moment, I wondered what my other students were thinking, particularly those who were students of color, immigrants, and queer, and who were feeling unsafe in the aftermath of a presidential election that had legitimated and activated white supremacist, xenophobic, and sexist beliefs and practices. I did not want to somehow validate this student's use of the language of safety. At the same time, I was aware that I had made possible this admission by structuring the conversation in the way that I did. By trying to create an open space for discussion, I had set up a space that could be turned into a culturally relativist space in which all opinions and feelings were considered equally valid.

The larger irony of this moment was that we had just started our final course unit on feminist responses to violence, which examined different forms of racial, gender, and sexual violence through a focus on mass incarceration and immigration detention in the United States and transnationally. For this day in class, students had read the introduction to Beth Richie's book *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*, in which Richie presents a compelling analysis of the nexus of interpersonal violence and state violence experienced by many poor black women, and illustrates how the mainstream anti-violence movement has historically failed to address race and class issues. The student who expressed concerns over her own personal safety had clearly not used Richie's analysis to reflect critically on her own feelings. (Or was she able to read Richie's critique as an endorsement of her own use of discourses of safety?) This student was asserting herself as an individual subject of trauma over structural forms of trauma, which also disregarded the ways that trauma and violence are part of everyday life for many communities in the United States. Identifying herself as a victim enabled her to reattach herself as a wounded liberal subject to forms of whiteness supposedly under threat.[1]



ARRESTED JUSTICE: BLACK WOMEN, VIOLENCE, AND AMERICA'S PRISON NATION BY BETH E. RICHIE (NYU PRESS, 2012)

Because I had struggled to respond to this student in the moment, for the next class meeting, I decided to begin class with an exercise on safety and violence. I reminded my students that the language of 'safety' had come up in our discussion on the election in the previous week's class, and explained that I wanted to push this discussion further to think about the relationship between safety and power. This was also the week after then Vice-President Elect Pence had been booed by audience members at a performance of *Hamilton* in New York, at which Brandon Victor Dixon, the black actor who played vice-president Aaron Burr, had read a statement from the stage to Pence that expressed alarm and anxiety about the new Administration and called upon Pence to "uphold our American values and to work on behalf of all of us." In his mode of response that has now become horribly routine, Trump immediately tweeted that Pence had been "harassed" by the cast and that the theater should be a "safe" place (Mele and Healy). I also mentioned this incident to students as an example of the multiple ways the discourse of 'safety' can be deployed, and how 'safety' can serve as a floating signifier detached from material conditions of risk and violence, to the extent that it can be actually used to silence critical perspectives on state violence from marginalized populations.

I asked students to do another freewriting exercise responding to questions like: "How are different people feeling unsafe? What are the actual conditions of safety? How do different types of violence (interpersonal, structural) affect different groups of people? What does safety mean to you?" After the students had written through these questions, we had a larger class discussion and then moved into the material for that day, which was about practices of criminalization and the prison industrial complex (Oparah).

To be honest, I am not sure how effective this exercise on safety and violence was as a response to the student's comments in the previous week of class. In our discussion, I attempted to make a few specific connections to Trump and his rhetoric during his candidacy in order to get students to think more critically about what safety means in the context of state-sanctioned structural violence, but I was also trying not to put that particular student on the spot. I think that I could have developed a more robust discussion on the definition of safety and pushed students further to more specifically identify practices that constitute an "unsafe" environment. In some ways, I was (too) focused on getting students to recognize state processes like policing, incarceration, and deportation as forms of violence that create conditions of unsafety for entire populations of people. Asking them to enter into this conversation instead through the ways that particular individuals mobilize rhetorics of safety might have been more effective. I have also been thinking about the temporal pace of the current moment; what I have

described above reflects my usual pedagogical approach of using the next class period to follow up on more contentious moments in the previous class period. But maybe in this particular political moment, in which every day feels urgent and pressing, these usual pedagogical strategies are mis-timed? Even though I do try to think about teaching as a way of planting seeds rather than as discrete moments in which transformations occur, this can still feel inadequate in terms of pushing students to think more critically about the relationships between their individual lives and larger systems of state violence.

Example two: "I voted for Trump *and* I'm a feminist"

In Spring 2017, I was teaching the same Women's Studies class on feminist social movements. On the first day of class, before we get into any of the course material, I usually ask students to think about their definitions of feminism and feminist issues. Classes had started the week after the Women's March on Washington, so on the first day of class, I also showed students some clips of the speeches given at the March, including those of the more progressive speakers like Janet Mock and Linda Sarsour (Democracy Now!). We used this material to have a conversation about how students define feminist politics. This usually produces wide-ranging discussion that both demonstrates the breadth of what can be considered feminist politics and allows me to highlight the ways that feminist movements have generated a critique of larger structures of power, in order to give students a preview of the course material for the semester.

That semester, however, I was surprised by a student who began her comment with a critique of the Women's March on Washington. This student – who was also a white woman – began by saying that she felt the Women's March was not as inclusive as its rhetoric had promised. I was initially pleased by this statement, since I hoped the student was going to continue with a critical assessment of the March. Perhaps she was going to comment on the racial demographics of the march participants, and say something about what it meant that so many white women showed up for the march in January but that many of those same women had not been showing up for racial justice events such as the Black Lives Matter actions over the past few years. Or perhaps she was going to continue with a critique of the preponderance of so-called pink 'pussy hats' worn by many of the women at the march, and think about how this symbolism could signal a particular type of trans-exclusionary gender essentialism. This student said none of this. Instead, she stated that she was dismayed by the fact that anti-abortion activists had reportedly not been welcomed at the march, and that as someone who voted for Trump *and* identified as a feminist, she took issue with what she saw as the exclusionary feminist politics of the Women's March on Washington.

Despite the experience from the previous semester, I was taken aback by this second encounter with a Trump feminist in a Women's Studies classroom, and I struggled to respond to her assertion. I did not want to dismiss or confront a student's personal politics on the first day of class. What took me by surprise in that moment was the student's willingness – in fact, her insistence – on identifying herself explicitly as a supporter of Trump. This was in contrast to the student from the previous semester who was intentionally vague and ambiguous about her political views. Both of these students, however, mobilized discourses of safety and vulnerability to argue that they were marginalized on the basis of their political positions. This conservative appropriation of wounded white identity is not new (Brandzel and Desai), clearly, but its articulation in a feminist classroom poses particular challenges. In retrospective, I wish I had been able to turn her comment back on to her, and ask her to explain in more detail how she was defining feminism. That could have opened up the conversation more and allowed me to respond with an explanation of feminism as a political project invested in challenging and dismantling larger structural oppression on the basis of race, gender, class, and sexuality.

Conclusion

What have these smaller moments taught me about navigating the phenomenon of Trump feminists in Women's Studies classrooms? As I have discussed, my immediate responses in these two specific examples felt inadequate at best and like failure at worst. These reactions have helped me think about the larger questions of silencing, complicity, and dissent in Women's Studies classrooms. I have found at my institution that directly challenging students who express conservative perspectives does not work because it puts them on the defensive, causing them to drop the class or stay silent. Yet adopting the liberal rhetoric of diversity of all political beliefs is not an effective pedagogical strategy either, since it perpetuates a relativism that ignores structural inequality and oppression.

Since these encounters with Trump feminists, I have felt a renewed commitment to helping students understand the role of white supremacy in our contemporary moment, especially since many of them have internalized post-racist perspectives, the kinds of perspectives that undergird white students' claims to marginalization. I have reminded myself that many Trump supporters do experience other axes of marginalization; many of my students, including my white students, are working class and low income, and therefore do feel marginalized in terms of their class status and access to resources. Many of my students have children of their own and most work at least one job while earning their degrees. That is, their senses of being marginalized are often grounded in their material experiences of capitalist exploitation, and in the effects of the dismantling of social services and support systems in the U.S. since the 1980s. These conservative students are in some ways articulating their feelings of insecurity through the rhetoric of safety. The challenge for me is to help them think critically about the actual causes of their feelings of unsafety and disempowerment without allowing them to resort to a depoliticized position of victimhood. Understanding and acknowledging explicitly in the classroom how their socio-economic backgrounds contribute to them feeling victimized is helpful to framing

conversations in class, since one of the biggest obstacles for them is being able to make connections between their own personal situations and larger structures of inequality. In more recent classes, for example, I have had success assigning readings like George Lipsitz's *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* in order to help students understand whiteness as a "structured advantage." I have coupled that reading with the sharing and discussion of anonymous in-class writing about how students have benefitted from whiteness as an institution. This has opened up space for me to navigate moments in which conservative students mobilize discourses of safety and vulnerability in resistance to course material that they find challenging to their political beliefs.

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Notes

[1] I am indebted to Kiran Asher and Lezlie Frye's paper, "Power, Politics, and Push-back in Feminist Classrooms," presented at the American Studies Association conference in November 2017, for this last point.

ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Refusing to Wait: Just-in-Time Teaching

by Ann J. Cahill and Tom Mould

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Three days after the 2016 presidential election, a professor at Elon University (a medium-sized, private university in North Carolina) emailed a group of colleagues, students, and friends, suggesting that they brainstorm ideas of how to respond productively to the election results. That email conversation led to several initiatives. An early concrete action was a letter signed by over 500 faculty and staff and published in the university's student newspaper that stated support for students belonging to groups who experienced increased vulnerability in the wake of the election (Huber et al 2016). Community members interested in sharing ideas about activism and engagement began to meet regularly. By the end of the month, several of the faculty and staff on this original email thread had signed on to perhaps the most audacious idea that had been generated: to develop and offer a one-credit course in the upcoming spring semester designed to provide students with intellectual and practical skills that would be useful in facing the social and political challenges that had been revealed in sharp relief during the campaign.

This article describes the process of developing the course, its structure and content, and its effects on the students, faculty, and staff who participated in it. The article also discusses strengths and weaknesses of the course design as a means of helping to ensure the success of any future endeavors. The course, which eventually came to be titled "Refusing to Wait: Intellectual and Practical Resources for Troubled Times," is an example of how institutions of higher education can respond quickly and effectively to political developments, while keeping student learning at the center of their mission.

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The Origins of "Refusing to Wait"

The faculty and staff who committed to working on the course were motivated by what they perceived as profound and imminent threats to democratic institutions and ideals. They believed that students would be well-served by a class that focused on utilizing the disciplinary knowledge of the university's faculty and staff to both understand and respond effectively to the current political situation. What began as a series of informal conversations and brainstorming soon led to an interest meeting with more than thirty faculty, staff and students. By the end of the first week of December, dozens of faculty and staff agreed to participate in the course, while eight faculty and staff committed to developing and organizing the one-credit-hour, pass/fail class, to be offered in the spring semester. University administrators quickly gave their approval, the Peace and Social Justice program agreed to offer the class under their program, and in the third week of December, the university's registrar sent an email to all students, informing them of the class and inviting them to register for it. Detailed planning for the course began in early January. By the time the class began less than a month later, we had assembled a teaching team of 22 faculty and staff members who would serve as presenters, organizers, and discussion leaders, all of whom offered their time and energy in addition to their regular course load and professional obligations (in other words, participating in this class did not count toward a faculty member's course load, and no additional compensation was provided for staff who participated in it). Over 80 students registered for the class.

The process of designing the class was challenging, for at least four reasons:

1. Time pressures: we began the process of designing the class in earnest in early December, and the first class meeting was on February 1.
2. Uncharted territory: we were designing a highly unusual class, the likes of which had never been taught at Elon University, and so there were no ready templates or norms that we could rely on.
3. The number of cooks in the kitchen: as the planning continued, the core organizing group eventually consisted of five faculty and staff: Professor of Religion Toddie Peters and Professor of Anthropology and Folklore Tom Mould who served as lead instructors, and Assistant Dean of Campus Life and Director of Residence Life Uchenna Baker, Professor of Philosophy Ann Cahill, and Director of Inclusive Community Well-Being Leigh-Anne Royster. Not surprisingly, there were differences of opinion about the focus of the class, the details of the course description, learning outcomes, and so on. While we were lucky to have a high degree of collegiality and honesty among the core organizers, the number of people involved combined with the time pressure meant that the planning sessions could be somewhat fraught -- but also invigorating. It was important to all involved with the course that there were both faculty and staff participants involved in every step of planning and implementation; this wide representation from across different programs and offices allowed for a deep understanding of students' intellectual needs and interests.
4. Navigating the political waters; this was a major topic of discussion among the core group of organizers from the very inception of the course. There was little doubt that it was the presidential election of 2016 that motivated the course, and for the core organizers as individuals, it was the particular result of that election that provided a sense of urgency. Yet everyone agreed that our responsibilities as educators required us to design

a course that was resolutely nonpartisan. To be nonpartisan, however, is not to be value-neutral or value-free; we wanted the course to focus on, among other things, understanding the value of democratic institutions and principles that we believed to be at the heart of both the role of the university and democratic society in general. The challenge, of course, was that one of the two major political parties in the US had selected as its standard bearer a candidate who espoused profoundly undemocratic beliefs, and in doing so had politicized principles that had previously been understood as nonpartisan and foundational to our democracy, for example, a belief in an independent, free press, or the epistemological value of evidence and science. To take a stance in favor of evidence, then, or against clear, explicit forms of white supremacy (such as the brandishing of Nazi flags), could be read as being biased against the Republican party. Ultimately, the group committed to being as transparent as possible about the ethical, political, and epistemological assumptions upon which the class depended, and took the position that those assumptions were not ones that should serve to exclude the participation of any reasonable member of a democratic society, regardless of party affiliation.

The Structure of "Refusing to Wait"

The class was designed as a one-credit class that would meet once a week throughout the spring semester, at a time that minimized schedule conflicts with other classes. All students would take it on a pass-fail basis, and their grade would be entirely based on attendance and participation. The guiding principle in developing the structure and the scheduling of the class was to make it as accessible to as many students as possible.

The final course title and description were as follows:

PSJ 171: Refusing to Wait: Intellectual and Practical Resources for Troubling Times

The recent US presidential election sent shockwaves through a variety of political, academic, and social communities, both within the US and abroad. In its wake, people are seeking resources to participate effectively on a variety of levels, from the familial to the federal. While leaders in every party expressed shock and outrage at the discriminatory rhetoric that emerged leading up to the election, figuring out a path forward has proven difficult. In this course, we will dig into issues of race, gender, economic injustice, and xenophobia in the evolving, post-election landscape. We will focus on developing intellectual and practical resources for responding effectively to threats facing individuals, communities, and democratic institutions. This course will be pass/fail with grades based on attendance and participation.

The core organizing group also developed the following list of student learning outcomes:

Students will:

- be able to evaluate news sources and stories including identifying fake news
- be able to rhetorically analyze the arguments made about racism, sexism, etc.
- be able to develop rhetorically sound, evidence-based arguments
- be able to recognize confirmation bias in their own lives and apply tools to avoid it
- be able to clearly articulate how racism, sexism, etc. are structurally embedded in society
- be able to evaluate the effectiveness of various types of social action for various contexts and issues
- be able to have constructive conversations with people who didn't vote the way they did
- be able to actively listen
- be able to talk with people different from themselves
- learn to grant their peers the space to work through complicated and sensitive issues
- learn to accept feedback when their words cause harm or distress
- be able to understand how legislation is built on and will contribute to beliefs and actions that have very real impacts on people
- understand how symbols can be used to make arguments
- be able to discuss the tension between politicized issues and partisan issues
- learn to identify and challenge dominant discourses

In addition, during the first class meeting, one of the organizers presented the underlying assumptions of the class, articulated as follows:

- Evidence matters; we will interrogate claims, particularly empirical claims, based on the quality of evidence that is offered in favor of them;
- No party has cornered the market on racism, sexism and xenophobia, but in this current political context, some of these ideas have been tied explicitly to parties and politicians;
- We share a commitment to democratic (small "d") ideals (such as freedom of the press, freedom of expression, pluralism, and so on); and
- We share a commitment to fight against systematic inequalities (there exists significant disagreement about how to

understand those inequalities, and how to address them; but we're not going to spend time arguing about whether they exist or whether they matter)

In designing the daily structure of the class, the organizers had multiple pedagogical goals. Part of the urgency of the course came from a sense that there was important disciplinary knowledge that would be useful to students in this particular moment. This disciplinary knowledge included historical information about white nationalist movements in US history; theoretical frameworks regarding gender inequality; and cutting edge research regarding algorithms, social media, and propaganda. While we valued the transmission of such disciplinary knowledge in short lectures, we also knew that students would need to discuss the primary course content in small groups in order to process it effectively. Finally, we wanted to create the opportunity for students to put what they were learning into action, to emphasize the connection between disciplinary knowledge and the need for social and political engagement.

Accordingly, we decided that each class meeting would have three distinct parts: a plenary presentation by a member of the teaching team (25 minutes); small group discussions, with the membership of the small groups remaining consistent throughout the semester (25 minutes); and social action work (25 minutes). The topics of the social action groups would be developed by the students over the first several weeks of the class, and then students would decide which groups they wanted to join.

For the plenary presentation, the presenter(s) would assign relatively short readings that would take no more than an hour to read and provide discussion leaders with at least 3 prompts to guide the small group discussions. Plenary presenters remained in the class throughout the small group discussions and were available to answer any emerging questions that the students and facilitators had.

Each discussion group had 8-10 students as well as two discussion leaders (it turned out to be useful to have two discussion leaders in case one of them could not attend the class in any given week). The discussion leaders committed to being familiar with the course syllabus, policies, and discussion norms; attending the plenary presentations; taking attendance; bringing the prompts to the discussion group; and being available to the action groups on an as-needed basis.

For the first two weeks, the social action segment of the class was a two-part introduction to social change that focused on the history of social change in the United States the first week and introducing students to various strategies of social change in the second week. This brief introduction to social action work was intended to help guide students in developing their social action plans. After identifying various topics of interest, the third class session included a process for students to discuss various options and coalesce into working groups. From week four on, the action groups were led primarily by students, with some involvement by members of the teaching team. Eventually, 8 action groups coalesced, with the following themes:

1. Advocacy and Direct Action
2. Inclusive Community at Elon University
3. Art as Social Protest
4. Climate Change
5. Responding to ACTBAC (a local white supremacy nationalist group)
6. Talking Across the Aisle
7. Immigrant and Refugee Rights
8. Criminal Justice Reform

There were thirteen class meetings during the spring semester. Although the organizers were aware of the possibility that political events would require some last-minute adjustments, they scheduled the first ten plenary sessions, leaving the last three open for an additional plenary session and presentations from the action groups (although, as we describe below, the last few weeks did not go exactly according to plan). After some on-the-fly adjustments during the semester, the topics for the first ten plenary sessions were as follows:

Week 1 Plenary: Why this Election is Different

Guest lecturer: Jason Husser, Assistant Professor of Political Science

Week 2 Plenary: Democracy and Critical Thinking

Guest lecturer: Stephen Bloch-Schulman, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Week 3 Plenary: Fake News

Guest lecturers: Derek Lackaff, Associate Professor of Communications, and Jonathan Albright, Assistant Professor of Communications

Week 4 Plenary: Oppression & Intersectionality

Guest lecturers: Ann J. Cahill, Professor of Philosophy, and Leigh-Anne Royster, Director of Inclusive Community Well-Being

Week 5 Plenary: The Creation of a Narrative of White Oppression

Guest lecturers: Tom Mould, Professor of Anthropology, and Jim Bissett, Professor of History

Week 6 Plenary: Freedom of Expression

Guest lecturer: Brooke Barnett, Professor of Communications and Associate Provost for Inclusive Community

Week 7 Plenary: Locker Room Talk

Guest lecturers: Leigh-Anne Royster, Director of Inclusive Community Well-Being, and Detric Robinson, Community Director for the Daniely Neighborhood

Week 8 Plenary: Islamophobia

Guest Lecturer: Brian Pennington, Professor of Religious Studies

Week 9 Plenary: Build a Wall (The Ethics of Borders)

Guest lecturers: Uchenna Baker, Assistant Dean of Campus Life and Ryan Johnson, Assistant Professor of Philosophy

Week 10 Plenary: Make America Great Again (Unpacking a Slogan)

Guest lecturers: Rebecca Todd Peters, Professor of Religious Studies, and Jason Husser, Assistant Professor of Political Science

The specific topics chosen for the plenary resulted from an intersection of priorities identified by the core organizers, the students (determined by a survey that went out in mid-January to students who had registered for the class) and the availability of specific faculty and staff on campus. We were painfully aware, of course, of the many topics that we could not address directly, but we were confident that the ones that we identified were well worth our students' time and attention.

The core organizers continued to meet on a weekly basis throughout the spring semester, adapting the schedule and topics as necessary, and addressing challenges that arose with individual students or the class as a whole. Most of those challenges were fairly predictable -- there were some discussion groups that didn't gel, for example, and time management was a constant struggle, given the size of the class, the brevity of the plenary sessions, and the need to rearrange the room twice during the 100-minute period. Not surprisingly, there were two or three students who challenged the content of the course, and accused it of having an anti-Republican bias. The core group of organizers and the discussion leaders worked together to respond to such challenges as constructively and clearly as possible, referring back to the learning outcomes and the guiding assumptions that were presented in the first class. Finally, as the semester continued, some students dropped out of the class, citing other time pressures and commitments. A total of 70 students completed the class.

On the whole, though, as the semester started coming to an end, the teaching team was pleased with the way the class was going. Conversations were generally lively and substantial (although discussion leaders always saw room for improvement along these lines), the material presented was obviously related to current events, and students were making important connections between the material being discussed and their own rights and responsibilities. However, the action groups seemed to be lacking in focus and momentum, for a variety of reasons. Perhaps most importantly, it had taken longer than we had expected for the social action groups to form –several weeks were spent on brainstorming ideas, and so students didn't commit to specific groups until about halfway through the semester, leaving insufficient time for both planning and implementing a project. In addition, making progress on any particular project was difficult with only one scheduled meeting a week, and the quality of student leadership was lower than we had hoped for.

As the end of the semester grew closer, the core group of organizers started talking about different ways of concluding the class. We wanted the students to feel empowered and inspired, and to have the feeling that the class was launching them into their communities with a renewed sense of purpose and urgency. We had planned to have each action group make a presentation on whatever project they had undertaken, but thought that one class period was sufficient for those presentations. What we needed, we thought, was a "ringer" – a surprise guest from outside the university community, perhaps a well-known activist, politician, or community leader who could give our students a rousing send-off. Working from the assumption that it didn't hurt to ask, we began sending emails to public figures, inviting them to help us to conclude this unique class in a fittingly dramatic way.

Our audacity resulted in something far better than any of us had imagined. At the beginning of the second to last week of the class, none of our inquiries had borne any fruit; our invitations had been met with refusals (which in some cases were accompanied by enthusiastic support for the class and its goals) or had been ignored, and we began planning for a final class that would bring together multiple plenary speakers to discuss how their different topics were related. Then, two days before the second to last class, we received an exciting invitation. Melissa Harris-Perry, the prominent journalist, author, and speaker who holds the Maya Angelou Presidential Chair at Wake Forest University (while also directing the Pro Humanitate Institute and serving as the founding director of the Anna Julia Cooper Center) responded to our email by inviting the entire class – all 92 faculty, staff, and students – to join the class she was concluding at her house for dinner in two days' time. We scrambled to arrange transportation (her house was about an hour's drive from our university) and to encourage our students to take advantage of this remarkable opportunity. And so the penultimate meeting of the Refusing to Wait class took place at the welcoming home of our generous host, who shared with us her bracing responses to the current political situation.

We still had one class meeting left, and dinner with Melissa Harris-Perry was a tough act to follow. But the core group of organizers wanted to return to the theme of social and political engagement one more time. We began the class in focus groups to synthesize course material, encouraging students to reflect on what they did, and did not get out of the class. We then asked them to reflect on the work they did in their Social Action groups and to jot down on a Post-It note what they planned to do related to their topic. Finally, we asked them to think about their own personal commitments they would make by completing the following sentences: "I refuse to wait for…" and "I commit to…" The questions were strategic because a few minutes later we presented them with two gifts, generously funded by a variety of university departments and offices: a copy of Timothy Snyder's *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (2017) and a custom-designed T-shirt with the phrase "Refusing to Wait" on it. We then provided paint pens and encouraged the students to customize their

shirts by adding exactly what they were refusing to wait for, and what steps they were going to undertake toward that end. For example, some wrote that they were refusing to wait for "LGBTQIA equality," and that they were going to "work toward equal rights and representation of trans people." The final act of the class was taking a photo of the assembled faculty, staff, and students:

Assessment

Throughout the designing and implementation of the class, students were invited to provide input and feedback in multiple ways. Before the course began, as mentioned briefly above, we surveyed students asking them four questions:

> Generally, what do you hope to get out of this class?
>
> Specifically, what intellectual skills do you hope to develop?
>
> Specifically, what practical skills do you hope to develop?
>
> Do you have any concerns or reservations about this class?

During the course, students developed ideas for actions, voted on them, and engaged in social action groups accordingly. We also asked students to propose ideas and vote on plenary session topics in order to ensure that we captured evolving student interest as well as the changing landscape of current events. More informally, we talked to our discussion groups to see what was working and not working for them in order to tweak the class as we went. We held similar conversations with the discussion leaders, focusing particularly on how we could improve discussions and facilitate social action group work.

The data below, however, focuses on the formal assessment measures we conducted at the end of the course. For students, our questions focused on the course goals. We conducted both an online survey to gather quantitative data as well as an hour-long focus group to gather qualitative data. Students remained in their same discussion groups for the focus groups, but we rotated discussion leaders so that the students would feel more comfortable commenting honestly on the discussion portion of the class. We also followed up with a brief survey approximately one year after the class began to assess any long-term impacts of the course.

For the teaching team, our questions focused on the course structure. We combined quantitative and qualitative measures in a single online survey that asked both open and closed-ended questions. The vast majority of the data is therefore direct assessment. Final grades do not provide indirect assessment since they were based on attendance and participation rather than graded work. However, we did ask the teaching team to comment on student presentations to provide some indirect assessment of student work.

Student Feedback

Students filled out a 15-question survey targeting each of the course goals. 59 of the 70 students completed the survey for an 84% response rate (Figure 1).

Combining the "strongly agree," "agree," and "somewhat agree" columns for all 15 questions suggests the relative success of the course for each question (Figure 2).

Overall, the majority of students agreed that all fifteen of the course goals were met. In particular, students felt that the class was most effective in improving their abilities to rhetorically analyze arguments about key course topics; develop their own rhetorically sound, evidence-based arguments; articulate how social inequities such as sexism and racism are structurally embedded in society; evaluate news sources; and recognize confirmation bias in their own lives. They found other goals somewhat less effectively met, including accepting feedback when their words cause harm or distress; understanding how legislation is built on and contributes to beliefs and actions with very real impacts; and having constructive conversations with people who voted differently from themselves.

The focus groups we held on the final day of class provides some insight into the statistics as well as identifying more clearly the specific areas of the class that did and did not resonate with the students. Focus group facilitators used five questions to structure the conversation, though discussions often moved in additional, productive directions:

- What did you get out of the class?
- Have you changed and if so, how?
- What will you do differently if anything?
- Did you engage others outside of class and if so, how?
- What did you hope to get out of the class but didn't?

FIGURE 1. RESULTS OF STUDENT SURVEY TARGETING EACH OF THE COURSE GOALS

Many of the conversations focused on what students got out of the class. The responses were wide and varied, but mirrored many of the course goals. With so many, we have listed them below, beginning with those comments made most often.

- Chance to discuss current events with accurate information. Chance to delve into these issues much deeper than casual conversations.
- Chance to hear from students with different views, different academic backgrounds, different personal backgrounds.
- Interdisciplinarity. Saw how the same subject could be approached from many different lenses.
- Seeing faculty and staff working together, learning together.
- Chance to think critically with others.
- Learned to identify and avoid logical fallacies.
- Explored underlying causes to major issues. Saw patterns. Learned about intersectionality.
- The energy and passion of everyone in the class. Peers who really wanted to be there rather than having to be there for some requirement.
- Opportunity to talk personally about how these issues affected them. A relief to be able to share with a group of caring peers. Felt like they were truly heard.
- Chance to work with students who shared similar views about social justice.
- Encouraged questioning. Saw faculty and staff modeling what it looks like to be an engaged citizen.
- Opportunity to explore areas of disagreement rather than stop once I realized I was in the minority.
- Practice and confidence to tackle challenging questions
- Humanized current issues that changed how I view current events. Different impacts for different groups.
- Helped remove the barrier between academics and "real life"

For many students, simply having peers committed to the same goals of social justice, who were in class solely out of interest rather than as a curricular requirement, made this experience a particularly memorable and invigorating one. They were similarly energized by seeing the teaching team engaged in the same questions they were. Noticeably absent was mention of the social action part of the course. When conversation shifted to areas of

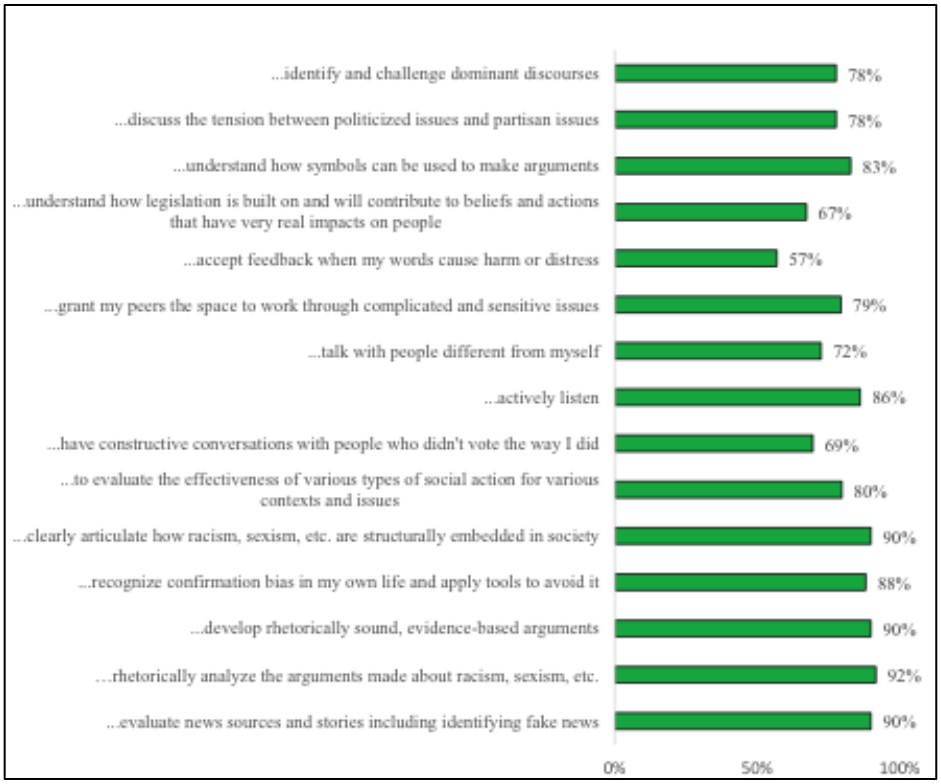

FIGURE 2: COMBINED STUDENT RESPONSES OF "STRONGLY AGREE," "AGREE" AND "SOMEWHAT AGREE."

the class that did not work as well, the social action groups were mentioned in virtually every focus group.

In terms of how students changed, some noted that they did not feel they had changed, clarifying that they came to the class committed to social justice, and left the same way. Many, however, commented on changes to how they approach and discuss difficult topics, noting that they are more conscientious about using evidence to support their claims, more open minded, less likely to believe they are right, less likely to judge, and more interested in listening to others to truly understand their point of view rather than just win an argument. While some said they felt much more informed and aware, others commented on realizing how little they know and how much they have to learn. Even still, there was general consensus that they felt more confident and comfortable engaging in difficult conversations. At least one student noted that issues they once dismissed as insignificant they now saw as significant.

Moving forward, many students said they would seek out people who have different ideas from themselves. They were tired of the echo chamber and excited about having discussions with people with different views. Others were more specific about preparing for such conversations, working to get the facts before throwing out their opinions, looking for evidence before believing something, and getting their news from multiple sources. The fact that so many of the students' plans for the future revolve around having difficult conversations is no doubt tied to their experiences attempting to do so. Students discussed their efforts to engage others outside of class, identifying roommates, friends, and parents as their most common conversation partners. Perhaps not surprisingly, many found their most fruitful conversations to be outside class with their fellow RTW classmates. When they spoke to friends with staunch partisan views, conversations were less productive, falling into a he said/she said pattern. Some students felt that there were people in their communities who were simply "unreachable." When they engaged friends with less entrenched views, they found their peers generally receptive, though many students noted that their friends would appear initially interested, but not for a sustained conversation. The same was true for some family members.

A handful of students mentioned bringing the conversation into their other classes, particularly Women, Gender and Sexualities Studies, Poverty and Social Justice, and International Studies classes. Although students were overwhelmingly satisfied with the course, not all of their expectations were met. Some wanted clarity on their own views but felt they got complexity rather than conclusions. Many wanted an opportunity to practice "talking across the aisle" more. A few mentioned wishing they had been asked to write an op-ed or a letter to their representative to apply the skills discussed in class. By far, however, the most common disappointment involved the social action groups. Everyone agreed that we simply did not have enough time to develop much less carry out a significant action plan.

Teaching Team Feedback

At the end of the semester, we asked all of the discussion leaders and plenary speakers in the course to fill out an online survey with a mix of 16 open and close ended question. 15 of the 22 members of the teaching team completed the survey for a response rate of 68%. It is relevant to point out that only 2 of the 5 members of the core organizing group completed the survey so the responses do not overly represent their views.

Members of the teaching team were fairly consistent in seeing the overall structure of the course as a basically good one, rating it as either "very effective" (67%) or "moderately effective" (33%), but with areas that could be improved. The plenary sessions were viewed as particularly valuable for the salient topics selected and depth speakers achieved in such a short amount of time (17% found them "extremely effective" while the remaining 83% found them "very effective"). Those sessions that were identified as particularly effective noted the clarity of the readings, the inclusion of concrete data, the application of theory to

relevant current events, and the development of thoughtful and thought-provoking discussion questions. Those plenaries that were viewed as less successful were too complex, too vague, or too ambitious.

That ambivalence about the overall structure of the course seems to have centered particularly on the discussion groups. Forty percent of respondents found them "extremely effective," while the same number found them only "moderately effective" (with the remaining 20% finding them "very effective"). During the semester, our informal discussions among the discussion leaders often focused on issues with the discussion groups, including uneven participation, lack of depth in the comments, and disconnect with the plenary session.

Particularly effective aspects of the discussions included the opportunity students had to discuss current events in an intellectually informed but informal way. Some felt that students do not typically get such opportunities at Elon University, and that the chance to address social action within this conversation was particularly impactful. One particularly effective discussion occurred when that day's plenary session speaker joined the group. Other powerful moments occurred when students got comfortable enough to really open up, whether in confronting another group member for dominating discussion or expressing one's political frustrations that did not easily conform to the rest of the group. Generally, discussions improved over the semester as students became more comfortable with each other, but some members of the teaching team felt the amount of time allocated for discussion was not sufficient.

As with the students, the social action component was viewed as being one of the weakest parts of the class, due primarily to time constraints. While the teaching team felt that at least some groups were effective in synthesizing course material into a clear action plan, all or most did not. Weaknesses identified among less successful groups included on the one hand reinventing the wheel rather than building on previous work, and on the other, simply participating in existing organizations without carving out new ground.

Finally, we asked what the teaching team took away from the course. Many of their responses echoed the students. They appreciated having the opportunity to learn about areas outside their own expertise from multiple disciplinary perspectives and talk about current events with similarly engaged people. More than anything, the teaching team expressed excitement, inspiration and gratitude in working with students so passionate and committed to social justice.

Recommendations for the Future

At the end of the course, many students asked if we would be teaching this course again. Colleagues asked the same question, both those who did not participate and those who did. Our answer was fairly uniform: we would love to, but we don't think we will. Among the course organizers, our reasons included the incredible amount of uncompensated time and energy, the concern that we would not have the same level of interest among either the students or our colleagues to do it again, and the sense that this course erupted out of a moment that was both emotionally and intellectually challenging, and that while we see the importance of maintaining that energy and refusing to allow the acceptance of sexist, racist, Islamaphobic, homophobic, xenophobic, and anti-intellectualism to become the new normal, this class may have been a powerful but only a first response.

…We see the importance of…refusing to allow the acceptance of sexist, racist, Islamophobic, homophobic, xenophobic, and anti-intellectualism to become the new normal[;] this class may have been a powerful but only a first response.

However, it is possible that the labor involved in designing and running the course could be redistributed by moving to a more student-led model, a move that could potentially be more sustainable either on a short-term or long-term basis. Different models would be possible depending on institutional structures and resources; at Elon University, we currently have a program that allows students to take primary responsibility for teaching non-credit classes. A course like Refusing to Wait could be adopted by students and adapted to fit this program. The model for Refusing to Wait might also allow the university to consider a new program where the students took the lead in determining topics and inviting guest lecturers, a possibility that would continue to leverage the considerable expertise of the faculty while ensuring that students were responsible both for the specific themes addressed in the class and the daily logistics. Of course, such a student-led course would still require an unusual sense of political urgency (at least for typical students of Elon), and it is unclear whether the sense of urgency that inspired the creation of this course is persisting, or even could persist across multiple years. And of course the matter of whether the course would receive credit may influence student interest in taking the course. Finally, the development of such a course would still take considerable investment, in terms of time and energy, on the part of the faculty who would guide the students in at least its first incarnation and perhaps beyond.

Although we have no plans to attempt to teach such a class again, many of the students and the teaching team offered suggestions for improving the class if we did, or if other universities wanted to attempt something similar. Those suggestions included the following:

- Reconsider the social action component. Reduce the number of groups. Students suggested having more faculty guidance to help them avoid dead ends that cost valuable time.
- Flip the classroom. Videotape the plenary sessions and have students watch them

before class, allowing our meeting times to focus more on discussion.

- Include time for Q&A with the plenary speakers.
- More aggressively recruit students from diverse political viewpoints.
- Scale back the number of course goals.
- Find time to address current events.

Aspects of the class that worked well and should be maintained if a course like this was to be taught again, include informative plenary sessions to provide foundational knowledge, discussion groups with the same students each week to develop trust and rapport, and a diverse group of instructors to ensure multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Conclusion

Just as the students took away lessons learned from the course, so, too, did we. Many of us have revised sections of our own courses to draw in some of the course content from the plenary sessions. Others of us have been working to provide more opportunities for our students to build social action plans into. As course organizer, administrator, and staff member Uchenna Baker explained, "An important aspect of the course for the staff was the idea of modeling for our students the democratic practices that we are calling them to espouse within and beyond the walls of the classroom. That is, as educators we must have a willingness to be in the gap, in the breakdown, and reconcile the cognitive dissonance that is unearthed. We have to be willing to inquire into the premise of our beliefs to reveal our faulty assumptions; otherwise we put them in action and they become the truth. The truth becomes something to protect and we hold on. This course invited both educator and student to collectively think and dialogue more critically about the implications that the 2016 elections had for all of us. More importantly, the course called for all of us to commit to action beyond the walls of the classroom. As an administrator, the beauty of dialogue across race, gender, political affiliation, and one's role at the university was realized. But more importantly, the belief in the power of collective action was renewed as a result of the course."

Course leaders were not the only ones to leave with renewed confidence and commitment to civic engagement and dialogue. In the focus groups, for example, a number of students commented that they felt better prepared to engage in conversations with their peers. Students in Ann Cahill's focus group spoke animatedly about the opportunity to talk with peers with very different views in a space of shared respect and interest. Another student recalled an experience from class just one week earlier: "One student had very different opinions from the rest of the people in the van. I saw many moments of using evidence and facts. Before this class, I would not have been able to respond effectively." Tom Mould was in that van as they drove back from the prominent journalist's home and was similarly struck by the conversation. One of the students in the van shared their story of being a Dreamer, a minor brought to the U.S. by undocumented parents. Another student asked a number of questions, and the two of them respectfully disagreed about some key issues surrounding immigration. Other students on the van entered the conversation in one of the most thoughtful and mature conversations Tom had heard on immigration between people of varied viewpoints. It was not a pile-on. While only one student shared views similar to Trump's "Build a Wall" ideology, students diverged greatly on how to resolve thorny immigration issues. No one raised voices. Some shared statistics and research findings; others shared personal experiences. People took turns and the conversation slowly shifted from the specifics of the initial story to a more robust conversation about immigration policy. At the end of the van ride, Tom privately asked the student whose personal story had started the discussion what they thought of the conversation. "Incredible. I was finally heard." A few days later, the professor ran into the student who had disagreed with many others on the bus and asked them the same question. "I have a lot to think about now. It's a lot more complicated than they make it seem." The professor asked him who "they" was. "The media, I guess." These various comments capture a glimpse of the range of impacts of this unique course. Some were empowered to speak on issues when they normally wouldn't, some shared deeply personal stories and were heard in ways they had not been before, and some were challenged to move beyond the sound bites of partisan politics.

The extent to which the class has continued to impact students is more difficult to assess. Almost exactly one year after the course began, we sent students a short 3 question follow up survey to see what, if anything, they had done or were still doing because of the class. 15 students out of 70 answered the survey for a 21% response rate. However, 49 were seniors and many may not have received the email. Based on the feedback, we know at least one senior did respond, but if the rest were not seniors, the response rate would be 15 out of 22 or 68%.

We asked them what aspects of the class, if any, do you continue to reflect upon? Almost a third of them mentioned the theory of intersectionality. The next most common responses was having tough conversations with people of different viewpoints. Again, although the end of semester survey suggested this was one of the least successful course goals, the qualitative data makes clear that for those students who felt it was achieved, it was a life changer.

Not surprisingly, only 2 of the 15 said they continued work with their social action groups, with most students attributing their lack of follow-through to lack of time. The vast majority of respondents did, however, make good on the promises they made in answering what they were refusing to wait for. A few students didn't answer, a few others didn't remember, but of the nine who did, their responses are worth including in their entirety:

1. Equality. Going to grad school to serve underserved populations!!
2. For people to stop being racist and discriminatory. I am in DEEP which is a social justice club.
3. Equal rights for women; I'm not afraid to have conversations with skeptics or male supremacists.
4. Equal rights and I've supported the women's movement this past year.
5. I am refusing to wait for others to speak for me.
6. Gender equality. Pursuing career in domestic violence and sexual assault victim advocacy.
7. Racial justice. Since our class I've read all I could on the subject.
8. Community empowerment. I was thinking about the work a few of my friends in Chapel Hill do with the Community Empowerment Fund (worth looking into) and searched for similar organizations and programs in the town I moved to. I got involved with SURJ for a brief moment, but there wasn't a whole lot of infrastructure in my city's chapter. I've made intentional efforts to support the local economy, but I'm continuing to look for ways I can apply myself to not only my town, but also other communities in the world. Thinking about community empowerment is helping me narrow my geographic focus when considering locations for potential applied research projects.

But perhaps the most breathtaking answer of all was:

I'm refusing to wait for permission to do what I can to make the world a more empathetic place. I've decided to run for elected office in my hometown.

While specific impacts may have been fleeting for many, the course seems to have encouraged at least some to believe they can change the world, providing a glimmer of hope that democratic thinking and social justice has a new cadre of defenders.

Acknowledgments

We would like to recognize the 22 faculty and staff who gave their time, energy, and willingness to be open, be challenged, learn, act and grow as a community of scholars and civically minded citizens. In addition to the course leaders already mentioned, and the plenary speakers listed in the course schedule, we would like to thank maggie castor, Bob Frigo, Evan Gatti, Joel Harter, Frank Hartfield, Deandra Little, Shannon Lundeen, Joan Ruelle, and Rebecca Scott. We would also like to thank members of Elon University's administration, as well as the Office of the Registrar, for supporting the implementation of this class.

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Appendix: Social Action and Personal Commitments Made by Participants of RTW

Social Action Commitments

- Work at Campus Kitchen (just got the job)
- Refusing to wait for racial injustice. I commit to challenging white supremacist culture on Elon University's campus
- Trying to engage with groups outside my norm
- Refusing to wait to engage students in politics. I commit to responding and embracing civic engagement initiatives at Elon University and beyond
- Work with Elon University admin to be able to put the bathroom newsletters up on Elon University's campus
- Refusing to wait for equality. I commit to engaging with my local, state, and federal representatives multiple times a week
- I will continue to inspire friends to contact congress members and will help finish all the survey responses
- We commit to being fearless, unapologetic, and mother-f-ing awesome
- Working with the people's assembly and relevant social justice orgs in Alamance County to build and respond to human rights challenges
- Refusing to wait for gender equality
- Refusing to wait for people to care about climate change
- Our social action group didn't really meet our goal, but I want us to continue to have an open mind when having meaningful conversations
- Increase the availability of spaces on Elon University's campus where students can freely and publicly express themselves-- especially via art
- I commit to becoming more involved in my local community's efforts for advocacy and direct action
- Refusing to wait for recognition as an equal. I commit to continue fighting for what I believe in
- Climate change, education, and support
- I commit to advocate for intersectional goals through my words and actions
- I commit to continue working with victims of sexual assault
- I am committed to further understand the criminal justice system and end the stigma surrounding the incarcerated
- Refusing to wait for human rights. I commit to creating artwork in my personal and public life that calls out social injustice
- Ongoing commitments: photo project (collect stories) and meet up with groups to discuss deadlines
- Informing friends and family about the injustices in the justice system
- I commit to finding creative ways to respond to issues I care about
- Education on campus about the sources of Islamophobia
- I commit to help prevent climate change
- Refusing to wait for environmental action
- Continuing to promote criminal justice reform education
- Getting the Elon University community to have conversations about social action from both sides of the aisle
- I will more actively participate in action that supports my causes in my hometown
- I commit to writing about an education others about conservation issues like climate change and habitat destruction

- Continue to advocate for, educate on, and support women's rights
- I'm committing to continuing open-minded conversations about political topics that are normally difficult to discuss, and not staying silent when I disagree
- I commit to creating a space at Elon University where students feel comfortable expressing themselves through art
- I commit to begin a revolution rather than waiting for it to begin. I wish to eliminate disparities and relieve oppression
- Refusing to wait for increasing global perspectives. I commit to hearing all perspectives before forming an opinion
- I am refusing to wait for community empowerment. I aim to join/volunteer for local organizations that immediate impacts on a grassroots level.
- Educate people about criminal justice system.
- Break stigma about previously incarcerated people.
- I commit to listening to others when they disagree with me and keeping an open mind when talking across the aisle, as to recognize that I am not always correct.
- I commit to actively listening in conversations across the aisle. I'm refusing to wait to… be informed.
- I commit to make Elon University a more inclusive campus.
- Refusing to wait for political action. I commit to contacting my Congressman and voicing my opinion, as well as committing to be the change I want to see.
- To work for a company that seeks to eradicate sexism/racism/heteronormativity in the workplace and beyond.
- I commit to being educated on groups that take part in direct action in order to help others find ways to be involved in aspects of current events they feel passionate about.
- I develop to fight for gender and racial equality.
- I commit to actively listening in conversations across the aisle.
- I commit to actively listening in all the conversations I partake in.
- Spread awareness for climate change.

Personal Commitments

- Work on getting better everyday.
- Refusing to wait for LGBTQIA respect. I commit to speaking out against prejudice and bigotry against this community.
- I am refusing to wait for our "leaders" to make positive change.
- I commit to staying informed.
- Refusing to wait for racial justice. I will be an advocate for people who lack a voice.
- I am refusing to wait to be well-informed.
- Refusing to wait for ignorance. I commit to challenging my friends and classmates to think critically about social issues and to not stand for injustice, especially here on campus.
- Refusing to wait for others to tell me what is right and wrong. I commit to educating myself.
- I commit to remaining informed about the issues facing the Elon University community, as well as the country. As well as engaging in conversations with those that disagree with me.
- I will refuse to let ignorance persist where I can stop it. I commit to promoting analytical conversation with those from different backgrounds from myself.
- I commit to remembering that my marginalized experiences are not universal and listening to the experiences of others different than me.
- I commit to being aware of my words and think about what I say before I do.

- Refusing to wait for sexual and gender equality. I commit to working with local social justice orgs to make Alamance County a safer place for LGBTQ community members.
- Refusing to wait for rights for immigrants and refugees.
- Refusing to wait for criminal justice reform. I commit to educating myself and others about the structural racism in the criminal justice system.
- I commit to being aware of the space I take up in conversations and listening to and amplifying the voices of others.
- Refusing to wait for human rights.
- I am committed to educating myself to see how I can make REAL change.
- I commit to call my congresspeople and voice my opinion regarding legislation I want them to vote a certain way for.
- Refusing to wait for the marginalized, downtrodden, and wronged in our society to be treated with the same respect as the rich and privileged.
- Refusing to wait for others to bring up difficult topics. I can do it too!
- Refusing to wait for racial and feminist justice.
- I commit to maintaining an open mind when involved in conversation with those whose perspectives differ from my own.
- I refuse to wait for political partisanship. I commit to working across political boundaries to find common ground with those around me.
- Refusing to wait for political acknowledgement of climate change. I commit to spreading awareness and information surrounding climate change and its harmful effects.
- I refuse to remain silent and passive on issues that matter and I refuse to lose faith on evidence-based reasoning.
- I refuse to become a "nice white lady" (i.e. a white woman wrapped up in her life and privilege who continues the status quo). I will be challenging and disruptive!
- Refusing to wait for human rights for <u>everyone.</u> I commit to continuing the conversation and my education. I commit to lobbying against legislation I disagree with and pursuing my JD.
- I commit to being informed and offering informed opinions at all times, not just in times of reaction.
- Become more aware of current events through reading and listening to different news sources.
- Refusing to wait for equality and acceptance of all minority groups.
- Refusing to wait for environmental justice. I commit to educating youth about the environment and climate during my summer internship.
- Committed to helping others better understand the importance of the environment.
- I refuse to wait for gender equality. I commit to defending equality and refusing to let sexist or stereotypical gender comments "slide." The everyday rhetoric of how we perceive male and female <u>needs to change.</u>
- I refuse to wait for gender equality. I commit to supporting other women and speaking up against injustice.
- Refusing to wait for gender equality. I commit to questioning both people and institutions when I see/hear underlying sexism.
- Refusing to wait for someone else to start the conversation.
- I refuse to wait to have important and necessary conversations. I commit to engaging in difficult conversations with people with whom I disagree/don't share the same views.
- I am refusing to wait for artistic expression. I will seek to use art to communicate my stance on issues.
- Refusing to wait for racial justice. I commit to not be silent about issues of race when something happens.
- Read multiple news sources.
- I will more actively engage in conversations that make social issues that impact my community.
- I commit to be informed with fact-checked information.

- I’m committed to advocating passionately for disability rights.
- Explore the intersectionality of issues that I will address in my job.
- Question one-sided opinions/comments.
- I will stand up and not be afraid to tell people how I feel when I hear things that are racist or hurtful and make sure that they understand that saying such things are wrong and are the opposite of how we want the world to be.
- Reading more news sources to gain more information of all sides of the issue at hand.
- I commit to informing and lessening the stigma of Islamophobia.
- I commit to keeping myself informed and developing more informed, researched, and well-rounded discussion topics.
- I refuse to wait for women to be treated as equals in the U.S. I’m committed to educating and demonstrating against sexism.

ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Trump, J.K. Rowling, and Confirmation Bias: An Experiential Lesson in Fake News

by Audrey Fisch

PHOTO BY ROMAN KRAFT

http://radicalteacher.library.pitt.edu No. 111 (Summer 2018) DOI 10.5195/rt.2018.481

Like many educators, I wanted to find some way to incorporate the issue of fake news into my teaching. Below is an account of my experience which is useful, I think, in terms of its reproducibility but also for the lessons it teaches about the intractableness and urgency of these issues. Given the ways in which fake news continues to be an issue and what we know about students' (and all our) vulnerability to manipulation by the media, I suspect this lesson will continue to have value for a long time.

The lesson centers around a news story I came across that I thought would work well in my classroom. The story had the following selling points: 1) it involved the author J.K. Rowling, a household name to my students, 2) it involved clear-cut and indisputable manipulation of the details of an incident – fake news, 3) it played to my students' antipathy to Trump and hence their confirmation bias, and 4) it is actually a story in which Trump was not the villain I knew they would assume him to be.

My lesson was a brief unit in my first semester English Composition class at New Jersey City University (NJCU), a comprehensive, public university. Designated as both an Hispanic-serving and a minority-serving institution, NJCU serves a broadly diverse student population: 25% White, 21% Black, 34% Hispanic, and 9% Asian. 77% of our students receive financial aid, with approximately 64% receiving Pell Grants. Many are the first in their families to attend college. In general, NJCU students are far less likely to be Trump supporters and somewhat more likely to be politically aware than the typical college student. In particular, Trump's attacks on DACA students and immigrants have resonated painfully with many NJCU students.

The lesson was labeled on my syllabus as Fake News. I began with a caution: I asked any students who knew the "trick" behind my lesson to refrain from speaking out (and I would advise any teachers who reproduce this lesson to do the same). None of the students in my three sections of College Composition, however, was aware of the story, so my caution was unnecessary and none, incredibly enough, was tipped off by the syllabus.

First, I showed my students a brief, 24-second video clip. I directed the students to ignore the title – "Trump doesn't ignore wheelchair boy - Monty shows Trump his secret service patch." (I will discuss the title below.) The video shows President Trump greeting a group of people standing behind his dais; he chats with them as he exits the room. The voice of a small, disabled boy, Monty, is captured on the video, calling out "Mama," and reaching his hand up and towards Trump. In the video clip, Trump does not stop to shake the boy's hand or engage him in any way.

Without any oral discussion, I asked students to post their responses to the video clip on TodaysMeet – a closed, backchannel chat platform that allows students to engage in written conversation (Daniels and Daniels).[1] Note: the platform asks students for nicknames when they post, and I let my students enter whatever they want as their nicknames, allowing, then, for students to choose pseudonyms or vague nicknames and creating an atmosphere of relative anonymity. In this sense, students, if they wish, can post their comments with some sense of confidentially and the resulting written conversation is more inclusive and safe. (The platform also allows the instructor immediately to hide any inappropriate comments, should that become necessary, which was a useful feature as I worried about a student revealing the backstory behind my lesson, but that never occurred.)

In response to my simple prompt - "post any and all thoughts," the students posted comments along the lines of this one: "The boy was trying to get a handshake from Trump. It seems like Trump ignored him." A few actually argued against the title of the video: "the title says that Trump didn't ignore wheelchair boy but in the video he clearly did." Notice here that my students did not, as I asked, ignore the video title; the content of the video overwhelmed them, and they assumed that the title was inaccurate. Many immediately injected negative feelings about Trump into the discussion: "The fact he treated a handicapped kid like that irritates me"; "That was foul"; "the boy is disabled . . . that makes it so much worse"; "Absolutely messed up. He has no shame."

Without any further oral discussion, I asked the students to watch the video again and to offer additional comments on TodaysMeet. The students became increasingly adamant in their condemnation of Trump: "He completely ignored the kid. All he had to do was look down and say hello" and "I honestly cannot stand him."

Next, I shared an excerpt from an article in the *Washington Examiner*:

> Someone published the clip from the 13-minute event on YouTube and alleged Trump had ignored 3-year-old Monty's requests for a handshake. The video circulated on Twitter, and caught the attention of Rowling, author of the "Harry Potter" series.
>
> "Trump imitated a disabled reporter. Now he pretends not to see a child in a wheelchair, as though frightened he might catch his condition," Rowling said referencing Monty, who has spina bifida, in one of eight tweets transmitted to her 11.4 million followers on Friday, July 28.
>
> "This monster of narcissism values only himself and his pale reflections. The disabled, minorities, transgender people, the poor, women (unless related to him by ties of blood, and therefore his creations) are treated with contempt, because they do not resemble Trump," she continued.
>
> "How stunning and how horrible, that Trump cannot bring himself to shake the hand of a small boy who only wanted to touch the President," the Harry Potter author continued.
>
> Thousands, including Chelsea Clinton, retweeted Rowling. (Quinn)

Again, without any oral discussion, I asked the students to react in writing on TodaysMeet. Many responded in agreement with Rowling's tweets: "Rowling

couldn't have put it any better" and "I agree with JK Rowling, I think that was an act of disrespect and ignorance." A few noted and praised the fact that Rowling's reaction was informed by the well-known incident in November 2015 in which Trump had disparaged a disabled reporter, Serge F. Kovaleski (Haberman).

Student opinion began to diverge slightly, however, not in how to read the video but in relation to Rowling's response. A few students questioned Rowling's decision to insert herself into the realm of politics: "J.K Rowling needs to stick to fiction." In response to these sorts of comments, several students defended Rowling's right to share her views: "she's allowed to post her opinions just because she has a massive following doesn't mean she has to stay quiet" and "J.K. Rowling has a strong influence . . . and speaking out helps the voices those afraid to speak." In other words, for many students, Rowling's authority and credibility reinforced their initial reaction to the video; for a few, her credentials as a novelist were insufficient to give her opinions on the video particular authority.

Next, I showed the students a second video, entitled "Trump Gives a Statement on Healthcare." We watched the video from timestamp 2:10 until 2:35; Trump is introduced by Vice President Pence and then enters the room and greets the people standing behind the dais. This video, as rapidly became clear to the students, is from the beginning of the same event to which Rowling had reacted, and it features the president directly and for a sustained period of time bending down to engage, nearly exclusively, with the disabled boy, Monty. (The video also includes Trump's Address.)

In fact, the first video I showed my students, the video to which J.K. Rowling had reacted, was an excerpt from the second video, an excerpt which, taken out of the full context, makes it look as if Trump ignored Monty. Indeed, the brief excerpt, particularly given the fact that we hear Monty calling out to his mother and reaching up his hand as if towards Trump, plays effectively and nearly irresistibly on our heartstrings. The earlier clip and the full video, however, make clear that President Trump had not ignored Monty; in fact, he had paid special attention to the boy during his entrance.

It's worth noting that both videos seem entirely credible because they contain video from The White House official YouTube channel. The first video, the misleading clip, works to cast Trump in a negative light simply by presenting one moment from the event entirely out of context. The short clip makes it look as if Trump is callously ignoring a vocal and engaging young disabled boy; the full video makes clear that Trump engaged the child fully and extensively at the beginning of the event.

The misleading clip was edited down and re-posted from the White House channel onto YouTube by someone, whose identity remains unknown (the original misleading clip has since been removed from YouTube). The clip circulated widely, capturing the attention of many, including J.K. Rowling. The video I shared with my students is a facsimile of what Rowling and others saw. Hence the title for the clip I showed: "Trump doesn't ignore wheelchair boy - Monty shows Trump his secret service patch."

Again, I asked the students to respond, this time to the video clip in which Trump engages with Monty, and I was surprised by the uniformity with which they blamed what they called "the media": "The media tends to crucify Trump, sometimes, unnecessarily"; "This video shows that you can't always be quick to make assumptions on things in the media because they don't cover the whole story sometimes"; and "I'm just saying the media lied to us." Many students at this point labelled the episode: "#fakenews."

I probed the students to unpack their understanding of "the media." What did they understand the term to mean? What is J.K. Rowling's relationship to the media? After all, she isn't a journalist. And was she offering news or opinion? I also asked students to think about the source of the misleading video. Was it posted by a credible news source?

The students, however, were not able to process this distinction between a personal opinion posted by a person (albeit a celebrity) on social media and a piece of news media. Like Trump, for the students, there was no distinction to be made between social media and news media. One student pointed out the dictionary definition of media: "the means of communication, as radio and television, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet, that reach or influence people widely" (dictionary.com). When I tried to press the students on the difference between credible, reliable news organizations and other media sources (like a random person who posts video clips of his cat on YouTube), they were resistant (which is surely indicative of how thoroughly discredited the mainstream news media has become in our post-truth environment).

When I tried to press the students on the difference between credible, reliable news organizations and other media sources (like a random person who posts video clips of his cat on YouTube), they were resistant (which is surely indicative of how thoroughly discredited the mainstream news media has become in our post-truth environment).

Researchers are working hard to think through the dangers of an unregulated Internet on which "someone" can post a misleading video, like that about Trump, and move millions of people and public opinion. In "Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning," the Stanford History Education Group "worr[ies] that democracy is threatened by the ease at which disinformation about civic issues is allowed to spread and

flourish" (5). Projects like that at Stanford intend to measure and ultimately improve students' abilities to "reason about the information on the Internet" (4). My students' reaction to the Rowling/Trump video, however, makes clear that while we (students, Rowling, all of us) may be vulnerable to manipulation through unscrupulous actors using our vast media channels like YouTube and Twitter, many of us have no counterbalancing trust. The danger is that everything out there becomes undifferentiated, untrustworthy media. I'll return to this issue below.

In my classroom, one student was more nuanced in his/her/their analysis of the Rowling/Trump episode. The student noted, "This is a prime example of what's wrong with the Internet. Everyone is an expert, and does no research into their misguided opinions."

In my classroom, one student was more nuanced in his/her/their analysis of the Rowling/Trump episode. The student noted, "This is a prime example of what's wrong with the Internet. Everyone is an expert, and does no research into their misguided opinions." This student continued, "I know for a fact she [Rowling] didn't take the 30 seconds [to look] into YouTube to look up the full video."

This student wanted to claim superiority to Rowling and her insufficient research and misguided reaction. But was that superiority justified? I had forced all of my students to react to the misleading video, and none of them had raised any questions, even given the title of the video and the title of our lesson on my syllabus. At this point, I pointed out that none of the students themselves had shown suspicion about the video, and that they too had felt confident enough to condemn Trump and the episode based on what they had seen (and on their own views about Trump). Indeed, my lesson was based on the power of this experience. It's one thing to read about and condemn Rowling's mistake; my goal was to simulate her mistake in the classroom so that my students could experience being duped just like the esteemed author of *Harry Potter* had been.

I continued the lesson with a discussion of the ensuing events, including a response from Monty's mother and her explanation that, among other things, the boy was raising his arm not to shake Trump's hand but to show the secret service patch he had been given earlier that day. We also read Rowling's apology.

Next, we turned to media coverage of the Rowling tweetstorm incident. I offered students a range of sources across the political spectrum to review – *CNN, The Daily Telegraph*, *Politifact*, and *The Washington Post* - and encouraged them to seek out others on their own. They noticed how thoroughly the media covered Rowling's reaction to the misleading video – including the now-deleted tweets both from Rowling attacking Trump and from Monty's mother in response. They also noticed, across the media coverage, the extent of the backlash against Rowling: "everybody is bashing Rowling for her mistake and are making it seem like she is a terrible individual." The students generally found the criticism of Rowling disproportionate: "she was one of many to overreact to the video so I don't think she should be bashed for it." Indeed, given that they had all fallen for the misleading Trump video, they were more generous towards Rowling than others in the media were.

Finally, we listened to a brief discussion on WNYC's *On the Media* with Melissa Zimdars, a professor at Merrimack College, about how to navigate a world of fake news. In particular, the discussion raised the important issue of confirmation bias, the idea that we are all more likely to believe those stories that confirm our existing ideas. My classroom experiment had relied on and exposed that confirmation bias in my students. The students, many of whom are immigrants and/or students of color, were already disinclined to support Trump; this confirmation bias meant they were more likely to accept the misleading video of his seemingly boorish behavior towards a disabled child as confirmation of Trump's heartlessness and arrogance. (I did have one avowed Trump supporter in one of my sections, but unfortunately, he was absent on the day of this lesson. It would have been fascinating to see how his presence affected the way the lesson played out.)

Having personally experienced being "duped," the students were primed to listen carefully to the suggestions Zimdars offers about avoiding fake news. As the students remarked, "it is the first time I felt duped"; "Well I feel lied to . . . and now I'm definitely going to overthink anything I see on the internet"; and "They got me." Fake news was no longer an abstraction; the lesson had allowed my students to experience personally their vulnerability.

Indeed, the issue of our broad vulnerability to this kind of manipulation arose at the end of the period in one of my three sections. One student raised the issue of Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election and quite astutely argued that the "Russians only fed Americans what they wanted to see and hear. [I]t is the fault of Americans for believing everything they see or hear." My classroom experiment, in fact, was taking place just as developments were breaking in *The New York Times* and elsewhere about the Russian Facebook ads designed to provoke and divide the American public and disrupt the election. Some students were well aware of the information surfacing about Russian interference, and a few connected this foul play on Facebook to the Trump/Rowling episode. One student raised the question of who had uploaded the misleading Trump video and to what purpose: "I do feel that whoever uploaded this video was trying to get a rise." Another student noted that Rowling was simply the victim who "fell for the trap."

Who laid the trap and for what purpose are questions that the news coverage of the Rowling/Trump incident did

not address. One particularly conspiracy-minded student suggested that Trump supporters might have been behind the doctored video. His logic: ensnare a liberal celebrity in a trap, get her to bash Trump unfairly, and then discredit and humiliate her for her mistake. The end result is more distrust in the media. Such far-out conspiracy theories are harder to dismiss in the wake of what we have learned about the Russians.

I mentioned earlier how insistently students conflated social media and media. In class, I pointed out to my students the fact that the individual (or organization) who posted the original video was not a credible, if left-slanting news organization, like *The New York Times* (although we don't know who it is who actually posted the video). But for the students, there was no distinction to be made between material posted on the web by malicious individuals and material posted by what we might call the reliable, if sometimes biased, news media. All of it, for them, was the media, and all of it was untrustworthy.

I fear that my lesson, like Trump's endless repetition of the terms "fake news" and "fake media," served to further my students' distrust of the media and not in a healthy or productive way. My goal had been to allow them to experience fake news, to understand their vulnerability to it, and to arm them with strategies to avoid it. I also hoped they would acknowledge the ways in which the mainstream news media's coverage of the Trump/Rowling episode was different from the manipulation they had experienced with the misleading video, which was wholly fake news. Indeed, comparing the different media responses to the episode, the students were able to reflect on the relative bias or slant among the different mainstream media outlets; they were also able to notice how different in scale this bias was in comparison to the entirely false agenda perpetrated by whoever posted the misleading video clip.

I did not, however, at least within the context of this lesson, get my students to view the news media as trustworthy, despite what they acknowledged about the thorough, well-documented coverage the Rowling/Trump episode received in the mainstream media. In the end, the Trump video, Rowling's knee-jerk response to it, the ensuing media frenzy, and then my lesson about these texts resulted in an overall heightening of distrust in all media – even what we see with our own eyes can't be trusted. I may have turned my students from "gullible rubes" into "gullible cynics" (Caulfield "Think"), for whom nothing is true. That skepticism of my students, engendered through some instructional trickery on my part, is, I think, a dangerous outcome.

Especially given the ways in which the Trump era has continued to demean the work of legitimate news organizations and to erode our trust in and ability to discern truth and facts from disinformation and blatant falsehoods, it is critical that lessons like mine be supplemented by the kinds of concrete strategies Michael Caulfield outlines in his brilliant and important book, *Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers*. Given the cynicism, skepticism, and broad distrust of expertise and authority of our moment, our task must be to pair an understanding of the dangers of confirmation bias and fake news with skill-building so that our students are empowered to serve as their own arbiters of the truth, confident in their abilities to wield the powerful, existing "tools for trust" (Caulfield "Think"). Caulfield suggests "concrete strategies and tactics for tracing claims to sources and for analyzing the nature and reliability of those sources" (*Web* 3). The web, he argues as he outlines the fact-checking moves in his book, is not just the "largest propaganda machine ever created [it is also] the most amazing fact-checking tool even invented" (*Web* 3).

I look forward to teaching the Trump/Rowling episode again but this time as part of broader practice in distinguishing the fake and the real, including verification of real but dubious-sounding news items (news items that appear fake but are in fact real). With this practice, I hope my students will move past a position of dangerous and potentially disabling cynicism and into a position of strength as empowered arbiters, wielding the power of fact-checking tools, in order to verify or debunk what they see in "the media." Teaching students the tools of digital fact checking may be a lot to take on in a first semester college writing course, but surely this kind of digital literacy is precisely the appropriate and required learning outcome for today's educated citizens.

Notes

[1] TodaysMeet closed as of June 2018. Backchannelchat.com seems comparable.

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ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Making a RUCCAS or How is an Urban Community Change Axis like a Writing Desk?

by Hannah Ashley and Katie Solic

YES ALUMNI, STUDENTS AND PROFS AT THE FREE MINDS, FREE PEOPLE IN BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, IN JULY OF 2017. (LEFT TO RIGHT) KHALIL SUARAY, DR. HANNAH ASHLEY, AKINRINSOLA SOLEBO, MIKHI WOODS, DR. LAQUANA COOKE, JESSICA AMARANT, NORMA MONESTINO-FUENTES, OLIVIA CAMPBELL, JALYSE THOMAS, LILAH SABER AND NAKYNA GARFIELD-DESPHY

How is a raven like a writing desk? Lewis Carroll has the Mad Hatter ask Alice. Spoiler alert: there is no answer. It was originally written as nonsense. If there has ever been a time when we as educators must swim through noise and madness (whether authentic or put on for political purposes), this era is it. As Kurt Anderson (2017) captures it, we have become a country which disdains "the reality-based community," which prefers "truthiness"—the feel of authenticity, without all the inconvenience of actual facts. Anderson describes our descent into madness as foundering into the depths on the 1960's left-counterculture, followed by the academic left's Foucauldian deconstruction of knowledge, then capitalized on by the right-wing media (as well as leftish Oprah-like wishing our worlds into being), social media and the bots that love it, the Christian Right—and voila: here we are at the Mad Tea Party.

The Mad Tea party is the (un)logic that continues out and past the far end of market-based logic. As Rapheal Randall, director of Youth United for Change, one of our long-time RUCCAS collaborators, pointed out recently at a conference, we are probably witnessing the end of commodity/colonial/racial capitalism. There simply are almost no more markets to which the global economy can expand. So they must contract, and with that, there will be consolidations of power and resource. But it is imperative that those who will lose out not notice as the contraction occurs; it is essential that the masses stay confused. We need not describe our current President's Mad Hatter "Make American Great Again" hat and the delusions and lies and magical thinking that he has tuned into and amplified.

We are not shocked (ok, we were shocked, but we are over that now). Of course the king of the Mad Tea party is mad. But how do we help ourselves and the youth and others with whom we partner to name and analyze the world with the Mad Tea party happening all around us, louder and louder? Organize, teach organizing, lead with others on teaching organizing. It is not an antidote, but it is a counter-logic. The logic of democratic participation is the counter to the logic/not logic of the market. It is slow, messy, inefficient, and real.

We need our own not-mad (but maybe angry) party, a reality-based one, an organized one, and so we made one. We have started to make a RUCCAS, the Rustin Urban Community Change Axis. We propose that universities--particularly but not exclusively colleges of education--join with national and local movements to resist, and to reconstruct the democratic social compact. And we mean something different than the neoliberal calls for civic responsibility (see, for example, the American Association of State Colleges and University's recent lead address, "Can Higher Education Recapture the Elusive American Dream?").

Producing and being educator-organizers, in our time especially, can't be done "sensibly," following tradition and with civility. It needs to be raucous; we need to make a ruckus, which traditional education, particularly colleges of education, is not used to doing. The challenge to the current neoliberal regime, especially from a college of education, implies a break from hierarchical governance/top-down decision-handing/divested and disconnected perspectives on communities and their schools. This is the raucous ruckus – working alongside communities, en mass, authentically balancing a multitude of needs and values and placing democratic participation at the center of educating educators. Based on our experience, we think radical educators at all levels can lead colleges of education and all institutions of learning toward this alternate logic, and we are building that plane as we fly it in our region.

The challenge to the current neoliberal regime, especially from a college of education, implies a break from hierarchical governance/top-down decision-handing/divested and disconnected perspectives on communities and their schools.

RUCCAS is named after our native son Bayard Rustin (born and raised in West Chester, Pennsylvania). Rustin was a prominent organizer in the civil rights movement, a spokesperson for nonviolent social justice movements, and an artist; he is often referred to as the architect of the 1963 March on Washington, although he often took a back seat to others because of being an out gay Black man in the 1950's and 60's.

Rustin is a role model for us in several ways. First, he managed to coordinate thousands of people and hundreds of groups by showing up where the people were, by word of mouth, by phone and index cards—and doing the hard, sometimes boring, but ultimately rewarding work of figuring out details, following up, and connecting with others to develop shared understandings and make things happen. So when it feels like (or we are told), *Well, the College of Ed just doesn't have the time/resources to work with the community; we already work with schools and that's hard enough,* it's good to remember: March on Washington without a single computer. Secondly, he lived his intersectional reality—always Black, always gay—and yet made decisions based on his best thinking about how his mind and voice could best have an influence on the world in that moment. Sometimes that meant staying in the background and leading from behind. We (two White women, one of us with bi-racial children, another of us queer and Jewish) are not suggesting people remain closeted or that our analyses can be race-neutral. Rather, in a race-toxic country that has flourished based on racial capitalism (Robinson, 1983) since its inception, it seems important for universities to lead from behind and for White folks to step up our labor and back the creation of organizations with the lived realities of people of Color front and center, with a clear understanding of history and power, with the active leadership of many but without essentializing or freezing up because we might be criticized (this article, for example, is with permission based on a presentation drafted by several others who don't share our

racial, socioeconomic background, and other lived experiences).

RUCCAS was founded in 2016 but its components grew in the years of liberal Obama-era stasis and conservative push-back. Before we started calling ourselves RUCCAS, our dean provided funds to support the formulation of an "urban strategy" to have a positive effect in the urban communities with which we worked, but did not explicitly ask us to work *with* those communities to formulate it. Truth be told, the College was likely expecting a bringing together and coordinating of our various programs, including the previous, disparate work of some of us on this article, and originally only involving university faculty in the conversation. However, while sewing together various field placements, courses, and extracurricular projects may result in more coherent urban education programming, it is not a coherent strategy for community change.

We knew that the answers didn't reside entirely in our state-school ivory tower. So we occupied the request for a strategy, and brought together allies--including students, community organization leaders, staff and faculty--to figure out what seemed to be lacking in urban community change work in our region, and what our university could do to fill that gap. Ultimately--and one of the points of this article is to argue that--while the College of Education was and is very supportive of the vision and mission that emerged, RUCCAS couldn't quite fit in among the requirements of accreditation, assessment and budget in a college of education.

RUCCAS is a university-community center whose mission is *to support the building of power for Southeastern PA metropolitan communities, specifically but not exclusively Global Majority/communities of color and low-income urban communities, through providing together new and mid-career urban community change professionals-- particularly urban youth workers, artists, and cross-sector racial and economic justice workers--credential-bearing educational pathways and supportive, healing spaces and opportunities for renewal.* It doesn't sound much like a college of education mission. Yet.

RUCCAS is now housed and supported by our College of Interdisciplinary Studies at WCU. The vision of RUCCAS, created by its members, is to have community and collective impact: *a sustainable hub for "urban change-makers," an enduring and robust institution that authentically and mutually meets the needs of multiple WCU entities and Philadelphia neighborhoods and organizations, where a deeply multiracial and cross-class alliance of youth and adults with a multiplicity of professional expertise and lived experiences engage in practices to further develop their own and each other's abilities to leverage assets and resources in and outside the community to cultivate security and vibrancy, trust and relationship, and equity and power.* RUCCAS is composed of member organizations that share a commitment to creating educational pathways for urban community change-makers, including but not exclusively teacher educators, and of people who themselves are already urban community change-makers and are looking for support in continuing to fight those fights. We are new as an entity, so those pathways and support mechanisms are still in development, but below we will discuss some of the rationales for our existence and a few interconnections already occurring among member programs. Although RUCCAS is not housed in college of ed, these interconnections are having a growing, though admittedly ad hoc, imperfect and improvisational, impact on our education programs and work in the region.

Q: When a university "disses" you, what do you get? A: A disposition.

One political and historical rationale that makes sense to college of education administrators is self-defense. Harvey Kantor (2017), reminds us that around the time of the Great Society, Americans gave up on solving inequality directly. Instead, we hung our hats on education. Sometime in the 1960's our country gave up on solving housing, health, socio-economic, and racial injustice per se, and put all our eggs in the basket of education, "the great equalizer." Educators of every political stripe know the impossibility of this cultural myth quite well. It's truthy, but not truth. But in response to what became a regular assault on us as educators for failing in every conceivable way, we decided to no longer just be responsible for "educating youth," but to be the everything to everyone. The movements are as varied as standardized testing, (surface-level) parent involvement, "no excuses" education, and university-community engagement. Some of these "innovations" work, to a degree, in some contexts, for a few.

Higher education is full of pockets of critique of the neoliberal, but we have not been at the forefront of the dirty, on-the-ground fights to take back our schools.

Barbara Ferman and co-authors (2017), in their new collection, *The Fight for America's Schools: Grassroots Organizing in Education*, articulate education's recent path, with its market-based DeVos logic of "choice" and "accountability." They also provide some countering case studies of democratic engagement of teachers, students, communities, and organizations that have pushed back on this "apparently logical system" (7), a system that, like the Mad Tea party when each attendee shifts down one seat, only gives a clean cup to the person at the head of the line. What is notable in Ferman et al's narrative is the conspicuous absence of higher education and colleges of education in particular. This gap is not because individuals and centers housed at universities don't focus their research or advocacy on public education--they do. But higher education writ large has been *docilely following* or even supporting the logic of "racing to the top" along with think-tankers and Gates-Zuckerbergs, rather than *leading alongside* their activist grassroots constituents. Higher education is full of pockets of critique of the neoliberal, but

we have not been at the forefront of the dirty, on-the-ground fights to take back our schools. In our own self-interest we must move from education grounded in the context of community to being leaders with community in community change. Supporting pathways for community change agents is not extra; it's mission.

A second rationale for the essential nature of this type of coalition work, despite it seeming "off-mission" for colleges of education, is that the logic of democratic participation is a dispositional and structural counter to the mad-market (un)logic in which education functions. The educational context in which we founded RUCCAS and the groups that are its members is the city of Philadelphia. Philly represents a microcosm of the challenges that face many school systems in urban centers, and the "solutions" that have followed the market logics. The eighth largest school district in the United States, with over 202,500 students in 339 schools, faces intractable and persistent issues, including the largest (and highly racialized) state-level school spending gap between rich and poor districts in the country (Mosankis, 2017), and deep budget cuts that have both increased class size and reduced critical staff in positions such as nurses, counselors, librarians, let alone ignored crises such as lead and asbestos in schools. In turn, trends toward standardization and privatization have resulted in the adoption of scripted curricula and top-down professional development, as well as schools being labeled as "failing" and subsequently being closed, re-staffed, or converted to charter schools, all of which is disproportionately impacting low income communities and communities of color (Buras, 2011; Lipman, 2011).

At the same time colleges of education continue to prepare preservice teachers who are overwhelmingly white (Milner, 2006; 2010; Sleeter, 2001), have limited experience in participating in cross-racial and cross-cultural relationships (Keengwe, 2010), and bring with them deficit perspectives and discourses about urban schools, communities, and students (Amos, 2011; Groff & Peters, 2012; Lazar, 2007). This, on the whole, has been true of our own university, West Chester, part of the State System of Higher Education, and a former normal school at which a great many of our students are pre-service or in-service teachers, so our education programs are integral to the entire university.

However, sitting at the nexus of the Philadelphia education context and the lived experience gap between K-12 youth and many of our preservice teachers lies a longstanding, rich, and vibrant local educator activist community, including both groups that have formed and pushed back on the neoliberal education agenda, and individual community members and university faculty who have worked in this area. Some of this work is profiled, in fact, in Ferman et al's book and in other research (see, for example Stern and Brown, 2016).

Knock knock. Who's there? Ink. Ink who? Incubator

In partnership with these Philadelphia educator-activist-organizer communities, RUCCAS-affiliated organizations have started to coalesce around a logic of democratic participation and practices. This coming together is offering an important sense of identity grounded in an essential set of dispositions for our time. As involved faculty and students, we share a commitment to do the messy work, on the ground, within the communities we are working to fortify, sometimes leading, but more often listening, learning, and backing. And by recognizing and naming our shared counter-logic, by linking our democratic participatory practices, and by leveraging our individual relationships and resources, we are building our not-mad tea party to be "incubating and sustaining" (Ritchie, 2012) for one another.

SCHOOL FUNDING DEMONSTRATION

One of those member organizations is the Youth Empowerment and Urban Studies (YES) program, which Hannah co-founded and currently directs. Another is the WCU Urban Education Fellowship (UEF), which Katie co-founded and currently co-directs. Our colleagues who drafted an early presentation on which this article is based are faculty or staff affiliated with RUCCAS, including Kyra, who is long-time staff at a community organization called Need in Deed; Bernard, who teaches in YES and runs a poetry club for youth in Coatesville, PA; and Kathleen, who teaches in YES and co-founded and co-directs UEF with Katie. Each of these separate projects (and we represent just some of the moving parts of RUCCAS) are based on practices of democratic participation. Together, they reinforce a counter-logic to the (un)logic of the mad market, not through classroom-based critique but through on-the-ground community.

Youth Empowerment and Urban Studies

YES was founded in 2011-2012 as an interdisciplinary, community-engaged academic minor open to all majors with a particular focus on helping to prepare urban educators. WCU, partnering with the School District of Philadelphia, obtained a mini-grant from AASCU (Association of State Colleges and Universities) in 2009 which spurred its development. RUCCAS currently houses YES, and its mission is "to amplify through study and action a critical understanding of the role youth can play in social change in Philadelphia." Like many community-based programs, one goal of YES is to contribute to making real community-based change in our local urban areas, but a more central goal is to develop "change-makers." Students take a three-course core sequence, and three more directed electives. The intro course, YES 250, moves students to reconceptualize "what is urban" (our students who grew up in urban areas need this work as much as their suburban counterparts), consider the operations of personal, interpersonal and institutional "-isms," and begin to form connections as a cohort through "youth worker resource groups." The next two courses are field-based. YES 300 includes theories of Freire, Gramsci and others that are made concrete by reading about strategies ranging from Youth Participatory Action Research to youth organizing, while students are in weekly field with one of our over a dozen community partners. In our capstone, YES 301: Seminar in Youth-Led Media, students learn practical skills of video, podcasting and gaming in the context of field work at critical urban youth media organizations.

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Our partner organizations vary in mission and practice. For example, one is a youth-led organizing project, another a teacher development program rooted in Freirian service-learning, while a third has a stated mission to support very concrete traditional objectives, such as tutoring and college access; some are community centers and YMCA's; others are arts- and media-based, and a few are now based on organizing on campus. Through sharing in class their struggles and successes in field, YES students experience a variety of strength-based responses to the needs of urban youth and communities.

Some of the field placements work out extremely well, in the immediate sense of contributing to the actual community. Recent YES 300 students have led teens at a community center to sponsor a town hall for their teachers and parents around racist, classist and adultist practices that they experience daily at their schools. Another YES 300 student, a man in recovery, mentored a young woman through her senior project on addiction, which she herself was facing. Some YES 301 students are placed with the media program at a school for pushed out youth, where they have produced videos on police violence or bullying. Others serve as near-peer mentors at our locally-grown social justice/media "iCAMP."

Others don't work out so well. Two recent YES 300 students worked with a weak student government organization at a Philadelphia charter high school (one was herself a former student there) to try moving them to be a stronger and more social-action oriented group. Though the partnership was developed by request of the school principal, staffing changes, cancellations, and lack of support meant that students sometimes drove an hour to find an empty room, and real movement was limited. Some teachers or staffers are delighted to accept students to work with them when we schedule in the fall, but by spring they seem challenged to figure out how to have WCU students be active participants in their organizations or classes. PSSA's, winter weather and lockdowns sometimes keep students from being able to easily meet even the very minimal number of field hours required (20 in YES 300 and 30 in YES 301).

While students enroll in YES voluntarily, they sometimes complain about field requirements that are an hour away from campus, especially when a number of them have field work for their Social Work, Teacher Education, Psychology, Criminal Justice (etc.) majors. Disproportionate numbers of our students are themselves from impoverished backgrounds and struggle with the demands of multiple jobs, being parents or guardians of children, having families threatened by deportation, or never having had the academic supports to read critically and write in the dialect of the academy. Nearly all students start out with top-down, "servicey" approaches to their field work, ranging from real savior complexes to knee-jerk adultist solutions to "the kids are just always on their phones"—many of which shift, but slowly, through the praxis. Reading is never enough; practice is never enough. It is essential that those happen recursively.

So caveats and challenges abound. But interest in the YES minor from students and community organizations has been exciting. We have graduated about twenty-five alumni, and currently have over sixty minors, one of the most successful interdisciplinary minors on campus. While WCU is a predominantly White institution (about 75% of our students are White), over half of YES students are of the Global Majority, primarily Black and Latino students, a racial balance completely unmatched in any other large academic program on main campus. About one in three are teacher education candidates. Nearly all of those students identify as leaders or say that they want to make a difference, though many are not sure how, when they arrive in our minor.

When they leave, however, many say they are changed. One student, a woman who already runs her own mentoring project in the City of Philadelphia, recently

told us that because of her coursework in YES, she is completely revamping her programming. YES students are actively sought after for internships and jobs in the region. They often go through as a partial cohort, so they are influencing each other toward new dispositions and identifications over several years. We believe that the "incubation" of selves that happens in the space of a coherent minor simply could not take root as deeply in a single course. Further, we believe that the emphasis on a collective mindset toward action and hope, rather than merely critique (which our students report makes them feel depressed and withdrawn) is central to the successes so far. Here is some of what we hear from YES students:

> Over the last three years, the YES program has been the most empowering, challenging, and inviting learning space on campus to me. The YES program truly does "create change"—in students, communities, and in the campus climate here at West Chester University. –O.

> The best part of my time at West Chester was becoming a YES minor. Through this minor I was not only awakened to the many everyday disadvantages of youth but to my true calling in life, to work beside these youth and make incremental change within diverse communities, in particular my own. Growing up as an inner-city youth I honestly didn't think that this minor could shed any light on much of anything for me. I was sure that I was very much aware of the unfavorable disparities that hindered minorities, much like myself...I was happily mistaken...I quickly discovered that I was learning more than I imagined, that the disadvantages that surround my community could be changed if I was committed to changing them. –D.

> When you show up consistently in a youth-dominated space, encourage student voice, and explore relevant issues, you are teaching with advocacy and love... As teachers, there is no way to work impartially. So, since we must be biased, we have a responsibility to be biased towards our students. We must come alongside youth in the spirit of advocacy and act as respectful allies instead of standard authority figures. We must lay down our systemic power every single time we walk through the doors of our schools, because our students do not have the option to lay down their systemic oppression. In doing so, we open up space for young people to discover their skills and create an environment where they can learn to live in advocacy, as well... *So, to my beautiful, bright, and brilliant students—past, present, and future, No matter what happens, I will still show up. But I promise you, I will do so, so much more. Love, Miss Jess. –J.*

> The YES Program…gave me a space to discuss social justice. People need to talk about the consequences of the biased systems in our society. YES has given me tools and experience to counteract these issues and given me hope that in my career I will be able to make further changes…to the systems that oppress so many communities of color. –N.

These students who articulate the counter-logic of democratic participation are our posse. They hang out in the YES office. They asked us to create a major and a master's track in Urban Community Change, which we are working on. YES--and now the wider entity of RUCCAS--is becoming a place where students who want radical change find identity, find a "reality-based community" that is also hopeful, determined, infused with a counter-logic of the possibilities of democratic participation. These students and others like them are not quite as swept up in the madness of a disintegrating and racially-stratified market system because they have a counter-identity and a countering set of essential dispositions. They have hats of their own. And while the theory they learn in classes matters, what matters equally is participation alongside community leaders (including youth leaders), and each other, and us, on the ground. Many of these students are now our colleagues in the region; they supervise our YES field students; they are running organizations working with urban youth and communities, in schools and elsewhere, with a very different perspective than the ones they started with.

Urban Education Fellowship

The Urban Education Fellowship (UEF) was founded in 2014-2015 as an extracurricular enrichment program for undergraduate preservice teachers. With year-to-year financial support from our College of Ed dean, fellows spend a semester interacting with partner networks of activist-organizer in-service Philadelphia teachers, including the Teacher Action Group (TAG) Philadelphia and the Caucus of Working Educators (WE). Most importantly, we believe, these engagements occur outside the context of schools and classrooms, taking preservice teachers to the *community spaces* in which practicing teachers are doing social change work *alongside* young people and community leaders. Fellows attend two day-long professional conferences, including the annual Education for Liberation conference hosted by TAG, two teacher inquiry community meetings of either TAG Inquiry to Action Group (ItAGs) or the Philadelphia Teachers' Learning Cooperative, and six meetings with one another on our campus to prepare for, reflect upon, and critically analyze each experience.

The intentional focus on groups of teacher organizers operating collectively in community spaces is a transformational experience for our preservice teachers. In their teacher education programs, interactions with practicing teachers are primarily limited to those with single mentor teachers and always focused on the work and professional life within the walls of a classroom—necessary, but perhaps not sufficient in an urban teaching life. In UEF, the invitation to participate in the networks and the organizations, and to take up and embody the

existing norms of democratic community engagement is the mentoring. Even more profound, our mostly white preservice teachers are challenged to re-think and give up their initial savior mentalities or their individualistic orientation to be the one who alone will make the change. Instead, many for the first time get a first-hand look into the power, the resources, and the collective action already existing in the community. This re-centers their perspective from individual actors to incoming members of a movement to which they already belong and can contribute.

As co-directors and practitioner researchers (Kathleen and Katie), we have been formally studying what happens in the fellowship, identifying ways in which fellows experience the program as a transformative learning experience (Mezirow, 1997). Fellows grow through the processes of encountering new perspectives (most powerfully those of youth and people of the Global Majority) that create chances to critically "re-read" their worldviews; of grappling with the tensions of returning to their home communities and peer and family relationships with heightened levels of consciousness around social inequities, white supremacy, institutional racism, and systemic oppression; of feeling a strong desire to know more about the inquiries that they had begun during the program. In addition, fellows noted the extensive new learning that they had done related to understanding issues of race and racism and to practicing their racial literacies (Stevenson, 2014).

As an extracurricular program, we run into many roadblocks that impede our students from fully engaging with these transformational experiences. Our preservice teachers have tightly prescribed course sequences that entail multiple semesters of high credit loads. Many are working significant numbers of hours at jobs as well. It is not uncommon for a student to commit to participation in the fellowship in December, only to acknowledge that they are overextended and withdraw from the program in March. Working with grassroots organizations sometimes means that scheduling information is not available far in advance, or can change at the last minute, with the schedules of groups of practicing teachers not always aligning well with the availability of college students. Sometimes fellows show signs of having experienced initial shifts in their thinking, and then the program ends and they shift back to previous perspectives.

We are seeing evidence, however, that fellows who are able to participate deeply for the duration of the program are taking up reframed worldviews and heightened senses of mission, and beginning to raise their voices in pursuit of democratic engagement towards equity and justice. After attending a TAG conference with the theme *#Black Lives Matter: Centering Racial Justice in Our Fight for Public Education*, Khalil (also a YES minor), shared with his peers:

> And for us to get awareness about this, I feel like we need to speak about it. And we need to say, you know, "that is not okay." Even if it is going to make someone uncomfortable. Who cares? Because, they'll be okay. Who cares if, for the moment [they feel uncomfortable]? Racism is not okay, it hurts people in so many ways that we don't realize. We don't even realize ourselves.

As Khalil indicates, a key insight that supports fellows in actively taking up issues of equity and justice (including systemic racism), is learning to accept and embrace discomfort, the need for ongoing learning, and a lack of permanent resolution in the struggle. After the TAG conference the following year, Nate (who became a YES minor) explained how the experience fundamentally shifted his visions around being a teacher:

> I think probably before the fellowship I didn't think much about what teacher enrichment, personal enrichment really looked like. And to see what it can look like was really powerful. I guess when I thought about that, I would think of inservice meetings with some guy in a suit or something but the TAG conference was really beautiful. *Teaching can be, or should be, like a folk movement* rather than like a sterile indoctrination. To see teachers as active community members, involved stakeholders, or partners is definitely an important way to see teachers, I think. A lot of people think of teachers as teaching and going home but I think the work is far beyond the confines of the school. The Fellowship definitely added that perspective. (emphasis added)

We frequently see fellows enter the program either already pursuing the YES minor program or deciding to pursue it. We also see fellows who leave us and seek out field experience course sections that they informally know offer urban placements or formally declare their intention to student teach in the School District of Philadelphia, a placement into which students must opt. Eighteen of our current twenty-six fellow alumni are moving forward on an urban teaching career pathway, with six alumni teaching or working with youth in the City of Philadelphia, six alumni teaching in schools in other low-income communities with racially diverse student bodies, three alumni student teaching in the School District of Philadelphia, and three more advancing into their upper level course and field work with intentions to do so. Most exciting to us, our program alumni in the City of Philadelphia are now becoming active participants of the teacher networks and organizations that they first encountered in UEF.

As is clear from the above examples, our interdisciplinary community of learner-teacher-change-makers has the added bonus of deepening student engagement in education and aiding teacher recruitment and retention (which is at crisis levels), including students and teachers of the Global Majority (teachers and students of color), though we do not believe that having more teachers of the Global Majority is a panacea or what ails us or should even be a central aim. If it happens, that's probably all to the good (for example, Khalil was a Psych major and now is a new dean of students at an elementary school), but more important is our orientation toward

education and youth work being informed by a collective logic of democratic engagement, a logic that is equal parts knowledge, skills and dispositions that reach in hope and anger toward shared, if temporary, democratic decisions to act. This messy slow real goal is what colleges of education must take on: education, as Nate put it, as a folk movement.

A RUCCAS is not like a writing desk; it is like a collective impact party. Or an incubator. Or a folk movement. Or a democracy. The interrelationships between RUCCAS member organizations make sense to our WCU students, and they move within and across and beyond our individual courses and projects and community programs, sometimes creating bridges to new partnerships. They may not explicitly name the shared thread of the logic of democratic participation as the tie that binds their interests and commitments, but they know that they benefit from and feel energized by the chance to do the hard, connected, deeply personal work and that it matters to be able to feel a part of something larger than oneself. It turns out that this is true of those of us leading RUCCAS-affiliated entities too.

Additionally, our experience has been that as we work together with organizations, even those not now staffed with a YES or UEF alum or two, we influence each other toward greater democratic possibilities. For example, a more traditional and successful tutoring-mentoring program founded by UPenn students, where YES students were in the field, influenced WCU students to begin a student-run chapter on campus. In return, YES/UEF students and faculty have influenced the organization's overall leadership to work toward ways to expand youth voice and leadership toward greater authenticity and participation. Other examples of the slow shift toward mutual support and the incubating of democratic participation through RUCCAS: drafting together and piloting a new democratic participation curriculum for after-school programs, written, piloted and revised by our students in collaboration with community partners; providing space, expertise, connections or labor toward iCAMP, toward a new center for youth development professionals, toward a social justice training network for youth; the expansion of university organizing work of one of our powerhouse urban organizing partners whose focus was not young adults. These were not transactional agreements, but results of relational connections in which all invested, unsure of the precise ends. These were the result of getting our hands dirty together. A last example, from a recent email connecting a community member to RUCCAS:

> Wanted to connect the two of you kindred spirits in hopes of fostering relationship. [Name] is a school board member in Phoenixville and is looking to further her education. She's an advocate for kids, has helped write legislation, has experience in lobbying, and is an all-around all-star…I'll let y'all take it from here.

Colleges of education should be throwing parties radical teachers and our allies want to come to. Stern and Brown (2016), writing about teachers in WE and TAG, with whom UEF collaborates, note, "Activist educators...ameliorate the anguish of their condition by collectively naming, critiquing, and acting upon their world" (17). We can't keep up with the fake news that gets thrown at us on a more than daily basis; we need an overall counter-logic to keep ourselves sane and moving forward in connection with each other. When enough of us share a commitment to the collective counter-logic developed on the ground, in authentic relation to each other, our accrediting bodies and budget offices might shrug and follow.

We think it's time to call for leadership. In fact, if we accept the role that the liberal society has placed on us, we can appropriate some of-the-moment language and call ourselves "collective impact organizations." Collective impact organizations are meant to solve complex problems that cannot be addressed through separate efforts. The Mad Tea party is one such complex problem. We don't know that it has a solution so much as it has different paths to resolution. Some of those paths look almost apocalyptic; some look equitable, just, exciting and "reality-based."

Colleges of education must be accomplices to their base constituencies: youth, families, communities, teachers. We must not keep doing the same thing over and over and expect different results. Therein lies the definition of madness. We have to convince our deans, our superintendents, our colleagues to *produce* and *be* educator-organizers. We have to provide rigor and also not be afraid to take the risks of humanly connecting and backing youth and young adult leadership. We need to create programs like YES, and the UEF, and Need in Deed, and poetry projects, and our other community-based partner organizations, and others we have not dreamed of that will attract change-makers (a significant number of whom will be of the Global Majority--if not, the program is not working) to be part of the educational landscape. We challenge ourselves to continue to be reality-based but even less civil and sensible. We plan to continue to make trouble with our students, our regional teacher-activist colleagues, and youth, and back them. We are not so scared to make a mess if we can remain fortified in the messy work of learning, all of us, democratic participation together.

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Notes

[1] This article is based on ideas first developed for and presented at the conference of Teacher Education State Colleges and Universities (TESCU 2017), in collaboration with Kyra Atterbury, Bernard Hall and Kathleen Riley.

ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Thin Edge of Barbwire: Pedagogical Strategies Against Borders

by Heath Schultz

THIN EDGE OF BARBWIRE. PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTHOR

Wednesday, November 9, 2016, was likely the most difficult day of teaching I have experienced. Like many, I went to bed late on Tuesday—election day—after watching the proof of white reactionary politics unfold in the form of state after state turning red on elaborate television graphics late into the night. On Wednesday morning, I moved in silence as I had my coffee, rode the bus into campus, and walked up the five flights of stairs to my office. All of the blue-voting teachers were in the hall talking in astonished whispers before class. Aghast and confused, many were as heartbroken that their would-be savior Hillary Clinton lost as they were horrified that the uber-capitalist and crypto-fascist won. Not *with her* any more than I was against him, I nodded hello while avoiding getting pulled into the conversation. By the time class started, I had not said a word all morning and, despite my desire to sit in silence, I had to face the students.

I was teaching art courses to first-year university students at a fairly well-to-do public university in Texas. Students were diverse both racially and economically—some from poor and working-class backgrounds and some from the richest suburbs of Houston and Dallas. Several were Latinx/Chicanx students who have experienced the violence and emotional trauma of the enforcement of the border personally, something Trump promised to escalate along with reactionary xenophobic racism. I have no recollection of my original plan for the session that day. Off script, I asked students if they wanted to talk about the election. I confessed I did not know what to say or how to facilitate our conversation but that I was happy to make space for them to process their feelings in a collective setting. Student after student expressed astonishment at the results of the election; a few expressed utter horror and fear. Two instances in particular stand out from this difficult post-election Wednesday morning. In one, a young Mexican-born man spoke of his family having been broken up by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and told us that he had not seen his father in several years as a result. Another student, a working-class Latina from El Paso, told a story of being late for a class that was held in a large lecture hall and having no choice but to sit between two young white men. Over her body they discussed their enthusiasm for Trump and how important it was that he build his wall. This student is shy and generally quiet in class, so it surprised me when she ended her story by saying, "when I walk into a room of all white people, I feel really nervous and uncomfortable." This was a brave thing to say to her majority white peers and white teacher. Although difficult to hear, it was not these stories that made November 9, 2016 particularly awful; it was the subtext of hopelessness that plagued all of us. It was the fact that I felt I had nothing to offer them; my only response to their sadness was an even bleaker view. I had only fear that their fears, and then some, would come true.

As much as I wish it were possible, I do not believe the classroom is a "safe space" in the sense that we can protect vulnerable students from state-sanctioned violence or hostile racist environments. The students know this, too. For this particular group of students, memories linger on campus of several racist assaults within the last few years. Most students could, off the top of their head, describe the time when white students threw bleach balloons at black students from their apartment balconies;[1] the time when the Young Conservatives of Texas organized a "Catch an Illegal Immigrant" game;[2] and the time when white students threw glass bottles at a black student from apartment balconies while yelling from above: "fuck you n*****."[3] Or, more generally, that the university *still* only hosts four percent African-American students.[4] It wouldn't surprise these students, then, that in just a few months the neo-fascist group American Vanguard would launch a state-wide "Texas Offensive" targeting Texas universities with recruitment and flyering campaigns.[5] The classroom does not exist outside of the world we live in, and in this shadow of Trump's election, that felt more true than ever. I had nothing to offer these students who feared for their personal safety, feared for their family being torn apart, feared for unknown forms of racism on the horizon. This paper chronicles a creative project I developed in direct response to this feeling of helplessness. When viewed in isolation, a meager response, yet I understand this small effort as one of sustained efforts to short-circuit the reproduction of racist ideologies in visual culture and the classroom.

As much as I wish it were possible, I do not believe the classroom is a "safe space" in the sense that we can protect vulnerable students from state-sanctioned violence or hostile racist environments.

Situating the Wall

Being located in Texas, many students were especially concerned with the looming threat of Trump building a wall and the corresponding escalation of racism. With this in mind, I developed an idea for a project in spring 2017: as artists, sculptors, and designers, we would build our own wall. I figured the best way to approach Trump's new presidency was collectively and unambiguously. I designed a three-and-a-half-week unit that created a space for students to inform themselves of the complexities of the border and process their opinions and feelings through dialog, collaboration, and making. I approached this project deliberately and consciously as a white arts educator who believes anti-racist pedagogy is required in all fields, not just in Ethnic Studies, to combat white supremacy. As I am writing this in early 2018, I learn that Oscar Monge, an American Indian Studies scholar teaching at San Diego State University, was "found guilty of harassing" a white student on the basis of her being white. Among other actions, the lecturer was forced to submit a report to a state investigator outlining how whiteness was a historical construct and how white supremacy as a political ideology operates in our society.[6] Imagine the difficulty of not knowing if your contract will be renewed next semester while you are trying to explain to a state bureaucrat that white supremacy is real! Monge's story is another chapter

in the increasingly long book of horror stories of repression, retaliation, and death threats present in the recent cases of Steven Salaita, George Ciccariello-Maher, Lisa Durden, and Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, among others.[7] What Monge's still-in-progress case illustrates is the greater difficulty instructors of color and women have in the classroom challenging white supremacy, especially when the embodiment of white supremacy is directly challenged at the personal-emotional level. White students often reserve a special anger for any instructor that is not a white straight male who disrupts their understanding of white supremacy. This renders those instructors especially vulnerable to the dangers of our contemporary political climate that can include loss of job, not getting tenure, or (the threat of) physical violence.[8] One lesson I have learned from these stories is that white instructors, especially men, must take responsibility for unmaking white supremacy in the classroom.

One lesson I have learned from these stories is that white instructors, especially men, must take responsibility for unmaking white supremacy in the classroom.

Histories of the Border / Building the Wall

I called this unit "Thin Edge of Barbwire" after Gloria Anzaldúa, and I will recount it below by first sharing the readings, discussions, and exercises that led up to working on our wall installation. In this way, this paper will formally mimic our time spent in the classroom.

We began with significant reading and discussion in order to contextualize an artistic project that could only come in its wake. These discussions ranged greatly and included the political history of the wall on the U.S.-Mexico border; the historical logic of the border and its enforcement; the emotional toll of colonialism and continual border enforcement; and creative responses to these social, political, emotional, and poetic registers. I utilized this interdisciplinary approach to recognize that political struggles operate on different terrains: there is as much of an emotional content to racism as there is a political content to the history of the border.[9]

We began this unit by reading journalist Todd Miller's short essay "The Border Wall Already Exists."[10] Miller discusses the history of the U.S.-Mexico border with particular emphasis on the border wall since 1994 and the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Miller begins his article by chronicling Bill Clinton's legacy as the original wall builder. Clinton was responsible for the first efforts to physically separate the U.S. and Mexico, which came in the form of a chain-link fence built from old landing mats from the Vietnam and Persian Gulf Wars. This fence would separate Nogales, Sonora, in Mexico and Nogales, Arizona, in the US. With the expectation that NAFTA would cause adverse effects on Mexican workers, this fence was designed to preemptively curb the influx of immigration that would come in NAFTA's wake. Clinton's prediction was correct: farmers could not compete with subsidized agribusinesses like Cargill, and retailers like Walmart and Sam's Club drove prices up and put small businesses out of business, for example. It was no surprise that Clinton also oversaw an increase in border controls (personnel, surveillance, geographic reach, and other resources) by fifty percent.[11] As is now fairly well understood, the walls constructed by the Clinton administration, along with increased patrol and surveillance technologies, were implemented upon traditional paths of migration in urban areas like San Diego, Nogales, Brownsville, and El Paso. These new border security efforts cut off urban cross-points, forcing migrants into harsh and remote deserts of Arizona and similarly hostile environments, resulting in the death of at least 6,000 people and in 2,500 missing persons since 2000.[12]

Many students were surprised to learn that the Democratic party has historically supported increased surveillance on the border. For example, the majority of the 700 miles of wall that currently exists on the border was the consequence of the 2006 Republican-sponsored Secure Fence Act, for which then-Senator Hillary Clinton voted in support. More startling is the 2.5 million people Obama had deported during his presidency, more than any other president in history.[13] However, students were most surprised by, and completely unaware of, the history of the Tohono O'odham Nation, whose land was split by the creation of the border in 1853. "Imagine a bulldozer parking in your family graveyard, turning up bones. This is our reality," a spokesperson told Congress in 2008.[14]

This historical context helped facilitate a conversation that resisted platitudes and uninformed talking points. Insisting on engaging with history and political policy also encouraged students to take responsibility for any ignorance they might have on a given topic, even if that ignorance might be the result of their environment of infotainment. To facilitate our discussion, I wrote questions that guided students in a reconstruction of the article's important points. I broke students into groups and assigned them one or two questions, encouraged using outside sources if needed, and tasked them with providing a detailed 'report-back' to the class. Below is a selection of the questions:

- What is NAFTA and how is it related to immigration? How is NAFTA related to an increase in border securitization in 1994-1996, during the presidency of Bill Clinton?
- What is "Operation Streamline" in regards to immigration and what are the consequences on migrants?
- How are the travel ban exercised by Trump in early 2017 (preventing travelers from Libya, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and Somalia) and the existing and border wall of U.S.-Mexico similar in concept? How are they different?

- What are the historic and continual effects of the border wall on the Tohono O'odham Nation?
- How do corporate surveillance companies and private prisons/detention centers factor into approaches to policing the border? How might these companies reinforce a more conservative policy in regards to U.S. Homeland Security and a generalized increase of border securitization (including airports)?

On the surface the questions are diverse but deliberately designed to encourage drawing connections between them as we discussed each one in class. The research and discussion format allowed students to do original research, discuss and develop their own opinions in a group setting, and make their own connections between content and personal experiences. This strategy also created a framework for an intersectional analysis of the border to emerge by asking students to think not only about immigration from Mexico, but economic policies like NAFTA, continual colonial violence on the lands of the Tohono O'odham Nation, and the xenophobia of Trump's travel ban, among others.

Using Miller as a baseline for some recent historical context, I next asked students to read the first chapter of Gloria Anzaldúa's Chicana feminist classic *Borderlands/La Frontera*.[15] Anzaldúa added both a broader historical as well as a poetic dimension to our ongoing conversation. Anzaldúa establishes a brief history of indigenous peoples who migrated through and/or settled in what we now call the U.S. Southwest dating back to 35,000 B.C. She describes the violence and colonialism of Hernán Cortés in the 16th century, and the U.S.-Mexican War and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, and she eventually brings us into recent times describing then-contemporary struggles of migrants (the book was written in 1987, but her writing continues to resonate). With Anzaldúa now in the mix of our conversations, students were obliged to consider colonialism and global power as articulators of and enforcers of borders and to look at the violence they have inflicted on indigenous peoples. For example, as a class we spent a significant amount of time discussing this passage:

> 1,950 mile-long open wound
> dividing a *pueblo*, a culture
> running down the length of my body,
> taking fence rods in my flesh,
> splits me splits me
> *me raja* *me raja*[16]

It is a beautifully written passage that directly associates borders with violence. A wound is evidence of a cut—a slicing of the landscape across an entire continent—that lashes into a culture, a pueblo, the flesh. Anzaldúa's language eloquently associates the violence on the landscape with the violence on the body, the community.

Reflective of her experience growing up Chicana in the U.S. Southwest, Anzaldúa wrote *Borderlands/La Frontera* in a mixture of Spanish and English. When approached formally, the combination suggests that an appropriate expression of her experience requires a movement between, and the usage of both, languages. For an instructor, this presents an interesting challenge in the otherwise English-speaking classroom. I asked the students to do their best to translate using the tools they had available to them and consider how Anzaldúa's culturally specific bilingual writing is important to the meaning of the text. I asked them to reflect on the moments they failed to understand. How might that failure also be important? From the outset, I thought this would be a good exercise for non-Spanish-speaking students because it required a consideration of language as an aspect of how meaning is created. Put another way, it calls attention to the hegemony of English in the university classroom and American culture. This is especially important when discussed in relation to a history of colonial imposition that Anzaldúa brings to the surface: languages as expressions of culture and culture as expressions of resistance. Although I assigned and led a discussion on *Borderlands/La Frontera,* as a non-Spanish-speaking instructor (I had to try to translate everything for myself, too), I was not an expert. Although I did not anticipate or expect it, many Spanish-speaking students eagerly translated Anzaldúa for the class. Deferring to the expertise of students turned the traditional classroom hierarchy upside-down, shifting the expertise entirely away from me. In the best instances, students that identified with Anzaldúa translated her writing by using their own stories to describe the cultural context of their Chicanx perspective. Unpacking the specificity of a single word could lead a student to share stories of growing up in El Paso and how comprehending that story was important to understanding Anzaldúa. In these moments, comprehension wasn't objective but contextual, narrative, and multi-generational and access to that knowledge required cross-cultural sharing within the classroom. This decentering of English also necessarily destabilized whiteness and the privileged educational background that comes with it, if only for a moment, in a deeply meaningful way. With the help of students who understood the cultural nuances of Anzaldúa, the classroom was encouraged to recognize that white and/or American culture is not *the* culture but *a* culture, and an imperialist culture at that.

Art at the Border

It is of little surprise that many artists have engaged with the problematics of the border in their artwork. The approaches vary widely and offer a breadth of profound thinking in regards to the violence of the border and the role it plays in our society. Once we had a better understanding of the historical, social, and political context of the border as described in the previous section, I introduced students to a number of artists that grapple with the border through their work. Below I will share two projects that helped establish a conceptual grounding for students' sculptural project of collectively building a wall. In general, I discussed artists' projects that would help students consider particular aspects of the wall they would soon build. For example: how can materials be used in a meaningful manner? How can the design of a wall be subverted? How can the concept of a wall or border be

relocated to resonate with those who do not live in the borderlands?

One powerful example of a meaningful use of materials is Margarita Cabrera's community-engaged project entitled *Space In Between*. The project has seen a few different iterations, but typically Cabrera collaborates with an immigrant community in order to create replicas of native desert plants indigenous to the U.S. Southwest. These sculptural desert plants are sewn together with border patrol uniforms and displayed in traditional Mexican terra cotta pots. The collaborators of this project often use embroidery to reflect on their own experience crossing the border.[17] Of particular interest to our class was Cabrera's use of border patrol uniforms, providing a poetic and illustrative example of how material carries meaning. We discussed how the material of these uniforms works as a symbol of the policing of brown bodies and a broader symbol of enforcement of the US border securitization. As we know from Anzaldúa, the violence on the landscape is also violence on the body. It is the border patrol that will not allow the 1,950 mile-long wound to heal—again and again they pick the scabs. By inviting immigrant women to collaborate, converse around the table with their stories of migration, unmake border patrol uniforms and restore the landscape with an offering of native plants, Cabrera and her collaborators do not erase state violence but instead transform oppressive objects into objects of healing. These symbols are remade into that which can return to the land and no longer control the stories of the women that lived them; the plants bear the marks of their struggle and stories of their crossing. These are the stories buried in the landscape.

We also looked to Ana Teresa Fernández's *Borrando la Frontera* (*Erasing the Border*), created in 2011, a performative action documented with photographs. In these photographs Fernández, a Mexican-born artist, is seen on a precarious ladder painting the large fence on the border separating Playas de Tijuana from San Diego's Border Field State Park. Predictably, in another photograph, border patrol appears to stop her and ask questions, although she is apparently able to complete her task. The result is an approximately 20-foot section of the border fence now painted sky blue. When viewed from a distance, the section of the fence disappears into the beach and sky. If this is a utopian gesture that falsely promises a gateway, it is also the creation of a harsh juxtaposition that exposes the formal ugliness and political cruelty of the border wall. Students and I discussed how one might subvert the formal qualities of a wall through design decisions. How could a wall be designed to fail? How could altering oppressive landmarks on the border be transformed through creative means to become objects of possibility, of liberation? Fernández provides one possibility.

Thin Edge of Barbwire, or: How to Build an Anti-Wall Wall With Students

As described above, my goal before beginning our collaborative project of building a wall was to provide a working understanding of the socio-political forms of violence—and resistance to that violence—that converge on the border. From the perspective of an arts educator concerned with justice, it was important to marry aesthetic and affective creative production with this politically informed specificity. By doing so, we made the classroom a space that refused generalization and liberal universal humanism (we're all the same!) and encouraged students to think *through* the aesthetic and affective *in political terms*. Only when students were capable of conversing eloquently and with an informed specificity did I feel it was no longer harmful to make creative work responding to violence on the border.

FIGURE 1: THIN EDGE OF BARBWIRE INSTALLATION.

I was working with approximately 40 students between two sections of the same course. Students worked in groups of three totaling 14 groups. I asked students to construct a section of the wall at approximately 4' x 2' and flat on the sides, which allowed us to easily assemble the wall and break it down in different locations. Beyond these basic specifications, I further prompted students with the following:

> Based on our conversations regarding the various issues borders present us with, your group will conceptualize and complete a sculptural response to borders. You should consider the meaning of materials, process, and design when developing your project. Your section of the wall must be two-sided; these can be mirrored or dialog with one another depending on your idea. Consider the following questions: Will your section of the wall be subversive

or dutiful? Porous or impenetrable? Welcoming or unwelcoming? Poetic or didactic?

What does your work say/ask?

How do the materials used and design contribute to the meaning of the work?

Who is the audience for this?[18]

Students presented sketches and written proposals to the class before they began building, which helped to articulate their section of the wall both formally and conceptually. These presentations engaged the class in a new round of discussion based on their proposed designs. This allowed for further reflection and conversation, and also offered possibilities for response. Finally, after much discussion and planning, the students began building.

When students were finished, we collectively installed our wall in the main thoroughfare of the art building. We assembled the 14 sections of the wall, which totaled about 30' in length with distinct "U.S." and "Mexico" sides (see Figure 2 below). The completed installation served, albeit on a micro-scale, as a functional wall and disallowed viewers to cross without walking all the way around.

FIGURE 2: THIN EDGE OF BARBWIRE, DETAIL. TOP IMAGES ARE MADE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BEING IN MEXICO, WHILE THE CORRESPONDING BOTTOM IMAGES ARE MADE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BEING IN THE U.S.

As you can see in the images below, students' responses to the project included a Día de Muertos altar to the 6,000 lost or dead in the desert, an ironic rock climbing wall with one side much easier than the other, a barbwire desertscape, and a wall-sized dreamcatcher. Deviating from U.S. academic sculptural norms, many students utilized and expressed diverse aesthetic approaches like sign painting, graffiti, altars, and papier-mâché. Similar to Margarita Cabrera, many students used narrative elements in their installations, with one memorable example from a student who wrote a letter to his father whom he has not seen in over a decade because his father is imprisoned in Mexico. This letter can only be read when one sits in a penitentiary style communication booth. In a myriad of ways, what students expressed above all is a sincerity both in the formal qualities of the work and the content.

It is important to reiterate and emphasize that this project was undertaken in a first-year art course for university students. It is no surprise that the unit was not without some conflict and problems. Many of our discussions maintained problematic understandings of Latinx culture and issues as they relate to the border. For example, early in our discussions a few students likened Mexican immigrants to thieves "sneaking into the back door of your home." In this instance, I intervened to challenge the students' racialized conception of the criminal, asking them to consider how U.S. popular culture creates images of the criminal as black and brown. I put together a few slides from popular films for the next course to help illustrate this point. The best way to combat this problematic thinking, however, was to allow the readings to do what they were designed to do. In our case, Gloria Anzaldúa's historical intervention countered the students' comments entirely by illustrating how colonialism was the original act of violence.

Despite moments like the above, the project is illustrative of the rich and critical conversations instructors can develop in classrooms outside of the fields where these sociopolitical conversations are more commonly held. In my case, in regard to the syllabus, I pushed the limits of what might be "acceptable" within the context of an introductory art course. In my field, many university administrators would protest that this unit veered to far from art and design and thus "did not meet course objectives." That said, this project provides an example of one strategy to flex the curriculum toward social justice. There are always opportunities to work in the cracks of the syllabus and harness opportunities as they arise. In my case, many of my colleagues (and my department head) were appalled by Trump's election, which enabled me to exploit their liberal disgust with Trump toward a more radical end. As radical educators, we're always negotiating the social and political demographics of our department/university culture as well as students' political sensibilities. The question is how to consistently find ways to work in the seams of the syllabus and curriculum to do so.

This project was a response to the felt helplessness on November 9, 2017, to Trump, to the continual escalation of violence in U.S. socio-political culture. I believe the project's success was rooted in normalizing critical discourse. We resisted treating this content an exotic field of study peripheral to what we 'normally study' in art education. We took seriously different cultural understandings and experiences of the border with

attention to how they are defined by the asymmetrical power relations developed through history.[19] I believe it is a step in the right direction that recognizes there is no anti-racist classroom unless that classroom is actively deconstructing white supremacy and establishing possibilities for non-hegemonic knowledges to grow, gather steam, and join forces. The fragility of critique in the classroom is the difficulty of sustaining that critique. Critical pedagogy requires the reiteration and elaboration of an intersectional approach to learning that is fostered the next semester, the next year, the next decade. The creation of projects like the one I've described above must be coupled with critical practices that are integrated into everyday practices of the classroom. "Thin Edge of Barbwire" becomes a failure if students recall it as "that time we talked about the border" rather than "one of the first times we talked critically about racism, power, and history."

At the end of our unit I shared a poem by Chicana feminist Cherríe Moraga called "The Welder." [20] I thought the metaphor of fusion as possibility for solidarity by way of poetry was a good summation to our time constructing pedagogies against the border. In the final lines of Moraga's poem, she offers this:

> I am the welder.
>
> I understand the capacity of heat to change the shape of things.
> I am suited to work
> within the realm of sparks
> out of control.
>
> I am the welder.
> I am taking the power
> into my own hands.

Notes

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[6] Katherine Mangan, "Lecturer's Critique of Whiteness Crossed the Line Into Harassment, State Investigation Finds," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. January 7, 2018.

https://www.chronicle.com/article/Lecturer-s-Critique-of/242178?cid=wcontentgrid

[7] Each of these cases has been covered at length by various news outlets. Briefly, Steven Salaita's tenured job offer from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was rescinded by the Chancellor after Salaita tweeted criticisms of recent Israeli aggression against Palestinians. George Ciccariello-Maher has faced right-wing harassment on multiple occasions for various tweets and/or appearances on news outlets. In December 2017 he announced his resignation from Drexel University after continued death threats and lack of support from Drexel. Lisa Durden was a lecturer at Essex County College in New Jersey when she appeared on Tucker Carlson's Fox News Program. After her defense of a Black Lives Matter event, outrage ensued, which led her to immediate suspension and eventual non-renewal of her contract. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor was forced to cancel several speaking events after receiving racist, sexist, and homophobic death threats in the wake of her Commencement address at Hampshire College in which she criticized Trump and referred to him as a "racist, sexist, megalomaniac."

[8] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation,* (Boston: South End Press, 1992). 167-168; Joy James, *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, and Race in U.S. Culture*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). 194-197.

[9] Paula Ioanide, *The Emotional Politics of Racism: How Feelings Trump Facts in an Era of Colorblindness,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

[10] Todd Miller, "The Border Wall Already Exists," *Jacobin*. August 23, 2016. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/08/border-wall-donald-trump-immigration-clinton/

[11] Miller, "The Border Wall Already Exists"

[12] Colin Schultz, "Nearly 6,000 Migrants Have Died Along the Mexico-U.S. Border Since 2000," *Smithsonian Magazine*. October 1, 2014.

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/nearly-6000-migrants-have-died-along-mexico-us-border-2000-180952904/?no-ist

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http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/obamas-deportation-policy-numbers/story?id=41715661

[14] Miller, "The Border Wall Already Exists"

[15] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, (San Francisco: Spinsters, 1987). 1-13.

[16] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 2.

[17] Artist's website: https://www.margaritacabrera.com/portafolio/space-in-between/

[18] Excerpt from the assignment sheet given to students.

[19] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). 203-204.

[20] Cherríe Moraga & Gloria Anzaldúa (eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color,* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015) 219-220.

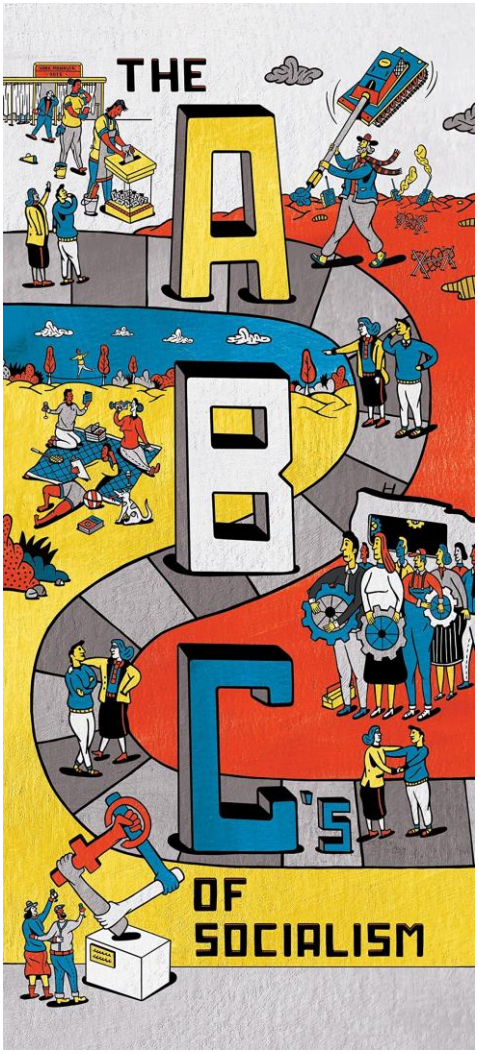
ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Review
The ABCs of Socialism by Bhaskar Sunkara

Reviewed by Adam Szetela



THE ABCS OF SOCIALISM BY BHASKAR SUNKARA. ILLUSTRATED BY PHIL WRIGGLESWORTH (VERSO, 2016)

The ABCs of Socialism by Bhaskar Sunkara. Illustrated by Phil Wrigglesworth (Verso, 2016)

REVIEWED BY ADAM SZETELA

In 2010, Bhaskar Sunkara started the socialist magazine *Jacobin*, while he was an undergraduate at George Washington University. Since then, it has evolved into an international force with millions of readers, hundreds of reading groups, and an MVP-list of writers and supporters, who range from Noam Chomsky and the late Ellen Meiksins Wood to Dave Zirin and Chris Mathews. *Jacobin's* emergence has also spawned a flood of email messages from people around the world who are asking questions about socialism. In response, Sunkara recruited some of the leading voices on the left to write an introductory book. The result is *The ABC's of Socialism*.

The organization of the book is especially useful from a pedagogical standpoint. Each chapter is titled as a question — "Why do socialists talk so much about workers?" "Aren't socialism and feminism sometimes in conflict?" "Isn't America already kind of socialist?" — and the response to the question is written by a different scholar. From Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor to Erik Olin Wright, the authors selected are noted radical intellectuals. They are also figures with track records writing not just for peer-reviewed publications and academic presses, but venues such as *The Nation*, *The New York Times*, and *Socialist Worker*. Consequently, the book is accessible and free of obscure neologisms and flamboyant rhetorical gestures. Moreover, while many of *Jacobin's* articles are written as polemics for readers already sympathetic to socialist ideas, *ABC's* is written in a tone that invites uninitiated readers to think about capitalism and socialism in nuanced and critical ways. Most notably, the book recognizes the redeemable aspects of capitalism as well as the intersections between these economic systems and forms of social oppression — such as racism and sexism.

For those of us who teach about socialism, this text is particularly useful, and there are a few different ways that I have incorporated the book into my undergraduate courses. First, I have assigned chapters to groups to present on during my unit on socialism. I listen to their presentations, and I fill in the blanks when they finish. Second, I have had students use their journals to reflect on a question, such as "Don't the rich deserve to keep all their money?", which is the title of chapter three, before we read the chapter. More often than not, the chapter and the ensuing discussion push students to reflect on their taken-for-granted axioms of capitalism in novel and more intellectually rigorous ways. For example, I have had more than one student recognize that the wealth of a company is a social product and not exclusively a product of individual genius and the "entrepreneurial spirit." Indeed, many of the questions in this book — "But at least capitalism is free and democratic, right?" — rebuke much of what passes as accepted political and economic orthodoxy in capitalist countries.

Even if this book were not used in a course, I think it would be of pedagogical benefit for radical teachers to read. At one level, it gives thorough responses to some of the most asked questions about socialism, which any teacher who teaches radical political and economic material will surely encounter. These questions range from inquiries about the role of individual rights in a socialist society to the perennial fear that, in the absence of the profit motive, socialism will stifle innovation. In addition, the accessibility of the text will show many educators, especially those in the jargon-filled world of academia, how to express these core concepts in simple ways, without sacrificing intellectual rigor. As someone who has observed other radical professors teach, I am always astounded by how teachers overcomplicate concepts, like "primitive accumulation" and "surplus value," for their students. The simple definitional explanations in *ABC's* — such as the distinction between "private property" and "personal property," or "positive freedom" and "negative freedom" — will give radical teachers a useful vocabulary to help them elaborate ideas central to socialism, in ways that are meaningful to younger people, and accessible enough for these students to retain and to use in future conversations.

Though I teach at Berklee College of Music where my students are more open-minded and progressive, not every book I have used has been well received. *ABC's*, however, has always been a hit. When I ask my students to reflect on the unit that I construct around this text, typical responses include "I had no idea capitalism was this undemocratic" and "I learned that the Soviet Union was not a socialist state." This latter comment speaks to one of the highest values of *ABC's*, which is its ability to deconstruct the popular "evil empire" image of socialism that still lingers in America's political imagination. As movements like Occupy Wall Street and the Sanders campaign linger in the background, with hopes of reemerging as political forces in the future, the distinctions between socialism today and "socialism" in the past will be as important as ever. For these reasons and others, I recommend *The ABC's of Socialism* without reservation to other radical teachers.

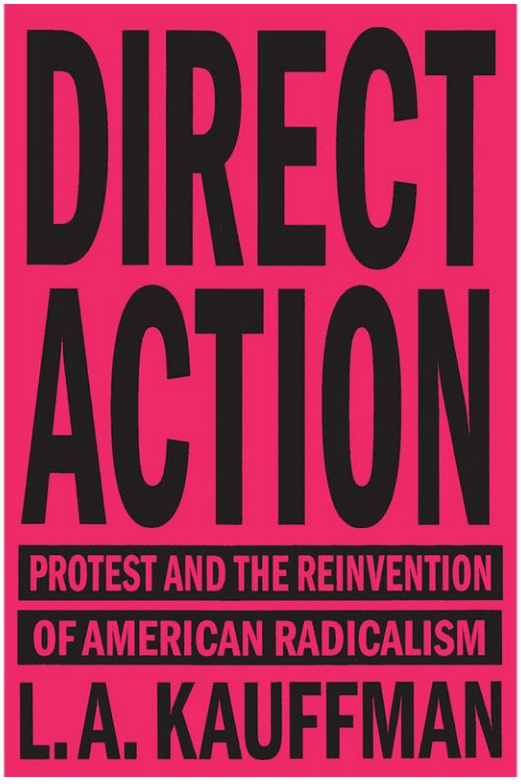
ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Review
Direct Action: Protest and the Reinvention of American Radicalism by L.A. Kauffman

Reviewed by George Lakey



DIRECT ACTION: *PROTEST AND THE REINVENTION OF AMERICAN RADICALISM* BY L.A. KAUFFMAN (VERSO, 2017)

Direct Action: Protest and the Reinvention of American Radicalism by L.A. Kauffman (Verso, 2017)

REVIEWED BY GEORGE LAKEY

In this book journalist and activist L.A. Kauffman describes changes in American radical activism from 1971 to 2014. The author focuses on tactics, organizational forms, and culture. In all three of those areas, the author shows us how alive to innovation radicals have been. Even though revolutionary aspirations didn't come to pass in the big picture, the changes in activist consciousness and means of struggle continue to play out in today's era of Trump.

In this review I will describe some of the book's contributions to understanding the movement's innovations of process as well as product, notably its increasingly egalitarian tactics and organizational models and increasing leadership by women and queer organizers. I will then use my own work on intentional learning to propose deeper analysis on the level of movement strategy (especially after 1980 when Ronald Reagan became President), and argue that the book reflects radicals' own frequent neglect of intentional reflection from experience as a way to heighten the learning curve that successful movements need.

Kauffman begins in Washington, D.C. in 1971 with the dramatic tactics used by "Mayday," an anti-Vietnam war protest in which protesters warned either the government would stop the war or the protesters would stop the government. The author takes us through several decades of confrontations that included tactical innovation – sanctuary in churches for Central American refugees, blockades of nuclear plant construction sites, and Occupy Wall Street.

Kauffman also shows us organizational experimentation that reflects anti-authoritarian values. The reader gets to see, for example, how differently decision-making was done in the anti-nuclear blockades and Occupy, than was the mode in the sixties civil rights movement as shown by the award-winning film *Selma.* The seventies demonstrators often formed affinity groups (5-20 people acting as units) who not only looked out for each other but participated in decision-making by sending their spokesperson to a "spokes council" that made decisions for the entire action.

That attention to process was both a reflection of the increasingly egalitarian culture of the demonstrators and in turn gave space for further assertion of equality. Kauffman shows us how identity politics became increasingly confrontational with reluctant white, or heterosexual, or male activists forced to adopt more egalitarian practices.

Supported by photos and graphics from the period, Kauffman's vivid story-telling assists the reader to get the flavor of what was going on in the decades when even Ronald Reagan's presidency couldn't stop American radicals from expressing themselves. "The new movements," Kauffman writes, "rejected hierarchical organizational structures, traditional leadership models, and rigid ideologies, and they sought forms of activism and political engagement that could preserve rather than subsume difference and multiplicity. Women, especially queer women, played crucial roles in this process of political reinvention, infusing this new radicalism with feminist practices and values through the very process of movement-building."

The book, however, has a different view from mine of the outcome. The author says in the introduction, "This is a story about dealing with defeat and marginalization." My disagreement has to do with the author's restricted lens. Kauffman is fascinated with tactics, organizational forms, and activist culture but not with strategy. I like the strategy level as well – the interaction between a movement's goals and the opponent's effort to prevent the movement's success. I'm especially interested in how movements do or don't learn from their own experience, changing their strategy (as well as organizational and cultural practices) in order to win.

Kauffman doesn't help us see whether activists gained victories from 1971 to 2014. Here is just a partial list of victories for nonviolent direct action campaigns, indicating strategic learning that was going on among activists from their experience.

(1) The U.S. government lost the base it needed to continue to wage the war in Vietnam, despite strategic mistakes made by the anti-war movement that were corrected in later campaigns.

(2) The U.S. support of apartheid was sufficiently damaged, simultaneous with parallel undermining in other countries, to precipitate change in South Africa. The U.S. movement's biggest strategic learning was to make the issue local, primarily through targeted divestment and boycott campaigns.

(3) The U.S. was prevented from invading Central America to prop up client dictatorships there. One of the movement's strategic lessons was how to increase the personal stake and fervor of Americans through the sanctuary tactic, and to enroll a Catholic constituency.

(4) The medical industry and government were forced to intervene effectively in the AIDS crisis. ACT-UP avoided much of the time and energy wasting of previous movements (rallies and marches, for example) by going directly into tactics of disruption.

(5) The U.S. nuclear industry's goal of 1000 plants was defeated by the grassroots movement, leaving the industry and its powerful allies only a fraction of that number.

(6) A substantial part of the U.S. apparel industry was forced to accept a code of conduct by the student sweatshop movement.

Both (5) and (6) learned to use a strategy of simultaneous local campaigns with local targets while confronting the national power structure. The various campaigns focused on learning from each other's strengths and mistakes.

(7) The fast-food industry was forced to pay more for vegetables so farm workers could gain higher wages, by the Immokalee Workers, a student-farm worker coalition using direct action including boycotts.

Kauffman is right to observe overall losses for radicals and liberals in the period 1971-2014, but the author's lack of a macro-view distorts the real picture. Movements *continued to win in the U.S. through the 1970s*, but then the counter-revolution launched by the economic elite in 1980 through the Reagan presidency reversed the overall rate of wins in later years. Most movements went on the defensive, struggling to hold on to previously won gains, instead of campaigning for new and even more progressive goals. Military generals agree with Gandhi that going on the defensive is a fundamental strategic error. Notably, the LGBT movement rejected the defensive posture embraced by labor, women, civil rights, educational reformers, and alone continued – dramatically – to move strongly forward.

Devoted as we radical teachers are to learning, we're bound to ask whether radicals can accelerate their learning by becoming more intentional about it.

In 1971, also the beginning of Kauffman's story, I co-founded a network of revolutionaries called Movement for a New Society (MNS).[1] To reduce the dogmatism that often diminishes the learning curve of radicals, we adopted this slogan: "Most of what we need to know to build a new society, we have yet to learn."

Digging into Paolo Freire, we embarked on a couple of decades of action/reflection. Our learning accelerated, not only in relation to sexism, racism, heterosexism and classism, but also in how to develop vision and strategy for change.

The MNS intention to learn came from how much we wanted to *win.* Each direct action had objectives, so assessment produced learning. We also evaluated a series of actions in light of the strategic course we'd set to reach broader goals. Our experiments with anti-authoritarian practices went "big-time"" through the anti-nuclear campaigns -- affinity groups, spokes councils, and the like – and continued to spread through intensive MNS workshops. MNS trainers were struck by how much more people learn when they set goals for themselves. Of course teachers like to urge students to reflect and assess, because reflection makes empowerment possible. Campaigns have goals, which is why campaigns support a learning curve, whereas one-off protests teach little. Individual activists are far more empowered by direct action campaigns than by disconnected protests.

After MNS was discontinued Barbara Smith, an African American community organizer in Philadelphia, and I founded Training for Change to pick up the thread of intentional learning for activists. We deepened our use of group dynamics, experiential exploration of cultural and other differences, and conflict tools. We forged a pedagogy that crosses cultural lines and increases empowerment, and called the pedagogy "direct education," a more intense form of popular education that uses the power of the learning group as a resource.[2]

When Canada's most radical trade union asked me to revamp its popular education-based leadership development program, I turned to direct education. After initial resistance, the union's worker educators found the pedagogy more in tune with the politics and direct action strategies of the union itself. Training for Change has by now taught direct education to movement facilitators in over 30 countries, although its main emphasis remains the U.S. Its mission is to heighten the activist learning curve, so movements can learn to win more often and transform their societies.

Notes

[1] MNS was laid down in 1988. Activist-scholar Andrew Cornell describes the group in his 2011 book published by AK Press, *Oppose and Propose: Lessons from Movement for a New Society*.

[2] George Lakey, *Facilitating Group Learning: Strategies for Success with Adult Learners*, 2010, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Teaching Note
Podcasts in an Alternative High School

by Jack Murphy

PHOTO BY NEONBRAND

The students of my writing class are often surprised and delighted to find that their final project will not involve another paper. After five months of personal narratives, profiles, short stories, and poems (plus daily writing practice and prompts), the process has understandably started to grow a bit tiresome. Instead, they are challenged to use the skills and concepts we have honed over the course of the semester to create an audio product— a podcast.

Podcasts have proliferated at a rapid pace over the last decade, in large part due to the unprecedented accessibility of the tools required to create them and the networks necessary to distribute them. Soundcloud and iTunes are now stocked to the brim with professional and amateur podcasts covering an absolutely endless variety of topics, and the most popular among these programs boast hundreds of thousands of loyal listeners. The biggest shows of 2017, *Serial, S-Town*, and *This American Life,* count their downloads in the tens of millions. In the case of my classroom, however, it is not the medium's capacity for mega-popularity that makes it an appealing and powerful project; in fact, it is the capacity for *smallness*, the intense intimacy, that makes it special.

The students in my classes are aged 16 to 21 and all are returning to school seeking a high school degree after dropping out of Chicago Public Schools. Of the 200 students enrolled, 90% are African-American or Hispanic, 18% are considered homeless, and 100% qualify for free lunch. While each student takes their own path to us, there are some extremely common challenges: many have a child of their own to take care of, most have a full-time job outside of school, and some have gotten caught up in the criminal justice system. For these reasons, poor attendance and tardiness are rampant— it's not uncommon for a student to stumble in several hours late having gotten home from bussing tables the night before well past midnight or else to disappear altogether after several weeks of excellent work.

We base our podcast on *This American Life,* where each week various stories are presented around a common theme. The theme in our case is simply "Truman Middle College," the name of our school, and students in groups are free to choose any topic that can be connected even tenuously. In a five-minute segment, then, incorporating an intro and outro, interviews with at least three people outside their group, and background music and sound effects, each group contributes one story to our show.

While few students in my experience have arrived as fans of podcasts, the tools required to create them are often very much a part of their lives. The easiest program is GarageBand, which comes standard on all MacBooks and iOS devices. Rarely have I been able to provide this program, but there are free, web-based tools which work nearly as well, the best being Audacity. All programs are simple enough that the necessary production elements can be taught in 30 minutes. Indeed, I often have students, aspiring rappers in their free time, who have already mastered the programs and production techniques; this leads to the happy circumstance where these students, often (but not always) disengaged throughout earlier assignments and projects, become rejuvenated as in-demand experts offering help to their fellow classmates and teacher.

This to me is an ideal use of technology, as it facilitates working and planning together in the real world (with students using their smartphones to make field recordings and conduct interviews), as opposed to the prevalent and very negative classroom tech tools which suck individuals into a screen. This also makes explicit the collaborative nature of creation, essentially hidden in the professional context and maybe even nonexistent in classrooms, as students very often are set to work on an individual writing assignment or, worse, a quiz or test. Students see very clearly that while the narrator is the most featured in the finished product, there would not *be* a finished product without the producers who conducted the interviews, the writers who wrote the intro and conclusion, or the editor who spliced together all the different audio files. Often, each student has a hand in all aspects of production.

While students are frequently dismayed at hearing the theme, perhaps fairly assuming they will be forced to create a sanitized infomercial for the school, they quickly find that almost any element of their life can be incorporated into their segment. On the one hand, typical topics embody what Noam Chomsky calls the essence of discovery, that being the practice of "puzzling over simple things." These simple things in the past have meant interviewing every student who goes to school with a sibling and exploring the implications of that situation; inquiring into the various living situations of classmates, teachers, and administrators and comparing the troubles and joys therein; and investigating how various students spend their lunch period, which at our school includes "off-campus" privileges. These segments often lead to the development of a natural solidarity among students, as they discover the similar struggles, successes, fears, and dreams heretofore hidden beneath the social networks they ordinarily relate by.

On the other hand, topics of a more socially conscious sort are also common. This typically begins with the desire to challenge school officials on policies ranging from tardies and uniforms to their relationship with the school security guards. The dean and principal have many times been interviewed and taken to task on what students consider to be unfair practices. Beyond that, students have pushed back on the narrative they know exists on what it means to be a student at an alternative high school. Our school is housed within a community college and one group approached the many college students and professors in the building and questioned their perceptions of the high school "dropouts" they share space with. These segments are deeply inspiring, as the students are manifestly *not* a part of a robust democratic institution— the adults in the building have almost complete control over their lives, and it goes without saying that school officials and policies are not subject to any kind of referendum or student consent whatsoever. To ask difficult questions of these people will hopefully contribute skills and confidence to challenge students' nominally accountable representatives, including Rahm Emanuel and Donald Trump. At the very least, it

installs the expectation that powerful people ought to answer for the policies they espouse.

The podcast project typically inspires some of the best, most exciting work my students produce all semester. And while the finished product bears little superficial resemblance to more traditional writing assignments we've explored, this project truly does utilize the concepts we have studied over the course of the semester (among these, interviewing, storytelling, figurative language, showing and not telling) and applies them in a fresh context in service of an authentic product. Beyond this, the podcasts over time stand as a historical document, capturing a wide-range of emotions, sounds, and voices in what will be remembered as a truly calamitous and truly vibrant time to be a young Chicagoan.

ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

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Teaching Note
How to Subvert Your University's Canned Curriculum

by Jennifer J. Young

PHOTO BY TIM GOUW

How to Subvert Your University's Canned Curriculum*

1. Never, EVER voice your intention to subvert. If you ask up front, the answer will be "No," and then if you get busted you're done. If you don't ask and get caught, you can still probably feign confusion (although you won't be able to pull this off twice, so follow these tips and don't get caught).

2. Include the standardized syllabus you're expected to teach in your learning management system or course website. This is important, because someone may access it for assessment purposes (nobody ever *actually* assesses anything [1]; assessment is mostly an exercise in box-checking and ass-covering, so you don't need to worry that someone is going to confirm that you've posted the standardized syllabus and THEN go on a deep-dive-dig through the rest of your online resources to unearth your Real Syllabus; this won't happen).

3. Never tell students where the standardized syllabus is. You must locate it somewhere that doesn't require a lot of scrolling for someone in an official capacity to find, but if you never reference it, follow it, or show students where it is, they will probably not know that it ever exists. If any of your students *do* find it and reference it, say this: "That's a standardized syllabus template that I'm required to post in the system, but I use my own syllabus, which is the one I sent you." Any student who questions this is super-intelligent. Super-intelligent people are, by definition, opposed to canned curriculum, because canned curriculum is stupid. So, the vast majority of your students won't question your subversion, and the ones sharp enough to detect it will be on your side anyway. Bases covered.

4. Create your real syllabus as a PDF or info-graphic --- something visually appealing and stable; don't use a Word document.

5. Start a Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram account(s) that you use only for your course, and disseminate your real syllabus via these networks. Post all assignments, updates, etc. to these sites.

6. By Week 2 of the semester, your students will be well-accustomed to this set-up, and they'll never even look for the standardized syllabus.

Caveats and Troubleshoots:

1. Even though you're not following it, you must be intimately familiar with the standardized curriculum, because you still need to teach the same information; you'll just be able to teach it more effectively and meaningfully, because you'll actually like what you're doing. (This is the true idiocy of canned curriculum: It's not only boring to learn, but boring to teach, and students can smell teacher boredom like a cadaver dog smells a dead body [standardized curriculum is, by definition, a dead body; it's dead before you even get it].)

2. Find out what the "assessment artifact" for the course is. You'll need to work that into your real syllabus, but it's probably only one assignment, and at least it won't hijack the entire course. Be sure to have students submit that one assignment to whatever system is used for assessment gathering.

3. If you have that rare student who doesn't and won't use social networks, then you'll have to individually e-mail things to that student. Just do it. It's a pain, but it's not as bad as teaching from a standardized syllabus.

4. This is the most important point, and your subversion success hinges on your ability to achieve this goal: You must teach well. You must be a strong and dynamic and well-liked teacher. You must be confident in both your content knowledge and in your ability to establish rapport with students. If your students are happy and performing (i.e. you get good evaluations and your students aren't complaining about you), nobody wastes time going on a reconnaissance mission to figure out what you're doing; they just leave you alone.

*I only promote this practice because I know that it works, and because I know that it's good for students. I've used it myself when I've taught for institutions that are short-sighted enough to require using canned curriculum, and I've never heard a word about it from anyone. My students still learned what they needed to know, but they actually enjoyed and found value in it. I got strong evaluations, and my students produced work that evidenced their growth. Real teaching is about connection and creativity, teachers aren't delivery-robots, and there's no one-size-fits-all in anything. Higher education en masse may or may not eventually figure this out, but until that happens, it's our job as professors to employ a little subversion to do what's best for our students.

Notes

[1] https://www.chronicle.com/article/An-Insider-s-Take-on/242235

ISSN: 1941-0832

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Contributors' Notes

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TEACHER DEMONSTRATION APRIL 24, 2018. PHOTO BY CHARLES EDWARD MILLER

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