

# RADICAL TEACHER

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

Issue 105

Archives and Radical Education



ALAIN RESNAIS' DOCUMENTARY FILM ABOUT THE FRENCH NATIONAL LIBRARY, ALL THE WORLD'S MEMORY (TOUTE LA MÉMOIRE DU MONDE, 1956)

# RADICAL TEACHER

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

## Introduction: Archives and Radical Education

by Linda Dittmar and Joseph Entin

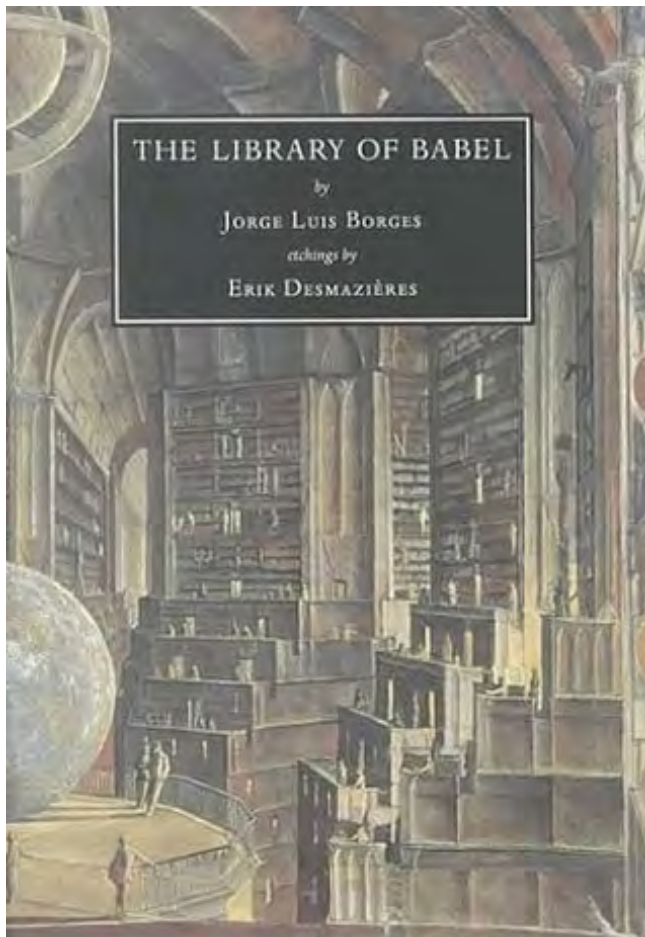


ALAIN RESNAIS' DOCUMENTARY FILM ABOUT THE FRENCH NATIONAL LIBRARY,  
ALL THE WORLD'S MEMORY (TOUTE LA MEMOIR DU MONDE)

Though Alain Resnais' documentary film about the French National Library, *All the World's Memory* (*Toute la Memoir du Monde*), is meant to celebrate the library's scope and organization, anxiety seeps into its cinematic "language": dim black-and-white footage, a restlessly prowling camera, close-ups that cut off object from context and detail from whole, discontinuous cuts, choppy bullet-like comments, and darkly foreboding orchestral music. It's a beautiful film, but what does it say about Resnais' feelings about the library? Certainly awe, but also high modernism's anxiety about proliferating knowledge. "Man," the authoritative male voice-over proclaims, "fears being engulfed by this mass of words."

In Jorge Luis Borges' "Library of Babel"—a surreal fiction rather than documentary—*anxiety gives way to despair, where the profusion of knowledge overwhelms those who search for it. For all its discomfort, Resnais' film has confidence in order (and the labor that goes into it) as key to retrieval, while in Borges' library even its highly regulated architecture bewilders those who traverse it. Its books are stored in an "indefinite, perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries," each connected to its immediate neighbors in a mazelike array of unknown options. As more and more seekers set out to find the "books of Vindication" that will justify all actions for all times, as they believe, a mad stampede for the texts that offer that salvation ensues.*

A 20<sup>th</sup>-century anxiety about the quantity and use of available knowledge haunts these accounts. Resnais'



library is being dug ever deeper into the ground and built ever higher toward the sky to accommodate the multiplying "mass of words" that is "engulfing" it. Borges' hexagonal containers extend beyond anyone's ability to chart; like its namesake, the tower of Babel, the library's seemingly rational arrangement becomes the site of chaos.

In a sense, these dark accounts are not so much about libraries as they are about the human brain, with its "hexagons" and neurons working hard to navigate everything from putting one foot in front of another to responding to a world crisis. For libraries and archives, though, the situation is changing now that we are entering a digital age, albeit in ways that we cannot yet predict. While available knowledge is multiplying many times over, so are systems of storage and retrieval. Wikipedia, Google, YouTube, and Wikileaks are well known but hardly the only examples of this turn-around. The capacity to digitize and disseminate has grown exponentially, creating different staffing and budget challenges but also raising questions of ownership and access, participation and exclusion, reliability, oversight and censorship.

**Many other archives could have been included in this cluster, from archived African American history to the New England Textile Museum or Argentina's Mothers of Plaza del Mayo. These and many others register the need to preserve and store other documents relevant to progressives.**

These are old questions, though they may require new responses from researchers and educators, including radicals. While this means that there are struggles ahead, the articles submitted to this special issue of *Radical Teacher* reflect optimism regarding a radical practice of teaching with archives. There's the verve of discovery here, of energy about re-appropriating conventional archives, accessing marginal knowledge, and expanding the definition of "archive." In her contribution, Ellen Schrecker reminds us of the usefulness of mainstream archives (e.g. FBI files and the Hoover Institute) for radical research. Her sobering caution concerns funding—a cause for concern for small alternative archives and radical ones in particular. Other contributors also discuss archives that consist of paper and other tangible objects, though their holdings are of more direct use to radicals: the Peace Archive at Haverford College, Asian-American zines, Interference Archive's social movement collection, the Lesbian Herstory Archive in Brooklyn, oral histories of the India/Pakistan Partition, and iLand's collection of performative movement "scores."

Many other archives could have been included in this cluster, from archived African American history to the New England Textile Museum or Argentina's Mothers of Plaza del Mayo. These and many others register the need to preserve and store other documents relevant to progressives. As teachers and archive users, contributors

to the present cluster of articles highlight that certain texts need to be preserved as tools of knowledge, debate, and contestation. They emphasize a critical, self-aware use of archives and redefine “archives” to broaden the rationale for their particular assembly so as to include unstable materials such as oral histories and transitory, time-based performances that are by definition ephemeral.<sup>1</sup>

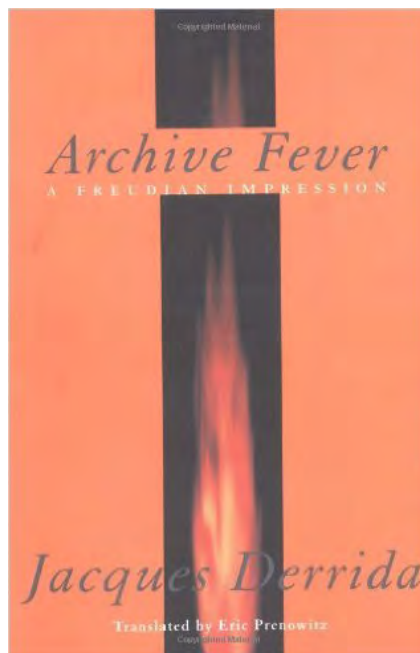
These departures from conventional archives raise the question of what is an “archive” in the first place. This definitional question has been the subject of much discussion in recent decades, as scholars across several academic and intellectual fields have initiated an “archival turn”—a growing interest in the concept of the archive and a rethinking of traditional notions of what archives are, what they hold, and how they are constructed, maintained, and used. Several things have sprung from this newly intensified focus on archives, starting with a questioning and expansion of the meaning of the term itself. If a standard dictionary definition refers to an archive as “a place where documents and other materials of public or historical interest are preserved,” today the term is often used not merely to describe traditional institutional repositories in museums and libraries, but a wide array of sites—some material, some virtual, some institutional, some defiantly anti-institutional—that house a striking range of materials, not just traditional documents, but items of popular culture, social movement ephemera, material objects, and much more.<sup>2</sup> Librarian Melanie Manoff argues that in the contemporary digital era, the term archive itself is “loosening and exploding,” becoming “a kind of loose signifier for a disparate set of concepts.”<sup>3</sup>

In a second, related development, long-standing notions of archives as neutral repositories of historical fact are being called into question. Drawing in particular on Michel Foucault’s conception of power-knowledge and Derrida’s *Archive Fever*, which argues, among other things, that “there is no political power without control of the archive,” historians, anthropologists, activists, and archivists themselves have placed new emphasis on the role archives play in contests over social, historical, and cultural authority.<sup>4</sup> Archives consolidate objects as sources of knowledge, and in so doing, they help construct boundaries around what counts as history and whose stories are likely to be told. Archives do not simply provide direct access to historical information; rather, they shape and organize what counts as history, and how history is framed and understood.

As the etymology of the term itself implies, archives are often the province of the powerful, who have the resources to preserve and regulate access to materials in ways that narrate the world from the perspective of history’s winners.<sup>5</sup> Archives can also play an active role in producing social hierarchies. Photographer, filmmaker, and

critic Allan Sekula has argued, for instance, that late-nineteenth-century photography was integrated into “a generalized, inclusive *archive*, a *shadow archive*,” designed to define and regulate social deviance.<sup>6</sup> Criminologists, anthropologists, and other social scientists and bureaucrats, Sekula explains, developed a massive archive of photographic images for the purposes of identifying criminals and other putatively subversive figures by physiological type. Ann Laura Stoler has argued that archives were crucial to European colonialism, not only as repositories that contain a record of colonial power relations, but also as “intricate technologies of rule in themselves.”<sup>7</sup> Colonial authorities collected and preserved records and data that not only documented, but also justified and legitimated their colonial regimes.

Yet however much archives are shaped to naturalize the rule of history’s winners, such archives can of course be read against the grain. Stoler argues for an “ethnographic” approach to archives, in which scholars move from treating archives as transparent repositories of historical evidence, to subjects that themselves need to be critically interrogated. Stoler asserts that colonial archives need to be read *against the grain*, for their silences and gaps, and *along the grain* as well, to understand and decipher their prevailing logics, modes of order, and relations to dominant institutions. Recently, Lisa Lowe has proposed a mode of reading archives “intimately,” often in defiance of accepted national boundaries and chronologies, to trace the typically occluded links between Western liberalism, settler colonialism, and slavery.<sup>8</sup> As activists and radicals have shown over the years (see the Pentagon Papers and Wikileaks), the archives of the powerful can be re-deployed to challenge the very sources of power they are often designed to protect and legitimate.<sup>9</sup>



Archives are always built on exclusions and omissions, as the boundaries drawn around them preserve some materials at the expense of others. The creation of counter-archives designed to legitimize histories and communities that have been neglected or suppressed by official record-keeping has proved to be a potent form of activist scholarship. The growth of this alternative archival infrastructure dates back at least to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the founding of early archives of African American history and culture, including the New York Public Library’s Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Moorland-Springarn Research Center at Howard University, and the Amistad Research Center at Tulane University. A much more recent example, outside the auspices of a major library or university, is the Weeksville Heritage Center in Brooklyn, NY—“a multidisciplinary museum dedicated to preserving the history of the 19th century African American community of Weeksville, Brooklyn - one of America’s first free black communities. . . . Weeksville

advances its mission through history, preservation, visual and performing arts, ecology and the built environment."<sup>10</sup>

**These departures from conventional archives raise the question of what is an "archive" in the first place.**

Modern and contemporary artists have also been mining the archive's radical use, especially given the truth-claims of photography, film, and tangible objects. One example is the path-breaking exhibition, "Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art." As Nigerian-American critic, poet, curator and educator Okwui Enwezor writes in his curatorial essay about this exhibition (whose title, not incidentally invokes Derrida's book by the same title), archives are anything but "inert repositories of historical artifacts." Rather, the contemporary artists whose work he includes in this exhibition "have appropriated, interpreted, reconfigured, and interrogated archival structures and archival materials . . . as an archival record, as an analogue of a substantiated real or putative fact."<sup>11</sup>

From James Allen's collection of souvenir postcards of lynching, *Without Sanctuary*, to Andy Warhol pillaging public records of race riots or the photos of Abu Ghraib, the power of these compendia exceeds their subject matter with its stubbornly cumulative repetition. In American artist Fazal Sheikh's "The Victor Weeps: Afghanistan" a series of hands hold tiny passport images of dead family members. Colombian artist Doris Salcedo's *Atrabiliarios* has shoes of the disappeared, mostly women, stored in shoebox-like niches sunk into the wall, each ghostlike behind a thin animal skin sutured over the nooks. Engaging viewers in active investigation, artist Walid Raad ascribes his image-series about the history of contemporary Lebanon to the non-existent Atlas Group's ostensible "archive." In one photo series that shows journalists looking at car engines destroyed in car bombings, the multiplied banality of the rendition as well as opacity of the political events strand viewers between horror at the event and distance from how it's shown.

As the above suggests, specialized archives often aim to set straight a historical record. Some do so by actively contesting official knowledge, shifting the burden to us, the users. Some do so in celebration of retrieved content, some in protest against its suppression, often both. Holocaust archives, for example, meld mourning and commemoration with the implicit warning of "never again." Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial and the AIDS quilt similarly mourn and commemorate, but also agitate and invite reflection about the broader implications of the traumas they register. Archives of the Nakba (Palestinian "catastrophe"/expulsion in 1948) and Palestinian resistance, especially martyrdom, similarly commemorate trauma, except that their engagement in current political struggles renders them militant.<sup>12</sup> The #FergusonSyllabus twitter campaign, started by Georgetown history professor Marcia Chatelain in response to the killing of unarmed 18-year-old African American Michael Brown by Ferguson,

Missouri police officer Darren Wilson in 2014, allowed educators to build collaboratively a virtual, social media archive of sources for teaching against racial injustice.

This issue of *Radical Teacher* addresses the way that progressive educators engage archives. How do radical teachers use archives in (or outside) their classrooms and with their students? J. Ashley Foster, Sarah Horowitz, and Laurie Allen describe teaching with a capacious "peace archive," containing both pacifist works of art by radical early twentieth-century modernist writers and painters, and the Quaker peace collection at Haverford College. Ultimately, students added their own contributions to the record, building an exhibition on pacifism in the face of total war that included their own peace manifestoes. Kailah Carden and Sabrina Vaught, writing with students Arturo Muñoz, Vanessa Pinto, Cecelia Vaught and Maya Ziegler, describe teaching a course on radical lesbian thought with and through the Lesbian Herstory Archives. In their class, as well, students not only used the archive as a source of knowledge, but also as an inspiration for their own archival projects, which collectively challenged the possibility that any archive can offer a complete or authoritative record.

Also describing the way students move from researchers to knowledge producers, Todd Honma's article describes an Asian-American studies class in which students delve into the 1970s zine *Girda*, digitally available at the on-line Densho Archive, before creating zines of their own that address gentrification in Los Angeles's contemporary Chinatown community. Gaana Jayagopalan's use of oral histories to study the partition of India and Pakistan has special immediacy in her classroom, as this event is still an open wound for many in India (and across its border to Pakistan), Hindu and Muslim alike. These oral histories contest the hegemony of the knowledge proffered by official accounts, enabling her students to grasp dimensions of personal trauma and grief that are largely effaced by the State's emphasis on grand geopolitical narratives. Bonnie Gordon, Lani Hanna, Jen Hoyer and Vero Ordaz describe the ethos of open access at the heart of Interference Archive, a participatory social movement repository in Brooklyn, New York. Run entirely by volunteer labor, Interference Archive allows teachers, students, and the wider public to help shape the way history itself is preserved and presented. Ann Holt and Chris Kennedy also stress the responsive, evolving quality of archives in their piece on iLAND's repository of movement "scores," or scripts, which are designed to be actively re-used and revised by the archive's users.

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As these essays suggest, the use of archives is participatory, open to the intention of its users. This is especially evident when their use involves self-aware radical teaching, where archives' availability to their users'

selection and configuration becomes, itself, subject to analysis. A question that arose for us, the editors of this cluster, is what in fact is "radical" about using archives beyond the fact that bringing a given subject matter to light intervenes in, and attempts to trouble or transform, conventional knowledge. For instance, is teaching about the India/Pakistan Partition through oral histories and with emphasis on its affective dimensions in itself radical? Are the essentially impermanent collaborations in the iLAND archive radical because they challenge our sense of fixed modes of selecting and knowing our world? While such questions may emerge more explicitly in some of our essays, they are in fact ones to consider in relation to this cluster as a whole. Keeping these questions in mind, we hope this issue provides a useful, thought-provoking, and perhaps even inspiring look at the creative work that radical teachers and their students are doing to use, create, and question archives across a range of educational contexts.



WIKILEAKS LOGO

## Notes

- 1 In their use of heterogeneous materials and many speakers, radical compilation documentaries such as those produced in the 1960s and 70s can also be considered mini archives. These include films about American labor, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, The Vietnam war, the Red Scare in Hollywood, the American anarchists, and the Lincoln Brigade. Such film, like a book that collects oral histories, is archival in its sources and in exposing their plurality, except that it's pre-selected and sequenced organization precludes the rummaging and discovery that are the hallmark of archival research.
- 2 Dictionary definition cited in Melanie Manoff, "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines," *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2004), 10.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 4.
- 5 The Latin word *archivum*, "residence of the magistrate," and the Greek term *arkhe*, to command or govern, both suggest links between record-keeping and political authority or rule. And, as archivists Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook observe, the origin of archives "lie in the information needs and social values of the rulers, governments, businesses, associations, and individuals who establish and maintain them." Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 3.
- 6 Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October*, Vol. 39 (Winter 1986), 10.
- 7 Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," *Archival Science*, Vol. 2 (2002), 87.
- 8 Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).
- 9 "Archives have the power to privilege and to marginalize," argue archivists Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook. "They can be a tool of hegemony; they can be a tool of resistance. They both reflect and constitute power relations." Schwartz and Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power," 13.
- 10 <http://www.weeksvillesociety.org/what-we-do/>.
- 11 Okwui Enwezor's essay, "Archive Fever: Photography between History and the Monument," is available in PDF at [sites.duke.edu](http://sites.duke.edu). The ICP exhibition he curated, "Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art," showed at the International Center for Photography, New York, 2007.
- 12 See Miki Kratsman and Ariela Azoulay, *The Resolution of the Suspect* (Cambridge, Peabody Museum and Santa Fe, Radial Books). Kratsman's photographic work includes portraits of Palestinians taken with a military camera that sets them up as "targets," neighborhood posters of shahids (martyrs), and photo-journalistic images of living people framed as "wanted" because they were eventually killed.



A DIFFERENT SORT OF ARCHIVE  
THE NAMES PROJECT AIDS QUILT



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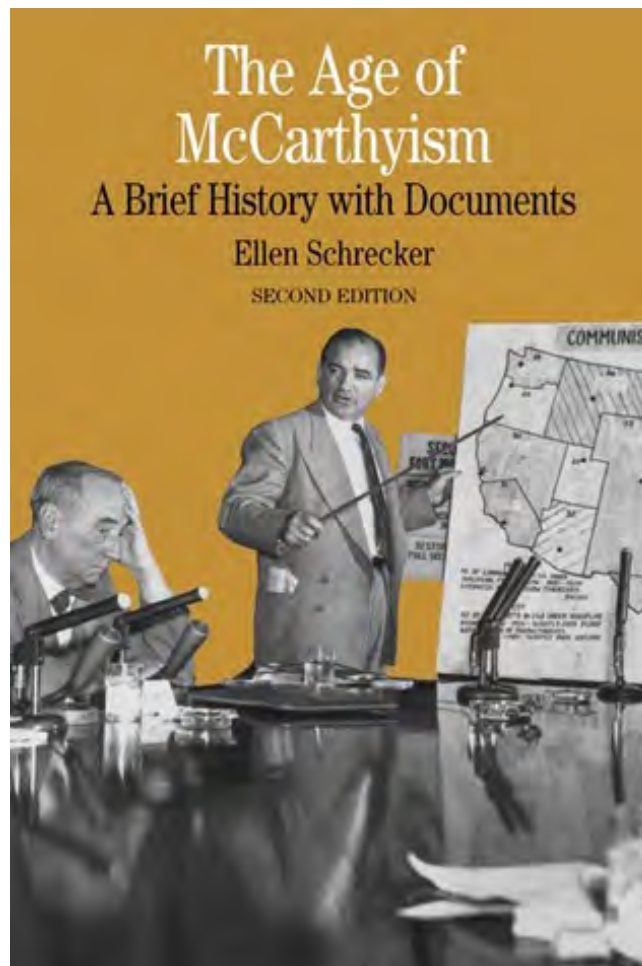
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## In the Archives: A User's Perspective

By Ellen Schrecker





I write as a consumer, a user of archives. I am a historian, who in my over forty years of research on McCarthyism and the American Left has probably worked in at least forty different archives—more if you count the individual collections housed within the larger depositories. I consider my historical work, at least in part, a contribution to making the world a better place. After all, the men and women who want to change history need history. Not only does learning about the past help us understand how our current problems came about, but it also reveals alternatives that can perhaps be resuscitated or at least suggest new strategies. Finally, it enables us to cast a critical eye on our society and work to change it, knowing that the current status quo was not and is not immutable.

**We need only recall how important the scholarship of radical historians was to the movements for black and women's liberation in the 1960s and 70s.**

Archival research is crucial to that project. Those of us on the left who hope to construct counter-narratives to the accepted wisdom of the day can do so only if we back up those narratives with concrete documentation derived from the records of the past. To be useful, our history must be credible. And that credibility demands serious archival research. While radicals may be looking primarily at radical movements, discovering previously unknown forms of social action, or offering a left perspective on a mainstream phenomenon, they must, nonetheless, carry out their research in accordance with the same set of standards that apply to all historians. They must work with as many original sources as they can. Otherwise, their findings can be more easily dismissed by the powers-that-be.

We need only recall how important the scholarship of radical historians was to the movements for black and women's liberation in the 1960s and 70s. That scholarship, it must be noted, gained acceptance because it was based on years of archival research. Thus, for example, scholars were able to challenge the accepted wisdom that had naturalized female inferiority by bringing their new feminist perspective to what they were finding in previously overlooked judicial proceedings, diaries, and other such sources. Black and white scholars did the same with regard to slavery and Reconstruction, again by finding a usable past in plantation account books, oral histories of former slaves, and local court records. Similarly, in my own earlier work on McCarthyism and the universities, it was only when I delved into the correspondence of a number of college presidents that I was able to find evidence of how extensively the academic community was collaborating with the red scare.

Archives have two main functions. One is to seek out, collect, and preserve as much material as they can, especially the records of those movements and individuals that mainstream institutions ignore or simply don't know about. It goes without saying that the standards for

collecting such materials must be thoroughly catholic. The criteria for relevance is so mutable these days that a collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century cookbooks that might have drawn giggles in the 1950s would today be prized by students of food and nutrition.

At the same time, besides bringing into the archives as broad a range of materials as possible (and pressing our fellow activists and colleagues to preserve their own records for donation to a suitable depository), we must also become concerned about the other function of an archive: providing access to the materials that it contains. The documentary evidence of the past—whether it is that of the powerful or the powerless— is useless for us in the present if it simply sits in boxes whose contents no archivist has catalogued or even looked at. What determines the availability of those materials is, as may be obvious to readers of *Radical Teacher*, money. The institutions that host most archives are as starved for cash as the rest of the public sector and non-profit world; and, as we shall see, many seem unable to support the services they must provide in order to make their collections accessible. Things could be worse, of course; the nation's archives could begin to charge admission.

**But digitizing older documents and then putting them up on the internet requires a serious commitment of resources.**

Enter technology. To a certain extent, the internet now provides considerable access to the raw materials of history. Thus, for example, sitting at my laptop in my son's dining room in California while working on a book about college and university teachers in the 1960s and early 1970s, I can look at digitized copies of student newspapers like the *Harvard Crimson* and the *Columbia Spectator* without having to go to Cambridge or New York. But, alas, the University of Michigan has only just begun to put the *Michigan Daily* on line, while the run of SUNY-Buffalo's digitized student newspaper available on the internet ends in the spring of 1962. Similarly, I can access many oral history interviews on line, especially if they were transcribed recently enough to have been done on a computer.

But digitizing older documents and then putting them up on the internet requires a serious commitment of resources. Keeping the websites that hold them alive and user-friendly also requires attention. At the moment, there is a random quality to what is available on line. And, as might be expected within such an anarchical universe, some archive websites contain amazing materials, but some are sparse, glitch-prone, or strangely incomplete. And, to be quite frank, I can't envision any depository, even the wealthiest, finding the staff and financing to scan the hundreds of thousands or, perhaps, millions of documents in its collections. Nor am I optimistic that some future "Google-Archive" software will function in ways that facilitate its use by historians rather than geeks. In fact, it may soon be the case that researchers who want to take



## Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute Archives

### The Bancroft Library

advantage of the web will need much more IT training that they currently get.

So, we must trek to the archives if we want to look at the official records and correspondence of a university president or the minutes of faculty meetings or the records of a radical campus organization or the invaluable ephemera in somebody's private papers. There are, of course, many different kinds of archives that progressive researchers need to consult. They range from the converted Berkeley garage that until recently housed the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute Archives and its collection of key First Amendment legal briefs to the massive National Archives in Washington and College Park, Maryland. I can, for example, recall spending several days sitting in the cramped law offices of the left-wing attorney Marshall Perlin going through thousands of pages of FBI files, though I have also looked at similar documents at the FBI headquarters where you need to have a minder whenever you go to the ladies room. Archival materials, in other words, can be found in all kinds of settings

There are the presidential libraries scattered across the United States in such not always exciting locations as Abilene, Kansas (Eisenhower) and West Branch, Iowa (Hoover). There are college and university archives and libraries that often contain a wide variety of specialized collections, as well as the records of the institutions themselves. Thus, for example, when the University of Texas was flush with oil money in the mid-twentieth century, it acquired the papers of James Joyce and dozens of other major writers, drawing generations of English professors and graduate students down to Austin. Students of the peace movement can consult the Swarthmore College Peace Collection, while historians of labor and the Left use such specialized libraries as Wayne State's Walter P. Reuther Library and NYU's Tamiment Library and Robert Wagner Labor Archives that collect materials on unions and radicals. If they're covering Los Angeles, those historians will probably consult the small independent Southern California Library for Social Science and Research and its collection on the local left. There are hundreds of such specialized depositories that have developed as groups and individuals have become increasingly aware of the value of their records.

It is important to realize that the provenance of a record does not necessarily identify its value for a particular project. Progressives, in particular, should not shun the archives of mainstream and even conservative institutions and individuals. FBI files are exemplary here. They are, of course, the main source we have on the doings of America's secret police. But they also contain

information about the objects of the Bureau's surveillance that can be useful in other contexts. Labor historians, for example, have found that FBI files contain otherwise unavailable publications and documents from left-wing unions in the 1940s and 1950s.

As far as I can tell, archives tend to be politically neutral with regard to access, though sometimes well-connected individuals and/or authorized biographers can get into collections closed to ordinary folk. But most of the problems researchers face affect all users. They range from inadequate finding aids to limited hours—all of them traceable to cut-backs in funding. After all, creating a useable finding aid requires the efforts of a trained archivist who must go through every carton of materials and organize the contents into a coherent system before the collection can be opened to the public. Though it's obviously better for records to be in an institutional facility than in someone's cellar or attic, they are of little use if they are not processed. And that may not be happening as quickly or effectively as it should. Underpaid, as they no doubt are, experienced archivists do not work for free. As a result, given the serious financial constraints facing most libraries and archives, we can assume that many promising collections languish in storage facilities (hopefully transferred into archive boxes so they won't rot), but essentially unavailable to the public.

A further barrier to successful research is a more subtle one that has to do with staffing. Even with a well-prepared finding aid, you can rarely navigate a major depository on your own. You will usually find that you need the help of an individual archivist who knows its collections, ideally someone who has even processed the materials you want and can steer you to the documents you need. But such expertise is dwindling and its disappearance makes it hard for researchers to find the materials they need. This was a problem, for example, at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin several years ago, where that major repository of movement records had lost much of its institutional memory because of staff turnover. Radicals may face additional difficulties in accessing materials, since archivists may simply be less knowledgeable about marginalized groups and individuals than mainstream ones. Another problem is that some depositories lump all their special collections (the rubric for archives, manuscripts, and other non-circulating materials) together. What that means is that the people staffing the reading rooms may be specialists in medieval maps and know nothing about the early LGBT community in Marin County. The University of California's Bancroft Library at Berkeley was a serious offender here.

Berkeley, Wisconsin—surely among the nation’s top flagship universities. Could there have been a relationship between the inadequacies of their archives and the defunding of public higher education? Could there have been a relationship between my inability to track down a set of papers that I *knew* were in the Library of Congress and the fiscal problems of the nation’s top library? And, what can one say about the near-shuttering of the State Archives in Georgia? Nah. Just a coincidence, except. . . . By far the most welcoming and most well organized depository I have worked in was the Hoover Institution Library and Archives at Stanford. Its experienced staff members know their collections and, more than at any other archive I’ve ever used, they want you to consult them and make it easy to do so. The home of one of the nation’s leading right-wing think tanks, the Hoover Institution does not seem to have any financial problems. But money alone may not be enough. Way down on my list of useable archives, Harvard can hardly be considered poor. Why its archives are nearly unusable remains a mystery. Perhaps in the age of corporate academe, facilitating research outside of the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields is not a high priority.

Money is also a problem for the people who use archives. To begin with, their scattered locations impose burdens, since travel is expensive. Some depositories do

provide travel grants to scholars, but such largesse is limited. In the best of all possible worlds, people who donate their papers would take such constraints into consideration and put their materials in a depository that contains similar collections to reduce the financial stress on prospective researchers. It would also be a big help if archives had longer hours and didn’t require several days’ notice to provide materials. But, in every instance, whatever makes archival materials more accessible requires additional resources. And in a capitalist society where utility and the market supposedly reign, it is hard to make a case for saving and then opening up the records of the past. It might make people dissatisfied with the present.



COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES



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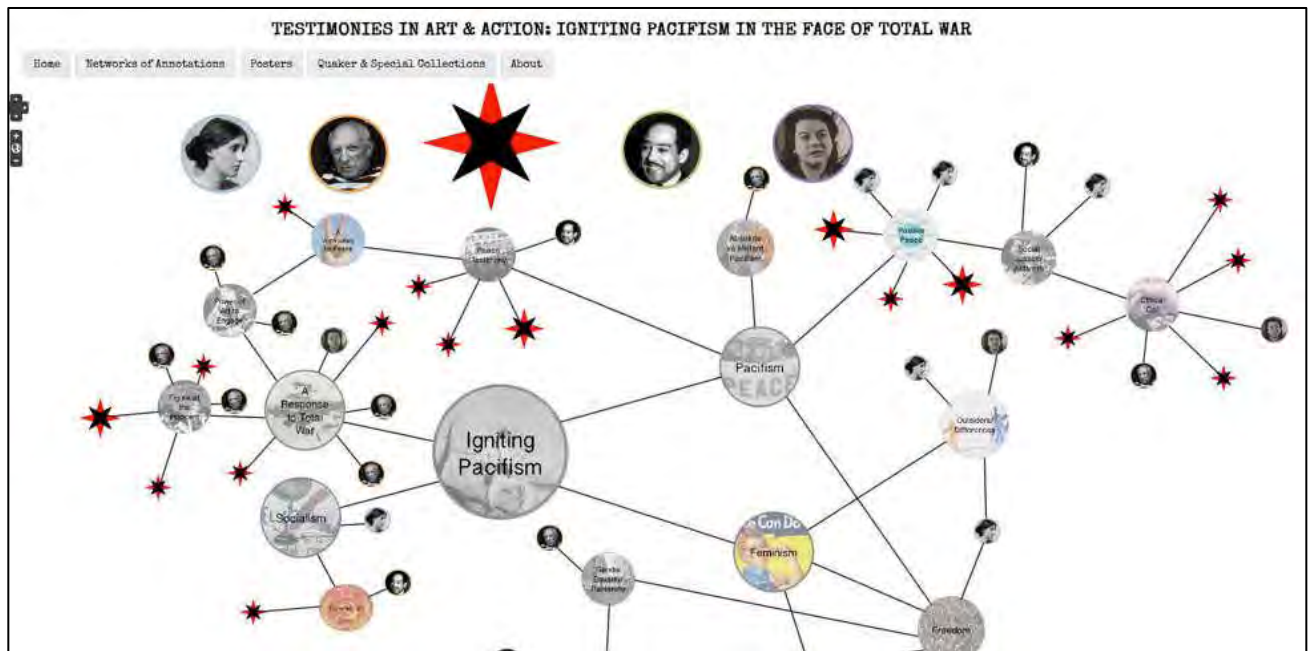
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## Changing the Subject: Archives, Technology, and Radical Counter-Narratives of Peace

By J. Ashley Foster, Sarah M. Horowitz, and Laurie Allen



MARCELO JUAREGUI-VOLPE'S PROJECT WAS TO CREATE THIS MIND-MAP ON OMEKA AND ADD THE QUAKER CONNECTIONS

What, in any case, is a socialist feminist criticism? The answer is a simple one. It wants to change the subject. The critic is committed to social change in her workplace, the university, as well as to political activism in the world.

— Jane Marcus, *Art and Anger: Reading Like a Woman*

Thinking peace in a time of war with undergraduates is a radical endeavor. It asks young writers to question their fundamental assumptions about human nature, the construction of society, and the way in which we (as global citizens) conduct our politics in world affairs today. As Paul Saint-Amour has shown in *Tense Future*, we are trapped in a “perpetual interwar,” where Saint-Amour uses “*inter + war* to denote not only ‘between wars’ but also ‘in the midst of war’” (306). He shows that the totalizing discourse of war has infiltrated every part of the social order, including notions of past and future: there is nothing *outside* of the war.<sup>1</sup> Susan Sontag, in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, asks incredulously, “Who believes today that war can be abolished?” She then answers with the declaration: “No one, not even pacifists” (5). Students often chime in with assent and agreement to this notion; the idea of peace, while lovely, is not practical. Seriously considering peace unsettles them. As pacifists have often reminded us, establishing a true, sustainable peace necessitates a radical and progressive restructuring of society, where the imagined peace requires being built upon a social intersectionality of feminism, socialism, human rights, social justice, racial equality, and an even distribution of power throughout the globe. Radical pacifist beliefs are often accompanied by anti-racist, anti-fascist, anti-imperialist beliefs, and argue for racial, gender, economic, and social equality. This world model demands a radical restructuring of our current lives and practices, and, the militant metanarrative of history tells us, is impossible. The difference between what should be and what is, is so great, such a rupture from the present, that it is potentially alienating to students.

As countless authors have shown, the story of a dominant “Western” history is one of battles won and lost, the lives of great men, and the inevitability, if not grandeur, of war. However, archives of the modernist era provide a counter-narrative of movements and people who worked rigorously for peace and equality during times of war, who argue that war is a *choice*, not a necessity of existence. It was a time of avid mobilization, but it also marked a flourishing pacifist global momentum, with the peace movement in Britain hitting its apex in the 1930s, women’s movements against fascism and war organizing internationally, the Harlem Renaissance fighting racism in the United States, and the Indian National Congress non-violently protesting British Imperialism. The international organization for peace is a counter-narrative that has been consistently, and the feminist critic suspects systematically, written out of the dominant story of Western history, and can be reconstructed and retraced through the recovery of what J. Ashley Foster calls here the “peace archive.”<sup>2</sup> Including students in this mission, introducing them to radical archives of what has elsewhere

been called “pacifisms past,”<sup>3</sup> radicalizes the classroom and allows undergraduates to become critical contributors to constructing counter-narratives of peace.

This article argues that performing the recovery of pacifist art and actions through archival research of the modernist era encourages students to engage in radical ethical inquiry. This article is based on four sections of the Peace Testimonies in Literature & Art freshman Writing Seminar, designed and taught by Visiting Assistant Professor of Writing and Fellow in the Writing Program J. Ashley Foster at Haverford College, and walks the reader through the construction of a student digital humanities and special collections exhibition, *Testimonies in Art & Action: Igniting Pacifism in the Face of Total War*. This exhibition ran from October 6 to December 11, 2015 in Haverford College’s Magill Library and involved extensive collaboration between Haverford’s library staff and students. In synergistic cooperation with Foster, Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts & Head of Quaker and Special Collections Sarah Horowitz, and then Coordinator for Digital Scholarship and Services Laurie Allen (who has since moved to Penn Libraries) worked to help shape the course assignments and ensuing exhibition. The exhibition placed archival materials in conversation with the major modernist pacifist documentary projects of Langston Hughes’ Spanish Civil War poetry and dispatches, Muriel Rukeyser’s “Mediterranean,” Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica*, and Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas*. This undertaking was driven by the questions, “How does one respond ethically to total war?” and “How can archival and special collections research do the works of peace?” Built around the work of these classes and materials from Haverford’s Quaker & Special Collections, *Testimonies in Art & Action* allowed students to deeply interrogate a variety of pacifisms and become producers of a critical discourse that challenges the status quo position that violence is perpetually necessary and the most important aspect of world history.

*This undertaking was driven by the questions, “How does one respond ethically to total war?” and “How can archival and special collections research do the works of peace?”*

## Palimpsest Texts

*Testimonies in Art & Action: Igniting Pacifism in the Face of Total War* grew out of J. Ashley Foster’s Peace Testimonies in Literature & Art Writing Seminar, taught at Haverford College, Spring and Fall 2015.<sup>4</sup> This freshman class, which fulfilled the writing seminar requirement, was structured around five main, what Foster calls, modernist pacifist documentary projects<sup>5</sup>: Langston Hughes’ Spanish Civil War poems and dispatches, Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica*, Muriel Rukeyser’s “Mediterranean,” Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas*, and the Quaker relief effort for the Spanish Civil War. These projects document the pacifist artistic responses to total war and the history and experiences of the author, creator, or those on the ground in Spain during

the Civil War of 1936-1939. As the collaboratively-written and edited catalogue describes, all of the main works contain:

...many layers of composition and compilation. For example, [Woolf's] *Three Guineas*, which Jane Marcus has called a "part of a major documentary project" [(xlv)] and an "interactive" [(xlv)] text, was compiled based upon three reading notebooks that included letters, newspaper articles, and typed-out excerpts. Muriel Rukeyser's poem "Mediterranean" is part of a much larger series of writings on Spain, which includes the novel *Savage Coast*, news articles, and prosaic-philosophical meditations. Pablo Picasso's great mural *Guernica* has been documented by his partner, the surrealist photographer Dora Maar, allowing us to study various stages of creation. Langston Hughes' Spanish Civil War dispatches are in conversation with his poetry, creating an intricate dialogue of his time in Spain, encounter with total war, and anti-fascist beliefs.

The Quaker relief effort can also be followed through reports, letters, photographs, fundraising pamphlets, and meeting minutes, many of which adopt modernist concerns and aesthetic techniques to conduct their mission.

The nature of the course material itself, then, focused on the activists who responded to the Spanish Civil War, is radical. All of the course texts offer a divergent and multifaceted view of pacifisms that intersect with other major social causes. Woolf's blend of socialism and feminism converges into a radical pacifism that seeks to reform education, equalize society, and eradicate war in *Three Guineas*. Picasso's anti-fascism, communism, anarchist traces, and pacifism blend into a fearful protest of total war in Spain. Hughes points out that peace must be based on racial equality and shows how his anti-racism, anti-fascism, and communism intersect to imagine a world with social equality. Rukeyser's militant pacifism, and support of a violent fight against fascism, unites with her socialist sympathies to render an ambivalent call for revolution that is juxtaposed with her longing for peace. The Quaker relief in Spain witnessed a peace testimony that adopted a social justice dimension.<sup>6</sup> All of these modernist pacifist documentary configurations imagine a peace that necessitates massive social reform and are therefore radical.

The fact that this radicalism can be traced and studied through layers of composition and compilation makes these materials vital in the writing classroom. The existence of contextual historical archives for these

projects provides students with the opportunity to trace the creation of the works, emphasizing the importance of rethinking, revision, and the evolution of ideas. For example, students used the digital archive of Virginia Woolf's reading notebooks for *Three Guineas* to better understand the way in which Woolf was responding to a militant, patriarchal cultural climate. Laurie Allen and Foster created a series of digital humanities projects that would reflect this palimpsest, intertextual, and hypertextual way of reading. Foster named them "digital annotations." Drawing upon the digital archives of Picasso's stages of *Guernica* and Woolf's reading notebooks for *Three Guineas*, students were asked to study these online resources next to the final versions and construct arguments based on how these archives illuminate elements of the final works. What do you learn from studying these archives next to the "finished" compositions, the students were asked? How can you trace the pacifism, feminism, communism, anti-fascism, and other forms of political intersectionality throughout the stages of the text?

Using Omeka's Neatline, students digitally "annotated" and embedded the sources and stages of creation in the

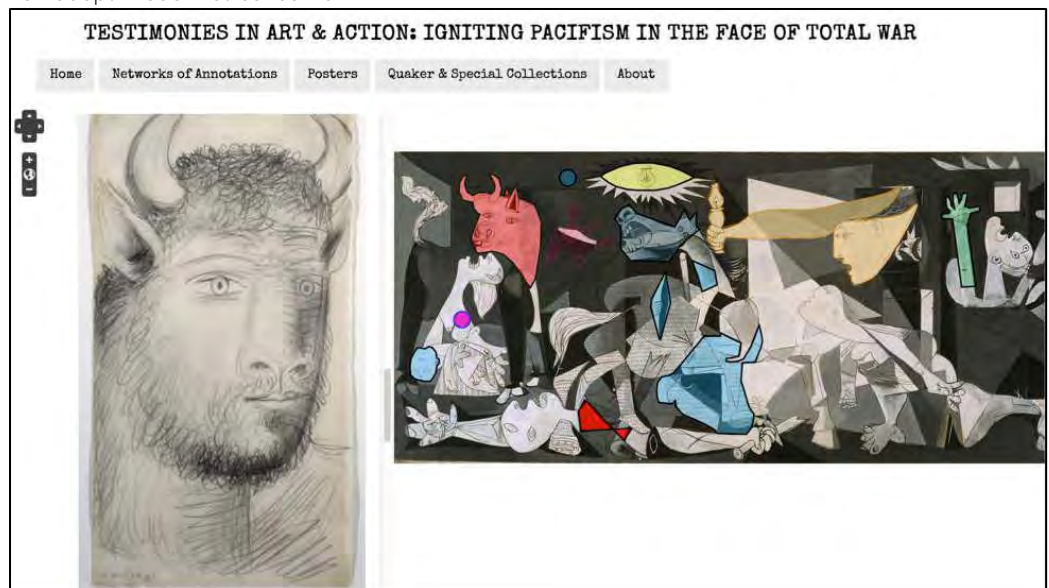


FIGURE 1: MADISON ARNOLD-SCERBO USES STAGES OF THE BULL TO ESTABLISH HER READING OF GUERNICA.

"final" versions of the texts and paintings themselves. This collage-like visual juxtaposition of the layers of creation alongside the finished product added variegated elements to the analysis of the text. Through these annotations, the students learned about researching, archival exploration, close reading, and analysis. The hands-on work of excavating and exploring the texts in their historical context and stages of creation allowed students to see the relationships among activism and writing, ethics and cultural production, by showing students how these artistic and civic works interacted within their current cultural moment. It also facilitated the creation of a visual argument that made apparent the palimpsest nature of the main texts.

Superimposing the stages of *Guernica* over the final painting allowed students to trace the politics in and pacifist genesis of Picasso's great mural. Responding to the brutal bombing of Basque civilians in the town of Guernica by fascist forces during the Spanish Civil War

is depicted in a more violent light, as he is covered in etched wounds. Therefore, Picasso's eventual drawing of a more peaceful child makes it clear that he wanted the viewer to contemplate the nature of death in the face of total war." [see figure 3] This analysis is conducted within

the context of a larger argument that responds to a class prompt that subverts Picasso's claim that "painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war."<sup>8</sup> The class prompt instead asked: "How is Picasso's *Guernica* an 'instrument' of peace?" Ultimately, Krapes argues, "Picasso's depiction of a dead child as a response to inhumane violence can be considered an 'instrument for peace', as it renounces the validity of blindly dropping bombs." From these examples, it becomes clear that students used the stages of *Guernica* to further understand the painting's relationship to, and

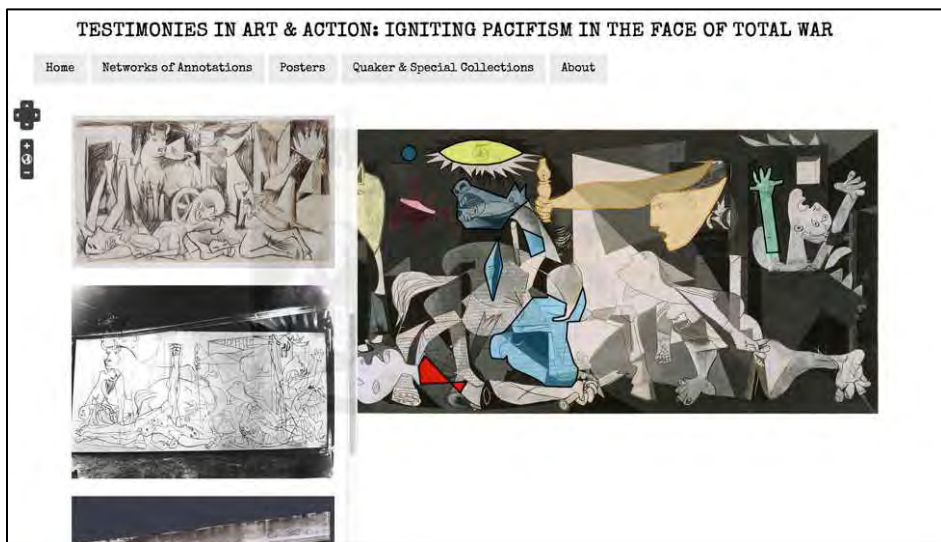


FIGURE 2: JOSHUA HILSCHER EXPLORES THE PRESENCE OF THE LIGHT BULB THROUGH THE STAGES OF GUERNICA.

(1936-1939), the painting represents the convergence of Picasso's communism, anti-fascism, and pacifism. Madison Arnold-Scerbo<sup>7</sup> traced the evolution of the bull through Picasso's studies, showing that the bull became progressively more "menacing," maintaining that "the contrast between the seemingly healthy bull and the death and devastation of the other figures clearly indicates a sympathetic feeling toward the victims and animosity towards the Nationalists." [see figure 1]

Another student, Joshua Hilscher, shows that the lightbulb in *Guernica* carries with it a critique of technology [see figure 2]. Arguing that although the light bulb was added to the mural late in the stages of creation, "the space was always reserved for politically-charged symbolism, first as a clenched fist, signifying a leftist salute, followed by a hand grasping a carrot, signifying a primitivist association of idyllic agriculture and simplicity." However, the light bulb has "an intrusive character, [ . . . ] One may imagine the waning lamentations of the dying peasantry, believing that technology only intruded their timeless lifestyle to inflict trauma."

Hannah Krapes, examining the studies of the dead child held by the wailing mother, illustrates that reading Picasso's studies next to the painting reinforces the pacifism inherent in the mural. She writes, "Here the child

intersectionality of, anti-fascism, communism and anarchism, and pacifism.

Excavating the layers of *Three Guineas* (1938) through identifying parallels between the text and the reading notebooks<sup>9</sup> Woolf kept before and during the writing of the text allows students to illuminate the ways in which Woolf used *Three Guineas* to combat patriarchy and the war-making system. These notebooks contain typed out excerpts of meaningful quotes and passages, letters, newspaper clippings, ephemera from the 1930s, and other items. A rich engagement of the intersectionality among Woolf's feminism, socialism, and pacifism—a trifold relationship that Jane Marcus points out in the introduction

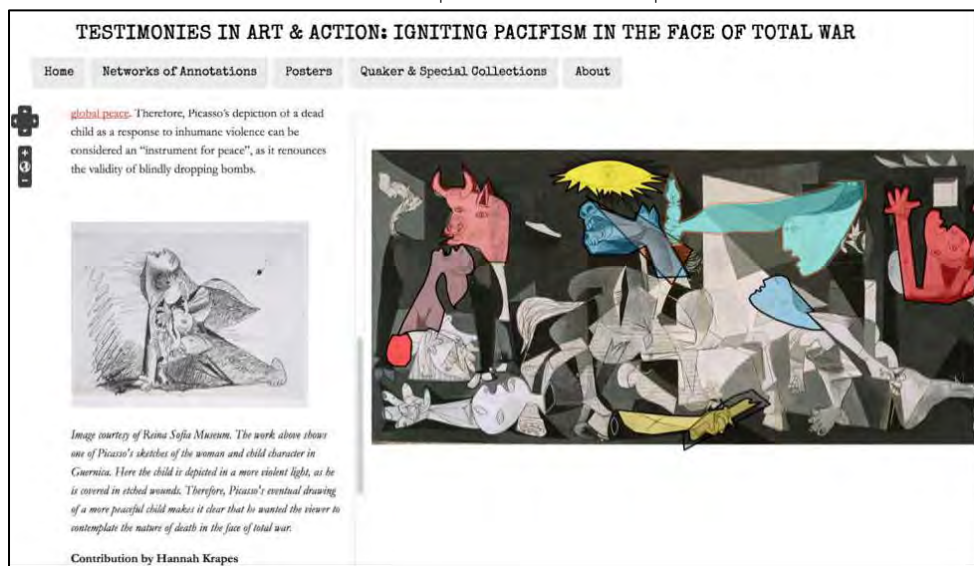


FIGURE 3: HANNAH KRAPES PROVIDES A PACIFIST UNDERSTANDING OF GUERNICA THROUGH EXAMINING THE STUDIES.

of the classes' addition of the text—unfolds in the students' annotations. Hanae Togami uses a quote from a

newspaper clipping about the necessity of the armed forces in cultivating “manly qualities,” to “deconstruct” the notion of the biological necessity of war. She writes, “Woolf deconstructs this concept contending that violent tendencies are not biological but stem from an education system that supports hostile competition; because women are not educated in formal settings, they cannot understand such tendencies (TG 2006 40).” Here, Togami gestures towards the way in which Woolf’s feminism and her call for education reform converge. Praxedes Quintana uses the scrapbooks to expose Woolf’s historical materialism and deep engagement with women’s financial independence, noting the inclusion of “Philip Mairet’s words about women’s supposed ‘love economic dependence’ on a male. Through the assumption that women enjoy the societally infantilized image of themselves, men are justified in their goals of keeping women under their thumbs financially.” Quintana exposes the specious argument that women want to rely monetarily on men, and works through how this argument is part of a Freudian “infantile fixation.” Emily Kingsley shows how Woolf’s feminism converges with her pacifism by building an argument that illuminates how men are “trapped” “within a fortress of their own creation.” She then goes on to argue that “Woolf empowers women to advance the anti-war cause by means of their outsider status—that ‘freedom from unreal loyalties’ which sets them apart from men (Three 1938 146).” Students, through this engagement of archival, textual, and artistic material, become able to trace the interaction between politics and aesthetics, and explore the intersectionality of socialism, feminism, anti-fascism, communism, and pacifism.

## Building a Peace Archive and Exhibition

On a parallel and complementary tract to the work with digital archives, the students also worked with original primary sources. The interface between the hands-on archival work the students undertook and the digital humanities project lead to the launching of *Testimonies in Art & Action: Igniting Pacifism in the Face of Total War*. Quaker & Special Collections houses peace pamphlets, ephemera, letters, journals, and memos from the Aid Spain campaign, to which both the British and American Quakers were significant contributors. When planning for the class, Sarah Horowitz and Foster discussed the materials available and their relationship to themes of the class; they wanted students to have hands-on experience with original primary sources in addition to their engagement with the digitized archival material discussed above. Horowitz planned a class in Quaker & Special Collections in which students were introduced to using archival materials and were asked to think holistically about them: not just what could be gleaned from the text, but from their material nature; not only their place in the archive but also how they interacted with the literature students had been reading. Students selected an item to further explore.

Early in the Spring semester of 2015, Foster met with the Librarian of the College, Terry Snyder, and asked if she could display the student digital humanities projects for a day. Inspired by City College’s digital art pop-up exhibition

*Bring Your Own Beamer*,<sup>10</sup> Foster wanted to project student work on the walls. Snyder suggested turning the display into a standing exhibition where the students could also curate and exhibit the College’s pertinent archival material expanding the scope of Foster’s vision immensely, and *Testimonies in Art & Action* was born. It became a multi-modal exhibition based on the guiding class questions, *what is an ethical response to total war? And, how can archives do the works of peace?*<sup>11</sup> Student digital humanities projects were cast onto the walls with huge projections alongside archival materials such as peace posters from the 1930s, ephemera, and reproductions of materials from other archives. Seven-foot vinyl decals from *Guernica* completed the effect.

The two Spring sections of the Peace Testimonies Writing Seminar worked diligently alongside Horowitz and Quaker & Special Collections staff to uncover intriguing materials. Each student, 24 in total, was responsible for choosing one item for the exhibition and writing an exhibit label which would be displayed with the item. While the label had a practical function in the exhibit production, it also gave students the opportunity to write for a public audience and required them to practice the difficult skill of writing concisely. Once each contributor had written their label, teams of student volunteers fact-checked, edited, and collaborated on the creation of the final texts for the exhibit.

Working with these materials allowed students to engage the practices of archival recovery, and illuminated how the archives contain lost stories, waiting to be uncovered and retold. Students chose a variety of items and worked across media and genres. Large 1930s peace posters were framed and hung alongside the digital projections and vinyl decals. Fundraising pamphlets, journals, letters, memos, and reports were identified, studied, and exhibited in three cases that stand in the gallery space. Students from the Fall 2015 semester, 23 in total, joined the Spring semester’s work in September, and were likewise asked to choose an item to display. On December 2, Horowitz re-organized the gallery cases and, in a pop-up format, hung new posters to allow the second semester’s work to be featured and included in the conversation.

This work empowered students to not only continue their interrogation of varieties of pacifism, but also to create connections among art, literature, and the activism of the Quakers. Many of the students used the Peace Studies term “positive peace” (introduced and formulated in Jean Mill’s writings on Virginia Woolf) to conceive of an activist pacifism that sought to construct a world that can sustain peace. Yutong Li, writing a label for an undated poster that says “Demand New World Conference,” brings together the notions of activist pacifism, Quaker relief efforts, positive peace, and the literary conversations of the 1930s. She notes that, “this poster, calling for a coordinated international effort in peace-building in place of force to deter war, sheds light on early explorations of what peace studies now call ‘positive peace.’” Connecting the discourse to Woolf and the Quakers, Li argues that, “In accordance with the Quaker effort to foster conditions for peace, contemporaneous pacifist writers such as Virginia



Woolf wrote about the role of socio-economic injustices (specifically financial and gender inequality) in the perpetuation of war . . . transforming pacifist activism from passive resistance of unethical wars to active promotion of peace.” Li situates the modernist pacifist effort within a larger history of pacifism, and locates an important trend of the convergence of social justice and activist pacifism while drawing parallels between the activism and art of the interwar era.

Writing about another poster called “Conscription,” Sydney Dorman interrogates larger ethical questions through the praxis of close reading. Maintaining that “the poster exposes war’s terrible nature with violent language,” Dorman avers “the causalities of total war beg the question, ‘How do we end war?’” Taking on this ethical mantle, Dorman offers one possible perspective, “For the Quaker community, the answer could be found within the creation of peaceful condition, complete reconciliation, and abstinence from fighting—thus conquering total war with total peace.” The hands-on engagement with archival materials, and the process of composing her label, facilitated Dorman’s construction of a counter-narrative, one that challenges “total war” with “total peace.” [see figure 4]

Engaging with primary documents also facilitated bringing students into ongoing discussions within academic fields. The debate surrounding the authenticity of Robert Capa’s famous photograph, “Spanish Civil War, near Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front,” most often referred to as “Falling Soldier,” has raised important questions concerning the relationship between photography and truth. Christin Bowen maintains, however, that “Allegations that this photograph was staged...do not take away from its pacifist message...‘Falling Soldier’ evokes an ethical call for peace by creating a sense of intimacy between the observer and subject during a dying man’s last moments.” The important lesson of this image is the way “the world was able to bear witness to the brutality of the war and feel affected by a far away conflict.”

*Estampas de la Revolución Española, 19 julio de 1936*, which features a collection of watercolors turned into stamps printed to raise money for the anti-fascist cause, allowed students to additionally explore the way in which representing war can glorify it. Sharim Jones points out that the picture *Guerrillera* “engenders positive feelings toward the cause of the Spanish people in fighting against the Fascist insurgents in Spain; it emphasizes the vivacious humanity of the Spaniards through endearing narratives and colorful imagery. Paradoxically, this painting screams for freedom in tones of war,” thus drawing attention to the iterative cycles between art and war.

Working on this exhibition, students came together to recover pacifist histories and construct counter-narratives of peace. Some contributors accomplished this by wading into ongoing debates in the disciplines, some found significant intersections among the authors, artists, and activists in our exhibition, some developed their own critical conversation and research questions that they pursued for the duration of the semester, and some asked overarching, and admittedly overwhelming, ethical

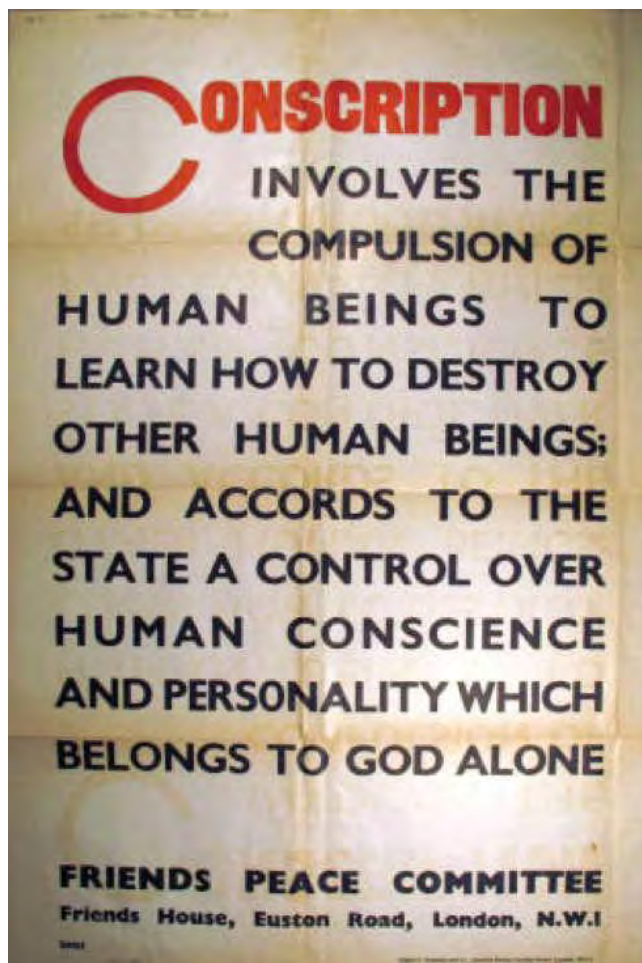


FIGURE 4: SYDNEY DORMAN OFFERS AN ANALYSIS OF THIS POSTER, “CHALLENG[ING] ‘TOTAL WAR’ WITH ‘TOTAL PEACE’”

questions. The juxtaposition of student digital-humanities projects alongside student-curated special collections materials allowed students to engage with a multitude of sources, conduct archival research, and work hands-on with primary documents. Despite all the exhilarating moments, and despite the astounding quality and consistency of the work, there were some challenges. We would like to take a moment to mention some of the challenges we encountered, and would also like to imagine ways in which interwar and pacifist archival recovery can be conducted in institutions that lack the resources available at Haverford College.

## Challenges and Translatability

As one might imagine, the biggest challenge involved in launching the exhibition as part of the course was time. Not only was the organization, creation, and execution of materials a consuming (though joyful and exhilarating) endeavor, but balancing these tasks within a course syllabus required a great deal of pedagogical acrobatics. The creation of the exhibition materials served important learning goals; however, students still needed to produce three formal papers of various lengths and practice thesis writing and structural skills for longer, sustained arguments. The digital projects and exhibition labels amounted to a fourth “paper” when put together.

Haverford's tutorial practice, where students share papers, engage in peer-review, and meet in small groups with the professor to critique each other's work, also added an additional consideration for the timeline of assignments. Because students meet with the professor at intervals over the course of a week, and then need time for revision, this necessitated that while formal papers were "under review," students were writing and producing annotations and other materials. Though this kind of multi-tasking and juggling multiple projects is an essential skill to develop for most workplaces, a small group of students felt their energies were too divided between projects and would have preferred to work on one thing at a time.

Additionally, it was harder to integrate the Fall semester's sections into the series of events than we had imagined. The Spring semester sections were part of the process from the beginning and were essential in creating the vision of the exhibition. This group of students, having had a real stake in the building of the terms of the exhibition, reflected great pride and investment in it. Their work was the most predominantly featured, and they collaboratively co-authored the initial curatorial statement and labels. While most of the Fall classes, all first-semester freshman, connected with the importance of the discourse and the kind of contribution they were making to the community, a few did not emotionally relate to their part in the process. All students contributed, and contributed well—we were very proud of all of them and their work, but a small handful from the Fall class failed to see how the exhibition, the digital projects, and the surrounding events benefitted them or their immediate community. Having joined in the middle of the process, all of them did not have the same level of ownership and realization of the vision the Spring semester's sections did. It was potentially overwhelming for first-semester freshman to walk into an undertaking of this scale without witnessing the full evolution and unfolding of the construction. These considerations stated, the net benefit of the exhibition was enormous, and all the students, even if they could not recognize how special their own work was, made a great contribution to the discourses of modernist, peace, and Quaker studies. As the next section will address, the exhibition allowed students to become critical participants in discussions of war and peace, writing and activism, and art and ethics. Using the archives radicalized the students to find their own scholarly voices and create intersections among social justice movements.

*Using the archives radicalized the students to find their own scholarly voices and create intersections among social justice movements.*

Haverford College, a small, private liberal arts institution, has enormous resources and networks of support for faculty and students. This undertaking would not have been possible without encouragement from the library, funding from the library and other sections of the College, and the expertise of the special collections and

digital scholarship teams. How might faculty at institutions that do not have such resources, or which do not have rich holdings of original primary sources, incorporate archives and special collections materials in their own classrooms? There are many special collections of materials available online, some of them radical activist "peace archives." In the previous sections of this article, we described how students used the online repositories of the Monk's House Papers (Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks for *Three Guineas*) and the stages of *Guernica* housed by the Reina Sofia. The TriCollege Libraries, a consortium of Haverford, Bryn Mawr, and Swarthmore Colleges, has likewise digitized many of its Quaker and peace-related holdings. For the radical teacher, significantly, the Warwick Digital Collections has opened a vast amount of resources to international scholars and students that are radical in nature. The King Center has publicized Martin Luther King, Jr.'s papers in a dynamic and interactive way, where users can scroll over a collage of his papers, gain information, and then click on a specific piece for the full item.

While the digital humanities components of this class and exhibition benefitted from the expertise of Allen and the library infrastructure, Omeka is a freely available software, and social media sites, such as Tumblr and Pinterest, can be used to similar effect.<sup>12</sup> Radical teachers should also not discount their local archives, historical societies, and other holders of primary source materials. Because finding aids are often written in the context of the dominant historical discourse, peace archives may not be easily discoverable. Collaborating with an archivist or librarian may uncover a treasure-trove of materials in unexpected places; even colleges that collect only their own history may have materials related to student reactions to the Vietnam War, for instance. Teachers can also encourage students to read against the grain and in between the lines of materials that might not seem radical on the surface. In short, the radical teacher can find many potential sites of connection for students to utilize archives, allowing students to develop political and cultural contexts around studying art, literature, and activism.

## Changing the Subject

The creation of *Testimonies in Art & Action* turned students into contributors and authors of a critical discourse concerning war and peace. The organization, series of events, and construction of materials surrounding this exhibition allowed students to collaborate alongside Foster, the library staff, with each other, and distinguished scholars in the fields of modernist, peace, and Quaker studies. The opening of *Testimonies in Art & Action* was preceded by a panel presentation entitled "*Three Guineas, Pacifist Activism, and the Event of Total War*," featuring distinguished scholars Jessica Berman, Farah Mendlesohn, Jean Mills, and Paul Saint-Amour. These four scholars also conducted class visits and spent time with students outside of class, and offered students the opportunity to be exposed to and in direct conversation with significant contributors to fields that think through war and peace, ethics, and responses to total war. In addition, at the events surrounding the exhibition over two semesters,

students conversed with members of the community at laptop stations, giving them the opportunity to articulate what they had completed, to explain to those outside the class the significance of their projects, and to engage in direct academic conversation.

In the brainstorming for the exhibition, students came up with the idea of creating a “mind-map” that showed how the authors, artists, and activists we studied were linked through ideological intersectionality. Locating the major themes of the class and the texts, students then connected these themes—which included concepts such as “socialism,” “communism,” “feminism,” “racial equality,” “ethical call,” and so on—to the students’ annotations, not only connecting the authors and artists to each other, but situating their own work within the middle of this discussion. Four students then collaborated to construct the actual map: Mairéad Ferry, Marcelo Juaregui-Volpe, Sophie McGlynn, and Jiaming (Rosalind) Xu. This map became Juaregui-Volpe’s main project as a summer worker—he took the original file and converted it to Neatline, adding the connection of the different idea bubbles to the student labels written on the Quaker relief work and special collections material, thus further identifying connections among the 1930s activists and the students’ scholarship. [see figure 5]

Five other students volunteered to help shape the vision for and worked on launching *Testimonies in Art & Action* over the summer. Christina Bowen, Adetomiwa Famodu, Ann-Victoria Isaac, Sophie McGlynn, and Ian Wheeler all brought creative vision to our undertaking and were essential contributors. Each found their niche in working with the materials; Famodu and Isaac helped generate the initial curatorial statement and materials; Wheeler took responsibility for editing, combining, and collating the labels; Bowen became very invested in the layout and design of the walls to the extent that she did the initial layout and learned to use an architecture program to map the materials; McGlynn compiled proposals, conceptually mapped the annotations to create videos for the large projections, and added copy. As news headlines about the Syrian refugee crisis announced that we were witnessing the biggest refugee crisis since World War II, the students demanded that we bring the exhibition into the present day. They made the argument that we were ethically obliged to include current materials concerning total war, and Bowen undertook a compilation of news articles that documented current humanitarian crises occurring throughout the globe. We used these news articles to tie the exhibition to our current cultural moment by placing QR codes and labels that drew a

parallel between the 1930s and the present on each wall and a map of current global crises on the last wall.

Working with the materials at Haverford, and connecting these archives to Picasso, Woolf, Rukeyser, and Hughes as well as the present day allowed students to operate in a networked structure of intersections and connections, linking a number of progressive and activist discourses, all while theorizing disparate modes of pacifism. Not only did they connect their work to the authors, with the digital humanities projects they hyperlinked to each other’s work and developed clusters of themes that interlinked to other clusters. This interlinking

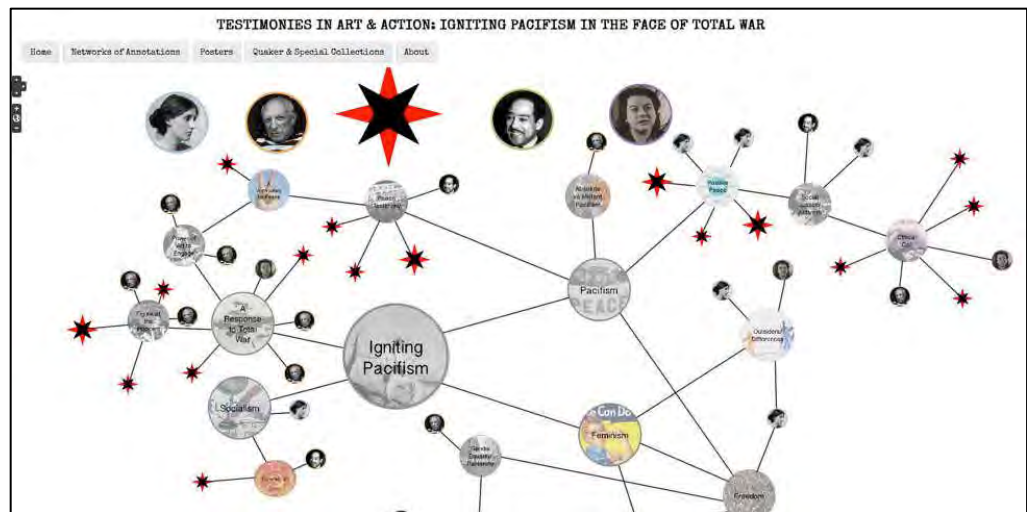


FIGURE 5: MARCELO JUAREGUI-VOLPE’S PROJECT WAS TO CREATE THIS MIND-MAP ON OMEKA AND ADD THE QUAKER CONNECTIONS.

created an elaborate web of activism in which the students became an essential part. Putting Muriel Rukeyser in dialogue with the Quaker relief work and Woolf (though the allusion to “gender equality”), Jiaming (Rosalind) Xu also situates Rukeyser historically:

By staying emotionally connected with the Spanish people, Rukeyser actualized the call of unity from Quaker Peace Testimonies and actively contributed to peace.

Furthermore, though Rukeyser escaped the Spanish Civil war, she hadn’t escaped the possibility of another, bigger war . . . some persisting social conflicts . . . that include fascism fighting against peace, patriarchy struggling against gender equality and class conflicts . . . might evolve into war, the ultimate manifestation of conflicts. . . . The only way to achieve peace, indeed, was to resolve these underlying social conflicts.

Here, we can see the connection that Xu makes among “persisting social conflicts” and war, issuing a powerful call to “resolve these underlying social conflicts.”

Using the peace studies notion of “positive peace,” in interrogating a Quaker poster, Sophie McGlynn connects special collections material to Hughes, Rukeyser, and Woolf. She writes:

Can peace ever be stable when injustice exists, and is just violence even possible? This poster, created by the London Quaker Friends in 1938, propels us to the heart of such questions by instantly equating peace and justice. Yet the Quakers were not alone in making this association. Virginia Woolf connects these ideas by **setting women's rights (justice) as a precondition** for preventing war (peace). Langston Hughes argues the inextricability of communism (which he views as the path to peace) and racial equality (justice). Muriel Rukeyser shows that giving war victims a voice (justice) is an ethical undertaking in her quest for peace in Spain. Like the Quakers, these authors all worked within a field now called **"positive peace": exploring how to construct a world not only free of war, but where societies and institutions actively promote justice for all, thus generating a lasting peace.**

Taking on the large ethical question of what a sustainable peace looks like, this label creates an intricate intersectionality amongst various modes of justice ("women's rights," "racial equality," and "giving war victims a voice") and peace. This label shows both the convergences and divergences of the disparate pacifisms put forth by the course materials.

This convergence and divergence of pacifisms is likewise discussed by the materials that Isaac constructed for the pop-up exhibition. **Isaac's poignant summation of each thinker's pacifism originated with her in-class presentation, given on the last day of class.** Isaac imparts:

- Pacifisms are anti-war views that are needed because of the repercussions of wars on **individuals, as Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* teaches us.**
- Pacifism is the dependence of local pacifism on global pacifism, as Virginia Woolf teaches us.
- Pacifism is an anti-war view that derives or is **conveyed in a child's innocence, as Aurora de Albornoz teaches us.**
- Pacifism does not mean that one needs to forget about the wars of the past. Forgive these wars, yes but one should absolutely NOT forget them, as Scott Hightower teaches us.
- Pacifism includes a subset called semi-pacifism, which means that one can express pacifist views but also believe that people need to fight for these pacifist views. Hence, a semi-pacifist is said to partially believe in pacifist views (debatable), as Rukeyser teaches us.
- Pacifism goes beyond war; it also involves issues such as oppression and discrimination, as Hughes teaches us.

From these examples, we can see that work with the archives, digging into the politics of artists, activists, and writers, and finding conceptual intersections between **course materials and the students' work itself allows**

students to become creators of a critical discourse. These students all fully engaged radical pacifist philosophies and generated a network of conceptual thought that challenges the notions of patriarchy, capitalism, and racism. **These students' work shows that a lasting peace must be built on racial, gender, and social equality, social justice, and human rights.** In thinking through the ethics of war and peace, students all contributed to **"changing the subject" (to invoke the epigraph above) from war to peace.** Instead of averring that the only way to respond to total war is with more war, these students started thinking about different modes of pacifist intervention. They all considered ways to *ignite pacifism in the face of total war.*

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Here we invoke and echo Jacques Derrida's famous statement "there is nothing outside of the text" (158).

<sup>2</sup> Foster is currently working on formulating a theory of the "peace archive" into a book project.

<sup>3</sup> This phrase from Foster's article "Recovering Pacifisms Past," was inspired by Saint-Amour's phrase "peacetimes past" (130).

<sup>4</sup> The class material and theoretical webbing was based upon the work Foster undertook for her dissertation *Modernism's Impossible Witness: Peace Testimonies from the Modernist Wars*. The central question of the text and what drove the research—*what is an ethical response to total war, or, how does one respond ethically to total war*—informed the themes of the class and, by extension, the exhibition itself.

<sup>5</sup> The analytic of "modernist pacifist documentary projects" is inspired by Jane Marcus's writings and teachings on women's documentaries. Continuing Marcus's legacy, there is now a community of scholars, including Magdalena Bogacka, Ann Donlan, and Rowena Kennedy-Epstein engaged in discussing women's documentary projects from the modernist era. The added dimension of pacifism to this manifold demonstrates the intersectionality between feminism and pacifism of the modernist era, among a number of other intersectionalities between the peace and social justice movements.

<sup>6</sup> "Testimony," as it is used here, draws upon the language of the Society of Friends (the Quakers). Quakers employ the term testimony to signify the set of actions that embody core beliefs and values. The testimonies historically are named as: simplicity, integrity, peace, equality, community, and today more progressively, sustainability. For further reading on the testimonies, see the website Quakers in Britain: Faith and Action. The convergence of the peace and social justice testimonies during the 1930s is developed throughout and a central argument of Farah Mendlesohn's *Quaker Relief Work in the Spanish Civil War*.

<sup>7</sup> We have received permission from students to quote them, and we use their full names here because the class materials are in the public domain--student names are listed online and accredited with each annotation. This use of their names also further includes them in academic communities as producers of critical discourse.

<sup>8</sup> This quote is in the epigraph to Russell Martin's *Picasso's War*.

<sup>9</sup> The digital archive of the *Three Guineas* Reading Notebooks Website, hosted by Southern Connecticut State University, with the permission of the University of Sussex and the Society of Authors of Great Britain, identifies the notebooks as having "entries dating from as early as 1927 to December, 1937."

<sup>10</sup> Many thanks to Zoe Berger for introducing Foster to this exhibition.

<sup>11</sup> This latter question is currently being worked into the theory of the "peace archive," and its articulation was informed by the collaborative work with Sarah Horowitz, the team in Quaker & Special Collections, and this exhibition.

<sup>12</sup> In the current semester, Foster is in fact using Pinterest to allow students to curate their own "peace archive."



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# RADICAL TEACHER

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

## From Archives to Action: Zines, Participatory Culture, and Community Engagement in Asian America

By Todd Honma



FIGURE 1. GRAPHIC FROM THE COVER OF THE FIRST ISSUE OF *GIDRA*  
ALL ILLUSTRATIONS PROVIDED BY AUTHOR

## Introduction

Zines are currently experiencing a resurgence across the country. The proliferation of zine fests, zine distros, and zine makers (or zinesters) point to a rejuvenation in zine culture not seen since the 1990s. For those unfamiliar with zines, R. Seth Friedman, publisher of the now defunct *Factsheet Five*, defines a zine as a “small handmade amateur publication done purely out of passion, rarely making any money or breaking even” (quoted in Chu, 1997). Stephen Duncombe, author of the seminal zine text *Notes from the Underground*, provides this definition: “zines are noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish, and distribute by themselves” (Duncombe, 2008). In addition to the renewed interest in the production of zines, a concerted effort to archive zines has also been growing. Zine archivists (both professional and DIY, or do-it-yourself) have established institutional archives (e.g., Bernard College Zine Collection), community based archives (e.g., Independent Publishing Resource Center in Portland, Zine Archive & Publishing Project in Seattle) and digital archives (e.g., Queer Zine Archive Project, POC Zine Project, Digital Fanzine Preservation Society). These zine archives have not only helped to preserve this ephemeral form of material culture, they have also created new pathways for learning about marginalized histories by increasing accessibility to these once obscure documents.

Zines are often used in the classroom to promote alternative pedagogies and forms of creative self-expression that are unencumbered by the need for technological skill or pressures to conform to particular aesthetics or abilities. Because of their do-it-yourself ethos, zines are often embraced by those from marginalized backgrounds because of their freedom to experiment with different modes of writing, expression, and presentation. Previous studies about zines in the classroom emphasize their effectiveness in bolstering individual agency and self-actualization (Chu, 1997; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004). In a way, this makes sense given how zines are often framed in mainstream discourse as a DIY project geared toward self-expression and individuality (Duncombe, 2008). Less attention has been devoted to the ways in which zines can be used to foster off-campus community partnerships and community engagement. The aim of this article is to highlight the latter approach to zine creation, or what Piepmeier refers to as the “embodied community” of zine culture (Piepmeier, 2008). The community aspects of zines include resource sharing, skills development, and the promotion of participatory culture, in which everyone is encouraged to contribute according to their own capacities towards a shared collective experience. Shifting from the individualistic focus of zines to their role in community building entails establishing a counter-narrative that frames zine-making within a history of political activism. Presenting zines as part of a larger archive of social movement history is key in this regard. Such a reframing is particularly important when teaching about the topic of Asian American zines and their relationship to community mobilization and social transformation.

I teach in the Asian American Studies department at a private liberal arts college in Los Angeles county where I regularly offer a course about Asian American zines and community engagement. The college has a longstanding history of emphasizing social justice and intercultural understanding within its curriculum, and the course contributes to the social responsibility praxis breadth requirement at the college. The course, entitled Zines, Creativity, Community, examines different forms of zine-making and DIY politics and the relationship of zines to community collaboration and social transformation. The guiding question we consider throughout the course is: how can we combine our labor, creativity, and available materials to come up with forms of individual and collective expression and empowerment (vis-a-vis zines) for use in community building and social change? One of the key aspects of this course is understanding how zines embody a form of participatory culture, mindful of the political and ethical concerns that such participation entails. In other words, the course is designed to create a space in which students enact a praxis (theory and practice) of participatory action and empowerment in communities beyond the college campus.

**Zines are often used in the classroom to promote alternative pedagogies and forms of creative self-expression that are unencumbered by the need for technological skill or pressures to conform to particular aesthetics or abilities.**

Because the college attracts a population of students who are already motivated to pursue critical inquiry around issues of social justice, the students who enroll in my class are usually quite enthusiastic about making the linkages between art and activism using zines. The racial demographics of the students are usually mixed, with varying degrees of familiarity with Asian American studies, as a discipline, and Asian American experiences, in general. In order to create a common base of knowledge, the first few class sessions involve contextualizing zines within a history of independent publishing, grassroots movements, and community activism. In particular, this entails understanding how independent publishing was a pivotal aspect of the Asian American Movement of the 1960s and 1970s in constructing a shared racial identity and a forum for mobilizing communities against social injustice.

One publication in particular stands out during this time period: the radical grassroots newspaper *Gidra*, which is known as the premier Asian American movement periodical (Maeda, 2009). *Gidra* occupies an important place in the history of Asian American zines. It was founded by UCLA students who desired an alternative publication that was accountable to the communities where they came from. *Gidra* is often credited for galvanizing an entire generation of Asian Americans to take action against social injustice, racial discrimination, and oppression. Eric Nakamura, the founder of the highly influential zine-



turned-magazine *Giant Robot*, has cited *Gidra* as being one of the inspirations for his own work. Nakamura views *Gidra* as launching the first wave of Asian American zines in the 1970s. This history is important to our understanding of zines because it establishes zines as a community-based endeavor, built on collaboration, radical politics, and social change.

Recently, the online Densho Archives ([www.densho.org](http://www.densho.org)) has worked with one of the founders of *Gidra*, Mike Murase, to digitize the entire run of the periodical (1969-1974). Densho's mission is to make accessible primary sources that "document the Japanese American experience from immigration in the early 1900s through redress in the 1980s with a strong focus on the World War II mass incarceration." According to their website, "Densho is a Japanese term meaning 'to pass on to the next generation,' or to leave a legacy." Densho's *Gidra* archive serves an important function in making this part of the Asian American experience widely accessible to those seeking to understand a history that often goes unnoticed.

**When teaching about Asian American zine culture, I place zines within an oppositional history of Asian American independent publishing and its relationship to community politicization and mobilization.**

As a pedagogical tool, zines exist at the intersection of radical history, analog creativity, participatory culture, and community involvement. By situating zine culture within a genealogy of resistance and community mobilization, students are encouraged to see themselves as a part of this history and to continue this legacy in their own class projects. As Schwartz and Cook point out, "Archives validate our experiences, our perceptions, our narratives, our stories" (Schwartz & Cook, 2002). Using archives in the classroom enables students to make the connection between their work and the struggles that have come before them. This article presents one example of how to make the connection between community archives and community action. The first half of this article discusses the use of Densho's online archive of the complete print run of *Gidra* as a way to teach students about community experiences, perceptions, narratives, and stories through the examination of histories of Asian American independent publishing, racial formation, and grassroots activism. The second part of this article moves from archives to action, illustrating how students can use the skills and knowledge that they learn from these archival materials and apply them to current events and community-based projects.

## Learning from *Gidra*

During its five year print run, *Gidra* covered a wide spectrum of topics, ranging from anti-war protests to the prison industrial complex to Asian American fashion to how

to fix a toilet. Today, it is mostly remembered for its influence in Asian American community politics, and its role in establishing a radical pan-Asian political consciousness (Lopez, 2011; Maeda, 2009). *Gidra* also inspired similar Asian American independent publications across the country. At the same time, *Gidra* embodied not just a particular form that is relevant to thinking about zines and community-based media, but also a particular ethos of participation, collaboration, and interdependency that is part of the culture of zine making. In describing the relationships that cohered around the creation of *Gidra*, Mike Murase writes: "It has been an experience in sharing—in giving and receiving—in a sisterly and brotherly atmosphere. It has meant a chance to actively work for something we really believe in. It has meant a chance to express ourselves in a variety of ways. It has been a lesson in humility and perseverance. It has meant working with people who care about people, and genuinely feeling the strength that can only come out of collective experience" (Murase, 1976).

When teaching about Asian American zine culture, I place zines within an oppositional history of Asian American independent publishing and its relationship to community politicization and mobilization. When we cover this particular module on zine history, I assign students the task of exploring the online *Gidra* archive and ask them to approach it as a resource in thinking about the relationship between content and form. I encourage students to investigate the specific topics, concepts, and issues that were pertinent back then, and reflect upon the ways in which the messages were conveyed, paying attention to aesthetics, layout, tone, and language. To supplement the archival sources, I also show a clip of the film *Drawing the Line: Japanese American Art, Design, and Activism in Post-War Los Angeles*, which features interviews with founding members of *Gidra* and explains the publication's mission and aesthetic strategies. During classroom report back, we examine how creativity can be used to convey a political message, using a variety of strategies including graphics, illustrations, poems, comics, letters, personal essays, and journalism. We discuss how this DIY mixed media style is similar to the tools used in what we now recognize as the aesthetics of zines.

We then spend time in class exploring how materials in the *Gidra* archive guide us in understanding four inter-related themes: (1) identity and action; (2) positionality and politics; (3) local and global; and (4) campus and community. Using the *Gidra* materials they encountered in the Densho archive, students form small groups to discuss and brainstorm about each of these four topics and to present what they talk about to the class. Some of the key themes and concepts that we covered include the following.

### Identity & Action

When combing through the *Gidra* archive, students were struck by both individual and collective forms of identity formation and the politics of representation. For example, one Asian American student remarked how powerful it was to see Asian Americans represent themselves on their own terms, challenging stereotypical

images found in dominant media where Asian Americans are tokenized as foreign, exotic, or the model minority. We also discussed how the members of *Gidra* contextualized their work within broader histories of activism, drawing parallels to other movements and historical events (Japanese internment, Filipino farmworkers movement, the Vietnam War) in order to define an Asian American identity. This prompts discussion about theories of racial formation, or what Omi and Winant characterize as “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (Omi & Winant, 1994). We also examined the use of local narratives to address larger issues; for example, how current events at the time, such as corporate redevelopment in Little Tokyo, city and county electoral politics, and student activism at UCLA, connect to broader understandings about capitalism, resistance, and the development the Yellow Power movement. This provides students specific examples of how a pan-ethnic Asian American identity emerged from community activism and movements for self-determination (Omatsu, 2000).

### **Positionality & Politics**

By reading *Gidra*, students come to realize the relationship between their positionality or social location and their political worldview. More specifically, students remarked on how members of *Gidra* were able to create a close-knit community with people who share a common positionality and political viewpoint. We discussed how engaging in political projects shapes your position in your community, and we also emphasized the need to engage in praxis, or the way in which politics and positionality inform each other through a constant cycle of action and reflection. As one student mentioned, one of the lessons that *Gidra* offers is how to embrace a dynamic view of identity: how your identity reflects upon what you do and how you take action. In addition, the very act of creating a community around independent publishing demonstrates how you can use writing to explore the relationship between positionality and politics for others to read and learn from.

### **Local & Global**

The articles in *Gidra* are useful in thinking about the interconnectedness between the local and the global. For example, students identified how Asian American identity and activism have been influenced by both local issues (racialization in the United States) and global issues (migration, war). Because the demographic profile of Asian America continues to be shaped by the constant inflow of migration to the United States, global geopolitics are an important part of how we think about Asian America, both historically and in the present (Lowe, 1996). For example, Asian American activists in the 1970s struggled against the influx of capital and corporate redevelopment from overseas investors, particularly in regards to the impact this had on ethnic communities such as Little Tokyo. As the political writing in the pages of *Gidra* indicate, the burgeoning Asian American internationalism of movement activists created a broader Asian American consciousness about how domestic and international spheres are connected. When students in the class investigated this

aspect of Asian American history, they particularly noted the impact that global U.S. expansion and imperialism had on local identities. They highlighted how the members of *Gidra* thought of themselves as children of imperialism, and how this fostered a collective response in coming together under an Asian American pan-ethnic framework (Espiritu, 1992).

### **Campus & Community**

One of the more immediately relevant topics that *Gidra* asks students to consider is the connection between campus and community, particularly the role that students play beyond the classroom. Many of the articles in *Gidra* focus on the fight to establish ethnic studies within higher education. This allows us, as a class, to discuss the various contributions that ethnic studies has made to the college curriculum. For example, we are able to contextualize our Asian American zines class as a legacy of the fight for ethnic studies, and how our class curriculum is indebted to the call from ethnic studies, and more specifically Asian American activists, to redefine education and re-orient student learning to address the particular problems found in marginalized ethnoracial communities (Omatsu, 2003). Some of the central tenets of ethnic studies include drawing upon community knowledge and moving beyond the separation of campus and community. In this context, the classroom becomes a place to redefine what education entails, honoring local knowledge and learning from the community. Some of the lessons that members of *Gidra* wrote about that resonated with students included how to use campus resources to address community needs and how to sustain the movement. Since the college population is characterized by an inherently limited temporality, these issues continue to resonate with students to this day.

The four themes indicated above allow students to make linkages between what Asian America means then and now. From research in the archive, students realize how the issues that were covered in *Gidra* continue to be relevant for Asian Americans (and other marginalized communities) up to the present day. In particular, we focus on the struggle around gentrification, fair and affordable housing, tenants' rights, and the destructive forces of capitalism, neoliberalism, and urban renewal. As Mike Murase states in the final issue of *Gidra*, “The ever-changing conditions call for deeper analysis, new strategies and greater resolve. And we need to understand the present, not as a static and isolated instant, but as a flowing moment in history” (Murase, 1976). By highlighting how the struggle against gentrification is not just a historical phenomenon but an issue that continues to affect Asian American and other ethnoracial communities in the present, we are able to investigate a concrete example of the how the present is indeed part of a “flowing moment in history,” as Murase suggests.

Using the *Gidra* archive as a way to connect the past and present also provides students with a foundation to think about how independent media, like community newspapers and zines, can be used to instigate change in local communities. To illustrate this point, we discussed the fight against corporate development in Little Tokyo, its negative effects on the Japanese American community, and

how Asian Americans organized forms of grassroots resistance to protest these changes. This discussion underscores the importance of student participation in social justice campaigns and the struggle against capitalist redevelopment that decimate economically disenfranchised communities. Topically this is relevant for their community project that focuses on gentrification in Los Angeles Chinatown. *Gidra* provides an example of how to employ various aesthetic strategies to depict controversies around corporate development and community mobilization against top down “urban renewal.” [See Figures 2 and 3] By creating these linkages, students are challenged to conceive of the archive as a living history—rather than a static and isolated repository—and in so doing, apply their knowledge from the archive to community action as part of their community zine project.



FIGURE 3. PHOTOGRAPH FROM *GIDRA* DEPICTING COMMUNITY ACTIVISM IN LITTLE TOKYO



FIGURE 2. ILLUSTRATION FROM *GIDRA* DEPICTING CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT IN LITTLE TOKYO

### Connecting to the Community

*Gidra* serves as a model for community-engaged publishing and collaborative work ethic. Just as *Gidra* addressed the uneven urban development and the lack of affordable housing in Little Tokyo in the 1970s, our community zine project focuses on gentrification and tenants’ rights in Los Angeles Chinatown in the current moment. Since the expansion of the Metro Gold Line and the redevelopment of Downtown Los Angeles (located just south of Chinatown), increasing numbers of urban professionals have moved into the area, displacing local residents. Many families in Chinatown live below the poverty line, and these residents feel the immediate effects of gentrification in their neighborhood (Mai & Chen, 2013; Park & Lin, 2008). High cost luxury apartments are replacing affordable housing, driving long-time residents out of the area. Furthermore, the affordable housing that is available exists at substandard levels. Working with the local community organization Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED), the students in the class strategize about how zines can be used to uncover unheard voices, foster education and outreach, and mobilize the Chinatown community. In this way, students are encouraged to connect the concepts and strategies of *Gidra* to the themes of the community project as a way to continue the legacy of using community-based media to address community needs.



FIGURE 4. CCED LOGO

CCED is a multiethnic, inter-generational community organization made up of activists, residents, small business owners, workers, youth, and friends of LA Chinatown. [See Figure 4] CCED was founded in 2012 in response to Walmart's controversial plans to develop in Chinatown, a move that many in the community believed would have detrimental effects on the residents and businesses in Chinatown. According to the mission statement on the CCED website ([www.ccedla.org](http://www.ccedla.org)), CCED's goal is to build grassroots power with low-income and immigrant communities to preserve the integrity of LA Chinatown as a vibrant and diverse ethnic and cultural space, where everyone is valued for their talents and contributions to the larger community. Through organization, education and mutual help, CCED seeks to revitalize a thriving Chinatown with good jobs for residents, clean recreational spaces, affordable housing, and accessible education. Currently, CCED is the only Chinatown grassroots organization to organize, mobilize, and create a presence in LA Chinatown that is opposed to residential and business redevelopment and the destruction of its traditional character.

As part of their community project, students in the class connect with members of CCED and collaborate to create a zine project that addresses the organization's goal of advocating for the Chinatown community in the fight against gentrification. In addition to the *Gidra* issues in the Densho Archive, I also expose students to the work of contemporary zinesters who have published zines about gentrification in various cities, such as New Orleans, Brooklyn, San Francisco, Portland, London, and Toronto. [See Figures 5 and 6] This allows students to contextualize their work both historically and within the current moment, as gentrification is a phenomenon that is happening in major cities around the world, with many community-based zines emerging to confront this issue.



FIGURES 5 AND 6. RECENT ZINES ADDRESSING THE TOPICS OF GENTRIFICATION AND TENANTS' RIGHTS

The goals of the community project are: to learn about tenants' rights, gentrification, and the current problems in LA Chinatown; to support CCED in existing projects and campaign work; to raise awareness on campus and locally about current issues affecting Chinatown; to develop outreach skills by talking to community members and other students; and to foster a community-based praxis including mindfulness of one's own positionality and critical self-reflection. Developing a community-based zine is a collaborative process that involves a multi-method approach to research, preparation, engagement, and production, including site visits to LA Chinatown and conducting oral histories/interviews. For example, students participated in CCED sponsored events (e.g., Lunar New Year celebration) and worked with members of CCED on door-to-door outreach to raise awareness about tenants' rights and to learn about the difficulties that Chinatown residents are experiencing. They also interviewed members of the community to gather oral histories and testimonies about substandard housing conditions that could then be incorporated into the zine project.

By encouraging students to work closely with the community organization and members of the Chinatown community, the community zine project challenges the individualization of learning found in today's neoliberal

classroom, which "limit students' perspectives about their capacities to contribute to the common good" (Bencze & Carter, 2011). As Peter McLaren points out, the neoliberalization of education works to "suppress the teaching of oppositional and critical thought that would challenge the rule of capital . . . [and] ensures the ideological and economic reproduction that benefits the ruling class" (McLaren, 2003). Working together as a group requires that students enact a critical, collective engagement with the uneven material conditions of the world around them. In particular, collaborating with CCED on the class project connects coursework to real world issues and expands the students' understanding of their own capacity to contribute to social change. It also impresses upon students the importance of working in solidarity with historically disenfranchised communities, exposing them to the ways in which Asian American communities harness their own agency to empower themselves and develop a political voice in confronting issues affecting their community (Võ, 2004). As Janelle Wong notes, nonprofit social service agencies and community-based organizations are among the most active institutions mobilizing immigrants politically today, and this work helps to foster a sense of belonging, self-worth, and avenues for political involvement, using unique and creative strategies (Wong, 2006).

The zine project highlights the experiences of Chinatown residents who face various obstacles in accessing the political apparatus that would allow them to enact social change. A majority of the residents are seniors, low income, with limited English proficiency, and limited understanding of their rights as tenants. Housing management takes advantage of the vulnerability of this population by using unlawful tactics to intimate residents from taking action. Tenants face problems such as environmental health hazards, unlawful rent increases or eviction notifications, and substandard living conditions such as apartments left in a perpetual state of disrepair. The zine helps to amplify the voices of the dispossessed and opens up avenues to circulate the stories of the injustices that are occurring in this community. The mutual collaboration between the students, CCED, and Chinatown residents contribute to a larger political project that aims to transform the oppressed from passive victims to agents of history (Freire, 2000). For the students, learning from elders in the community demystifies the structure of property ownership and property relations and fosters the development of a critical consciousness and a mindfulness about the different creative approaches that can be used in the struggle for social transformation. In this way, the community zine project functions as a mode of critical pedagogy, which Peter McLaren notes, “locates its central importance in the formidable task of understanding the mechanisms of oppression imposed by the established order . . . from the perspective of the dispossessed and oppressed themselves,” which then must be linked to political and anticapitalist struggle (McLaren, 2003).

The final result of the project was the publication of a zine entitled “Chinatown Changing: Gentrification in LA”. [See Figure 7] The contents of the zine included a profile of Los Angeles Chinatown, stories from the Chinatown residents about housing struggles, information about tenants’ rights, an overview of the work that CCED provides in the community, and personal outreach stories from the perspective of the students. Similar to the form and content of the work found in *Gidra*, students used a variety of strategies including graphics, illustrations, personal essays, and photography to document what is currently happening in Chinatown. Since its publication, the zine has served many different purposes: helping CCED get in contact with more Chinatown residents; raising awareness among non-residents about the current issues in LA Chinatown; publicizing the work that CCED does in the community; and providing resources about tenants’ rights and contact information for those who would like to get involved. The students provided copies of the zine to CCED and distributed the zine in the community, on campus, and at zine fests. In addition, students donated copies of the zine to our college library’s zine collection so as to document the students’ work, share the knowledge among other members of the campus community, and continue the efforts at preserving zines in an institutional setting. Finally, the students provided the master copy of the zine (commonly referred to as “zine flats”) to CCED so that the organization can continue to duplicate the zine into the future.



FIGURE 7. CLASS ZINE PROJECT ENTITLED “CHINATOWN CHANGING: GENTRIFICATION IN LA”

Overall, the students responded enthusiastically to the community zine project and appreciated how the assignment provided what one student called “a solid understanding of how to use zines to contribute to social activism and community building.” Another student commented that working collaboratively on a community-based zine helped her to more thoroughly understand the participatory aspect of zine culture, especially in regards to being more intentional about the types of community materials that were included in the zine and being mindful about the relationship between content and form in how the zine is presented. All the students expressed their gratitude for being able to hear the “genuine testimonials” of the Chinatown community, which gave them a clearer portrait of how gentrification affects low-income ethnic neighborhoods. Furthermore, many students remarked how the project allowed them to move beyond the abstraction of theory to understanding the issues on a

more personal and emotional level. An Asian American female student remarked on how learning about theories can become so dense and convoluted when limited to the space of the classroom, and that practice is essential to grasp the concepts and ideas. She elaborated, "I've learned that with community organizing you put yourself out there because you are sick and tired of these community conditions and politics that are demeaning to the common people." Another Asian American student who grew up in similar conditions in Oakland Chinatown emphasized the need to center the members of the community in project planning to ensure that they have agency in the process. She eloquently characterized the zine project as one that "weaves a story about the collective pain of displacement."

The project was not without its difficulties and challenges. The issue of insider/outsider status when embarking on a community project can be quite pronounced, particularly along racial lines. Reading previous scholarship on community-based education, particularly Jean Wu's "Race Matters in Civic Engagement Work," about college students volunteering in Boston's Chinatown, helped to anticipate many of the challenges that students would face (Wu, 2010). However, some lessons are learned most effectively through direct experience. For example, some of the white students in the class noted the difficulty in interviewing Chinatown residents because of language barriers and the reluctance of some of the Chinatown residents to engage with the students due to a general unfamiliarity of what they were doing in their community. A white female student reflected on how the failure of those entering the community to address their own biases and assumptions can undermine their participation as well as the solidarity that is crucial to promoting community development. This insightful comment underscores the necessity of understanding one's positionality and privilege when approaching community engagement work and the importance of being mindful of the ethical implications of working with a community to which one does not necessarily belong. All of the students, regardless of background, noted how important it is to consider the ethics involved in working with community, and that working in solidarity with the community means being sensitive to what the community envisions for itself.

Another important lesson was the realization that social justice work is an ongoing project. One Asian American male student stated, "I know very well that our completion of this project in no way means that we have solved the issues at hand. Gentrification is an ongoing problem in LA Chinatown as well as all across the country. I feel inspired to get involved with grassroots organizations like that of CCED depending on where I end up after I graduate." His sentiments illustrate how community-based learning plays a significant role in the politicization of college students by introducing them to real world issues. Through the process of action and critical reflection, students come to realize that they are a part of a larger struggle for social justice (Jung, 1989). In addition, the project helps to impart the significance of everyday interactions in transforming social relations, and how small local actions collectively add up and contribute to a broader

struggle (Chiu, 1989; Omatsu, 2003). Grace Lee Boggs writes that one of the goals of education is transforming relations by "overcoming the 'dehumanization' that has been fostered by the commodification of everything under capitalism and building more democratic, just, and nourishing modes of relating to people" (Boggs, 2012).

## Conclusion

In telling the history of the underground press in the United States, Ellen Gruber Garvey notes how independent publishing functioned as a radicalizing activity, creating oppositional identities and subverting conventional power relationships (Garvey, 2002). By moving beyond dominant paradigms that frame zines within a discourse of individualism and self-interest, we can also tell a counter-history of zines situated within a radical tradition based on collectivity and community mobilization (Nguyen, 2012). Archives play a crucial role in contextualizing zines within this history of activism and community empowerment. As we have seen with the example of *Gidra*, archives can be used as a way to link students to worlds beyond the classroom and engage in community struggles for social justice. As Haivan Hoang writes, "*Gidra* began as a way to assert self-determination but concluded with lessons about the rhetorical work involved in cultural production and the need to make connections, to alter subject positions, and to question what role writing has in social processes" (Hoang, 2015). By drawing linkages between the past and the present vis-à-vis the study of *Gidra* and the creation of a community-based zine, students enact similar lessons about connecting to communities beyond campus, interrogating their personal subjectivity and positionality in working with marginalized communities, and recognizing how zine-making can play a role in social transformation.

Stephen Duncombe writes that zines can be considered "pre-political" because they do not directly effect change at the structural level. He states, "The focus of political discourse is always on the consequences of political injustice, with little attention paid to identifying and grappling with underlying causes" (Duncombe, 2008). While this may be a bit of an overstatement, since many zines do confront systemic forms of oppression, this differentiation helps to identify the potential of zines as a vehicle for an emergent political consciousness. In other words, the form and ethos of zines allow flexibility and malleability that can be put to use in a variety of contexts and projects, both directly political as well as "pre-political." This creative approach also avoids the narrow definitions and prescriptions often found in institutional politics, and instead encourages innovative pathways to community activism and social change. As Adela Licona points out, zines reveal the "emergence of a coalitional consciousness and practices of articulation that have the potential to create and mobilize communities for social justice based on egalitarian social relationships" (Licona, 2005). Relationships such as the cooperation between individuals and the collaboration between different community constituents characterize zines as a form of participatory culture, challenging students to think beyond hegemonic educational strategies that reproduce atomistic

learning. In that sense, zines provide an exciting way to translate their “pre-political” momentum into community politics and mobilization, guiding students’ enthusiasm for creativity and hands-on learning from do-it-yourself (DIY) to do-it-together (DIT), from individual to collectivity, from campus to community.

The archival impulse currently at work in zine culture provides a window to a radical past that allows us to consider historical alternatives for models of collaboration and community action. The increased access to these materials, particularly in the digital archival arena, encourages students to think about their own role in history and the importance of documenting their work for other generations to learn from and build upon. Incorporating the community voices found in the archive into the classroom can unlock creative and innovative possibilities for reshaping our community-based pedagogies. Kate Eichhorn writes, “What makes the archive a potential site of resistance is arguably not simply its mandate or its location but rather how it is deployed in the present” (Eichhorn, 2013). The digitization of *Gidra* in the Densho Archives not only provides increased accessibility to these important historical materials but allows for their activation within contemporary movements and reorientation in pedagogies of social justice. This is particularly key for archives that document marginalized and under-represented communities, which provide a way for students who come from these communities to see themselves in the archive and to empower themselves as shapers of history. As Schwartz and Cook point out, archives are “active sites where social power is negotiated, contested, confirmed” (Schwartz & Cook, 2002). Linking archives with practice, and in doing so, learning from the past to inform our work in the present, encourages us to re-envision education from the ground up, embracing what Glenn Omatsu refers to as “the rich possibilities embedded in our communities and within ourselves” (Omatsu, 2003).

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# RADICAL TEACHER

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

## A Critical Archival Pedagogy: The Lesbian Herstory Archives and a Course in Radical Lesbian Thought

By Kailah R. Carden and Sabina E. Vaught  
with Arturo Muñoz, Vanessa Pinto, Cecilia Vaught, & Maya Zeigler



"WELCOME TO THE LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES" PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES BY KAILAH CARDEN

"[T]he archive" has a capital "A," is figurative, and leads elsewhere. It may represent neither material site nor a set of documents. Rather, it may serve as a strong metaphor for any corpus of selective forgettings and collections...

— Ann Laura Stoler

I have learned that the goals of an archivist and of a storyteller are not so different. We keep stories alive, we create stories, and (*most of all*) we create potential.

—Arturo Muñoz

## Introduction

Archives are variously understood as institutions, repositories, concepts, and even subjects. Here, we describe how we have taken up Lesbian archives as both radical sites of knowledge production and exchange, and as pedagogical subjects. In the spring of 2015, we piloted an undergraduate seminar entitled, "Radical Lesbian Thought," nicknamed "RadLez" by the students. For their final project, the six students in this course developed their own archives in relation to their learning through and at the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA). Additionally, Arturo, Cecilia, Maya, and Pinto, or The Rad Lez Kidz as they named themselves, expanded their archival inquiry as a self-directed independent study the following academic year, forging cross-institutional, intergenerational collaborations and shifting the location of pedagogical power.

Through the course, we radically co-produced inquiry and knowledge. Specifically, we undertook dialogic praxes of critical pedagogy to both study thought and to build thought. In other words, the subject matter was also the practice of learning. As Cecilia wrote at the end of the semester,

I have learned an immense amount not just about the histories of Radical Lesbian thought but also of a practice of thinking and knowledge production that we have both studied and endeavored in. . . . As we're studying the production of Radical Lesbian thought, we are also producing Radical Lesbian thought. . . . The course has mirrored a Radical Lesbian thought method of knowledge production.

We learned Radical Lesbian Thought through the doing of Radical Lesbian Thought. The dialogic interplay between content and praxis was ongoing so that the subject matter dynamically changed through our practice of it.

This paper is the story of how we collectively forged a critical, Lesbian archival pedagogy through dialogic praxes. In section one we explore three theoretical framings of archives (Gopinath, 2010; Halberstam, 2005; Stoler, 2002) paired with three features of our radical Lesbian pedagogical praxes: dialogue and difference; collaborative knowledge production; and archival methodology. In section two, we illustrate these critical archival praxes

through three course activities: writing and reading archival letters; conducting research at the LHA; and creating final archives.

## Background

### Radical Lesbian Thought: Centering the Archives

The syllabus for the course Radical Lesbian Thought emerged through dialogue between Kailah, a graduate student and TA in Educational Studies, and Sabina, an advisor and professor in Educational Studies. This dialogue was a practice of intergenerational Lesbian knowledge exchange that would be repeated throughout the course development, implementation, and the ensuing intellectual communities and projects. Significantly, the Department of Education at Tufts University supported this course idea through a course development grant awarded to Kailah. The program in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Tufts co-listed the course.

Our initial course description, on the front page of the syllabus, communicated the parameters of our exploration of radical Lesbian thought and situated it as archivally contextualized:

Course Description: This course will consider radical Lesbian knowledge production during the second half of the twentieth century in the United States. Radical Lesbian thought encompasses dynamic, complex, and at times contradictory bodies of knowledge. Specifically, we will pay attention to the emergence of educational and activist knowledge movements by tracing early epistolary and news-making endeavors as they gave way to the formation of collective knowledge production across literary, historical, and other disciplinary areas. This course will contextualize the history of radical Lesbian thought both inside the academy—as connected to and in conflict with feminist theory and queer theory—and outside the academy in relation to feminist and queer knowledge movements. Course readings, assignments, and seminar discussions will provide an in-depth focus on critical questions of power in relation to choice, essentialism, and shifting spheres of knowledge and education along tense lines of race, class, and gender. The course will be organized as an archival research process, drawing on archival materials, and including research at the Lesbian Herstory Archives, other Lesbian archives, and the student production of archives.

This guiding course description reflected our course-development dialogue and was the starting point for the process of collaboration that unfolded throughout the course. It introduced critical lines of inquiry as they are situated historically, intellectually, and politically, and introduced the LHA and archival methodology.

### Disciplinary Context: Knowledge Production and Power

Questions of power are central to the critical theoretical traditions of Educational Studies and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) within which we developed this course. However, even within those

traditions, we found Lesbian thought and knowledge production to be relegated to de-contextualized historical considerations or simply absent from scholarly discussions. Students brought this same perspective through their own academic experiences. Pinto reflected,

Lesbian history and existence have been erased in many courses I have previously taken regarding gender and sexuality, often in the name of queer theory and moving beyond the concept of fixed or labeled identities.

□



<http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org/tourfloor.html>

**Class 1: 1/20 Course introduction: Archives, knowledge, and lesbian thought**

**Advance reading:**

- Halberstam, J. (2005). The Brandon archive. In *In a queer time and place: Transgender histories, subcultural lives* (pp. 22 - 46). New York and London: New York University Press.

**Break Reading:**

Syllabus quotation and poem

**Assignment:**

- Paragraph response:

**Film screening:**

- "Watermelon Woman"
- Sunday, January 25, 7pm, Tisch Library Room 304, with Queer Narratives class

PAGE 5 OF RADICAL LESBIAN THOUGHT COURSE SYLLABUS. IMAGES COURTESY OF THE LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES, LOGO CREATED BY CARRIE MOYER FOR THE LHA

Maya echoed Pinto, writing "I realized that I didn't really have a true understanding of any sort of 'Lesbian history.' Who would be included in such a history, anyway?" In a course where Lesbian herstory, culture, politics and thought were not only explicitly centered, but made up the entire content, different questions of power arose. Instead of using Lesbians and Lesbian thought rhetorically as an exception, a monolithic entity, or an entirely ignored category, in this course we attended to power contestations within and between Lesbian communities and movements. Students explored historical and contemporary Lesbian debates over separatism, race, porn, S/M, and trans issues, among others.

Our entrance into intellectual traditions was facilitated by our negotiation of identities as always intersectional, always in relation to knowledge, and always institutionally co-constructed (Collins, 1999; Crenshaw, 1991). We committed to substantive intellectual, structural

intersectionality that produced rich discussion, connection, tension, dissent, and knowledge. Rather than rely on or require categorical declarations of self, we engaged identity in the classroom as it emerged constantly in relation to powered contexts of ideas, debates, structures, and communities. We as teachers interacted with materials as Lesbian scholars, conveying to students not "I am a Lesbian," but rather, for instance, "I have these conflicting intellectual ideas about separatist traditions." The class was culturally and epistemically non-White, though a couple participants identified individually as White in relation to ideas or readings. Class dispositions, language, and other situated identities emerged throughout. Arturo described this intellectual process as affording "each of us our respective Radical Lesbian consciousnesses." The process was further facilitated by extending our class beyond the university and engaging dialogically with the LHA, both before and after our visit.

**The Lesbian Herstory Archives**

We understand the LHA as an archive organized around Lesbians as a political, intellectual, and cultural category. Our centering of radical Lesbian thought and practice matched the foundational claims of the LHA. Founded in the 1970s by New York City Lesbians, the LHA is a volunteer-run, community-based archive, housed in a Brownstone in the Park Slope neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. Its early Statement of Purpose, as conveyed in an LHA newsletter, read as follows:

The Lesbian Herstory Archives exists to gather and preserve records of Lesbian lives and activities so that future generations of Lesbians will have ready access to materials relevant to their lives. The process of gathering this material will also serve to uncover and collect our herstory denied to us previously by patriarchal historians in the interests of the culture which they serve. The existence of these Archives will enable us to analyze and reevaluate the Lesbian experience. We anticipate that the existence of these Archives will encourage Lesbians to record their experiences in order to formulate our living Herstory (Edel, Nestle, Schwarz, Penelope, & Itnyre, 1979, p. 1).

This statement, which remains relatively unchanged, resonates with the scholarly importance of Lesbian knowledge production in the academy. The archive is a site of herstory collections and of knowledge production and exchange. Pinto reflected, "I had never critically considered the significance of knowledge as something produced **by** people, who come with their own subjectivities, or even archives as a manifestation of this knowledge production."

Through the centering of archival methodologies and the LHA itself, we all came to understand ourselves as archivists and pedagogues, as knowledge heirs of the LHA. Writes Fritzsche (2005),

Archives are not comprehensive collections of things... nor are they arbitrary accumulations of remnants and leftovers. The archive is the production of the heirs, who must work to find connections from one generation to the next . . . a cultural group that knows

itself by cultivating a particular historical trajectory (p. 16).

As heirs, we were simultaneously students and teachers, stewards and producers of knowledge. Students were able to understand radical archives as necessarily intergenerationally peopled. However, unlike the prevailing notion of sterile archive and staid scholarly practices, the production and exchange of knowledge was not uni-directional and acultural, but rather was multidimensional and culturally Lesbian.



\*ARCHIVAL BOXES\* PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES BY KAILAH CARDEN

## I. Archive as Pedagogy: Theoretical Foundations

### Dialogue and Difference

For us, critical pedagogy is fundamentally a dialogue that centers questions of power production, reproduction, and disruption (Freire, 2000; McLaren, 2008). Dialogue is the heart of critical pedagogy, in large part because it is exercised through attention to difference. Britzman (2012) suggests that queer pedagogy is “a technique for acknowledging difference *as the only condition of possibility for community*” (p. 297, emphasis original). Lesbian archival dialogue is rooted in the ongoing establishment of an intergenerational, knowledge-producing communities of difference.

In developing this dialogic praxis in the service of difference, we had to land on a specific set of methodologies for critical Lesbian archival dialogue. We conceptualized archives as sites where powers collide and are resisted, and where knowledge-based collectivity is developed (Cvetkovich, 2003; Derrida, 1995; Foucault, 1982). Our theoretical engagements helped us to approach the brick-and-mortar LHA as contextualized and organized by socio-political knowledge traditions, movements, groups of people, and historically framed eras.

As jumping off points, we incorporated three central readings on archives into the syllabus. In advance of the first class meeting, we e-mailed “The Brandon Archive”

(Halberstam, 2005) to students with the assignment to write a response to the ideas in the chapter. “In crafting this response,” we wrote, “be thinking about the role and meaning of archives, particularly for non-dominant people. Please do not summarize the chapter, but detail your own thinking in relation to it.” This was the start of two things: our archival dialogic processes situating students as knowledge producers; and our conceptualizations of the archive as complex, contradictory, and open-ended—dialogues of and across difference.

“The Brandon Archive” facilitated this two-pronged approach to critical Lesbian archival dialogic praxes. Halberstam (2005) describes the archive produced in response to the 1993 murder of Brandon Teena—“a young female-bodied person who had been passing as a man” in Falls City, Nebraska (p. 22). Halberstam’s scholarly analysis across specific powered sites of difference illustrates the meaning-making potential of an archive’s content, form, and process. As Halberstam (2005) writes, archives are “simultaneously a resource, a productive narrative, a set of representations, a history, a memorial, and a time capsule,” (p.23) as well as “a discursive field and a structure of thinking” (p. 33). So, with this first archival framework, we began to construct our own conceptualization of archives as sites where content and process are linked through continuous dialogue.

### Collaborative Knowledge Production

In developing our own archival frameworks we found we had to shift entrenched power dynamics to foster collective knowledge production. Our second framing of archives was Gopinath’s (2010) “Archive, affect and the everyday.” This article works to attend to queer inflections of loss in commonplace artifacts and daily acts. As can happen, we did not find ourselves returning to this conceptual framework as a class, though individual students did return. In spite of the fact that we offered the whole class opportunities to connect this framework to our dialogue, it simply never gained traction. Instead of rigidly insisting students engage this work, we participated dialogically with students to cultivate a shared archival praxis that did not highlight this particular framing.

Gopinath’s framework as peripheral to our understanding of archives highlights a moment of the ground-up construction of our critical archival pedagogy. Using the syllabus as a guide, not as mandate, fostered student understanding of their role as co-producers of course inquiry, content, and pedagogy. We were staunch about some expectations and inclusions, as we understood them to facilitate growth in ways students could not devise, design, or predict. An established expectation and practice of rigor in our class meant that we had shared trust that inattention to a framework was a decision made through substantive scholarly consideration. The **process** of collaborative decision-making remained integral. This expanded the rigor of the course, pivoting on agentive student participation and production. However, this came in part out of years of Sabina’s pedagogical dispositions, and we do not imagine it as necessary to a radical archival pedagogy. We understand it as illustrative of possibilities, not as prescriptive.

Students had to grapple with shifting dynamics of collective decision-making and the demanding implications of co-producing thought. As Maya said, capturing the shared sentiments of her classmates:

I grew to more enjoy the freedom (and also responsibility) required by such a setup. In essence, I saw this as putting the onus of drawing meaning from our own work onto students rather than have a formulaic (linear) structure that more easily affords/feeds meaning and understanding to students.

While many students were initially uncomfortable assuming the role of knowledge producer, Arturo expressed what they all came to experience—he began to see it as a welcome change from his previous coursework:

Up to this point in my academic career, I have tried to steal whatever ontological sovereignty that I could. In other courses, I felt uncomfortable moving beyond or departing from the theories and frameworks that were provided by the professor for fear of it costing my grade.

In this course, not only did we pedagogically position students as knowledge producers, we gave students the option to grade themselves to further remove any real or perceived restrictions to their learning. As Arturo adeptly stated: “The most crucial part of self-grading is finding value in one’s own work.”

It was through the praxis of dialogue across different institutional locations of the classroom that we co-created our own knowledge producing community. Britzman (2000) posits that for dialogue between students and teachers “to occur, both educators and students have to learn to see knowledge as something that is made in and altered by relationships” (p. 49). Britzman (2000) goes on to state that “learning is the work of making interpretations, experimenting with the potential force or power of what knowledge can do, and with *marking* knowledge with new significance” (p. 49, emphasis original). As instructors, we explicitly marked the power in the process of knowledge production. Requiring students to prioritize readings, develop their own assignments, and choose the subject of their final projects—and giving them the option to grade their own work—shifted the power dynamics of the classroom. Explicitly, it fostered rigorous knowledge production. Importantly we did not entirely relinquish the power of the teacher, but instead used authority to facilitate the collective practice of critical Lesbian archival pedagogy (Wooten & Vaught, 2015).

### **Archival Methodology**

Archival content does not guarantee an archival pedagogy, just as Lesbian content does not assure a Lesbian pedagogy. As hooks (1994) cautions, “different, more radical subject matter does not create a liberatory pedagogy” (p. 148). Instead pedagogy, and the methodology of knowledge production, must deliberately support the content taught. In our course we both studied archival methodologies *and* employed them as pedagogy. Students were in charge of creating their own Lesbian archival methodologies, which really took flight when we

read Ann Laura Stoler’s (2002) “Colonial archives and the arts of governance.” Stoler advances a methodology of reading *along* the archival grain. She suggests that while it is relevant to examine what is missing from archives, it also necessary to “read [an archive] for its regularities, for its logic of recall, for its densities and distributions, for its consistencies of misinformation, omission, and mistake—*along* the archival grain” (p. 100, emphasis original). Reading along the grain is methodologically necessary to identify and analyze flows of archival power.

***This archival methodological framework allowed us to consider the LHA as a complex, knowledge-producing subject. So in returning to hooks’ claim that radical content does not guarantee radical pedagogy, we borrow from Stoler to argue that radical content does not necessarily produce a radical archive.***

As a class and knowledge producing community, we used Stoler’s (2002) archival methodology to ask of this specific terrain of power: what logics are active in radical Lesbian archives? what patterns of meaning emerge at the LHA? and what rises to the top in each archivist’s reading of the LHA? Because the LHA is a radical “grassroots Lesbian archives,” it is already reading *against* the grain of hetero-patriarchal histories (“History and mission,” 2015). Thus, it was especially important for us to read *along* the LHA’s grain to identify *regularities*, *densities*, and *distributions* of Radical Lesbian Thought. By examining the stories, artifacts, and ephemera that were preserved, we began to make sense of the salient narratives, epistemologies, and methodologies of the LHA.

Moreover, Stoler (2002) suggests that reading along the grain is a methodology that positions the archive as an ethnographic subject. Stoler argues that the shift from the “archive-as-source to the archive-as-subject” creates a corresponding reframing of “archives not as sites of knowledge retrieval, but knowledge production” (p. 87). As such, archives are defined not only by what they contain, but also by their dynamic processes of meaning making. This archival methodological framework allowed us to consider the LHA as a complex, knowledge-producing subject. So in returning to hooks’ claim that radical content does not guarantee radical pedagogy, we borrow from Stoler to argue that radical content does not necessarily produce a radical archive. Rather, by approaching the archive-as-subject we examined the practices of Lesbian archives to understand the totality of their radicality.

In the spirit of the pedagogical charge to collaboratively experiment with power and knowledge via radical archival methodologies, Arturo wrote that through the course, “I aimed to harness the potential of archives; I further aimed to exploit the power attached to the term ‘archive.’” Echoing Stoler (2002), he suggested that by contesting “archives, as structures and moderators of

power, [that] can create a static image of history” he sought new meanings and new archival methodologies.

## II. Archive as Process: Critical Archival Praxes

In part two we move from the archival theoretical frameworks of the course to three examples of activities we collectively undertook: reading and writing letters, conducting research at the LHA, and creating final archives. These three activities—letters, field trip, and final archives—were informed by our archival frameworks of dialogue and difference, collaborative knowledge production, and archival methodology.

### Letters as a Practice of Dialogue and Difference

In the spirit of Halberstam’s (2005) framework of dialogue across difference, we used letters as both artifact and practice. We were specifically interested in letters that were written to be publicly circulated to build and maintain intellectual communities. We read selected letters to *ONE*, a Gay and Lesbian newsletter, from the 1950s and 60s, an open letter from Audre Lorde to Mary Daly, as well as an anonymous letter later attributed to playwright Lorraine Hansberry, written to *The Ladder*, the first known U.S. Lesbian newsletter (Hansberry Nemiroff, 1957; Loftin, 2012; Lorde, 2007). The corresponding assignment was to “write an open letter to a current Lesbian/Gay/Queer media outlet.” The letters we assigned and the letters the students wrote pivoted on difference across vectors of socioeconomics, race, sexuality, gender, and ideology.

We scaffolded this epistolary activity by placing students in dialogue pairs to discuss these questions:

- What are the concerns and issues in the letters you read?
- What are the concerns and issues in the letters you wrote?
- Where do you see echoes, overlaps, and Lesbian knowledge disposition?

By identifying the “echoes” and “overlaps,” the students’ own letters entered into the ever-expanding archives of Radical Lesbian Thought.

These activities shaped our collective understanding of the potential of archives for teaching, learning, and creation. As Pinto stated halfway through the semester, “this class isn’t about just discussing the readings, but, rather, using them as frames of reference to dig deeper into concepts to deconstruct them and then reconstructing them entirely.” We read these letters, as Pinto articulated, not just for their content and concepts, but also for the opportunity to create, through deconstruction and reconstruction, our own radical archive of Lesbian thought.

Further, this activity anchored us in a generational and intergenerational Lesbian knowledge producing practice. In Cecilia’s final project, a letter to Sabina and Kailah, she reflected on the generational and intergenerational collective features of epistolary practices

in radical Lesbian knowledge-producing communities. She writes,

Using the letter as a means to transfer separatist Lesbian thought is important to me because of the way in which it has been used to create uncensored separatist conversations, which are able to remain within Lesbian spheres without being subjected to hetero-patriarchal exploitation. It also marks a collaborative Lesbian conversation, which I have participated in while endeavoring to produce the knowledge that has informed this archival letter. The practice of letter writing itself has been passed on intergenerationally as it was born out of a fugitive desire and means to produce knowledge (of kinship, of love, of politics, of life) along with sisters, lovers, fighters, etc. The physical artifact of the letter, too, is an inter-generational space and practice.

Here, in her final project, Cecilia circles back to one of the first activities of the course to analyze the importance of writing and reading letters as a way to exchange and produce knowledge in and across Lesbian communities. She marks this process, and her letter, as “archival.” In doing so, she circulates this letter beyond its named recipients, and enters into a larger dialogic conversation with Lesbian separatist knowledge producing communities, as an heir, author, and intergenerational kinship member. These roles, for all of us, were shaped and strengthened at our trip to the Lesbian Herstory Archives.

### Field Trip as a Practice of Collaborative Knowledge Production



“WELCOME TO THE LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES” PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES BY KAILAH CARDEN

After weeks of preparation and anticipation, our class made the trip from Boston to New York to conduct student-directed research at the Lesbian Herstory Archives. This trip afforded us the chance to, as Arturo said, “develop various conversations with Lesbians” historically and contemporarily in a shared space. We traveled by bus, train, and car, met in Brooklyn for lunch, and connected as

a reconfigured collective to enter the LHA. Part of our radical teaching was this journey itself. We were all first-time travelers on this intellectual pilgrimage to the LHA.

We came to understand the LHA as a site of intergenerational knowledge production and exchange, containing artifacts and people, that preserves a constellation of pasts. On walking through the doors to the Brownstone, we were greeted by LHA co-founder, Deb Edel. She welcomed us into a purple living room overflowing with books by and about Lesbians, arranged on the floor-to-ceiling shelves non-patriarchally by first name. Deb gave us a short history of her work with the LHA and other Lesbians as she took us through the multiple rooms in the house-turned-archive. She began to tell the story of the founding of the LHA, and explained that the 1970s were an exciting time. Halfway through her sentence, she paused, smiled and exclaimed, "It's **always** an exciting time to be a Lesbian!" Standing in a dusty, filtered-light, second-floor room, filled with filing cabinets, and boxes full of letters, sci-fi novels, and the collection of Audre Lorde, we recognized the significance of this invitation into a Lesbian herstory.

Despite researching the LHA before our visit, we were all surprised by the affective impact of this trip. Pinto recorded these feelings in her reflection on our visit.

My expectations before visiting the Lesbian Herstory Archives were humble. I was sure we had learned just about everything there was to learn about Lesbian history and the LHA would simply be a supplement to this learning journey. I could literally **feel** how wrong I was the minute I walked in. I was standing in the epicenter of Lesbian history, existence, and knowledge production, whether it was the books, magazine, flyers, buttons, jackets, or shoes that lined every inch of the space—a space that validated my (and so many other women's) existence.

This "epicenter of Lesbian history" provided a depth and richness to our inquiry that was not possible at our university. This field trip rearranged our class boundaries as the formal structures of the university fell away.

At the LHA, we conducted self-directed and co-constructed research to support our lines of inquiry. Pinto described this dynamic collaborative knowledge production in her reflection on our research at the LHA:

The most incredible part of visiting the LHA was sharing that intellectual and personal yet, ultimately, collective experience with everyone. . . . I came to understand that this space does not simply inhabit an address in Brooklyn; rather, its very existence and survival as an archive has worked to inform how we related ourselves to both the class and understood our realities. How can one single place do that??

Collectively, we understood the LHA to be both a site and a subject, and to therefore have its own agency and disposition (Stoler, 2002). The LHA allowed us all to participate in an intergenerational Lesbian dialogue, with people and artifacts, both in resistance to and outside of

dominant discourse. However, we also brought the intergenerational dynamics of our class with us.



PINTO CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON LESBIAN SCIENCE FICTION. PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES BY SABINA VAUGHT

Intergenerationality formed a continuous framework for the course. Kailah and Sabina as co-teachers operated intergenerationally. This was also reflected in the relationship between Cecilia and Sabina, as state-recognized daughter-mother, whose intergenerational relationship was formed in and out of the class in part through intellectual Lesbian knowledge exchange<sup>1</sup>. Cecilia was a second-generation Lesbian in multiple capacities. Students experienced the merger of mother-daughter and teacher-student relationships as creating new possibilities—that families of origin can also be intellectual homes and that teachers can also be in intellectual kinship relation to students through shared knowledge traditions and practices. Moreover, this encouraged Cecilia's understanding of Deb as an intellectual and political kin, as a foremother, with whom she felt both excited and comfortable to speak at length during our time at the LHA.

After interviewing Deb in the LHA's working kitchen, Cecilia reflected on the praxis and "intense importance of intergenerational knowledge exchange particularly in Lesbian thought." She detailed the multiple instances and sites of intergenerational knowledge exchange throughout the course.

This occurred both through my work with you both [Sabina and Kailah] but also through our visiting the archive and the actual readings of older Lesbians. In my future work I wish to acknowledge the historical importance of all Lesbians and the way in which that informs my own archival readings now.

The literal presence of intergenerationality was also experienced by students as a symbolic experience of inquiry and of time.

Just as our learning took place outside, within, and across the boundaries of the classroom, the research conducted at the LHA had an impact beyond the official end date of the semester. Arturo shared,

The research I conducted and the artifacts I was able to interact with at the LHA have left a lasting



impression on me. The work I do will remain informed by the Lesbian materialities, preserved in this archive, that I was able to interact with. For that, I'm grateful.

In the end, the field trip was not simply an activity to support assignments, it also inspired future projects of thought and action. Through students' creation of their own archives, in addition to their continued work with Lesbian archives and the LHA, we were all reminded that learning is not confined to one classroom, one semester, or one site. For us, producing and exchanging knowledge was a tool to enter into, and create, ongoing radical Lesbian community.

### "Finals" as a Practice of Archival Methodology

For the final project of the semester, students used the research they conducted at the LHA to create their own archives. Arturo created a video archive of his spiritual relationship to Audre Lorde, Ntombi Howell, and Florynce Kennedy; Pinto wrote a Lesbian separatist science fiction novella; Cecilia produced a Lesbian separatist letter; and Maya created, curated, and contextualized a herstory of Lesbian buttons. Other students conducted similarly unique and creative archival projects.

We came to realize that, while labeled a "final," there was nothing finished or complete about these archives. Unlike a traditional final, which is often a performance of knowledge to signify the completion or demonstrate the mastery of learning, these finals opened up new lines of inquiry. Pinto articulated the ongoing process of archival knowledge production in reflecting on the methodology she employed to create her own final archive.

This project granted me an imaginative freedom to do two things: 1) further explore another form of knowledge and archival production regarding radical Lesbian thought; and 2) create my own platform upon which I could address and tease out my tensions and conflicts, while still be able to critically interact with the material from class.

What students variously described as "imaginative freedom" (Pinto), "autonomy," (Cecilia) and "vast amount of conceptual space," (Arturo) in RadLez was a rigorous departure from their other coursework. Cecilia noted at the end of the semester that her "ability to design my own assignments, research focus, and project has made me greatly more invested in this class than I could have ever been without this type of academic independence." This process of sharing power itself, providing the option of self-grading for example, illustrates our ongoing power as teachers. Radical Lesbian pedagogy did not mean pretending power did not exist, but, as Audre Lorde (1990) says, bringing it to the fore and working within and across it.

To both shift power and make it transparent, we attended to multiple and contradictory stories simultaneously. We collectively explored the "problem of how knowledge of bodies and bodies of knowledge become a site of normalization" through our archival research and production (Britzman, 2012, p. 293). Throughout the semester we complicated and critiqued singular narratives of Lesbian existence, those same narratives many of us had experienced in other coursework, when Lesbians were included at all. Through their final projects, RadLez students challenged the systems and institutions that construct a singular, normalized Lesbian body and Lesbian thought. For example, Cecilia incorporated archival collections into her final that challenged dominant



DEBORAH EDEL, TEDDY MINUCCI, CECILIA, PINTO, MAYA, AND ARTURO. PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES BY EUGINA GELBELMAN

narratives of separatist Lesbians because they were produced **by** separatist Lesbians.

One of the parts of the Separatist community I most appreciated in this research was the multitude of voices that came out of it. This is interesting to me since the idea of "Lesbian Separatism" is often framed as a very individualist one, with a one-woman mold. At the LHA during this trip, though, I found archived profiles women in the Lesbian Separatist movement had written of themselves.

Cecilia located knowledge creation as a **collective** act, grounded in Lesbian community. "Ultimately," Cecilia wrote, "the Lesbian Separatist movement was creating a **community** (not an individual united identity), and in so doing was creating new visions of thought and knowledge for Lesbians, about Lesbians, by Lesbians and with Lesbians" (emphasis original). In order to produce their own archives, students read along the grain of the LHA to identify Lesbian "consciousnesses" (Arturo) and communities created through dialogue and difference. In capturing the complexity and multiplicity of these

communities in their archives, students resisted the “normalization” and simplification of Lesbian thought.

### One Year Later: “Open[ing] Out of the Future”

As we experienced, “the archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future” (Derrida, 1995, p. 45). As we write, four of the RadLez students carry forward the potential we all co-created in the course. These students, under the collective, self-chosen name the Rad Lez Kidz, facilitated a showing of the LHA’s Audre Lorde exhibit at Tufts University. This required fundraising, returning to the LHA to conduct research, collaborating with Deborah Edell and the LHA volunteers, and producing their own companion archive, events, and exhibit. Due to the deteriorating physical condition of the exhibit, this is the final showing before the Audre Lorde Exhibit is permanently archived at LHA. Not only are these students continuing to be collective knowledge producers, but they are doing so well beyond the confines of the semester, classroom, and direction of Professor and TA. “I developed a sort of ‘Radical Lesbian consciousness,’” explained Arturo. “That is, I have become more aware of the potential that continues to exist for radical Lesbian thinkers/organizers/-identified people.”



ARTURO, CECILIA, AND PINTO. PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN AT THE AUDRE LORDE EXHIBIT OPENING AT TUFTS UNIVERSITY BY PEARL EMMONS

We collaboratively developed a radical Lesbian archival pedagogy through dialogue that spanned the classroom and the Lesbian Herstory Archives. In this paper we detailed the ways in which we framed and did not frame archives and shared illustrations of how our archival frameworks became student and teacher practice in the classroom, in the Lesbian Herstory Archives, and in between. Letters, the trip to the LHA, and student-produced finals are three activities that exemplify the salient frameworks of dialogue across difference and power, collaborative knowledge, and archival methodologies including reading along the grain and approaching the archive-as-subject. Our praxes informed our engagement with archival content, while the content continuously challenged and refined our praxes. As Maya noted, “I have had few classes that have given me no choice but to stretch and challenge my manner of thinking about theory, and theory-in-practice/as reality.” This

critical archival pedagogy, a pedagogy we applied to Lesbian archives, positions students as knowledge producers and ultimately creates “potential.” Arturo wrote,

I have learned that the goals of an archivist and of a storyteller are not so different. We keep stories alive, we create stories, and (**most of all**) we create potential. We sustain (in the case of this course) the Radical Lesbian Imaginary. This course creates potential, as each student in the course has created their own story.



MAYA AND PINTO. PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN AT THE AUDRE LORDE EXHIBIT OPENING AT TUFTS UNIVERSITY BY PEARL EMMONS

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This was not an easy or predictable process. Cecilia and Sabina's months-long deliberation over Cecilia's enrollment in the class hinged on Sabina's normative understandings of the boundaries between private/family life and public/academic life. While numerous other faculty members had taught their own children in courses at Tufts, Sabina was so uncomfortable that she asked for permission from her chair and dean, hoping one would say "no." However, one had also taught her own child in a class, and both were supportive of the idea. As Cecilia wrote, the potential "complications" of her participation in the class, "were taken on in order that I might be able to participate in the only academic Lesbian knowledge producing conversation I might have access" to at Tufts. "This inherently marks an honoring of intergenerational Lesbian thought but also allows me to be formally engaged in a political and collective conversation with other Lesbians."



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# RADICAL TEACHER

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

## Orality and the Archive: Teaching the Partition of India through Oral Histories

By Gaana Jayagopalan



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Last December, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi took diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan one step closer to peace talks by choosing to visit his Pakistani counterpart in Lahore for the latter's birthday. The move, the first of its kind in a decade by an Indian Prime Minister, received much attention from media worldwide and was both praised and criticised (BBC, December 25). This was closely followed, only a few weeks later, into the new year of 2016 by a deadly attack on the Pathankot Air Base near the Punjab border in India by terrorists allegedly associated with links to Pakistan. At around the same time, my Indian Writing in English seminar in Bengaluru was discussing the partition of India and Pakistan as a part of the module on narrating the nation. In the context of negotiating one specific aspect of narrating the nation—that of communalism and religious fundamentalism—we were drawn to the historiography of **the** event – the partition of India – that is often construed responsible for the allegedly growing hatred between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Discussing the partition amidst such political developments was significant for my graduate seminar.

In understanding the various known and familiar aspects of partition, both my students and I recognized certain responses as characteristic<sup>1</sup> when it came to dealing with it: most observations about the partition, we learnt, were framed within the contemporaneity of increasing tensions between the two States ever since they were partitioned. Debates about religious intolerance in the country were always mounted on defining ideal ways of exhibiting nationalism<sup>2</sup>. Our discussions very often veered towards problems of ascribing the 'Hindu-Muslim problem' (as it is very often termed here in India), invariably to the partition itself<sup>3</sup>. Quite contrarily, the schisms that are often pointed at between the Hindu and Muslim community have other trajectories that are not quite discussed in mainstream historical accounts of the partition either<sup>4</sup>.

Therefore, it is in an attempt to locate the human dimensions of the political and territorial event of partition by reading the archive that this paper wishes to explore the strength of oral narratives. The ideas become all the more significant in the context of teaching about partition through a set of oral narratives.

## Reading Archives, Teaching Partition

This article explores how teaching partition in an English Studies graduate seminar in Bengaluru, through archives of oral accounts narrating the partition, opened newer trajectories of using oral histories as teaching materials. The course closely read the discursive construction of the knowledge of partition in archival processes of the state vis-à-vis oral accounts collected primarily by Urvashi Butalia (1998, 2000) and Veena Das (2000). The article examines how the teaching of partition through these archives proved to be illuminating in understanding the narrativization of partition as it is prevalent today.

The paper argues that oral histories see immense strength in being read as archives of a different nature as

opposed to the State's archivization of partition: the subjecthood of the victim in oral histories, it was observed through our discussions, is an embodied subjectivity as opposed to the effacement of subjectivity in the State's representation. To the State, partition becomes an event of numbers and territorial disputes (an idea carried forward even today in its contemporary negotiations of India-Pakistan relations). Oral histories, on the other hand, are narrativized as witness accounts. These enabled students to recognize the human side of partition thereby creating an **affective** literacy of partition. The introduction of oral narratives in the classroom led to an **affective turn** in engaging with an event of great trauma like the partition of India. It enabled us as a class to rethink the modes of knowing and narrating suffering associated with the partition of India. It clearly led us to recognize the location of a voiced subjectivity in such narratives. The flexibility of oral archives enables more voices to be added to the archive unlike the State's record of the "facts" of the event. Urvashi Butalia in her introduction to *The Other Side of Silence* remarks:

*the oral narrative offers a different way of looking at history, a different perspective. For, because such narratives often flow into each other in terms of temporal time, they blur the somewhat rigid timeframes within which history situates itself. Because people locate their memories by different dates, or different timeframes, than the events that mark the beginning and end of histories, their narratives flow above, below, through the disciplinary narratives of history. They offer us a way of turning the historical lens at a somewhat different angle, and to look at what this perspective offers (p 13).*

Let us now turn to a discussion of some classroom experiences that substantiate the same.

## The Partition of India: An Overview

The Partition of India is an important event in the socio-cultural historiography of India. This political event is associated with a territorial division between the two countries. The plan to partition India was announced in June 1947. Consequently, in August 1947, a predominantly Muslim state was created in Pakistan and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and a predominantly Hindu State in India. The event was accompanied by a movement of several millions of people across the borders of the two states. It was also marked by large scale violence including murder, dacoity, communal hatred, sexual violation, and loss of property among others.

This plan did not foresee the large scale movement of people that ensued. By the time of the political freedom of India and Pakistan, several people had begun to move to and from both the countries. The period was characterized by a growing hatred towards the "other" on either side. Urvashi Butalia recounts one such instance where a Sikh shared his tale of "hatred" that he relived now, full of guilt, regret, and remorse. He says "our entire village took off to

a nearby Muslim village on a killing spree. We simply went mad. And it has cost me fifty years of remorse, of sleepless nights—I cannot forget the faces of those we killed” (73). Gyanendra Pandey (2001) makes an interesting observation in this regard. He says that the partition is not to be viewed merely as a “happening” but rather as a “category of understanding the happening” (66). This is a significant insight into understanding the very narratives of the Partition of India.

## Engaging with the Partition in Classrooms

The partition of India is introduced to students at school in India at different points in time. The first set of materials that they encounter as resources to understand partition are their textbooks. Popular cultural media, too, have representations of partition. Literary works around partition have been produced within English as well as regional Indian languages, especially Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi. Popular feature films have also built storylines around the event of partition<sup>5</sup>.

The students who were enrolled in this graduate seminar were in their first year of the graduate program. The program includes students from different parts of India. The group, therefore, was a mixed one comprising varied cultural backgrounds. Some students hailed from places closely associated with the partition like Punjab, for instance.

The module on partition is a part of their course titled “Indian Writings in English.” The objective of this course is to introduce students to specific debates in and around notions of “India” and its contestations, through various literary and cultural texts within the context of emerging work originally written in English. While the texts and contexts of this course have changed every year I have taught it, one framework that has guided this course is narrating the nation: what are the various means by which a nation is narrated and, in effect, comes to be imagined? Novels written by Indians in English inform one aspect of narrating the nation in this course. The Partition is introduced as another aspect among several contesting narratives that show a layered reading of the nation and its imaginations. The module on Partition emerged as a part of a larger unit that negotiates and interrogates various ideas about the nation and nation-state. A key idea that is discussed in this module is violence and the nation-state. It was in the context of discussing issues around communalism, religious fundamentalism, and violence in India that our discussion prompted us to view partition differently.

## Initial Classroom Discussions about the Partition

My introduction of the partition to this group of graduate students began with a discussion of commonly held knowledge about the event itself. Partition is a rather familiar referent within the contexts of India’s struggle for independence. More often than not, students invoked the major political names of Nehru, Jinnah, Lord Mountbatten associated with India’s partition. Some also mentioned that Gandhi was against the very idea of the partition, which led us to deliberate: What had the State provided us by way of archives about partition? What does it mean to archive the partition?

Our discussion began with a negotiation of the term “archive” itself. The archive, it was clear from the students’ responses, mean a set of documents containing data and information about events, people, and places. “But who puts them together?” I prompted them to think. It was necessary to now clarify how an archive comes into being.

## Understanding “Archives”

I initiated the discussion by introducing the concept “archive” as one in which a healthy interest has been invested of late. Derrida’s and Foucault’s contributions to theorizing the archive became integral to understand the idea of oral histories as archives themselves. A brief elaboration of Derrida’s ideas of archiving as a reflection of the pleasure principle in its desire to



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preserve the past for the present and future, enabled students to understand an important implication of building an archive: the mode of archivization (system of structuring archives together) determines the kind of knowledge preserved. Who wants what kind of knowledge system to be preserved for the future? If there is a careful choice in preserving knowledge, what is being excluded, erased, or effaced? This led us to an important realization regarding archives and the State: what the State preserved as archives of Partition, then, was also politically motivated. In effect, the students were able to see an archive as a reconstruction of said events that takes on the form of a narrative. It became important to ask the pertinent question about the authorship of these narratives and their construction. Who constructs these narratives? What are the purposes and functions of a given construction? How does one negotiate an archive’s construction so that certain events get recorded?

At this point I brought into the discussion the Foucauldian idea of archives not just as a set of texts and documents, but as the *system of discursivity*—a system that provides a premise for something to be stated as a fact. The students were introduced to Foucault’s notions of

the archive. For Foucault, the archive is not just a set of texts or narratives. It is one that enables certain things to be stated in certain ways, or in other words, it functions as a discourse. Inevitably, such a grouping of texts or narratives links the information recorded to the networks of power that created it.

The class then became increasingly concerned with modes of representation that the State uses to negotiate partition and border disputes. While documents that read and understand the modalities of partition form an important part of the archive, the various discursive spaces that the State utilizes in its processes of narrating and memorialization of the partition also become significant to understand narratives of the partition. For instance, in an interesting article, Richard Murphy (2001, pp 185-191) explores the ceremonial exchange between the Indian and Pakistani troops at the Wagah Border as a performative space of the partition that marks a "political paranoia" of difference and negation. He closely reads this everyday affair of aggressive foot-stamping vis-à-vis the Basant

discussion of the essay "Understanding Partition: Politics, Memories, Experiences" on partition in the Grade 12 CBSE (Central Board for Secondary Education) textbook<sup>6</sup> (CBSE is the central board that governs secondary education in India. Students under this curriculum share the same syllabus to study Indian History across the country.) This essay provides students with an overview of partition not merely by looking at the political dimensions of the event, but also by locating the emergence of communal hatred in the division of the two States. The essay also provides a counter-narrative mode of understanding partition: unlike the standard practice of merely stating a set of facts, it begins by making a crucial reference to "stories" being central to understanding partition and points to the strength of locating partition not merely in documents and state policies but in individual stories that altered the everyday lives of its victims.

The CBSE essay includes three such instances of partition stories told by individuals involved directly in the movement to and from both the countries. These stories

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His declaration was greeted with cheer from the thousands who gathered at the approaches to the Secretariat.  
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Sir John Cochrane, Governor of

parties among modern Lahoris as events that mark a distinct difference between India and Pakistan. The States' political paranoia is read here alongside the citizens' cultural paranoia. What serves as a cultural memory that permeates the cultural ethos of the historiography is marked by accentuated difference and aggression. Thus the seminar moved closer towards discussing the discursive construction of partition in and through archives of oral histories.

## Introducing Oral Histories as Teaching Materials

The classroom discussions made it imperative for us to re-negotiate our 'facts' about the Partition as givens. As mentioned earlier, several literary works and popular films centered around partition are available to engage with the modes of representing partition. While most often literary and cultural expressions about the partition are used to begin classroom discussion, our starting point was a

capture the tensions of religious difference, communal hatred, and nationalistic fervor quite well in the context of the partition, which made it a useful place to begin discussing the partition, especially as at least some students had a general sense of the event and its repercussions. Introducing into the syllabus literary works concerning the partition also proved helpful; some students, I assumed, would be familiar with the mode of narrating partition through stories and not merely as facts and figures. This would help them accept these stories as archival material of a different kind, when compared to the documents that are normally understood as archives in general.

Interestingly, no student who had studied the essay was able to recall the individual stories included in it, though students were able to identify larger issues like rape, burglary and, most important of all, "Hindu-Muslim hatred" as some of them phrased it. Their inability to recall the individual accounts made it easier to impress upon them the one-sided reading of partition.

## Student Stories: Creating Archives in Classrooms

During the discussion, one of the students intervened “on a different note” by sharing a story of partition she had heard from her maternal grandmother who was forced to migrate from Lahore to Delhi in India<sup>7</sup>. She recalled how her grandmother, then a young girl of fifteen, was forced to move from her ancestral property with her family and siblings to India. The family had hoped that this would be a temporary arrangement and left most of their valuables buried in their backyard because crossing the border with valuables, they heard, was not an easy affair. The student recalled how her grandmother crafted an ingenious way to carry some gold coins across the borders: she kneaded several of them into the dough used to make *rotis* and convinced officials at the border that the dough was for her little siblings who might feel hungry along the arduous journey undertaken to reach the other side.

This little anecdote functioned as more than an interesting story in the class. What began as an exercise in understanding what school textbooks have said about oral histories and partition led us to a fascinating dimension of the event — understanding partition as it affected the everyday life of its victims. That there was a student in class to whom this story had been passed on added strength and great value for the first time I taught the partition and oral histories as archives. We no longer needed to access a story outside the purview of our experiences to validate the emotional aspects of the partition; here was a student among us who had firsthand account of the experience from her grandparent. This account, I observed, made students more conscious and curious about earlier witness accounts and other stories we were to read in the course.

Following this, a set of State records about Partition were closely read in class. One such document was a report filed by the Ministry of Information, Government of India on population movements on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, 1947 (National Archive, Movement of Refugees). This report provides an overview of the number of Muslim and non-Muslim refugees who were moved to and from India and Pakistan.

What became interesting in this report, quite apart from the evident religious binary it illustrated, was its conflation of particulars as general. While the Hindu-Muslim markers became a way of understanding the physical movement into both the nations, what also emerged for us was the conflation of the subjectivity and personhood of an individual into a larger, consolidated religious binary. The colonial tropes of temporal linearization and spatialization as well as the tendency to divide partition into phases and locate it spatially in and around Bengal and Punjab was easily visible while the oral narratives we discussed dismantled several such notions. Human dimensions of history, which had to do with the “difficult” part—of grief, despair, and loss—were merely captured as:

*On October 29, six thousand non-Muslims arrived in India by refugee trains from Lahore and*

*3,000 from Lyallpur. Three thousand Muslim refugees each from Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana were moved by train to Pakistan.*

This account does not capture the pain, loss, and grief of partition. Another report by the British High Commissioner to India on 15 September 1947 described the communal disturbances that were developing in parts of Punjab following the movement of people across both the newly-formed countries. After a list of number of casualties, the report states:

*Nehru at Press Conference on 12th (September) said that the official and non-official sources estimated number of deaths in Delhi disturbances roughly at 1,000. Official verified figures of casualties in disturbances in West and East Punjab were 15,000 killed but he felt these figures were very low and might be doubled or trebled (“Communal Disturbances”).*

Reading reports such as these, we began to see how the State’s archives of partition that provided facts about the event did not account for narratives that embody the subjectivity of the individuals who were in transit. This prompted us to revisit the story that was narrated by one of the students. “What is interesting about Kudrat’s story about her grandmother’s movement from Pakistan” one of them remarked, “is how this story has no mention of a Nehru or a Jinnah or a Gandhi! Those are the only names we know of with regard to Partition.” Surely we were made aware, through this remark, of the “other side” of Partition that does not directly involve the politicians of the time. This radical line of inquiry led us to recognize how the event of partition must be re-viewed through a different set of lenses. Here were stories that told not just about the losses in terms of numbers but also stories about survival and hope, betrayal and despair.

## Introducing Urvashi Butalia and Veena Das

This gave us an occasion to engage with one of the most brilliantly recorded oral histories about partition called *The Other Side of Silence* (1998) by Urvashi Butalia. Butalia observes how the Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984 made her doubly aware of the communal dimensions of the relations between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in India at the time. Stemming from Butalia’s own engagement with stories she had heard from her family as a child, the work begins with Butalia’s visit to her maternal uncle, Rana, who chose to remain in Pakistan. Following this, she decides to visit her uncle several years after the partition. The work, which is a collection of witness accounts of partition, does more than give us an idea of how partition affected the everyday lives of people from different walks of life. Questions of caste, class, and gender become central to Butalia’s negotiation of partition. In her “An Archive with a Difference,” she uses letters written by common people who were affected by the decision to partition the two countries, addressed to the very civil and administrative



authorities who made those political decisions. The loss of a community and the fears of rebuilding communities are seen as important concerns in these letters. On reading and discussing some of these letters in class, it became apparent that the letters are an embodiment of hopeful citizens of a new nation who are otherwise erased from the mainstream narrativization of the Partition.

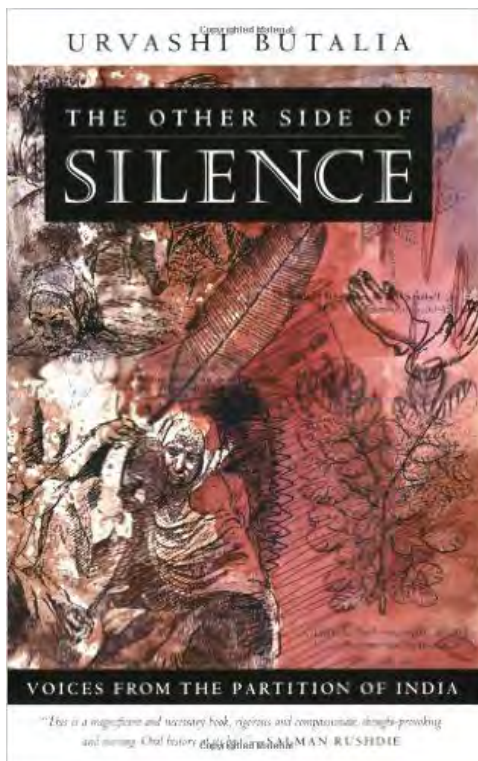
### Victim-as-Witness: Partition and Subjectivity

We began to read Butalia's oral histories from her work *The Other Side of Silence* as witness accounts not just by individuals who witnessed the partition but also by those who came to bear witness to it in their very act of revisiting the traumatic event. Functioning as witness accounts, it was observed that these victims were bearing witness to the event itself, creating a new register to understand their narratives of trauma and suffering. The victim-as-witness is a category that is constructed differently in these personal narratives of suffering as opposed to State archives which merely collate victims as numbers.

Butalia provides an extremely moving account of her maternal uncle as well as her mother's views on the partition in her chapter "Blood." Both Rana, her uncle, and Subhadra, her mother, locate partition in the ways in which their everyday lives changed. Butalia places Rana's predicament of having chosen to stay back in Pakistan within a tenuous relationship he shared with his family. His choice of having to convert to Islam to remain in Pakistan along with his mother was a painful one that led to the separation of the two from his siblings who moved to India. Rana, we learn, was unwelcome in his own home. His loyalty towards Pakistan and his own family came to be doubted. Butalia observes:

*Ever since television made appearance, Ranamama made sure he listened to the Indian news everyday. When cricket was played between the two countries, he watched and secretly rooted for India. Often, when it was India playing another country, he sided with India. . . . His children and family found this bizarre. They could not understand these secret yearnings, these things that went on inside his head (p 39).*

Similarly, in "Subhadra", Urvashi Butalia's mother's account, Subhadra remarks how Rana was never accepted as a Muslim in Pakistan (p 65). Reiterating Pandey's argument that Rana's double bind was inherent in her subjectivity makes for an interesting shift from thinking



accounts.

### Asha and the Widow as Survivor *vis-a-vis* the Partition

Yet another interesting ethnographic work that we recalled was Veena Das' work on partition and subjectivity (2000). In "Violence, Poisonous Knowledge and Subjectivity" Das' research focuses, much like Butalia's, on the accounts of several women whose negotiation with partition concerned everyday spaces of domesticity, not borders, property, and possessions. What is fascinating about Das' work is how the stories collected bring partition into the domain of kinship and domesticity. Through a re-reading of one of the accounts given by a Partition survivor named Asha, Das negotiates the experience of partition that lies in the edges of unspoken words, unvoiced fears and grief.

She recounts one such narrative of Asha who was widowed prior to the partition and had no home to go to post-partition. In Asha's life, we are told, "the originary moment of the violence of the Partition got woven into the events of her life because she was already vulnerable as a widow in a kinship universe of Hindu upper-caste ethos" (209).

Widowed at the age of twenty in 1941, much before the event of partition was to take place, Asha recounts how her bereavement after her husband's death, coupled with being childless, "weighed heavily upon her" (210). Asha's husband's sister gave her own son in adoption to help her gain some interest in life. However, during the partition, Asha's family lost its property and belongings and had to leave Lahore. Her own natal home was in Amritsar, the nearest town to the border on the Indian side. This family

about the partition as a "happening" to understanding the category of that very happening.

### From Numbers to Subjecthood: Oral Histories as Archives

Oral history documentation works against the generalizing principle to highlight the subjectivity of the person. These narratives do not function as metanarratives of a community or as the general history of the nation. Students began to recognize that in the state's archival methods such narratives merely function as a set of generalized numbers. These victims are characterized by an effacement of their victimhood. In the oral narratives archives, however, we recognized the embodied subjectivity of the sufferer: otherwise absent, clouded, and shrouded in State

provided refuge to many from Asha's conjugal family until other relatives came forward to help them. Asha continued to live in her parents' home but was seen as a burden by her own brother and his wife. Das quotes Asha: "a daughter's food is never heavy on her parents, but how long will one's parents live? When even two pieces of bread are experienced as heavy by one's own brother, then it is better to keep one's honor—make one's peace—and to live where one was destined to live." (211)

Her parental home where she is entitled to receive honor became a place where she could no longer make the same kind of claims after her marriage. She was forced to accept the last resort of having to live where she was "destined," which was in her conjugal home. Das observes how Asha's reading of her own plight is "shaped by the cultural, patriarchal norms of widowhood" especially in the absence of the feeling of belonging that was earlier extended by her sisters-in-law, even after her husband's death. With the reliance on the sacred texts, a life of asceticism was the prescribed measure, and all the more stringent for the upper caste widows like Asha (Gupta 2001, 302). Her stay in her conjugal house was always encumbered by daily chores. She had to perform this role to ensure that the family did not see her as an added responsibility and yet her very presence, Das observes, functioned as a constant reminder to the family of the loss of her husband. She could neither express grief as it would disturb the happy picture of the family, nor express her happiness as she was a widow. Her brother-in-law, a widower himself, began to make passes at her that she found difficult to deal with, while her own siblings saw her as the poor widow with whom the ancestral property would have to be divided. Her becoming an unwanted entity within these domestic spaces illuminated the subjecthood of a widow in the context of the partition. Here was a fascinating oral narrative that helped us locate the effects of partition in everyday life.



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## Telling Partition: Kinship and Domesticity

Das marks Asha's account as one that narrates partition as an event of loss, betrayal, and hopelessness. She observes:

*for many women such as Asha, the violence of the Partition lay not in what happened in the riots or in the brutal violation of their bodies but also in what they also had to witness—viz. the possibility of betrayal coded in their everyday relations. . . . Who could have predicted that a major political event would reveal the possibility of betrayal in much-loved relationships? (p 218).*

Her account is told here in elaborate detail to impress upon readers the strength in the telling of her experience. It is this orality that constitutes a re-reading of the archives. In Asha's recounting of the partition experience, it is the home that becomes more relevant than the nation. Her remarriage is, in turn, seen as betrayal by the members in her conjugal family. Her account highlights the politics played out between relatives of her community and not between communities as is often associated with Partition. Das reflects:

*In the case of Asha we saw that she defines relationships of kinship much more through ideas of care, and in her story the brutality of the Partition lay in what violence could do to alter the ways in which kin recognize or withhold recognition from each other. Thus the traumatic memory of Partition cannot be understood in Asha's life as a direct possession of the past (p 221).*

This kind of historiography frees it from a convenient positioning of the "other" seen in other records by the British administrators of the time too. It turns partition from two-nation, two-communities, two-religions' story to larger questions of dispossession, dislocation, and betrayal. Partition, therefore, is not just geopolitical but also emotional. Butalia makes an interesting remark in the context of remembering the partition. She says: "I have come to believe that there is no way we can begin to understand what partition was about, unless we look at how people remember it" (p 13). Partition, therefore,

is about how people remember it. Oral archives of partition stories do not arrive at facts, but rather, on how memories shape "facts."

## Gendering Oral Histories about Partition

In reading Asha's account, an interesting set of responses emerged from some of the male students in a class where the majority was young. One of them remarked: "While what these writers are saying is indeed of great significance, I do not understand how the partition is always problematized from the point of view of the women and children. Did men not suffer at all? While the domestic space is definitely significant, why should the other side of partition only entail dimensions of the woman's experiences?" This was an interesting observation, calling attention to the danger of gendering the archive. To look at partition as an event that only affected women and children, not men, can be a dangerous reading of the archives themselves.

This observation led some of us to explore the questions of masculinity in and around partition. An illuminating addition to our own archive of material on partition was made possible through a reading of Deepak Mehta's essay (2000) "Circumcision, Body, and Masculinity: The Ritual Wound and Collective Violence," through which we were able to locate the ritualized constitution of the body. The essay clearly articulates the anxieties of both masculinity and nationalism through the Muslim identity. The strength of such a critical observation has been pointed out by Pandey, too. Pandey claims that while there have been several accounts of ritualization and sexualized violence against the body of the woman, the male body is never discussed in detail in any such accounts. Mehta's interesting account of reading masculinity within the discourse of partition further broadened for us the scope of oral history narratives about the Partition.

## Pedagogical Implications: Partition and the Affective Turn

As the class read such witness accounts, we began to see how the oral archive recorded in the work significantly differs from the facts collated by the State. The facts reported in the State accounts are not obvious givens. Butalia (1998) observes how the Indian Independence Bill provided for ten committees that were set up to look into the matters of the partition, but none of them considered the problems of rupturing and dislocating people's lives (p. 75). Partition has largely been known in the way it has been handed down to us. These committees have indeed shaped the cultural apparatuses of partition.

The oral narratives, however, provided for an affective turn in constituting the historiography of partition. This affective turn is achieved by reading stories about loss, betrayal, and hope rather than assimilating a set of figures and political facts around the partition. The discursive construction of the victim in State archives has no space for the particulars. The voice in these State archives is not the victims' but the State's—the voice of those who were only distantly involved in the event. That these individual stories have been archived in and through several projects before they fade away is the greatest strength of an oral histories archive. That we had one more oral narrative shared in our class apart from the ones by Butalia and Das added to our own archive of partition stories we were familiar with.

A significant pedagogical implication of reading oral histories as archives of suffering was that students brought back several other stories to class about Partition that covered a range of other issues like caste, class, gender, and sexuality. The movement from gaining theoretical knowledge about reading oral histories of partition to feeling and relating with it through other similar narratives was indeed notable in students' readings and engagements with other narratives of suffering.

Oral histories may restrict or even appear to constrict the temporal and spatial canvas, but it definitely expands the boundaries of critical engagement and cultural analysis.

The State records events of death, rape, loss, and despair but oral narratives do the same differently. In them, patriarchy, sexuality, national politics and everyday life all intersect, but are seen through the prism of lived experience. What is therefore refracted is more than just a story. An oral archive, then, enables us to imagine a dynamic historiography of the nation. What Das does with the fragments of Asha's experience is to perform a cultural exegesis: her reading is not an application of an existing framework of history to a personal account. She sees another dimension of the historiography of the nation through it. What is foregrounded in these accounts is the materiality of the pain and suffering of the subjects of the Partition.

## Oral Histories as Archives: Challenges and Problem Questions

The introduction of oral accounts of partition saw its share of problems when brought into the classroom as teaching materials, too. Students raised concerns about veracity and authenticity of these narratives that were often recalled from memory several years after the partition. This, they said, countered the "objectivity" that is central to the discipline of history itself. "Would these not be mediated accounts? How much would they remember? How well would one remember forty years after the happening?" they asked.

However, once students understood that such narratives challenge not just the "givens" about partition but also the received beliefs about the processes of historiography itself, it became clear to them that authenticity is not always a strong critical point when discussing narratives of trauma and suffering. The historian's understanding of partition may be different from the popular imagination of the same. Private memories and witness accounts often counter mainstream versions of history. Having introduced the problems of disciplinary narratives of history, oral narratives prove to be a stronger archive that negotiated the interstices of caste, class, and gender within the partition as opposed to the otherwise singular and unitary preoccupation of partition as a narrative of geopolitical division and large-scale violence.

That the students were indeed able to see partition well beyond the lens of dates, events, and political figures was a welcome change. The move from dealing with partition as distant subjects not directly affected by it, to recognizing the embodied suffering of subjects as violence and suffering. Such oral histories function as important archival sites that also alert us to a fuller picture of the partition without shying away from its horror or being forced into apathy due to lack of knowledge about them. Their recognition of a secure, safe, well-constituted sense of Self vis-à-vis the lives of those who experienced trauma and suffering enabled a better, empathetic recognition of the Other. "We no longer see subjects of suffering and trauma with a sense of detachment and security but rather with a sense of relating with them as individuals cohabiting similar life-worlds as ours" remarked one of the students. What made the use of oral histories as archives to discuss

the Partition radical was locating an affective literacy in the reading and understanding of events marked by violence. Students in general began to be a lot sharper in critiquing the modes of violence in other contexts too. The introduction of a story from one of their own classmates made the understanding of oral narratives and its strength a lot more useful.

Oral narratives need to be collected to enable students to understand suffering from the perspective of the subjecthood of the victim. In introducing these archives into the classroom space, the partition was re-viewed through an affective lens of pain, suffering, and feeling of empathy. This affective turn was possible in the recognition of the "other side of silence," otherwise effaced in historical accounts. These archives of oral histories have shown us how where no government remembers stories of those who crossed and those who remained, memories disseminate them.

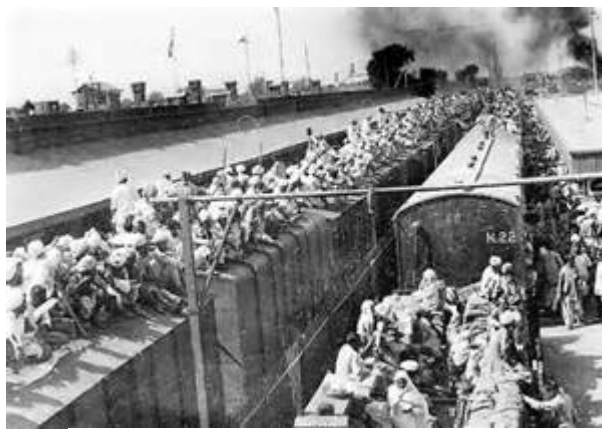


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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Most of the relations between India and Pakistan are constructed around the Hindu-Muslim paradigm. What is meant by “characteristic” here is the nature of responses that have anything to do with both these countries. It is marked by an increased sense of hostility politically, and consequentially also emotionally in the minds of several nationalist Indians.
- <sup>2</sup> When several Muslim celebrities from Bollywood raised issues about the tolerance in the country, the characteristic response was “Go back to Pakistan.” The sentiments around categorically asserting a nationalist identity has become increasingly tense today in India. The recent developments around the debate of nationalism in the premier public universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University emphasize the tolerance-intolerance debate in this context. The current government has been criticized for an increasingly rightist Hindutva discourse defining nationhood (See Sashi Kumar’s “The New Nationalism” in the March issue of *The Frontline* for more). It is within several of these debates that the question of Partition was raised in our classes.
- <sup>3</sup> The Hindu-Muslim relations in India have always been configured within and around increasing communal tensions. A vast amount of archival material points towards the problems and perspectives of understanding the Hindu-Muslim relations. Several instances of communal tensions in the country, including the Ramjanmabhoomi incident that led to the destruction of the Babri masjid in Ayodhya by right wing Hindu fundamentalists in December of 1992 and to the riots in Mumbai and consequent bomb blasts in 1993 are attributed to a breakdown in the harmony between the two communities. A variety of literature exists that critiques and problematizes many of these positions. See Jha et al (2012); Mehta et al (2007); Pandey (2001); Das (2000) for more on understanding the nature of the rather problematic constructions of Hindu and Muslim subjectivities.
- <sup>4</sup> A wide literature is available that ascribes the communal differences between Hindus and Muslims to events prior to the Partition itself. Literature on the peaceful coexistence of the two communities is also available. See Gyanendra Pandey’s *Remembering Partition* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001) and *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: OUP 1990); Asghar Ali Engineer’s *Communal Riots in Post Independent India* (Hyderabad: Sangam Books, 1984) for more on the subject.
- <sup>5</sup> Works by Sadat Hasan Manto, Alok Bhalla, Khushwant Singh, and films like *Qissa* are a select few references of literary and cultural expressions of partition.
- <sup>6</sup> See “Understanding Partition: Politics, Memories, Experiences”(pp. 376- 404) in *Themes in Indian History III*, Delhi: NCERT for the chapter on Partition
- <sup>7</sup> I would like to thank my student Kudrat Handa for bringing this story to the discussion in class. This one story opened several dimensions of reading partition for both students as well as me. Thanks are also due to Amala Poli, a former student who added important ideas to an earlier draft of this paper.



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# RADICAL TEACHER

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

## Archives, Education, and Access: Learning at Interference Archive

By Bonnie Gordon, Lani Hanna, Jen Hoyer, and Vero Ordaz



THE FRONT PORTION OF THE ARCHIVE, SHOWING BOOKSHELVES, AS WELL AS FLAT FILES FOR POSTERS. (PHOTO: JEN HOYER)

## Introduction

Archives are a tool for education, and the access policy of an archive affects what kind of education takes place in its space. In this paper, we describe how Interference Archive (IA), a community archive in Brooklyn, New York, creates unique educational opportunities by providing access through a radical access policy based on open stacks and experiential learning. These means of access are intended to subvert representational power by allowing visitors, donors, and volunteers to take part in deciding how histories are told, how materials are accessed, and how the collection is re-used as a resource for learning about contemporary and historical social movements.

We lay groundwork for how the radical nature of our access policy provides space for unique education opportunities through a brief history of IA and an introduction to its collections and day-to-day work. We'll provide context for how access typically plays out in archives and contrast this with how collection access at IA, through a variety of means, shapes our work and is a tool for education and mobilization.

The authors of this paper are regular volunteers at IA; it is important to recognize that in speaking as "we", we are four voices and perspectives among many at IA. Bonnie Gordon is an archivist who volunteers her time by working with the online catalog and administrative support. Lani Hanna works at the farmer's market while pursuing graduate studies and primarily volunteers on exhibitions, audio archiving, and administrative support at IA. Jen Hoyer is a librarian and musician who volunteers her efforts towards cataloging and fundraising. Vero Ordaz came to IA while she was a student in American Studies at Brooklyn College. She expanded her classroom education through IA and supports the archive as she can.

## About Interference Archive

The mission of IA is to explore the relationship between cultural production and social movements as a way to tackle social and political issues. We bring together people interested in social change, such as educators, artists, activists, archivists, and community organizers. We offer a study center and public programs including exhibitions, workshops, talks, and screenings, all of which are free and open to the public.

The archival collection at IA grew out of the personal collections of its founders, Josh MacPhee and Dara Greenwald, who amassed an extensive collection through their involvement in social movements over the preceding 25 years. Along with collaborators Molly Fair and Kevin

Caplicki, they opened IA in December 2011 as a public archive where movement participants with firsthand knowledge about the material could play a role in organizing and describing this collection.

In 2016, IA has established itself in New York City's activist scene as well as in a national and international network of activists and community archives. IA is located in the Gowanus neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, in two rented rooms on the ground floor of a converted industrial building that houses other studios and offices. One room houses the archival collections as well as some study space. The second room is used for exhibitions and public programming; it can comfortably fit 35 chairs for a talk or film screening. Sections of the exhibition room are partitioned off as co-working space; this rent subsidizes the rent of IA and provides work space for groups and individuals whose interests connect with those of IA. The building is situated close to three major subway lines and, while we see regular visits from New Yorkers, we have a steady stream of visitors from around the globe who have included IA in their travel plans because they are



THE EXHIBITION SPACE AT INTERFERENCE ARCHIVE, WITH MATERIAL FROM "WE WON'T MOVE: TENANTS ORGANIZE IN NEW YORK CITY", MARCH - JUNE 2015 (PHOTO: GREG MIHALKO)

interested in our work or for research purposes. IA is open to the public four days per week, with at least one volunteer staff member available during each open shift. Additional events and meetings keep the archive open three or four evenings per week. Through a combination of regular open hours, programming, and exhibition openings, we see anywhere from 30 to 300 visitors to the archive each week.

Increased attention to IA's work has resulted in collection growth through regular donations. IA's collection policy encompasses the cultural production of social movements—posters and prints, buttons, t-shirts, periodicals, pamphlets, zines, books, moving images, audio recordings, and other ephemera produced in multiples. Our collection development policy does not favor any political agenda, but IA's policy of open stacks access, which we'll

describe in more detail through this paper, affects what we collect. The intent is not to develop a collection of material that has been designated as "radical" by a certain community, movement or individual, though many materials may fall into that category. Instead, the radical nature of IA's work lies in this open access policy and a focus on public facing programming that radically shifts the communities and individuals who have access to the history recorded in this archival material.

IA is run completely by volunteers; there are no paid staff. We aim to operate along similar lines to the organizational structures of many of the social movements represented in our collection: these are largely non-hierarchical, consensus-based groups from the political left. Initially run by a core collective, IA's volunteer community has evolved into a network of working groups that each focus on different projects or tasks. These include the Admin, Cataloging, Audio, Born Digital, Education, and Fundraising working groups, as well as ad hoc groups that come together to develop exhibitions. All labor at Interference Archive is volunteer and commitments vary depending on an individual's desire and availability. Operating on volunteer energy necessitates careful budgeting of labor. At IA we choose to focus our labor in ways that serve experiential access. The majority of our labor at present is focused toward regular open hours and educational programming, including exhibitions, talks, and workshops.

## Access at Interference Archive

Open access is a priority at IA. Open collection access means visitors can drop by anytime during our open hours and work with material themselves. They do not need to make an appointment to come see the collection, and institutional credentials are not required for access to the material.



STUDENTS FROM A LOCAL YOUTH PROGRAM VISIT INTERFERENCE ARCHIVE TO STUDY POSTER DESIGN WHILE CREATING THEIR OWN NEIGHBORHOOD MURAL (PHOTO: JEN HOYER)

We prioritize open access because it creates opportunities for experiential education, which we define as direct interaction with archival material as the basis for educational programming and learning opportunities that

are of benefit to any visitor, whether they would take the formal title of "student" or not.

Before describing how IA's radical emphasis on open access to collections shapes the kind of educational opportunities we provide, it's helpful to step back and understand how access typically unfolds in archives. We understand that making any statements about what is "typical" is a broad generalization, but we'd like to clarify how IA's position towards collection access plays out as a radical shift from the norm, and how it enables IA to be a valuable resource and tool for education.



A VISITOR TO THE ARCHIVE READS ZINES (PHOTO: JEN HOYER)

IA's work fits broadly under the umbrella of community archives, or "collections of material gathered primarily by members of a given community and over whose use community members exercise some level of control" (Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd 73). It's useful to think of community archives as grassroots groups that focus on saving the material of community organizations. Community archives often collaborate with the organizations represented in their collections, and they tend to be self-organized with a "bottom-up" approach. By contrast, institutional archives tend to take a "top-down" approach, often mirroring the bureaucratic organizational structure of the institutions they exist within, and drawing on the efforts of that institution to collect and organize archival material, rather than utilizing the efforts of the subjects of the archival material (Ziegler 107-108). When we talk about how IA fits into the realm of community archives, we recognize the community we serve as an incredibly broad spectrum of activists and organizers (for further elaboration on this, see Sellie et al. 2015).

Additionally, many archives collect unpublished records generated by organizations and individuals during their normal course of business. Archives sometimes need to place physical and intellectual access restrictions on these. By contrast, IA collects materials that were produced in multiples and explicitly intended for public consumption. Staffing volunteers at IA do not need to restrict access to specific materials in the collection.

While not absolute, the framework of community vs. institutional archives gives a useful lens for thinking about different ways that archives approach access. Within the bureaucratic structure of institutional archives, the primary



goal of an archivist has traditionally been seen as preserving records before providing access (Cook 224). Even in the context of an institutional archive that houses radical, activist collections, access limitations on the Riot Grrrl collection at Fales Library have been viewed as problematic because Fales' access policy states that it prioritizes access to 'qualified researchers' (Eichhorn 31). By contrast, community archives are a space for "participatory recordkeeping", where the subjects of archival material also become decision makers about how collections are accessed (Upward, McKemmish, Reed 221).

Every object accessioned into the collection at IA is available to the public for perusal. Visitors are encouraged to search experientially: to open boxes and look through the collection on their own rather than search a computer (although an online catalog is in its infancy, our open stacks browsing structure means that cataloging everything is not paramount to access). To make experiential searching easier, the collection is organized by format, and then by subject or alphabetical title within each format. Visitors find that browsing can result in relevant or inspirational connections between collections that they otherwise may not have discovered had they not had open access to the entire collection.

Other access issues connect to the nature of both visitors and staff at IA. Visitors to IA often define themselves specifically as "not a researcher." Some are uncomfortable simply opening boxes and taking pamphlets out because they have never been allowed to do this before. By contrast, others come equipped with a list of subject terms that they've used to search in their university's library, and they're upset that they can't sit down and search a computer to find exactly what they're looking for at IA. With regards to staffing, our all-volunteer structure means that the archive is staffed by people with diverse skill sets and subject knowledge. On any day, a visitor might interact with a volunteer who has a lot of experience working with zines, or a volunteer who has subject- or movement-specific knowledge. It's important to think about the impact staff knowledge and experience has on how visitors access the collection. Even in large institutional archives with highly accredited paid staff, there is a trade off between staff with subject expertise and staff with information science backgrounds.

**By removing "gatekeepers" to access, we also remove transactional relationships that position our collection as a commodity.**

For IA, an experiential method of relating to the collection has multiple benefits. It allows for more egalitarian relations with the space and material. By removing "gatekeepers" to access, we also remove transactional relationships that position our collection as a commodity. This moves closer to the original intent of the material in our collection: the cultural ephemera in IA's collection was made to be distributed for community

building and information sharing. Founder and volunteer Josh MacPhee explains that "the goal is not to lock this stuff away, but to keep it in circulation; if not physically circulating, intellectually circulating...It's not just about wanting to get a look at an old pamphlet. It's about coming and being able to talk to three other people about that old pamphlet" (Interview with V. Ordaz, November 2014).

## Exhibitions and Programming: Creating Space for Experiential Learning

Our open stacks collection is meant to diversify the audience that engages with our material, but we recognize that many people think of archives as a space for people to do research. To counter this and make our material more available—and more obvious—to a larger audience, we focus on providing a platform for producing new information and communicating with a wider public by programming film screenings, panel discussions, and class visits. Our programming encourages critical and creative engagement with the histories of social movements and seeks to reach parts of our community that do not see themselves as "researchers" but whose life experience, work or education has historically been affected by the material and ideas represented in the IA collection.

Since 2011, IA has hosted four exhibitions each year, focusing on a variety of issues or tactics for social movement organizing. Regular events are held both to coincide with these exhibitions, as well as to highlight other issues, organizing work, and social movements. As a result of the volunteer nature of our organizing structure, each program is influenced and represented through the interest of the organizer. This brings a wide variety of perspectives and questions out of the collection.

We'd like to reflect further on how exhibitions and public programming at IA provide opportunities for experiential learning. Our exhibitions are as diverse thematically as our collection. These have showcased the Asian American Movement in New York in the 1970s; a comprehensive history of tenant organizing in New York City since the 1940s; the Havana, Cuba based Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL); and a look at the intersection of comics and identity politics, among others. Each exhibition is organized by a group of volunteer collaborators who comb the archive for related material in order to research, design, write, promote, and install each exhibition. IA exhibitions ask questions of the archival material that stem, in part, from the differing backgrounds or interests of the organizers.

The exhibition *Self-Determination: Inside/Out* (September - November 2014), organized by Molly Fair, Josh MacPhee, Anika Paris, Laura Whitehorn, and Ryan Wong, showcased a diverse selection of objects created for social action by incarcerated people and their allies. The materials in this exhibition included pamphlets, t-shirts, posters, and audio recordings. Laid out thematically, these materials depicted prison activism around AIDS education, political prisoners, incarcerated women, and LGBTQ people. The exhibition also depicted tactics such as hunger strikes,

smuggling audio testimony, and historical narratives such as the Attica Rebellion. All of this material came together in one space to create dialogue between the various pieces of ephemera about organizing tactics and issues in the past. This was achieved by presenting related and contrasting material adjacent to each other in the exhibition alongside textual commentary. This presentation was ultimately designed to educate about the past and stimulate conversation amongst exhibition visitors regarding these issues today.

The curators for *Self-Determination: Inside/Out* were comprised of a group with varying backgrounds and entry points to the material, including a former political prisoner, prisoner rights activists, as well as volunteers who were interested in learning more about these issues. As a result, curators and additional volunteers who helped with this show all had the opportunity to learn from each other, as each brought different knowledge and experience. This exhibition evolved out of personal interest from a few regular volunteers at IA who connected with IA supporters who also shared an interest in putting together an exhibition of archival material about prison organizing. These individuals brought their idea to the Core Collective (now the Admin Working Group) to propose the exhibition and address questions or concerns. Over the course of several months, the curators met regularly to comb the archive for relevant material, to discuss themes they wanted to highlight as well as themes brought to light by the archival material, and eventually they worked to finalize content and install the exhibition. Decisions about what material and themes to highlight developed out of careful conversations among the collaborative curators.

Alongside this exhibition, the curators organized a schedule of regular programming, which drew conversation out of the archival material and asked visitors to engage more deeply with the material on display. Events included a reading group discussion of James ‘Yaki’ Sayles’ *Meditations on Wretched of the Earth*; and a panel discussion with National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights (NNIRR), Families for Freedom, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, CUNY Prison Divest, Columbia Prison Divest, and Enlace which invited visitors to think about the role of private prisons in criminalization. Members of the New Jersey 4 visited to take part in a film screening and discussion of their criminalization. Beyond just looking at material on the walls, these programs provided clear entry points for discussion and continued conversation about the issues presented by archival material in the exhibition: reading group participants talked about current issues of incarceration, and event participants learned from current organizers how they can become involved in confronting these issues today.

*Armed by Design: Posters and Publications of Cuba’s Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL)* (September - November 2015) was conceived as an exhibition which could broach issues of solidarity in the past and today by looking at the posters and publications of the Cuba-based OSPAAAL. This exhibition was organized by Lani Hanna, Jen Hoyer, Josh MacPhee, Vero Ordaz, Joelle Rebeiz, and Sarah Seidman.

The work of this Havana-based group focused on building solidarity with liberation movements across the third-world and developing an identity for the anti-imperialist world. Bringing posters and publications together provided an opportunity to explore questions and topics related to OSPAAAL’s work that are bypassed when this material is more commonly shown in contemporary art and design contexts which celebrate or critique the work for its aesthetic value. This exhibition re-presented the work in its political and historical context.

The curators of *Armed by Design* included regular archive volunteers, newer members of the volunteer community at IA, graphic design professionals, and scholars whose work focuses on Cuba and OSPAAAL. The idea for this exhibition was sparked by a major donation of OSPAAAL posters. The donor of this collection gave them to IA because of IA’s access policy. He wanted members of the public to be able to look at these posters without any kind of institutional barriers. To honor this intent, volunteers at IA began discussing how an exhibition of these posters and other material generated by OSPAAAL could provide an ideal way for the public to learn about and interact with this donation.

**As conversations about the exhibition expanded, a focus on the connection between graphic design and the changing aesthetics of solidarity work developed, it became evident that a political statement would not be necessary or relevant to the goal of the exhibition.**

The curators met over the course of a year to have conversations about graphic design and solidarity, as well as about these issues specifically in the context of Cuba. By pulling out major questions from these curatorial discussions, the organizing committee developed themes for the exhibition -- such as the role of women in liberation movements, or the changing relationship between solidarity and armed struggle. The curators wrestled with whether the exhibition should take a stance on the current political situation in Cuba. As conversations about the exhibition expanded, a focus on the connection between graphic design and the changing aesthetics of solidarity work developed, it became evident that a political statement would not be necessary or relevant to the goal of the exhibition. The curators decided to allow the public to explore a variety of perspectives represented by the OSPAAAL design.

Related programming brought together groups of political artists and designers to host a discussion about doing solidarity work through art creation, including Avram Finkelstein, Dread Scott, and Kameelah Janan Rasheed, a screening of the work of Santiago Álvarez, a roundtable discussion on posters in the digital age, as well as a panel of organizing groups who have worked in solidarity with Cuba over the past five decades. Attendees at the latter

panel explained that they had come to the event because they wanted to learn more about how to engage with Cuban solidarity movements in today's political climate. Programming for this exhibition was designed both to reflect themes presented in the exhibition, and to foster conversations—such as how solidarity with Cuba specifically has changed since the height of OSPAAAL's work.

Additionally, because this exhibition focused on two types of material—posters and books—it gave visitors a way to think specifically about how these formats are useful as tools for organizing, how we learn from both printed material and graphic posters, and how we can implement these today as a tool for change. A bilingual exhibition catalog in the same format as OSPAAAL's regular *Tricontinental* journal publication gave visitors a tangible way of thinking about the information-as-solidarity tools that OSPAAAL produced.

**...it gave visitors a way to think specifically about how these formats are useful as tools for organizing, how we learn from both printed material and graphic posters, and how we can implement these today as a tool for change.**

More than just a series of events and a collection of material on the walls, IA's exhibitions can serve as an introduction to accessing the physical collection. Many of our exhibitions start in the exhibition space and continue on the walls of the archive itself. A selection of exhibition material is available to be handled and further examined; when visitors can pick up exhibition material and begin to explore it, they ease into the experience of handling archival collections. Our exhibitions often represent a very small portion of relevant material, limited by the actual wall space available. Situating an exhibition of curated material alongside the broader collection encourages visitors to further explore questions and connections raised in by the exhibit, or begin a search on other issues and themes.

While a large percentage of IA's volunteer labor is directed at staffing and exhibitions, there is a strong focus on additional programming and education that supports creating access to the collection. Typical events include a recent film screening and skype conversation between local Black Lives Matters organizers and student protesters in South Africa; and a moderated discussion with local organizers who have taken part in and learned from Rojava's fight for democratic confederalism, gender equality, and ecology in the midst of the Syrian Civil War. This kind of programming utilizes the space at IA to incubate conversations in response to very recent events, and to give the audience a way to plug in with various communities or organizing groups. Depending on the event and our archival holdings, when possible we also pull related archival material to give attendees a clear way to integrate the movement they are learning about with

historical movements they may (or may not) already be aware of. All programming at IA is free and open to the public; requests to host events are often received from outside organizations and individuals. Determining whether an event will happen at IA necessitates evaluating requests against IA's event policy (available at [interferencearchive.org/events-policy/](http://interferencearchive.org/events-policy/)) as well as the availability of volunteer labor to host events. As an all-volunteer archive, labor is a constant negotiation. We have found ourselves in situations where we were supportive of an event proposal but could not commit any volunteer availability in order to host it. We have learned that we need to be honest with ourselves about our capacity as volunteers.

## Creating a new Classroom Experience at Interference Archive

Interference Archive is also a space for formal education. We host numerous class visits from local schools every year, including NYU Gallatin, Pratt, Hunter College, Brooklyn College, and Sunset Park High School. We also host groups of students from neighboring community organizations, such as Reelworks, YouthFX, Mobile Print Power, and Groundswell. Teachers bring their students to IA specifically because they cannot interact with the archival collection at their institution in the same way. This is usually because their institution's archives have not collected the types of material that IA collects, or because IA models an alternative classroom structure for participatory and experiential learning. Some teachers bring their class with the hope to discuss a specific movement or look at a specific type of material; others are more broadly interested in activism, design, and how social movements produce material to achieve their goals.

During these group visits, staffing volunteers try to pull material related to questions and themes being explored by the group, as well as set aside time during the visit for open exploration of the archive. This allows for variable discovery which may delve deeper into the issues that brought the group to visit IA in the first place. The type of material at IA also presents new questions for consideration. Ephemera, often lost from regular view in academia, is opened to discovery. Many students, as well as other visitors, don't have opportunity elsewhere for the level of interaction with archival material that allows for this kind of interpretation.

Several classes from various CUNY schools visited during the *We Won't Move* exhibition on tenant organizing in New York City. These students were learning about urban development, and more specifically gentrification, discrimination, and tenants' rights. IA's exhibition became a platform for these classes to actively engage with material that depicted the history of tenant rights, and several of the students returned to the archive for project-based research throughout the length of their course.

While professors are often drawn to IA because a current exhibition fits thematically with their course subject matter, teachers find the archive through other relationships or issues. A middle school class from a nearby

Brooklyn neighborhood came to look at political graphics, and an IA volunteer pointed the students towards several collections of posters that feature political design language and illustrate how it has developed over the last 50 years. The students then facilitated a discussion of the material and how it connects with current social justice movements, contemporary graphics like GIFs, and the use of material culture versus the internet.

The ability to handle the collection at IA provides room for critical thought that can arise from the physical state of objects, giving space to understand not only the primary "text" or message expressed, but the context of creation, the objects' creators, and where the objects were meant to be seen. Resulting discussions with students about the connections between movements and material have even become the foundation for public events hosted at the archive, like workshops and panels.

As an example, IA hosted a group of teens from Willie Mae Rock Camp for Girls (WMRC) who were exploring arts and activism through audio during the 2015 exhibition *if a song could be freedom...Organized sounds of Resistance*. Each teen was creating a podcast about issues they had selected as important, and they visited Interference Archive to learn from how this exhibition presented music as a tool for political organizing. Visual, textual, and audio elements helped the teens connect the role of music in political movements. They viewed album artwork alongside liner notes, lyrics, flyers, magazines and zines, and also made use of the exhibition's listening station. The WMRC participants were presented with perspectives they had not yet considered, opening a discussion that linked the work of previous generations to the contemporary issues they were asking questions about on their podcasts. While the visit was meant to provide the teens with inspiration, the conversations that ensued led to an event at IA showcasing their podcast projects. These included a survey of music of the Black Lives Matter movement, dispatches from young women in roller derby training camp, and conversations with women of color about music and activism. The audience for this event included other teens and adults connected to the WMRC program, as well as family and friends, members of the IA community, as well as the general public.

IA is able to expand the dimensions of the classroom through its open stacks access to diverse collections. Our priority on collection use and audience engagement provides educators and students a chance to participate, in its broadest sense, with public scholarship. Access to the materials and ideas contained in IA's collection, as well as the opportunity to shape IA's programming, provides space to ask new questions and apply skills and knowledge gained in the classroom. This shift allows for inquiry beyond the boundaries found in traditional academic settings.

## Conclusion

The access policy of Interference Archive, grounded in an open stacks policy and experiential learning, lays a foundation for education and mobilization. The examples above are a very small selection of the range of programming and direct educational support that we develop out of the ideas represented by material in our archival collection. By reflecting specifically on the access policy and educational programming at IA, we've explored one facet of how an archival access policy can impact education. At IA, our access policy is apparent in the ways that we prioritize volunteer labor to maintain open hours so visitors can explore our collection, in addition to our efforts towards exhibitions and programming that develop critical and creative engagement around the histories of social movements.

Returning to core issues of access in archives and how an access policy can impact education, we come to the intertwined issues of archives, access, and politics. The politics of any archive is rooted in power (Pell 40). Archives are places of control: archivists make decisions about what to collect, how to organize it, and how to provide access to it. By doing so they are making decisions about what history should be privileged above others, who has the skill to describe that history, and who has the right to access and learn from history. A desire to give power rather than keep it is implicit in this core part of IA's mission, and is at the core of IA's focus on access. If the politics of an archive is power over historical narrative, IA's politics is that information, as a tool for power, be put into the hands of the people it represents.

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# RADICAL TEACHER

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

## Tracing the Horizon: iLANDing as Radical Archive Practice and Pedagogy

by Christopher Kennedy and Ann Holt



*SIP (SUSTAINED IMMERSIVE PROCESS)/WATERSHED (2010), HUDSON RIVER, NEW YORK. A COLLABORATION WITH JENNIFER MONSON, CHRIS COGBURN, KATE CAHILL, MAGGIE BENNETT AND KATRIN SCHNABL (PHOTO COURTESY ILAND)*

## Tracing the Horizon

*We sit together in the foothills of the Taconic Mountains as dusk descends. The sounds of summer surround: cicadas, crickets and owls. Within the hour, the moon rises like a torch, bright and full of possibility.*

*Jennifer begins to walk toward a small ravine to the east and, instinctively, we all follow behind. Together, we enter the edge of the forest. The moon's light begins to fade and it's difficult to find sure footing.*

*We continue through a bramble and I can feel pricklers catch my legs, spreading their seed, entering my skin. We emerge on a recently plowed cornfield. The earth is soft and supple. I've never seen the moon this bright before. Our shadows are suddenly noticeable and we begin to dance and move along each earthen ridge with laughter and excitement. A shadow theater of the land.*

*Soon the quiet of the eve deepens and Jennifer points to the horizon. All four of us intuitively form a line. She signals for us to begin a score: a transect or eye tracing score. Focus on a point on the horizon furthest from you. Slowly trace a line from that point towards you touching every surface as if your eyes were a magic marker.*

*We all trace the horizon with our eyes and I feel a deep calm extend through my body. We stand transfixed for what seems like an hour, noticing, observing, being in place together. As we enter back into the forest we whisper to each other, speculating on the sounds of insects and nocturnal routines taking place all around us.*

*While we had walked many of the same trail paths before, there was something about the eye tracing score that brought the land and all of its rich layers into sharp focus. The score had enabled us to be fully present in our bodies, opening a space for dialogue, for ecstatic encounter, and improvised movement—all with little or no verbal communication.*

## Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Art, Nature and Dance (iLAND)

The purpose of this paper is to highlight an example of how a group of artists/educators/researchers involved in the Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Art, Nature and Dance (iLAND) conceptualize their practice as both users and producers of archives. iLAND is a dance research organization based in New York City. For over ten years, iLAND has brought together movement artists and scientists, visual artists and designers for intensive arts-based research and performance residencies. While each iLAND residency is unique, collaborative groups submit a proposal that identifies an area of research and a project that will use movement, dance or practices from other disciplines such as architecture, urban planning or biology to be used for understanding and responding to ecological phenomena in and around NYC. The duration of each project varies, but

typically lasts 3-6 months, and includes some form of public engagement such as a workshop, happening, or culminating performance. The output of each residency are scores (Score.1), which the organization describes as a set of instructions that tune one's observational senses to a particular aspect of an environment, which we might not otherwise notice, or be attuned to. Walking tours of lower Manhattan that trace original waterways; dancing with street trees in Harlem; foraging for mushrooms in Chinatown; dancing alongside migratory routes of birds in Corona Park are just a few examples.

### Score 1. *Listening and Movement Score*

With a partner, speaking in whispers, walk around the room facing each other trying to maintain the edge of being able to hear each other.

## Conceptualizing the iLAND archive

With a decade of transdisciplinary knowledge-making that foregrounds somatic, kinesthetic and choreographic approaches in relationship to a variety of disciplines, the residencies have generated a robust collection of artifacts and materials that respond to changing environments. This documentation is particularly significant in light of our descent into the "Anthropocene," a geologic time period in which the earth's systems are significantly altered by human activity.

Recognizing the archival value in these materials and approaches, iLAND founders have decided to preserve and share this documentation for its research and pedagogical value in the form of an archive called iLANDing. The process of developing the archive has sparked an interesting discussion amongst iLANDers about the fragility of ephemeral, site-specific, and time-based movement data generated by iLAND participants. Figuring out how the



HUMAN GEOGRAPHY AND THE PRACTICE OF PRESENCE (2008), BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK, KARL CRONIN, CHOREOGRAPHER, AND SASHA CUERDA, GEOGRAPHER (PHOTO COURTESY ILAND)

archive should be assembled, organized and made available has blurred the boundaries between the ephemerality of time-based art and preservation as well as the archival processes used to capture it.

By definition, an archive is a site for housing unique materials (primary source or original documents and artifacts) to be preserved in perpetuity for continued use (Society of American Archivists, 2008). The iLAND archive consists mainly of scores from a decade of participatory performance projects, documentation and reflections, images, and narrative descriptions of projects. An open access physical field guide and website (iLAND, 2016) is in the process of being created to both contain, share and dialogue about the content with a diverse set of users interested in it for research, teaching, learning and art-making.

### Score 2. *Bone Tracing Score*

(In pairs) One partner holds still, while the other, using their fingers, traces the bones in the hand, arm or body of their partner.

Let it be said that we are *non-archivists*. We are two artist-educators, teaching undergraduate and graduate level courses in art and design education. One of us is an artist involved in iLAND, and the other's research has long been focused on questions of the possibilities and potentialities for using and accessing archival materials for art and pedagogy. We do not intend to appropriate the term "archive" (Theimer, 2012). Rather, we seek to suggest ways for artists and teachers to engage and use an archive representing embodied and transdisciplinary approaches to situated places of learning, particularly ways that invite and provoke new interpretations, ideas, and responses (Ellsworth, 2005).

It is only through user engagement and interpretation that archival materials can be activated. Therefore, we are cognizant of the fact that archives are increasingly being defined in more expansive terms within the archival profession, in terms of how they grow (Krause and Yakel, 2007; Greene, 2002) as well as in context to the relationship between user, producer and archivist. Understanding that archives are deeply embedded in social relations in that they function in terms of how records are created, used, and shared, the aim of this article is to examine the process of creating and using an archive comprised of embodied data (Scores 2 and 3), and the potential of how the archive itself might operate as radical pedagogy (Scores 4, 5, 6).

### Score 3. *Sound/Listening Score*

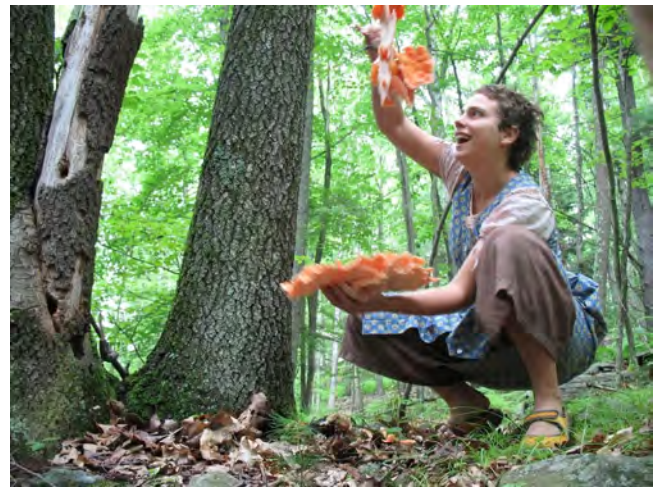
Noticing the textures and materials of the surfaces around you, use your body to make the softest sound you can, gradually increasing to the loudest sound, then back to the softest sound. Repeat twice.

## iLAND as radical pedagogy

The potential role of iLAND's archive and process plays out in the K-12 school setting or spaces of higher learning through setting an example for inspiring methods for learning about place, critically engaging the implications of human/non-human relationships in the built environment, and in collaboration. First, iLAND residencies, and more broadly the iLANDing "method" offer interesting examples

of place-based education that attend to multiple learning styles and recognize the socio-political implications of relationships. The emphasis of iLANDing on process and in finding ways to collaborate through shared inquiry emerges in relationship to changing environments through and with the body. Learning unfolds through research-based practices, shared experience and sensory engagement that embraces a level of uncertainty, risk and serendipitous discovery, factors typically absent or avoided in the K-12 or university classroom.

One can consider an iLAND residency, such as Strataspore in 2009, to imagine possibilities in how the iLAND archive might operate pedagogically. Strataspore is a Collective, consisting of a mycologist, architect, choreographer, educator, and artist. The group explores NYC's hidden infrastructure through the lens of fungi, using mushrooms as a metaphor and material for research, movement and public projects. Their process began by foraging for mushrooms in various parks around New York City. They gradually learned the basic science of mycology, and used mushrooms as an opportunity to bring people together through public workshops exploring issues such as soil contamination, ailing urban infrastructure, affordable housing, and cheap, sustainable food sources. Over time the mushroom emerged as both a metaphor and lens for understanding NYC's hidden infrastructure and ecological systems, inspiring conversation, collaborations and engagements with landscapes around the 5 boroughs.



STRATASPORE CHOREOGRAPHER ATHENA KOKORONIS FORAGING FOR MUSHROOMS IN BEACH LAKE, PA (2009)

Strataspore created two dances, one at the Judson Church and the other at the Flea Theater. Choreographer Athena Kokoronis developed scores for each dance inspired by weather patterns, John Cage, and movements interpreted through previous mushroom hunts. The act of slowly leaning down to pluck a mushroom, wandering off trail paths, and scanning the forest floor became a source material for the two works. As the group's collaboration deepened, the two pieces evolved alongside regular outings led by Gary Lincoff, the resident mycologist, who was also interviewed live during one of the dances to provide an intimate and improvised soundtrack.

Like many iLAND projects, the public was able to participate by joining the collective through workshops or

culminating public events. What's interesting here is that the practices of both research and movement occur in public spaces, allowing for spontaneous and unscripted encounters that inspire dialogue about a particular ecology, landscape or socio-cultural issue. Learning occurs rhizomatically and horizontally, transmitted through the group's internalized network and then circulates through the public sphere.



**BELOW AT THE MIDDLE** (2009). PERFORMED LIVE AT JUDSON CHURCH IN NEW YORK, NY. PERFORMERS: YUKO MITSUISHI, JACKIE DODD, CAROLINE WOOLARD, MONIQUE MILLESON, SHINOHARA KENSAKU, CHRISOPHER KENNEDY, CASSIE THORTON, ATHENA KOKORONIS, JULIETTE MARCHINA

#### Score 4. *Latent Potential*

Wait until it rains. The next morning, find a park or green area near you. Walk slowly, scanning the ground. Look carefully for emerging fruiting bodies (mushrooms). Visualize the mycelial network below your feet. Walking through the city, take note of the evidence of the infrastructural network below your feet (fire hydrants, street lights, manhole covers).

#### Score 5. *Foraging*

Choose one square foot of ground. Examine that square for an hour.

Go foraging for mushrooms in Chinatown.

#### Score 6. *Oyster/Oyster Dinner*

Acquire discarded oyster shells from a restaurant in the West Village. Fill them with oyster mushrooms. Feed to guests. Contemplate the connection between oyster mushrooms and oysters from the sea.

Strataspore, in this sense, is a platform for collective knowledge initiated by the group's engagement with local ecologies, and the science and metaphor of fungi (Score 4). A community of practice emerges through this process, allowing both the collective and public to learn through movement (the mushroom hunt) and shared experience (Score 5). The concept of movement-research offers a flexible container to structure this process, which aims to understand ecological phenomena through kinetic and somatic engagement (Score 7). As the group's investigation deepens, new knowledge and meaning begins to circulate (Score 8).

#### Score 7. *Diagramming Score*

Draw a diagram of how you got here.

Draw a diagram of your journey here this morning.

Draw a diagram of what supports you.

#### Score 8. *Movement Score*

Watch the water for 5 - 8 minutes.

#### Score 9. *Listening Score*

Begin by listening to whatever sound catches your attention. When you have listened to it completely, let another sound catch your attention. Try to hold on to that sound until you have listened to it completely.

Many of the same structures and pedagogical processes unfold through other projects. In a 2013 project for instance, *Through Body, Through Earth, Through Speech*, the collective Fantastic Futures collaborated with environmental scientist Jason Munshi South and artist Sonia Finley to engage with the general public in the neighborhood of Queens Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. Their project explored questions of difference, biodiversity, proximity, and intervention, connecting to Munshi South's research on the evolutionary implications of urbanization for wildlife in New York City. Over the course of the summer, they engaged Corona Park through a series of movement and listening workshops, collecting field recordings and data on animals used for a performance at Eyebeam's Art+Technology Center.

Another project called **PARK** explored the evolving ecology of Fresh Kills, New York, one of the world's largest urban landfills. Existing as both process and performance, PARK members describe the project as a "form of making and unmaking that engage wilderness, post-industrial spaces, and everyday landscapes to locate a convergence of nature, industry, and individual experience." Through



improvised movement and field studies the group documented evidence of the site's ongoing evolution from urban landfill to park site.



**PARK** (2011), FRESH KILLS, STATEN ISLAND, NY. KATHY WESTWATER, POET JENNIFER SCAPPETONE, ARCHITECT SEUNG JAE LEE, AND TRAIL-BUILDER LEIGH DRAPER (PHOTO COURTESY ILAND)

Similarly, *River to Creek: A Roving Natural History* was a project initiated in 2010 engaging the North Brooklyn waterfront and areas along the Newtown Creek, a superfund site and the most polluted waterway in New York City. Described as both participatory research and an art action, the project was a collaboration between marine scientist/dancer Carolyn Hall, ecologist/visual artist Kathleen McCarthy and Clarinda Mac Low and Paul Benney, and members of TRYST. The group led a walking tour, kayak convoy and bike ride, each guided by dancers and a different expert who shared their knowledge of botany, history or water ecology. The final research including recorded conversations, image and video, was translated into a sound collage transmitted by radio along the route.

Although each collaboration varies, the iLAND model offers a unique framework for educators to rethink our individual and collective relationships with/in the places we live, work and play. The examples highlighted here focus on process, and the use of the body as a tool for collecting data, encouraging dialogue and direct participation with natural and built environments. As a transdisciplinary practice, iLANDing inspires a transformative understanding of human relationships to ecology, and creative modes of practice that are not based in one specific discipline but rather form new methodologies and knowledge.

What is radical here, is the way iLAND methodology resists neo-positivist claims for how and why knowledge is created, circulated, and legitimized especially within the field of science education or ecology studies. iLANDing does not prescribe or assume a particular kind of empirical evidence through each residency, but instead encourages the pursuit of open-ended inquiries and interpretations of everyday phenomena that leave room for complexity and uncertainty. What's more, iLAND projects are typically open-ended, leaving behind traces of understanding in the form of scores. These scores are a curricular framework to take up anew, re-adapt and re-translate through accessing the iLANDing archive. iLAND data (archived and made accessible) is open access and inviting to be re-activated

through re-enactment and re-modification (Lepecki, 2010). The ideas explored through each residency become enmeshed in the very environments to which they seek to respond becoming a continuous and ongoing learning event

for both iLAND residents and the publics they encounter or engage directly in the present, and future visitors to the archive through the interpretations that are generated.

## iLANDing as a living archive

In the case of iLANDing, what is in the making here is a set of materials that blur boundaries between time, space, art and archive. The iLANDing archive serves as a

repository for ephemera connected to each project, and the organization has made a decision to foreground the scores developed as one of the primary ways the user will engage and interpret the archive. iLAND has also invited each residency group to support selected scores with other materials like images, maps, and other artifacts.

While the scores are specific to the project, they are also open to interpretation. In this way, the scores become a source material that are meant to invoke some of the larger ideas explored through each residency, while inviting users of the archive to interpret and remix each score in different ways. The production of a feedback loop, enables the archive to be *living*, responsive and ever-evolving. In foregrounding a kinetic and indeterminate relationship to changing living systems, the work of creating scores and capturing moments is born from the archive, mediated temporally through the body as archive and then folded back, reframed, and refigured, into the archive. The "archive" encompasses a site, a body/memory, and an action.



**RIVER TO CREEK: A ROVING NATURAL HISTORY** (2010), EAST RIVER, BROOKLYN. CAROLYN HALL, KATHLEEN MCCARTHY, CLARINDA MAC LOW AND PAUL BENNEY (PHOTO COURTESY ILAND)

The idea of a living archive is predicated on a notion of continuous growth (through its users) in a participatory archival environment where users generate new content from the collection, which then becomes part of the growing archive—with new possibilities (Holt & Esposito, 2013). As such, a living archive is dynamic. The collection

lives and grows through generative use, and will continue to grow as users engage, repurpose, teach, and share the collection and their teaching processes inspired by the scores. This type of approach to archives is indeed part of an increasing trend inside and outside of traditional archival practice to re-imagine archives. These approaches see archives as interdisciplinary social resources being both produced and interpreted simultaneously (Kozel, 2013) and archiving processes enhanced by digital networked technologies (Kozel, n.d.) which encourage a diversity of users and creative interpretations, particularly pertinent to the performing arts ("Future Histories", 2005; Motion Bank, 2010).

Considering both the challenges and opportunities of this kind of archival practice, how can the archive reflect iLAND as a living, participatory, and open organization that honors the complexity of living systems? Can this archive capture the multisensory experience of iLAND projects (i.e. dancing along the shores of Dead Horse Bay in the late spring)? How can we imagine the future user amongst our materials of what an archive is, and can be, in this instance?

## iLANDing as a radical archive practice

What makes the iLAND archive uniquely radical is in designing the central focus on the user/producer engagement within a social framework of **making**. For example, the web platform is slated to be a dynamic and responsive archival device, using a poetic "taxonomical logic" to allow users access to past scores, while also inviting re-interpretations and adaptations. What this means is that user engagement with the archive is encouraged as both a using and producing activity. Hence, the archive unfolds as something in-the-making, allowing new relationships and contexts to emerge.

The radical archives practice of iLANDing shifts the focus to a participatory one emphasizing the social and



*BIRD BRAIN: A NAVIGATIONAL DANCE PROJECT (2001), JENNIFER MONSON (PHOTO COURTESY ILAND)*

creative practice of iLAND residencies. In participatory archives, the institution supports multi-directional content experiences. The institution serves as a "platform" that connects different users who act as content creators, distributors, consumers, critics, and collaborators. This means the institution cannot guarantee the consistency of user experiences. Instead, the institution provides opportunities for diverse co-produced collections (Simon,



*THROUGH BODY, THROUGH EARTH, THROUGH SPEECH (2013), QUEENS FLUSHING MEADOWS, CORONA PARK. JULIO HERNANDEZ, HUONG NGO, PHUONG NGUYEN, SOLGIL OH, SABLE ELYSE SMITH, OR ZUBALSKY AND JASON MUNSHI SOUTH (PHOTO COURTESY ILAND)*

2010). The notion of participation also situates the archive as open, democratic, and inclusive. For instance, scores are developed through shared practice and language as an invitation for both novice and experts to generate and recreate both new and old responses—extending not only the artwork but also the archive.

Moreover, while some argue that digital repositories lessen opportunities for tactile experiences (Latham, 2010), these virtual galleries can actually afford more possibilities for participatory projects and pedagogy that are inclusive, democratic, and open. As a digital repository, iLAND can be accessed from anywhere. For instance, a New York City teacher, regardless of budget restrictions on field trips, can incorporate it into their curricula and virtually bring it directly into their classrooms. As a virtual space, iLAND scores are essentially available to **everybody** to engage, translate, and modify. Mindful of who really has access to the archive as a social and pedagogic space, including the ability and confidence to participate in it, the iLAND archive serves as a container and support for focus/practice while relating to a location, community, or site. It is thus a social mode of research, teaching, learning and art-making.

## How can a radical archive practice reflect a radical pedagogy?

The radical pedagogy of the iLANDING archive is then located in how it reflects the users and producers of the data it generates and the possibilities and potentialities inherent in using the archive. First of all, the emphasis of the materials is on process. Scientists, dancers and artists collaborate to investigate a

local ecology—and respond in turn through collaborative forms of inquiry. The output or “byproducts” of each project range from dance scores, photographic documentation, videos, websites, publications, and other written works. For instance, considering again the Strataspore residency, over the course of six months the group developed a series of dances and public engagements, which generated a set of data including photographs, videos, movement scores, a multi-user blog (<http://strataspore.ning.com>), and a small publication.

The richness of these materials lie in their potential for public pedagogy, provoking radical relationships to natural systems based on an informed and embodied understanding of the environment built on new conceptions of ecology that are science and arts-based. iLAND allows for untested and emergent practices to develop in relation to a particular place, a group of people, and the wider public sphere of NYC. This involves a pedagogy of reciprocity and replicability, and multiple ways of knowing.

The question becomes how to bring a diverse user/producer audience to the archive. This is a key concern particularly in targeting audiences less familiar with using or even entering archives; how to make one aware that the archive exists for everyone and not just the lone historian or researcher, but also for artists, teachers, and students of all kinds to encounter and engage with it.

## In/Continuum: iLANDing futures

iLAND is a community of people from different disciplinary and cultural backgrounds who come together around shared interests in urban ecology, interdisciplinary collaboration and movement as a research practice. This paper set in motion the idea of iLANDing as an archive and evolving artwork. The challenges are twofold: First, creating a system that is authentic and will reflect **the score** (i.e. the set of loose instructions that allow one to translate and adapt). Second, to create the conditions for attracting a diverse range of user/producers, particularly those not necessarily familiar with using an archive. This requires an attitude that embraces and necessitates a level of ambiguity, a zero-control of any one artist, an acceptance and willingness to be okay with precariousness. With this paper, we describe the iLAND archive within the realm of possibility, as pedagogical tool or departure point, a system of call and response inviting disruptions of conventional understandings of archives and an explicit inclusion of participation, of intersubjective relations with self, others, and ecology.

While the architecture to house the iLANDing archive is still in nascent stages, its intention as an open access, participatory and dynamic archive of transdisciplinary exchange and somatic understanding offers a salient

context to consider alternative and perhaps radical approaches to archival process and practice. In positioning the body as both a pedagogical and archival device, we open the possibility for new conceptions of archives as living systems in the making.



URBAN MIGRATIONS (2001-2005), TIMES SQUARE, NEW YORK, NY, (PHOTO COURTESY ILAND)

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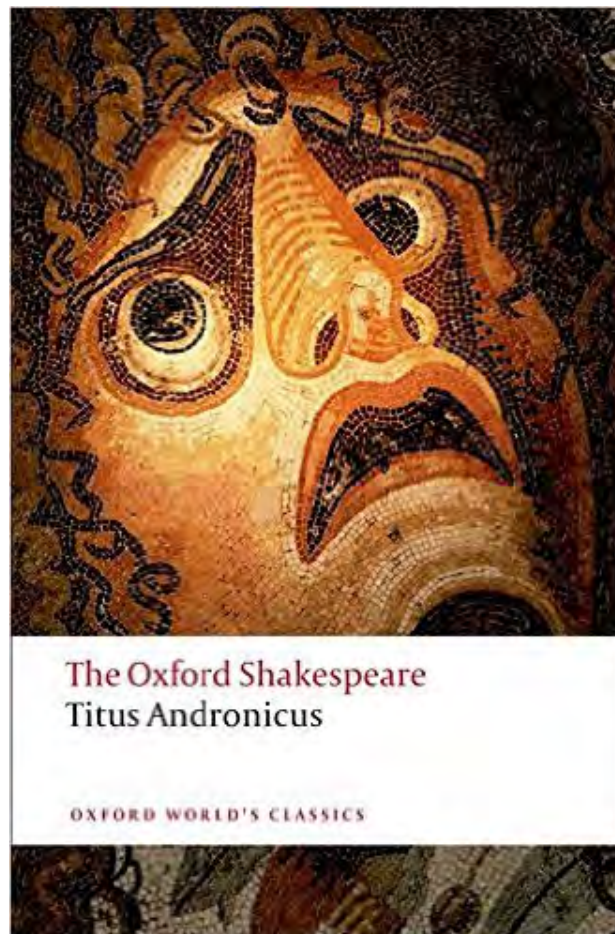
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# RADICAL TEACHER

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

(Early) Modern Literature: Crossing the Color-Line

By David Sterling Brown



I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not.

—W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

When the structure of an academic course poses an intellectual problem, students are bound to a curriculum that requires them to resolve critical issues because it is not simply the literature but the very foundation of the course itself that makes students think. Thus, I conceived of (Early) Modern Literature: Crossing the Color-Line largely by reflecting on a profound undergraduate experience in a Shakespeare class that made me feel both curious and uncomfortable: an instance when Trinity College professor, Milla Cozart Riggio, referred to a scene in *Titus Andronicus* as a “moment of black power.” As the lone African-American student in the room, it felt as though the professor sat Shakespeare directly next to me. In 2013, when I returned as a visiting scholar to Trinity, a small liberal arts college with a predominantly white faculty and student body, I wanted to recreate that experience on a class-wide scale for my students, nearly half of whom were people of color. Therefore, I designed a curriculum that aimed to shift the demographics of a traditional Shakespeare course by placing historically disparate texts and black and white authors in conversation with one another.

On the level of racial representation and inclusivity, the color-line is always crossed in my early modern classroom, even when Shakespeare and his contemporaries are the sole authorial voices, because the authors always enter the room through me. My personal and professional identities, my being African-American and an early modern scholar, are inextricably linked for students who become educated about the English Renaissance through my black voice, from my black body. When I teach, no longer sitting as the sole student of color in an undergraduate early modern classroom, I *stand* with Shakespeare and he winces not. Crossing the Color-Line altered my pedagogical and personal relationship with Shakespeare. And it was through this course that my students’ perspectives on Shakespeare, and his relation to the world around them, also changed.

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In Crossing the Color-Line, students re-read early modern texts by William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe—primarily through a racial lens—after first studying theories and concepts such as the “color-line,” “veil,” “mask,” and “double-consciousness” articulated by Frederick Douglass in “The Color Line” and W.E.B. Du Bois

in *The Souls of Black Folk*.<sup>1</sup> Students also used the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature to look forward and consider the African-American experience as depicted in works by James Baldwin, Harriet Jacobs, Adrienne Kennedy, Nella Larsen, and Suzan-Lori Parks. As anticipated, synergy developed among the different texts because my students arrived at each class keen on understanding key questions that arose as they read. By the end of the Fall 2013 term, my students devised answers to their questions, answers that were documented weekly in 500-750 word essays called the “inroad” assignment.<sup>2</sup> This writing exercise, from which I will include excerpts, required students to enter into a text with the specific goal of assessing its value within the context of Crossing the Color-Line and in relation to the critical concepts used by Douglass and Du Bois.

Crossing the Color-Line was not simply a foundational course theme that established dialogue between the professional and personal, social and political, past and present, and black and white; “crossing” also defined the actions students took to generate new intellectual ideas and bring more of themselves into the classroom. As I argue, a radical course such as Crossing the Color-Line showcases, through literature and other media, how instructors can transcend identity politics to construct a methodology and pedagogy that intricately connects the academic to the personal and experiential. Because Shakespeare was not the sole authorial voice in the room, or the only early modern author in our syllabus, Crossing the Color-Line actively rejected the homogeneity one can often find in an early modern classroom. For one thing, by not being Shakespeare-centric, the course valued the female perspective and resisted an androcentric authorial focus. For another, by positioning “the problem of the color-line” as relevant in the early modern period, the combined study of African-American and early modern English texts challenged critical race studies to include pre-nineteenth-century literature (Du Bois 9).

### W.E.B. Du Bois: Sitting with a “Racist”?

In one of our initial class discussions, at least one of my students was not persuaded by Du Bois’ assertion (and this essay’s epigraph): “I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not” (67).<sup>3</sup> During our examination of Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* in week two, a student declared that “Shakespeare was a racist,” a claim primarily based on the dramatist’s portrayal of cultural others, such as Aaron the Moor, as inferior and barbaric in comparison to the play’s Roman characters such as Titus—someone who kills two of his own children. This student boldly called out what seemed to be an obvious double-standard. However, the controversial “racist Shakespeare” formulation briefly silenced the class; my students’ facial expressions revealed that not everyone agreed. Ultimately, “Shakespeare was a racist” offered a key, and memorable, point of inquiry in a course that concentrated on the historical and cultural context of race, prejudice, and racism, as well as other social issues. If, in fact, Shakespeare was a racist—if modern notions of race are actually applicable in the period, another question students

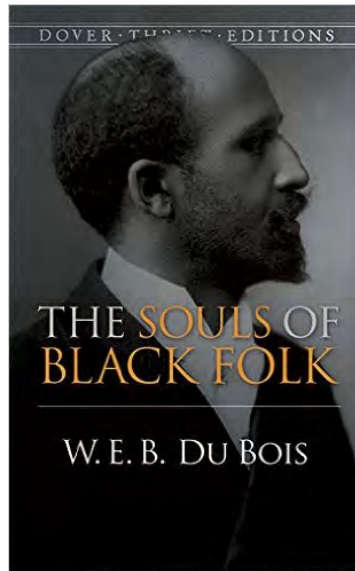
considered—then why doesn't Shakespeare "wince," as Du Bois notes, when sitting next to a black man? After the uncomfortable moment of silence, my students began to challenge respectfully the "racist Shakespeare" notion by dissecting the African-American author's language.

On the most basic level, class members reasoned that, by sitting with Shakespeare, Du Bois metaphorically crossed the Postbellum color-line. He advertised his personal agency by clarifying whose choice it was to sit next to whom. His color-line assertion, which expands on Douglass' previously mentioned work in "The Color Line," bridged the disparate texts in the course by rhetorically uniting the black and white authors. And Du Bois' allusions—not only to Shakespeare but to other great non-American, white rhetoricians and philosophers such as Balzac and Dumas, Aristotle and Aurelius—emerged as contradictions for my students (67). If Du Bois, serving as a synecdochic representation of black people, could "sit with," "move arm and arm with," and even "summon," as he proclaims, the previously named white people, then why couldn't black people also coexist with white people in America (67)? In the context of *Souls of Black Folk*, my students reasoned that Shakespeare was not racist. They concluded that Du Bois exploits the "cultural capital" and brand recognition represented by Shakespeare, transforming the early playwright into a politically charged rhetorical weapon black people can use to fight prejudice, racism, and socio-political inequity (Guillory vii-xiv).

One of the things that made Du Bois' Shakespeare allusion so fascinating for my students was how it implies that education shaped Du Bois' reality. Similar to his white American counterparts, Du Bois "consumed Shakespeare and ... his name" (Sturgess 15); afterwards, Du Bois deployed his knowledge of England's esteemed dramatist for his own literary audience by invoking Shakespeare's name and echoing his poetic style through blank verse. Commenting on an African-American character in Du Bois' text, one student noted in an inroad assignment, "John left home because he wanted to better his community and himself by getting an education. He sought to cross the color-line." <sup>4</sup> John, much like Du Bois himself, defies America's Jim Crow laws by metaphorically sitting with the white man. In *Souls*, Du Bois suggests Shakespeare can teach black and white America, and the world, about tolerance and race as we modern people understand the concept: as a critical tool for analyzing ethnic difference.

## Inroads: Black and White Authors

In Crossing the Color-Line, the constant traversing of boundaries empowered students to create conversations that crossed lines between texts and between the academic and personal. Our first unit, "The Color-Line and the Shape of Identity," capitalized on the earlier Douglass and Du Bois



readings as students studied Shakespeare's *Titus* and Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, specifically using Du Boisian concepts to examine religious and racial lines of difference. The "color-line" is not wholly applicable in Marlowe's play because color is not the concern there; Christians, Turks, Jews, and other religious ethnic mixes were not explicitly separated by a color-line during the period. However, my students discovered Du Bois' color-line theory does resonate with the racial and ethnic tensions depicted in *Titus* between the Romans and the "barbarous" Goths and Moors (1.1.28). By reading *Malta* right after *Titus*, students identified integral points of contact between Aaron the Moor and Barabas the Jew because of the parallels between anti-Semitism and racism. Both characters' "racialized

status[es were] underlined by the other characters in the play[s]" through their actions and language (Ogude 158). For my students, the similarities between Aaron's and Barabas' second-class positions far outweighed their differences.

The act of constantly thinking between texts, or between two different historical moments, trained students to look backwards and forwards. In an inroad assignment written during the second week of class, one student analyzed part of act 4, scene 2 from *Titus*, the moment the Nurse presents Aaron with his biracial lovechild. The student writes,

*The Nurse very clearly lists "black" in a string of other negative adjectives, drawing a color-line by making that [the child's] defining characteristic. . . . This relates to Frederick Douglass' article "The Color Line," in which he states, "They can resort to no disguises which will enable them to escape its deadly aim. They carry in front the evidence which marks them for persecution." The Romans instantly mark even this innocent child.*

The concluding sentence hints at the irrationality of racist thinking, for the newborn's blackness prevents the white characters from seeing his innocence. Additionally, this student offered a compelling argument about Du Bois and Aaron, the latter of whom announces that "Coal black is better than another hue / In that it scorns to bear another hue" (4.2.100-101). The student explains,

*Aaron's argument on behalf of his race relates to Du Bois' The Souls of Black Folk, when [Du Bois] says, He "would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world." While Douglass makes a point that one's color can never be hidden, Aaron takes this as one of [his] best attributes because [blackness] is strong and not*

*something that should be attempted to be covered or changed.*

As the student observes, similar to Du Bois and Douglass, Aaron and his son are outsiders whose blood and color are wrong according to the dominant culture.

It was during unit two, "Sexuality, Race, and the Paradox of Passing," that the members of my class began to move beyond discussions predominantly about race and racial identity. While this particular unit contained none of Shakespeare's plays, students continued to sit with his work as they studied Larsen's *Passing*, Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, and Marlowe's *Edward II*. In an inroad assignment focused on the moment in *Passing* when Irene Redfield first interacts with her estranged friend, Clare Kendry, one student expanded on the second unit's themes by incorporating class and wealth into an analysis of race, exoticism, and physicality:

*Clare's eyes are also closely examined and referenced several times throughout Part I [of the book]. They are constantly referred to as "black eyes," an adjective that not only speaks of their literal color, but also takes on another meaning when set in her "ivory skin." . . . This dichotomy makes her "exotic" and incredibly persuasive. It is this blend of the social power that a wealthy white woman has, combined with the unique beauty of her mixed features, such as the full lips and arresting eyes, that makes Clare so magnetically attractive.*

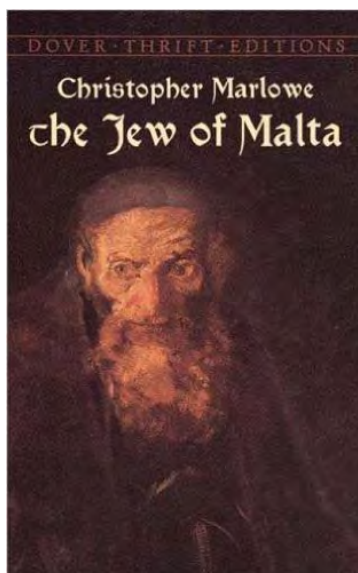
Du Bois, Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Paul Laurence Dunbar's "We Wear the Mask" also entered this student's analysis. The ensuing class discussion about Clare's exotic features compelled students to comment on the physicality and hypersexuality of the Gothic and Moorish characters in *Titus*. Moreover, the exchange allowed the conversation to cross the boundary between academic and pop culture as students critiqued famous women such as Kim Kardashian, a public figure who has voluptuous physical attributes stereotypically ascribed to the black female body—full lips, a large butt, and wide hips. Class members argued that, similar to Clare in Larsen's *Passing*, Kim Kardashian is perceived as a safer object of desire because her non-black skin, which covers what might be generalized as African-American features, is devoid of the social stigma surrounding blackness. Whether it was in relation to our literature, or Miley Cyrus and the historical West African origins of "twerking," students used their writing assignments to scrutinize myths about race, class, gender, and sexuality that pertained to the past and their present. In class, students referenced our previously studied texts and theories to engage in complex conversations that problematized sexuality, desirability, beauty standards,

and privilege by associating those topics with race and assimilation.

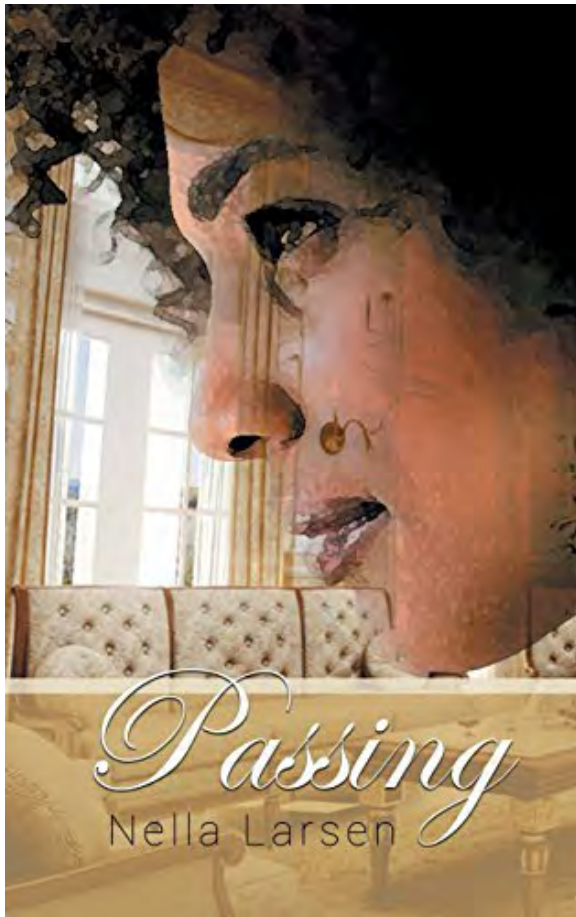
Students carried ideas discussed in the first weeks of the semester into our final unit, "Constructions/ Destructions of the (Early) Modern Family," and continued to enhance the sophistication of their textual associations. When we studied Harriett Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* toward the semester's end, a student astutely identified how literacy helped determine the specific outcomes for Jacobs and Shakespeare's Lavinia, a character from *Titus* who, despite having her hands cut off and tongue cut out, communicates crucial information about her attackers because she is literate. When we studied Shakespeare's *Tempest*, students analyzed excerpts from William Apess' *A Son of the Forest* and evaluated the negative effects of colonization, thus linking the early modern play to Native American history. And when students reflected on the allusion to *Hamlet's* Ophelia in Suzan-Lori Parks' *Venus* (124), they used the literary reference to compare and contrast black and white femininity by acknowledging distinctions in the social perception and treatment of black and white women.

From the beginning, I hoped my students would develop a specific analytical skill set throughout our weeks together, so we concluded the course with two difficult texts, *Hamlet* and Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*. *Hamlet* was especially a challenge for students to contextualize because the play does not deal with race overtly. When my students looked to me to start this discussion, I said *Hamlet* was the "wild card" in the syllabus and that I did not have the answers. Eventually, a fruitful conversation developed as students turned to their inroad assignments and considered the significance of memory, a central topic in *Funnyhouse* and *Hamlet*. Both plays effectively dramatize the dangerous consequences of not having a distinct identity that exists in relation to but separate from one's parents. The trauma transmitted from parents in Kennedy—from Negro-Sarah's mother and father—and in Shakespeare—from the Ghost of King Hamlet and Queen Gertrude—presents itself as a psychological stain that causes personal destruction. A student perceived this association and noted that in *Hamlet*,

*This fixation on death, suicide, and burial, which we see in Hamlet's monologues, reminds me of Negro-Sarah's fixation on her father's murder and the violence committed against some of her "selves." Negro-Sarah had also been shattered by the tragedy of her society, and constructed violence around her to make sense of her personal chaos. Hamlet's personal chaos is similar in some ways because he creates an alternate personality for himself to present to others, whether he is fully aware of it or not.*







*Hamlet's sanity is questioned by his family members as well as the reader, just as the reader of *Funnyhouse* of a Negro sees several sides of Negro-Sarah and questions her understanding of her "selves" and the reality around her.*

In this thoughtful critique, psychological darkness productively linked *Hamlet* and *Funnyhouse*, inspiring additional comments about related textual intersections.

This particular student saw past the color-line and came, like Pat Parker, to view *Hamlet* and *Funnyhouse* as dramas "examin[ing] the racialized metaphors of blackness itself as a sully[ing], dirty[ing], or muddy[ing]" (Parker 137). Despite their myriad differences, Negro-Sarah and Hamlet relate through their stained psyches. Students learned that tragedy, death, mourning, and violence were key thematic associations aligning the racially dissimilar early modern and African-American characters through metaphorical blackness. Furthermore, gender surfaced as a concept that united *Hamlet* and *Funnyhouse*, as a student also argued, "Constructions of the royal family throughout [*Hamlet*] bring to mind other explorations of family dynamics and blame. Just as Negro-Sarah blames her black father for creating her mixed-race self as a product of rape, Hamlet blames his uncle for tearing apart his picture-perfect family. He, too, holds his mother's chastity in high regard and thinks she has become "impure" due to her incestuous marriage to her deceased husband's brother. In other words, Claudius in *Hamlet* and Negro-Sarah's father in *Funnyhouse* both

commit equally destructive social and sexual violations; and Queen Gertrude in *Hamlet* and Negro-Sarah's mother are blackened by the impropriety of their respective sexual histories that disturb their children.

Such provocative connections were explored further through required in-class presentations that developed student insights articulated in their inroad assignments. The ten-minute presentations required class members to produce an entirely new paper that linked their previously written inroad thoughts to the reading outlined in the syllabus for presentation day. Sometimes this meant students connected their ideas from the first half of a specific text to the second half. However, if the reading due on presentation day was a new text, then students had an added challenge: relating the end of Marlowe's *Edward II* to the beginning of Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, for example. The inroad presentations afforded students frequent opportunities to develop their in-class, face-to-face communication skills, what sociologists Daniel F. Chambliss and Christopher G. Takacs stress as one of the "core liberal arts skill[s]" that aids students' learning processes (112). During our most contentious conversations, students respectfully disagreed with one another and learned to value open dialogue. Students' submitting their inroad documents before class through Moodle, an online learning platform, enabled me to tailor my instruction to their concerns, to identify moments of confused textual interpretation, and to ensure that students comprehended the challenging literature. Class often began with issues students found to be most difficult. Or, we concentrated on the scenes and language that made students most uneasy, such as the conclusion to Larsen's *Passing* where Clare's white husband shockingly discovers that she has been passing and is, in fact, "A nigger, a damned dirty nigger!" (111).<sup>5</sup>

By the term's end, each student had completed ten inroads, which gave them an archive of ideas to draw from as they developed their final papers. In general, I saw improvement in all of my students' writing and I attribute this, in part, to how the inroad trained course members to engage actively with the material. One of my former students candidly shared, "I thought the weekly inroads were quite progressive. I won't lie, I probably groaned when you first mentioned them, but I ended up really loving having an outlet every week where I had to examine some/any aspect of the text I found interesting. It was also a really good way to hear other people's thoughts." The inroad assignment facilitated the exchange of students' textual interests. I then synthesized their thoughts so class discussions generally considered what intrigued them most.

## Connections: Read, Heard, Seen, Felt

The topics covered in Crossing the Color-Line led to some difficult discussions that inevitably made students uncomfortable. Thus, pedagogically, I believed it was imperative to provide students with experiential learning opportunities that would move them across the color-line through a variety of exercises. For instance, my students had the opportunity to see a production of *Macbeth*

directed by Darko Tresnjak at the Hartford Stage. The off-campus trip allowed students to see that “the true discipline of drama study is to find out how drama works, how it performs under the conditions for which it was written, how it communicates and affects an audience” (Styan 61). While nearly all of my students had previously read *Macbeth*, this was the first time most of them were seeing a live production of the play, which was not included in our syllabus. For undergrads accustomed to managing drama on the page, the *Macbeth* performance was challenging, especially because students could not look at the language. Rather, they had to listen to the actors, watch the action, and decipher the complex meaning of the words. As they viewed the play, my students had the added difficulty of determining how *Macbeth* related to our course.

The questions students first brought to the live production were relatively simple: inquiries about Macbeth’s ambition or the nature of the three witches. However, visualizing the drama, and then connecting it with ideas expressed in our African-American texts, fundamentally changed the kinds of questions my students wanted answers to about *Macbeth*. In a class discussion following the performance, a dramatic exchange between Malcolm, son of King Duncan, and Macduff, a Scottish nobleman, emerged as a possible touchpoint between the African-American and early modern literature:

**Malcolm:**

*Black Macbeth*

*Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state  
Esteem him as a lamb, being compared  
With my confineless harms.*

**Macduff:**

*Not in the legions*

*Of horrid hell can come a devil more damned*

*In evils to top Macbeth.*

**Malcolm:**

*I grant him bloody,*

*Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,*

*Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin*

*That has a name.*

(IV.iii.53-61).<sup>6</sup>

Students interpreted “black Macbeth” metaphorically, especially since they had learned about blackface and the absence of black actors on the early modern stage, but they still questioned the phrasing that reinforces the color of Macbeth’s character (see Courtney 113 and Hill 3-11). Can Malcolm’s comment connect Macbeth, a character who commits treason and murders his king, to a racially black character such as Shakespeare’s Aaron? Since early modern players were white, how was physical blackness represented on the stage? And how do Macbeth’s onstage actions make him emblematically “black”? When considering such inquiries, students referred to our earlier secondary reading, Margaux Deroux’s “The Blackness

Within,” and reflected on how early modern geohumoral theory might justify Malcolm’s reference to Macbeth as “black,” a complex term that is a negative modifier and signifier even in our modern world (see also Floyd-Wilson).

*Macbeth* was a profound site of in-class analysis for students because, as they deduced, Shakespeare crosses the color-line rhetorically. Through plays such as *Hamlet* and *Titus*, the playwright offers a glimpse into how early modern people divided their own world in terms of specific binaries: contrasts between black and white, or dark and light, or evil and good “that might be called the originary language of racial difference in English culture” (Hall 2). Thus, Shakespeare’s work presents emerging notions of modern racial stereotypes.<sup>6</sup> In *Macbeth*, the “black” man’s soul and conscience are stained. While the Scottish people should recognize Macbeth as evil, Malcolm justifiably fears that Macbeth’s ability to “wear the mask that grins and lies” will enable the villain to deceive the masses (Dunbar “We Wear the Mask”). Students argued that the “black Macbeth” scene builds on amplified rhetoric denoting what it means for Macbeth to be black: criminal, threatening, and amoral. Through its negative connotation, “black” provides an intriguing point of contact between the African-American and early modern literature that have more in common than is generally thought.

Besides seeing the *Macbeth* performance, students had other opportunities to cross boundaries that enriched their educational experiences. For example, they formulated interview questions for and learned from my paternal grandmother, Christine Wright, who was born in Jim Crow Mississippi in the 1930s and spent her childhood working on a sharecropper farm. The interview, complemented by a PowerPoint presentation I titled “Incidents in the Life of a Sharecropper,” allowed me to bring more of myself into the classroom as I crossed the line between the personal and professional, between being a deferential grandson and a college instructor. In *Crossing the Color-Line*, course members also heard and analyzed the lyrics of what Du Bois calls negro “sorrow songs”; they connected their personal experiences with racial profiling, classism, homophobia, and gender discrimination to our critical conversations;<sup>7</sup> they interacted with Trinity’s Women & Gender Resource Action Center director, who came to our class to discuss rape and sexual assault, sensitive subjects that pertained directly to our early modern and African-American literature and campus life; they watched film clips, critiquing the visual representations of the issues we covered in our literature; and they shared outside resources with me—articles, web links, YouTube videos, movies, and texts from other courses—and used me to disseminate those materials to the class. Perhaps most importantly, they taught me to appreciate the value of unpredictability and improvisation in the classroom—the value of simply seeing where things go.

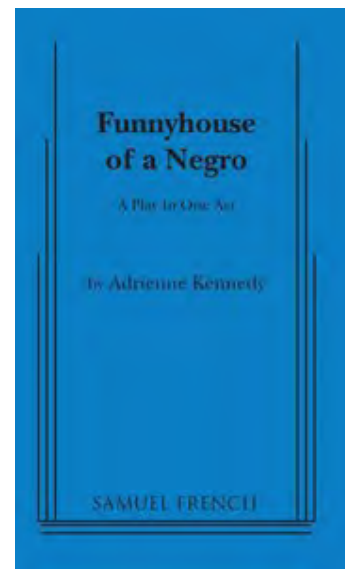
One of my fondest memories from this course relates to a 1960's literacy test a student emailed to me early in the semester, a test designed for black people who wished to vote in Louisiana (see *Slate*). To create a teachable moment, I printed out the literacy test and administered it to my students. I put a \$20 bill in front of me and promised to give it to whoever finished the test first according to its original directions: "Do what you are told to do in each statement, nothing more, nothing less. Be careful as one wrong answer denotes failure of the test. You have 10 minutes to complete the test." The test included 30 convoluted statements, such as "Place a cross over the tenth letter in this line, a line under the first space in this / sentence, and a circle around the last the in the second line of this sentence" (statement #22) and "Draw a figure that is square in shape. Divide it in half by drawing a straight line from its northeastern corner to its southwest corner, and then divide it once more by drawing a broken line from the middle of its western side to the middle of its eastern side" (statement #23).<sup>8</sup> Initially, my students were thrilled about the prospect of earning the money, but they were quickly dismayed upon realizing the literacy test was impossible—even for their college-educated minds.

By sitting with the literacy test and trying to achieve an unattainable goal, my students experienced how the system was designed for black people to fail. The inequity was palpable, and so were my students' frustrations and the empathy they felt for the black voters. To build on my students' disenchantment, we returned to *Souls* and *Titus* because the subject matter of the course resonated (more or less) with contemporary issues. At one point, an African-American student spoke candidly from a personal place about inferiority and an experience with what he felt was racial profiling on campus. My students listened attentively to their classmate's disclosure and then discussed the effects of biased policing and prejudicial legislation. In a later class discussion, they equated the black people in 1960s Louisiana with Marlowe's Barabas, a character whose home and wealth are seized by the Maltese governor mainly because Barabas is a Jew in Malta. No longer concerned about the \$20 bill, my students' frustrations were focused on the illusory nature of equality.

## Retrospection

As an experimental course, *Crossing the Color-Line* was not without some challenges. What would I change a second time around, aside from shortening the reading list, which was too dense (eleven major texts in thirteen weeks)? I would be clear with students about the personal demands of this class from the beginning. The course required a depth of responsiveness and self-awareness that may not be typical in other literature classes because I intended for all students to feel uncomfortable, as I felt in "Shakespeare." But, given the sensitive course material—and students' fears of offending one another or sounding ignorant, as articulated in their course evaluations—it would have been helpful had I designed initial small-group activities to build trust and foster the sense that our classroom was a safe academic space where students could articulate whatever thoughts the literature inspired within

them. One way of doing so would be to discuss transparently the ways in which their inevitable discomfort will be productive for their learning. Next time around, I will not only encourage students to bring outside information, and their academic and life experiences, into the classroom as they often did, but I will also encourage them to bring *Crossing the Color-Line* into dialogue with the various other spaces they occupy on a daily basis.

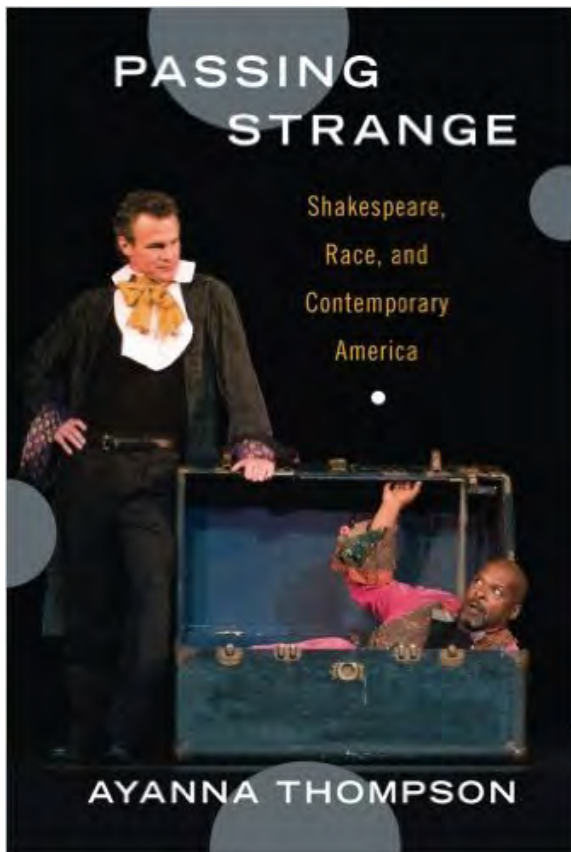


Through recent communication, I learned that some of my former students have, in fact, taken their knowledge from the course beyond the boundaries of the academic institution. When commenting on prejudice in America, one student wrote: "Especially with the #BlackLivesMatter movement and some of the horrific incidents that have been happening across the country, I will often use some of the language [from] this course to understand how blackness and otherness [have] been perceived before—and how it is relevant to the current conversation." Another student shared, "The idea of bringing to light the issues race can have on a person and time period is something that is becoming more necessary in today's world. Sometimes people discuss only the fact that issues exist. It's not too often you get to not only look back to see how different things were in the past, but also how similar they were. I find myself thinking of issues we discussed in *Crossing the Color-Line* still in my daily life today."

Hidden within these students' retrospective insights are literary characters such as Shakespeare's Aaron, Marlowe's Barabas, Kennedy's Negro-Sarah, and Larsen's Clare. And I have no doubt students are also thinking critically about real people such as Emmett Till and Trayvon Martin, whom we discussed in class, and the many human casualties of other "horrific incidents," as my former student put it: Sean Bell, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, Samuel DuBose, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Akai Gurley, Bettie Jones, Corey Jones, Levar Edward Jones, Quintonio LeGrier, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, and the nine people who perished in the June 2015 mass shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. My former students, almost weekly, are witnessing people—especially minorities—being mistreated because of characteristics endemic to who they are. Yet, as indicated by their comments above, these students are not just observing; rather, they are having "conversations." They are still "thinking" about what they learned in *Crossing the Color-Line*, a course that advocated for heterogeneity.

In the conclusion to *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race, and Contemporary America*, Ayanna Thompson

implies, with some suggestive evidence, that the lack of substantial diversity within the early modern field stems from the homogeneity of most modern Shakespeare classrooms. Thompson writes: "If the field were to support the inclusion of race studies more systematically and consistently, then our ranks may diversify more rapidly and thoroughly. I find it depressing that I can name most of the Shakespeareans of color despite the fact that our professional organizations are relatively large. On the most simplistic level, this means that we need to encourage our undergraduates and graduates who are interested in both Shakespeare studies and race studies to pursue a career in academia" (180). Diversifying our ranks, or simply reimagining how we teach sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature, is essential for increasing the appeal of early modern studies for students who might not otherwise see themselves as fully interested in, comfortable with, or capable of succeeding in the field. By increasing the appeal of early modern studies, and bringing it into dialogue with later literature, we can use different critical tools to highlight under-studied and undiscovered issues in early modern texts. And we can sustain the conversation that Du Bois initiates, the conversation between the past and the present that shows how and why Du Bois can sit with Shakespeare.



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## Notes

- 1 In his essay, Douglass alludes to the eloquence of Shakespeare's Shylock from *The Merchant of Venice* (568).
- 2 The assignment's name suggested that each literary work was a rhetorical landscape for students to explore.
- 3 Du Bois' quotation presents the opportunity to discuss blank verse with students.
- 4 Quotations have been extracted from my former students' inroad assignments as supporting evidence.
- 5 One student noted in recent correspondence, "Our class discussions made me feel uncomfortable because the issues we discussed were heavy. There were several times when I felt 'white guilt' due to the subject matter."
- 6 There is a Western history of black actors being cast in a couple roles where the characters themselves are traditionally white. Black actors played Macbeth and Richard III sometimes (Anderson 100). It is also interesting to note that "the classic Shakespearean texts that include black characters (Aaron, Othello) rely on stereotypes that represent black men as aggressive, transgressive and violent" (Anderson 92).
- 7 This idea is scrutinized more thoroughly in *Weyward Macbeth: Intersections of Race and Performance*, which explores the "play's weyward history within dialogues about race" and "positions this 'Scottish Play' in the center of American racial constructions" (Thompson 8).
- 8 As one of my former students noted in recent correspondence, "So many students spoke from really personal spaces about the texts, which I thought made for a really unique environment."
- 9 A virgule has been inserted to denote the original line break in the literacy test.



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# RADICAL TEACHER

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

## Brief Introductions: Gender, Visual Culture, and the Carceral State

by Erica Rand



OUT IN THE NIGHT, BLAIR DAROSH-WALTHER'S 2014 DOCUMENTARY ABOUT THE NEW JERSEY 4, A GROUP OF YOUNG BLACK LESBIAN FRIENDS, SOME GENDER NONCONFORMING, WHO WERE UNJUSTLY INCARCERATED AFTER ACTING IN SELF-DEFENSE AGAINST A HARASSER.

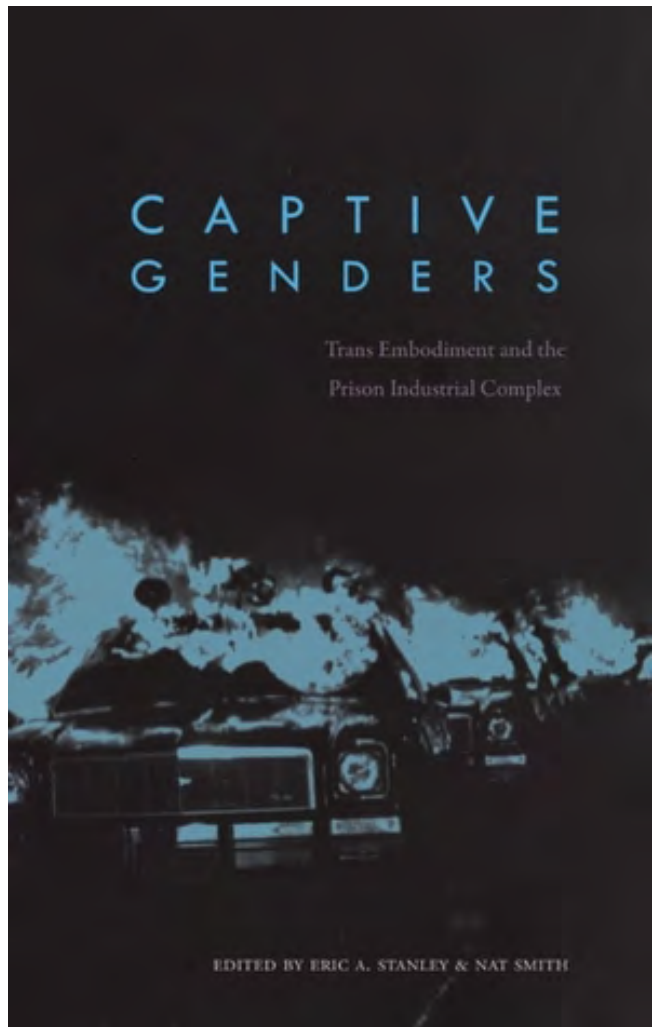
In the Winter semester of 2016, I switched up the beginning of Gender and Visual Culture, a 200-level course I teach regularly at Bates College, to take advantage of a one-time opportunity: extensive programming for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on “Mass Incarceration and Black Citizenship.” Since the mid-1990s, Bates, an expensive liberal arts college in Lewiston, Maine, has recognized the day with workshops, talks, films, performances, a debate, volunteer opportunities, a keynote, and other activities organized around a theme and developed by a committee of faculty, staff and students over the course of a year. This practice stems partly from campus activism. After the federal holiday began in 1986 came years of protest that Bates would not honor it. Many of us refused to teach that day. Meanwhile, on three different occasions between 1989 and 1994, faculty canceled classes for teach-ins: after the harassment of a female faculty member; after George H.W. Bush declared the official start of what is now called the “first Gulf War”; and after racist, anti-Semitic, and anti-queer graffiti generated stupendous student activism (also involved in forcing the other days) to have a day dedicated to coalition organizing. Suspending classes annually on MLK, Jr. Day for programming had the excellent purpose of regularizing the social-justice teach-in day—although ask yourself who benefits from such days being less disruptive to business-as-usual when you can plan for them in advance—and, fundamentally, of declaring the central importance of anti-racist, multi-issue activism and education in a majority white institution in the statistically whitest state in the nation.

I want to indicate for the record, however, since our official PR unsurprisingly omits it, that upper administration supported installing the teach-in model partly because it conveniently allowed the institution to recognize the day without giving hourly and salaried staff paid time off. Thus while Bates sometimes uses the “a day on, not a day off” associated with the designation of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, since 1994, as a Day of Service, that usage camouflages its equal aptness to describe a labor issue for people whose “day on” and not “off” is mandatory and sometimes little altered by the day’s events, although staff are supposed to have some leeway to participate. (None of this is surprising for an institution that, several years later, used dubious and duplicitous tactics ill-befitting its self-promotion as egalitarian to squash dining-service workers’ attempts to unionize.)

In any case, while I always require students to participate in MLK, Jr. Day activities—not least because white students often skip it for skiing without a grade-linked assignment—I don’t always alter my course design significantly for the theme. This year I did. The racist, gender-policing violence of the carceral state, which often depends on visual scrutiny, is integral to the context and content of the course. Yet I faced a challenge because MLK, Jr. Day occurred only a week after the term started. Since the course, cross-listed in Art and Visual Culture and in Women and Gender Studies, serves as an introduction to visual studies and/or gender studies for many of the first-year through senior students taking it, I had to figure out how to introduce those large subject areas and the prison

industrial complex in two class sessions that also required time-consuming activities like going over the syllabus.

To do so, I assigned Eric Stanley’s essay “Fugitive Flesh: Gender Self-Determination, Queer Abolition, and Trans Resistance” to accompany our discussion of beginning gender concepts. An introduction to the anthology *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*, the text, besides being keyed to the MLK, Jr. topic, appealed to me for the way that Stanley interrupts some prevalent tendencies, especially for my traditionally college-aged, often privileged students, to individualism and self-discovery. For example, Stanley



defines gender self-determination, not as a personal goal, but as a collective project to “create the most space for people to express whatever genders they choose at any given moment” and insists that gender identities, not simply sprung from within, are always formed in relation to power (p. 11).

I also assigned several other pieces. They included a recent *New York Times* video and text piece about Cricket Nimmons, one of the first trans people to undergo surgical transition procedures partly funded through Medicaid. Nimmons described, among other aspects of her history, the role of her gender identity in life circumstances that

contributed to a period of incarceration. We also discussed a recent blog post by black artist and art professor Steve Locke called “I Fit the Description . . .,” about being stopped by police as a potential burglary suspect on his way to his professor job, and looked at Locke’s artwork, particularly *Spectators* (2003-4 and ongoing). For the series, Locke made postcards from lynching images, on display in a widely attended exhibit when he began the project, from which he had digitally deleted the victims to “remove the spectacle of flaming, twisted, and charred black bodies and center the focus on the real horror of the activity—the murderers’ confidence in their actions.” His experience and artwork show how habits of looking figure in the stigmatization and criminalization of people seen to depart from racialized ideals of masculinity, femininity, and heteronormativity.

I was happy with the immediate results of this early curriculum. The class discussions before and after MLK, Jr. Day seemed to go well, as did the short writing assignment linked to it. As I told the students, I’d opted to throw a lot out there at an accelerated pace. It was more than fine to be confused if the topics were new, and even if they weren’t. By the end of the second week, I’d also rocked the complacencies of a few gender-studies majors with Julia Serano’s challenge in her spoken word performance *Cocky* to the notion that genitals have intrinsic gender (since some women have penises, for example, penises are not male and people who have them are not “male bodied”) and in the argument in her short essay “Performance Piece” that gender, contrary to a popular gender studies truism, is not always most importantly “a performance.” More than hoping for mastery, I sought evidence that the material, if confusing, had been question-generating, assumption-confounding confusing, rather than throw-up-your-hands-and-walk-away confusing. I found it.

I was still pretty satisfied at the halfway point. To revisit our early focus on mass incarceration, I showed *Out in the Night*, Blair Darosh-Walther’s 2014 documentary about the New Jersey 4, a group of young black lesbian friends, some gender nonconforming, who were unjustly incarcerated after acting in self-defense against a harasser. Students were well prepared to discuss the role of the visual in the interconnected workings of gender appraisal, surveillance, self-fashioning, pleasure, policing, and violence as well as the politics of authority in relation to the director’s statement on the film’s website about making the documentary as a white woman.

By the end of the semester, however, I had recognized a continuing problem that a student’s question regarding the final paper helped me see the extent of. The paper required students to use course materials, among possibly other sources, to evaluate a group project that asked students to make, design, or curate visual material about gender in the complexity we had discussed. The student, who had been doing engaged, very good work in the class, wrote to me that because, as she perceived it, the majority of readings concerned transgender narratives, and her group project didn’t address trans issues, she was having trouble finding relevant sources to bring to her assessment.

I should have done more, early and often, to situate this material and our work with sources in relation to one of the learning objectives listed on the syllabus, that students will be able to “situate trans and queer gender at the centers rather than the margins of gender studies.” While that objective was definitely accomplished in the sense of *central* meaning *important*—even leading some students, like the one I just mentioned, to magnify the quantity of “transgender narratives”—students did not always recognize, despite my prodding, that the work people produce as and about trans and/or gender-nonconforming subjects bears on gender more broadly. They missed that point sometimes even when materials explicitly addressed gender in general or made that very point explicitly. And the effects of missing it can be enormous. As Dean Spade emphasizes repeatedly, including in a short reading I assigned called “Dress to Kill, Fight to Win,” they can include heightened stigmatization and gender policing of people whose practices, such as body modification, are then misconstrued as marginal. The effects also include the failure to recognize trans and/or gender non-conforming people in the fullness of their roles as makers, critics, and theorists.

Next time I teach the course, I think I’m going to stick with Stanley’s essay and related material for gender introduction. The context of mass incarceration remains regardless of the programming that generated my switch-up. But I clearly have a lot of work to do.



JULIA SERANO IN “COCKY,” WRITTEN AND RECORDED IN 2003 AT THE BERKELEY POETRY SLAM



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## Call for Teaching Notes for *Radical Teacher*

Is there a book, film, essay, poem, or story that you've found particularly useful in the classroom and want to share with other *Radical Teacher* readers? We are especially interested in Teaching Notes on new materials not widely known, but we would also like to hear about newly rediscovered older works, as well as new ways of teaching familiar ones.

Or has something challenging, encouraging, or frustrating happened in class? If you think our readers can learn from your experience—whether you handled things well, handled them badly, or are still trying to decide—we'd like to hear about it.

Contributions should run about 500 to 1,500 words. If you'd like to see some sample Teaching Notes, check out "Recent Issues" on our web site.

Please send your Note to Bob Rosen at [RosenR@wpunj.edu](mailto:RosenR@wpunj.edu) with the header "Teaching Note" and also submit it online at <http://radicalteacher.library.pitt.edu/>.



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**David Sterling Brown** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Arizona. He specializes in Shakespeare and early modern English literature. In addition to being a member of Phi Beta Kappa and a 2013-2014 Consortium for Faculty Diversity Scholar, he is a graduate of the program in English and American Literature at New York University and he was the first Trinity College (CT) alumnus to hold the Ann Plato Fellowship. At Trinity, David served as a faculty member in the English Department where he designed and taught an early modern English/African-American literature course entitled (Early) Modern Literature: Crossing the Color-Line.

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**Bonnie Gordon** has volunteered at Interference Archive since 2013 and is involved in its Administrative Work Group and Cataloging Working Group. She has a Master's in Archives and Public History from New York University and has worked at archives and non-profit organizations throughout New York. Bonnie is interested in digital preservation, personal digital archiving, and access to archives.

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view and manipulate primary sources in ways not possible with the originals. Horowitz's research and publications focus on teaching with and assessing student learning from original primary sources. She serves on a Society of American Archivists/Association of College and Research Libraries Rare Book and Manuscript Section task force to establish guidelines for primary source literacy.

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**Ann Holt** serves as a Visiting Professor of Art and Design Education at Pratt Institute and Executive Director of Have Art Will Travel! Inc., a non-profit arts based organization for Gender Justice in Tribeca, Manhattan. She researches archives as social spaces for experiential pedagogy, feminist scholarship, and activism, seeking to expand on notions of using archival materials as both forms of information and things to experience. She also writes about issues of access to archives and marginalized histories of art education.

**Todd Honma** is an Assistant Professor of Asian American Studies at Pitzer College. His research and teaching focuses on various forms of subcultures, including zines and independent publishing, tattooing and body modification, and makerspaces and community-based science and technology.

**Jen Hoyer** is a librarian, archivist, and recorder player, and has been one of the core organizers at Interference Archive since 2013. Originally from Canada, Jen has organized the archives of Canada's oldest public library, created online research tools for the social justice sector in western Canada, and loves cataloging ephemera at Interference Archive.

**Gaana Jayagopalan** teaches graduate students with the School of Business Studies and Social Sciences at Christ University, Bengaluru, India. Her research interests include Cultural Studies and Popular Culture; Nation and Narration; Indian Literatures; Philosophy of Disciplines; and Higher Education in India.

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**Vero Ordaz** arrived at Interference Archive in 2014 through her interest in broadening access to the arts and humanities, with an emphasis on socially engaged work. After helping to develop and expand the outreach work of StoryCorps, she completed her BA at Brooklyn College and now coordinates the public programming at the Murphy Institute, CUNY School for Professional Studies.

**Vanessa Pinto** graduated from Tufts University with a BA in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Child Study and Human Development. Her senior project examined the construction of White masculinity and White maternalism in the context of elementary school play activities and sites. She currently works in Lesotho, as a Peace Corps member teaching primary level English.

**Erica Rand** is the Whitehouse Professor of Art and Visual Culture and of Women and Gender Studies at Bates College. Recent writings include *Red Nails, Black Skates: Gender, Cash, and Pleasure On and Off the Ice* (Duke, 2012), "Court and Sparkle: Johnny Weir, Kye Allums, and Raced Matters in Gender Authenticity" (*GLQ*, 2013), and "Five Outings in Queer Indirection and the Ingredients of My Undoing" (*Liminalities*, 2016, <http://liminalities.net/12-2/outings.pdf>). She is on the editorial boards of *Radical Teacher* and *Salacious*.

**Ellen Schrecker**, a retired professor of History at Yeshiva University, has written extensively about McCarthyism and higher education. She is currently doing research (in archives) on faculty members and politics in the 1960s and early 1970s.

**Cecilia Vaught** is a senior at Tufts University, majoring in Africana Studies and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She has spent two summers working with Native Women's domestic violence education organizations and shelters. Her senior project will examine sexual violence produced by the man camps of the Keystone XL pipeline.

**Sabina Vaught** is Associate Professor, Director of Educational Studies, and acting Chair in the Department of Education at Tufts University. She is also Director of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Tufts University, and Co-chair of the Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies at MIT. She holds affiliations in Africana, American, and Colonialism Studies. Vaught earned her Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and is a former high school English teacher. Her scholarship is grounded in critical race and feminist theories, and examines state institutional contexts and dynamics of schooling and power. Vaught's second book, *Compulsory: Education and the Dispossession of Youth in a Juvenile Prison* (forthcoming with the University of Minnesota Press) is an ethnographic examination of a juvenile prison school system.

**Maya Zeigler** graduated from Tufts University with a BA in Anthropology and minors in Film and Dance Studies. Her senior research explored the Audre Lorde exhibit at Tufts



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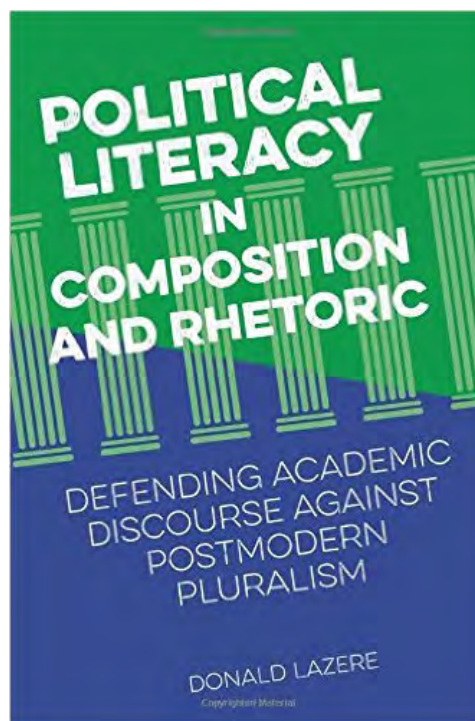
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News for Educational Workers

by Leonard Vogt



Presenting a thoughtful justification for the left in American education, Donald Lazere's *Why Higher Education Should Have a Leftist Bias* (Palgrave) argues that to teach students rhetoric and critical thinking, key components of a humanist education, educators must discuss and teach students to grapple with the conservative bias in academia, the media, and politics that is considered to be the status quo.

In *Political Literacy in Composition and Rhetoric: Defending Academic Discourse Against Postmodern Pluralism* (SIU Press), Donald Lazere calls for revival of the National Council of Teachers of English resolutions in the 1970s for teaching the “critical reading, listening, viewing, and thinking skills necessary to enable students to cope with the persuasive techniques in political statements, advertising, entertainment, and news,” and explores the reasons these goals have been eclipsed in composition studies over recent decades.

## Unions and Strikes

The faculty union of The City University of New York (CUNY) voted overwhelmingly (92 percent of over 10,000 unionized faculty and staff members voting in favor) for strike authorization to be used possibly in the fall in the union's continuing efforts to get a contract after five years. Even though CUNY faculty have not had a pay raise in 6 years (over which time the cost of living in New York City went up 23 percent), New York lawmakers a month earlier passed a state budget which included no money for CUNY faculty pay increases (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 12, 2016).

On February 24, 2016, graduate workers at the Missouri University occupied the university's administrative building to demand that they be recognized as university employees and be given collective bargaining rights (*Left Labor Reporter*, February 26, 2016).

"The Union Advantage for Contingent Faculty" says that union representation over a 30-year career can mean an additional salary of at least \$1 million for a full-time professor at public universities. For adjuncts as well, who make an average of \$2,700 per course which adds up to a yearly salary of \$22,000 for four courses a semester, union representation could help relieve their poverty conditions. When adjuncts have won union rights, they work under one to three year contracts and earn \$7,300 per course, making their annual salary almost \$60,000 for four courses a semester (*The New Crossroads*, April 27, 2016).

The Working Educators (WE), the progressive caucus of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT), initiated a campaign last year to inform Philadelphia parents and teachers about their right to "Opt Out" of standardized tests because the PFT leaders were not talking about the demoralizing aspects of overtesting on students, teachers or parents ([www.truth-out.org](http://www.truth-out.org), January 29, 2016).

The Chicago Teachers Union held a one-day strike and citywide day of action on April 1, 2016. According to *Jacobin* (April 2, 2016), the strike was not "primarily about increased school funding, pensions for teachers, or even corporate taxation, though the union is fighting for all of these. It is a strike about democracy—about who owns our society's resources and how decisions about those resources are made." Those supporting the strike were transit workers union ATU 308, AFSCME Council 31, the Black Youth Project 100, University Professionals of Illinois Local 4100 and the Chicago Student Union.

In February and March of 2016, an estimated 20,000 teachers, nearly half the entire Palestinian teaching staff, defied the Palestinian Authority (PA), went on a wildcat strike, and won a pay raise they were promised three years earlier. Many of the demonstrators, some of whom were treated brutally by the PA in its attempt to keep them away from the strike, feel that the teachers' union leadership's close tie to the government is a detriment to teachers' rights ([portside.org](http://portside.org), May 1, 2016).

A Colombian academic and member of the higher education union ASPU, Dr. Miguel Ángel Beltrán, was

arrested for rebellion in July, 2015, sentenced to 8 years in a high security prison, and is now on hunger strike to demand that his case be reviewed. To send a message of protest to the Colombian government, go to <http://www.labourstart.org/go/beltran>.

## Student Activism

The national "Fossil Free" movement is pressuring colleges to address the issue of climate change by divesting from fossil fuels. In April of 2016, 8 students at Northern Arizona University were arrested during a sit-in. At Columbia University, a six-day occupation of Low Library was held to demand the president of the university endorse fossil fuel divestment. This occupation gained supporting praise from presidential candidate Bernie Sanders ([democracynow.org](http://democracynow.org), April 20 and 29, 2016).

Linda Katehi, the chancellor of University of California, Davis, was put on administrative leave during an investigation of a number of infractions, including the 2011 pepper-spraying of student protestors and her subsequent \$175,000 attempt to get the viral video off the internet. Protesting students also demanded she resign her position on private corporations such as the for-profit DeVry University, the textbook publisher Wiley & Sons, and the Saudi school King Abdulaziz University ([democracynow.org](http://democracynow.org), March 17 and 29, 2016).

The University of Puerto Rico was shut down during a three-day student strike in protest of austerity cuts ([democracynow.org](http://democracynow.org), March 17, 2016).

The Million Student March of November 12, 2015 marks the beginning of the student movement demanding free higher education, cancellation of all student debt, and a \$15 minimum wage for all campus workers. Over 100 actions have been carried out across the country with support from numerous progressive organizations and labor unions. To read about the history and future of this movement, see "Why Free Higher Ed Can't Wait: Students are Rising Up to Demand Free Higher Education" (*Dollars & Sense*, March/April, 2016).

According to the Center for American Progress, 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high school every year and large numbers of them are involved in breaking barriers for accessing higher education and fighting for immigrant rights. To read the story of just one of these students, go to [www.truth-out.org](http://www.truth-out.org), January 3, 2016.

## K-12

Detroit teachers have been calling in sick to make their grievances heard. One of these "sickouts" helped force Darnell Earley to resign as emergency manager of Detroit Public Schools. As emergency manager of Flint, Michigan, Earley is well known for his infamous switching of water supplies, resulting in the poisoning of Flint's water. The largest such "sickout" action of January 20, 2016 temporarily closed 88 of the district's 104 schools. And again in May, 2016 all but three of the city's public schools were closed due to a "sickout" over the possibility of the

district running out of money and teachers not getting paid at the end of the school year (*In These Times*, April, 2016; [democracynow.org](http://democracynow.org), May 3, 2016).

Across the country, and disproportionately with students of color or students with disabilities, discipline frequently comes in the form of paddles, stun guns and mace, thus allowing police departments to criminalize adolescent conflict ([truth-out.org](http://truth-out.org), March 12, 2016). Even before entering their classrooms, 100,000 New York City school children must go through airport-style security screening every day ([portside.org](http://portside.org), January 16, 2016).

In March 2016 over 2,000 students from the Boston Public Schools walked out in protest over austerity measures and the proposed \$50 million deficit for the following year ([portside.org](http://portside.org), March 9 and 14, 2016).

"Teacher Challenges Low Evaluation in Court and Wins" (*Washington Post*, May 10, 2016) describes how Sheri Lederman, a fourth-grade teacher in Great Neck, New York, won her legal battle to have her 2013-14 VAM score of "ineffective" removed by the Supreme Court of New York State. The case, argued by Lederman's lawyer husband, made the Justice who heard the case declare the score "arbitrary" and "capricious" as he declared it illegal. This case is an inspiration for other teachers to stand up and legally challenge their scores and thus challenge the validity of the testocracy.

Teachers are often humiliated, frequently pessimistic, and even sometimes hopeful as the profession faces the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges of the U.S. educational system. "Stop Humiliating Teachers" (*The New Yorker*, February 11, 2016) describes the U.S. "tendency, when there's an economic or social crisis, to lay blame on public school teachers. They must have created the crisis, the logic goes, by failing to educate the young." In "Professor: Why I am 'Incredibly Pessimistic' About the Future of Public Education" (*Washington Post*, March 11, 2016), Mark Naison explains his pessimism: "Public schools in recent years have sustained assaults from believers in the privatization of the public education system. The powers that be plan a data-based reinvention of teacher education that will require the closing, or reinvention of colleges of teacher education. If these plans go through, a majority of the nation's teachers and teacher educators could lose their jobs in the next 10 years, replaced by people who will largely be temp workers making minimum wages." And Henry Giroux explains "Why Teachers Matter in Dark Times" ([truth-out.org](http://truth-out.org), May 13, 2016): "For the most part, public school teachers and higher education faculty are a national treasure and may be one of the last defenses available to undermine a growing authoritarianism, pervasive racism, permanent war culture, widening inequality and debased notion of citizenship in US society. They can't solve these problems but they can educate a generation of students to address them. Yet, public school teachers, in particular, are underpaid and overworked, and lack adequate resources. In the end, they are unjustly blamed by right-wing billionaires and politicians for the plight of public schools. In order to ensure their failure, schools in many cities, such as Detroit and Philadelphia, have been defunded by right-wing legislators. These

schools are dilapidated—filled with vermin and broken floors—and they often lack heat and the most basic resources. They represent the mirror image of the culture of cruelty and dispossession produced by the violence of neoliberalism."

## Race and Education

According to a report by the *Atlantic Black Star*, Black students in the South are twice as likely to receive corporal punishment as white students, with 42,000 Black male students reporting that they were beaten. Data compiled by the U. S. Department of Education shows that Black students are three times more likely than white students to be suspended or expelled from school. Nationwide 15 percent of Black students receive suspensions compared with 4 percent of white students ([truth-out.org](http://truth-out.org), April 9, 2016).

*For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood . . . and the Rest of Y'all Too* by Chris Emdin of Columbia's Teachers College critiques the pervasive savior complex narrative that gives white teachers in minority and urban educational communities a false sense of saving students. Emdin compares this approach to the Native American schools of the past that measured success by how well students adapted to forced assimilation and encourages contemporary teachers to value the unique realities of minority children and incorporate their cultures into classroom instruction ([portside.org](http://portside.org), April 16, 2016).



*Rethinking Schools* (Spring 2016, Vol. 30, No. 3) continues its excellent educational reporting with a feature article "Teaching the FBI's War on the Black Freedom Movement." At Lake Oswego High School in Oregon,

students learn about the FBI's counterintelligence program of the 1960s and 70s and make connections with the Black Lives Matter movement of today.

The Afrikan Black Coalition (ABC) of the University of California (UC), after months of research and pressure against UC's complicity in the prison-industrial complex, announced that UC has begun to sell all its shares in private prisons (portside.org, January 14, 2016).

As students confront racism on U. S. campuses, they also are learning about the legacy of segregation and the history of the Black Freedom Movement. At Middle Tennessee State University, students are demanding the renaming of Forrest Hall named after a Confederate general and the KKK's first grand wizard. At Princeton University, students want the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and the Wilson College residential complex renamed because of Wilson's aggressive support of segregation (portside.org, January 8 and February 27, 2016).

## Charter Schools

*The Miami Herald* reports that Florida since 2000 has given \$70 million in taxpayers' money to charter schools that have closed down in 30 school districts. The Department of Education says it has gotten back only \$133,000 in the last three years from the schools that closed.

"Got to Go': High-Performing Charter Schools Shed Students Quickly" (*The Guardian*, February 21, 2016) focuses on Success Academy, the largest charter school network in New York City, which achieves high test scores by driving low performers out, at a rate almost four times as high as at public schools (10% versus 2.7%).

*Jacobin* (April 2016) gives the history of the charter school movement in Chicago and how it closed neighborhood schools.

## Israel, Palestine, and Divestment

Students and faculty across the country are joining the boycott against Israel for violations of Palestinian human rights by encouraging their universities to divest from Israeli state institutions and corporations that do business in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories. The New York University graduate study union voted overwhelmingly to boycott (salon.com, April 23, 2016). At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the 9,000 member graduate study union voted to join the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement (democracynow.org, May 19, 2016). The Columbia University faculty signed a petition supporting divestment. On January 7, 2016, the Cleveland, Ohio chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace unanimously endorsed the Emergency Resolution on Islamophobia submitted by the Radical Caucus of the Modern Language Association submitted at the 2016 MLA Convention in Austin, Texas. The Radical Caucus has been trying to introduce a BDS resolution but has faced strong opposition for several years.

Reactions to boycott and divestment have not always been sympathetic. Harvard Law School's Justice for Palestine group received funds from The Milbank Fund, the multinational law firm that endowed it, for a speaker event called "The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack" where speakers addressed the widespread suppression of Palestinian rights advocacy in the United States, with reference to the de-tenuring of Steven Salaita at the University of Illinois. The next day, the Dean of Students office received many angry phone complaints from Milbank executives who wanted the name of their fund to be removed from any future events of the Justice for Palestine group (*The Harvard Law Record*, February 17, 2016). According to [www.theintercept.com](http://www.theintercept.com) (March 24, 2016), the regents of the University of California unanimously adopted a new "discrimination" policy that links anti-Zionism to anti-Semitism. The logic was that "students opposed to Israeli policies, and those questioning the state's unequal treatment of non-Jews, had fostered a dangerous environment for Jewish students by supporting the effort to pressure Israel to change its policies through a campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions, known as BDS." And in Florida, state legislatures voted in a bill that would eliminate state funding from groups, including universities, associated with BDS, a bill that sets a precedent for defunding in other states where BDS activity is strong in universities (truth-out.org, February 25, 2016).

"Why Israel's Schools Merit a US Boycott" (*Los Angeles Times*, January 8, 2016) explains the relationship between Israel's educational system and what the article terms, "its broader structures of racism." As an example, the article states that Israel maintains two separate educational systems for Jewish children and for minority Palestinian children, with three times more money being invested in the education of a Jewish as opposed to a Palestinian student.

At The Palestinian Technical University Kadoorie in Tulkarem, an agricultural institution, the Israeli army has confiscated land to use for military training and as a shooting range. Opposing this militarization of the campus is the "Friends of Kadoorie" campaign which can be reached at [friendsofkadoorie@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofkadoorie@gmail.com) (Academia for Equality, Kadoorie University).

## Sexuality, Gender, and Education

"83 Seconds" (*The Nation*) states "Women are currently receiving less than a fifth of all bachelor's degrees in physics, computer science, and engineering." Why? Since we know girls and women are just as intelligent and adaptable as boys and men, and indeed females get better grades than males in high school and college mathematics courses, there must be another answer. Marcia Linn of UC Berkeley explains that testing is the problem since girls and women are far better course takers while boys and men are better test takers. Linn explains that "the tendency of girls [is] to be more conscientious than boys," when taking tests, thus pondering more over 60 second answers (or even the more generous 83 seconds now

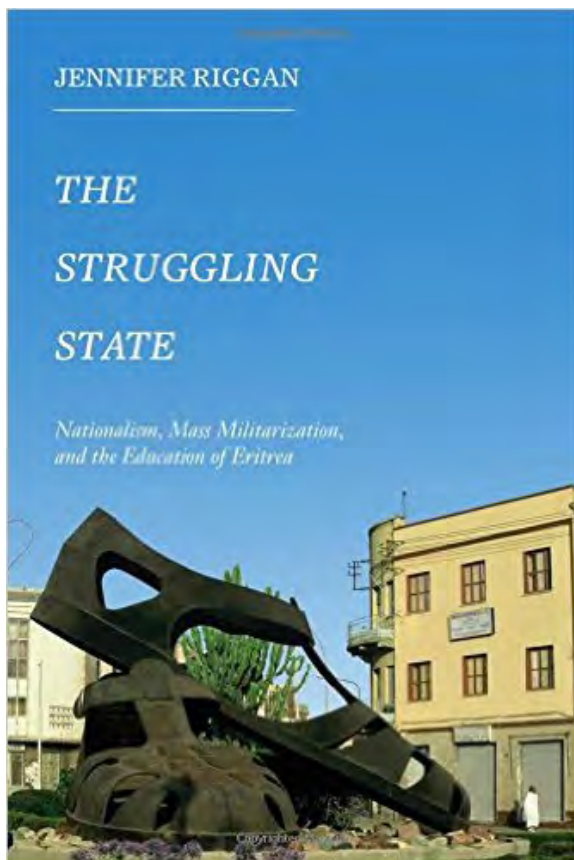


allotted by the SAT) than boys do and ending up with fewer correct answers and lower overall scores.

*Rethinking Schools* (Winter 2015-16, Vol. 30, No. 2) highlights two cover stories on “Rethinking Sexism, Gender, and Sexuality,” one story describing a New York City K-8 school welcoming a transgender 8<sup>th</sup> grader and the gender transition of another student, and the second story showing how a 9<sup>th</sup> grade teacher teaches a sex-positive and inclusive sex education class.

## Religion and Education

Title IX, the law prohibiting sex discrimination, is structured in such a way that exemption can be requested by religiously affiliated schools and programs, institutions and places where sex discrimination might indeed be most prevalent. Religious schools that receive federal dollars may ignore federal law Title IX, as 56 of them have since 2013 by getting exemptions (*The Nation*, February 8, 2016 and truth-out.org, April 2, 2016).



## Resources

In *The Struggling State*, Jennifer Riggan examines the contradictions of state power in Eritrea as simultaneously oppressive to and enacted by teachers. Riggan, who

conducted participant observation with teachers in and out of schools, explores the tenuous hyphen between nation and state under lived conditions of everyday authoritarianism. A 2003 law in Eritrea—a notoriously closed-off, heavily militarized, and authoritarian country—mandated an additional year of school for all children and stipulated that the classes be held at Sawa, the nation’s military training center. As a result, educational institutions were directly implicated in the making of soldiers, putting Eritrean teachers in the untenable position of having to navigate between their devotion to educating the nation and their discontent with their role in the government program of mass militarization. *The Struggling State* shows how the hopes of Eritrean teachers and students for the future of their nation have turned to a hopelessness in which they cannot imagine a future at all.

Bullfrog Films has released three new videos to be used in high school and college classrooms.



*TREES IN TROUBLE: Saving America's Urban Forests* tells the compelling story of how one community in southwest Ohio confronted their tree crisis and fought the invasive pest by taking action and joining together. Through partnerships with scientists, city officials and everyday citizens, this community was able to fight the pest and protect their urban forests for future generations. The film also explores the rich history of urban forestry in the United States and the exciting new research linking human health and trees.

As world governments struggle to meet the aspirational limit of 1.5°C of global warming agreed to at COP21 in Paris, a new campaign is targeting the fossil fuel industry in an effort to withdraw its social license to operate. *DIVEST!: The Climate Movement on Tour* chronicles 350.org’s ‘Do the Math’ bus tour across the United States in 2012 as it launched the fossil fuel divestment campaign onto the national and ultimately international stage.

*WEconomics: Italy* reports on the extensive and innovative cooperative economy in the region around Bologna. The Emilia-Romagna region in northern Italy has one of the highest concentrations of cooperative businesses in the developed world. The capital, Bologna is an industrial powerhouse, where prosperity is widely shared, and cooperatives of teachers and social workers play a key role in the provision of government services.

Is there a news item, call for papers, upcoming conference, resource, teaching tool, or other information related to progressive education that you would like to share with other *Radical Teacher* readers? Conference announcements and calls for papers should be at least six months ahead of date. Items, which will be used as found appropriate by *Radical Teacher*, cannot be returned. Send hard copy to Leonard Vogt, Department of English, LaGuardia Community College (CUNY), 31-10 Thomson Avenue, Long Island City, New York 11101—or email items to [lvogt@nyc.rr.com](mailto:lvogt@nyc.rr.com).



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