

RADICAL TEACHER

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

Critical Creativity

by Sophie Bell



TOGETHER WE GROW A NEW PATH BY ANDREA NARNO VIA JUSTSEEDS.ORG (2021)

This issue of *Radical Teacher* looks at the critical creativity radical teachers are marshaling, and have marshaled, in confronting and combating the interlocking crises we face in our classrooms, our campuses and schools, and our world. Such critical creativity was exemplified by Saul Slapikoff (1932-2022), one of *Radical Teacher's* staunchest members and the only Biology professor to serve on our board. Alongside new essays, we have collected in this issue a representative sample of Saul's work (as well as Susan O'Malley's thoughtful tribute) to honor his legacy and foundational role at *Radical Teacher*.

Saul appreciated crises. In fact, he deliberately sought out -- and combined -- "possible strategies and arenas for struggle" in order to fight towards justice. As he writes in his Teaching Note on the volume *Ecology as Politics*, "If we are to avoid technofascism as well as ecological collapse, the struggles for democratic socialism and for an ecologically sound society must be made one." He searched out arenas in which to forge movement work on multiple fronts: organizing workers on railroads and in biology labs, organizing students and faculty in protesting against the Vietnam War and for American Studies (read his astounding account of much of his lifetime work in his "A Course on Bio-Social Problems and How I Came to Teach It"), and ultimately, playwriting for Palestine.

Across all these sites of struggle, Saul found that storytelling was the universal factor that made political work -- indeed, all work -- possible. Counterintuitively, he described storytelling as the heart of radical science: "It is not enough to expose the racism, sexism, and classism that underlie much of biological and behavioral science, or to draw the connections between much of the work in the physical and chemical sciences and the Department of Defense and multinational corporations. It is as important, if we are to demystify science, to develop the understanding that science -- even good science -- as a creative human activity has an ideological content. Scientists, no less than novelists or poets, are storytellers. Their stories are based, at best, on unbiased data obtained by verifiable procedures which are then organized and given meaning by the application of creative imagination."

Saul acknowledged the difficulty of a transdisciplinary approach to study and movement work. In his review of *Ecology as Politics*, he called it "a difficult book for many students -- not for its language, but for its daring integration of issues." He shows at once the thrill and challenge of asking students "to bring together such diverse issues as ecology, politics, labor, imperialism, and health within a single worldview. When the author Gorz does so, Saul describes how this "so thoroughly challenges deeply held views about the nature of capitalism and of 'socialism' as we have come to know it that [students] are initially stunned." Finally, he announces the value in only for "those students ready to suffer the discomfort along with the excitement of new insights."

Saul always looked for the class analysis in science teaching. In his film review of the documentary *Song of the Canary*, Saul points out how "its sensitive portrayal of the lives and feelings of the workers involved," allows the film to "transcend its focus on occupational safety and health

issues and should be a useful addition to any course that deals with the lives of workers and the meaning of work in modern corporate America." In his article, "Health Care and Science Teaching," he argued persuasively: "Health has been transformed for us from a state of being to a commodity to be purchased."

Our current crises, seen through Saul's eyes, represent more opportunities for organizing. Seeing his work alongside new publications connects those radical teachers of today to Saul's search "a viable movement capable of engaging significant numbers of students in the struggle for a democratic, egalitarian, socialist future..." That search goes on.

This issue is for radical teachers who, like Saul, recognize crisis as the context for teaching with voracious creativity and commitment to collective action wherever they can find it. This issue bears witness to the ways that radical teachers are sparking students' critical consciousness, amplifying their voices while inspiring them to critique ideological doxa they've unknowingly ingested, bringing in collaborators from archives and communities outside the classroom to make the work richer and more impactful, learning from and with our students, and tapping into writing's artistic and analytical capacities to create new knowledge.

Each of these essays documents and critiques the oppressive conditions of our students' lives and their educations. They are deeply critical, testifying to the difficult, sometimes paralyzing contexts in which we meet our students: in educational institutions that don't value our labor and/or theirs; in a political climate that devalues and defunds public education at all levels; under legislation and threatened legislation that attempts to silence any teaching that asks students to look at the structural inequalities in their lives, let alone to address them. [Each group of racially, ethnically, culturally, linguistically marginalized and historically and currently oppressed people are fighting actively on battlegrounds to defend lives, lands, work, rights, climate.]

Yet these pieces are best characterized by their critical creativity -- critical on the one hand because they offer critiques of oppressive conditions, and on the other because creativity is critical to responding effectively to such conditions. They are largely focused on work that took place within classrooms -- three classrooms in colleges and one in a middle school (stay tuned for our next issue, which offers a greater look at work outside and around classrooms).

These authors invite us to tap into creative resistance in co-creating knowledge with our students to navigate the crises that we face. As editors, these articles all caused us to pause in our reading and jot down notes, sketching out or revising assignments for our own classes. We hope they will cause you to do the same. They might also inspire you to email a colleague with whom you've always wanted to collaborate and explore that possibility. Either way, they offer vital practical and theoretical contributions to critically creative radical teaching in times when racial capitalism is damaging all our futures.

The approaches in these essays are widely divergent, but they all involve some or all of the following: combining text and non-textual elements, student collaboration, interdisciplinarity, collaborations between teaching and library professionals, opportunities for publication within or outside class. And they all describe students and faculty creating infectiously critical work.

In Jeane Schepers's "Zine Pedagogies: Students as Critical Makers," zines become a rich metaphor and an actual set of practices for creative resistance. Schepers hopes readers will "approach the essay like a zinester," in a DIY spirit of idiosyncratic meaning-making and critical community building informed principally by queer and feminist, but also antiracist, epistemologies. According to Schepers, zine pedagogy supports "traditional collegiate skills like scholarly research, database searching, close reading, critical thinking, applied methods, and analytic writing," while offering a "radical version of pedagogy understood as mutual learning, cooperative skill-sharing, and a dialogic process that students, librarians, archivists, and professors enter together with both seriousness and joy." We challenge you to read this article without wanting to make a zine yourself, or ask your students to try it.

In "Power Relations and Experiential Learning," Daniel Hengel locates his classroom in a radical pedagogical genealogy of experiential education that propels creative student critique. Arguing that his students in an underfunded urban public university hold expertise in what Claudia Rankine calls "quotidian struggles against dehumanization," he focuses on pushing back against the specific dehumanizing pressure, exerted by an increasingly vocationalized humanities curriculum, to blunt their imaginative and critical capacities. For him, his students' creativity is a crucial accelerant to their conscientization. In a semester-long multimodal digital project, he asks students to make power relations legible in a site or sites they inhabit in their daily lives. The projects students create are themselves compelling, but his focus remains on the internal and collaborative work the students do to develop their critical consciousness, individually and collectively.

In "Disrupting Data: Critical Reading, Technology Integrated Assignments, and Engaged Student Learning," Mt. Holyoke Latina/o Studies faculty Vanessa Rosa and Research and Instructional Librarian Caro Pinto offer another epicenter for creative critical work by students -- a collaboration between classroom and library faculty to establish a framework for students to engage data digitally. Their collaboration's intersecting genealogies in liberatory pedagogies and critical information literacy offer tools for students in a course titled "Race, Racism, and Power" to engage with dehumanizing and disturbing data, but also to "disrupt" that data through presenting and sharing it with one another.

They offer students individual and collective opportunities "to grapple with multiple layers of course content by simultaneously troubling how we conceptualize

data while also visualizing concepts like intersectionality, institutional racism, or the school-to-prison-pipeline." Students work together in ways modeled on Rosa and Pinto's own "equitable and collaborative" working relationship between faculty and librarian, they encourage collaboration among students "to center their own expertise and embodied knowledge" in creative engagements with data.

Unlike the other essays here, Sean Golden's creative energies in "Toward a Grotkean Pedagogy: Teacher as Political" focus on developing himself as a teacher who holds multiple marginalized positions that prevent him from having a robust genealogy of models of "teacher as political" that imagine people like himself at the front of the room. He traces the ways that school leaders, other teachers, available curricula, and parents prevent his ability to grow in the ways he needs to support his students, and how reparative reading helps fill the silences and erasures needed for him to do this work. In order to support the radical teaching he is beginning to do in the classroom, he performs "reparative readings" on the resources and materials at hand that will allow him to develop the pedagogy he needs.

Golden's key figure is Miss Alordayne Grotke -- a racially Other teacher (fandom sites debate whether she is Black or South Asian) who played a small role in Disney's late-1990s animated series "Recess." Her clear political commitments to feminism, decolonial efforts, environmentalism, and her support of her students' concerns and self-advocacy become resources here for Golden to create a teaching persona and teaching methodology that can humanize, make visible, and galvanize. The work is then passed on to students, affording them opportunities to do the same.

This essay calls for teachers to assemble resources for teaching politically when the system doesn't see or support you or your students. We found ourselves asking who occupied our own teaching genealogies -- in our own educations and in popular culture. And we could imagine asking our students the same thing. Some of our responses will be necessarily idiosyncratic. But the cultural images we may have consumed collectively make influences we can analyze collectively.

Sophie Bell is a member of the *Radical Teacher* editorial collective who teaches First Year Writing at St. John's University in Queens. She is the author of *Mapping Racial Literacies: College Students Write About Race and Segregation*.



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Remembering Saul Slapikoff

by Susan Gushee O'Malley



SAUL SLAPIKOFF

Saul Abraham Slapikoff, a long-time member of the *Radical Teacher* Editorial Board, died on August 26, 2022 at age 90. Saul taught in the Department of Biology at Tufts University for 30 years and was instrumental in the establishment of the Tufts American Studies Department for which he served as chair.

He was an invaluable member of *Radical Teacher*. His article, "A Course on Bio-Social Problems — And How I Came to Teach It" (1977), reprinted in this issue, begins this way:

I joined the Communist Party in 1948 while a high school senior, a few weeks after the presidential election in which Henry Wallace had run on the Progressive Party ticket. Following four stormy years at Brooklyn College as a party activist and a brief stint in the Army (I had been discharged early as a security risk) I decided to become an "industrial concentrator" for the Party. I worked in a series of jobs on the railroads in the New York City area (11).

He later became disillusioned with the Party after he read Nikita Khrushchev's speech to the 20th Party Congress of the CPUSSR that criticized Stalin and detailed some of the horrors Stalin had perpetrated. Thus began Saul's quest to find meaningful work that he hoped was "relatively value free" (12) and the path to his becoming a biologist. He eventually came back to politics and got involved with Resist and the anti-war movement, and developed a course "Contemporary Bio-Social Problems" to integrate his politics with the study of biology.

Saul joined *Radical Teacher* in 1979. With few exceptions, all the members of the Board were English professors. Because of Saul, *Radical Teacher* has had articles on the environment, women scientists, science teaching, and health care. In a tribute to Saul, RT board member James Davis wrote, "Saul's accessible style and thoughtfulness about politics reads ... like a model of *RT* essays." Saul also served as treasurer of *Radical Teacher* for many years, filed our annual report for the Center for Critical Education with the State of Massachusetts, and mailed out the magazine to our many subscribers before we became an open access online journal.

Saul was also an advocate for human rights for Palestine. His book, *Consider and Hear Me: Voices from Palestine and Israel* (Temple University, 1992) describes his experiences working in the West Bank. After retiring, Saul wrote plays and became involved with the Underground Railway Theater in Boston.

Memories of Saul I cherish include his eloquent tribute to Richard Ohmann at the Radical Teacher Memorial; in spite of Saul's Parkinson disease, the discussions we used to have about gardening and growing fruit trees; his visits to Richard Ohmann and me at the farm with his wonderful life partner Flora Gonzalez the summer before Dick died; and his attendance at my mother's funeral at St. Joseph's Church in Belmont, MA, where Saul was utterly bemused by the

Catholic mass and the practice of offering up suffering to the souls in purgatory.

Those who comprised the Boston contingent--Friede, Pam, Linda, Louis, and Saul-- remember with fondness our wild rides (Saul driving superbly) from Boston to Middletown, CT, every 6 weeks to RT editorial board meetings. We'd talk and laugh about movies, theatre, protest marches, courses we were teaching, occasionally the upcoming meeting agenda, and whether it was time to have another bake sale to keep *Radical Teacher* going—all this at 85 mph.

I, and the rest of the Radical Teacher Board, will miss him intensely.



MEMBERS OF THE RADICAL TEACHER EDITORIAL BOARD. SAUL SLAPIKOFF IS PICTURED SECOND TO LEFT.

Susan Gushee O'Malley was one of the founders of the *Radical Teacher* in 1975. She is Professor Emerita, City University of NY, where she taught composition, Shakespeare, Women's Studies, and Liberal Studies (Kingsborough, Graduate Center) for 37 years. The recipient of Fulbright, NEH, Huntington, and Folger Library grants, she has published in early modern women's studies (*Custom is an Idiot: Jacobean Pamphlets on Women*, University of Illinois Press), disability, higher education, and civil rights. She was on the executive committee of the Professional Staff Congress for 9 years and Chair of the CUNY Faculty Senate for 4 years. For the last 11 years she has served on the Executive Committee of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women at the UN. She plays cello in the UN Symphony Orchestra.



ASSORTED PHOTOGRAPHS OF SAUL SLAPIKOFF



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A Course on Bio-Social Problems and How I Came to Teach It

by Saul Slapikoff

from *Radical Teacher* #4 (1977)



PROTECT THE SACRED – STOP LINE 3 BY ANDREA LOMANTO VIA JUSTSEEDS.ORG

I joined the Communist Party in 1948 while a high school senior, a few weeks after the presidential election in which Henry Wallace had run on the Progressive Party ticket. Following four stormy years at Brooklyn College as a party activist and a brief stint in the Army (I had been discharged early as a security risk) I decided to become an "industrial concentrator" for the Party. I worked at a series of jobs on the railroads in the New York City area.

As an industrial concentrator I was supposed to become a part of the working class, be active in the local union, and maintain a generally low, but "progressive" political profile. After I worked for a while as a freight handler, the Party and I agreed that I should seek work in the operating crafts -- the elite jobs in the industry. The New York Central Railroad, Grand Central Division became my center of work and operations.

Railroading was fun. The work was out of doors, just dangerous enough to be exciting, yet not scary enough to upset me. The men that I worked with were varied, ranging from hopelessly depressed alcoholics to highly interesting self-educated working-class intellectuals. Since I worked as an "extra" most of the time, I had the opportunity of quickly getting to know nearly all of the switch tenders, brakemen, and conductors in the division. Given the men's diversity, the wide range in ages, the multiplicity of ethnic backgrounds, and wide variation in lifestyles, there was an unusually strong feeling of camaraderie and an amazing lack of nasty competitiveness.

The Grand Central Division may have been somewhat atypical among railroads. For example, during the depression of the '30s the Division voluntarily went on a six-day work week to spread the available work around. When I began working there, every other railroad in the New York City area, indeed the vast majority in the country, was still working a seven day week. The five-day week was not introduced until late 1955 or 1956. I never was able to find out why the shortened work week had been adopted so early.

The only elements in the work that seemed to lead to the sense of camaraderie I felt were the danger, and the almost constant battle to slow down the shrinkage of jobs: the railroads were being devastated by an avaricious and dishonest management, and a public policy favoring the auto and trucking industries.

I readily got into my work as an industrial concentrator: I had gone fishing and drinking with some of the other workmen; had become a regular at meetings of my Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen lodge; and had been rewarded for my efforts by election to the post of Chaplain -- yes, Chaplain! -- of the lodge. The year was 1956.

Only a few months after my election my Party group received its copies of *For a Lasting Peace and a People's Democracy* (the Cominform newspaper) which, together with the *New York Times*, reprinted Nikita Khrushchev's speech to the 20th Party Congress of the CPUSSR. The speech was a bomb shell. It criticized "the cult of personality," which had been developed around Stalin. It even detailed some of the repressive horrors Stalin had perpetrated against dissenters within the CPUSSR.

The effect on the CPUSA was swift and catastrophic. Many leaders and rank and file members quit the Party. Some, facing the criticisms the speech unleashed, opted for a more militant and dogmatic line and went on to form the Progressive Labor Party. Others, somehow, stayed on.

I found the speech devastating. For years I had led myself to believe that the things Khrushchev eventually detailed (only the tip of the iceberg, I'm sure) were lies concocted by the capitalist press. Any doubts I had I neatly interpreted as bourgeois weakness on my part.

To discover that my "weakness" was really the exercise of rational critical judgment, that in fact I had been lying to myself and others, was crushing to me. Soon after the initial discussion of the speech by my cell of five, I decided to quit the Party. My disillusionment left me thoroughly demoralized. I became cynical about all political and ideological questions; I distrusted all movements. The thought of further discussing any part of Khrushchev's speech, or the feelings it released in me, seemed so thoroughly pointless that I wanted out as fast as possible.

Though I quit the Communist Party, I decided to remain a railroad worker. I enjoyed the work and the company of my fellow workers. Despite my being "furloughed" for about five months out of the year, my wages, supplemented by unemployment benefits, proved more than sufficient to meet my needs. That fall, however, I was laid off nearly a month earlier than usual and was called back for only two or three weeks of the Thanksgiving-Christmas-New Year's rush period, rather than the usual six to eight weeks. I had gotten married before Thanksgiving and, given my changed circumstances, felt I had better plan some alternative to railroading, since my job might disappear altogether.

After a lot of thought and discussion with my wife, I decided to go back to college part-time to take courses in the sciences and math. I had been a Sociology-Anthropology major before working on the rail road. I changed my mind.

The sciences seemed attractive to me. I had enjoyed my high school biology and chemistry courses, and had found my introductory biology and chemistry courses stimulating. I had majored in Sociology-Anthropology, rather than biology or chemistry, because the latter took too much time to allow me a full political life. Besides, the social sciences were obviously value-loaded and ideologically challenging, while the sciences, it appeared, were relatively value free.

Given my cynical state of mind after quitting the Communist Party, the sciences seemed like the only direction for me. I had had my fill of ideologically loaded work. I felt that I could not trust my own judgment in anything to do with ideology or politics: the mere thought of my years of self-deceit made it impossible for me to consider anything but the sciences.

I did recognize that the sciences were heavily in the service of industry. Therefore, I came to reject the notion of majoring in chemistry. I had read about the "thrill" of discovery in chemistry in Bernard Jaffee's book *Crucibles* while in high school. But even from my relatively uninformed perspective, it was all too clear that chemists either worked

in industry or trained other people to go into industry. The intent of the curricula approved by the American Chemical Society was too obvious to miss.

Biology seemed to be another case. As a field, it did not appear to have the same ties to the production of profit as chemistry. Biological research, I thought, was directed toward the improvement of the human condition through, for example, the enlargement of crop yields by plant geneticists, or the discoveries promising to improve medical care for the masses. In retrospect, I can only marvel, given my wariness of capitalist institutions derived from eight years in the Party, at the naivete that my science education, abetted by the reading of books like De Kruif's *Microbe Hunters*, had instilled in me.

In the spring of 1957, I went back to Brooklyn College to take one course in biology at night. Over the next two years I did work equal to more than half a B.S. degree, taking courses in math, physics, chemistry, and biology. For the next year and a half work on the railroad continued at a diminishing level. Finally, in the spring of 1959, I quit to become a research assistant on a cancer research project at Beth Israel Hospital in New York City. Not much later the hospital workers went on their first strike against New York City's private hospitals. Refusing to cross the picket line, I joined a small supporting picket line of professionals and was fired.

Fortunately, one of the principal investigators of the grant paying my wages decided to protect me. He was on the Brooklyn College faculty, where in the 40's he had been a stoolie for one of New York State's red hunts into the teaching profession. His conscience must have bothered him. Though he was pissed at my action, he hired me to teach at a National Science Foundation Summer Institute for high school teachers, then got me back my job at Beth Israel that Fall.

These were, for the most part, the most demanding years of my life. I worked thirty to forty hours a week on the railroad or on research; took four courses a semester whose contents took hours to master; and often needed to relearn material that I had not studied or used for seven or eight years. Meanwhile, my wife and I, trying to develop our relationship, did not see each other for days on end, especially when I worked the night shift on the railroad.

Despite these demands, or possibly because of them, I thoroughly enjoyed those years. I was learning an awful lot very fast, and was getting ready for my next step -- graduate school. Biochemistry, I decided, was the field I wanted to enter. It seemed to sit in a pivotal position between chemistry and biology, both of which I thoroughly enjoyed. Furthermore, biochemistry would provide an excellent foundation for movement into a wide variety of research areas.

Graduate school was not quite what I had expected. I was in the biochemistry department of a medical school with six or seven faculty members. The department was like a feudal kingdom, the chairman the feudal lord, the other faculty his vassals. The chairman's power derived from his success at grantsmanship and research. The signs of his power and success were everywhere to be seen. Forty to

fifty percent of the graduate students, all of the postdoctoral fellows, and half of the research space were his; the department secretaries served his needs first; etc. Other faculty members had clear limits placed upon their ability to grow or increase their power within the department, since their space, facilities, number of graduate students, postdocs, and technicians were all limited. Research empires such as the chairman's were never to be theirs as long as they stayed on. On the other hand, as long as they produced something in research, and did some (not too much, to be sure) teaching, they could look forward to a degree of security and to protection from the chairman. The competition among them for the leavings was intense and often took the form of dumping on another faculty member's graduate students. None of these relationships were lost on the graduate students. In fact, we mimicked them by developing an obvious pecking order among ourselves. Since I worked hard, did well in my courses, had some luck in my research and quickly exploited it, and was a student of the second most powerful member of the department, I was able to complete the requirements for my Ph.D. in little over 3 1/2 years. And so I went off to do postdoctoral research in one of the most prestigious departments of biochemistry in the world.

The Department, chaired by a Nobel Laureate, was almost like a communal paradise -- a marked contrast to the one I had graduated from. The faculty, post docs, and graduate students showed mutual respect for and interest in each other's work; their willingness to cooperate was remarkable. Exceptions seemed to derive from personality traits rather than status. Even the support staff -- secretaries, technicians, glassware washers -- were treated with more respect than I have ever seen elsewhere.

In that environment, where friendships and high-quality science flourished, I spent the happiest years of my career in science. It was not that the competitiveness and power-seeking that characterize most of capitalist science had been wholly eliminated from the department's lexicon, rather, their focus had been directed almost entirely outward. Here was a base from which the philosopher-kings could do battle with the world. The benefits of high status, memberships in study sections of the National Institutes of Health, editorial positions on leading journals, and so forth were constantly being exploited for the advantage of this elite. How could a scientist at Podunk U. ever hope to compete?

My post-doctoral fellowship came to an end in August 1966. I moved on to Tufts as an assistant professor of biology. During the ten years since I had quit the Communist Party I had done nothing politically. The civil rights movement, the beginnings of the New Left, and protests against the American involvement in Southeast Asia were occurring at a distance from my universe. I would read about them, feel a degree of sympathetic satisfaction, and guiltily send off a check responding to one or another appeal. But I could not allow myself to be personally engaged. The thought of becoming involved in a political organization or movement was so unsettling, I would not consider it. Instead, my energies had been devoted single-mindedly to mastering my field, and preparing myself for a career as an independent scientific researcher and teacher. It had been a lot of hard work. The rewards came from the satisfaction of

participating in an exciting human endeavor, the deep pleasure in knowing I had helped to unravel some of the secrets of nature.

It was with a sense of eager anticipation that I assumed my new position. Upon arrival at Tufts I discovered that the lab I had been promised had not yet been built. Thus my first six months left me with more spare time than I had anticipated. By then a growing Students for a Democratic Society, the beginnings of a significant draft resistance, and a more vocal anti-war movement had begun to make greater demands of my conscience.

In the Spring of 1967, the Fifth Avenue Parade Committee announced a major anti-war demonstration for New York City. When no publicity for it appeared on the Tufts campus, I felt compelled to do something. A young postdoc and I, fearing both financial and political disaster, decided to put up money for chartering a bus from Tufts to New York City. The response to our advertisement proved great enough to allow us to charter a second bus.

I was excited by the sheer size of the demonstration. However, I was moved at some deeper level by the sight of a group of young men sitting on the Sheep Meadow in Central Park tearing up or burning their draft cards. So, soon after, I signed the Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority, pledging to support draft resistance and other forms of civil disobedience to the war. However, I could not bring myself to become involved with any organizations.

The completion of my lab in the Spring of 1967 found me hard at work doing research and teaching. I felt challenged and excited by both. Preparing a biochemistry lecture course for the fall took much of my time. In the lab I often worked till midnight, enjoying the opportunity to do research on my own, sparing no effort to achieve some success.

There was to be a march on the Pentagon in the Fall of 1967. When I heard that it was to be preceded, a day earlier, by a draft card turn-in at the Department of Justice, I felt a strong urge to attend. The Friday of the turn-in was one of the most unnerving days I have ever spent. From the time I boarded my plane in Boston, until I went to bed late that night, I spoke, with one brief exception, to no one.

A kind of controlled bedlam raged at the church where people gathered prior to the march. Functionaries, often near hysteria, their voices much too loud and nearly incomprehensible, tried to explain what was to happen and what we were to do. Outside, on the front lawn of the church, sat a group of draft resisters, sharing some bread, cheese, and milk. They talked with quiet animation, exuding a warmth toward each other that was truly moving. What a contrast to the mad scene inside the church!

Throughout these preliminaries and the events that followed, I allowed myself to speak to no one, for to break my isolation would be to make some commitment to joining the movement, rather than just being there and observing.

That night I walked the streets of Washington feeling as alone and disconnected as a character in a Daliesque nightmare. I knew I would finally have to overcome the fears of ideological and political commitment I had carried since leaving the Communist Party in 1956.

The next week I contacted an acquaintance working with Resist, a support organization for draft resisters. I returned to organizational political activity by raising money for Resist in the Boston area. Later I became active in the New University Conference, an association for radical academics.

During the next few years, the demands of my political work placed a sharp limit on the intensity with which I could pursue research. It was not that I no longer enjoyed research: the excitement and sense of adventure were still there. But since I felt an obligation to my students to continue doing my best at teaching, something had to give: it was the research. I had long-since been stripped of any illusions I had about the relationship between science and scientists and the drives for profit and power characterizing our society. Academic scientists often do operate with autonomy in their choice of research interests. However, they are channeled into certain areas by the lure of more easily available grants and of fashionably "hot" fields where fame and power might be more readily attained. Scientists respond to priorities set by others, even when the pursuit of those priorities does not reflect their own best judgment.

I had long-since been stripped of any illusions I had about the relationship between science and scientists and the drives for profit and power characterizing our society. Academic scientists often do operate with autonomy in their choice of research interests.

The return to political commitment had sharpened my perceptions of the scientific enterprise. Having attained such understanding, I felt the need to integrate my teaching with my politics. Unfortunately, the curricular demands of such technical courses as biochemistry leave little time in which to explore the relationship of science to the social and political institutions within which it functions. I wanted a forum inside the curriculum to explore this relationship.

So about six years ago I began to teach a seminar titled "Contemporary Bio-Social Problems." The course was originally intended for biology majors: given their relatively narrow technical education, I thought they would benefit most. As a result of student pressure, however, any junior or senior who has taken one course in biology is allowed to register. At present about half the students in the course are biology majors.

Tufts is an expensive place to go to school: the tuition is among the highest in the country. Most of the undergraduates are from middle- or upper-middle-class families. There are few blacks. However, about half the students are women. Competitiveness is the dominant spirit, most students spending much of their time worrying about their futures as professionals. The biology majors are mainly pre-meds. Clearly, this is no fertile ground for the development of radical consciousness. At the height of the anti-war movement left wing politics had dominated the

Tufts campus; currently only five to ten students are visibly involved.

To encourage maximum participation, I limit the class to eighteen students. Consequently, I have on occasion taught as many as three sections a semester. The seminar meets once a week for three hours. During the first two meetings I introduce the areas of discussion for the semester and go over the requirements for the course. For each of the next nine weeks two students are responsible for leading discussion on a particular issue. A week before they conduct their seminar they announce its subject, and assign readings they have placed on reserve. Seminar subjects and readings are selected after consultation with me; they are within bounds I have previously set.

By "leading a discussion" I mean that the students have ten to fifteen uninterrupted minutes in which to develop the main arguments on which they wish the class to focus. Following this period, all members of the seminar are free to interrupt with questions and comments. My role is to keep the discussion focused and to raise issues which I feel have not been adequately considered either by the seminar leaders or by the class. This format demands that the students learn to extract the key issues from an area, thus hopefully focusing discussion in a productive way. Group participation in the discussion of controversial issues is maximized, rather than students being subjected to a one-sided lay-on.

In addition to leading a seminar, the students are required to write a term paper. I tell them to imagine they are editors of a collection titled *Readings in Contemporary Bio-Social Problems*. They are to read articles, chapters of books, poems, stories, etc. dealing with one area which is to constitute a section of the volume. After choosing the three to five selections they want to include, they are to summarize them in a paragraph or two and then defend them. I urge them to adopt one of two editorial stances: use the readings to advocate a particular point of view or ideological position; or choose the selections that best represent varying attitudes toward an issue.

The students must then write an eight-to-twelve-page introduction to their section of the imaginary volume. I urge them to write the introduction from a specific ideological, ethical, or political perspective, their objective being to convince the reader of the correctness of their stance. In arguing their own position, the students must, however, take account of competing views. I will not accept a traditional research paper in which the arguments and conclusions of others are merely catalogued, followed, at best, by an assertion of personal opinion. The students are told that they are responsible for a rationally argued point of view.

The term papers are due early enough to allow everyone to read them all. Then during the last three meetings they are discussed and criticized by the whole seminar. In addition to this collective evaluation of the term paper, I give each student my own in writing.

Virtually everyone who has taken the course, though commenting on the difficulty of doing the paper, has agreed that he or she learned a great deal from the assignment.

Very few of the papers have been wholly successful. The eight-to-twelve-page limitation may be severe, but I insist on it not only for logistical reasons, but also because it keeps the students from rambling, forcing them to make their arguments tighter and to give them more thought.

The specific subject matter of the seminars and term papers has varied from semester to semester. Some of the topics have been *environmental issues, including strip mining, pesticide use in agriculture, air and water quality and cancer; population and resources; health and health delivery, including abortion, birth control, death and dying; implications of genetic engineering; women in science; race and intelligence.*

No text I have used has ever really satisfied me. Therefore, I now place a substantial number of articles and books on reserve. The students are encouraged to do the same with worthwhile materials they come across. (A short list of books I have used is appended at the end of this essay.)

While each seminar and paper focuses on a specific concrete problem, I try to make sure that some wider questions get explored. Here are a few:

- *Are there technical solutions to biosocial problems, or do the solutions lie in political and social action?*
- *Who decides what scientific questions are to be asked and explored?*
- *Why are certain kinds of questions asked and not others?*
- *How are "solutions" to problems proposed and turned into policy?*
- *What kinds of "solutions" are proposed and who ends up paying for them?*

In addition to posing these questions, I try to explore the possibilities for a democratic, non-elitist science. There are no well-developed democratic models appropriate for our society, pre- or post-revolutionary. However, I do present the experiences of the socialist countries, especially China, as well as some ideas of anarchist writers such as Murray Bookchin. Reflection on these discussions leads me to conclude that there is no current theory or practice that clearly points the way toward a democratic non-elitist science. Only the successful struggle for an egalitarian society will allow us to create models for a democratic science. Yet conflicts over science policy will continue to be part of the larger struggle.

My evaluation of the course is positive: students are challenged to think about problems in ways they have rarely done before; participation in discussion is reasonably high; the relationships between science, scientists, power, and profit are explored sufficiently so that, hopefully, my own naivete upon entering a career in science will not be replicated; finally, the hope for pursuing knowledge and usefully applying the secrets of nature in a just and egalitarian society is held up as a viable goal.

The greatest weakness of the course lies in its abstractness. Tufts at present has no viable movement capable of engaging significant numbers of students in the struggle for a democratic, egalitarian, socialist future. This eliminates, for the short run at least, the opportunity of testing in practice some of the goals developed by the course. Another difficulty, the subject of some student criticism, is my tendency to dominate discussion, somewhat stifling exchanges between students. This latter difficulty can easily be corrected; the former -- the absence of an active movement on the campus -- finally depends on forces larger than my own will.

Some books used in the course:

- Murray Bookchin, *Ecology and Revolutionary Thought*. An eloquent anarchist view of ecological problems and their solutions.
- Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle*. A thoughtful left-liberal analysis of the causes of the environmental and energy crises. Commoner points his finger at the capitalist drive for short-term private profit, rather than long-term social need, as the underlying cause of the energy and environmental crises.
- Paul Ehrlich and Anne Ehrlich, *Population, Resources, Environment*. The authors see population growth per se as the cause of the environmental and energy crises. The book is an excellent source of statistics (misused) and fallacious arguments. Too bad it is so expensive.
- Barry Weisberg, *Beyond Repair: the Ecology of Capitalism*. This book is a more radical analysis than Commoner's. It unfortunately suffers from the serious defect of uncritically and incorrectly asserting that the socialization of the means of production in the Soviet Union, North Korea, and China, for example, has led to a more sane and effective environmental policy than that of the U.S.
- Mahmood Mamdani, *The Myth of Population Control*. This book is a beautifully clear analysis of the big birth reduction campaigns in India and, it is fair to assume, other agrarian countries. Mamdani shows that they are doomed to fail in the absence of concrete conditions that would make it pay for people to restrict their family size.
- Health PAC, *The American Health Empire*. An excellent radical critique of the health delivery system in the U.S. Although parts of the book are somewhat dated, the analysis presented is still much to the point.
- Joshua Horn, *Away with All Pests*. A fascinating view of the Chinese approach to health care and health delivery by a British surgeon who spent many years in post-revolutionary China as a participant in the health delivery system.
- Richard Wertz, ed., *Readings on Ethical and Social Issues in Biomedicine*. This excellent anthology features some thought-provoking essays by the editor, as well as an excellent collection of readings.

In addition to the books listed above, three magazines that have proven to be useful sources of articles are:

- *Science for the People*. Published by Science for the People, a radical organization
- *Social Policy*. A left-liberal bi-monthly.
- *Science*. The office publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (the establishment organization). It is useful for its News and Comment section, as well as for its articles.

(I am indebted to Louis Kampf and Wayne O'Neil for their strong encouragement to write this essay and to Louis Kampf for his patient editorial assistance.)

Saul Slapikoff (1931 - 2022) taught biology at Tufts University and also directed its American Studies Department, which he helped establish. He published *Consider and Hear Me: Voices from Palestine and Israel* (Temple University Press, 1992) and later developed as a playwright, working with the Underground Railway Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He served for over four decades on the Editorial Board of *Radical Teacher*.



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RADICAL TEACHER

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

Introduction: Health Care and Science Teaching

by Saul Slapikoff

from *Radical Teacher* #19 (1981)



"HOLOCENE" BY PETE RAILAND VIA JUSTSEEDS.ORG

I. Not too long ago, my friend Louis told me, "Well, I had my annual checkup yesterday, and the doctor says I'm okay." How many of us have either heard or made similar announcements and felt genuinely good that we or a friend or a loved one has been pronounced "healthy" by a physician? So pervasive has the power of health professionals become that we no longer rely on the information we get from our own bodies and our own sense of well-being to know whether we are in good health. Instead, we need a physician's certification to assure us of our health. So deep is the mystification surrounding health and medicine, and so powerful is the myth of medicine as an omnipotent science, that, despite our misgivings about the quality of medical care and its dehumanizing institutions, most of us still seek out physicians not only to treat us in sickness, but also to validate our health. In no other area of our culture has consumerism gained a more tenacious hold on us than in the area of health. Health has been transformed for us from a state of being to a commodity to be purchased. (For a brilliant analysis of the deep malaise that besets our society as a consequence of the medicalization of life and health, and for a breathtaking panoramic view of how we got there, see Ivan Illich's *Medical Nemesi*s. See, as well, the last chapter of Andre Gorz's *Ecology as Politics*.)

Our dedication to medical consumerism has been historically reflected in the kinds of demands the Left has made for changes in the health care system. For many on the Left, political demands have been limited to calls for broadening access to the health care system by the introduction of some form of "socialized" medicine. Associated with this program for greater distributive justice has been the goal of controlling the extraordinary costs of modern high technology medicine. The underlying assumption has been that what is bad about the health care system is its inequitable distribution of services. It is natural that, as radicals, our response to the sex-, race- and class-biased inequities in the distribution of health care services is one of outrage. Our egalitarian commitments lead us to support struggles for a more equitable distribution of medical services. If only women, the poor, and people of color had access to the same services as the wealthy and if only the costs were not so high, all would be well, we think. We ignore the fact that these same institutions whose services we seek to distribute equitably have expropriated our health, have medicalized virtually all of our normal stages of growth and development, and have made as many people sick as they have cured.

In recent years, critiques of health care institutions have gone beyond the simple question of unequal distribution of medical services. Even within the medical system itself there has been some tendency to criticize and correct some of the more grotesque excesses of the health care system. These tendencies are manifested, for example, in the growth of the hospice movement and in the increasing number of options being made available to women giving birth. The last decade has also been marked by struggles for participatory justice, such as those for community control over health care institutions and resources, and by the establishment (and disappearance) of alternative "people's" medical clinics. On other fronts, struggles around occupational safety and

health have intensified and have been accompanied by demands for union and worker control over conditions affecting health and safety in the workplace, and the ecology movement has focused attention on the fact that health depends on an environment increasingly threatened by pesticides, chemical carcinogens, radiation, etc.

However, the sharpest attacks against the tenacious hold which the medicalized health care delivery system has on our lives and consciousness comes from two sources: the growth of the multi-faceted holistic health movement and the growth of the women's health movement. While the holistic health movement appears to be somewhat amorphous and encompasses within it many different tendencies, it does represent an attempt to divest the medical/health care establishment of its sovereignty over health and the treatment of disease. The women's health movement, which is more self-consciously political, has sharpened the focus on the inherent problems of the health care system even more. The basic thrust of the movement, through its educational activity, its formation of self-help groups, and its establishment of women's health clinics, is to demystify women's perceptions of their anatomy and physiology and to give women, rather than the medical establishment, control over their health and lives.

All of these developments -- the deprofessionalization of health care; the assertion of individual capability and responsibility for adopting more healthful life styles; and the assumption of individual and collective nonprofessional, informed control over those normal functions of our development and life which have fallen victim to domination by the health care system -- are indeed revolutionary in their potential. However, within movements dedicated to fostering these developments, there is also a potential for victim blaming and for deflection from legitimate struggles for distributive and participatory justice. While these movements are helping to demythologize and demystify the nature of health, individual and social, they can also raise consciousness about the fundamental sickness of our society, which is badly in need of radical reconstructive surgery.

II. No group of radical teachers I know leads lives more fragmented than radical scientists. The gulf between what we do as research scientists and teachers and our political work often seems unbridgeable. American science is an expensive, highly competitive endeavor. "Publish or perish" not only describes the imperatives for achieving tenure, but even more accurately describes the competition for research funds. Due to this fierce competition, teaching (for young scientists especially) is often a secondary activity. Further, there seems to be little connection between the teaching that we do and our politics. The teaching of basic science, given the curricular expectation of covering a defined body of material, is often characterized by appeals to authority; the presentation tends to assert that "these are the facts." Such teaching mystifies science. It obscures that scientists, being human, cannot help but unconsciously reflect the biases and politics of their times. As privileged members of society, they often find themselves defending the social

order, cloaking their defense in the language of science and appeals to nature.

For radicals this obviously unsatisfactory situation has led to development of a series of courses (under such rubrics as "Science and Society") in which the main focus is on the ideology and politics of science rather than science itself. Teaching such courses is not without risk for the teacher, who often is looked upon by her or his seniors as lacking seriousness. While the existence of such courses is a significant improvement over the exclusion of ideological analysis from the science curriculum, ghettoizing such analysis inside special courses creates some potential problems.

The first problem is one of audience: These courses often attract primarily non-science majors, and thus do little to challenge the consciousness of future scientists and physicians.

It is not enough to expose the racism, sexism, and classism that underly much of biological and behavioral science, or to draw the connections between much of the work in the physical and chemical sciences and the Department of Defense and multinational corporations. It is as important, if we are to demystify science, to develop the understanding that science -- even good science -- as a creative human activity has an ideological content.

Second, such courses can easily become arenas in which cynicism, rather than skepticism, about science develops. It is not enough to expose the racism, sexism, and classism that underly much of biological and behavioral science, or to draw the connections between much of the work in the physical and chemical sciences and the Department of Defense and multinational corporations. It is as important, if we are to demystify science, to develop the understanding that science -- even good science -- as a creative human activity has an ideological content. Scientists, no less than novelists or poets, are storytellers. Their stories are based, at best, on unbiased data obtained by verifiable procedures which are then organized and given meaning by the application of creative imagination.

The third problem with "Science and Society" courses is that they tend to deflect radical scientists from seriously undertaking a revision of courses in which the primary focus is on scientific content. Since the way we teach such courses often perpetuates the myth of a neutral science based upon the notion that only what can be quantified is important, a serious consideration of how to teach basic science is in order.

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RADICAL TEACHER

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

Teaching Note *Song of the Canary*

by Saul Slapikoff

from *Radical Teacher* #17 (1980)



CLIMATE STRIKE BIRD BY BEC YOUNG

***Song of the Canary*. Directed by Josh Hanig and David Davis. Distributed by New Day Films, 58 minutes.**

S*ong of the Canary*, a film about occupational safety and health, is really two films in one. The first deals with the experiences and problems faced by workers in a California-based chemical company producing pesticides. As a result of their interviews with workers in the plant, the filmmakers discovered that all of the workers exposed to a particular pesticide, DBCP, were sterile. This discovery, the resulting national attention focused on it by the media, and the feelings of anger, anguish, and renewed determination of the workers and their union to deal with health and safety issues are vividly documented. Shown as well, interwoven with these responses, are glimpses of hopelessness and resignation among the affected workers regarding their own fates that are especially poignant.

The second half of the film depicts the struggle of a group of mainly older (some prematurely) North Carolina textile workers, disabled by brown lung disease, to gain compensation for their disabilities. Their organizing of the Carolina Brown Lung Association and their bouts with the state government and mill owners are touchingly drawn. Their strength and determination in the face of their terrible physical disabilities and powerful enemies are inspiring.

Both segments of the film clearly delineate the conflict between the workers' interests in effective occupational safety and health programs and the corporate owners' interests in maximizing profits and maintaining control of the process of production. Interviews with the corporate managers make clear the total lack of human concern in their pursuit of profit.

While I have used *Song of the Canary* in my Environmental Toxicology course at Tufts, it has also been used in courses on Community Health, Sociology, and Environmental Economics, and in a biology course for non-majors. Because of its sensitive portrayal of the lives and feelings of the workers involved, the film transcends its focus on occupational safety and health issues and should be a useful addition to any course that deals with the lives of workers and the meaning of work in modern corporate America.

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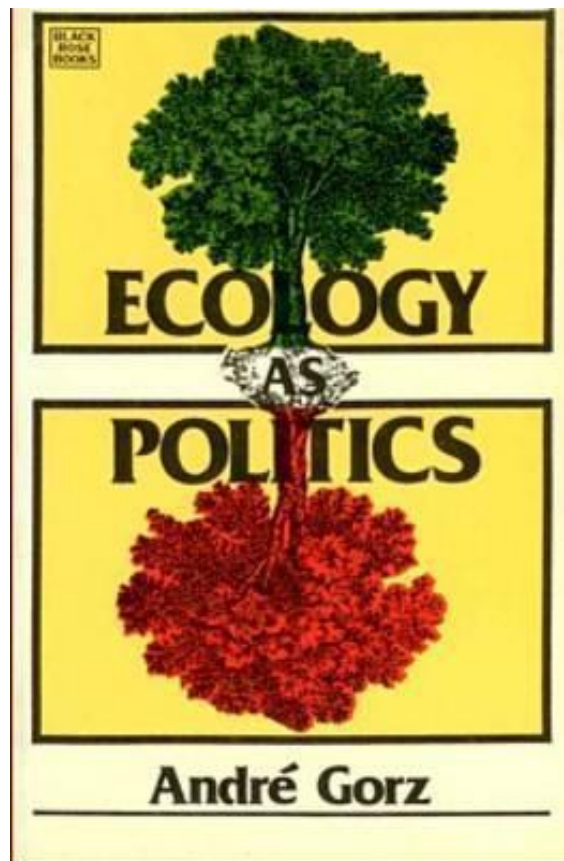
RADICAL TEACHER

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

Teaching Note Ecology as Politics

by Saul Slapikoff

from *Radical Teacher* #23 (1983)



ECOLOGY AS POLITICS. BY ANDRE GORZ (BOSTON: SOUTH END PRESS).

Ecology as Politics. By Andre Gorz (Boston: South End Press).

In this exciting and challenging book, Gorz delineates the connections between ecology and politics in an exceptionally penetrating series of essays. Inspired in part by Ivan Illich's *Tools for Conviviality* and *Medical Nemesis*, he concludes that "the only things worthy of each are those which are good for all; the only things worthy of being produced are those which neither privilege nor diminish anyone; it is possible to be happier with less affluence, for in a society without privilege no one will be poor" (Gorz's emphasis). The alternative to his vision of a "no growth" socialism based upon an inversion of the tools of capitalism, he says, is a technofascist world: the ecological crisis permits no other choices but these or complete ecological collapse. "Today," he says, "a lack of realism no longer consists in advocating ... the inversion of growth and the subversion of the prevailing way of life. Lack of realism consists in imagining that economic growth can still bring about increased human welfare, and indeed is still physically possible." If we are to avoid technofascism as well as ecological collapse, the struggles for democratic socialism and for an ecologically sound society must be made one. *Ecology as Politics* helps provide insight into possible strategies and arenas for struggle.

This is a difficult book for many students -- not for its language, but for its daring integration of issues. Students are excited by Gorz's ability to bring together such diverse issues as ecology, politics, labor, imperialism, and health within a single worldview. However, his view so thoroughly challenges deeply held views about the nature of capitalism and of "socialism" as we have come to know them that they are initially stunned. For those students ready to suffer the discomfort along with the excitement of new insights, this is an extraordinarily valuable book.

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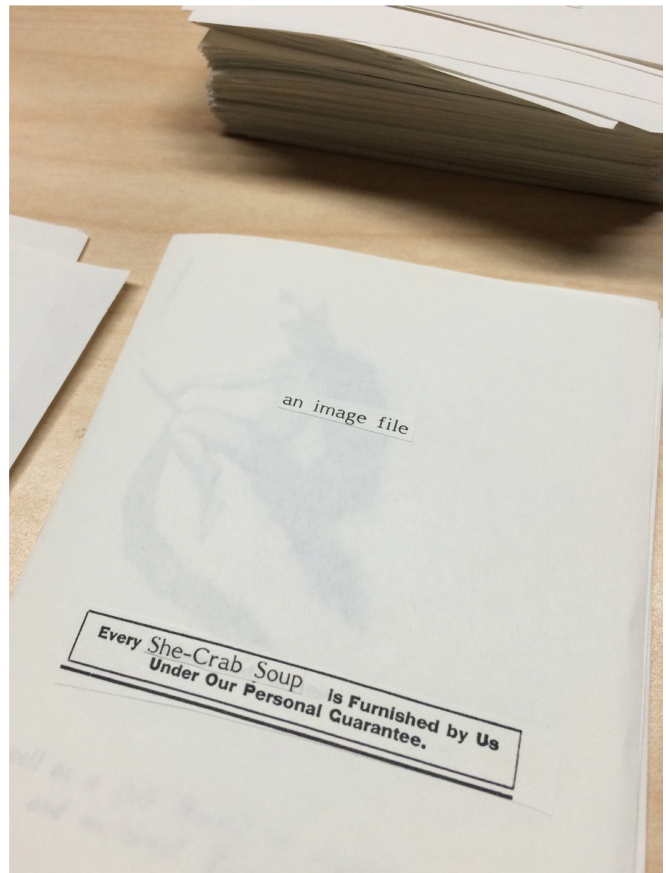
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RADICAL TEACHER

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

Zine Pedagogies: Students as Critical Makers

by Jeanne Scheper



1. SALOMÉLIA PRODUCTIONS, *SHE-CRAB SOUP*. BALTIMORE, MARYLAND AND SOMERVILLE, MA, 1996. COLLECTION OF THE AUTHOR

She-Crab Soup: The Remix

In the mid-1990s, I created a zine (a small hand-made chapbook) called *She-Crab Soup*—the title literally torn from a repurposed soup-can label hawking a regional delicacy from my hometown of Baltimore, Maryland. The label-turned-zine cover was intended as a queer and feminist repurposing, a sign of how gender and sexuality are a semiotic soup that can be playfully remixed through creative juxtaposition, flagrant rule-breaking, and surreal leaps of imagination. It is twenty-five years since I pasted together that first zine—clandestinely and after hours at work—performing an anti-capitalist slowdown in the time-honored tradition of what the zine *Sabotage* celebrates in its title: workplace sabotage (Duncombe). This is now my fifth year using zine-making as a DIY (do-it-yourself) tool for undergraduate student engagement at the University of California, Irvine (hereafter UCI), a large public research university that is increasingly first-generation serving, and federally recognized as Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American Pacific Islander-serving—and, therefore, an important institutional site for honoring students’ connections to what bell hooks calls “homeplace” and community-based knowledge systems and practices (hooks 42).

Zines—typically associated with small, hand-made, analog, low-cost, low-circulation publications—are frequently grounded in fandoms or networks organized around shared taste affinities, social identities, political imperatives, or quirky pleasures. An emphasis on collectivity lends zines, which are literally unbound (traditional zines are often made from a single folded sheet of paper), a metaphoric ethos of unboundedness. These “fanzines” or “zines” (a truncation of ‘magazine’) can be traced across multiple genealogies. The zine might be seen as kin to the little magazine explosion at the end of the nineteenth century, including women’s scrapbooks and political pamphlets, although their roots are commonly identified with the surge of science fiction fan magazines in the 1930s and 40s. In contemporary feminist circles, zines are known as an integral part of 1980s punk subcultures and underground music scenes. While some zines are still expressions of music fandom, others are more like confessional diaries, and still others are small manifestos filled with poetry, homemade comics, quotes, clippings, and photographs. Zines are strongly associated with “third wave” feminism, the feminist riot grrrl scene (which confronted sexism in the punk music scene) and the punk homocore scenes of the 1980s and 90s—with their militant gay activist toolkits for taking on government inaction and homophobia during the emergence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. One of the most visible and impactful recent zine projects has been the [POC Zine Project](#) (POCZP) which aims to serve as a portal to zines by people of color and make them easier to find and share. There is, in fact, a robust tradition of “resistance to white dominance in the zine community” by people of color in the U.S. (Arroyo-Ramírez, et al. 109).

In the last ten years, zines have experienced a renaissance in the U.S. and globally, making them an

intriguingly reinvigorated pedagogical tool with potential applications in many learning contexts, from community-based activism to the university classroom. Zines are at heart an analog form, but one that shares many of the qualities of self-making, self-publishing, and participatory community-building across time and space that millennials and Generation Z associate with digital social media platforms. Since they are heavily visual, in addition to textual, and are rooted in personal expression and techniques of self-invention, zines resonate with the videos, posts, and memes of blogs, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, Twitch, and other media for digital storytelling such as podcasts. Zines operate as a social medium strongly linked to free-play and the possibilities of creating communication across time and space and place. At the same time, analog zines remain unabashedly material, tactile, and sensual and resonate with the renaissance of “craft” culture and other contemporary versions of “DIY.”

I invite you to read this essay like a zine: make your own connections, enjoy the remix of voices—student, teacher, activist, zine-maker—and take in the different textures, tones, and images: theoretical, confessional, citational, critical, serious and playful. I open with five foundational principles that inform my approach to “critical zine-making” and then turn to what zines are, why zine-making fosters an “ethos” that is a particularly good fit for the feminist critical cultural studies classroom, and how I utilize zines in gender and sexuality studies classes to teach about the existence and value of community archival practices and queer history-making. By the end, I hope you approach the essay like a zinester: after exploring the different microcosms of zine archives, zine-making, and zine pedagogies, you are invited to re-fold these pages, make your own cuts and connections, take what works, bookmark the rest for later, and create your own zine worlds in the DIY spirit of skill-sharing.



2. STUDENTS IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS 2017, UC, IRVINE. PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTINE KIM.

Five Key Principles: Towards a Critical Zine-Making Ethos

1. Repurposed Productivity

When I created *She-Crab Soup* in the mid-1990s, I was working in the spirit of what I considered a set of

underground community ethics that comprised what I convey to students now as an overall “critical zine-making ethos.” The first principle, **repurposed productivity**, derives from the material conditions of zine production: As indicated above, zine-making is frequently an unauthorized workplace activity. Zine-making can represent a form of work stoppage in the service of stealing back your mind-space and extracting resources for creative activity from the drudgery of nine-to-five wage-labor. For my students, this perhaps translates into stealing back agency from the neoliberal university.

To make my zine *She-Crab Soup*, I clandestinely snuck in afterhours to repurpose standard office workplace supplies—scissors, glue sticks, and tape—in the service of art and activism. I commandeered, like so many other Gen Xers, the photocopier, making dozens of unauthorized copies on standard 8 1/2 x 11 pages and folding each sheet into the tiny pages of a zine. I relished zine-making as a multi-valenced anarcho-queer act of resistance against capitalism—and in the service of reclaiming eros, in the Audre Lorde sense. In “The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” Lorde wrote, “The principal horror of any system which defines the good in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need, or which defines human need to the exclusion of the psychic and emotional components of that need—the principal horror of such a system is that it robs our work of its erotic value, its erotic power and life appeal and fulfillment” (340). Zine-making is designed to be a wrench in that system. The corollary for students in the present—working their way through school or not—would be claiming for themselves the space of thinking, connecting, and critical-making outside both the frameworks that mandate university learning as an instrumental movement towards profit-driven productivity and the external drive to monetize themselves in the realm of social media self-marketing.

2. Critical Recycling

I was not alone in extracting creative life from the afterhours and downtime interstices of the workplace: a similar phenomenon was happening all across the United States, in the everynight life of the Kinko’s copy shop. In the late 1980s and 90s, copy shops made up what one blog remembers as “graveyard-shift salon(s)” (CrimethInc). The copy shops of this era constituted a serpentine network of workplace sabotage activity fueling everything from zine production to underground comics, militant political posters, and underground music fliers among a variety of anarchist and punk-inflected subcultures revolting against the social violence of this era including government inaction and corporate greed related to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the newly announced so-called “war on drugs,” and the overall militarism and carceral expansion of the Reagan-Bush years. These informal or underground networks strategically deployed the second principle of zine ethos that I like to share with my students—an aesthetic and political commitment to **critical recycling**. Using the excess images and detritus from dominant consumer culture, these makers repurposed mainstream materials from the margins,

creating spaces and tools for cultural revolt and imagining different futures.

Zines are often created in this way, by collaging or remixing everyday found images—magazine ads, food packaging, cartoons, newspapers, photographs. (Arguably, this assemblage aspect of zines is the precursor to today’s meme and video remix culture.) Materials are recycled—but not just materially re-purposed, they are re-valued conceptually, made to make meanings beyond or even in opposition to those originally intended.

In *She-Crab Soup*, for example, I surreally juxtaposed mundane images to create subversive, queer meanings and puns, retooling the normative gender images that surround us daily into new non-normative configurations and counter-discourses. A cartoon of a 50s housewife in an apron from an ad in a homemaking magazine is coupled with a comic-book cowgirl twirling a lasso to refashion an unexpected romantic or dominant/submissive lesbian coupling, in the tradition slash fiction. Where popular culture failed to deliver mimetic queer imaginaries and at a time when queer visibility (representational or in the streets) felt highly constrained and the target of incredible social violence, the possibilities for weaving genderqueer subtexts suddenly were liberated within the infinite imaginary space of the zine. Coupled with the exercise of what I would call “improper reception practices,” such images are sometimes legibly queer only to other queer readers. As I further queered inanimate objects, I created zones of desire and affect which might not even be legible to other queers. Perhaps these queered object lessons were versions of Guy Debord’s critique in *Society of the Spectacle*: challenging how capitalism relentlessly transfers our desires from humans to things and machines. Zines offer a space for radically free expression: of eros, libido, or non-normative affect. Traditional zines are composed of pages we can touch that are uncensored by the state, corporate capital, or social norms. Such playful juxtapositions and random or chance encounters echo the politics and practice of dada and surrealism in the early twentieth century or in more contemporary terms, the remix. My own practices were often tied to situationist notions of the *dérive* (playful “drifting” through spaces, alone or in small collectives). And they were deeply linked to the queer militant graphic activism of the 90s that infused groups like ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) whose visual activist affinity group Gran Fury retooled and critically recycled the language of advertising to create queer forms of agitprop. I introduce students to these histories through digital archives, such as [NYPL’s Gran Fury collection](#) or the [ACT UP Oral History Project](#). By sharing the ethos and skill-set of critical recycling, I encourage students to think about how they can critically re-appropriate, reuse, recycle, and remix popular and material culture to create their own unfettered meanings and rework the configurations of social space.

3. Anti-Copyright

She-Crab Soup was a deeply intimate, even secretive, zine—and importantly, remained anonymous and proudly anti-copyright. While I was the “maker,” I had no aspirations to be an auteur or profiteer. The third principle I share with

students is this ethos of **anti-copyright**. The anti-copyright ethos of zines refuses conventional conceptions of “intellectual property,” the logics of private property, and ownership of ideas. Ideas are not possessions, but rather are shared inheritances: collective archives, bits and pieces meant to be freely “stolen” and made available to others or repurposed.

In recent years, archivist Elvia Arroyo-Ramírez introduced students to the idea of [Creative Commons](#) licensing in our discussion of copyright, and now students are invited to consider the conditions under which they want to share their work (commercial use or not; derivative works or not; and so on)—including the choice of whether to use creative commons principals such as “ShareAlike” which allows sharing, but only if the new work is made available under the same creative commons license terms as their original work.

Zines are vital forms of communication and community formation that fall outside of dominant for-profit structures and monetization. This is another way students can consider what thinking critically looks like when freed from editorial, state, or corporate forms of censorship.

4. World-Making

Because my own zine, *She-Crab Soup*, was not widely distributed—perhaps making it a closer kin of the artist’s book—it might not appear to perform this vital function of zines: to build community across geographic distances and social affinities. But, in retrospect, I see that *She-Crab Soup* was a queer love letter to the future, my calling card into a world that didn’t exist then. *Then* was the 1990s—an era of queer politics steeped in “mourning and militancy” at the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis and a climate Eve Sedgwick described at the time as a result of “unchallenged aegis of a culture’s desire that gay people not be” (Sedgwick 26). *Now* is the 2020s, a time when my students are pushing the boundaries of binary gender and rising up against anti-black violence and anti-immigration sentiment and policies—the afterlives of the earlier moment, which are being named and resisted in powerfully new ways now.

She-Crab Soup conjured epistolary magic in service of this future. Dear reader, this brings us to the fourth principle: **world-making**. *She-Crab Soup* was in fact “world-making” futures that I, as a young person in my 20s, was being told could not exist because of society’s genocidal fantasies—that gay people were non-reproductive or godless, that the black communities where I was raised in Baltimore, Maryland were self-destructive or without value. Zines are essential tools of the weak that not only speak back to power, but importantly produce “*activism and community through materiality*,” as the tagline for the POC Zine project says.

In my teaching, I have taken the truism that the humanities are a vital site for teaching “critical thinking” and cultivated and extended that idea through pedagogies of “critical making.” In the pages of a zine, students are communicating new knowledges gathered from their research while creating new worlds and futures for themselves and their communities. For the UCI students

that I have worked with over the last five years in this modality, zines represent an important practice for recognizing themselves as cultural producers, cultural makers, and lifelong learners. Their zines are a space in which they experience the joys and pleasures of artistic license. And the process is one in which students can unmake the logics of the neoliberal university that has monetized knowledge and production, and increasingly produced the logics of “students as passive consumers,” students as future capitalists, and of course, mostly, students as debtors with “mortgaged minds” (Scheper).

The world-making space of zines offers an alternative set of investments: it gives students permission to seize the tools of *thinking/conception*, *making/production*, and *sharing/distribution*. It gives license for uncensored and unfettered creative output (no editor, no publisher, no ratings system, no distributor, no likes and dislikes, etc.). And it promises access to audiences that are not necessarily circumscribed and defined by the existing social hierarchies, class-based access points, or even delineated in the usual demographic ways either in the classroom or on social media networks. As the third issue of *Riot Grrrl* put it, people started making zines because they were “tired of being written out—out of history, out of the ‘scene,’ out of our bodies” (quoted in Nguyen 175). Zines are the counter-archive, rich spaces for resistance and connection between outlaw and outsider subjects. And to take up that power is to produce counter-archives, to re-make histories, and to embrace the possibilities of scripting new worlds and futures.

5. DIY Skill-Sharing

Part of the community and future-building process in the feminist and queer studies classroom is to work against the received ways people are taught that knowledge is proprietary (as principle 3 observes), or that we are competing for scarce resources, or that we must hoard or covet what we know. If, as teachers, we can disrupt the circuits of power in the classroom, students and teachers can learn from each other in new ways. The hope is that everyone is equipped with tools that can be put into practice beyond the walls of the classroom and passed along to others. It is in this spirit of **DIY skill-sharing** that I offer up the story of *She-Crab Soup* and the five principles of zine ethos that I took away from my earlier experience of zine-making. I offer them as a gift in the spirit of zine “gift-economies” in the form of playful and serious pedagogical essay in the hopes of contributing to how we collectively describe not only the process, theory, and practice of pedagogical work, but how we convey the value of our labor as radical feminist and queer cultural studies scholars and teachers.

Teaching with Zines

Zine pedagogy provides an impetus for exercising and learning traditional collegiate skills like scholarly research, database searching, close reading, critical thinking, applied methods, and analytic writing. At the same time, zines do so by inviting students to assume the mantle of creative

cultural production as part of their engagement with feminist and queer epistemologies and their application of feminist and queer methodologies. Students use zines to shape knowledge frameworks and produce new knowledges at the same time. Once made, zines are meant to be distributed and then become about valuing, communicating, and translating ideas and information to people for whom those ideas and histories matter most. Rather than remaining passive consumers—or monetized creatives—in the classroom, zines emphasize student and community-centered critical and feminist pedagogical practices such as gift-economies and mutual aid that upend the neoliberal classroom (as articulated by bell hooks and Paulo Freire—or more recently Sarah Ahmed in *Living a Feminist Life* or Roxanne Gay in *Bad Feminist*). For gender and sexuality students, zines can serve as everyday interventions and sites of feminist critique that they can bring back into their own lived experiences and homeplaces. Students, attentive to structures of power both in and out of the classroom, are motivated to become actively engaged in social critique and social change as part of the conversations they care most about—beyond the classroom or university.

In sum, zines are particularly effective conduits for several important critical pedagogical values including ethical community-based research processes that value “subjugated” or non-expert knowledges, sustainable approaches to knowledge production, skill-sharing, information-sharing (anti-copyright; creative commons licensing), and participation in gift and mutual aid economies (made newly visible during COVID19 emergency remote learning conditions).

A Local History of Zine Culture

In 2015, UCI’s gender studies librarian Pauline Manaka connected the work she saw students producing in my gender studies classes to a new library initiative to create an annual Zine Fest and collect local zines. Born in South Africa, Manaka described herself as a product of the June 1976 Soweto Uprising, and she loved seeing students extend their library research into creative modes of critical engagement with social justice issues. Previously, Manaka had worked with students in my classes to develop research topics into creative performances, visual culture activism, or what I called “blueprints for social change.” The blueprints for social change assignment was inspired by a “liberating action” project first shared with me by Karl Bryant, a Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies professor at SUNY, New Paltz. Incorporating zine-making soon became a regular part of my pedagogical practice.

Christine Kim, the Public Services Assistant for Special Collections & Archives, had begun collecting materials at the [OC Zine Fest](#) and other local Orange County zine festivals, recognizing zines as essential tools for empowering local communities to preserve their own histories. The UCI Zine Fest resonated with and was coordinated with the existing International Open Access Week, a celebration of public access to information. I saw the invitation to collaborate as the best “flipped” learning opportunity one could wish for—student engagement spilling out of confines of the classroom and onto the steps of the library and into the community.

Hosting the Zine Fest outdoors at the library “gateway”—a public commons of sorts—ensured that zines were experienced as a medium that is public, collectively-driven, process-oriented, dialogic, engaging, and playful. This shifted the relationality between teacher/student towards a radical version of pedagogy understood as mutual learning, cooperative skill-sharing, and a dialogic process that students, librarians, archivists, and professors enter together with both seriousness and joy.



3. UCI ZINE FEST 2019. PHOTO CREDIT: UCI COMMUNICATIONS.

Zines as Community Archiving

Most of the students, I find, have never set foot in the library, let alone worked with unique physical and historical materials like those held in special collections. Collaborating with archivists and librarians to use primary source material was already an established part of my teaching practice. Our librarians’ commitment to community outreach and access quickly debunks any stuffy preconceptions of archives as guarded sites of elite power and privilege.

My aim is to create opportunities for students to make connections between primary source materials, archival ephemera, and their own lived experiences. Students identify topics that reflect their own interests and curiosity, and as often as not these reflect identity-based or community-based investments. Engaging with archives as community spaces enables students to draw on feminist theories of “situated knowledges,” “participatory action research,” and “engaged scholarship” as they look at materials. The aim is to present the zine assignment as a form of “critique-in-action”—a form of applied knowledge production. They are often surprised by what they find and the surprising personal connections they make to materials. Students produce zines that creatively re-present feminist and queer cultural studies ideas, using primary and secondary sources. Students are then invited to distribute and share that work with peers, bringing their own thinking back to the community of the classroom, but also to their home communities or chosen audiences. I see this as a methodological practice akin to teaching students ethical fieldwork practices—where academic resource extraction is redressed through sharing back findings in ways that are directed by and/or are a benefit to the communities who were the object of study. Students can use zine-making as

a microcosm for developing and practicing skills of building ethical relationships to subjects and objects of study and as a channel for sounding their own pedagogical voice.

Zines as Cultural Critique

One of the primary reasons I like to teach with zines is that for feminist cultural studies teaching purposes, zines often carry the weight and power of social critique associated with the alternative press, independent media, or underground media (manifestos, chapbooks, pamphlets), and certainly resonate with the growing popularity of comics and graphic novels. Zines can be understood as an extension of (and make a strong teaching complement to) the small publication practices that mobilized radical political thought during the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s including the Black Power, Chican@ Rights, and Indigenous Rights and gay liberation and women's rights movements (Zobl 3). These are a few of the reasons zines are celebrated in multidisciplinary institutional sites, such as my own, Gender and Sexuality Studies (Creasap 157).

Musician, zine writer, and more recently ceramicist Osa Atoe's *Shotgun Seamstress* is an iconic fanzine launched in 2006, "by, for and about black punks, queers, feminists, outsider artists and musicians." Osa explains in a 2012 interview with Elizabeth Stinson, "I wanted to provide images and writing that reinforced my own identity as a black, queer, punk musician and also that made D.I.Y. culture and anti-consumerist ideals accessible to other black people" (263). She describes *Shotgun Seamstress* as "an attempt to create community but in a non-geographical kind of way" (269). She describes her black punk community as international. "I write letters and e-mails and share two-hour-long phone calls with black punks in California, Illinois, Michigan, Quebec, London, and beyond" (269). She continues, "The point of making that zine wasn't to have more dialogue with white people. The point was to put all the emphasis and attention on black punks" [...] I think the main way that racism is incorporated into punk narratives and punk history is through omission" (263-67). Zines, to reiterate, are not only or primarily spaces of self-expression, but they are spaces of cultural critique, and that critique is not necessarily or only directed to sites of power (although it can be) as the primary interlocutors, rather these critiques are often simultaneously acts of unbounded community formation, and the interlocutors are those who have been similarly impacted by power.

While outside the scope of the present essay, it is important to note that zines are also not de facto radical progressive outlets. As the LIS Microaggressions collective cautions, "zines have historically overrepresented dominant white groups" (Arroyo-Ramírez et al 109). Eric Ward, writing for the Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Report, argues: "From Skinhead literature to Skinhead 'zines, the struggle to define what it means to be a Skinhead is being fought out in black and white." There is, at the same time, as the LIS Microaggressions Project puts it, "a rich tradition of resistance to white dominance in the zine community embodied through zines created by and for people of color" (109). Zines, therefore, are a medium and a genre which can lend itself to different uses—and in fact, they are

presently being taken up as a powerful ground for ideological contestation. In this sense, the zine remains an important and still underexamined object of analysis for cultural studies.

"Taking up Space"

UCI student Zhená Morillo describes critical making as "creating a radical space that allows me to connect with the value and power of processing the ways I have felt alienated, minimized, and ostracized in heteronormative society. It allowed me to take up space." Zines offer this gift of "taking up space" while often being very small affairs. Whether the small, easily reproduced little "books" made from a single sheet of 8½ x 11 standard copy paper folded into 8 segments (instructions easily found on the web [in PDF form](#) (Anne Elizabeth Moore's classic has been translated into Arabic, Greek, German, Georgian, Khmer, Russian and Spanish) or in [YouTube instructional videos](#) like this inspired one from Asha Grant, Director of The Free Black Women's Library, L.A. and founder of The Salt Eaters Bookshop) or, of course, the new digital counterpart made from magazine publishing software such as Flipsnack or Canva, zines are often part of complex transnational networks that are still strongly tethered to ideas of the local. An essential ingredient of many zines is their tie to specific geographic spaces, in the form of celebration of communities of origin, and boosterism of the local. This is one of the reasons I was personally drawn to the form, as a Baltimore expatriate living in Southern California seeking affective tethers to my hometown. Zines can be sites of new global imaginaries or archives of over-looked or erased local histories. *Zero Zine* by OZONE collective (pronounced "Zero Zone,"), which comes out of Baltimore, pays attention to a previously obscured history of Korean culture in the Station North area of predominantly black Baltimore (Britto). Iconic political zines such as *Girl Germs* by Molly Neuman and Allison Wolfe reflect ideas of the local through connections to specific cultural music scenes, in this case the riot grrrl movement of the Pacific Northwest and bands such as Bratmobile (*Girl Germs*) or *Bikini Kill*, a collaborative zine made alongside the band of the same name. Students can read digitized versions in several archives, including online at [Dig DC](#) The People's Archive at DC Public Library as these zines are also considered part of the local collections documenting punk shows in Washington, DC. In each of these examples, zines "represent," in the colloquial sense. They "represent well" everything from cities and to music fandoms to identities to feminist critique. And they "represent" in the political sense of speaking up for places, people, cultures, and scenes that are under-represented or minimized, as Zhená put it.

Radical Repositories

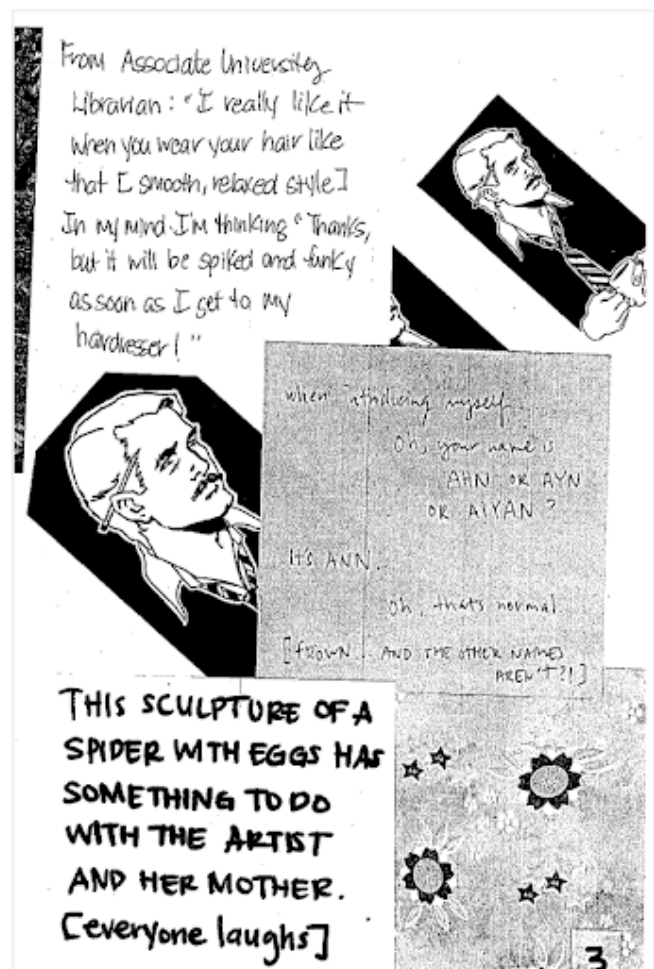
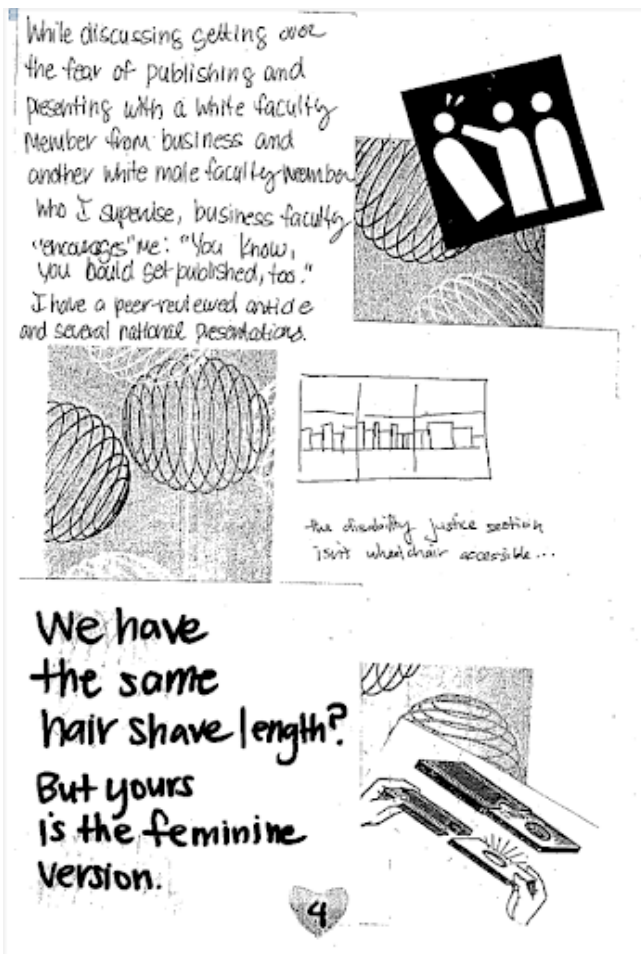
Zines are radical repositories—containers for the expression of fandoms, but also political affinities (for instance, bringing together those who have experienced sexual violence in resistance and healing), intersectional identities (a meeting place for queers of color), affective affinities (shared feelings for hometowns or diasporas), or shared modes of desire and sexual expression (connecting

same-gender loving, odd artefact collecting, or fetishistic sexual practices). Zines and zine communities are spaces for intersectional critiques of power left out of mainstream discourse, spaces for examining everything from ableism to heteropatriarchy to capitalism. Zines can be circulated for a variety of reasons, even becoming effective tools for political education, where shared experiences of injustice can be collectively accounted for and where the force of that documentation can be used as a tool for political change.

The Library Information Science or *LIS Microaggressions Zine* is an important accounting for microaggressions in the Library Information Sciences profession. By collecting sometimes anonymous and originally private instances of microaggressions, the zine was used to issue a call for a public accountability that included a "calling in," for dialogue and larger exploration of the subject of microaggressions." The creators explain the zine conveyed the "physical weight" of "collective microaggression experiences" and they extended their critical work through workshops that asked readers to engage in "active critical reflection and analysis" (Arroyo-Ramírez et al. 116-117; 122).

Beginning in Library Special Collections

I begin my courses by taking students in-person to visit [UCI's Special Collections & Archives](#) and the [Orange County & Southeast Asian Archive](#) (OC&SEAA) Center (except for remote teaching during COVID-19). In special collections, students are greeted by tables of zines, artists' books, political posters, social justice movement documents, and scrapbooks curated by the archivists. Depending on the course, students may see materials such as "This is an Emergency: A Reproductive Rights and gender justice portfolio" or three-dimensional assemblages that challenge the very idea of a "book," such as Mexican artist Yani Pecanin's *El tendadero* (2007)—a washboard covered in cloth mounted on a box with writing, buttons, pins, and sewing implements. Students are invited to look for intellectual content while also to engaging with the physicality of the objects and the relationship between materials, images, text, and context. I use theories of colonial and plantation archives to encourage students to examine not just the contents of archives, but consider the constitution of the archive itself, how desire and power informs its shape and chosen contents.



4. CYNTHIA MARI OROZCO & SIMONE FUJITA, EDS. *LIS MICROAGGRESSIONS ZINE*. MARCH/APRIL 2015, VOL. 1.1: 3-4.

Some of what students find is very local: There are collections related to political organizations and figures such as Christine Browning, a Senior Staff Psychologist for the Counseling Center at UCI and a founding advisory board member for the UC Irvine LGBTQ Resource Center; and Robert F. Gentry, the first openly gay elected official in southern California and first openly gay mayor in the state of California, who also served as Associate Dean of Students at UCI. Significantly, this collection of papers includes the hate mail he received, providing an opportunity to think about the importance of archiving something such as “hate mail.” Finally, students will discover zines made by former UCI students, which are now part of the collection. As Elvia Arroyo-Ramírez pointed out to students, UCI is not in a bubble—it is porous with the surrounding communities. She pushed me and the students to look more broadly at how we understand and define our community.

Students are invited to contextualize the objects and artefacts they examine by learning how to use finding aids and how to think critically about search terms as historical and contextual, using tools like [Homosaurus](#), an international linked database of vocabulary of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) terms that our subject librarian Melissa Beuoy introduced to us. (And they learn about the existence of subject librarians!)

I ask students before they leave special collections to take with them a “trace of the archives” in the form of an image taken on their phone or a quote they have written down from a primary source. Later, I ask them to



5. SCREENSHOTS OF INSTAGRAM POSTS BY HISTORIAN, BOOK DEALER, CURATOR, FOUNDED MEMBER OF THE GLBT HISTORICAL SOCIETY GERARD KOSKOVICH @GKOSKOVICH DEPICTING CROSS-DRESSING CIRCA 1900, EXAMPLES OF EPHEMERA USED BY STUDENTS FOR ZINE-MAKING. SEE WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/CLQUUTLBCYD/.



6. “BORN THIS WAY: PROUDLY TRANS, INTERSEX & 2-SPIRIT!,” THE ARQUIVES DIGITAL EXHIBITIONS

incorporate this trace into their own zine. The idea is to have archival “ephemera” reappear materially in their own work, as a citation, an homage, a part of its DNA. This practice emphasizes research as a dialogic process and a process of producing genealogies of knowledge by weaving their primary sources into their own production. It is deeply tied to engaging with the “afterlives of archives” and ideas of how the past produces future possibilities. This practice of incorporation is a form of feminist citational practice as well. Examples of ephemera students have included are postcards or political buttons. See IMAGE 7 for how ephemera are incorporated in a student zine]. As they pull their materials and ideas together, I encourage students to approach zine-making as a form of critical curatorial practice.

Using Digital Zine Archives

Students can draw on and incorporate materials from online digital archives as well, including library special collections, individual zine sites, and community-based archives, many of which feature work by feminists, queer people, and trans people of color. This diversity is not an accidental fact or by pedagogical design; rather, it is a reflection of the fact that zines are especially meaningful for those individuals who do not find ourselves represented in the mainstream political or media landscape, or for those who find themselves written out of official histories or archives, or worse, who find only a toxic and distorted mirror there—where non-normative identities are routinely displayed as spectacle, as difference, as outsider, and therefore as less human.

Students can easily access the hand-drawn pages of zines through online projects such as the POC Zine Project, whose collections demonstrate how zines are important survival tools for marginalized, oppressed, or

disenfranchised communities and individuals or the [Barnard Zine Library](#) collection of zines on feminism and femme identity by people created by women, non-binary people, and people of all genders. They can also find them by visiting local independent bookstores, local libraries, or zine festivals. Zines become places for subversive interventions in the narratives of the dominant sphere or places for self-invention. Zines also tend to represent intersectional identities that are too often written out of mainstream media. For example, I have shown students a non-U.S. based zine which represented queer Islamic identity and experience. U.S. students found this a powerful example because they assumed that queerness and Islam do not intersect, especially in a way that celebrates those experiences. Significantly, when we reached out to the maker of this zine for this essay, they decided they did not want the zine reproduced or represented by name because they felt that the fact of online digital archiving had now produced new vulnerabilities for them that they perhaps had not anticipated or no longer felt comfortable with. This demonstrates how the personal and intimate engagements of zines are potent, but also raises important ethical questions for students to consider about vulnerabilities, power and access, especially as analog material is digitized.

Another example I give in class is to contrast zines' representations of disability with how ableism is perpetuated in mainstream popular culture. Students read [The Adventures of a Mis/identified Queer Crip](#), written by Ashley, a disability activist and self-identified queer Filipina with cerebral palsy. The title, which itself reclaims pejorative terms, is a powerful manifestation of practices of self-determination that DIY self-authorship can provide.

The author writes about a friend offering to help her set up her bedroom, so that she would be able to masturbate and experience sexuality from a space of self-love. She recounts that this was the first time that anyone had ever asked her about her sexual needs. "I've been like a saint, angelic," she explains. When such private revelations go public—even on a small scale—intimacy becomes a daring act of political resistance, in this case against the shame that a patriarchal and ableist society promotes when it desexualizes or idealizes people with disabilities. Her zine offers a powerful counterpoint to the hyper-idealized, super-heroic images of people with disabilities found, for example, in Toyota's Super Bowl ads featuring Paralympian Amy Purdy, which were widely [criticized by disability activists](#).

Feminist Critique and Zine Theory

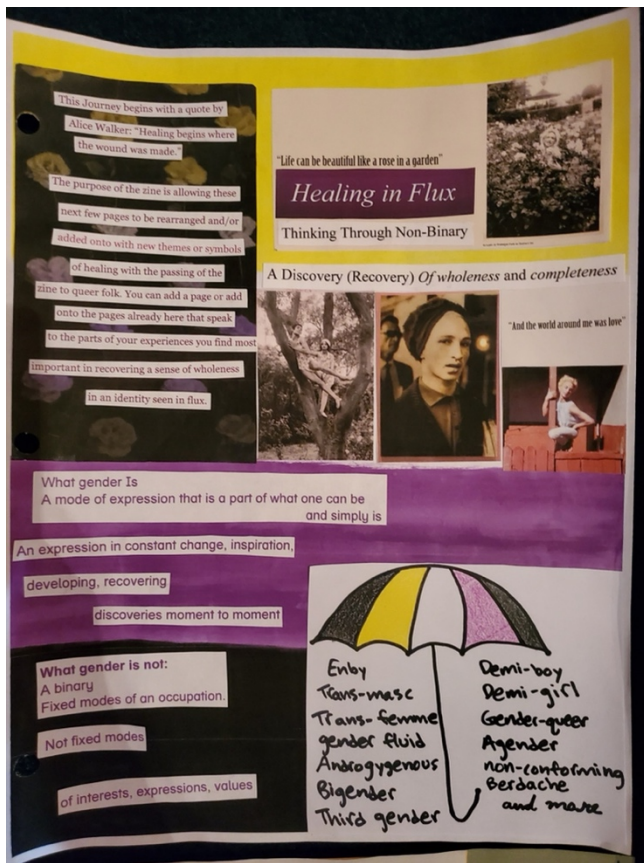
Scholar Mimi Nguyen, who has written key scholarly texts on feminism and zines from the perspective of a participant-observer, argues that zines have the potential to do important social political work through such excavations of experience as a social phenomenon. She explains, "Through the radical reinterpretation of individual experiences as social phenomena with histories and political consequences, and the subsequent rejection of these structural determinations, an individual might become a radical object of knowledge, a sovereign subject who tells the (albeit ever-changing) truth about herself in order to know herself and to be known by others" (175). The feminist

axiom "the personal is political" is reanimated by zine culture, which wrests gendered experience back from individual isolation, from shame, or from cooptation by consumer culture. Nguyen continues, "Tackling erotic knowledge and sexual abuse, compulsory heterosexuality and girl-girl intimacy, domestic abuse and domesticity, young women called attention to how such encounters, feelings, and memories that appear to be personal and self-referential, are also ideological and social" (177). This is feminist zine culture seen not only as a tool for self-expression (which is often the only thing they are assumed to be), but one in which self-expression and representation becomes social critique and social change.

Importantly, Nguyen extends her argument to turn that critical lens on the whiteness that powerfully structures underground scenes like Riot Grrrl even as they articulate themselves as counter-cultural. Nguyen's work is an important part of the required reading that I use when I teach about zines because it provides students a model of critical thinking that they can execute when making zines within a feminist or cultural studies course framework. Nguyen's work pushes them to move from personal expression towards structural critique and this becomes a significant part of the drafting process of the student made zines.

Conceptualizing Zines: *Healing In Flux*

This critical move from personal expression to structural critique is developed both rhetorically and conceptually—through a student's choices about format, genre, and the appearance of the zine. Zhenia Morillo (they/them pronouns), a student in Queer Lives and Knowledges, wanted to convey the idea that individuals should be able to script their own gender. After brainstorming with me in office hours about their audience goals—who they wanted to speak to and why—they created a zine, *Healing in Flux* (2020) where the binding itself could be undone by the reader. Using a hole punch to create the binding (instead of the traditional folded zine) allowed the reader to add pages themselves, thus creating a space for the collective authorship of gender and what Zhenia, returning as a guest speaker to address and skill-share with this Fall's class, described as "movement in the margins." Zhenia describes choosing "to include movable margins and materials in my zine to express the experience of being able to be seen as whole, and yet capable of existing in constant change and inspiration—and making discoveries moment to moment that I wish for others to experience and explore." *Healing in Flux* incorporated images and words from primary sources such as *OUT!* magazine from the 1990s (sourced from the ProQuest [LGBT magazine archive](#)), images and writing by Kewpie, Daughter of District 6 (1942–2012) a South African drag performer, and zines like *Fierceness* (2011) from the [QZAP archive](#). Morillo reflects, "Each unique queer bit of memorabilia, ephemera, and material found in archives such as the Digital Transgender Archives and the Queer Zine Archive Project (QZAP) allowed me to see the significance of cultivating a non-linear, relational, and unending process of what healing can mean to each transgender or non-binary identified person." Morillo explains how the zine leant itself

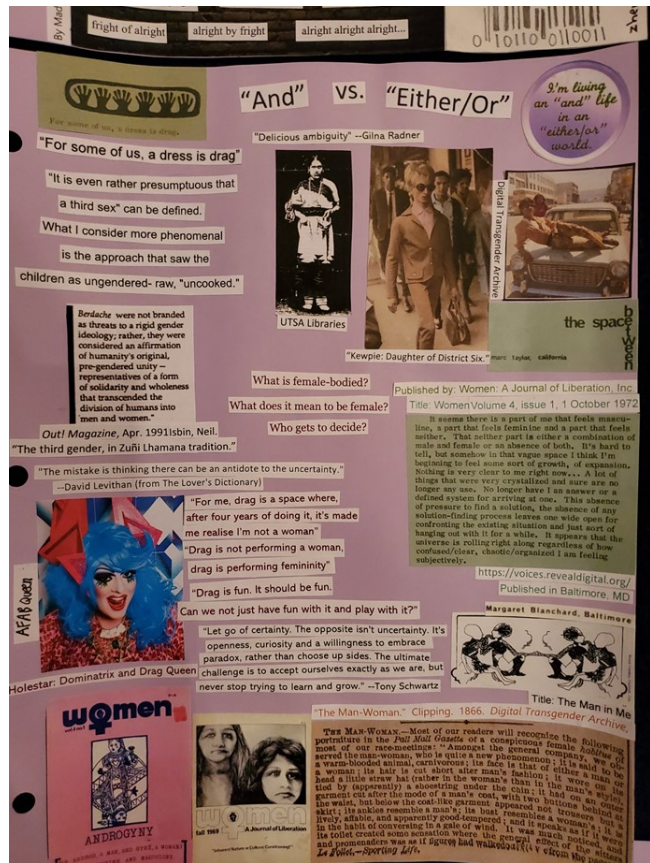


7. HEALING IN FLUX, ZHENA MORILLO, LOS ANGELES, 2020

to a healing modality through anachronistic experiences of time: "I chose the theme of healing to create a connection to the past where I could time travel and create a healing relationship with my own gender and sexuality by seeing different definitions, experiences, and voices of healing and identity." The next year, Morillo went on to an internship with UCI's Campus Assault Resources and Education office and spearheaded a collective to create a digital interactive zine that offers resources geared to trans and nonbinary people healing from sexual assault.

Cautionary Tales of Allyship and Other Rabbit Holes

When students desire to write or research as allies, zines offer an opportunity to teach a cautionary tale about the presumption of affinities, as Nguyen's critique shows. Nguyen created the celebrated *Evolution of a Race Riot* (1997) as an empowered and angry challenge to racism and white exclusionary practices in the riot grrrl scene. Her later scholarly work challenges the limits of experiential knowledge that comes from "a scene" that doesn't examine its own structures of power. About the riot grrrl scene, Nguyen asks, "But how then could experience yield revolutionary knowledge about race, where the dominant experience was whiteness?" (179) Nguyen's critique takes the feminist politics of "intimacy" to task as a "liberal fantasy" where emphases on "self-actualization" and "self-empowerment" presume a more compassionate collectivity but leave unexamined how "the demand for proximity and



intimacy is unequally distributed" (180). This insight is a particularly salient topic for the gender studies classroom, where students are challenged to think intersectionally about the category of gender. They learn to move beyond solutions to racism or heterosexism as an additive process or a process of simply demanding proximity and access or what the LISM project calls "sycophancy." Instead, students can hone their ally skills of listening, amplifying other voices, honoring the work of people of color, and keeping the focus on the subjects they are studying and engaging, using feminist ethical citational practices. Again, as the LISM project notes, "learning to be a true ally or partner is a multi-step, nonlinear process," which can take place through the multi-step, nonlinear, re-visioning zine-making process (125).

Love Letters in the "Past Tense Future"

Visits to special collections bookend my courses—and this essay—as the start and endpoint of student zine engagement. When I introduce my students each quarter to Special Collections to teach about primary and secondary sources, it is more importantly to teach about the value of archives as spaces where "Community is seen as permanently valuable," as Kelly Spring, one of the archivists, put it. By the end of the quarter, we circle back to special collections by inviting students to "become immortal" by donating their zines to the collection. One of the things that I love most is that zines themselves become rich interactive counterhegemonic microcosms. These pedagogical time capsules—collections of images, words,

and messages—challenge dominant discourses and preserve “ephemera,” those fleeting aspects of community and identities that are living “off the grid,” against the grain, or literally or metaphorically suppressed and distorted by dominant culture.



8. STUDENTS EXPLORING ARTISTS' BOOKS AT THE ORANGE COUNTY & SOUTHEAST ASIAN ARCHIVE (OC&SEAA), UC, IRVINE. PHOTO CREDIT: AUTHOR

Zines, students have learned, represent tools of survival, especially for minoritarian subjects. Zines are “world-making” spaces for building imagined futures and communities. José Esteban Muñoz writes of this power of queer possibility in his piece on “Ephemera as Evidence”: “Queerness is often transmitted covertly. This has everything to do with the fact that leaving too much of a trace has often meant that the queer subject has left herself open for attack. Instead of being clearly available as visible evidence, queerness has instead existed as innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments, and performances that are meant to be interacted with by those within its epistemological sphere—while evaporating at the touch of those who would eliminate queer possibility” (6).

Zines become the gathering spots, the watering hole, the underground railroad, the temporary autonomous zones [TAZ] where “innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments,” of queer knowledge production can be recouped or imagined. And zines materialize what Philip Brian Harper names the “evidence of felt intuition”—evidence produced by the accumulation of quotidian experiences of discrimination, evidence that the black subject is positioned to read from the position of a knowing subject aware of the ways that structural inequality, whiteness, and social violence

are writ as benign when viewed as isolated incidents. This queer of color literacy is a form of “knowing” that the dominant power group denies, suppresses, and dismisses as “over-reading,” or as a project of slights or victimization. It is a subjugated knowledge that the zine is positioned to recognize and reproduce in an increasingly alienated and commercially mediated world, one in which capitalism determines life chances, narrative forms, social relations, and what gets to count as knowledge.

Simply reading the titles of the UCI student zines over the years is like a found poem, a snapshot of what each cohort of students was experiencing and thinking and imagining. In 2015, it was the campus’s 50th anniversary and there were a lot of official acts of ‘remembering’—from oral histories to photo opportunities to celebrating UCI’s breaking ground in Orange County. The student zines, however, told a different story: *Femme Empowerment* (reproductive justice and birth control); *Fat Cat Gaming* (girls and gaming/ girls and STEM/ gamergate); *Feral Cats* (critique of slut shaming); *Life In Color* (racism and white privilege across three waves of feminism, notable created all in white); *Embrace* (sex positive/body education: menstruation; patient /doctor relationships); *UNDOCUQUEER* (undocuqueer movement / immigration).

In Spring of 2020, as we collectively experienced a global pandemic and “stay-at-home” orders that were concurrent with the uprising against anti-Black police violence, the found poem of zine titles went like this:

Queerantime and Asian America; Dragging Through Time; When Will it End; Sueños Seguros [a reference to Soñar Fantasmas #41 from Mexico in 1990s]; Trans and NonBinary Reproductive Justice and Politics; Hijras in Hindustan; Propaganda Magazine Cracked: A thoughtful



9. STUDENTS ZINES FROM GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES, UCI. PHOTO CREDIT: AUTHOR

exploration of queer expression in the *Propaganda Magazine* archives; and iRESISTE!

For student zinesters, "There is no room for shame in the revolution," to quote Cal State, Los Angeles Professor Molly Talcott. Through zines, students make their ideas material while ensuring them a future, often for those whom our society harbors the most genocidal and negating tendencies towards, from black transgender people, to queers, undocumented immigrants, children, and people with disabilities. These small do-it-yourself manifestos seemed to speak with loud, declarative voices: zines are sacred for being profane; zines are the mothers of the disappeared; zines are the "conscience of the art world"; zines declare Transgender Black Lives Matter. Zines are world-making tools. There is no room for shame in the revolution and the revolution will be photocopied!



10: ARCHIVE YOUR ZINE! FROM ZINEFEST 2019. PHOTO CREDIT: UCI COMMUNICATIONS

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RADICAL TEACHER

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

Power Relations and Experiential Education: Facilitating *Conscientization* in the Humanities

by Daniel Hengel



IMAGE COURTESY OF AUTHOR

“Theory is cool, but theory without practice ain’t shit.”

—Fred Hampton

My name is Daniel Hengel. I teach—and study—what I affectionately term, “Twentieth and Twenty-First Century English Language Literatures of Resistance” and First-year Writing in the City University of New York system, the most socioeconomically and culturally diverse student population in the United States. 80% of CUNY students identify as a person of color, 58% as female, over 50% of CUNY students face housing or food insecurity, and 39% of our undergrads are second language learners. CUNY students speak a total 174 different languages.¹ Our student body differs substantially in terms of class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, race, gender, age, religion, academic preparedness, and English-language fluency. Our students are a kaleidoscope of too frequently disenfranchised social bodies striving for better lives in a culture whose institutions too readily reproduce the conditions of their marginalization. I have had the privilege to teach in classrooms so full of difference since fall 2013.

Early each semester my students and I discuss the many privileges attached to my subject position and social body. As an able-bodied, straight, cisgendered, white male from a comfortably “middle-class” family in “Upstate” New York, few benefit from more unearned advantages than I do. This careful conversation is vital to my teaching. It lets my students know that I am aware of my own privilege and positionality relative to the works I assign. Many of the texts we read and write about in my classes speak to my students in a language that I can empathize with but never completely understand. My students are familiar with “the quotidian struggles against dehumanization” recalled by Rankine’s narrator in *Citizen* in ways that I can never be (24). Having a candid discussion about “the professor’s privilege” also lets my students know that my classes are a safe space to have difficult conversations. I want them to speak and write as openly and honestly as they can about the texts we study—many of which candidly relate and confront systems of oppression and marginalization.

For me, and many, many others, education is our society’s most readily accessible engine of equality and its most important generator of critical citizenship. Like Henry A. Giroux, I believe “teachers at all levels of schooling represent a potentially powerful force for social change” (28). Even as schools and educators work to “perpetuate . . . dominant ways of knowing” they provide the space for *conscientization* (Breunig 112). Indeed, I believe supporting the growth of our students’ critical consciousness, by facilitating critical dialogues and encouraging students to recognize and challenge the techniques of power and oppression moving through the body politic, may be the most important responsibility we have as educators. That we, in some small way, can not only “prepare people for future work” but offer our students a “vision . . . of a more socially just world” that they help to create (Breunig 112).

Unfortunately, the current neo-liberalization of higher education, all too often, stymies collegiate efforts to help students become “aware . . . and capable of revealing their

active reality, knowing it and understanding what they know” in order to reject “the internaliz[ation] of their oppression” and to challenge and transform the lives and social spaces (Freire *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation* 171). Continuing a trend in higher education that surfaced in the 1980s with the rise of Regan and New Conservatism, twenty-first century university studies—yes, even in the “Humanities”—have too frequently sacrificed *conscientization* for “vocationalism in higher education” (Kolb 6). The turn toward a skills-based, job-training, pay-for-play higher educational system in the United States is far too complex and outside the purview of this article to discuss here. Suffice to say, it exists and it effects all of us—after all, how many times have we seen English departments attempt to entice students with flyers reading, “Careers for English Majors.” Instead, in this article I would like to discuss the value of experiential education in the Humanities as a way to foster *conscientization* in the classroom. I begin by briefly advocating for experiential education in the classroom before detailing one way I employ experiential learning in my courses through a semester-long, multi-modal, digital project I call, “Power Relations: The New York City Experience.”²

Why Praxis-Oriented Experiential Education

Done right, I believe experiential learning can be a democratizing force in the classroom that blurs the line between theory and practice, encourages self-directed student-centered learning, and helps create a safe discourse climate that challenges students to think critically about their positions in the world around them (Eyler 28; Rainey and Kolb 130). My employ of experiential learning aligns with the tenets of critical pedagogy and Freire’s understanding of the important role praxis—“the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it”—plays in the liberation of the oppressed (Freire *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 79). Critical pedagogy and experiential education—as praxis—are part and parcel of liberatory systems of education that can foster “critical thinking and promote practices that have the potential to transform oppressive institutions or social relations” (Breunig 109). Praxis-oriented experiential education reminds students and teachers that the “world and human beings do not exist apart from each other, [we] exist in constant interaction”; that knowledge does not exist in a vacuum apart from its application; that there is more to learning in college than filling a blue-book at the end of the term (Freire *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 50).

Experiential education’s movement between the real world and the classroom is vital to critical pedagogy and Freire’s understanding of praxis as a *conscientizado* building practice. Unfortunately, in the Humanities, we too often ignore the liberatory and epistemological potential experiential learning can have in our classrooms and the new depths of knowledge and understanding experiential learning can bring to our students’ understanding of the histories, texts, cultures, and arts we share with them. By giving students the opportunity to, in some way, experience the content we teach, we provide the space to free the text

from our own readerly biases and the (meta)physical confines of the classroom into new fields of meaningful discovery.

Power Relations: The New York City Experience does not place a limit on my students' form of expression as they reflect on and share their experience with the class. Yes, it still asks students to reflect on their experience. The critically-reflective post is, perhaps, the most important element of Power Relations. Reflection is key to praxis. As Lewis and Williams note in "Experiential Learning: Past and Present," (1994), "through critical reflection people become aware of the cultural and psychological assumptions that have influenced the way they see themselves and the way they structure their lives" (7). For Freire, reflection leads students "from a purely naive knowledge of reality to a higher level, one which enables them to perceive the *causes* of reality" and to then act on and transform that reality (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 131). Power Relations provides students with the opportunity to reflect in whatever voice, medium, and style they choose when they draft their posts. My prompt states,

The Post: There's but one true rule governing your post. Your post must include text and some sort of non-textual medium. Oh, and there should be a title of some sort, something epic.

- The text you write can be: a journal entry recalling your observance of the machinations of power and its relationship to a text or construct attended to in our class, a short story about your experience, a score, a series of captions to a video you shot, a newspaper-styled article reporting on your event, an analysis of a cultural phenomenon you observed, a poem, a short feature exposing an agent of oppression, a description of the unreality of the dissonance you reckoned with as the prism of power became visible, an anything that is written. There is no minimum word count—different forms of expression ask different utterances from us—but there is a maximum word count! Please, write no more than 600 words. You don't have to write and write and write. Choose your voice! This assignment is not meant to stress you out and burden you in an endless cycle of production. Try to have fun.
- Your non-textual medium can be anything that's not written words, seriously anything. Be creative. You can: paint a painting, paste a collage, play a song, perform a poem, act out a scene you wrote, sketch a comic, parkour, design a graphic, build a GIF, link to a series of related images or sounds, edit a video montage, do a YouTube thing, draw a picture, or dance a dance. Did I mention you can do anything you want to do?

All too often, in higher-education, we limit—perhaps even scorn—our students' creativity and divergent forms of expression. The lack of creativity in the college classroom

stands in stark contrast to the liberatory practices critical pedagogy encourages us to adopt. One of Freire's biggest criticisms of the "banking concept" in education is its capability "to minimize or annul the students' creative power and to stimulate their credulity[, which] serves the interests of the oppressors, who care neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed" (Freire *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 73). The conventions of academic writing can be stifling, especially to a student body full of wildly different linguistic backgrounds and fluencies. Often in our scholarly work we celebrate authors like Rich and Lorde and Anzaldúa—who protest the marginalization of underrepresented voices and champion ulterior modes of expression—but discourage our students from writing outside the boundaries of academicese. Yet, as Macedo argues, "this sequestration of language denies people the possibility to understand the dialectical relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed . . . language is not only a site of contestation; it is also an indispensable tool for a critical reflexive demystification process that is central to *conscientization*" (18). Giving students the opportunity to express themselves freely and creatively in an analytical exercise encourages students to think more liberally, imaginatively, and enthusiastically about their experience, which often extends to their engagement with the theoretical space and content of the entire course. Furthermore, the addition of a non-textual medium has dramatically increased the degree of analysis and consideration my students have brought to their studies. It also provides students who are not text-based learners with an opportunity to articulate their ideas outside of the limitations of writerly practices. Though most students tend to pair pictures with journal-like reflections of their experiences unveiling power relations in the real world, I have had dozens of students produce a wide array of creative projects including poems, paintings, drawings, music, short stories, creative non-fiction, video-montages, and, on one memorable occasion, a sculpture made of found art while visiting family in Guatemala.

The dialogue generated in the "response and response to a response" elements of Power Relations further grounds this project in critical pedagogical practice. Praxis-oriented experiential education works best when it creates a space for dialogue between peers. As Kolb and Rainy note, "dialogue is key to human emancipation of the oppressed" (138). The idea is to provide the time and space for students to self-generate their critical consciousnesses outside the purview of the classroom and the immediate presence of the educator. Though I read each post, response, and response to a response, I do not participate in the student dialogue until everyone has had the opportunity to engage in the conversation.³ I want this dialogical space to exist free of my opinions. My students do not write to me but to each other, which I find to be a critically generative way for them to engage with the abstract concepts and forms of coercion Power Relations aims to unveil. *Conscientization* is a self-directed practice generated among peers through dialogue. It is something gained through experience, reflection, and discussion not stasis, rote regurgitation, and lectures. I have found that the additional response to a response—to think through how one peer understands what a third peer has

experienced and reflected on—creates a unique matrix of dialogical growth and critical conscientiousness.

Power Relations: The New York City Experience

I developed and refined this project over the course of six semesters and have run it in some shape or form since spring 2018.⁴ I have employed this exact project in a number of different classes including, “The Twentieth Century and the Arts of Resistance,” “Fantasy, Fiction, Film, and their Dissidents,” “The 1980s: A Decade of Upheaval,” and the woefully titled, “Science Fiction and Dissent: Reading Sci-Fi to Explore Identity, Power, and the Environment.” In the fall of 2017, in the first iteration of “The 20th Century and the Arts of Resistance,” Power Relations began as a rather run of the mill experiential learning project that asked students to locate and experience a space in which they could identify a discourse of power and write a short essay about the relations of power they observed. I received papers that analyzed the power relations present in school board meetings, museum displays of indigenous art, student organizations, and a de Blasio press conference. A particularly creative and memorable project on the Battle of the Badges, a charitable boxing event between the FDNY and NYPD, led me to reconsider how students could best present their projects and understand their work as participating in public discourse. This student eschewed the traditional essay form and wrote a piece of creative non-fiction that questioned her motivations for attending a boxing match in light of her distaste for violence of any kind as a commentary on how certain people gravitate toward a particular kind of power and authority. Apparently, the audience representing the NYPD was overwhelming white and the FDNY attendees were a far more racially heterogeneous company. I was blown away. Here was a student, who began her experience with a plan to talk about violence and ended up with a piece that saw through the veneer of boxing for charity and into the current of racial distinction and repressive state authority winding through the audience. For me, this was an “unveiling of reality” that needed to be shared (Freire *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 81). So, that winter, inspired by my student’s piece on the Battle of the Badges, I taught myself how to use WordPress and rewrote “The New York City Experience” project.

Power Relations is now a digital, multimodal, praxis-centered, communal, semester-long project that lives on our class website. The project is divided into three, three-day “cycles” that fall near the end of the first, second, and third months of the semester. In each cycle the class is divided into “posters” and “respondents.” On day one, one third of the class posts about their experience on our class website. On day two, the other two-thirds of the class responds to the posts uploaded to the class website on day one. On day three, respondents address another classmate’s day-two response to a post from day one—I ask the students to begin their day three responses with something like, “Hi Michela, it’s Kumar. How’s it going? I really dig your reading of Johnathan’s post but I disagree with your take on the role power plays in . . .” I call the three elements of Power Relations, “posts,” “responses,” and “responses to

responses,” respectively. Students who post in a cycle do not have to act as respondents, though they often answer peoples’ comments on their work—which is totally great! I allow my students to choose the cycle they post in as it is the most onerous element of the project. After introducing the project on the second day of class we set a time to open cycle requests that gives the students a few days to plot their semester schedules. I award cycle dates on a first come first serve basis at the start of our agreed upon cycle request date and time. Students must wait until the start of the cycle request hour before emailing me their preferences. This way everyone has the same amount of time to figure out what works best for them.

Now, Power Relations requires students to identify and dissect the machinations of power in an ostensibly benign space in their world. I do not tell them where to look.

Critically, the nature of the experience I ask students to engage in and write about has changed dramatically since Power Relations’ first iteration in 2017. Now, Power Relations requires students to identify and dissect the machinations of power in an *ostensibly benign* space in their world. I do not tell them where to look. Though I am happy to brainstorm potential ostensibly benign spaces rife with power relations with my students. I frequently encourage them to email me or pop-by office hours to bounce ideas around. Like Freire’s “problem-posing education,” Power Relations is a self-directed learning experience that asks students to see through the surface of the world around them and into the underling structures of disenfranchisement built into architecture of their social lives. This is a vital change from Power Relations’ earlier requirement to merely “identify a discourse of power.” The aim of the assignment changed from an exercise in identifying how power operates in a space we expect to see it into a project that encourages students to see the everyday as a potential site of power relations. If we believe that all education is political and that we as educators have the ability to play some small role in facilitating social change, then I think we do more to help our students realize their *conscientization* if we ask them to search for and peek behind the veil of society’s spaces and performances in order to demystify the tacit operations and forms of coercion all around them. Importantly, I believe this turn from the exceptional to the everyday encourages students to not only recognize modes of oppression in the quotidian but to see every space as a possibility for resistance.

At its best, Power Relations encourages students to reveal to themselves the polyvalent forms of power, privilege, and coercion that operate in a dialectic of submission and resistance as they seek and support the counter hegemonic discourses waiting to be discovered in their daily lives. I’ve had students deconstruct the deeply imbedded racism of Nivea’s “white is purity” campaign, the hyper-sexualization of the female body and toxic masculinity in gamer culture, K-pop’s complicity in prioritizing Western

standards of beauty, and school dress codes and their woeful reproduction of gender binaries.⁵ One particularly insightful project investigated the cultural biases and unequal distribution of knowledge in NYC’s public library system. This student—Rebekah—decided to do a walking tour of two branches of the NYPL after seeing the NYPL’s advertisement campaign, “libraries are for everyone.” Rebekah visited the Stephen A. Schwarzman building—the main branch of the NYPL—and the Fort Washington Library in Washington Heights—her local NYPL facility. What begins as an excellent comparison of the drastically different quality of the branches’ public offerings, décor, services, and collections evolves into a critique of the prioritizing of European values and forms of knowledge. Rebekah’s post begins with a series of photographs of the two branches and a detailed commentary comparing the ostentatious grandeur of the Schwartzman Library and the dilapidated facilities at Fort Washington. Rebekah’s text discusses the unequal distribution of wealth and knowledge that disproportionately targets socioeconomically distressed neighborhoods. She then notes that the Schwarzman building—as a physical space—largely fails to live up to the promise of the NYPL’s advertising campaign. Though certainly grand in scope, the Schwarzman building in its friezes, murals, statues, and busts, “seems to emphasize whiteness and masculinity” (Rebekah 9). Rebekah pays special attention to the proliferation of a whitewashed Judeo-Christian tradition and literary cannon in her deconstruction of the Schwarzman building’s architecture and art. Importantly, Rebekah also discusses the large amount of surveillance and many

restricted spaces present at the Schwarzman branch. Her project then takes a counter-intuitive turn in its evaluation of the branches. Rebekah argues that, notwithstanding its state of disrepair, the Fort Washington library’s lack of institutionalized surveillance and ease of access better exemplifies the spirit of the NYPL’s “libraries are for everyone” campaign. She writes,

Despite its grandeur, the flagship location of the NYPL actually seems to function in ways that are counter to its stated purpose. Here, whiteness is central and access to information is restricted or must be vetted by the institution’s gatekeepers. Though it is physically less inspiring, the Fort Washington library actually seems more accessible, closer to the ideals of the institution. Perhaps the power of knowledge is available at the NYPL; just don’t look for it at the Schwarzman Building. (Rebekah 10)

Rebekah’s work is exemplary. Not only does her post engage a number of different registers of power and forms of capital but it grows into something more than what she first set out to investigate on her walking tour. What begins as an analysis of class and NYC’s unequal distribution of wealth within its public services becomes a comment on the NYPL’s prioritizing of European bodies and forms of knowledge and a critique of the kinds of access available to the general public at the Schwarzman branch, which ends in a celebration of the egalitarian disrepair of the Fort Washington library.



KAYLEE'S HAND. IMAGE COURTESY OF AUTHOR

Perhaps unsurprisingly, every semester I run Power Relations one of my students who identifies as a female person of color creates a post critiquing the proliferation of white American standards of beauty represented in the aisles of beauty products that fill pharmacies in neighborhoods historically home to people of color. Happily, posts of this kind exemplify the *conscientization* that I hope Power Relations encourages in my student body. Students frequently compare Duane Reade's wild assortment of "pale-skin" toned foundation to the dearth of ebony-tinted shades on offer by companies like Burt's Bees, Neutrogena, and Almay. My favorite post of this kind was rather cleverly titled, "Yet Another Thing America Can't Makeup For." In it, my student—Kaylee—holds her hand in a Black Power salute next to the "darkest shades [these brands have] to offer." None of the shades on offer come close to Kaylee's warm, coffee-toned complexion. It's a very compelling image. Vitally, her critique of Eurocentric beauty standards doesn't end with her lambasting of major market makeup companies. Kaylee's post finishes with a commentary on a broader problem of self-subjectification she sees within her community. Kaylee writes,

The lack of darker pigmented makeup is not only the fault of many makeup companies, it's the idealism of light skin that created this lack of coverage of the Black population of America. The idealism of white skin, white culture and white supremacy is still alive in American culture today, but is being concealed by the slow progress of those considered to be radical—ie. those who preach that black is beautiful. (5)

Here Kaylee, a bit obscurely, identifies the proliferation of colorism and the marginalization of dark skin within her community as part of a system of privilege that prioritizes whiteness as both an aesthetic and cultural marker of the ideal. Though Kaylee might not yet have the linguistic capital to clearly articulate her observations regarding the mechanisms of disenfranchisement represented in the unequal distribution of foundation shades, her level of consideration and introspection embody the critical thinking and self-reflection this assignment hopes students bring into their lives every day.

A like-minded and particularly unique post approached the aggrandizing of Eurocentric beauty standards by breaking down the deeply imbedded techniques of Othering present in the categorization of beauty products. In this post, the student—Camella—focuses her discussion on the location of certain types of beauty products—something I had never even considered when walking into a CVS. Camella writes,

When I walk into a drugstore and I look for products for natural hair, I won't find them in the "beauty" section with the majority of the hair products, instead, I'll find them within the "ethnic hair care" section. This distinction is problematic because it causes a segregation between hair and a dissociation between POC and beauty. It indicates what kind of hair (therefore what kind of person) can have the word "beauty" associated with it and establishes it as the norm . . . ultimately influencing discrimination and colorism and leading to

self-hatred or feelings of shame for not looking like the beauty standard. (2, 4)

This is a wildly perceptive observation that ably deconstructs the unequal processes of naturalization that exist all around us, while pointing to the very real consequences of privileging one form of beauty over another. Camella's post also notes the scarcity and expense of "natural hair" products like Shea Moisture relative to the abundance and affordability of relaxers. Camella then briefly discusses the implicit biases imbedded in relaxers as a product. Similarly, I have had a number of students disparage the prevalence of bleaching creams and the lack of Black-oriented self-care products available at their local pharmacies—the pictures of aisles of bleaching creams crammed into corner-store pharmacies in communities of color are particularly disturbing.



IMAGE COURTESY OF AUTHOR

Perhaps my favorite post regarding culturally enforced Eurocentric standards of beauty focuses on Fenty Beauty by Rihanna. In it the student not only eviscerates major market makeup companies, but also celebrates Fenty Beauty as a counter hegemonic discourse. She argues that Fenty's 50 shades of concealer challenge the privileging of whiteness in the makeup industry by providing people of color with the breadth of choices once reserved for people with pale skin. What I love most about this post is its attention to the possibility for resistance within techniques of distinction that engender forms of privilege and the Othering of already marginalized social bodies. I think this student-activated *conscientization* at its best. Indeed, many of my favorite posts—no surprise given my research interests—take Power Relations as an opportunity to reflect on a dialectic of oppression and resistance in an effort to speak truth to power.

In fall of 2019, one of my students—Sarina—wrote a particularly compelling and creative post that framed gentrification as a dialectical exchange between the oppressive marginalization of economically distressed

communities of color and new “places of resistance to the power of gentrification and gentrifier” (Sarina 4). Sarina wrote her post as a literacy narrative detailing her family’s forced relocation to The Bronx after being priced out of their neighborhood in Brooklyn. Sarina’s post takes a confessional tone as she describes the pain of losing the neighborhood you were born and raised in. She writes, “It hurts to visit Brooklyn now because it is unrecognizable to me. It feels like a completely different place, ripped of the culture of the people that once occupied it” (Sarina 2). Her life story and keen observations, including that “gentrification is inevitable because places change and grow all of the time” and the important “difference between improving a neighborhood and completely displacing the people in it” spoke to the class’s lived experiences in NYC. Her work was incredibly well-received by the class respondents. There are 20 comments on her post—the average comment thread is about three or four replies long. After briefly detailing her move from Brooklyn to the South Bronx, Sarina addresses the nascent wave of gentrification occurring in Mott Haven—a neighborhood in the South Bronx. Her post identifies The Bronx Collective—a locally owned apparel and art vendor—and Lit Bar—the only independently owned bookstore in The Bronx⁶—as two “micro resistances” that challenge the “wheel of oppression” (Sarina 5). She notes that though The Bronx Native and Lit Bar likely could not exist without Mott Haven’s economic revival, both recent additions to Mott Haven seek “to improve the community and the people in it, rather than displace them” (Sarina 2). The Bronx Native and Lit Bar feature works by local artists, hold community meetings, visit local schools to support education, and strive to help the people of Mott Haven thrive. I believe Sarina’s post lives and breathes the very best Power Relations offers students. Her work relates her lived-experiences in NYC as the catalyst for a critique of power, identifies a counter hegemonic discourse in her community that speaks truth to power, reflects on how we can reclaim forms of distinction to resist socioeconomic and cultural displacement, and, perhaps most importantly, sparks a powerful discussion among her peers.

A Few Notes: Foundations, Time, and Assessment

Power Relations encourages students to unveil systems of power and coercion tacitly operating through the body politic. When we discuss the potential of this assignment in class, I do not focus on a particular manifestation of oppression and coercion in society. Instead, we discuss how polyvalent structures of power work to maintain hegemony and unique hierarchized forms of distinction that mark one category of people as elect. I focus on techniques of power rather than particular forms of oppression and resistance so that I do not inadvertently limit the potential scope of my students’ inquiries. My partiality for biopolitical dialectics of submission and resistance in Afrofuturism isn’t for everyone. Throughout the semester my students read a truncated version of Althusser’s, admittedly problematic, essay “Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses,” selections from Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, Bourdieu’s “The Forms of Capital” and

“Physical Space, Social Space, and Habitus,” and excerpts from Scott’s *Domination: And the Art of Resistance*. These texts act as a kind of non-proscriptive roadmap for Power Relations that I hope helps students see behind the veil.⁷ Typically, my students and I read the Althusser and the Foucault before the start of cycle one.

If you decide to run an experiential learning exercise similar to Power Relations in your classroom, I encourage you to allow it to live alongside your class for the entire semester. Critical pedagogy and praxis-oriented experiential education encourage students to continuously integrate new ways of understanding and being in the world into “old constructs” (Eyler 24). For Freire, “true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking . . . which perceives reality as *process*, as *transformation*, rather than as a static entity” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 92).⁸ This relationship to knowledge—our ability to see ourselves in the world and transform it—asks us to recognize our potential for change each and every day. Power Relations’ long-life creates a permanent threshold linking my students’ lived experiences to their classroom practices. It tells students that I too believe that this mode of learning and seeing the world is not something we do once and forget about but a way of being human(e) in the world that we share and live in every day.

In my classes, Power Relations is worth 15% of my students’ final grade. I base my assessment on “Careful consideration. Effort. Execution. Pride. There is no one, concrete, universal standard of excellence governing the assessment of this assignment. It depends on you” (Hengel “The Prompt” 3). This is a quantitatively graded assignment. Students receive full marks for completing the duties of a poster or a respondent. I do not judge the quality of their insights into the ebb and flow of power in the body politic. Instead, I ask myself, “did this student put their best effort in?” The answer is usually, “yes!” I rarely award less than full-marks—most students turn in work that exceeds my expectations. I read everything they write. I do not respond to student responses or responses to responses. I comment on every post. I engage with my students as if I am a part of their dialogue not the judge of it. I do this for a number of reasons. I designed this project to be a co-intentional practice whereby I am in dialogue with and get to learn from my students’ experiences. This is impossible if I stand in judgment over their experiences. By engaging with my students in the voice of a peer rather than that of a figure of power—a professor is certainly in the dominate position of power in the classroom—I am able, however fleetingly, to decenter “a privileged voice of authority” through a “collective critical practice,” which, hopefully, extends into the classroom from the ethereal plane of our class website (hooks 84). Finally, freedom from ABCDF-fetters encourages creativity.

Final Thought

I’d like to take a moment to mention another benefit to breaching the divide between our students’ lived experience and university studies. Experiential education provides a unique opportunity for community building in the classroom. Though this may seem like an ancillary concern to many

college educators; for me, community building is vital to learning at the collegiate level.⁹ University studies can be an alienating, solitary activity that dampens our students' enthusiasm for the work they do in our classrooms. I believe passion and joy and laughter belong in the classroom. They are contagious and they make us want to learn more. I strive to show my excitement and love for the work we do and texts we read whenever possible. Like hooks, I think "excitement is generated through collective effort" (8). Experiential education helps create an environment that encourages cooperation and communal knowledge making. For hooks, "sharing experiences and confessional narratives in the classroom helps establish communal commitment to learning" (186). When this attention to personal experience evolves into a praxis-oriented educational learning environment we have the opportunity to not only build learning communities that respect one another as scholars but we can help our students develop a network of allies that helps them navigate the politics of privilege that permeates the world they live in.

I warmly encourage you to include some form of experiential learning into your assessment portfolio and to open your in-class discussions to your students' lived experiences. Over the past three years, the various iterations of "The New York City Experience" have been widely well-regarded by my students. When we do our post-semester debrief of our class on the final day of the term, this project is usually my students' favorite bit of intellectual labor. Experiential education provides me with a litany of opportunities to engage in critical pedagogical practices that foster student-centered learning and the development of my students' *conscientization*. By providing the opportunity to inscribe their lived experiences into the architecture of our classes, we let our students know that we value their unique subject positions; that their voices will be heard; that their lives matter.

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APPENDIX A

THE PROJECT

Power Relations: The New York City Experience (PRNYCE)

The Assignment: It's a blog thingy and it's going to be great. Divided into three parts, "Power Relations: The New York City Experience" asks you to identify, explore, and dissect a power relation you locate in an ostensibly benign space in New York City and post about your experience with respect to anything we have read for or talked about in class. Try to discover and discuss the movement of power in a space that masks its tacit forms of coercion. For example, how does the layout of the Met reproduce and prioritize Western-hegemonic forms of distinction and value? You will also be asked to respond to other student experiences and to respond to responses of other student experiences in a matrix of student voices and awesomeness.

The Site: pending

The Space: Anything that exposes you to a masked relation of power. Power is a many-faced monster. All I ask is that you check with me first. I'll sign-off—you go for it. Okay, you don't *have* to check with me, but if you're unsure of your project, then email me or pop-by office hours and we can do some brainstorming.

The Post: There's but one true rule governing your post. Your post must include text and some sort of non-textual medium. Oh, and there should be a title of some sort, something epic.

The text you write can be: a journal entry recalling your observance of the machinations of power and its relationship to a text or construct attended to in our class, a short story about your experience, a score, a series of captions to a video you shot, a newspaper-styled article reporting on your event, an analysis of a cultural phenomenon you observed, a poem, a short feature exposing an agent of oppression, a description of the unreality of the dissonance you reckoned with as the prism of power became visible, an anything that is written. There is no minimum word count—different forms of expression ask different utterances from us—but there is a maximum word count! Please, write no more than 600 words. You don't have to write and write and write. Choose your voice! This assignment is not meant to stress you out and burden you in an endless cycle of production. Try to have fun.

Your non-textual medium can be anything that's not written words, seriously anything. Be creative. You can: paint a painting, paste a collage, play a song, perform a poem, act out a scene you wrote, sketch a comic, parkour, design a graphic, build a GIF, link to a series of related images or sounds, edit a video montage, do a YouTube thing, draw a picture, or dance a dance. Did I mention you can do anything you want to do?

The Response: Write 300-ish words in response to a student post. How do you identify, complicate, question, (dis)agree with what was said, sung, drawn, seen, filmed, anything-ed, by the student you chose to respond to? How do your unique lenses overlap, diverge, inform, and/or speak to one another? Please, be sure to read through the entire cycle of posts before responding—you never know what you may find. Feel free to supplement your response with something other than text. The Response should begin, "Dear Posting Student's Name,"

The Response to the Response: Join the Conversation. Try to look through the eyes of an-other as they appreciate the experience of someone else. How does another student's response to a student post affect the way in which you internalize, appreciate, and/or understand the impressions of an-other? Your R2R should attend to both the post and the response—you've got to call them out by name. Again, 300-ish words should do it. Please begin your R2R with, "Dear Respondent, I totally (modifier) (action verb) your reading of Posting Student's Name." You can also respond to an R2R.

When:

1	2	3
Post: Midnight, 09.27	Post: Midnight, 10.25	Post: Midnight, 12.01
Response: Midnight, 09.28	Response: Midnight, 10.26	Response: Midnight, 12.02
R2R: Midnight, 09.29	R2R: Midnight, 10.27	R2R: Midnight, 12.03

How Does This “When” Business Breakdown?

- You will Post only once in the semester.
- You will Respond to a Post and write an R2R twice this semester.
- In the Cycle you Post, you do **not** have to Respond to a Post or write an R2R—though if you would like to engage with a response to your Post in an articulate, considered internet debate please do.
- In Cycles that you do not Post, you must Respond and R2R to a Post and a Response.
- The assignment is broken into threes. A third of the class will Post in any one Cycle, the rest will Respond and R2R.
- You may pick your Post day—first come first Posts the Post they want to Post—email me your best-life Post list. I’ll do what I can.
- Your contributions will not count toward your grade on this assignment if they are late. Feel free to Post earlier than the due date—in fact, that’s totally encouraged.
- Responses and R2Rs must be executed sometime in their listed, 24-hour windows.

What’s PRYNCE Worth to You: 15% of your final grade in this class (each cycle is worth 5% of your grade). Also, a life-affirming experience.

Assessment: Careful consideration. Effort. Execution. Pride. There is no one, concrete, universal standard of excellence governing the assessment of this assignment. It depends on you.

Daniel Hengel is Lecturer at Fordham College. Daniel studies and teaches what he terms 20th/21st-century English Language Literatures of Resistance. His work has appeared in *Nordic Irish Studies*, *The Wellsian*, and *Join the Conversation: A Guide to First-year Composition* and he has a piece forthcoming in *The D. H. Lawrence Review*. Daniel loves being a teacher.



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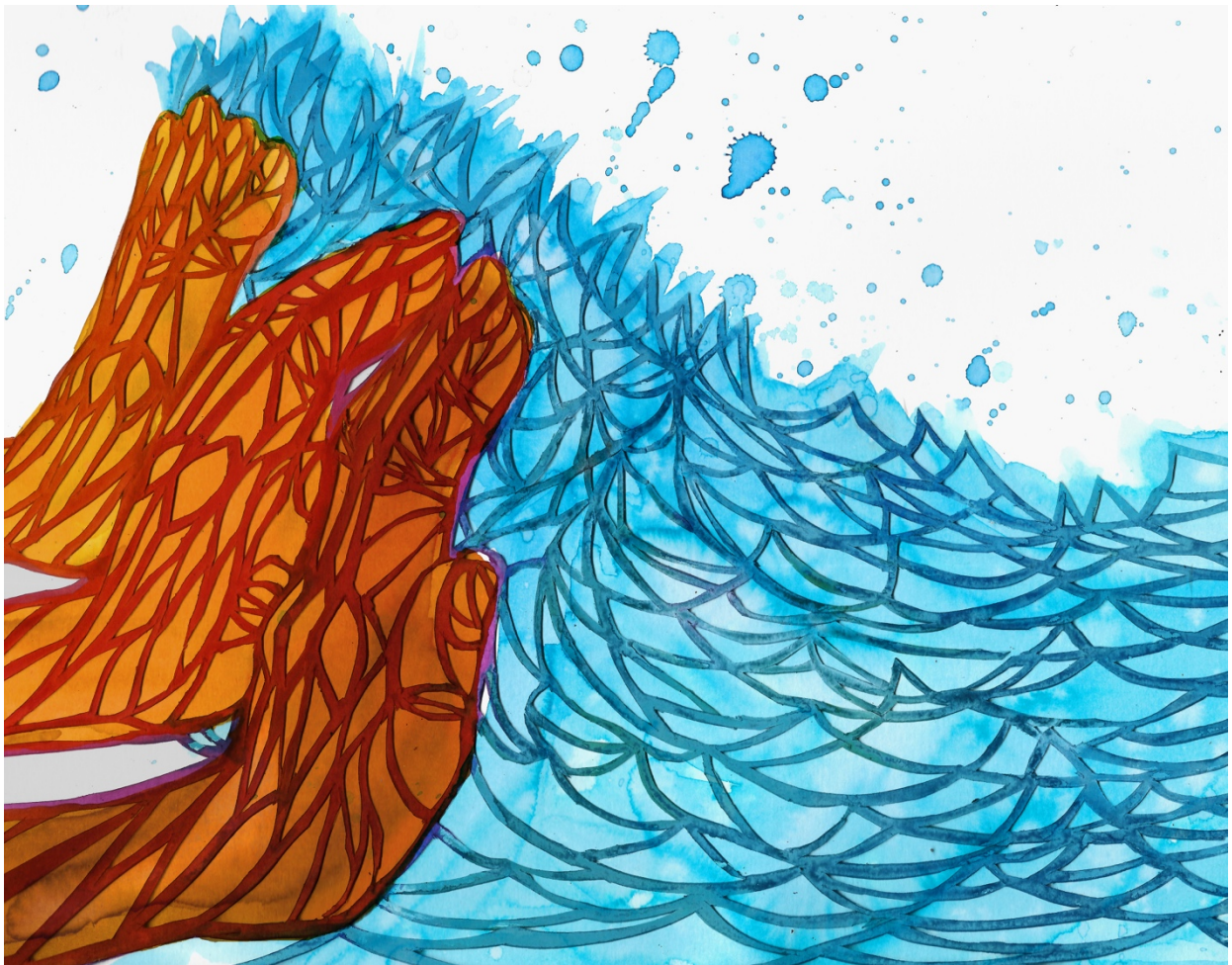
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RADICAL TEACHER

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

Disrupting Data: Developing Technology Integrated Assignments to Teach about Race and Racism

by Vanessa Rosa and Caro Pinto



"WATER" BY ERIK RUIN VIA JUSTSEEDS.ORG

"Professors cannot empower students to embrace diversities of experience, standpoint, behavior, or style if our training has disempowered us, socialised us to cope effectively only with a single mode of interaction based on middle-class values."

-bell hooks "confronting class" *Teaching to Transgress*, p. 187

"Authority Is Constructed and Contextual: Information resources reflect their creators' expertise and credibility, and are evaluated based on the information need and the context in which the information will be used. Authority is constructed in that various communities may recognize different types of authority. It is contextual in that the information need may help to determine the level of authority required."

- Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, Association of College & Research Libraries

Introduction

Developing assignments that move beyond traditional writing-based course requirements can create opportunities to meet a multiplicity of learning needs as well as creative ways to engage with course themes. Drawing on the lineage of liberatory pedagogy and critical information literacy, we (Vanessa Rosa, Assistant Professor of Latinx Studies and Caro Pinto, Research Librarian) created the Disrupting Data Project—an assignment where students develop visualizations to explore key course themes. We constructed the project to offer an opportunity for students to center their own expertise and embodied knowledge in a 200-level course, *Race, Racism, and Power*. While teaching about race and inequality in higher education can be a challenging endeavor, *Disrupting Data* allowed us to encourage students to think critically about the role of "data" in the history of race science. The assignment also helped students question the perceived value of data science, data visualization, and data-driven decision making, to challenge the notion that data is neutral or objective and in turn disrupt the privileging of European positivist frameworks. In addition to empowering students to see themselves as a part of knowledge production in the classroom, the project also allowed us to model sustainable collaboration to students and to our colleagues on the Mount Holyoke College campus. The purpose of this article is to share our approach to creating and sustaining an assignment that centers collaboration (between us and between students) and can serve as a starting point to consider how technology-based assignments can facilitate achieving learning objectives.

Who We Are

We are a librarian and a faculty member in Latina/o/x studies at Mount Holyoke College, a gender diverse women's college that centers dynamic and student-centered learning. The College nourishes a strong culture of innovation in its pedagogy; faculty have the resources to collaborate with

centers across campus, the art museum, as well as with librarians and instructional technologists to create technology enhanced assignments and scaffolded research assignments. In this context, there are ample opportunities for faculty, librarians, and technologists to work together to create meaningful learning opportunities for students.

Pinto (the remainder of the essay uses third person for clarity and refers to the authors by their last names) is a Research and Instruction Librarian at Mount Holyoke. She works as a liaison to multiple Departments, including Rosa's home department, Spanish, Latina/o, and Latin American Studies. She has extensive experience as an instructional designer and in digital humanities and is known by faculty for her work on interdisciplinarity and critical information literacy. In addition to her work with students and expanding the library's collection in her subject areas, she provides course-integrated instruction to support information and digital literacies. She embraces a creative and collaborative approach to instructional design. Rosa is an Assistant Professor of Latina/o/x Studies at Mount Holyoke. Her interdisciplinary scholarship examines interinstitutional inequality, with particular focus on urban studies and housing. In her teaching, Rosa creates opportunities for mutual learning between students and faculty and centers student experience in her pedagogy.

Context

Race, Racism, and Power is a 200-level course housed in Latina/o Studies and cross-listed with Gender Studies and Critical Social Thought. Rosa first taught this course in 2015 and has since taught it one time per year. The course generally has between 17-18 students, from across graduation years and majors. Majors include Psychology, Astronomy, Gender Studies, Critical Social Thought, Environmental Studies, Sociology, History, Anthropology, International Relations, Spanish, Urban Studies, and students who have not yet declared a major. The course serves as an interdisciplinary introduction to race and racism in the United States and focuses on structural and institutional racism. The description on the syllabus describes the course as follows:

This course analyzes the concepts of race and racism from an interdisciplinary perspective, with focus on Latinas/os/xs in the United States. We will explore the sociocultural, political, economic, and historical forces that interact with each other in the production of racial categories. In particular, we will focus on racial ideologies and processes of racialization, as well as the relationship between race and ethnicity. The course will examine racial inequality from a historical perspective and investigate how racial categories evolve and form across contexts. This approach will require us to draw connections between micro and macro processes and interactions. We will consider a range of issues and topics including colonialism, systemic and structural racism, immigration, intersectionality, violence, and resistance/refusal. The analysis that we develop will ultimately allow us to think rigorously about social inequality and transformation.

Key Learning Outcomes: at the end of the semester, students will be able to...

- Discuss the meaning of the social construction of race and racism
- Explain the history of race and racism in relation to colonialism
- Describe the different types of racism and racial ideologies
- Define intersectionality and the relationship between race, class, gender, age, sexuality, ability, citizenship, ethnicity, etc.

In the past, Rosa primarily used traditional written forms of evaluation (papers, film reviews, exams, and reflections). She wanted to incorporate a technology-based assignment that gave students another medium to engage with specific arguments in each reading to achieve learning outcomes.

Pinto and Rosa got to know each other through Pinto's position as the Library and Information Technology departmental liaison for Latina/o Studies at Mount Holyoke College. In Pinto's role as a departmental liaison, she assists faculty with book/media acquisitions, technology in the classroom, setting up and managing course Moodle sites, class visits for the library, etc. These types of relationships tend to situate the librarian as a service provider for the faculty member; in other words, it is not designed to be an equitable relationship. They first interacted during the fall of 2015 when Rosa was planning two Skype guest lectures for Rosa's Latinx Urbanism course and Pinto assisted with the setup of the technology in the classroom. Pinto expressed interest in the topic as well as seeing firsthand different ways that technology is used in the classroom, so Rosa invited her to join the class for both Skype lectures. This allowed them to have more informal conversations after class about their interests and to get to know each other on a more personal level. Rosa had recently arrived at Mount Holyoke and was only familiar working as an adjunct instructor at larger institutions, so the role of the liaison was new. Through these interactions, she was able to get a better sense of Pinto's broad areas of expertise and desire to work more closely with faculty and students.

As functional expertise overtook subject expertise as the bedrock of a successful career as a teaching librarian over the last twenty years, subject authority (expertise with particular disciplines) has been devalued. While liaison programs across higher education jettison subject expertise in favor of functional expertise, especially in favor of technology, this collaboration reinforces the importance of subject expertise combined with technical expertise. When Pinto was a hybrid librarian and technologist, she prided herself in the cultivation of both subject expertise and technical expertise; cultivating expertise around specific academic disciplines continues to be the most challenging and most rewarding part of Pinto's role. Reading plays a central role in this process; reading widely across disciplines

and mediums is essential. As Pinto's department unmerged the technologist and librarian roles into two distinct positions, the importance of centering subject expertise as the driving force in pedagogical conversations remains essential to Pinto; technology can be a tool in the classroom as long it does not usurp the energy of the class at the expense of the larger learning goals. Her subject and technology expertise were therefore essential in the Disrupting Data collaboration; the author's modeled to students that authority does not live solely in the faculty member, but alongside peers, librarians, and technologists.

Developing Disrupting Data

Rosa contacted Pinto in November 2016 to express interest in developing a technology-based assignment for one of her classes. They arranged a meeting in December to discuss the possibilities for working together. During the meeting, Rosa described why she wanted to pursue a new technology-based assignment and used the example of a digital timeline that was developed by a colleague. Fresh from learning about an exciting digital scholarship project using Timeline JS, Rosa wanted to explore the possibility of incorporating Timeline JS into her Race, Racism, and Power Class for the spring 2017 semester. In many contexts, a librarian or technologist in Pinto's place might say, 'your wish is my command' or 'this is my not my expertise,' but she was interested in the space between those extremes: how can a timeline project from another campus be used as a starting point to imagine a high impact project on our own campus and for this particular course?

Cultivating these types of relationships requires time and good faith on both sides. As relationships like this one develop, librarians and faculty can build mutual trust and take intellectual risks together. The accrued trust in this relationship allowed Pinto to talk freely about the limits of certain tools, how to consider balancing an innovative project with other established course goals, and clearly articulate the limits of labor she could offer in support of Rosa's vision. The distance between technology use in pedagogy and technology integration is vast; many faculty, librarians, and instructional technologists struggle to realize the goal of integration over use; in many ways it is more art than science and is responsive than prescriptive. It was a credit to the solid footing in their relationship that Pinto felt comfortable suggesting a new path for this collaboration. Beyond the assumption that 'technology is good,' many faculty may read about a project at another campus or attend a conference session where a particular tool was used and suggest that we integrate it on our own campus. Rarely are questions of labor addressed (where did that custom CSS come from?) or how much expertise is required to use different technologies or software (how easy is SketchUp for a novice?) or which parts of the syllabus could be adjusted to create space for technology. Often, instructional technologists must negotiate with faculty to devise an assignment or conditions that allow for innovative technology within the boundaries of the semester, the experience levels of students, and the technologies available on a given campus. When Rosa approached Pinto with an

idea to pursue a technology-based assignment, they conversed and explored different opportunities to engage.

Rosa described the course and the course objectives to Pinto. Pinto provided feedback on what she heard and suggested the concept of an assignment inspired by “Dear Data” by Georgia Lupi and Stephanie Posavec’s *Dear Data* (2016). In *Dear Data*, Lupi and Posavec (2016) explain their year-long exploration of everyday life visualized through data:

Each week, and for a year, we collected and measured a particular type of data about our lives, used this data to make a drawing on a postcard-sized sheet of paper, and then dropped the postcard in an English “postbox” or an American “mailbox” (Lupi and Posavec, 2016).

So, for example, one week the authors recorded how many times they encountered a door, goodbyes, laughter, or complaint. They would track their experiences with each theme and then choose a way to visualize it on a postcard. Both authors had different interpretations of their data and how to communicate the data from their everyday life to each other. The illustrations in the book vary from postcard to postcard and week to week. The different visualization styles and the critical understanding of what constitutes data, interrogating how we communicate different types of data, and questioning and exploring how visualizations impact our interpretation were foundational questions for conceptualizing how to employ *Dear Data* as a framework for the assignment. Rosa and Pinto drew from the author’s insights on different conceptualizations of data to implore students to consider the role of data in race science and processes of racialization as well as how reimagining what constitutes data and how we represent data can facilitate deeper engagement and give students the tools to understand the many ways racism is produced and reproduced in our society.

Important in the preliminary project planning conversations was Pinto’s clear understanding of the course content and objectives. She was careful to express the challenges with technology-based assignments and ensure Rosa calibrated her expectations. Pinto explained the *Dear Data* concept and clearly articulated two key aspects of the project in relation to this class: 1. That it would allow students to use *Dear Data* to visually conceptualize the key course concepts; and 2. That it would allow students to critically engage with course content about the relationship between knowledge production and race.

Looking at the syllabus, Rosa expressed her learning goals to have her students consider the relationship between race and knowledge production. As an ardent fan of the Association of College and Research Libraries Framework for Information Literacy framework, Pinto realized that the *Dear Data* project could be a way to explore how we understand and process readings about knowledge production and the social construction of race:

I came across a post in Brain Pickings about *Dear Data* (Lupi and Posavec, 2016) that piqued my interest. Data, data visualizations, and data fluencies represent emerging facets of academic libraries and the project was an opportunity to learn about data. When Princeton

Architectural Press released the *Dear Data* project in monograph form, I immediately purchased it for our library, pouring through it to gain a foothold to consider questions about how drawings and symbols can be as powerful as numbers or graphs. I knew that this project and framework would inform my teaching when the right opportunity arose. Happily, when Rosa and I met at the end of the fall term in 2016 to talk about collaborations for the spring, the right opportunity emerged.” -Caro Pinto, Research Librarian, Mount Holyoke College

Because of Pinto’s subject expertise and her instructional design background, she quickly made a strong case for *Dear Data* and it was clear that this would be a great starting point for exploring technology based assignments in *Race, Racism, and Power*. Pinto suggested building a WordPress website where students would upload their assignments. Rosa had experience working with WordPress in the past, so this was an appealing suggestion that would not require her to learn how to use new software. A paid student technology mentor would build the site under Pinto’s supervision.

Rosa was attentive to Pinto’s critical articulation about the role of data and visualizations in scientific racism. In the course, students learn about the history of race and racism in the United States, racism as a justification for colonialism and enslavement, and the centrality of scientific explanations of racial difference to justify white supremacy. So, for example, students critically interrogate racist scientific “evidence” that posited race as biological and therefore measurable. Pamphlets and documentation that highlighted visualizations of skull size and other physical features were central to constructing ideologies around racial superiority and racial inferiority as a justification for enslavement and eugenicist practices and policies. Through the assignment, students were encouraged to rethink traditional ideas of what is considered data. This framing of the assignment encouraged students to develop and employ critical thinking skills to engage with the course readings. Therefore, students not only cultivated critical thinking and close reading skills to reinterpret the texts or concepts visually, but also were able to reconsider what is considered as objective evidence or data versus what is not. By questioning science’s insistence on objective reasoning, students examined the possibilities of social scientific and humanistic inquiry and analysis. The critical framing of the assignment was central to facilitating students’ understanding of both the historical constructedness of race and racial categories, and simultaneously, the real material impacts of racism.

Integrating Disrupting Data into the course

Rosa and Pinto established a schedule prior to the beginning of the semester that outlined specific dates in the semester where Pinto would attend class to meet with students. It was important to them to make sure students saw both Rosa and Pinto as resources as they navigated this new learning framework. In the first class of the semester, they co-introduced the project to students. Rosa described

the logistics of the assignment: what students were required to do, how it would work, and the learning objectives (see Appendix 1 for assignment guidelines in syllabus). She explained to students that they would be required to make a series of blog posts on WordPress that visualized a specific aspect of the assigned reading. Each visualization would require students to think critically about the “data” in the reading. In student responses on Wordpress, they could pull out statistics, demographic information, or visualize theoretical concepts (see Figure 1 and 2 for examples). Pinto described the technological aspects of the assignment and demonstrated how to upload the assignment. She also made a sample Dear Data entry on whiteness and race so that students had a sense of what was being asked of them. Pinto provided students with her email so that students could be in contact with her regarding any technological questions. Students were asked to sign-up for three Dear Data posts over the course of the semester. Students signed-up for their posts in the second class and began posting for the readings for the third class.

At the beginning of the third, fourth, and fifth class meeting, Rosa took five minutes at the beginning of class to answer any questions about the assignment. She also opened the Dear Data WordPress dashboard and showed students how to upload their posts again. This proved to be a very important review for many students who were still confused about how to use WordPress.

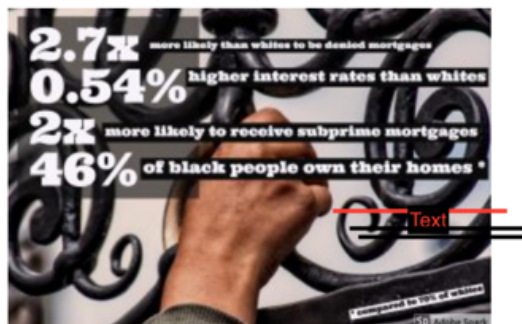
They also built in two Dear Data check-ins throughout the semester and added them to the syllabus so that students knew to expect facilitated discussions and group reflections about the project. Pinto came to class and facilitated the discussion with students. Having Pinto facilitate and engage with students at key moments throughout the semester was crucial to emphasize her role as a collaborator in the assignment and also allowed Rosa to participate in the discussion as a co-learner with students. The shifting of roles, ongoing reflection, and amplification of Pinto’s expertise elevated the impact of the assignment. During check-ins, Pinto invited the class to look closely at several Dear Data entries and also talk about any challenges or issues students were having. Intentionally planning moments to pause and reflect about both the logistics of the assignment and the objectives allowed students to see in practice how collaboration (between Rosa and Pinto) can be employed as a pedagogical strategy and how it can be a tool for disrupting top-down educational models and hierarchies in higher education (between faculty and staff and between faculty/staff and students).

Additionally, during the group check-ins and project reflections, students worked together in two groups to write the text for the homepage of the Dear Data website. Two students worked as the group facilitators and one student was the notetaker (she typed the google doc with the notes from the class on the projector) (Figure 3). Students collaboratively wrote the goals and objectives for the

Inequality in Homeownership

Classic

To create this image, I pulled some of the most striking figures about black homeownership from the chapter and superimposed them on a photo that shows a nonwhite hand at a gate (signifying a barrier or a lack of access to whatever lies on the other side). I intended to illustrate the effects of those statistics on people. It is one thing to read numbers on a textbook page, it is another to see someone physically encountering a boundary constructed by the wealth disparity.



Discussion question: How would the statistics represented on this image have to change in order to demonstrate a significant change in the black-white wealth disparity in the United States? Would a change in statistics actually represent a change in the lives of members of marginalized communities affected by wealth disparity? Why or why not?

FIGURE 1. SAMPLE STUDENT POST (BY LUCY JAMES-OLSON) ON THE COURSE DISRUPTING DATA WORDPRESS SITE, SPRING 2020.

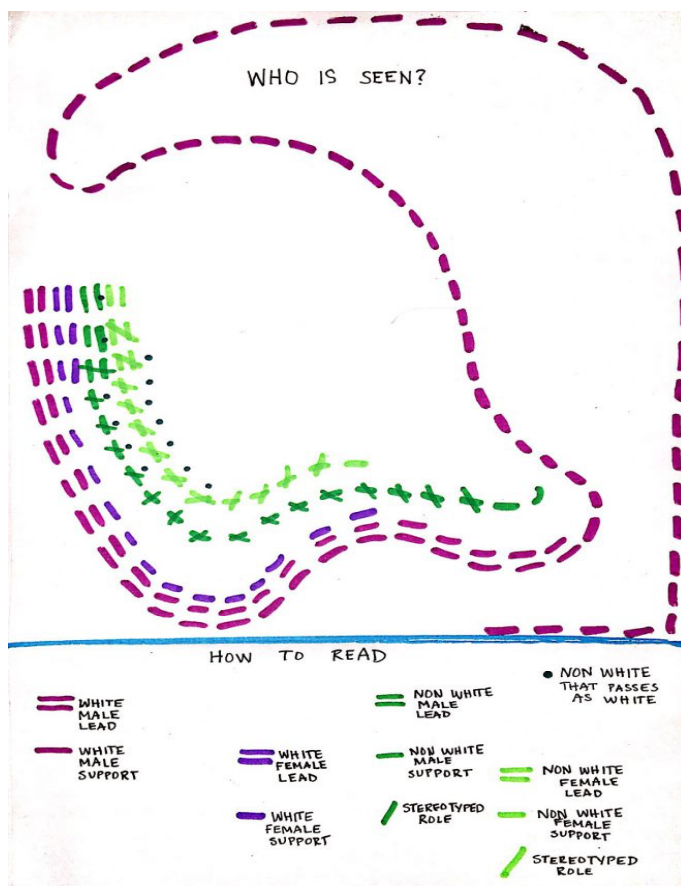


FIGURE 2. SAMPLE STUDENT POST (BY ELIZABETH DELORME) ON THE COURSE DISRUPTING DATA WORDPRESS SITE, FALL 2017.

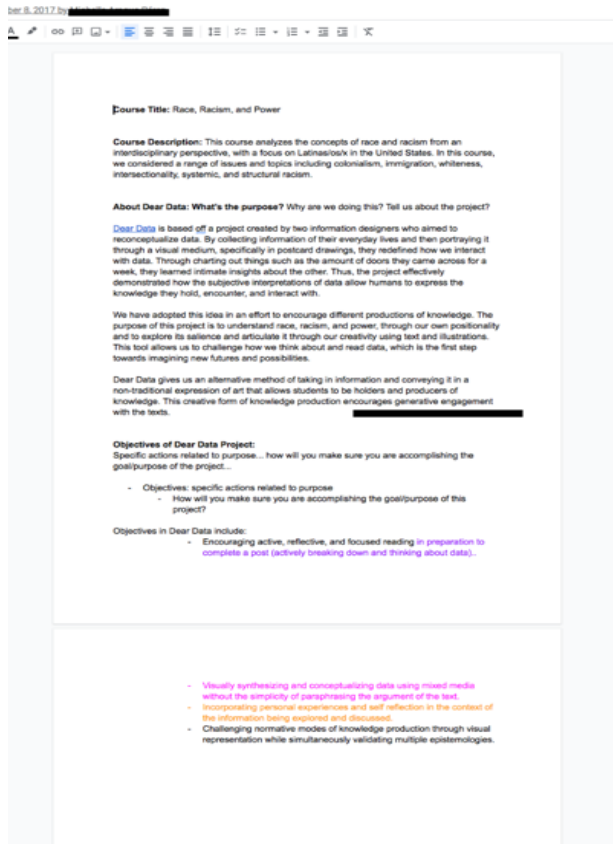


FIGURE 3. STUDENTS WORKED TOGETHER IN GOOGLE DOCS TO CO-WRITE THE TEXT FOR THE HOMEPAGE OF THE CLASS WORDPRESS SITE, FALL 2017.

assignment on the homepage of the WordPress site (Figure 4). This was a transformative experience for the class and added another layer to the collaborative aspects of the project. While students worked individually on their blog posts, they were able to co-write the website homepage based on their experiences with and knowledge of the project. This was another opportunity for students to center their voices in the classroom.

Similarly, in spring 2020, students worked in two-groups to write descriptions of the project. Students in group 1 brainstormed the following:

- Effectively disrupts traditional structures of knowledge production by prompting students to critically interpret course materials through creative visualizations
- Students regaining agency over the way that they learn
- Collaborative
- Allows students to work without restrictions which also changes the way we engage with / approach materials
- Personal introspection // Personal GROWTH
- Array of interpretations of the text - no two are the same

- Freedom of creativity and analysis
- Caters to different learning methods
- Adaptable to different learning styles
- FUN

Here, students reflected on the various aspects of the assignment. Although students constructed each post on their own, they center the collaborative nature of the assignment (learning from each other). They also highlight how the assignment allowed them to creatively engage with the materials and interpret the readings from their own perspective.

Evaluation

From the outset, Pinto and Rosa discussed how to evaluate the process and project. While Rosa conducts mid-semester evaluations for all of her classes, in *Race, Racism, and Power*, students were able to anonymously comment on or express concerns specifically about Dear Data early in the semester. The Dear Data check-in classes also served as an opportunity for group informal evaluation and reflection. Pinto also attended the last class of the semester and facilitated a Dear Data debrief with students. As a final project evaluation, they worked together to develop an end of semester anonymous evaluation for the assignment in addition to the formal evaluations required for all courses. Pinto wrote the first draft and Rosa revised it. Using a google form with anonymous responses, the author's asked students the following questions:

- Name, Major, Graduation Year (Optional)
- How familiar with WordPress were you before this project?
- Do you prefer creative assignments over papers?
- What has been the most challenging part of this assignment?
- Has this project impacted your learning/engagement in other classes?
- If you answered yes to the above, how has the project impacted your learning/engagement in other classes?
- What did you learn from participating in the Dear Data Project?



FIGURE 4. WORDPRESS DEAR DATA HOMEPAGE, 2018.

- How did your visualizations change or shift during the semester?
- If you were to chat with someone taking this class next term, what would you want them to know about participating in the Dear Data Project?
- What was something about this project that could be altered to improve the Project experience?

There were many important reflections from students about the assignment. One key response was that students reported that Dear Data impacted their learning in other courses: 60 percent of students responded that the project positively impacted their learning/engagement in other classes. Students were given the opportunity to explain their response:

"I've learned to contextualize in a different manner. Since all of my classes are reading intensive, learning another way to analyze readings has been very helpful."

"I have tried Dear Data notes for readings in other classes."

"It has helped me visualize facts and data and be able to explain it to others in ways that we both understand. Visual representation also aids in making connections to other readings and information."

"I have a class that is called Problems in Global Ethics so a lot of the concepts and materials I learned from my peers' Dear Data Assignments I incorporate into this class and it really helps a lot because there are a lot of similarities in these two classes."

Another key reflection was that students reported that Dear Data impacted the way they read the course materials and their analytical engagement with the readings. For example, students wrote:

"I appreciated that this assignment allowed me to demonstrate what I got out of the readings in a visual form. I was able to engage with the readings in a deeper level and outline the main argument/points."

"I've learned the power of visualization vs. writing notes."

"It has helped me to think more deeply about the readings and information that I have been learning about."

In response to the question, "What did you learn from participating in the Dear Data Project?", students responded,

"I came to understand the concepts I did a Dear Data entry on much deeper level than any of the other readings. I was also struck by the difference in interpretation of the materials, not in the message drawn from the reading, but the way people visualized it. Specifically, the connections they would make that I wouldn't, the context they would place it in, and places where I saw connections that they didn't. The subjectivity of our experiences of the readings was really underscored as it was the inspiration for this project."

"Drawing visuals to represent readings really helped me try to focus on what the reading was saying as a whole and to find the key points of it."

"I think I learned the most from seeing other people's Dear Data interpretations. People did really interesting things that I wouldn't have thought of."

Overall, students reported a positive experience with the project. In response to the question, "If you were to chat with someone taking this class next term, what would you want them to know about participating in the Dear Data Project?"

"It's the best thing ever! It's valuable in synthesizing the readings, and more fun than just writing responses. It turns the class into a collaborative space which is open to new ideas and ways of learning."

"Dear Data is amazing! It's a great hands-on way to engage with the text, communicate with others in the classroom, and personalize the readings. It is also a way to sort out what you are thinking and discover questions you might have."

"It is going to be fun and spoil you for readings in other classes. Sometimes I will read something for another class and think to myself that I wish I could do a Dear Data entry on this. I would encourage people to make time to really do their entries well because you can get much out of it and do an effective entry given time and heavy thought. Artistic skill is by no means necessary. It is all about the concepts and how you see them."

Additionally, in the formal College course evaluations, students commented specifically about how the assignment impacted their understanding of race and racism. Students wrote:

"I learned a great deal about racial conditions and racial justice; I thought that I was already educated on these topics as I try to stay aware of current and past events, but I genuinely feel enlightened now that the semester is coming to a close."

I liked that as the semester progressed we used our own questions and our own dear data posts to start discussions. It helped expand the range of topics we were able to cover and helped clarify anything we were confused about.

I felt like the students learned a lot from each other which gave us agency in the classroom. Overall, the structure of this class is different from others I've taken at Mount Holyoke College, and I'm very happy about that. It's not the traditional format of learning through lectures and taking exams/writing papers which helped me understand that learning can be done through various avenues.

We used great tools in the class to further the ideals of challenging pedagogy and hegemony, most notably the "Dear Data Project" where we as students were challenged to create a visual piece and discussion question or each week's reading. By using a creative

outlet rather than a traditional writing response, students were able to represent a diverse range of responses in a manner much more approachable format. As a first-year, this was especially appealing. As I was trying to navigate how to write a college paper in other classes and questioning my ability to do so, I was able to use skills like collage creation and digital art in Professor Rosa's class-- things I am much more well-versed in and comfortable with.

The readings reflected the concepts well and the Dear Data Project allowed us to really dissect those concepts. There weren't many written assignments which I personally prefer. Dear Data allowed me every week to really reflect on the content and so did the discussions in class."

In the formal course evaluations, students reflected on the relationship between Disrupting/Dear Data and their own learning about race, racism, and power. Students expressed an appreciation for assignments that were not a formal paper and also that the assignment allowed them to dive deeper into specific concepts.

Based on student feedback, one significant change was implemented was how the assignment was incorporated into the class. While the first time they used Dear Data in spring 2017, students were only required to complete three posts during the semester, in fall 2017, students posted on the Wordpress site one time per week (for a total of 9 posts during the semester). Students commented that the assignment was transformative for their learning and that they would have liked it to be used for weekly discussions in class and worth a higher percentage of their grade (because of the amount of time they put into developing each post). Because of students' suggestions to make the assignment a more central part of the course, Rosa also restructured class time where class would begin with students working in small groups and discussing each other's visualizations. After working in small groups, the class would come back together and discuss the posts and key concepts as a larger group. Rosa would end the class by emphasizing the key takeaways from the readings and the Dear Data blog posts to ensure the learning objectives for each class meeting were met. This approach both generated a collaborative classroom dynamic where students deeply engaged with one another's disrupting data posts and also supported neurodiversity in the classroom.

After incorporating the assignment into the course three times, Rosa consulted with Pinto to make another significant change and revised the name from Dear Data to Disrupting Data to better capture the goals of the assignment. Given the role of data science in the production and reproduction of race and racism, the title "Disrupting Data" more precisely captured the need to challenge, question, and critique the perceived objectivity of positivist representations of data.

Conclusion

While the outcomes from this assignment index the impact on student learning, this reflection centers the collaborative development process, different possibilities for engaging with students about the histories of race and

racism, as well as the importance of creating and supporting collaborative learning spaces. Cultivating mutually supportive relationships that benefit faculty and librarians can enhance student learning. It also models to students that there are many "experts" on campuses and outside of the classroom—including in library and technology departments. Pinto also asserts that collegial and respectful collaborations make librarian and technologist working conditions better and move away from positioning librarians as staff who provide services to faculty and students—and instead positions librarians as crucial resources on campus. The bridging of ideas and expertise across campuses and between faculty, librarians, and students can be transformative for campus communities and student learning. Opening up classrooms and syllabi in ways that promote collaboration—in planning, implementation, and evaluation, including using student feedback to improve the assignment for future classes. These are some of the ways that equitable and collaborative partnerships can decenter hierarchies, particularly between faculty and staff, that often dominate learning environments in higher education.

Much can be gained for both students and the teachers to bring in other experts and introduce students to collaborative teaching models. While professors are generally the sole authority in the classroom in traditional higher education contexts, and, unless co-teaching, hosting a guest lecture, or being supervised for a teaching review, they might have limited need to share instruction or open the classroom to peers. For the Disrupting Data assignment, close collaboration in the classroom was not something Pinto and Rosa extensively discussed prior to the first class meeting; it was nurtured before the first class and developed organically during the process. One key reason for this was because of Pinto's technology expertise and her skills in project management and instructional design. This was something she brought to the project and was a welcomed asset. As such, during classes where Pinto attended, she led discussion and answered questions as a co-instructor and co-facilitator modeling collaborative instruction in the classroom. This dynamic decenters the traditional power dynamics that one often encounters in American higher education where the professor is the sole authority in the classroom. While acknowledging the power dynamic between a professor and librarian, Pinto was able to point to their relationship with Rosa when seeking to build other collaborations across campus. This gave Pinto more agency to promote her expertise, protect her time, and experience better working conditions.

Finally, courses about race and racism can be challenging for both instructors and students. It can also be liberating and offer students the tools and vocabulary to understand our social worlds and give order to their experiences. This assignment allowed students to grapple with multiple layers of course content by simultaneously troubling how we conceptualize data while also visualizing concepts like intersectionality, institutional racism, or the school-to-prison-pipeline. Giving students the space and creative outlet to engage with course concepts allowed for deeper classroom discussion and overall better understanding of the course concepts. Digital based assignments also give students the opportunity to grapple

with what they are learning through other forms of creative expression beyond written reading responses and essays.

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Appendix A: Assignment Guidelines

Spring 2017 syllabus

Dear Data: Details to be discussed on the first day of class. *Dear Data* (the book) is on reserve at the library.

Dear Data entries are assigned to encourage students to engage with the readings through visual/artistic reflection and representation. How can we visually represent the ideas/concepts/theories we learn in class/in the readings? What images, words, pictures help express/represent the content of the readings? You can use drawings (markers/crayons/colored pencils and sketch paper), drawing apps on your phone, video, concept mapping, collages, etc. You can choose your creative medium, however, if it is not listed above, please confirm your medium with me. Also, your representation must be able to be uploaded to the class Wordpress site. Each entry must include a title and 1-2 sentence description.

You are required to do three Dear Data entries over the course of the semester. You will sign up for your entry date on January 31st in class. You must upload three Dear Data entries to the class WordPress Site on your assigned dates.

Additional information on Dear Data, including the login information for the website, is available on Moodle.

Fall 2017 syllabus

Dear Data: Details to be discussed on the first day of class.

Dear Data entries are assigned to encourage students to engage with the readings through visual/artistic reflection and representation. How can we visually represent the ideas/concepts/theories we learn in class and in the readings? You can use drawings (markers/crayons/colored pencils and sketch paper), drawing apps on your phone, video, concept mapping, collages, etc. You can choose your creative medium, however, if it is not listed above, please confirm your medium with me. Also, your representation must be able to be uploaded to the class WordPress site. Each entry must include a title, a 1-2 sentence description, and a discussion question. Please upload your entry by 9 pm the night before class.

You must upload nine Dear Data entries to the class WordPress Site on your assigned dates. Students with last names A-M will post on Sunday night and students with last names N-Z will post on Tuesday night (the night before class). The first day of posts will be September 20th. Each post is worth 5%.

Additional information on Dear Data, including the login information for the website, is available on Moodle. *Dear Data* (the book) is on reserve at the library.

For technical questions about Dear Data please email Pinto

Spring 2020 syllabus

Disrupting Data: Details to be discussed on the first day of class. *Dear Data* (the book) is on reserve at the library.

Disrupting Data entries are assigned to encourage students to engage with the readings through visual/artistic reflection and representation. How can we visually represent the ideas/concepts/theories we learn in class and in the readings? What

images, words, pictures help express/represent the content of the readings? You can use drawings (markers/crayons/colored pencils and sketch paper), drawing apps on your phone, video, concept mapping, collages, etc. You can choose your creative medium, however, if it is not listed above, please confirm your medium with me. Also, your representation must be able to be uploaded to the class WordPress site. Each entry must include a title, a 1-2 sentence description, and a discussion question.

Students are required to make nine DD posts during the semester on your assigned day. Please upload your post to the class WordPress site by 8 am on the morning of class.

Last names A-K—post on Mondays

Last names L-Z –post on Wednesdays

Each post is worth 5%. The rubric for grading can be found on Moodle.

Additional instructions will be discussed in class on January 22 and 27.

For technical questions about Dear Data please email Pinto

Vanessa Rosa is Class of 1929 Dr. Virginia Apgar Assistant Professor of Latina/o Studies at Mount Holyoke College.

Caro Pinto is a research & instruction librarian at Mount Holyoke College.



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RADICAL TEACHER

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

Toward a Grotkean Pedagogy: *Teacher as Political*

by Sean Cameron Golden



GRAPHIC BY KILL JOY VIA JUSTSEEDS.ORG

A note to the reader: In my teaching I seek to introduce my students to new ways of framing questions and answers we, as educators and academics, have grappled with for centuries. In that spirit, the article below plays with form in a way that embodies what I hope is my own radical teaching.¹ You will find a series of vignettes from my time teaching at Brooklyn Center Middle School, a predominantly lower socioeconomic suburb located just outside Minneapolis, Minnesota. The student body is majority Black and African American, Hispanic, and Southeast Asian (Nearly all the eighth graders at the school passed through my English classroom, and out of six periods of thirty students each, about ten students were white). These vignettes are accompanied by a moment at University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, where I currently teach and study, in which I panic about online teaching. The undergraduates I teach are predominantly white female elementary education majors. When reading this essay, please take note of the endnotes, as they are not directly part of the story in which I build the theoretical pedagogy of Miss Alordayne Grotke,² the wonky fourth grade classroom teacher of Third Street Elementary School from the Disney television series *Recess* (airing from 1997–2001). The endnotes in the paper can be engaged with while reading or after—reader, you don't have to read the endnotes. They are merely there to add deeper context into the theorization behind Grotkean pedagogy and the political choices a teacher must make in the classroom.

Although fictional, Miss Grotke was one of the few examples I had of a teacher of color in front of the classroom (my first Black teacher did not come until my sophomore year of my undergraduate days). Miss Grotke practiced her own radical pedagogy when teaching her fourth-grade class about issues surrounding gender stereotypes, environmentalism, imperialism, and race in the US. In this way, she embodied what has come to be my own central standpoint in education: teacher as political. This standpoint builds upon commonly recognized concepts in education, namely of the “personal as political” and “the myth of neutrality.” To develop this concept of teacher as political, I home in on what might be called a Grotkean pedagogy, conducting a reparative reading (in connection to the theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s use of this term) of this *Recess* figure and bringing it alongside my own experiences in the classroom. This essay and this project are an attempt to provide contextual understanding about the role of a Black teacher in front of the classroom.

"To speak of diversity, in light of this country's history of racial recidivism, is to focus on bringing ethnic variety to largely white institutions, rather than dismantling the structures that made them so white to begin with."

—Jelani Cobb

Introduction

One week before school starts. At the English Language Arts teacher meeting we all have our novels for the year.

I won't teach or tell the story of Black death in my classroom.³ My Black, Brown, and Hmong students do not need to hear about their unexistence—who wants to constantly read and learn about their bodies being erased? This question lingers as I flip through *To Kill A Mockingbird* over and over as the other teachers talk about new strategies to teach Shakespeare. Instead, I think, I'll ask the students to inscribe Tom Robinson's name all over our classroom so that we'd never forget what it means to defend the dead,⁴ to battle and defy the narratives of Black erasure.

Fast forward eight weeks in time after the moment I told myself I won't teach Black death.

We walked down the hallway to our principal's office side by side; me with a high-top and him with a hipster man-bun. It was Friday, a day that we—as educators—were allowed to dress more casually. Without fail he wore one of his NBA jerseys, I wore a button-down shirt I picked up in Vietnam. I wanted to use clothes to show my Brooklyn Center students Black people are not just limited to the confines of state lines; he used his clothes to build bridges with a community he was not automatically a part of. The door to our principal's office was open and a student was just exiting. Gathering her paperwork together, the principal called us in, pointing to the two chairs across from her desk. Once settled, she said, "I got a call from a parent worried about his daughter's education. He said that the two of you were being too political by displaying Black Lives Matter posters."

Shrugging away what was more of an accusation than a question or invitation to have a conversation, we both acknowledged our support of BLM. Leaning back in her chair, the principal said, "I support BLM, but if you can't connect it to your respective lessons, take the signs down. We have to think of all our students and not be too political in the classroom." With that, we left with an "enjoy your weekend." Walking back to gather our things from our respective classrooms, the man-bun teacher noted how weird it was that the respective students of the complaining parent were among the few white students who attended the middle school.

Man-bun made his sign less visible the following week by putting it on the side of his desk; I asked the students to make more signs for their classroom. To counter the erasure of Tom Robinson in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I made the political choice to create with my students our own literary monuments (art, protest posters, songs, short stories, playlists) to (re)story our visions of what justice looks like for Tom—and our existence.

Skipping through time, it is the last week of August 2020. The first full semester of mass online teaching looms on the precipice.

"Sean, you are ready to publish your Canvas course," the Curriculum and Instruction (C&I⁵) technology wizard exclaims excitedly, "I know you have been worried for weeks but this looks like it will be a successful asynchronous/semi-synchronous course."

"Lorrie, thank you for all your help!" I sign out of the Zoom call a little too quickly, as the panic prompts me to go back to perturbedly pacing in my office.

As a queer Black male, my body is used as an entry into my teaching practice and a way to immediately alter the students' public concepts of bodies that are allowed to teach. The first day of class I ask my students how many of them have had a Black teacher before "this" moment. Many of them say I am their first. To exacerbate my worry of online teaching, all my teaching strategies rely on body movements in the classroom. From demonstrating understanding of texts through tableaux to creating Afrofuturist fortune tellers, the body in my classroom is used, seen, and heard to forge a classroom community. HOW WILL I FORGE A CLASSROOM COMMUNITY ONLINE!?!

*slow deep inhale

and exhale*

Months move maliciously fast; we make meaning as we monitor the absurdity of the pandemic.

My fingers twist my hair, curling and curling the curls even more so. I wait "in" my advisor's personal Zoom meeting room. The more I wait, the more nervous I get. Defending my teaching choices always makes me terrified—perhaps it is the inexperience, but I always feel as if I'm defending my right to teach. The wheel stops and in a blink, I've left the waiting room and my advisor's mouth is moving, but my audio can't keep up. "—good to see you, Sean. How was the semester? Let's start with your recent email... teacher as political and the use of self-determination to counter Black erasure as, you write here...' to privilege conversation and connection as Black imaginative agency is centered by deliberate classroom practices and curriculum choice to aid in the toppling of settler-state literature and practices that were once viewed as monumental to knowledge production...."

Why Miss Grotke? A Reparative Journey

Around the same moment I was in conversations with the C&I technology wizard, I was also revisiting the Disney cartoon show *Recess* as a tour through my childhood nostalgia to escape the weight 2020 placed on Black bodies; we were dying at a higher rate from the virus than other racial groups and still fighting the pandemic of killer cops. As a C&I scholar I immediately became enthralled with the teaching practices of Miss Alordayne Grotke. Visibly the only Black educator in the show, and quite possibly the only Black teacher seen in children's programming at the time, Miss Grotke did not shy away from being a radical teacher—each

day in her class was an interrogation of the white patriarchal system of public school education.

Entering the profession, I wanted to undo damage that was done to me as a Black child by white teachers. Having never had examples of Black teachers or teaching (I consider my aunties and other Black family members as seminal educators in my upbringing, but I'm strictly talking about the teaching in the classroom and hallways of American schools), I began to structure the practices I was seeing Miss Grotke utilize as a way to inform myself of how Black teachers should teach within educational institutions dictated my whiteness.

Esther Ohito and Shenila Khoja-Moolji use Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's reparative reading theorization to help repair the readings of two Black female characters from the books *Sarah Phillips* and *Caucasia*. Within this lineage of women writing about repair and care, I alter their focus from the Black female body to thinking about the Black teacher body. Using another Black female teacher character, Miss Grotke, I employed strategies from reparative reading to analyze Miss Grotke's teaching body and the performance in her classroom in order to understand what it means to embody a Black politics in the classroom. This reparative reading helped me work through my own painful experiences as a Black political teacher in the violent "American school" system.⁶

Miss Grotke was displayed as wild and eccentric; she wore flip-flops in the classroom, proudly didn't shave her legs, and constantly redirected lessons to reflect her political views. I was plagued by the exhaustion of constantly having to defend my place and choices as a Black teacher to my white colleagues. From the beginning of my time at Brooklyn Center I was targeted by other teachers for wearing clothes that were not considered to them as "unprofessional"; and constantly talked about for letting students call me by my first name. It was clear the image they saw of me was not in line with their political visions. "Politics of respectability rely upon whiteness as the measuring stick for digestible forms of black woman-ness, and therefore contribute to the 'political economy of domination fostering Black women's oppression'" (Ohito, Khoja-Moojli 280). I replace "black woman-ness" and "Black women's oppression" with Black teacher-ness and Black teacher oppression to help my reflection of why my white colleagues felt as if they needed to question my moves. I felt an allegiance with Miss Grotke in these moments. As seen numerous times throughout the shows, her colleagues constantly questioned her approach to education and how she chose to present herself and interact with her students.

Having felt the pain of my historical existence only be acknowledged in confluence with chains, teaching for me was a way to repair the virulent educational upbringing I experienced as a child—which I think was exacerbated by the lack of a Black teacher presence in the classrooms (predominantly in the suburban schools I attended). However, when I entered the classroom at a suburban school that was predominantly Black, I felt the same weight of tokenism, and the same flesh wounds were scratched into me just like when I was a student. It wasn't until I removed myself from the middle and high school environment that I

had a chance to care for my teacher psyche. The reading of Miss Grotke helped me establish a Black teacher as a political force in the classroom lineage to inform my path forward as I continue to do the political work of emancipating the Black teacher image inside the classroom.

Remaking a Slogan: teacher as political

Miss Grotke was radical; she took up the practice of teacher as political by constantly and deliberately making sure to (re)story narratives of consensus (read colonizing) public history. She willed the students to unlearn the biases of an education system, holding its stories accountable for the damages done to marginalized beings. Taken from the second wave Feminist movement, teacher as political is a play on the slogan "personal is political." Derived from Carol Hanisch's essay in *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation* in 1970, the slogan became a rallying cry into becoming a mindset "to change the objective conditions, not adjust to them" (Hanisch 1969).⁷ As a feminist theory standpoint, the "personal is political" suggests the small issues of personal experience should be examined to understand how larger systemic issues play against the personal.

Taking the mantle of teacher as political means the educator is choosing to resist the notions and societal demands that the teacher must be a figure of neutrality; a standpoint in opposition to white patriarchal school systems and the lies its curriculum tells students by surveilling what, where, when, and how learning takes place. Teacher as political is a teaching mindset and standpoint to counter public histories of American exceptionalism born from the oppression of marginalized communities. Teacher as political means the educator is a truth seeker; they examine what is upheld as monumental in our current school systems and rip away narratives that perpetuate Black death that survive in the violent shadows of white tormented imaginations. To evoke Grotkean pedagogy, a teacher must challenge what they are told to teach to promote educational emancipation. The teacher must not remain neutral.

The Myth of Neutrality

I start with Jonathan Gold's words from *Teaching Tolerance*:

Students look to their teachers to be the authority on the course material. And even though we may be aware that we are making choices about what content we include and exclude and whose perspectives we endorse and whose we disregard, most of us still like to pretend we are maintaining some level of objectivity. I came to the conclusion that objectivity is practically impossible. What's more, it can hinder our students' moral development. And cultivating morality is uniquely essential to the project of teaching history.

I remember as a student asking teachers about their political views and their thoughts on world issues. The school district I attended is in a white suburb of Orange County—

a notable racist hotbed.⁸ Lurking racism in the hallways or not, I still held interest in the opinions of my teachers (all white). Zero teachers had any opinions. All would robotically answer "the classroom is not a place for the political opinions of the teacher." I questioned not the political motives of the teachers but how their political choices then influenced their curricular implementation in the classroom. We as educators hold influential positions in our engagement with young minds. It is in the classroom where the world is shaped and built. This is one of the themes of teacher as political; in the classroom we must commit to ending colonial and imperialist agendas through curricular choices.

When I walked out of the principal's office after the first "rebuke" of my pedagogy, I was left stunned and stunted. An authority figure who'd granted me permission upon my hiring to be more socially justice oriented in my classroom was now asking for me to remove a sign that not only showed support for my students, but also me.... Was she suggesting that I be neutral in defending my own belonging?

Neutrality is a problem. It allows for insidious thoughts to ripen if they are not addressed.

Neutrality is a problem. It allows for insidious thoughts to ripen if they are not addressed. Students would draw swastikas in the bathroom of my high school in between classes—is a teacher supposed to stay neutral and let a clear act of hate pass? Teacher as political forces the educators to recognize the political weight their positioning as teachers in society holds. To use this standpoint in the undergraduate classroom is to not only have a Black Lives Matter sign in your classroom or office or behind you on Zoom, but to act like you believe in Black Lives Matter, even if that act potentially risks your job.

Stated earlier, teacher as political means to take a stand against the notion society has that the teacher be a neutral form of knowledge in the classroom. This thinking is a disservice to the education of our students and a disservice to the years teachers put into perfecting the art of teaching. To embody Miss Grotke means to actively make annotations and redactions of public histories; at every moment the classroom teacher must be ready to make the historical corrections to accurately frame history. Teacher as political standpoint does not concern itself with the political ideologies of a racist two-party system. It concerns itself with shaping a more liberatory future out of the ashes of the western epistemes' historical fantasies.

Teacher as Political in Practice

During our *To Kill A Mockingbird* unit students were asked to design their own protests. To accomplish that, they were required to engage with multiple different prompts. Some composed songs, some made posters, a couple wrote speeches, and others wrote stories about protests. I looked around my windowless classroom as student work slowly became a window into the radical dreams of the young. Students' Black Lives Matter posters screaming "Justice 4

Tom" were not hidden behind a desk; even the girl whose father complained about an overload "political" messaging, stood in solidarity with her BIPOC classmates as she collaborated on friends' pieces. I sat in the middle of the room on top of the desks swiveling² my head searching for my next move.

In the fields of Native and Indigenous studies the idea/concept/theory/practice of self-determination, which is best described for the theorization of teacher as political, is "most interested in the ways through which Indigenous peoples negotiate on their own behalf, claim resilience, take ownership of adaptation, and innovate knowledge production and dissemination" (Huaman, Martin, 2020, pg. 4). Used widely in many different lanes, self-determination suggests that we (the marginalized beings) should have our own right to govern our bodies and make policy decisions about our own cultures. The colonizers' tongues are not allowed to slip into our words. It is with this thinking the teacher as political owns the languages they choose to hear in the future.⁹

For thirty minutes I shifted student work around the classroom. One poster came down to go up onto another wall with no rhyme or reason. I was trying to figure out the best way to show student work without offending others. Jarome's poster ends up at the top of pile; Jamere's poster is a big hand with the middle finger grabbing the attention, "F**k Police" is stenciled in red letters that drip down the page. Jarome was a student who was severely allergic to the system of schooling—getting him to finish one poster (which was just one of three components of the project) took us a week and a half. There was nothing suggestive about the "political" messaging behind this work—fuck the police!

Thinking through self-determination and the goals of teacher as political standpoint, Deleuze's work on deterritorialization leading to reterritorialization complements both the wants and needs of the respective concepts.¹⁰ Deterritorialization destroyed cultures. An example of this would be the South's eradication of Black schools and Black teachers as their response to the decision to integrate schools after *Brown v Board of Education* (1954), more swiftly enforced after the second decision in 1956. This decision was championed by the use of the document, *The Southern Manifesto*.¹¹ Reterritorialization, used through a teacher as political standpoint, in practice would be hanging up a "F**K Police" poster on their respective desks so students know it is not a "political" standpoint to want fair and unbiased policing where Black and Brown people are not disproportionately killed by the police in the United States; this was countering erasure.

Jamere walked in the classroom the next day with the biggest smile on his face when he saw his poster hanging on the side of my desk. Now having more hindsight of the situation, it might have been a poor decision to blatantly ignore my principal. However, it was imperative for me to display my scholars' work, no matter the language they used: teaching as a political act is not singular; it is communal. All bodies must be accounted for and accountable so that the classroom can be a community working together to decolonize the teachings of white western males. The goal was to create a classroom

community that recognized and listened to marginalized perspectives—displaying the posters was my way of acknowledging my scholars' voices.

Educators must do more than just suggest visions of the futures to the students. "...a primary learning objective for black schoolteachers as a professional class was to help students understand the urgent demand to make the work anew" (Givens 2021 159). The classroom is a shared learning community where both educators and students build the future together by dismantling the systems built by white violent imaginations. Police—once seen as monumental to the functioning of our society—were toppled and discarded like statues in this 8th grade language arts learning community.¹²

Unlearning Biases

"I thought it was powerful to sit and talk about our storied selves and how they became storied for three hours a day." My chair came to a complete stop as I finished telling the technology wizard of C&I the origins of the Critical Conversations assignment.

"Okay, I wrote everything you said down—sharing the Google doc now. Let's break this apart together. First, you should not ask your students to record themselves talking for three hours, not realistic for a 1000 level undergraduate course," she says in a very Edna Mode fashion. Each meeting, the technology wizard of C&I's linear thinking leaves my brain exhausted.

"I really only want my students to create knowledge with each other. Two people in conversation attempting to build a consensus reality about the socio-cultural and geopolitical issues that plague their lives using texts featuring Indigenous futurites and Black imaginative thought and agency." I stare through the screen as I think about if my students' conversations will hold a flame to the Haymarket Books talk about abolitionist teaching. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJZ3RPJ2rNc&t=2521s>)

Last June after the murder of George Floyd, a close friend of mine was going through a reckoning of unlearning after watching all eight minutes and forty-six seconds of the crime.¹³ In a series of lengthy conversations, my friend and I talked through how he learned or didn't learn about race and stories of marginalized beings. In these moments, he questioned his privilege and positioning as a white cisgender man and his past reactions to works written by non-white folks. As we spoke and listened to one another about our differences and similarities, a knowledge of one another's storied lives bloomed—we became our own curriculum.

Thinking about countering erasure of the Black body in the classroom, I return to the conversations I had with my friend over the summer. One of the first questions I asked him was if he ever had a Black teacher. Like myself and many others who had grown up in the public school system, he had not. As a mixed-race child, one of my parents being Black, I still had access—my aunts provided a wealth of information—to Black educators, so Black thought and art was not foreign to me. When we spoke of our readings in

high school and what was being learned in the classroom, woefully my friend lamented about how disappointed he was to have only believed in the colonizer's papers.

The texts that he had believed to be monumental were in fact just tools to shape public history and hide marginalized beings' historical accounts. He'd been taught to think that books like *The Great Gatsby*, *Heart of Darkness*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (and on and on through the "classic" canon) were necessary cornerstones of our education. And seeing this, I began to question what it is that we find monumental in curriculum and why school systems are still reliant on the implementation of these texts in schools.¹⁴ In our discussion of these texts, the two of us were creating knowledge about the world and our place in it through the directed use of books and other literature, instead of using literature to be the sole proprietor of knowledge.

It was important to me that students knew academic knowledge (i.e., knowledge that relies on Western ways of knowing) could be produced through alternative ways that eschewed the limitations of standardized paper writing. Pinar writes about using conversation needing to be critical to break the barriers of curriculum. As we converse, we enter a shared space that allowed for imagination and critique to be more easily accessed. With texts promoting Black imaginative agency, students talk, and through talking, future worlds are created that fit not just the student but that of the Grotkean thinker; we counter erasure together.

Conclusion

"Can we remember what it is to be alive with each other, beyond suffering and survival?"

—adrienne marie brown

What does it mean to survive a pandemic? How do we remember what it is like to connect with other humans without using death as an entry point? These were questions I asked myself as I began to construct the reading lists and assignments for my Fall 2020 classes. As Black death played out on screen like Greek tragedies, I wondered how do we best talk about this targeted erasure of Black people in classrooms—and what does it mean to ask students to write and read about the respective pandemics we live in and through?

Reparative reading was chosen because, "A reparative reading directs readers to extract 'sustenance from the objects of a culture – even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them' (Ohito, Khoja-Moojli 282). In this article for *Radical Teacher*, I wanted to center my teaching body alongside Miss Grotke's pedagogy and her performance inside the classroom as a way of self-actualization and curating a Black teacher genealogical lineage. Teaching inside an American school system is not sustainable for Black teachers. The repair and healing for (of) my teaching self is a journey. Care is not spoken about in the teaching profession. This is me giving care to the pain inflicted inside school hallways. The wounds heal like scars;

they keloid, festering on our psyche like those lashes from the whips on the backs of the enslaved that acted against the will of white domination. To alleviate the pain we must address the need and reason to continue to be political teachers: as Black teachers we attempt to rebuild the world so that we [Black folk] are no longer seen in confluence with chains.

Teacher as political is a way of being and teaching in critical manners to help students unlearn biases. This is a standpoint that counters erasure of marginalized beings in the classrooms; I do not teach so my students can acquire information, I teach to (re)story my life as a student and help alter my student's perception of what is an education. Teacher as political is a direct attack against 'schooling' and a weapon for educators that want to truly help students unlock diverse histories.

End Notes

1. Stacy Holman Jones writes in *Living Bodies of Thought*: "In critical autoethnography, theory is a language available to us as we write our stories". I've wanted to become a college professor since I learned about Plato and the great ancient philosophers. (I thought it would be cool to sit on a rock and think). Beyond the superficial, I wanted to prove wrong the racist teachers I had in my schooling career--not only succeed in their realm, but change it. Autoethnography helps to inform my understanding and production of knowledge. Having been and being a marginalized creature in the classroom, my thinking is derived from the knowledge acquired from my survival of and in the racist American school systems. Drawing from my survival, I write my knowledge into and with the knowledge of other Black theorists and borrow knowledge from my Indigenous brothers and sisters who are doing radical decolonial work in academia. To unlearn biases of oppressive education systems is the engine behind teacher as political.

2. Using Miss Grotke as a trendsetter for the concept of teaching as political, Sabzalian's essay aids the theorization as it helps push feminist and native theories together to challenge "hierarchical power relations and dominant ideologies" (362). Furthermore, Sabzalian writes that feminist standpoint theory was a counter to the thinking that knowledge production must be detached and objective; this privileged the "feeling" that drives knowing. Sabzalian writes that using Native feminist theories helps to "counter colonial logics and further decolonial futures" (361). To use the standpoint of teacher as political one acknowledges they become a bricoleur of theories to upend the patriarchal education system by privileging the teaching of histories from the perspective of those shadowed by the oppressors' history books. It is important to note that we as the teacher must be accountable to our own work in the colonial system. "Through reflective dialogue and intersectional critique standpoint theorizing has a long history of engaging the politics of difference" (363); we are looking for ways to exist.

3. School and classrooms have been sites to damage Black bodies for centuries. Dumas uses racial melancholia to research the suffering Black students feel in white dominant

classroom spaces. Confronting these sites of suffering Black educators must take on the burden of protecting their BIPOC students from historical harm and protect their respective psyches—school damage haunts. Teacher as political standpoint addresses the Black educator works in these suffering sites and respects the educator's need to rebuke consensus knowledge, and protect the personal psyche of the marginalized being.

4. Christina Sharpe asks Black scholars and educators to become undisciplined as they work within the white ivory tower toward true racial and social equality and equitability. Writing that these academic systems were not set up to think the BIPOC scholar will succeed, we work in the wake of the Transatlantic Slave Trade to defend the dead; we sit with history as we conduct the emancipatory teaching practices. The teacher as political understands that defending the dead means to always (re)story the dominant narratives of American curriculum. To defend the dead means to disregard Western knowledge production and privilege ancestral knowledge and embodied histories. To defend the dead means to hold a Black Lives Matter rally in your 8th grade classroom for Tom Robinson.

5. The Curriculum and Instruction department is housed in the College of Education and Human Development at The University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

6. Jarvis R Givens wrote *Fugitive Pedagogy: Carter G Woodson and the Art of Black Teaching* to emphasize the need for Black people to escape the teachings of the "American School," through an analytic of fugitivity. Fugitivity looks for the ways in which teachers and students have subverted the curriculum in order to learn about themselves as racialized beings not through the words of white textbooks. "Fugitive Pedagogy asks: What has been the nature of black people's relationship to the American School? And how have they worked to enact their own visions of teaching and learning within this structural context?" (Givens 2021 10).

7. Hanisch originally wrote the piece to promote the consciousness—raising about how the patriarchy affects even the fine points of a woman's life. She continues that by thinking about how personal decisions affect and effect societal decisions, then we [womxn] should think of changing our personal lives in order to get what we [womxn] want societally. Thinking through the art of teaching, educators are rarely given control of the content and preferred assessments. To combat the western system of schooling, teacher as political demands educators to select and defend their content and how they go about collecting student understanding and knowledge of respective content. Teacher as political examines the decisions made in the classroom and the classroom curriculum as political moves to educate against erasure of marginalized bodies.

8. If interested, here is an article that goes into the history of the KKK in Orange County: <https://fullertonobserver.com/2019/01/07/a-brief-history-of-the-ku-klux-klan-in-orange-county-notes-on-the-banality-of-evil/>. This is necessary information because many think Orange County is a liberal hotbed, but it has

proven time and again to be an unfriendly place for Black faces.

9. Much of this essay and theorization around Grotkean Pedagogy/teacher as political is a bricolage. Bricolage requires one to be interdisciplinary and smart, what are they using, how are they using it, and why is it needed to emancipate and reimagine stories [when I say "it" I allude to various theories or conceptual tools]. Almost an inspired act, bricolage as research emphasizes creativity and diverse thinking as it "challenge(s) the hegemonic status quo" of Western society and knowledge. Bricolage and the collaboration of knowledges can help fight erasure of the settler states. Bricolage, as Komea writes is, "adopt(ing) and adapt(ing) tools and theories from variety of sources to ho'oku'iku'i or stitch together a rich tapestry of analyses that privilege Indigenous perspectives, expose and 'speak back' to Western domination, and promote social justice and Indigenous self-determination" (190-191).

10. From Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) this philosophical concept is about how bodies are territorialized and coded within a system of power. Deterritorialization is for the separation from cultural and political practices of colonization and imperialism (italics are my original thoughts on the subject). In my interpretation, reterritorialization is what Jarvis R. Givens argues in his book about Carter G. Woodson, that fugitivity is the analytic mode we as emancipatory educators need to operate in to remake the world anew, without systems of oppression.

11. Signed by about one fifth of congress at the time, the document gave southern parents (white parents) a right to revoke integration and continue segregationist practices. The document advanced beliefs that Black folks were subordinate and did not have enough intellect to teach white people. This was issued in 1956.

12. Teacher as political standpoint uses *Monumental Mobility's* use of memory work to confront historical memory: "memory work is the myriad ways in which monuments imbedded in a social fabric play a role in how individuals and collectivities make meaning of the past as distinct from the concrete matter of what actually happened," (7). I propose we think of curriculum as a sort of monument, what is monumental in our curriculum? How do these curricular monuments shadow the narratives of the marginalized? When and why should the educator make the political move to "topple" these monuments from the curriculum? These are the questions those working from the lens of teacher as political are to answer.

13. Teacher as political adopts the analytic of fugitivity to "investigate the precarity of the interstitial space between life and death that Black people inhabit in an anti-Black world" (Ohito 2020 188).

14. Paraskeva starts with the Galeano quote, "incapable of fighting poverty, it fights the poor, while the dominant culture, a militarized culture, worships the violence of power," to describe our society. Taking knowledge acquired from *Monumental Mobility*, the books that we consider to be monumental (like *Gatsby* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*), are violent representations of our society. With the continuation of teaching these texts, we promote the worship of violent

language toward BIPOC communities. Itinerant Curriculum Theory is Paraskeva's invention to "delink(ing) from the totalitarian worship of the archetype of modernity," the modernity being western knowledge systems. ICT is a tool to aid the "decolonial struggle against curriculum epistemicides," (262). Drawing heavily from Deleuze and his work on becoming and deterritorialization, Paraskeva seems to suggest the teacher and student should be in a symbiotic learning community. This is further supported by the authors use of Huebner writing teachers interact with students like "a jazz quartet, each one find[ing] his own way of adding beauty to the jazz form," (265). The issues of gendered language aside, teacher as political standpoint firmly suggests that the teacher is not the holder of knowledge in the classroom—directly opposing consensus understanding of the teacher as know-it-all.

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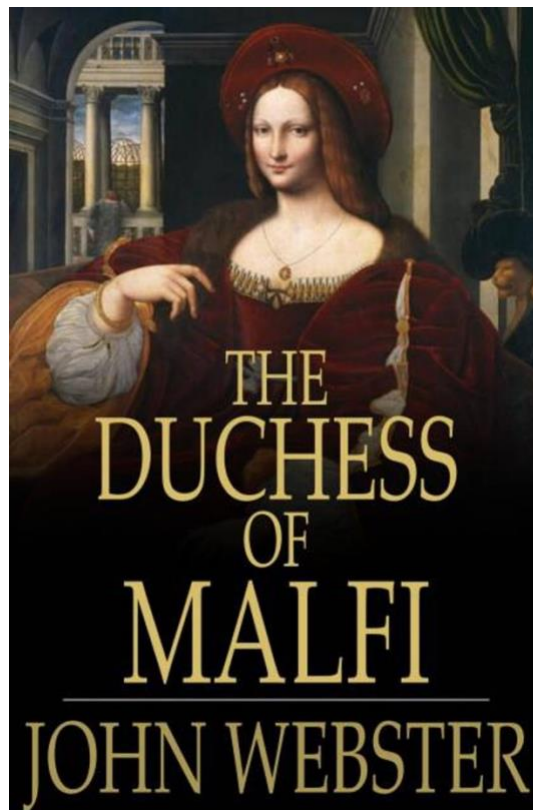
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Teaching Note

Incomprehensible Concepts and Contexts: Teaching *The Duchess of Malfi* in Bhutan

by Kuruvella Babu Shankar Rao



THE DUCHESS OF MALFI (1623) BY JOHN WEBSTER

It was spring time in Bhutan when I, an Indian teaching in a Bhutanese college, started teaching John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623). This was to the M.A. students of Yonphula Centenary College, a government postgraduate college affiliated to the Royal University of Bhutan, Bhutan. It was a mixed-gender class of 27 students, of whom 9 were women and 18 were men, and all of them were in the age group of 31-42 years. Being in-service salaried government teachers, who were sponsored by the state to upgrade their qualifications with a goal to improve the quality of education in Bhutanese schools, they can be categorised as "middle-class" in South Asian terms. For students living in a Buddhist country, where even the killing of animals for food is prohibited and the Gross National Happiness is prioritized, the psychological trauma, the violent and gory events portrayed in the play were appalling. But it was the concepts which made such violence possible that the students could not understand. As the Bhutanese were not acquainted with the concept of pure-impure blood, nor with the concept of "the female body as an embodiment of honour," nor the "honour-killings" so familiar to Indian peoples, they could not understand the so-called defilement of "blood-lines" in the Jacobean play.

As the class read Act I, Scene 3 of the play, I realised that dealing with the text was a challenge as the Bhutanese society is unacquainted with the restrictions and proscriptions placed upon women by male family members as exemplified by the Duchess's brothers. When the students read the implicit threats from the brothers about her remarriage, and her witty rebuttals in Act I, Scene 3, they were shocked and could not understand the authority of the brothers over their sibling, the Duchess. The classroom was filled with doubts, questions, and comments such as "How can brothers restrict their sister thus?" "How can brothers decide what is good or bad for their sister?" As they explained to me, "In our Bhutanese Buddhist culture, parents and brothers do not interfere in the marriage decisions of our women. Marriages are done based on the choices of women and men, without fuss and pomp, just with the exchange of locally brewed liquor 'araa.' Women can choose a groom from any community; Bhutanese, Nepali, or any other country, and there is no question of the family 'blood' being tainted by marrying a man/woman from another community." The comment about tainted blood was again raised when we reached the point where Ferdinand receives information about the Duchess's secret marriage/liaison and the birth of her child, when he bursts out in an uncontrollable rage, and describes her as "notorious strumpet," "cursed creature" and speaks of her "infected blood" (Act II, Scene 5).

Then the students reached Act IV, Scenes 1 & 2, wherein the Duchess is imprisoned and awaiting her inevitable murder and is subjected to a number of cruel methods of psychological torture, including being forced to kiss a dead man's hand and hear the clamorous and hysterical noise of the madmen, and finally put to death followed by the execution of her two babies and Cariola (her maid). The students could not imagine a world such as this.

Gayatri Spivak in her essay, "How to Read a 'Culturally Different' Book," suggests that while teaching a culturally different text in a college curriculum, students and teachers

should be "prepared to take the texts historically and/or politically" (p. 73). She further argues that literature, being "a vehicle of cultural self-representation" and "direct expressions of cultural consciousness," can help readers in comprehending the "contemporaneity" (p. 74) of the author's times by contextualizing the texts within their historical and political milieus. In a similar vein, the class (the teacher and the students) tried to place *The Duchess of Malfi* (a culturally different text for the Bhutanese students) within the socio-political scenarios of the Jacobean era, and tried to read and analyse it through the social hierarchy and gender-lens. However, the Bhutanese students, being unacquainted with a class and gender-based hierarchical social system, were unable to comprehend the nuances of the world of the Duchess. It was then that I realised that I may have to relate the text to contemporary and comparable socio-political scenarios.

It was then that I realised that I may have to relate the text to contemporary and comparable socio-political scenarios.

As someone who hails from India, I thought that one way of helping them understand these concepts was to turn to the Indian context, which provides several examples of the concept of purity-pollution, and caste-based honour killings. I decided to show them how the events of *The Duchess of Malfi* are similar to what happens often in India.

To help the students understand the Jacobean gender disparity, male chauvinism, and the nature of patriarchal structures in the world of the play, I took two newspaper clippings from two leading dailies of India, *The Hindu* and *The Times of India*, which reported the caste-based honour killings in India. The sensational news item from *The Hindu* titled, "Pranay was killed in the fifth attempt," was shown to the students to familiarize them with such concepts. The news, as reported, talks about the brutal murder of a Dalit youth for loving and marrying a girl from a different caste. The father of the girl, Maruthi Rao, and his hired goons had, in their fifth attempt, killed Perumalla Pranay Kumar in broad daylight at Miryalaguda on September 14, 2008 ("Pranay was Killed"). A similar news article titled "Honour Killing? Inter-caste couple murdered in Karnataka's Vijayapura," published in *The Times of India* on June 23, 2021, reporting the murder of a Dalit boy and upper caste girl for meeting secretly in the fields and loving each other, was also read to the class for the purpose of understanding the text. In addition to the newspaper clippings, a video clip was played from a Hindi film named *Dhadak* (2018), a romantic social drama which is the remake of a Marathi original movie named *Sairat* (2016). In the movie, the female protagonist hails from an upper caste community while the male protagonist belongs to a lower caste/Dalit community. In the final scene, the brother and relatives of the female protagonist visit the family of the eloped couple and brutally murder the male protagonist and their baby boy (Tragic *Dhadak* 0.18- 4.04).

The presentation of the afore mentioned examples of caste and community-based honour killings from their

neighbouring country, India, helped me to explicate the text to the students, but they still could not believe that such heinous and inhuman incidents were everyday occurrences in their neighbouring country in the 21st century. To a society where there is no race, caste, or gender hierarchy, teaching a play such as *The Duchess of Malfi*, which is built upon culturally specific patriarchal and social hierarchies, was a real challenge. This is in stark contrast to teaching this or similar plays in India, where the prevalent social contexts help students to immediately comprehend the world of such plays.

been working as contractual faculty at Tezpur University, Assam, India.

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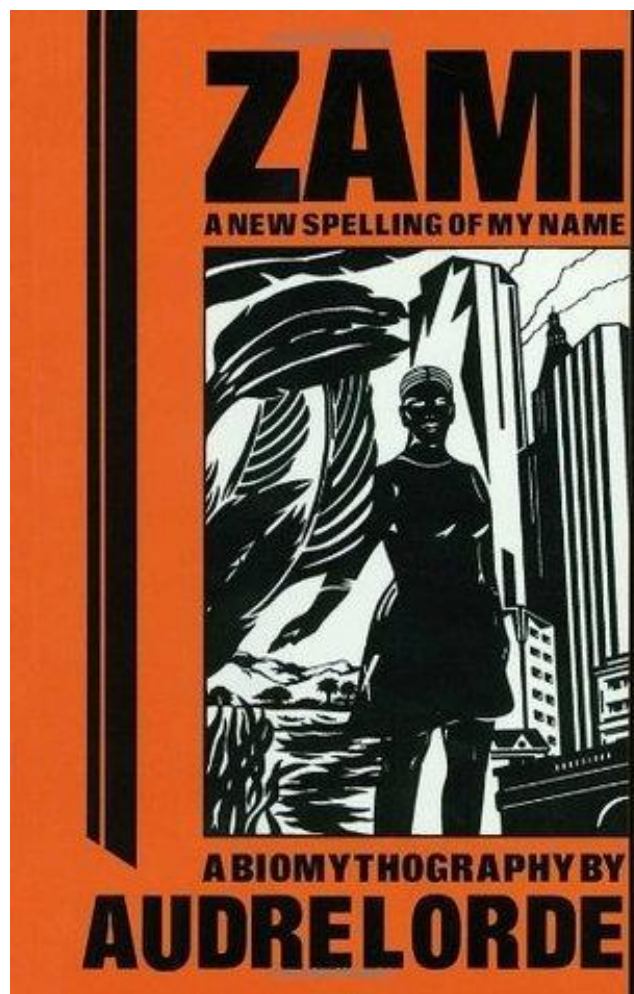
RADICAL TEACHER

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

Teaching Note

Teaching Subjectivity, Intersectionality, and Personal Politics with Audre Lorde's *Zami*

by Katy Hull



ZAMI BY AUDRE LORDE

Since 2018, I have taught a seminar-based class on New Left autobiographies for BA history students at the University of Amsterdam, where I am a lecturer in American Studies. Most of the students whom I teach come from middle-class backgrounds; a large number of them are in full-time study while working part-time jobs. Due to high housing prices, they often live outside of Amsterdam with their parents. In other words, my average student is not a member of a social and economic elite. Nonetheless, there are (often unexamined) privileges at play in Dutch society, particularly related to the privilege of whiteness. People of color, who make up twenty percent of the Dutch population, are underrepresented in higher education; around ten percent of my students are people of color. In my experience, the class on New Left autobiographies encourages students to reflect not only on structures of inequality in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, but also on systems of privilege and discrimination in their own lives.

When teaching the course over the past four years, I have assigned excerpts of autobiographies from across the New Left, including the writings of civil rights and black power activists (Angela Davis, Mary King, Anne Moody, and Malcolm X) and of anti-war student activists (Tom Hayden and Todd Gitlin). Among the subjects that we discuss in the classroom are: the continuities between non-violent civil rights and more militant forms of black power; the sources of second wave feminism; and the intersection of race and gender discrimination for black female activists. Since Davis's and Moody's memoirs tend to be of particular interest to students, I am currently planning a new iteration of the course, which will focus exclusively on black female autobiographies. In preparation for this version of the course, I recently read Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*.¹

Zami is a challenging text to introduce into the classroom for two reasons. First, its genre of "biomythography" might be a source of confusion for students. Second, although published in 1982, Lorde's narrative ends in the late 1950s. It does not cover the 1960s and 1970s, when she established herself as a leading voice in black radical lesbian feminism. The text is valuable, however, because it can: i) provoke reflections on the subjectivity of all historical sources; ii) offer insights into how sexuality, gender, and race intersected for queer women of color; and iii) breathe meaning into the concept of the "personal is political."

Autobiography, History, and Memory

Because of the lessons they have learned in Dutch high schools, some of my students draw strict distinctions between "biased" or "subjective" sources, on the one hand, and "unbiased" or "objective" sources, on the other. Lorde's memoir can help to challenge this kind of sharp distinction. *Zami* was a "biomythography," according to Lorde, because, in addition to recounting her memories of childhood, youth, and her twenties, she incorporated female-centric myths, drawn from her mother's native Carriacou (a small island in the Grenadines). The personal stories that Lorde recalled, which dominate the book, were not fiction.² Yet the genre of

"biomythography" is likely to evoke initial skepticism among students who have fixed ideas about what constitutes a credible historical source.

Such skepticism could provide a starting point for classroom discussions about the ways that *all* autobiographies are consciously constructed. Rather than questioning whether a particular detail in an autobiography is factually correct, students can learn to pose more productive questions, such as: "why did the author recall this event?" and "what did they want the reader to derive from this anecdote?" This could also open up a conversation about how all sources—including seemingly authoritative government reports, for instance—are constructed through subjective processes of selection and elimination. In short, a discussion around *Zami*'s genre could help students to get beyond relatively simplistic notions of "biased" versus "unbiased" sources.

Intersections of Race, Gender, and Sexuality

Most of my students are informed about the concept of intersectionality, often through social media. But I have noticed that many of them have difficulty grasping how intersectionality functions in practice for people who experience simultaneous forms of discrimination based on their race, gender, and sexuality. One advantage of the autobiographical genre is that the reader feels a sense of connection with the author-protagonist, as they follow her through childhood into early adulthood. This sense of connection could help students to understand on a more empathetic level the various forms of discrimination that Lorde experienced.

For example, *Zami* lays bare Lorde's experiences of racism. She recalls that white people frequently spat on her in New York in the 1930s. She remembers how her first-grade teacher in her majority-white school accused her of cheating when she produced excellent homework. And she recollects sitting at a lunch counter on a family trip to Washington, DC in the late 1940s, only to be refused service. Through discussion of these incidents, students can learn about the lived realities for black Americans in the North as well as the South in the early twentieth century. They can also consider how *Zami* belongs to the broader African American autobiographical tradition of exposing racism and asserting the author-protagonist's humanity, which began with slave narratives.³

Zami also testifies to forms of discrimination—including in pay and working conditions—which Lorde encountered as a woman of color. In a necessarily lurid chapter (which teachers would of course need to approach with sensitivity), she describes the "homemade" abortion that she underwent around the time of her eighteenth birthday. Students could be prompted to reflect not only on the precarious position of all women who chose to terminate their pregnancies in the pre-Roe v. Wade era, but on the especially dangerous circumstances for working-class black women, who had neither the economic nor social capital to secure an abortion in a medical setting.⁴ This classroom discussion could also help students to recognize the disproportionate impact that

the recent *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision has on lower-income women of color.

Particularly in the latter half of *Zami*, Lorde describes the reality of being black, gay, and female in a world that demeaned all three of these identities. She writes eloquently about the loneliness of her identity, both in society at large and within her predominantly white lesbian community. For instance, she recalls:

I was gay and Black. The latter fact was irrevocable: armor, mantle, and wall. Often, when I had the bad taste to bring that fact up in a conversation with other gay-girls who were not Black, I would get the feeling that I had in some way breached some sacred bond of gayness.⁵

Analysis of passages such as this could encourage a conversation in the classroom about the interlocking webs of racism, sexism, and homophobia that dominated American society in the 1950s, as well as reflections about what has—and has not—changed for queer people of color today.

Giving Meaning to Personal Politics

Generally, my students do not connect immediately to the second wave feminist adage, “the personal is political”: they need evidence to understand how processes such as “consciousness raising” played out in practice. Reading *Zami* would help students to realize how Lorde came to her own awareness of the personal dimensions of politics. Students will readily recognize that *Zami* consists of multiple love stories. They may need some prodding, however, to understand one of Lorde’s intentions in writing the book, which was to show how each relationship (starting with her first love—her mother) was a catalyst for her own self-realization as a black lesbian woman. While the links between the author’s early life and later activism may be less explicit in this “biomythography” than in some other New Left autobiographies, *Zami* exposes the roots of Lorde’s conviction that gay rights must accompany economic justice, freedom of speech, and civil rights. And in our contemporary moment, in which the right frequently maligns and misrepresents “identity politics,” this text could prompt classroom discussions about the relationship between various forms of freedom, fairness, and justice.

Notes

1. Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (New York: Crossing Press, 1982).
2. Audre Lorde, “To Be Young, Lesbian and Black in the ‘50s,” Radio interview broadcast on KPFK, November 28, 1982, produced by Helene Rosenbluth, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=nS8_5Dm-sg.

3. David Dudley, “African American Life Writing,” in *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms*, ed. Margaretta Jolly (London: Routledge, 2001), Vol. 1, 23–25.

4. Lorde, *Zami*, 103–15. In addition, *Zami* contains a number of relatively short sections that teachers would need to approach with sensitivity, including two references to sexual abuse of a minor and use of a pejorative racial epithet. Lorde, *Zami*, 49, 75, 203.

5. Lorde, *Zami*, 180–81.

Katy Hull is a lecturer in American Studies at the University of Amsterdam. She earned her doctorate in American history at Georgetown University, supervised by Michael Kazin. She is the author of *The Machine Has a Soul: American Sympathy with Italian Fascism* (Princeton, 2021).



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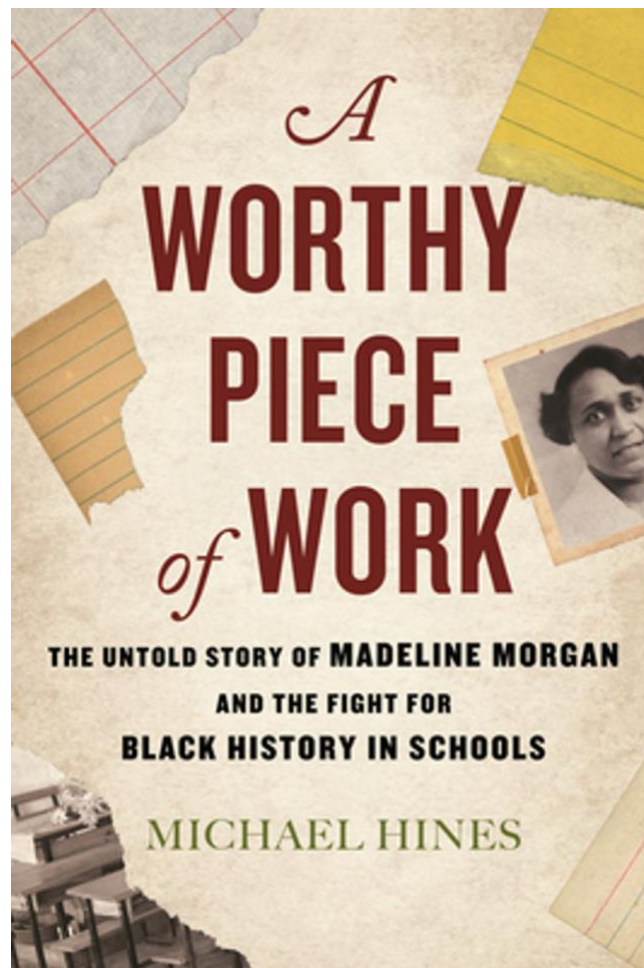
RADICAL TEACHER

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

Review

A Worthy Piece of Work: The Untold Story of Madeline Morgan and the Fight for Black History in Schools

by Susan Klonsky



MICHAEL HINES. *THE UNTOLD STORY OF MADELINE MORGAN AND THE FIGHT FOR BLACK HISTORY IN SCHOOLS*. BOSTON: BEACON PRESS, 2022.

Michael Hines. *The Untold Story of Madeline Morgan and the Fight for Black History in Schools*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2022.

Students of the history of education in Chicago know of the work of Carter G. Woodson, the great theorist and organizer who initiated "Black History Week" in Chicago in 1926. Woodson is generally recognized as the "father" of Black studies, and as the chief early advocate for celebrating the achievements and culture of African Americans in classrooms and communities. Woodson and the organization he established (the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History/known as ASNLH) fought for the inclusion of a fulsome appreciation of Black achievement into the preordained and highly centralized curricula of Chicago Public Schools and other school districts. Then as now, his work was met with resistance and was frequently diluted and ignored. Rarely are other educators acknowledged for the early efforts to expand, include, or correct the historical record presented to students.

Scholar Michael Hines has examined the long history of this battle through the work of Madeline Morgan, a Chicago teacher who receives scant credit for her efforts as an educator and organizer. Morgan deserves better, and Michael Hines has carefully examined the early efforts she led, along with hundreds of black women teachers and parents, to shine a bright light on the accomplishments of Black Americans, and to incorporate this content into the curricula of schools—particularly those serving Black children.

Over many decades of work with Chicago public schools, I confess I had never heard of Morgan (later known as Madeline Stratton Morris). I found no references to her work among several histories of the Chicago Public Schools or among seminal examinations of curricular theory. Morgan was not an academic, although she earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree at Northwestern and remained connected to various scholarly and research associations throughout her life. Her purpose was practical and urgent: to transform the education of Black children in the Chicago schools and the system that governed the curriculum, and to foster interracial and intercultural respect through education.

This book reveals the transformative leadership role of Chicago's Black women who served as librarians, teachers, mothers, and civic leaders. Most of these women arrived in Chicago in the first wave of the Great Migration, and were educated in Chicago, their social networks (in Morgan's case, her membership in Phi Delta Kappa—a national sorority of Black educators) proved a source of sustenance and influence beginning in the 1930s, offering national connections and recognition.

Why was Morgan basically ignored in the annals of Black studies and public education? Michael Hines offers:

Black schoolmen and especially school-women working at the primary and secondary levels were often relegated to a somewhat ancillary position in the Black history movement. A 1945 article...written by none other than

Carter G. Woodson makes this point more clearly. Woodson's piece, 'Negro Historians of Our Time,' surveys 'a number of Negroes who may properly be designated as modern historians,' lauding both the growth and the increasing professionalization of the field. Woodson concentrates on male academics, such as John Hope Franklin, Rayford Logan, and Luther P. Jackson.... Only toward the end of the piece does Woodson mention the work of Black teachers, noting that 'this story would not be complete' without the inclusion of "at least certain men and women..." (94).

Hines relays in meticulous detail the enormous number of meetings, conferences, and organizations in which Morgan participated, spoke, wrote, and organized over the course of her career, spanning 5 decades. (Often hyper-local in its mapping of her work, this book may be of greatest interest to Chicago historians).

But the crucial element was the force of character and vision which propelled Morgan to persuade her colleagues that the creation and acceptance of a curriculum was both essential and attainable. The project came to fruition as a series of curriculum guides adopted by the Chicago Board of Education, authored principally by Morgan and dryly titled "The Supplementary Units for the Course of Instruction in Social Studies." After prolonged negotiation and debate the Chicago Schools Superintendent and the Chicago Bureau of Curriculum adopted the Supplementary Units, and they began to be distributed in the spring of 1942.

The United States was at war. Social and civic unity were a serious priority, and the units represented an acknowledgement of deep-seated inequities not only in the resources available to schools serving Black children, but in the content of instruction. Morgan and her associates labored to ensure that graphic descriptions of the treatment of enslaved people and conditions under Jim Crow were included in the Supplementary Units. These are the same sorts of depictions which are being erased and censored in classrooms today in Florida and Texas for fear they may cause "discomfort" to white students. But in the 1940s, those most likely to be discomfited were the children of the Great Migration, newly arrived from the Black Belt South, for whom the memory of lynchings and Klan terror were all too fresh.

In 1943 riots broke out in several US cities, overwhelmingly initiated, Hines states, "by white mobs angry over Black economic and social gains" (100). Several popular publications theorized that Chicago remained peaceful in part because the schools were promoting greater racial "tolerance" and understanding. In late 1943, Los Angeles experienced what became known as the Zoot Suit riots, "as white servicemen from the surrounding base repeatedly descended onto Mexican American and African American neighborhoods intent on destruction and violence." In the aftermath, the assistant superintendent of the L.A. Public Schools wrote to Madeline Morgan: "Here in Los Angeles, with its tremendous Negro problem [*sic*], we have heard of your success in developing work units for children which reflect the achievement of the Negroes during the past two decades. We are very anxious to use your materials. May we have copies?" (103,104)

Over the ensuing decade, other districts followed suit, if only as window dressing to demonstrate some level of activity to cool things down. And as the war drew to a close and the urgency for intercultural cooperation waned, Morgan's work gradually fell into disuse. Indeed, hostility to school integration surged. In fall of 1944, the home of the Chicago Superintendent of Schools was attacked with a pack of dynamite. In the fall of 1945, only a month after the end of the war, hundreds of white high school students in Chicago's south side staged an "anti-Negro strike," refusing to go into school unless Black students were removed. Similar incidents arose in industrial cities in the Midwest where great numbers of new migrants had arrived during and immediately after World War II, seeking employment, housing, and education. By late 1945 the Supplementary Units were mostly disused except in Black schools.

The fight for full equality in the public schools of Chicago has taken many twists over the years since Morgan's day. The schools after Brown found new ways to enforce racial separation and to limit the options of Black children—even going so far as to confine children in Black neighborhoods to hundreds of "temporary" demountable classrooms in order to keep them within their defined attendance boundaries—and out of the white neighborhood schools. A 1980 consent decree set up magnet schools and other devices meant to promote integration but by 2009 the decree was set aside.

In ensuing decades, many initiatives sought to revivify and update the Black history curriculum and to weave it more fully into the social studies as well as all the domains of elementary and secondary education in Chicago. These curricular units come and go. (Indeed in 2019, the Chicago Public Schools adopted the study of the 1619 Project by Nikole Hannah-Jones in the high schools).

As we witness the renewed MAGA backlash against content that recognizes and celebrates Black arts, history, and literature, one wonders what Madeline Morgan and her sorors would have to say. Clearly, she would call us to persist in what she termed "this crucial war for democracy" (138). It's a fight that never ends.

Susan Klonsky is a Chicago writer and education activist. She is the co-author of *Sacred Ground: The Chicago Streets of Timuel Black* (Northwestern University Press, 2019).



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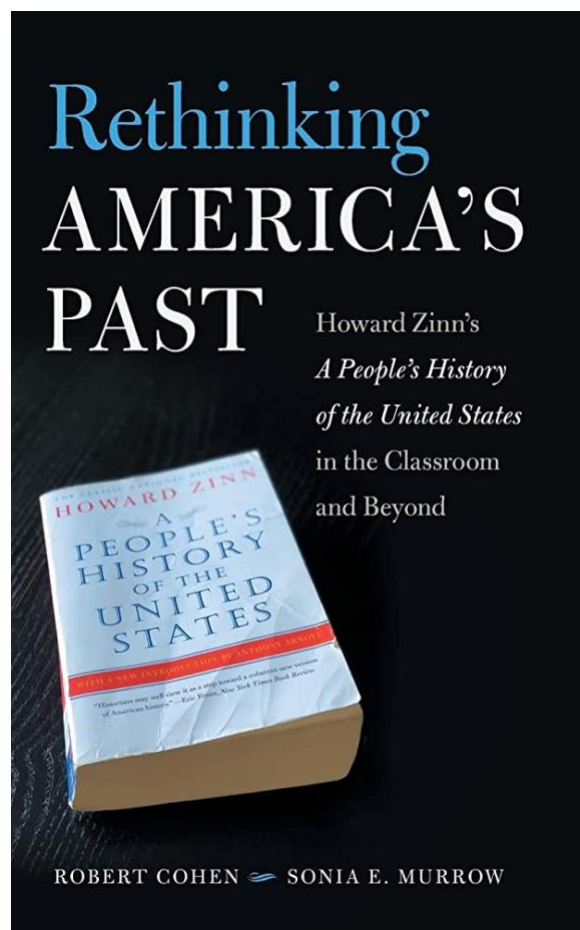
RADICAL TEACHER

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

Review

Rethinking America's Past: Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* in the Classroom and Beyond

by Barbara Winslow



ROBERT COHEN, AND SONIA MURROW. *RETHINKING AMERICA'S PAST: HOWARD ZINN'S A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND*. ATHENS: UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA PRESS, 2021

Robert Cohen, and Sonia Murrow. *Rethinking America's Past: Howard Zinn's A People's History of the United States in the Classroom and Beyond*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2021

Rethinking America's Past: Howard Zinn's A People's History of the United States in the Classroom and Beyond could not have come at a more decisive moment in US history. 2022 marked Zinn's one hundredth birthday. Organizations and institutes such as the Zinn Education Project and Rethinking Schools are celebrating his work. *Rethinking America's Past*, comes at a time when Zinn's *People's History*, in addition to the New York Times' Pulitzer Prize winning *1619 Project*, are coming under attack for being dangerous and subversive by the former US president, countless right-wing governors, federal and local congressional representatives, as well as extremist state and county boards of education. Teachers in the public, independent, even some charter and religious schools, as well as professors in the academy, are appalled and terrified at the almost D-Day like assaults on public education, teachers, teaching, reading, and thinking. These attacks are not only confined to book banning but also on the standard social studies and history curriculum in the schools. What is so astonishing, perplexing, troubling, and enraging is, given the attacks on Zinn and history education, so little attention has been paid to Cohen and Murrow's thoroughly researched, original, and accessible book, which demonstrates a deep knowledge of social studies education, US history, and US history education.

Cohen and Murrow are professors at New York University and Brooklyn College/CUNY respectively. Both are teacher educators, scholars, and activists committed to studying the practice of urban education and teaching social studies and history to urban students. (Disclaimer: Sonia Murrow was a colleague of mine in the Secondary Education Department in the School of Education at Brooklyn College, where she directs the Social Studies Education Program).

Rethinking America's Past is not a paean to Zinn, but rather an analysis behind the popularity and usefulness of Zinn's book, especially with secondary social studies and US history teachers. Cohen and Murrow review the historiography of history education before Zinn, reminding readers that not so long ago most history taught in classrooms and in the academy was about elite white men, the wars they fought, and the nations they (mis)led. For the most part, racial, class, gender, and ethnicity conflict did not exist in US history textbooks. It almost seems that the purpose of the social studies and history curriculum was to make the subject of history as boring and uninteresting as possible for teachers and students. There were, however, many teachers who wanted their students to love history and engage with the materials as well as students who were eager to find something exciting in their classrooms. The authors review the impact of Zinn's book on both secondary school teachers and teaching as well as his influence on academic historians.

One of the most exciting chapters, "In High School Classroom," provides a case study of how *A People's History*

has been used in the classroom. The Tamiment Library in New York City contains the Zinn archive which contains thousands of teacher and student letters and their emails describing how Zinn's book is used in classrooms. One extraordinary teacher, Bill Patterson, who taught in two conservative, white middle-class Oregon suburbs, decided to challenge his students' assumptions, or rather lack of knowledge, about US history. He paired Zinn's *People's History* along with the assigned textbook to provide a contrast to the standard historical narrative. Far from indoctrinating students as the right-wing claims, students were thrilled to know that historians disagreed, debated, and argued. They couldn't believe that they could critique and criticize historians, including their own teachers. They began to understand that historical knowledge did not mean memorization of presidential dates and wars. Rather they could make determinations, based upon reading original documents, informed by their own personal experiences, to understand the contested and complicated nature of history and that there was no absolute truth in history.

Reading Chapter Four, "Dear Mr. Zinn," was an eye-opener. Although Cohen and Murray reference Bill Patterson's students' letters to Zinn in an earlier chapter, reading the students' letters documents the life-changing experience Patterson's students had reading Zinn. Rebecca Mayer writes,

The Sacco and Vanzetti affair was one of those that sticks out in my memory. Not only was the story new to me, but the concept that someone could be convicted of a crime that they may not have committed. I realize that for an 18-year-old to just be discovering this is naïve, but remember, I grew up in suburban, middle class ... Oregon" (100-101).

Mayer credits Patterson and Zinn with her becoming a public librarian.

Cohen and Murrow also showcase those students who disagreed or were angry with Zinn; some even questioned his patriotism. Amanda, a junior in one of Patterson's classes, wrote that Zinn's chapter on Christopher Columbus and the Indians "made me mad. To me Christopher Columbus is a hero I strongly disagree with every section in your book." She then criticizes other aspects of *A People's History*, questioning and critiquing chapters on the Japanese internment and the Philippine-American and Vietnam wars. Despite her negative assessment of the book, she ends up complimenting Zinn: "you aren't a 'sheep' ... that follows the average crowd" (103-104). To my amazement, I wonder how many academic historians today would spend as much time replying to a high school student's letter as did Zinn who replied at length to Amanda's queries thanking and encouraging her.

The letters Cohen and Murrow showcase could also serve as a teaching guide. Teachers could assign students to write letters about something they learned in class or some issue that interests them to other teachers, historians, elected representatives, family members, or other public persons. Such an exercise might not only help them with their writing skills but also with assessing source materials and constructing historical arguments. The letters that

Cohen and Murrow reprint cover the gamut from praise to outright hostility. But they demonstrate that the students were thoroughly engaged in Zinn's arguments, and most, even the most hostile, were appreciative that they were able to see other points of view.

An important chapter, "Retrospective and Reviews," details how Zinn has been evaluated by academic historians. Of course, he has been reviled by the right – politicians, pundits as well as tenured professors – most notably Oscar Handlin's review in the *American Scholar* ("Arawaks," Autumn, 1980). Liberal and left-wing historians have also criticized the book, often for his treatment of Indigenous struggles; race, in particular slavery; and women. Eric Foner, Pulitzer prize-winning historian who praised Zinn's book as a "necessary corrective" expressed the most common criticism of Zinn (one in which I share): Zinn offered "an over simplified narrative of the battle between forces of light and darkness," as well as a tendency to portray underrepresented people as either "rebels" or "victims," ignoring those who led "less dramatic but more typical lives" (186-187). Recognizing the importance of Foner's and other sympathetic historians' critiques, Cohen and Murrow push back explaining the reasoning behind Zinn's emphasis on Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal policies or his refusal to include electoral politics, in particular the two-party system. These, Zinn believed, elevated elections and politicians away from the narrative he wished to emphasize: the struggle for social justice and equality.

What is missing from Cohen's and Murrow's chapter on the critiques of Zinn, and one I wish had been included, is an analysis of Sam Wineberg's excoriation of *A People's History*. Wineberg, the Margaret Jacks Professor of Education at Stanford University, Director of the Stanford History Education Group, wrote an eight-page review denouncing the book as "dogmatic" and "dangerous." Then in September 2018 he wrote in an essay, "Howard Zinn's Anti-Textbook": "Teachers and students love a People's History of the United States, but it's as limited and close-minded as the textbook it replaces" *Slate* (16 September 2018). Wineberg argues that Zinn's book is basically no different from established US history texts. Zinn "speaks with thunderous certainty," and his "power of persuasion extinguishes students' ability to think and speaks directly to their hearts." Ultimately, writes Wineberg, the book is dangerous because "many teachers view *A People's History* as an anti-textbook, a corrective to the narratives of progress dispensed by the state." Teachers and historians at the Zinn Education Project (zinnedproject.org) disputed Wineberg's claims, the most important being that Wineberg did not even mention how teachers use the Zinn materials in their lesson plans and classroom materials or students' reactions to the Zinn book. They add that Wineberg assumes that teachers and students are passive victims of Zinn's extraordinary charisma. Murrow and Cohen's chapter would be stronger if they weighed in on the Wineberg/Zinn debate. After all, they both acknowledge that Wineberg is one of the most influential scholars for those who study historical cognition, and his critiques cannot be easily dismissed. Much of Wineberg's concerns are addressed in chapters three and

four, the ones dealing with Patterson's classroom teaching and the letters to "Mr. Zinn," but not by Cohen and Murrow.

Rethinking ends with Zinn and popular culture. Historians who watch movies were probably amazed by the memorable scene in the Academy Award winning movie, *Good Will Hunting*, when its protagonist Will Hunting, played by Matt Damon, challenged his therapist, played by Robin Williams, "If you want to read a real history book read Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States*. It will fucking knock you off your ass." And if you were a fan of the Sopranos, you couldn't help but be fascinated by the confrontation between mafia boss Tony Soprano and his son Al, who was reading Zinn's chapter on Christopher Columbus. Al believes the story must be true because "it's in my history book." Tony responds, "so you finally read a book and it's bullshit," and "in this household Christopher Columbus is a hero. End of story" (239).

Murrow and Cohen attribute Zinn's cultural popularity to Zinn's understanding of the importance of mass media and the appeal of the performing arts. After all, Zinn was a playwright: "Emma" (1975) about the anarchist Emma Goldman, "Daughter of Venus" (1985) about nuclear disarmament, and "Marx in Soho" (1999), and made a number of television and audio recordings. He was, as his critics and admirers would agree, an extraordinarily charismatic public speaker. He enlightened audiences with his knowledge as well with his wicked sense of humor. He was less interested in academics than in ordinary people, the same people his books lauded. His many admirers included prize-winning writers Kurt Vonnegut, Studs Terkel, and John Sayles; former students; the novelist Alice Walker; and children's rights activist Marian Wright Edelman. Performing artists Damon, Chris Moore, and Anthony Arnone directed a documentary, *The People Speak*, inspired, and narrated by Zinn. Cohen and Murrow explain why these public figures were drawn to Zinn's work, and why they were excited and honored to be involved in the Zinn project. In 2017 *The People Speak* came to a sold out, wildly enthusiastic audience at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. There were large contingents of Brooklyn high school and college students in attendance. Staceyann Chin, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Deva Mahal, Aasif Mandvi, Frances McDormand, Peter Sarsgaard, Stew and Heidi Rodewald, David Strathairn, and Marisa Tomei read aloud the words, speeches, and poems of dissenters and dreamers. *The People Speak* continues to be performed at high schools, colleges, and other public accessible venues. Zinn never wavered from his belief that the words of hitherto little known or completely unknown radicals would inspire future generations.

Rethinking America's Past does not necessarily need to be read by teachers who work with the Zinn Education Project. Although they should. They already know Zinn's value, although I am sure they would find the material in *Rethinking* very reassuring in this very difficult time for history teachers. They might find new arguments to rebut the anti-education activists who wish to force feed students with the boring-great-white-men-who-made-America-the-greatest history. Teachers who harbor misconceptions and disagreements about Zinn's *People's History* might change their mind or be open to some other points of view after

reading *Rethinking*. My hope is that more academic historians read this important book. Too many look down upon secondary school social studies and history teachers. After reading *Rethinking*, they would have a better understanding of the importance of history education in the schools and the central roles that history teachers play in preparing their students for a better understanding of history. Some academics might even be surprised at Zinn's level of scholarship as well as his partnership with leading historians. Finally, some might want to work with teachers and get involved in history education in their schools and communities.

Barbara Winslow is Professor Emerita, Brooklyn College, and founder and Director Emerita of The Shirley Chisholm Project of Brooklyn Women's Activism.



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RADICAL TEACHER

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

Poetry

It's Different Now

by Christopher Clauss



TAKING CARE BY MEREDITH STERN VIA JUSTSEEDS.ORG

It's Different Now

They want me to fill out purchase orders / spend my own money on classroom supplies / and get reimbursed / maybe / after the credit card bills have already come due
They want me to inventory the glassware/ plan a budget for what I will spend / a year from now / before this year has even begun / and then they only give me half of what I need

I just want to teach science

They want me to put all of the chairs / on top of the desks / at the end of the school day / otherwise the custodians refuse to sweep
They want me to find and erase the swear words / pick off the gum wads / spray down and disinfect / everything / and never get sick /unless I know I'm going to be sick at least two weeks in advance /so they have time to find a substitute teacher

I just want to teach science

They want me to wear my school identification badge /at all times while in the building
They want me to do bus duty /and lunch duty /and recess duty
They want me to supervise / the hallway in between classes
They want me to supervise / the students lingering in the science lab / in between classes / at the same time as I am standing out in the hallway
They want me to bend / the laws of time and space

I only teach middle school science

They want me to manage the behavior in my classroom
They want me to teach respect and dignity / to children never shown it at home
They want me to inspire children / who seldom are in attendance for me to inspire
They want me to create a safe and welcoming environment
They want me to break up fist fights / but also / to avoid physical interaction with fighting students / for liability purposes
They want me to keep track of which students / go to the bathroom / and how often / and during which classes / and for how long / and how many times per week
They want me to use a calm, soothing tone / and greet every child with a smile
They would not hire me do any of this / without a master's degree

I have a master's degree
in *education* / I just want to teach science

They want me to practice fire drills / shut the doors / lock the windows / count heads in the parking lot
They want me to know the difference between a lockdown / and a shelter in place
They want me to hide in a closet / reassure crying 13-year-olds / this is just a safety drill
They want me to have a plan to barricade my classroom doors
They want to give me a bucket of rocks / for the science classroom / for my students to throw should a gunman enter
They want me to teach my students to throw rocks

They want me to recertify / first aid / CPR / learn what to do if I am first on the scene
It's different now / since the marathon / they tell the teachers, "Lose the limb, save the life." / so now we learn to apply tourniquets
These last years / since Parkland / teachers learn first aid for a bullet wound
I carry a card in my wallet / that says / I can treat a bullet wound

I just want to teach science
They want me to carry a gun

Christopher Clauss is an introvert, Ravenclaw, father, poet, and middle school science teacher from Chesterfield, NH. He is a poetry organizer at Slam Free or Die in Manchester, NH, a venue he has represented six times at the National Poetry Slam. Christopher's poems have been published in *New York Quarterly*, *Plants and Poetry Journal*, *Sylvia*, *FreezeRay*, and *Bureau of Complaint*. Christopher's first full-length book of poetry, *Photosynthesis & Respiration*, is now available from Silver Bow Press or your favorite local bookstore. His mother believes his poetry is "just wonderful." Both of his daughters declare that he is the "best daddy they have," and his pre-teen science students rave that he is "*Fine, I guess. Whatever.*"



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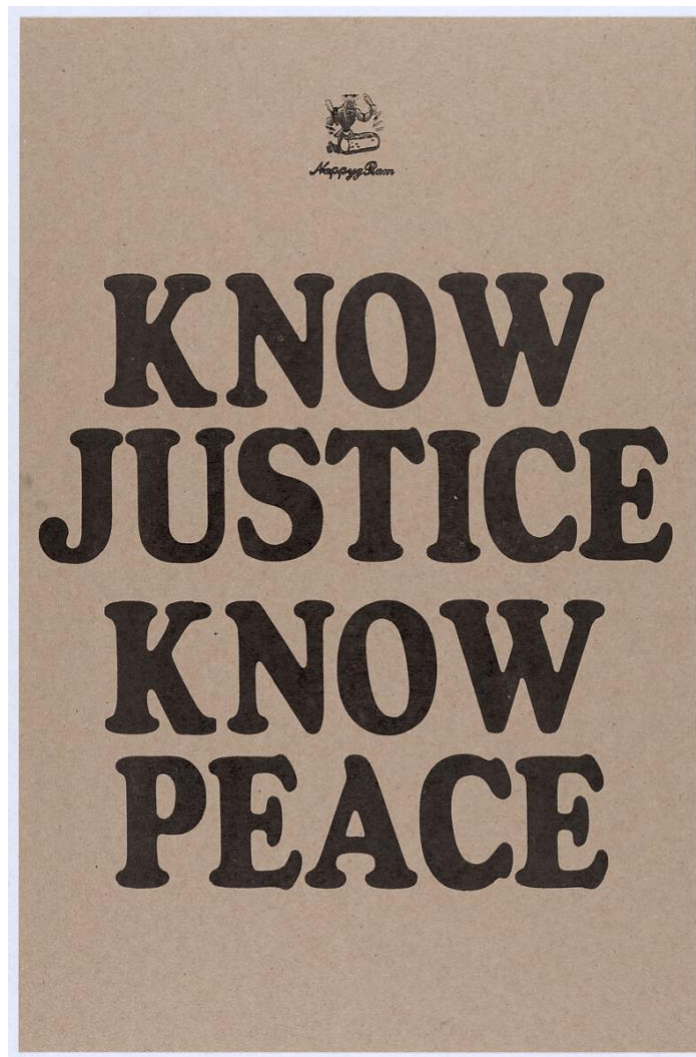
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Poetry

Inequality

by Paul Buchheit



KNOW JUSTICE KNOW PEACE BY AMOS KENNEDY AMERICAN (2020)

Inequality

Seductive is the spectacle of trade
without restraint, with opportunities
for all, a booming bubbling cavalcade
of bounty and bonanza, guarantees
of profit, super yacht and private jet,
and pomp, festoon, champagne and caviar,
from Shangri-la to Xanadu, roulette
a single color in a world bizarre,
a realm of gold beneath the ocean tide.
The willing heirs to this magnificence,
as progenies of plutocratic pride,
embrace their roles in their inheritance.

And just outside this sea of plenitude
are tattered urchins asking coins for food.

Paul Buchheit wrote for progressive publications (Commondreams, NationofChange, Alternet) for 15 years. He is an author of books, poems, essays, and scientific journal articles. He recently completed his first historical novel, *1871: Rivers on Fire*. His poetry has appeared in *The Lyric*, *Illinois State Poetry Society*, *Poets & Patrons of Chicagoland*, *Maria W. Faust Sonnet Contest*, *The Journal of Formal Poetry*, *Society of Classical Poets*, and other publications. His most recent non-fiction book was *Disposable Americans*, published in 2017 by *Routledge*.



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