RADICAL TEACHER

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

ISABELLA JACOB, "SWIMMING POOL T3" (2000)

Anti-Oppressive Composition Pedagogies

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Introduction
Anti-Oppressive Composition Pedagogies

by Erica Cardwell, Julia Havard, Anandi Rao, Rosalind Diaz and Juliet Kunkel

ISABELLA JACOB, "SWIMMING POOL T3" (2000)

At its best, teaching is definitely a community accountable intellectual project. It is also a community-building project and a community-transforming project. But that depends on whether or not we do what it takes to create a context within which folks (including ourselves as teachers) can actually commune.

- Alexis Pauline Gumbs

The project of creating an anti-oppressive composition issue began with multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional collaboration between Julia Havard, Erica Cardwell, Anandi Rao, Juliet Kunkle and Rosalind Diaz, who crafted a call for community-building and community-transformation: to build tools, resources, and spaces for transforming our classrooms, specifically our writing classrooms; and to approach the teaching of composition in community, with accountability, and with *urgency.* This collaboration started as a working group at the University of California Berkeley, Radical Decolonial Queer Pedagogies of Composition, as a number of instructors at multiple levels of the academic hierarchy struggled with the differences between our writing classrooms and our research. Following Condon and Young, Inoe, and Gumbs, our editing team wanted to create a context and process for rich unraveling of un-teaching oppressive systems through composition.

From the design and scaffolding of course content to the implementation of assignments, from prescriptive grammar to evaluations and assessments, oppressive structures such as white supremacy, ableism, queerphobia, sexism, and transphobia as well as their intersecting and multiplying effects are an inherent part of our composition classrooms. In this issue, we asked teachers to tell us their strategies for combating, refusing, undoing, and confronting these structural forces and the intimate ways they tangle our pens to paper. In addition, these authors supplied us with strategies, tools, theories, techniques, and reflections for generating, creating, validating, enriching, and valuing student work across difference.

To both forge something new and reflect on the work that makes this type of intervention possible requires that we situate ourselves with respect to Critical Pedagogy as an academic field. Critical Pedagogy, as it has become canonized, is often traced to the publication of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970, followed by Freire's intellectual descendants. While many radical educators have drawn foundational inspiration from the insights of these thinkers and activists, the canon of Critical Pedagogy has also been critiqued for its tendency towards abstract generalizations and universalisms (Biesta 74; Weiler 353); failing to fully problematize the nation-state, limiting its "project of anti-system" (Cho 310); and asking why for so many people this academic theorizing of radical-ness does not feel empowering or applicable to localized projects (Ellsworth 297).

We situate our project in the groundbreaking work that *Radical Teacher* has published over the last fifty years. In 1978, Barbara Smith published the essay "Towards A Black Feminist Criticism" in Issue 7 of *Radical Teacher*. Smith outlines principles to engage with writing that will not simply comply with traditional legacies of critical pedagogy, but will desire to understand "our political reality and the literature we must invent" (26). Smith offered the intervention of a Black feminist critical consciousness via the platform of *Radical Teacher*. Twenty years later, in 1998, Lennard J. Davis and Simi Linton co-edited issue 47 of *Radical Teacher* devoted to disability studies, at this time an emerging field, that highlighted problematic trends in existing courses on disability and investigated methods of radicalizing curriculum, raising up methods of reading disability as culturally and politically relevant, not simply an issue of biological difference or a tenant of watered-down academic calls for diversity. Davis and Linton describe the methods and reflections of contributors as "open[ing] a window," not providing a holistic assessment of the field but in investigating moments of pedagogical critique, letting light pour down and ripple off of new strategies of envisioning inclusive education (3). Forty years after Smith's call and twenty years after Davis and Linton's, the university has answered this imperative, spurred by decades of painstaking activist labor, via multiple interventions--from Black studies and disability studies departments, to ethnic studies and queer, feminist, and crip pedagogy. But Smith's interrogation continues to simmer: what does it mean when a sentence "refuses to do what it is supposed to do"? How are these vast changes in the shape of academic frameworks reflected in sentence-level choices students make in our writing classrooms? When we teach writing, are we indeed teaching that sentences that refuse are a gift, not a problem, as Smith insisted? From the design and scaffolding of course content to the implementation of assignments, from prescriptive grammar to evaluations and assessments, oppressive structures such as white supremacy, ableism, queerphobia, sexism, and transphobia as well as their intersecting and multiplying effects are an inherent part of our composition classrooms.

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As we frame Issue 115 of *Radical Teacher*, we know that the equitable survival of all under current political regimes requires us to examine the broken pieces of the educational system and ask ourselves to re-imagine our writing classrooms urgently, in the service of revolution. Some of the questions that grounded us included: How can you teach writing soft and writing ugly, writing with accountability and in community, writing across generations, writing cellularly, writing toward collective access, writing safely but toward bravery? What is the conjure art (Amara Tabor-Smith) of teaching writing

magic? How do you teach writing anti, against, or undoing? How do you teach writing as craft? As grassroots organizing? What is the molecular web of words, methods, and gestures that shapes the space of your classroom to allow for the sparkly and undeniable truths of your students to shine through in text?

The cover art for this issue—"Swimming Pool T3" created by Isabella Jacob—encapsulates an intention of this issue: to understand different techniques, positions, and strategies as resources that can be combined, layered, recycled, and repurposed in moving toward varied yet parallel horizons. The piece is a collage depiction of a swimming pool—a space, like a classroom, haunted by histories of segregation due to fear of the contagion of difference. The pool is crafted out of a multitude of materials, "new and found papers, Braille documents, photographs, seismic records of earthquake events," and the visual lines of the piece point to many different windows at the end of the horizon line, the colors of dusk or early morning suggesting a moment of transition. According to Jacob, "[t]he ritual of cutting/tearing/pasting/layering" is done with materials "infused with their own histories," which Jacob considers her own history embedded within. The positions, viewpoints, and techniques of authors in this issue collectively urge us to shift toward differential horizons, and we believe these models, reflections, lesson plans, exercises, and pieces of theory supply the materials for a carefully crafted re-imagining of composition space, during a political moment that is desperate for change.

These authors collectively answer the question "How can academic writing refuse to uphold the structures of oppression that seek to marginalize teachers and students along lines of difference and how can teachers work collectively, coalitionally, and as accomplices to teach writing toward the freedom of the most oppressed?" Owen, Fahs, and Rodas suggest creative compositional teaching tools such as letter-writing, manifestos, and comics as creative methods of integrating bodies, relationships, and feeling into the classroom space. Marsellas and Boodman write through the radical potential of scaffolding and beyond. These authors are simultaneously writing strategies of undoing white supremacy as a central structuring feature of higher education through a multitude of techniques, re-writing histories (Lisabeth) to shift futures (Fazio). Some of the authors plunge into theory, while others write through their methods, some integrating both as praxis. We ask you, as teachers, to imagine yourself into this archive "against critique fatigue" (Boodman) and unravel what possibilities, methods, technologies, and processes of making and remaking you can draw from and add to.

Yanira Rodríguez collects a "constellation of experiences from organizing spaces to graduate education to forward a multi-modal pedagogy of refusal in composition," grounding her work in Black and Third World Feminist and Critical Race Theories, which hold up writing through personal experience as vital groundwork for theory. The piece suggests and models strategies for "divest[ing] from whiteness as an identity category" in the composition classroom and in the academy more broadly. Rodríguez's piece, through strategic citation, the interweaving of personal experience and

theory, and the creative use of woodcut prints, is a thoughtful and vehement unpacking of the power structures that reproduce white supremacy at multiple levels of academic institutions. Through "word-body-acts of refusal," Rodríguez suggests that decolonial potential can become embodied reality rather than metaphor (Tuck and Yang) as organizing and classroom teaching are presented as entangled and inseparable. As editors, we read this piece with gratitude for the vulnerability of the author to share the experience of holding multiple forms of anti-oppressive labor, the physical and mental impact of this work, and its potential toward transformation.

Nick Marsellas and Eva Boodman, provide a closer read of scaffolding, a guiding tool to the educator that assists in establishing collective goals in the critical classroom. Boodman and Marsellas agree that scaffolding can push students beyond their capacity for analysis and readiness. Marsellas' findings suggest that the "knowledge of an other" is not the most effective tool for breaking down social and emotional privilege in the classroom. Instead, Marsellas believes that unintelligibility or "deep end teaching" involves a vulnerable willingness on a social and emotional level to "not know" and essentially de-center mastery and objectification of marginalized communities. Boodman writes of "the discouragement, demoralization, and disempowerment that groups of students may collectively experience when there is too much 'critical' content, and not enough structured skill-building to allow students to respond creatively, emotionally, practically, and politically/institutionally to the information they are being asked to take in – even if, and especially if, it relates to their own experience." She terms this "critique fatigue" and names "radical scaffolding" as an alternative.

Laura Lisabeth writes an extended review of *Dreyer's English:An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style* and the genre of English style guides more generally, which unpacks how "standardized English" grammatically embeds white supremacy into writing pedagogy. She suggests that through historical unraveling of this process, investigating under-represented resistive uses of vernacular, and validating students' own unique relationships to language, "students gain a critical understanding of the language of power and the power of language identities that over history have bent the English standard with non-standard knowledge."

Breanne Fahs provides a template for teaching writing manifestos, a method that teaches students to write, through and within emotion around injustice, acknowledging the emotion that exists within the classroom environment that is often invisibilized. She argues that this work imbues students' writing with a sense of their own embodied authority on a topic, reversing some of the harm of academic hierarchies.

Pryzbylo and Savonik emphasize the revolutionary potential of publishing student work. In "Publishing Revolution: Publishing Praxis in the Classroom," Ela Pryzbylo works in collaboration with her students with the premise of publishing as a radical act. In their work, students "begin with an exploration of the ways in which publishing is necessarily a political praxis, and one that can be effectively

utilized in feminist, antiracist, and anti-oppressive projects of world-making." Savonick similarly interrogates the practice of student publishing in the article, "What Can Our Writing Do In the World?: The Feminist Praxis of Publishing Student Writing." The author invites students in First Year Composition classes to participate in creative modes of publishing to formulate their context and thinking in the early onset of their academic career. Savonik is interested in "curriculum that aims to transform undergraduate students' cognitive schemas by forming new 'impressions' (Ahmed) of social justice," through witnessing themselves and their peers as writing "publicly."

Julia Rodas' comic/essay, co-published with her students Mamadou Barry, Madeline Lewis, Eric Moore, Luis Moreau, and Julio Rodriguez, demonstrates a method of teaching anti-carceral feminisms through comics. The piece winds between art-making and composition to suggest multi-modal forms of student engagement that validate students lived knowledge and feelings as a resource and that open multiple creative points of entry to a project. She models this approach, drawing and writing through the process that brought her to anti-racist education and confronting the feelings that arise teaching across racial difference. In showcasing her student work, Rodas models what fellow authors in this issue urge teachers to engage in: Savonick's "feminist praxis of publishing student writing" and Przybylo's "publishing revolution." Rodas also includes alternative text for each page of comics for the purposes of making her piece accessible for disabled teachers and students who may be accessing her piece through a screenreader, which hopefully will serve as a model and call to action for others to make their work accessible to all teachers and students as well.

Ianna Owen's teaching note illustrates the use of letter writing in composition classrooms as a strategy, grounded in African American literature and practice, of spreading information about prison abolition through a network of relationship student kinship ties and developing writing as a practical strategy that creates ripples of intimate action to "politicize vulnerability in writing and to turn more hearts and more resources toward the long project of freedom for all people." Michele Fazio's teaching note illustrates how composition courses can focus on undoing racism through texts, assignments, and communication around difference. She tracks us through the construction of a course at University of North Carolina-Pembroke, taking into account the specific racial history and classroom demographics that she employs to inform course material and conversation.

The authors of this issue write the body into the composition classroom, those of the student and teacher and of the complex ridges of hierarchies between us. In the affective economy (Ahmed) of the classroom, these authors imagine strategies for composition to materially advance the position of the marginalized student, while examining modes of undoing whiteness and the way it seeps into academic structures, teaching modalities, language, and relationships.

We hope that this issue provides radical teachers with concrete methods to undo oppression in your classrooms, to highlight and subsequently unembed the covert ways that hierarchies structure our language use and essay construction, and that it provides tools beyond and between words to emphasize the power of art-making, relationship, feeling, listening, and refusal in order to write and embody more just worlds. We hope this work can ripple through your intimate kinship connections (Owen) into your classrooms and that the intellectual community crafted through this process can work in accompliceship with readers toward deeper communal growth and more resourced classroom organizing.

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Pedagogies of Refusal:
What it Means to (Un)teach a Student Like Me

by Yanira Rodríguez
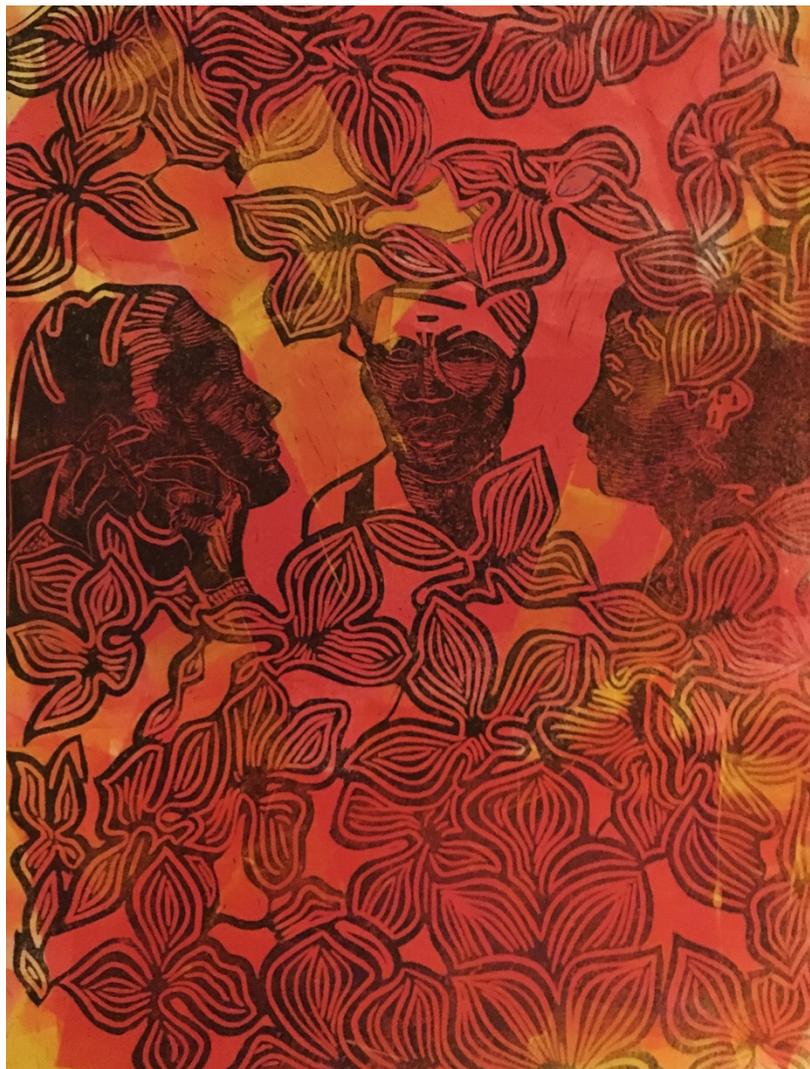
"LINEAGES I: ENTRE CORALILLOS CON MAMI Y MAMÁ TINGO" BY YANIRA RODRÍQUEZ

We Refuse:
Justice projects which require us to prove humanity or worth.
Justice projects which require us to frontload a lot of learning or consciousness-raising.
Justice projects which require us to appeal to the people who abuse us.
Justice projects which require us to gather an audience of white settlers who are presumed to have agency.
Justice projects that presume compromise as the main avenue for achieving solidarity.

-Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2018, p.8)

This analysis addresses the need to develop an ethos of refusal in Composition Studies and the academy in general, arguing that refusal is a livening rhetorical strategy of survival, that challenges colonial futurity (Tuck and Yang), is generative and generous (McGranahan), and opens liminal space (Anzaldua, Baez, Lugones) for existing in predominantly white institutions — not at the margins nor centers but at the places of transformative possibility and deep relationality (Ahmed, Bilge and Collins, Licona and Chavez). My experiences as I began to identify and refuse the expected relationality in academic spaces along with my participation in Queer Black POC-led organizing spaces, inform the questions that animate my teaching practices.

- What intra-University community organizing-pedagogies can we develop to dismantle white supremacy, sexual assault, and abolish campus police?

- What intra-University community organizing-pedagogies can we develop to decolonize spaces of interaction? or rather, what intra-University community project-based pedagogies can we develop that foreground abolition, reparations and the return of indigenous land while opening new possibilities?

I am being deliberate when I pose these questions by asking what project-based pedagogies can we develop. But to be more explicit with the language, how can the university be a site for organizing within and against the institution, and our teaching spaces sites to unpack social movement theory as related to student-teacher-workers' urgent demands. I suggest embodying an ethos of refusal and developing pedagogies that foreground refusal has the potential to create abolitionists or what Fred Moten terms an *undercommons*, who do not stop at the recognition of how the interrelated foundations of white supremacy and settler colonialism serve no one but an undercommons who move beyond recognition toward action, as he states: "…what it is that is supposed to be repaired is irreparable. It can't be repaired. The only thing we can do is tear this shit down completely and build something new" (152).

Through a refusal of the bankrupt rewards of "entry" where one is meant to be thankful for simply being included in a still-oppressive structure experienced in academic spaces, we create an opening. Refusal allows us space to examine and gain clarity on that which is being refused.

Refusal helps us unmask seemingly benevolent relations and the function of affect in creating institutional buy-in. Our refusal creates space for resistance to incorporation while simultaneously opening space for us to turn toward another possibility. Our refusal lets us recognize that we are each other's possibility. Through our refusal we challenge normalized coercive violence (e.g. the capitalist reproduction of death, prisons, the dispossession of indigenous lands). Our refusal delegitimizes that which has gained legitimacy by force. As such, our embodied refusal constitutes a decolonial potential.

Refusing the imposed scripts of being and belonging that function as containment and appeasement mechanisms through words like civility, collegiality, dialog, generosity and also community, reveals relationality as fraught, as a process of struggle (see Olwan on assumptive solidarities and Tuck and Yang on incommensurable struggles). There is a crisis of community within institutional spaces, and in the field of composition more specifically, a crisis that scholars with marginalized identities have attempted to address since the moment otherized bodies entered institutions of higher education (see Kynard, Pritchard, Gumbs, Ahmed, Khadka et al, Gutiérrez y Muhs et al). But despite these attempts and despite the crisis, the field of Literacy and Composition studies continues to forward dissonant internal and external definitions of community. The first blankets subjectivity to avoid accountability while the second relies on a sense of community as "those people" beyond the academy, a sense still predicated on a colonial missionary imaginary.

The internal definition of community (the one that circulates through the field, our departments, the academy) simultaneously professes to "recognize difference" while deploying robust rhetoric and actions to contain that difference, or rather to contain what Lugones terms "the problem of difference" (68). The external definition of community, one used by community writing/publishing, relies on a sense of community as beyond the academy, where those who are out there "in the community" do not make it in, or rather, if and when they do, they must become hyper visible as tokens/brokers of diversity or must become abstracted less their difference become a problem. In this process, there is a continual pitting of bodies and knowledges of people with marginalized identities against one another.

Dreaming in Radio Waves

I was an 8th grader, newly back from Quisqueya and attending school in Harlem. Sleeping on the floor of la abuela's bedroom, we would go to sleep listening to late-night Spanish radio comedy shows. Occasionally I would hear her laugh or I would laugh, but we were mostly laying there silent, in the dark, with the echoing voices from the radio lingering in the interstices, the day closing out, a black hole. It wasn't until I recognized this need for sonic comfort in my daughter, la hija that I realized I too, fall asleep, to these voices, mediating the night. These entangled beings, la madre, la abulea la hija, la nieta transmitting the needed codes for survival.

The abstraction functions as a way to disenfranchise people with marginalized identities from their experience-based knowledges. One example is the deployment of rhetorics of "community authenticity" weaponized against people of color in the academy when we attempt to call out problematic "community" work. Refusing the stories they tell becomes a way to turn and tell our own.

> **What promise does the settler-colonial academy hold for me who feel the years from and of this moment always in circular motion extending me toward *mi abuela*, toward *mis nietas* to be. May they never *sense upon* me and find I'm working for our oppressors as an infamous curator of our life-line-*conocimientos.***

I am tempted to write that we should move away from the term community and toward the term collective struggle, but I fear the quick uptake of terms that help to avoid accountability through window dressing with the right language. Instead, I will say that if as composition teachers we are committed to co-create a community that works for all, if we are committed to move beyond pseudo communities whose foundation is conflict avoidance (Peck, 2015), if we are committed to refuse the kind of justice projects Tuck and Yang outline in the epigraph above, if we are committed to take the needed risks with and for each other, if we are committed to anti-racism, to decolonization, then it feels important that we become "fluent in each other's stories and struggles" (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p.30) . What comes through in this essay is my attempt to give readers a sense of what some of us experience and risk through this political continuum of colonial violence.

Focusing on refusal as performative, rhetorical, and *undisciplined* (Pough, Durham), and following in the lineage of Black and Third World feminist and Critical Race theories on narratives as political tools, I share a constellation of experiences in and beyond the classroom to forward a multi-modal pedagogy of refusal in composition. More specifically, I share this piece, which bridges academic critique with counternarratives, mini-*diálogos*, and art prints to signal to the composing practices that are possible and necessary in our shared spaces of learning.

During the 2016-17 academic year, in the midst and post the election, I taught first year composition. The climate included university administrators across the nation espousing rhetorics of dialog and support for students who were Trump supporters. These rhetorics often equated students subjected to anti-Muslim hate speech to white students feeling uncomfortable in the classroom. This climate was echoed at Syracuse University, where I was teaching at the time. The student newspaper published an op-ed titled: "Feeling unwelcome, Trump Supporters at Syracuse University want Civility."

In the article a self-identified Trump supporter attributed getting a C+ grade to being graded on his politically conservative ideas and not the quality of his work. The article also recounted stories that ranged from a conservative student being "verbally attacked" by a TA for

wearing a "Make America Great Again" hat in class, to conservative students not having good mentors due to the lack of conservative faculty (Hippensteel, et al. 2017).

Informed by this particular climate I want to share a few counterstories that are representative of the classroom and mentorship at a predominantly white institution, counterstories that are representative of the kinds of

> **My anger is and isn't about you.**

interactions/relationalities graduate students and faculty of color encounter and that invariably affect our pedagogical approaches as we commit to anti-racist, anti-oppressive pedagogies. Rhetoric and composition scholar Aja Martínez defines composite counterstories as a practice that "critically examines theoretical concepts and humanizes empirical data" and that are composed using "…statistical data, existing literatures, social commentary, and authors' professional/personal experiences concerning the topics addressed" as grounding material (69). As Martínez notes, counterstories have been used by critical race theorists such as Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, and Tara J. Yosso. The counterstories I share below follow the trajectory of a composite character, a graduate student named Rainy Cruz, as they attempt to navigate graduate education, teaching and mentorship.

Pedagogy as refusal of the "classroom": Rainy Cruz and the problem of teaching composition to soldiers

> *Audre Lorde was teaching remedial writing to an interracial group of police officers that wore their full uniforms, including their guns to her class each day (Gumbs, p. 302)*

> *What does the memory of [ten-year-old] Clifford Glover [murdered by police] teach the teacher who teaches policemen to become authors, who teaches policemen to write, who authorizes the language of police-in-training? (Gumbs, p. 313)*

Rainy Cruz is teaching first year composition in the midst of Trump's election. Though she has been used to teaching mostly white students, this year her first year writing class is comprised of mostly white men in the STEM and Forensics and National Security fields. After a summer where rhetorics of dialoguing and engaging in deep listening of Trump supporters were pervasive and taking that as an indication of what awaited teachers who do anti-racist pedagogy, Rainy Cruz spends the summer planning for the class. She started thinking hard about developing a kind of pedagogy that would minimize violence while still unpacking the reality of the moment. While Rainy Cruz decides she will not bring news about Trump and the election into the classroom she remained committed to introduce students to Black feminist composition texts and to unpack the commonplaces around meritocracy and individualism and happiness that reduce reality and criticality to the soundbites that foment fear and fascist ideals.

One student, Pete, persistently shows up wearing a Meninist sweatshirt. And a few times a week, Pete, a white, tall and burly man, also shows up to class in full camo military garb since he is an ROTC student. At a university with deep ties to the military, it was not Rainy Cruz's first time teaching composition to a soldier and while the specific political context was not new, racist and misogynistic students seemed particularly emboldened by national rhetorics that espoused hate and violence. This deepened the tension of teaching composition to a soldier in training in full knowledge that soldiers were consistently being deployed to contain people of color such as in Ferguson and the Mexico-U.S. border. A few months before the start of class in the very city where Rainy Cruz is teaching, military tanks were sent in to control a largely Black and Brown community in outrage after a police officer shot and killed an unarmed innocent man. This is on Rainy Cruz's mind as she is teaching Black feminist scholars such as June Jordan and Audre Lorde in her composition class, scholars who wrote about what it means to teach composition to cops who kill Black children, women and men. Rainy Cruz decides to recommit daily to teach against violence despite how shaken she is to be in the classroom with a white-soldier-man-student. She shows the class the white men, including students, who marched on the UVA campus with tiki torches shouting "blood and soil" and "you will not replace us" alternated with "Jews will not replace us." Rainy Cruz asks the class how did students their age come to participate and support such actions. The responses to her pedagogy start to come in.

Rainy Cruz the "unamerican" teacher:

In the same class, another student, Pete's friend John, in response to an assignment on a reading on meritocracy, proceeds to write a four-page response through which, as he states, he was going to give Rainy Cruz, a lesson on reality. The student writes: "My job in writing this to you is not to uncover the truth about all this phony bologna stuff about the American Dream being a lie but to show you facts and give you questions that will leave you asking 'how are minds thinking like this.' Well to start off we all live and thrive in America."

John then goes on to capitalize certain phrases in case Rainy Cruz didn't get their meaning: "We are given rights, hence, THE BILL OF RIGHTS, we are given choices, hence THE FREE MARKET ECONOMY." This goes on for four pages with statements that begin with phrases such as: "My question for you is…" and "I want you to think about, seriously think about…" And then it wraps up with this concluding question and thoughts: "What American would criticize America? This is a wonderful country full of opportunity and triumph," John writes. "Living here does not make you an American. Embracing this country makes you an American."

Rainy Cruz gets evaluated:

At the end of the semester when it was time for evaluations, a third student, Mark, writes a pretty damning evaluation of Rainy Cruz which he then signs with the hashtag "#Trump/Pence." Rainy Cruz finds the evaluation striking because despite the elections Rainy Cruz made a decision to protect the few students of color in the classroom (and themselves) by not teaching specifically about the elections. After all, to Rainy, Trump's antics and bankrupt electoral politics were nothing new.

Rainy Cruz is advised

At that same time as this was happening in the teacher's classroom, during an advising session Rainy's advisor went on and on and on about their inability to stay "neutral" in what felt like an invitation for Rainy Cruz to share their reactions about the political moment or rather their own "inability to control themselves" in the classroom. Rainy Cruz found this odd, because it presumed she was teaching about Trump but was also meant to elicit an admission of a lack of "neutrality."

> **Mini-*diálogos:* Convo with a "mentor"**
> **You have to place your ideas in the field!**
> *Qué field?*
> **The field! the field! the field!**
> *La tierra? Si! Sembramos palabras*
> **We grow the words we're going to need.**
> **How is your work connecting to the field's scholarship?**
> *I grow bougainvillea's y framboyanes.*
> **What is your specialization?**
> *I press their fallen flowers in useless oppressive books. To commune with brutalized trees.*

Advisor: I am usually pretty good at staying objective and separating my political responses from my teaching but I am finding it difficult, how about you Rainy?

Rainy Cruz: Sorry to hear you are having such struggles, it is a tense political climate.

Advisor: I mean I am just finding it hard to stay objective, do you find this to be the case?

Rainy Cruz: These are difficult times.

Advisor: My family are long-time progressives who support Hillary Clinton and it is just…

This line of questioning went on for a while and Rainy Cruz began to feel that they were being baited and gaged for whether or not they could handle teaching Trump supporters, whether they could be "objective." This sense was not a function of paranoia but rather an accumulation of discreet interactions. Rainy Cruz listened for a while and finally responded.

Rainy Cruz: I am not teaching about Trump and I don't support Hillary. But I do want to talk to you about some dynamics in the classroom. Completely ignoring the assignment, a student decided to write a problematic response which was decidedly directed at me.

Advisor: It is understandable that would happen in this climate, likely a function of the election.

Rainy Cruz: Would you like to read it?

Advisor: No need. Just keep me posted.

Later in conversation with a fellow teacher and friend, Rainy Cruz shares these happenings.

Rainy Cruz: The advisor was going on and on about Hilary and her family when what I asked for was advice on how to handle problematic students in the classroom.

Fellow teacher: Did you get any?

Rainy Cruz: No, instead I received this talk about Hillary based on some strange assumption that I am at all invested in electoral politics. I wanted to do an Ash Shakar and say, "I am a revolutionary communist, you idiot!"

In that brief opening, the friends find space to laugh together. When I learned of the 300+ mostly men marching with tiki torches on the UVA campus, I saw explicit connections to these discreet moments in the classroom and other spaces of relationalities, moments as the ones I describe above, seemingly mundane moments that are not one-offs of a particular incident or institution (see Kynard's account of being accused of writing her student's dissertation).

As we commit to collectivize risk and build the courage to teach in these times, our relationalities will also reveal that teaching has always demanded a particular kind of courage from specific bodies. That is, as the current political moment and movement work have opened a wave of hiring of faculty with marginalized identities and has pushed for more diversity initiatives that also inform curriculum, what practices and principles will be developed and implemented to sustain these faculty through their anti-racist work in and beyond the classroom?

Thus, when I say teach, I mean teaching despite all the ways some of us are pushed not to teach and supporting people placed in those positions. I also mean thinking about pedagogies and practices that extend beyond the classroom, that broaden sites of learning. I mean teaching white people not to kill or erase Black, indigenous, people of color. When I say *in these times*, I don't mean these times are some fixed moment or new or exceptional (see Kaba), instead I am referring to a currently emboldened repressive state that has been in place for so many for so long but that by relying on "white shock" at newly discovered excessive use of force it creates a false hierarchy and division of violences. This hierarchy in turn renders some violences more acceptable than others. Under this model, curricular repression or classroom microaggressions become dismissible when the threshold for violence is set at Black students being brutalized and dragged out of classrooms by police or when a Black student using a glue gun for a class project ends up with a SWAT team being called to campus (Svrluga, 2017).

I am arguing that instead of a hyper focus on the current repressive administration all of us should already be shocked into action by the demographic composition of our classrooms, shocked by how so many students struggle to meet basic needs, some of those being the need for safety and belonging (Parks 2019), shocked into action by the curricular changes meant to depoliticize (and police) our pedagogies, shocked into action when graduate and undergraduate students of color share the racist, ableist and heteropatriarchal macro and microaggressions they are experiencing, shocked when colleagues are disrespected, silenced, policed. When the shock comes after 20-something-year-old white male students are marching on college campuses with tiki torches, it signals that we have missed intervening at the incremental moments that build on each other to create the conditions for a fascist state.

Refusing the Classroom

It should be unconscionable to think that your little assignment or assessment strategy is offering a radically transformative end-game in this social system. That's academic marketing— and a catering to white comfort. It's not anti-racism. Your pedagogy is not unshackling 400 years of slavery for any slave or her descendant. Your classrooms are not untying the noose of Jim Crow lynch law, past or present, for any Black bodies that have hung from trees. And you are not breaking down today's prison walls and borders. So comfort and a feel of ease are not options. All that we have— when we think in terms of racial realism— is struggle. That's it. The hope is in the process of the struggle. It is in the constant work, not the end result or an eventual sign of progress because that is not forthcoming… not in the lifetime of anyone in this room. Being a racial realist changes the way you approach and politicize the work.

-Carmen Kynard (from Notes on Racial Realism)

In what follows, I will share some classroom practices but these practices are highly contextual and should not be taken up as the formula of what needs to be done. As Kynard via Derrick Bell argues in the epigraph above, the classroom is not going to save us and in fact it often functions as a space to avoid accountability. What does it mean to emphasize liberatory pedagogies in the classroom while we continue to neglect other spaces in the academy, where faculty and students with marginalized identities bump up against the oppressive workings of the institution and its actors? Kynard's statement reveals that the classroom is not separate from the rest of the institution, nor a contained space sitting outside the rest of the social order. She challenges us to think that the kind of learning and action that we need must happen everywhere, at all times. We can't afford to think that the 15 weeks of the discreet space of the classroom is achieving something ungrounded and separate from movement history or the greater demand for justice that necessitates continued struggle.

Her statement also helps us deal more clearly with the fear of failure that is pervasive among our students and that we often ascribe to "teach for the test and the grade" models of education that they have been exposed to but that also signal to a crisis of belonging. Thus, using the movement language of struggle allows us to include failure as part of our pedagogy. Liberatory progress requires struggle, and struggle means that we can't be afraid of failure. In an effort to remain attentive to the connection between struggle and

possibility, and having shared some of the less uplifting moments of the classroom, I will also share some pedagogical strategies.

Pedagogy as Struggle

With some students I don't begin from a place of "this is everything you don't know," but rather from a place of "you live it so you already know and together we can do something with what you already know." With many other students the approach is different and is informed by who makes it into the classroom. To get us closer to a shared even if fraught sense, I try to cultivate a livening pedagogy, a kind of sci-fi voyage, a blend of soundscapes, printmaking, collaging and writing. All these forms are "texts and tools," and all composition assignments in our classroom can be approached in these and many other ways. Students often love this approach and other times they resist it.

Following in Toni Cade Bambara's lineage, I conceive of my work as a teacher as that of a cultural worker and my pedagogy and the temporary communities of the classroom as spaces where we can work collectively "to make the revolution irresistible" (Bambara 35). In an interview with Kay Bonnetti, Bambara states:

"REFUSAL AND POSSIBILITY" YANIRA RODRÍQUEZ

The task of the artist is determined always by the status and process and agenda of the community that it already serves. If you're an artist who identifies with, who springs from, who is serviced by or drafted by a bourgeois capitalist class then that's the kind of writing you do. Then your job is to maintain the status quo, to celebrate exploitation or to guise it in some lovely, romantic way. That's your job… (35).

On the other hand, the job of the artist-writer-teacher accountable to their communities is revolution, one whose foundation is to uphold and celebrate life through the production of love. This approach in all spaces of relationality refuses the competitive pull and disciplinary separation and ownership often evidenced beyond the classroom.

Approaching the work of the classroom from this perspective has allowed me to transform research writing courses, for example, into interdisciplinary spaces where we engage with artist and art exhibits that respond to the social political moment. We do collective research on various artistic social justice interventions including how artists have created work to critique and upend police brutality, gentrification, war and empire, food injustices, immigration abuses, etc. The idea is not merely to "study" artists and their work, but to learn and practice cultural production, to learn about the tools and the lineages of resistance they are connected to. In this class students make art together, responding to a social political issue of interest, with the intent of engaging in other forms of meaning making. In my journalism classes the ends are similar even as the means take on other forms such as learning and applying the history of the underground press, creating zines that respond to important campus concerns, and other journalistic interventions taking on issues such as sexual assault, unequal distribution of resources, segregated unsafe housing. These stories which usually include a multi-media component have the explicit purpose of making an intervention as they often do when they are published in the school newspaper. In some ways my journalism classes afford different possibilities as I often have the same students over several semesters. As students respond to social concerns, their own histories and issues come into the room and this is a fraught process that necessitates struggling through the faulty tools we are given to make sense of the violences we witness, impart and personally experience. My classroom is always an attempt to dislodge the mechanistic way many students (due to economic and other pressures) have come to understand their education and its value.

Pedagogies of the Wind and Stars

The social relations that we (were never meant to) survive, also live in our bodies painfully, and Audre Lorde is not here to remind us of this lesson herself, except in as much that she is present in the pedagogical wind. But wind is our teacher (74).

-Alexis Pauline Gumbs

Through this work I join in a long lineage of scholars who write narratives about the possible and untenable in our field with the hope that we can think together about a pedagogy of refusal that extends beyond the classroom to all spheres of relationality with people and the natural world. The classroom and other narratives I share above leave me with deep longings. In writing these narratives I find myself asking: How can teachers of color and marginalized

identities stay alive in the classroom? By alive, I mean, how can we keep the pedagogy, ideas and questions alive as well as our bodies? I mean, how can we keep our students alive? our colleagues? How can we engage in an unrelenting refusal to allow white people to keep killing us?

The urgency of that question informs the knowledges we share in the classroom as well as the collective work of reflection that we do in my composition classes. I try to make sure we leave both my current composition and journalism classes reflecting on the intellectual lineages we have connected to through the readings, the artist tools we have used and the skills we have gained. I try to guide a collective reflection on how we will put these knowledges and tools to use, to what end goals, to what ancestors will we call on for strength. That means I also spend time trying to connect white students to their ancestors who fought against oppressive evil but also other lineages. Refusing and turning toward liberatory knowledge lineages reveals pedagogies of refusal as intergenerational and as refusing the capitalist reproduction of death (Gumbs, 319); as refusing a notion of arrival predicated on hierarchies; as refusing a hyper-focus on the classroom and instead extending to all spheres of relationality; as refusing the policing and containment narratives of the "other" that dominate a white supremacist imaginary; as refusing the avoidance of struggle that devolves into fatalism or detached optimism. In refusal, we find movement and space to turn toward a livening pedagogy.

As I write this, the Highlander School's archives have been burned down, with preliminary reports indicating it was done by a white supremacist. The burning of Highlander's archives reminds me of the many discussions I have had with my close colleague-comrades about how sometimes it seems like the slow, deliberate, painstaking interventions we make get trampled and undone by students' experiences beyond our classroom. But then I am encouraged by what I know to be possible because I have lived it, because movement histories, which remain alive through people in collective struggle, prove it to be, so the insurgency takes hold.

Notes

1. https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2017/08/torch-bearing-white-supremacists-descend-on-uva-ahead-of-unite-the-right-rally.html

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RADICAL TEACHER

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

Off Scaffolding and into the Deep End

by Nick Marsellas
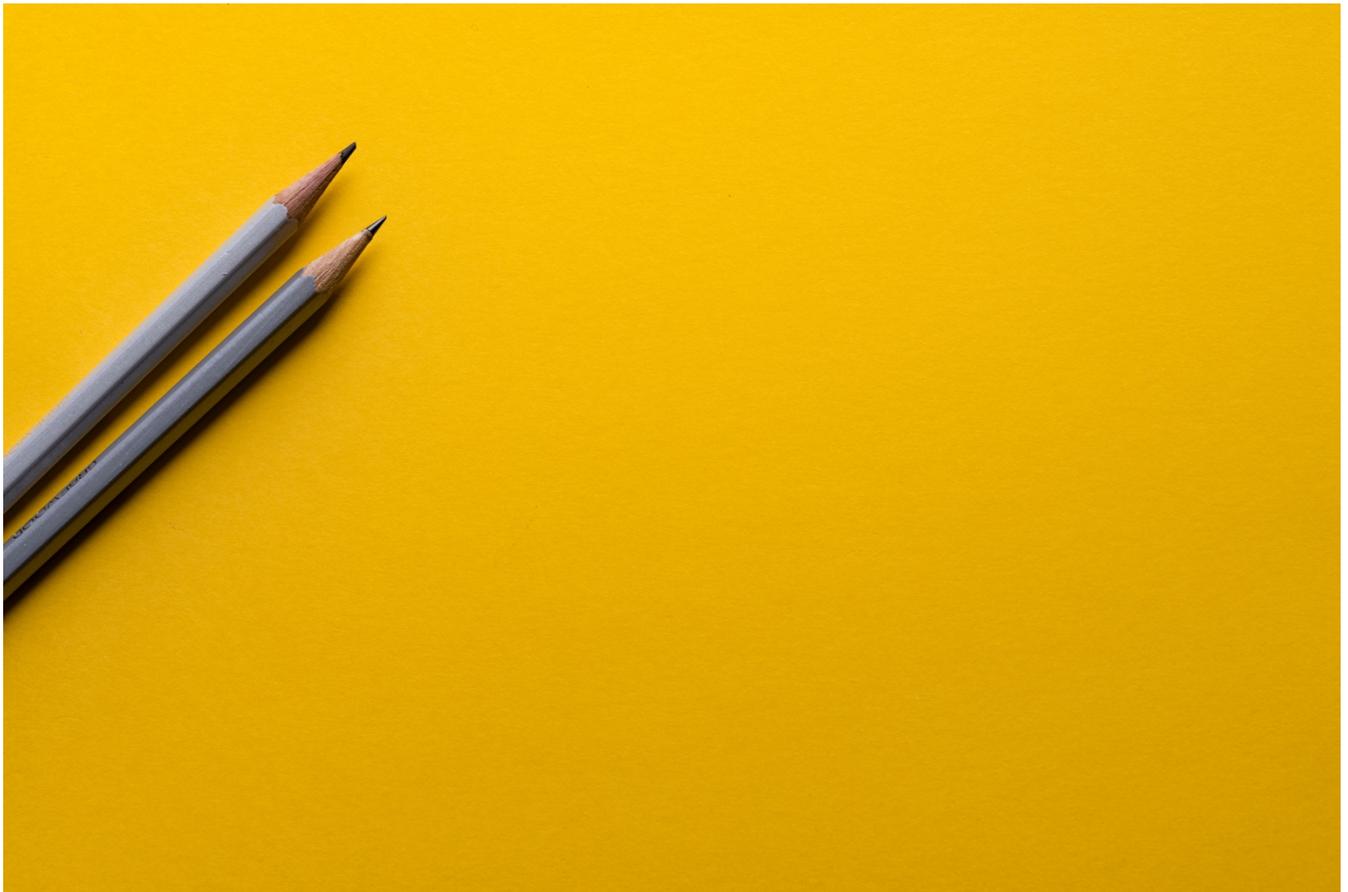
PHOTO BY JOANNA KOSINSKA

When I look at a movement that hungers for recognition from the very people who disown us I remember that we are grieving.

- Alok Vaid-Menon

In my role as a first-year teaching mentor for graduate students, I found the new composition teachers to be experiencing a tremendous amount of distress around the idea of teaching texts from authors with marginalized identities. Brought up within a pedagogical framework primarily informed by critical pedagogy and multicultural education, these new teachers wanted to present their students with the work of various marginalized authors, but they struggled (as many of us do) with the attendant complications: How much bibliographic information is needed for students to understand the author's point of view? What happens if one of my students says something offensive? How much extra information do I need to give my students for them to be able to have conversations about race, gender, etc., and do I need to do all of this extra work for each marginalized identity we talk about? My answer – less fully articulated then than it is now – is to reframe our expectations for ethical student behavior. No matter how we may try, teachers cannot be responsible for offering privileged students the scaffolding they need to "understand" other humans' existence.

These questions come out of a multicultural scaffolding model of critical pedagogy. This model imagines that knowledge of an other is required for, and entails, ethical behavior towards that other. In a multicultural framework, critical pedagogy's emphasis on critical consciousness is translated for white, elite, American schools and universities, replacing the goal of liberation of the oppressed self with the goal of cultivating sympathy for the oppressed other. Critical race education scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate, in their foundational article "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," argue that "At the university level, much of the concern over multicultural education has been over curriculum inclusion […] multiculturalism came to be viewed as a political philosophy of 'many cultures' existing together in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance" (61). The multicultural model of education privileges including subject matter from a diverse (read: non-hegemonic) range of experiences, usually with the goal of promoting coexistence and understanding. While many believe this is the appropriate response to students who are increasingly cut off from the experiences of others, there are some who critique multiculturalism as one more tool of hegemony. Queer pedagogy scholars Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes, in their article "Flattening Effects," emphasize the damaging effects of multiculturalism's forced intelligibility:

> Our experiences as multicultural pedagogues for nearly two decades have shown us that the "reconstructed language" often taught—and modeled in curricula and textbooks—is rather bland, emphasizing commonalities that prevent us from perceiving and analyzing critical differences. We call such emphases on "shared

> humanity" the *flattening effect*, or the subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) erasures of difference that occur when narrating stories of the "other." (431)

The problem of the multicultural scaffolding model, following Alexander and Rhodes, is that empathy follows from identification and similarity, even as our course materials do their best to narrate difference.

Rather than assuming mastery of multicultural content as the ethical and intellectual goal for our classroom, we might be able to find ways to facilitate learning differently – in ways that acknowledge the importance of our work in introducing privileged students to conversations that our marginalized students have been having for their entire lives, and in ways that also push our marginalized students further into those conversations than they are used to going. However, we cannot do this if we continue to privilege a mastery of content in cases where the content reflects the lived experiences of marginalized people. Instead of attempting to scaffold the lives of marginalized people, we can enact a model of education based in unintelligibility – a model I call deep-end teaching.

Instead of attempting to scaffold the lives of marginalized people, we can enact a model of education based in unintelligibility – a model I call deep-end teaching.

Where the multicultural scaffolding model aims for establishing a shared understanding of marginalized identities, deep-end teaching dismisses the supposed need for common ground. It asks students to establish a certain level of comfort with radical difference. This comfort then bears the possibility of welcoming different experiences into our classroom without the demand that those experiences become legible. Practicing deep-end teaching shows that we trust our students to be good people, to handle topics with sensitivity, curiosity, and intelligence. Furthermore, it allows us to bring more diverse voices into the classroom without tokenizing their diversity, making that the sole focus of their contribution to students learning.

My first opportunity to practice deep-end teaching was in the fall semester of 2017, when I was teaching a course called Imagining Social Justice. In one segment of the course, I taught a relatively unknown chapbook of poetry by Alok Vaid-Menon, a trans nonbinary Indian-American poet. Their work challenges homonationalism and systemic violence against queer bodies; they do this by exploring the complex relationship between pain, generosity, and systemic violence – or, on seeing the good in a world that is willing to destroy you in order to make sense of itself. I spent the same amount of time on biographical details as I would any other author, including the pronouns that they use, but I didn't offer the students supplementary texts on nonbinary identity. Vaid-Menon's work focuses heavily on people's ability to connect with one another without/before understanding, and it felt like a powerful enactment of their philosophy to ask students to work with their poetry without

the solidness of an academic-theoretical framework based in supplemental queer theory texts.

A large part of Vaid-Menon's emotional and pedagogical labor is devoted to daily interaction in public with strangers. These interactions are not explicitly solicited, but Vaid-Menon dresses in bright, genderfuck attire on the streets of New York City, resulting in abrupt, sometimes dangerous interactions that unsettle strangers' understandings of gender without the scaffolding process of a gender theory class. As one can imagine, these interactions often inflict a great deal of pain on Vaid-Menon. However, conventional trans "visibility" is equally unappealing to them. In one of their poems, they ask "what would it mean to have people say 'i'm here' instead of 'you're fabulous?' what would it mean to no longer have to be fabulous to survive?" In another, they link typical affirmations of trans identity to typical transphobic comments:

> there are hundreds of photos of me circulating in text threads and web forums across the world. "look at this souvenir i found in new york" "look at this thing today i saw at the mall" "#me" "#same" "#mybf " "#tearemoji" "#wtf" "#goals" what i have learned is that it is only socially permissible to identify with me online. there is a type of loneliness that comes from everyone staring at you but no one seeing you. every time someone takes a photo of me i want to give them a hug to remind them that i am real. but the moment a meme becomes a person, the screen cracks and there is violence. (7-8)

Even on tour, they cannot be sure to what extent their audience will be able to make sense of their identity. Vaid-Menon assumes that if audience members have come to their poetry reading without a thorough understanding of the gender theory that would attempt to explain nonbinary identities, their confusion will not be a barrier to empathy and compassion. Yet Vaid-Menon is unflinchingly empathetic towards the world.

> Sometimes I wish "the world" staged a Q&A with "us." I would raise my hand and ask it: "WHO BROKE YOUR HEART?" I would listen. Tell it:
>
> "**I AM SORRY**." (27)

Part of the impetus for my tossing students into the deep end with regard to Vaid-Menon's identity was a course goal that asked my students not to be paralyzed by the typical attitude towards social justice issues. I didn't want my students thinking that if they tried to hold a conversation without expertise in the subject that they would be at risk of causing grievous harm. I found that we were able to mitigate harm quite well in the classroom, and that students' fear of causing harm was actually often cited as one of the contributing factors to not doing the right thing in a given situation. This coincided with one of the course goals for the class, taking action in uncertainty. This course goal reads:

> Students will be able to let go of the rigidity of certainty and open themselves to engaging topics with inquisitiveness, even those topics they feel strongly about. They will understand the difference between spacious knowledge and claims of certainty. Most importantly, students will engage social action within this framework of inquisitiveness, while not allowing their lack of certainty to debilitate their social justice efforts.

The decision to encourage action in uncertainty was also a political one. My course was designed to emphasize solidarity action rather than expertise-driven conceptions of social justice. Students came into the course with one or two causes that they were passionate about, but they soon realized they were all working towards similar goals, even if they were using different terms or specialized language. This allowed students passionate about net neutrality to collaborate with students passionate about indigenous Mexican rights without either student being an expert in (or even necessarily aware of) what the other passionately valued. It also worked to counteract some of the cultural hesitation with regards to having these emotionally charged conversations. I find that this reluctance to talk openly about race, gender, and other social issues often comes from a place of genuine caring, of not wanting to say the wrong thing, not wanting to hurt someone. But ultimately, we know that silence on these issues is part of the problem, so it is up to us to get our students to a point where they feel confident enough in their own ethics and basic intelligence that they can find that balance of confidence and humility that will enable them to join conversations where they may not already have expertise.

Uncertainty's Role in Good Thinking/Writing

Student-writers have been trained to play their strong hand, to make what they can of a text and to ignore what challenges them, what produces nuance, what is difficult (Bartholomae "Stop Making Sense" 267). A cohesive and well supported argument is valued higher than a paper folding in on itself because it's struggling to come to terms with the complexity of a topic. Students do not like to admit that they do not fully know a subject; they are terrified of mistakes, as we all are (Elbow 5). This is especially the case in the context of volatile topics, topics that could potentially offend others. This rhetorical gesture, admitting limited knowledge, is not one that is frequently rewarded within the educational apparatus. As such, it is much more likely that the student has been encouraged to take a particular position in an argumentative paper, to ignore or counterobstacles to that argument, and to investigate/research a topic until they are able to tie everything neatly together, not until their argument unravels, though this unraveling may actually be where they learn the most.

Deep-end teaching asks teachers to prioritize teaching this rhetorical humility without embarrassment. When we reward well-constructed, simplistic papers over messy, entangled ones, we are inviting students to ignore the inherent complexity of reality. Surely there are some teachers reading who would say that there is no way they could conceive of privileging simplistic, formulaic papers like the ones I have described, but to these teachers I ask how often they have written "where is your thesis statement" or

"I'm not sure what point you're trying to make" on a student's work. We teach students that to be unable to make sense of this inherent complexity is embarrassing, that the proper rhetorical move is to pretend to be able to make sense of this world.

When they finally realize the impossibility of wrangling the complexity of reality, students trained in an ethical system that privileges knowledge can enact a type of self-deprecation. However, even though they doubt their abilities, students are able to empathize and take action based on that empathy. One of my students exhibited just this type of action in an interview after our Imagining Social Justice course. In one part of the interview, the student recalls getting into an argument with a romantic partner outside of class about the need to respect nonbinary people's use of they/them pronouns, yet the student still felt self-conscious about having "enough information" to handle nonbinary identity with care:

> I still don't have a lot of information on that subject [nonbinary gender identity] and I don't know what causes someone to be like 'I'm not a guy I'm a girl, or I'm not a girl I'm a guy, or I'm both,' I don't know how that happens. And I don't want to speak on something that I know nothing about. And also if I'm knowing nothing about it and I'm just saying things it's probably really ignorant to someone who knows a lot about it or has experienced that kind of thing, and I also don't want to diminish their experience by talking on something like that - to try to act like I'm an expert. (Anonymous Student A)

The student had "enough information" to call out transphobic comments by a romantic partner, yet the student remains anxious when discussing the topic, cautious not to say anything that could be taken as offensive. In the student's interview, the student prioritizes gathering information as a way to behave ethically, even when the student is clearly making ethical decisions within this framework of "knowing nothing about it."

Multicultural pedagogy can make students paranoid about their ability to master knowledge of a subject position that they don't occupy. This mastery begins to look like a noble goal rather than an act of colonizing arrogance. The above student, certainly not the only one, positions ethical action as secondary to mastery of volatile social justice subject matter. The unachievable goal of full knowledge of the other is taken to be requisite to speaking or writing ethically. It's no wonder students are hesitant to talk in our classes when we invite discussions of race, gender, etc. Without inhabiting these subject positions, they believe that they do not have the requisite knowledge to act ethically. Rather than offering the generosity to forgive herself for only having partial knowledge of nonbinary experience, the student interviewed becomes stuck in a mode of self-deprecation that vastly underestimates her ability to be kind and considerate to nonbinary individuals.

The multicultural scaffolding model presents knowledge as prerequisite for ethical action. Because ethicality is so closely aligned to knowledge in this model, those who do not feel comfortable adopting a presentation of mastery risk not feeling "authorized" to behave ethically. They may begin to mistrust their ability to behave ethically at all (especially given the economic and cultural barriers to institutionalized knowledge), resulting in confusion, or worse, a self-identification against ethical behavior altogether.

In writing, students might shy away from topics that ask them to behave ethically without intimate knowledge of an other's experience. Writing prompts that engage the experiences of others begin to look like minefields. How can one avoid saying something offensive while writing about someone else's experience? The challenge seems insurmountable when you add the conventional essay instruction – construct an argument, act like you know best, don't show your vulnerabilities. At the scale of the classroom, this self-deprecation translates to stilted conversation. As the student above says about the students in the class, "we're just all trying really hard not to be dicks."

> ***Within a multicultural scaffolding model, a professor's invitation for students to speak on volatile subjects without mastery at best looks like the professor is unaware of the damage someone's ignorance can cause; at worst, it looks like we have set an elaborate ideological trap.***

Within a multicultural scaffolding model, a professor's invitation for students to speak on volatile subjects without mastery at best looks like the professor is unaware of the damage someone's ignorance can cause; at worst, it looks like we have set an elaborate ideological trap. This is an entirely sensible position for students working from a position where knowledge is required for ethical behavior. The most ethical classroom participation for a student who is unfamiliar with the intimate lived experience related to the course's subject matter, according to the multicultural scaffolding model, is to try to absorb as much knowledge as possible. There is a sense that one is not capable of ethical action without mastering the other's subject position. Yet the students know that they will be forced to act at some point, either by being called on in class or in a written assignment. It may be that students' fear of "political correctness" on campuses is nothing more than a fundamental doubt about their own ability to engage with others ethically.

As my student expresses in the quotation above, "I also don't want to diminish their experience by talking on something like that - to try to act like I'm an expert." Amassing and implementing knowledge is supposedly how one behaves ethically, yet to act like an expert rather than situating expertise in another figure in the classroom with more expertise (even if this person is only imagined) is to "diminish their experience." Even after our class, authority is not centered in the student's own knowledge but in the hypothetical "someone who knows a lot about it or has experienced that kind of thing." Thus, students may never

feel comfortable speaking about others in this model, no matter how much scaffolding we provide.

One deep-end teaching technique that has helped my students overcome some of this paranoia of mastery is a knowledge-gap exercise adopted from *Teaching Queer* by Stacey Waite. She offers an activity that attempts to circumvent students' desire for exhaustive knowledge of a subject. She uses it as a preparatory activity for research paper writing, but it was easily adapted to a standalone classroom activity. She asks her students to list 25 things they do not know about a topic and 25 things they cannot know about it. In Waite's words, the assignment "asks you to begin by recording the limits of your own knowledge and experience. […] It asks you to acknowledge that all knowledge is partial knowledge, and to begin your project with a full examination of what you have failed to know, uncover, or see about this subject" (69-70). The primary purpose of the assignment in Waite's classroom is to show students that the starting points for many of their argumentative essays were not informed by the students' actual knowledge or a broad range of experiences, but for my purposes the writing project served as a means of catharsis for the students. The assignment asked them to admit to what they did not know and, more importantly, assumes that this was true of all of them. Additionally, it asks students to acknowledge that there is much important information they will never have access to, and that we were going to have a conversation anyway.

Dave Bartholomae gives us a perspective on interpretation that can help us better understand the multicultural scaffolding model. According to him, the act of interpretation itself "begins with an act of aggression" ("Wanderings" 89). Sometimes we think that students valuing a text sounds like a lively classroom, everyone working through their own interpretations, eagerly discussing their half-formed ideas with one another. Bartholomae suggests that the silence before interpretation "could be said to be an act of respect," and that interpretation is "an attempt to speak before one is authorized to speak, and it begins with a misreading – a recomposition of a text that can never be the text itself speaking" (89). This is a helpful balm to the extrovert-panic that some of us experience in a silent classroom. Yet, this perspective, that interpretation is violence, brings a great deal of anxiety to those of us who are used to coursework that incorporates the practice.

Instead of taking for granted the violence of interpretation—of knowledge construction that is necessarily incomplete, blunt, simplistic, and thus violent—we can incorporate interpretation into our deep-end teaching. The interviewed student could be taken as an example to be celebrated rather than as a failure of subject mastery. The student intuitively/affectively understood the romantic partner's insult to nonbinary existence and did something about it, even without having enough of a mastery of the topic that the student could articulate the precise reason the insult was insulting. From the frame of deep-end teaching, "correct" interpretation becomes less important – we need not capture exactly what an author means to say, nor should we pretend that we can. By now, this is well-worn pedagogical advice, yet many writers still operate from an

ethics that privileges this type of knowledge-hunting, so that we may be authorized (not just institutionally but ethically) to speak about the experiences of others.

Multicultural Scaffolding's Originary Point, The Privileged Student

Any model of scaffolding requires that you make assumptions about your students' prior knowledge. In many ways, this can be a useful tool for learning, but one place that scaffolding fails is when making assumptions about how much your students know about race, gender, and other types of knowledge that can come from lived experience. In these cases, I find that any attempts to scaffold these ideas result in surface-level discussions, where the conversation can be derailed by any student questioning foundational premises like "oppression exists" or "nonbinary people are real." One of my deep-end teaching practices is to preempt these questions with a set of community agreements adapted from the Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance (AORTA). Some of these are content-oriented, while others provide guidelines for how we interact with texts and with one another. From the outset of the class, students know that there is ample room for questions and curiosity, but they also know that we will be refining our ability to differentiate discussion questions that take our classroom community deeper into thought from questions that students should investigate on their own or with me during office hours.

Even with these community agreements, many teachers would be wary about introducing nonbinary identity into a course that is not explicitly about gender and has no gender studies prerequisite. I certainly was. Often, we are told to scaffold everything we teach, even the experiences of others. We must start with white straight male experience, the conventional wisdom goes, because that will be the most relatable to our students. Then we may branch out, add on a queer lens or a racial lens once we have established students' understanding of a topic through the supposedly neutral framework that they are used to. How can we prevent the normalizing impulse to imagine our students as privileged (especially when most of them are), and our pedagogies as primarily concerned with reception by those privileged audiences?

Even in teaching a course with social justice in the title, I was still afraid that I was going too out of the box, that my students would rebel or that they would not be able to handle nonbinary identity with care and intelligence. I thought I might need to make the content more relatable. It is this type of thinking that keeps our syllabi filled with privileged canonical pieces, even when we devote our final unit of the semester to ways that marginalized people have complicated the topics we are discussing.

Teachers can feel beholden to the well-worn advice to "meet students where they are." However, in all of the conversations that I have had about teaching about marginalized identities in composition classrooms, the student we are "meeting" is invariably imagined as the most privileged student possible. Our scaffolding is oriented towards these privileged students – we work hard to catch

them up to students who may have lived the marginalization that is now appearing in our course materials. However, especially in these types of conversations where nonmarginalized students do not have life experience to draw from, this means that we ask our marginalized students to perform some of this remedial education. Or we ask them to sit patiently, to wait until they get to the most advanced special topics courses before they will find colleagues who will be able to match their lived experience with the "adequate scaffolding" to talk meaningfully about race, gender, etc.

Where the project of multicultural education is ostensibly to introduce all types of students to all types of different experiences, in practice, marginalized students have always needed to maintain a double consciousness to understand both marginalized and privileged experiences, while multicultural pedagogies disproportionately function to make marginalized experiences palatable for privileged students.

Speaking to this problem, a special issue of *Radical Teacher* from 2011 interrogates the "special guest" model of presenting trans topics. Situated within a critique of multiculturalist education, the authors discuss the theoretical and practical violences that occur as a result of a multicultural model of trans identity in the classroom. Within the context of the "special guest" special issue, Erica Rand explains that in a multiculturalist model of difference, trans people in the classroom are exhibited to discuss the singular topic of transness, not generally brought into the classroom as complex individuals. "One ironic effect of the 'special guest' phenomenon," she says, "is that special-guest status based on oppression can obscure the other reasons that the presence of special guests might well be solicited, preventing them from being seen as authors, artists, thinkers, writers, creative beings, theorists, [etc.]" (42). This result of the special guest phenomenon is noted in Marilyn Preston's article from the issue as well, as she notes that "students often also express that they 'feel bad' for transpeople having to 'survive' in this world, and how 'brave' transfolk must be to exist" (52). Students are so used to engaging with difference by recognizing the (very real) identity-based oppressions that are taught through a multiculturalist lens that they are not trained (or don't think that teachers want to hear) ways of engaging with the special-guest other than in gestures of pity.

The special issue also highlights the ways in which transness is most often used to illuminate the experiences or improve the status of cisgender students, and it argues forcefully that this should not be seen as a victory. Rand invokes Priya Kandaswamy to say that "requirements and teaching about multiculturalism and diversity often direct [or are directed towards] white, privileged students heading for careers in business where such knowledge is now considered an asset" (42). "Diversity is a commodity," states Diana Courvert, "a mother lode of 'new facts' that provide value to normalized students. The focus is on how the marginalized can serve the needs of the normative student" (27). Kate Drabinski also implements this critique, highlighting trans issues in women's studies classrooms and departments as "never central in their own right and always interesting only

insofar as they illuminate more clearly 'women's' issues" (10).

If we are beholden to the practice of multicultural scaffolding, our classrooms will never be able to center our marginalized students. Mary Bryson and Suzanne De Castell show the disproportionate control hegemonic discourses have in our classrooms in their reflections on a co-taught special-topics "lesbian studies" course in their women's studies program. Even in these special topics courses, it's quite likely that there will still be hegemonic resistance to foundational premises that function as scaffolding for these more in-depth conversations. Bryson and De Castell recount one particularly difficult student in their course:

> This student showed us the disproportionate power of one. For as long as only one student 'held the line' […], all our discourses, all our actions, were permeated, were threaded through with the continuous and inescapable subtext of white heterosexual dominance, the backdrop against which everything else in these institutions happens. (And how unlike this is the 'invisibility' of one lesbian or gay man in these same settings). (294)

In a sense, there is no solution to this dominance of one in integrated spaces; marginalized communities in the academy will always be subject to the fact that discussions of race must be tailored towards white students, that discussions of gender must be tailored towards cisgender male students. At least this is the case under a model of multicultural scaffolding. Deep-end teaching, on the other hand, allows us the freedom to let the classroom be unintelligible to our privileged students, and for this not to be seen as a failing on either their part or ours.

Ethical Instruction

Students expect us to give them the tools to predict what is most ethical in a situation. I can almost hear your students' exasperated response to difficult discussions: "just tell me what I'm supposed to say." I certainly hear it in my classrooms. This stems from an understanding of ethical discourse practices as static, universal, and rules-based. We teach our students the "rule" (transfer the practice to them), and then they happily cling to the rule, not taking up the real agency involved in trying to determine, situation by situation, what would be the most compassionate action. Furthermore, they avoid the discomfort of knowing this deliberation is never going to guarantee the right decision. Truly ethical discourse practices are always contingent, malleable, and able to help our students (and teachers) more quickly adapt to unforeseen dilemmas in discourse.

The belief that ethical behavior requires education is primarily a feature of Hobbesian ethics, which has translated into America's particularly pessimistic neoliberalism. Rather than believing that all humans are ethical beings from birth, a Hobbesian view suggests that we must reeducate ourselves and each other from our base, unethical nature towards a more civilized, ethical existence. We assume that education produces more ethical subjects, at least in the case of critical pedagogy and social justice topics. Take, for

instance, the common refrain of "educate yourself" as one of the first steps to becoming an ally for a community to which you don't belong.

A multicultural scaffolding model privileges the privileged – those with access to education about topics are assumed to be better equipped for ethical decision making than those without this knowledge. Mastery of multicultural, social justice subjects makes one appear to be sharper, more ethical. People who know specialized terms like "whitewashing" and "queerbaiting" are taken to be more ethical than those who don't. Multicultural scaffolding also assumes that by teaching these terms as modes of critical engagement with a text, we are fostering a more ethical student body. Multicultural scaffolding inherently reinforces the coupling of knowledge/prosperity/goodness on one side of the binary and ignorance/deficiency/evil on the other side.

When discussing Vaid-Menon, many students expressed surprise that the material was so relatable. But this claim of relatability allowed for some misrecognition of experience. Various men in the class discussed the difficulties of being gendered male and various women discussed the difficulties of being gendered female, though conversation about nonbinary identities was limited. I take this to be a result of multicultural pedagogy's suggestion that the way to empathize with others is to identify with their experience. In a multicultural model, lack of identification signals a lack of empathy. In our culture, it is conventional to express empathy with statements like "I know just how you feel," or "I can imagine how hard this must be." However, the more important work seems to be getting students to admit that they may not be able to achieve total mastery of the content, they may not be able to identify with the author, and that they should not let that stop them from engaging with the author's work on its own terms.

Deep-end teaching is about becoming comfortable not knowing – not knowing the details of a situation or whether there is a "correct" course of action (situations are rarely that simple).

Deep-end teaching is about becoming comfortable not knowing – not knowing the details of a situation or whether there is a "correct" course of action (situations are rarely that simple). We are always working from a limited knowledge. While we strive in good faith to understand a situation, that understanding is not the foundation of our ethical decisions, and so we are not shaken or paralyzed when we realize there is more we do not know.

Another deep-end teaching technique I incorporate into my classrooms is dyad conversation practice. It's a practice around listening; it's particularly listening without trying to fix anything. There is a certain type of empathetic listening we are more familiar with: we try to see things from the speaker's point of view, we try to fit their experiences into our own understanding of the world. This is the model of empathy that asks you to walk a mile in someone else's shoes without acknowledging that you have different size

feet. Dyads help students practice listening in a different way - allowing space for complexity and confusion, listening without trying to categorize or assimilate what you're hearing into existing schemas, listening in a nonconceptual way.

In the first session, I invite students to get into pairs and simply make eye contact for a few minutes. (I use the language of invitation because I am very clear with my students that they do not need to do any of the activities I offer. If a student prefers not to do an activity, we work together to find other ways that they can participate in the lesson.) Students often feel a little uncomfortable – we can become somewhat self-conscious when we're sharing connection with others, especially nonverbal connection. Eventually, though, students settle into the experience of connecting with that person, bearing witness. In this activity, done in the first week, students get familiar sharing intimacy and connection with strangers.

After the initial silent dyad, most other dyads involve taking turns speaking and listening. I ask a question and one partner has some time to respond to the question uninterrupted, then I ring a bell and the second partner has the same amount of time to respond to the same question. After, we discuss as a class, only occasionally allowing students the time to respond individually to their partner. There is an expectation that the listener will want to respond to something or to take the conversation in a different direction based on a thread of connection they have identified with their partner. This is how most conversation happens. The instruction is to let go of that itch for identification and to practice connection across difference. The structure of the activity prevents this impulse to build on similarities. At the beginning of a semester, the responses are typically superficial, but as the class begins to trust one another more, the responses become quite heartfelt, in part because there is an understanding that the speaker does not need to tailor their speech in order to elicit a certain conversational response from their partner.

Related to the goal of fostering empathy across difference, I will sometimes ask students questions that challenge them to recall the pervasiveness of difference even among friends. A question that I enjoy posing to a class who has formed close bonds over the course of the term is "What's something that your classmates will never understand about you, even if you tried your best to explain it to them?"

As we learn from the work of Karen Barad (among many other insightful teachers), everything in the universe is always already intimately connected. But that doesn't mean we know anything about it. If we are brave enough to acknowledge the reality that there will always be undetermined, unknown, and unknowable subjects to interact with, that there will always be mistakes made from ignorance, we cannot possibly advocate for an ethics based on knowledge of the other as is so often the model of multicultural liberalism in our classrooms. Rather, we must adopt an ethical practice that privileges unintelligibility. Deep-end teaching reorients our classroom's approach to empathy. We acquiesce that we might not know someone's reality as intimately as they do. We adopt humility in the

face of even what we think is certain. Furthermore, we understand this ignorance not to be a barrier to compassion but a fundamental condition of self and societal reflection and care.

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RADICAL TEACHER

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

White Fears of Dispossession: Dreyer's English, The Elements of Style, and the Racial Mapping of English Discourse

by Laura Lisabeth
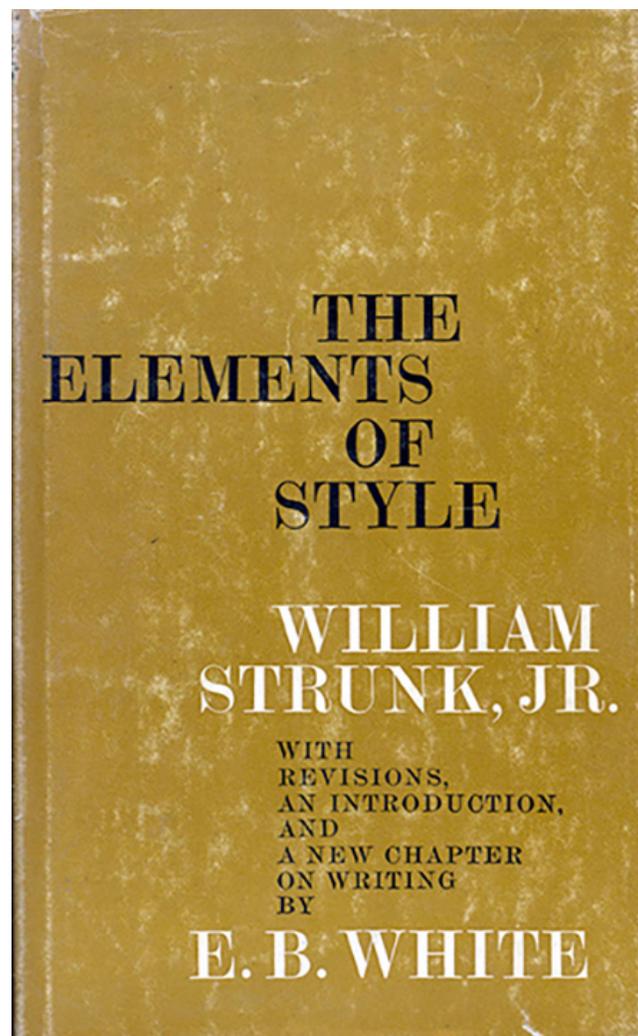
STRUNK, WILLIAM JR., AND E. B. WHITE, *THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE*, THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, 1959.

When I look at a movement that hungers for recognition from the very people who disown us I remember that we are grieving.

- Alok Vaid-Menon

Dreyer's English: An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style (Random House, 2019) by Benjamin Dreyer, Random House's Senior Copy Editor, enters a ring long dominated by the perennial Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*. Dreyer's book is currently number two on three Amazon book lists, right next to Strunk and White, who have been firmly at number one on many such lists, some that pre-date Amazon, since its first edition was published by Macmillan in 1959. This review will argue that both *The Elements of Style* and *Dreyer's English* are emblematic of the under-interrogated systemic racism of standardized English, and that this has far-reaching implications when these texts find their way into writing curricula. Some of those implications include the racist impact of program and institutional choices to make standardized English style part of assessment practices (Inoue 2015) resulting in the implicit underwriting of White Supremacist language as it is valued in discursive style guides such as Dreyer's or Strunk and White's. Writing classrooms that include *Dreyer's English* or *The Elements of Style* or any of a number of other pundit-driven writing handbooks take up the project of constructing English as White property instead of searching for ways to welcome other language epistemologies, and to step aside for long-overdue acts of resistance that come with reappropriating the discourse of power, especially within the institutions that have historically reproduced a social and economic order that benefits White Americans.

Asao Inoue reminds us that both schools and literacy have historically been constructed to protect White Supremacy. He calls attention to the work of Catherine Prendergast and Cheryl L. Harris who both use legal accounts to illustrate the history of literacy as White property (Harris 1993, Prendergast 2003). He also ties this history of the Whiteness of literacy to the early twentieth century eugenicist Lothrop Stoddard, who warned of "White Settlements" being populated by people of color in his 1920 book *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World Supremacy.* Inoue writes of Stoddard's concept of "inner dikes," historically formed social institutions that are "bulwarks" of Whiteness:

> Just like the logic behind redlining to protect real estate property from Black Americans, the White settlements—the White property—that Stoddard speaks of are understood as crucial dikes that need protecting

because they are the last defense of the White centers. Education, schools, and literacy in the US are inner dikes. (Inoue 11)

The implications of continuing to pay forward this American tradition of cherishing usage guides that express racialized language idiosyncrasies sediments another kind of oppressive layer into the already untenable realities for people of color in American educational, social and economic spaces. We continue to be a society that is reluctant to recognize how educational systems have persisted in functioning as inner dikes of Whiteness.

Writing in *The Nation,* Kyle Paoletta frames Dreyer's book in terms that underscore the systemic nature of the racism driven by standardized English when he observes, "*Dreyer's English* is a style guide for the one percent." Like E.B. White before him, Dreyer promotes a historically classed, racialized and gendered code, that of the privileged White man alert to dispossession, who patrols the boundaries of a White system of knowledge production.

The genre Dreyer has inherited from White—a kind of idiosyncratic narrative of correct language usage—can be partly traced all the way back to changes in rhetorical education at the end of the nineteenth century. Robert J. Connors describes this period as a "transition from emphasis on style and communicative effectiveness to primary emphasis on rule-governed mechanical correctness" (87), and Dreyer does his part to regulate commas. But to understand the particular historical roots of *Dreyer's English* and *The Elements of Style*, we must look at an earlier predecessor that comes closer to capturing what these two popular books are up to. In "Handbooks: History of a Genre" (1983), Connors looks even further back in history to a change in America's social structure and the writing handbook's more revealing ancestor from the mid-nineteenth century, the "handbook of conversation," a genre of popular ettiquette guides (87). It is this family tree to which Dreyer and E.B. White belong. Rather than prescribing mechanical correctness like the ones that began their hegemonic rule in the late nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries along with current-traditional rhetorical instruction, Dreyer and White create discursive maps of social, racial and gendered territory that are so seductive they reign on bestseller lists for years—sixty, in fact, in the case of *The Elements of Style*.
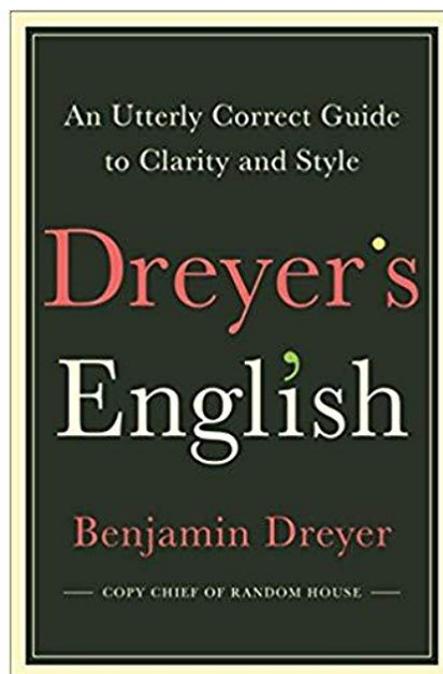
The antecedents for White's and Dreyer's books are out of a specific American social history deeply marked by moral anxiety. Cultural historian Karen Halttunen describes American antebellum society as a landscape of shifting class and moral boundaries as "young men were leaving their rural homes and families to seek work in the booming cities of industrializing America. As thousands of young Americans

broke away from traditional restraints on their conduct, middle-class moralists began to grow alarmed" (Halttunen 1). Connors aligns this period of American history with a proto-genre of handbooks that were "manuals of usage, politesse, and manners [that] became increasingly popular as the social equalitarianism of the Jefferson-Jackson period receded in America." (87). So, Connors points out, these "conversation" handbooks were "the products of cultural rather than of pedagogical needs" (ibid.) In *Authority in Language*, Milroy and Milroy write that after the Civil War, language ideology in America focused on racial discrimination rather than on class distinctions (160), a uniquely American form of language prejudice. During this period, conversation and etiquette handbooks began to appear to demonstrate social behavior and language as racial territories with rules and boundaries that must be policed not just in the interests of middle-class-gentility but against racial incursion. Titles like *Don't* and *Discriminate* (Connors 87), both published in 1883, remind us that some of these behavior guides coincided with the Reconstruction era, and were filled with a kind of White Supremacist outrage against social, cultural and economic dispossession, a telltale mark of White Supremacy, as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva discusses in detail in his book, *Racism Without Racists* (2014). This territorial quality of White Supremacy plays out in proprietary attitudes toward English language as a kind of property as well; Bonilla-Silva might see this linguistic propriety in an educational context as one of the "frames of abstract liberalism" used in this case to rationalize meritocratic beliefs about the teaching of standardized English. Asao Inoue, whose anti-racist writing pedagogies and assessment practices are some of the most important recent developments in the field of Composition, similarly calls out dominant language standards as racist by saying that "all grading and assessment exist within systems that uphold singular, dominant standards that are racist and White Supremacist when used uniformly" (*Labor Based* 3). Connors cites an 1847 *Grammatical Corrector* by Seth Hurd, in which Hurd recruits his reader in defense of English language territory by telling her what the linguistic invaders are: "a collection of nearly two thousand barbarisms, cant phrases, colloquialisms, quaint expressions, provincialisms, false pronunciation, perversions . . . and other kindred errors of the English language" (ibid.) This is where *Dreyer's English* and *The Elements of Style* belong—not so much next to the classroom or office usage handbook, although they do function in part as quick usage references—but to this genre, the discursive guide to linguistic respectability as White territory. When reading Dreyer's thoughts about lawlessness, crossbreeding and invasion of Anglo Saxon culture inherent in the history of English, it would seem that a scant few days have passed since Hurd made his pronouncements in the *Grammatical Corrector.* Dreyer writes:

> The English language…is not so easily ruled and regulated. It developed without codification, sucking up new constructions and vocabulary every time some foreigner set foot on the British Isles—to say nothing of the mischief we Americans have wreaked on it these last few centuries…It has, to my great dismay, no enforceable laws, much less someone to enforce the laws it doesn't have (6).

Dreyer's reference to law enforcement as a response for sullied English smacks of Jim Crow Era policing of imagined transgressions of White boundaries. Halttunen describes similarly racialized mid-nineteenth-century performances of social boundaries as "polite social geography" in which the decorated and arranged front rooms of the house hid the messy social relations of the servant areas, such as the kitchen (102). The rules for staging one's behavior within the bounds of these social spaces were spelled out in rigid prescriptions for the body that included how to carry gloves or hats, or where to stand while talking with a party guest. Guides such as *The Young Man's Friend* (1855), included excruciatingly prescriptive instructions for crossing the threshold of someone's house:

> "If an appointment had been made, the visitor was to stand at the door as the clock chimed the hour: '…your body must be in a right line with the frame of the door at the instant the first stroke of the great clock sounds. If a moment later, your character is gone'" (Martine qtd. in Haltunnen 102).

For both Dreyer and White language becomes the ground upon which social relations are mapped according to a similar linguistic system of racialized parlor and kitchen geography. For Dreyer, using trendy nominalizations, such as "that's a big ask," constitutes the kind of linguistic stumble that literally unmasks the writer, communicating to everyone in the parlor that you belong in the back of the house: "[nominalizations] grate as well as amuse, as can many of the other attempts…to gussy up shopworn ideas by replacing conventional language with overreaching—and arguably unnecessary—coinages" (Dreyer 150). Dreyer's use of "overreaching" broadcasts his opinion that language usage reveals the speaker's origins, dividing those who speak the code of the parlor from those who don't. In White's case, though he, too, wants trendy vocabulary kept out of the front parlor. He concedes—like the duplicitous Victorian he is— that a writer can secret it away in the kitchen: "Buy the gold-plated faucets if you will, but do not accessorize your prose" (White 82). Our history of systemic moral turpitude toward race, class and middle-class values, and the nineteenth-century conversation guides originally designed to resolve these anxieties, can help us to think about the ways our modern-day discursive guides to language similarly maintain systemic racism in deeply historical and uniquely American ways. These kinds of dicta are, as Carmen Kynard points out, simply the "aesthetic rules of a white middle class" (4).

> ### *For both Dreyer and White language becomes the ground upon which social relations are mapped according to a similar linguistic system of racialized parlor and kitchen geography.*

Going back sixty years to the 1959 formation of the *Elements of Style*, we can see that White, represented by Macmillan, then one of the last of the old patrician family publishing firms, voices the same fears of dispossession

Dreyer expresses. White's boundary-tending materializes in the racist imagery of twentieth-century imperialism. English has disturbingly fragile borders, and writers must not be lured into any transgression that might take them into uncivilized country. To transgress correctness becomes an existential threat in these terms, and when this disposition is transferred to the writing classroom, primarily students who have not grown up using standardized English see their lives hinged to their ability to perform it. For example, White sees in the wider culture "a mainstream of turbulence" and "the beat of new vocabularies," and he warns the writer to "not be carried away" (68). Such metaphors of angry waters and strange languages sounding like drums call up images of a colonial time in which Whiteness stood for the stabilizing effect on the world of Empire's "civilizing" presence. Perhaps Dreyer's colonial disposition toward language is most visible through its embeddedness in the world of publishing and popular literacy: the websites, podcasts, blogs and Twitter streams that propagate these racialized and classed beliefs about language, one being that some among us have an "ear" for what's correct, a kind of inborn sense about "what works" in a sentence, as Dreyer says (lithub.com 2019). White, too, sees "style" as intuitive, as a constellation of "high mysteries," in fact (White 52). This is an expression of White habitus plain and simple (see Inoue *Labor-Based*, chap. 1). Both Dreyer and White, when talking about usage and style, sound a lot like they are defending the "inner dikes" of Whiteness that Inoue describes. Like *The Elements of Style*, Random House's *Dreyer's English* began its life on top of bestseller lists, proving that those inner dikes include the publishing industry. Most troubling are the racist dispositions hidden away in such writing advice and baked into American educational culture where complaining about the lack of standardized correctness in student writing is an ever-present conversation, part of a paternalistic and racialized vision of teaching writing.

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As a twenty-first century guide to linguistic gentility, *Dreyer's English* has a partly self-selecting readership: readers, Kyle Paoletta points out, that prove Dreyer's book is "destined only to confirm to the snobs and sycophants who will doubtlessly cherish it that they really are smarter than the rest of us" ("A Style Guide"). But, *The Elements of Style* is deeply entrenched in higher education, and appears on a surprising number of syllabi across the disciplines, suggesting that not all readers are independently choosing to consult the book. In fact, it is the number one most-assigned textbook across over a million syllabi according to The Open Syllabus Project (opensyllabusproject.org), put

there by otherwise well-meaning professors from all disciplines with the hope that the book will magically transform student writing into expert academic prose, or at least cure a few incoherencies, perhaps help corral the "offbeat," as White would have preferred. The privileged language of the academy has in fact grown out of this history of gentility with its anxieties over class and racial boundaries and has become, as Asou Inoue suggests, "[w]hiteness as a discourse and set of expectations in writing" (*Antiracist* 49). As a naturalized part of educational culture, Standardized English is foregrounded, Carmen Kynard points out, even in institutions that insist on its primacy "*alongside a rhetoric of dismantling*" hegemonic discourse (Kynard, italics original, 19). This persistent hypocrisy is disheartening; for radical teachers, it is a focus for resistance, as it preserves Standardized English as "one of the mechanisms of structural racism" in education (Howard 2018).

When we support standardized English as the primary and desired discourse for all students—all people who arrive here in American and want to stay, work or study— we buy into its classed and racialized code upon which the teaching of writing has historically based its ethos and conducted its practices. What constitutes "good" English style in academic settings is formed by a complex ecology of institutional, cultural, and consumerist forces which, across history, have supported Standardized English for profit by exploiting its nearly mythical connections to an aspirational figment of the social imagination: the literate White American, exquisitely performed by both Dreyer and White. In 1959 Macmillan marketed *The Elements of Style* as a partner in the national construction of academic discourse that a Cold War Congress was busy mandating and funding along with other monocultural, monolingual education features underwritten by the National Defense Education Act (1958). Today, the ties between education and global corporate culture might make us long for a new NDEA—government support that would sustain education against a new and ironic set of enemy interests that include its own Secretary of Education who funnels public education funds into private schools. Henry Giroux sees current neoliberal corporate pressure on schools as a drive toward "pure instrumentalism," resulting in starved humanities budgets as part of a broader culture war in which the rise of the corporate university has become a "sustained effort to dismantle education from the discourse of democracy, public values, critical thought, social responsibility, and civic courage" (Giroux 31). For the radical teacher, it is important to know that books like *Dreyer's English* and *The Elements of Style* perpetuate the American meritocratic myth that says education and a command of Standardized English will help students transcend social and racial barriers without examining the systems that create those barriers in the first place. The prospect of meritocracy in America was never true even though it has become an entrenched narrative that purports to be a cornerstone of American democracy. The strikingly similar ironic tone deployed by both White and Dreyer is a cynical hedge against the historical fact that a socially configured correct English does not hand those students the "keys to glory," as Carmen Kynard, in a stroke of more ethically grounded irony, names the empty meritocracy of standardized language acquisition (4).

In their irony Dreyer and White may sound like they really know better, but they are too comfortable with their racial and class affiliations. Their cynical language dispositions travel beyond classrooms and cocktail parties and are behind profits to publishers and other global corporations that exploit Standardized English as the lingua franca of not only American social access but of domestic and world business as well, growing the reach of a privileged white code and deepening its already long history of false promises and racism. Contingent to the American meritocracy myth is the global workplace where English language is a commodity impacting millions of workers who view the acquisition of "business English" as imperative to earning a place in the world economy.

Language as a parlor game for the one percent takes on significant ethical complications when placed in the context of the global workplace where English has been co-opted by neoliberal language values. "Neoliberal linguistics," as defined by Suresh Canagarajah, is a term that captures the exploitation of language as "product," as in his example of a Japanese restaurant in Tunisia that "uses Japanese-looking scripts, which are actually undecipherable and don't mean anything" (15). But it also affects the workers who use English in the multi-national corporate world, such as the people he interviews in his book, *African Skilled Migrants in Anglophone Workplaces,* who see English as a way to economic mobility but discover that "[t]hough the promotion of English is presented as a way of expanding one's multilingual resources, it reduces one's repertoire, as it is often learned/taught at the cost of local languages" (13). However, Canagarajah goes on to argue for the ever-present resistance of translingual resources:

> "though monolingualism and uniformity are enforced by gate keepers and the powerful, translingual scholars are optimistic that spaces can be found for variation in the mix of semiotic resources that constitute a text…The diversity that always exists in practice enables multilingual communities to find spaces for voice, renegotiation, and resistance" (56).

The same empowering argument can be made for the writing classroom, too; in particular, as Canagarajah's work shows, neoliberal linguistics is an area for more research in professional and technical writing. In these professional and technical writing classrooms, in which students are often presented the code of gatekeeping and power as a decontextualized discourse of correctness tied to their economic life, we can design opportunities to see the historical context of correct and standardized notions of English language, while honoring students' own language resources. As Inoue writes, we need to name the effects of English:

> "our students are in our classrooms to learn rhetorical practices that will help them as citizens who must language in the world. They need us for this work. It is also a critical learning of a White racial *habitus*, or maybe a learning of ways to be mad against it and the institutional systems that reproduce White language privilege" (*Labor-Based* 48).

Inoue's critical framing of standardized English is where I center my writing pedagogy. A rhetorical analysis of Dreyer's or Strunk and White's texts is a good place to start generating these essential critical questions about the historical role of English. In keeping with Inoue's anti-oppressive pedagogies, there are some teaching practices I have started to develop that generate a few "ways to be mad" at oppressive language standards. My chapter, "Empowering Education With Social Annotations and Wikis" in the edited collection *Web Writing: Why And How For Liberal Arts Teaching* (2015), shares the results of an assignment in which I asked a class of Introduction to English Studies students to analyze the rhetoric of *The Elements of Style*. They worked in small groups using a hosted wiki, but a google document shared with everyone is a more streamlined alternative that students are more generally familiar with. Breaking apart the text into lexical pieces of their choice, students were asked to first analyze the rhetoric of the passage, and then to create a collaborative imaginative and multimodal response to that rhetoric, using language, creative typography, images, short videos and gifs or original artwork. As traditional English Studies majors, many students engaged in the rhetoric as fans of language correctness. But some also took the opportunity to question White's pronouncements and call attention to suggestions like, "Place yourself in the background," a directive to background identity in favor of the "sense and substance of the writing" (56); in the context of *The Elements of Style*, this is a move toward the white language identity of the academy.

To situate the college writing classroom in critical space, every semester I assign readings from the anthology *Rotten English* (ed. Dohra Ahmad 2007), a collection of vernacular English literature from around the world. This literature allows us to discuss English on the global stage, and through the lens of systemic power structures. Combining the history of the English Education Act (1835) described in the contemporaneous "Macaulay's Minute On Indian Education" with the vernacular poetry and fiction of writers from former Euroamerican colonies, students gain a critical understanding of the language of power and the power of language identities that over history have bent the English standard with non-standard knowledge. Many institutions expect students to perform standardized English and academic genres that privilege a white knowledge system, but "languaging in the world," as Inoue says, paired with discussions of English as a colonizing force overthrown beautifully, passionately by artists like Mutabaruka, Kendrick Lamar or Patricia Grace, gives students empowering and creative alternatives. It is not enough, however, to hold these literate gestures up as a resistant preamble to what school presents as the more important business as usual of learning the White standard.

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RADICAL TEACHER

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

Radical Scaffolding Against Critique Fatigue

by Eva Boodman
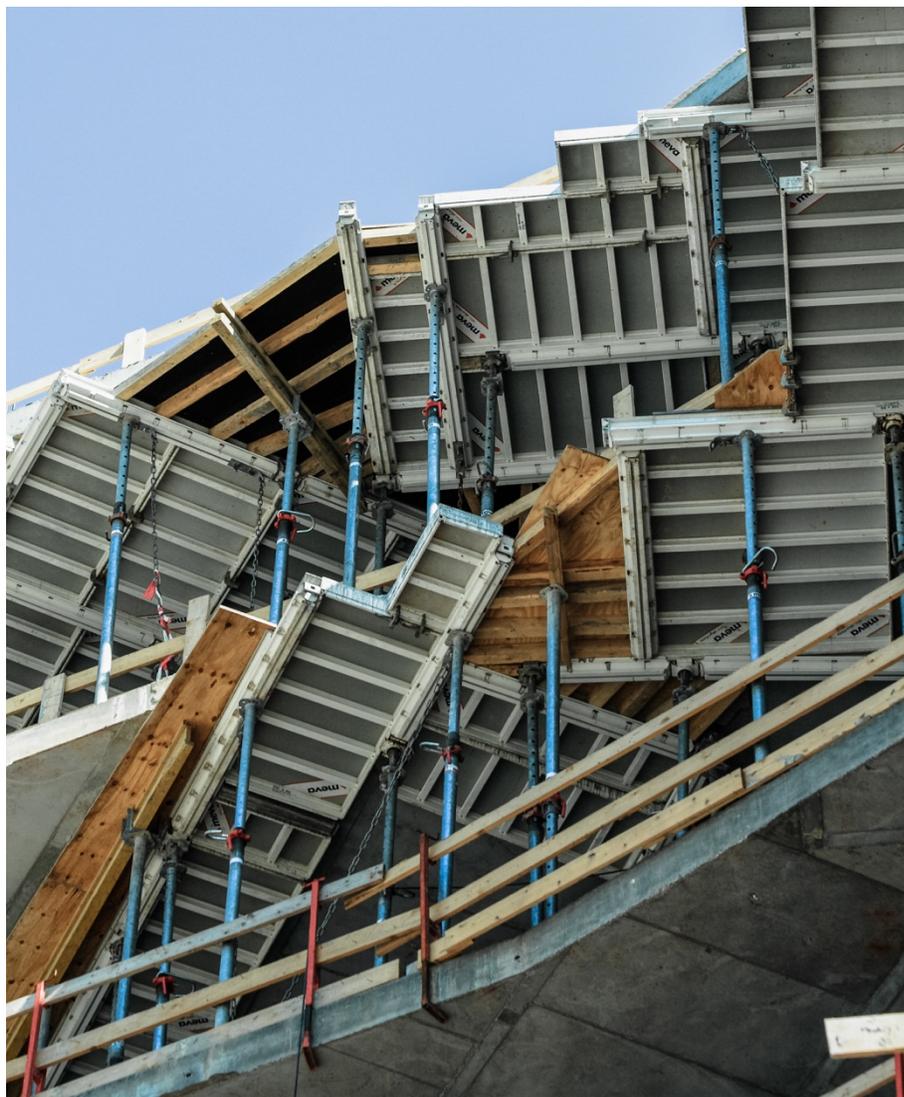
PHOTO BY JENS RADEMACHER

1. Critical pedagogy and critique fatigue

On an afternoon last November, I was met with an unusual awkward and heavy atmosphere when I walked into my gender studies classroom in the public university where I then taught. I felt it right away, even though class hadn't yet started, and it was all the more noticeable because the group had thus far been good-natured and engaged. Chalking it up to the fact that it was "that time" of the semester, I plunged head-on into my lesson plan. We were discussing Siobhan Somerville's paper "Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body," which looks at how racial categories as we know them developed in tandem with, and inseparably from, categories for homosexuality in the nineteenth century. I had thought the paper fascinating. It brought a whole new angle to our class project of understanding the relationship between gender and technologies, not to mention the fact that it would prompt an interesting discussion about what to do with the nefarious origins of the identity categories we use! I asked the students to get into small groups and to break down the connections offered in the text between racial categories and categories for sexual deviance, to then present them to the class. But (as some readers may have already guessed), something wasn't working. The class was quiet; out of respect for me, I believe, the students went through the motions of the activity, but they were clearly uncomfortable. Without saying so, they made it known that they did not want to be having this conversation about queerness and race. When I asked them what was going on, one student said angrily, "I just don't see why we're reading a text that doesn't offer anything new to the analysis!" Another student said, with exasperation, "Yeah, okay, we *know*, racism exists! Why do we keep reading about it if there's nothing we can *do* about it?"

Now, before I continue, a couple of things are important to mention. The first is that I am a white, "masculine"-of-center gay woman who was then occupying the complicated position of teaching courses on gender, race, and power to classrooms that are majority black and brown students – a reality that was commonplace at my institution, and especially in my own retrograde discipline of philosophy (if race and gender are being discussed at all). One obvious explanation for my students' responses is the defensiveness and exhaustion resulting from that historically loaded setup: having to contend with potentially traumatizing material about racialization in an environment controlled by a white woman, who was evaluating them in the context of a punitive institution meant to train them in respectability. The racialization of school is certainly central to this story: many institutions of higher education function to inculcate students into white, middle-class normativity. What I want to focus on, though, is a sub-dimension of the situation that is less obvious, less written about, and potentially more applicable to those who don't share my social position. The problem to which I'm responding in this essay is a phenomenon I'm going to call "critique fatigue": the discouragement, demoralization, and disempowerment that groups of students may collectively experience when there is too much "critical" content (that is, content aiming to reveal and explain the patterns and mechanisms of oppression) and not enough structured skill-building to allow students to respond creatively, emotionally, practically, and politically/institutionally to the information they are being asked to take in – even if, and *especially* if, it relates to their own experience.

In the case of my own critique-heavy class, immediately prior to Somerville's essay, the students had read Sarah Haley's work about the state of Georgia's post convict-leasing practice of paroling black women into unpaid domestic labor, a text on the suppression of midwives, and Dorothy Roberts' *Killing the Black Body*, which documents the racism built into the US construal of reproductive rights. These texts are important, and I would teach them again, but only with adequate support for students to use those texts in a structured creative writing or "making" process centered around their own interests and goals—where by "making", I mean forms of creative cognizing not limited to traditional or formulaic essays, or even to reading and writing, alone.[1] Without a guided "making" process, students begin to feel trapped in the structures and patterns of racial capitalism being constantly hammered out in the course content – a sense of entrapment that is consistent with the way anti-racist teaching and inquiry in the humanities tends toward "damage-centered research" that traffics in the pain narratives of the groups to which many working class, racialized, or otherwise academically underrepresented students belong.[2] The inadvertent result of overloading students with critical analyses without providing any outlet, is that the patterns of structural racism, classism, and colonialism get reenacted in classrooms where professors think they know what students' own goals are, and assume that "critique" – using reading and writing to identify and describe the structural harms affecting oppressed groups – is one of them. While it is important to identify oppressive structures and processes, oftentimes academic "critiques" do this by recirculating "tropes of dysfunction, abuse and neglect" suffered by those marginalized by institutions of higher education. This kind of critique can be fatiguing because, as Tuck and Yang argue, it acts as a reproduction of settler colonial theft and appropriation.[3] As bell hooks writes of this phenomenon, "no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. […] I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk."[4] This is to say that while some "critique" may

serve students well, if it is not integrated into a larger process whereby students gain some knowledge, control, and power over their own learning (and their own learning environment), it can have some unintended and undesirable effects.

And this is where the assumptions of Freireian critical pedagogy, while well-meaning, can reinforce critique fatigue. Critical pedagogy rooted in Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* tends to focus on Freireian "critical consciousness," or *concientizaçao*, wherein education involves understanding one's social situatedness in order to engage in collective, transformative praxis that reconciles social and political contradictions through revolutionary dialogue. This kind of "education for liberation" begins with a "thematic investigation" undertaken by the educator about the problems most affecting those involved in the educational process and ends with the oppressed leading a "cultural revolution" that reconciles teacher and student, oppressor and oppressed, to create a new material reality.[5] Without delving too deeply into the jargon, details, and problems with Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, it is clear that it is primarily a guide for undertaking popular education on a dialectical (Marxist) model.

> *No matter how "progressive" a college and its faculty may seem, the neoliberal university is not the revolutionary terrain intended by Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and treating it as though it is can paradoxically be a great disservice to students – especially students who grew up poor, are BIPOC, immigrants, first generation, or have a disability – who may have political goals and visions of liberation different from the Freireian professor.*

There is much to like about Freire and Marxist popular education, and some of its dimensions can indeed be translated for college humanities classrooms, but it is also true that higher education is a professionalized, professionalizing, and therefore, fundamentally class-conservative environment.[6] No matter how "progressive" a college and its faculty may seem, the neoliberal university is not the revolutionary terrain intended by *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and treating it as though it is can paradoxically be a great disservice to students – especially students who grew up poor, are BIPOC, immigrants, first generation, or have a disability – who may have political goals and visions of liberation different from the Freireian professor. As Fred Moten and Stefano Harney write, the "critical academic" is bound to ignore the diversity of un-unified goals, skills, and experiences in a classroom of students who are revolutionary in their small-scale, disorganized forms of theft, refusal, disruption, and passion[7]—and this is especially the case because of the critical academic's bourgeois complicity with institutional power and class benefit.

Treating the realities of race, class, and colonialism as discernable or disclosable primarily through "critique" without an "application" can have the additional paradoxical effect of silencing students who may have their own direct, first-hand accounts of how something like "structural racism" or "colonialism" happens or of allowing their voices to be "heard" only if they reify their position as subaltern. The Freirian technique of "thematic investigation" – a kind of reconnaissance, undertaken by a revolutionary organizer/educator *not* indigenous to a given oppressed community, whereby the interests and problems of that community are discussed – could, in this light, put students who are members of underrepresented groups in the uncomfortable, and unethical, position of having to act as "native informants", bringing community knowledge and experience into a context that has been known to appropriate it for the purposes of institutional prestige and career advancement.

For these reasons, to have something like "structural racism" be the takeaway of a course or a lesson can be patronizing (or even worse, potentially re-traumatizing) if it is not accompanied by a structured process of creative output, planning, and conversation through which some of the learning goals and thematic agenda are set by the students themselves. It's important to note that Freire himself was committed to joining the "theoretical" with revolutionary praxis, or the collective, dialectical activity of targeting a set of structures or structural forces identified through critical consciousness. This project is definitely a good one. But it's unclear how this praxis translates for students who may earnestly need support to get through the requirements of college. Cultivating a set of choices for how that can be done in such a non-revolutionary environment would be a much-needed addition to the Freirian critical pedagogy approach.

Traditional critical pedagogy is not a harm-reduction method. And for that reason, it can sometimes ignore the ways that a structured, process-oriented approach to creative writing can not only help students develop self-aware "respectability" strategies for meeting "learning objectives" and curricular requirements in the humanities (should they want to, and many do); it can also support students in meeting other self-established goals that range from simply passing the course, to self-expression, self-advocacy, and survival in a punitive institutional environment that was mostly not set up for their success. Where critical pedagogy in the Freirian tradition is helpful for initiating a conversation about the "big picture" structural circumstances affecting students' experiences inside and outside of class, in a classroom context it can have a tendency to de-emphasize the forms of "cultural revolution" that students are *already* undertaking for their own survival – like a current student of mine who does not have time to do the reading for our course, but who is waging a quiet war against the college president to change the school's policy on de-enrolling students who cannot afford to pay their fees on time.

In classrooms where there is an emphasis on structural analysis and critique that reveals systemic racism, sexism, and settler colonialism, process-oriented creative writing can recognize and use the cognitive, emotional, and cultural

knowledge and skills students bring. When students have choices about how they engage with this process, the motor of political meaning is shifted into their hands. This is why, in a way that may seem counter-intuitive to both proponents of radical pedagogy and critical pedagogy, I'm going to make the case for what I call "radical scaffolding": a series of gradual, peer-supported steps or platforms by which students develop skills by building on what they already know. Radical scaffolding decreases students' academic alienation through choice and autonomy, connects critique to creative action and interpretation, disconnects writing from the punitive formulas of an institutional context, and can be thought of as a context-specific means of carrying out some of the more important insights of critical pedagogy in a way that avoids making patronizing assumptions about what "liberation" and "education" mean to adult students.

2. "Traditional" scaffolding

"Scaffolding" is a useful concept from education theory in need of a serious update. The term, in its more standard sense (different from the "radical" sense I want to propose), is used in current pedagogical theory to describe a structured, collaborative learning process whereby learners transition from knowing how to do something only with "more capable" assistance, to being able to do it independently. The term is often associated with psychologist Dov Vygotsky's pedagogical theory – another form of Marxist critical pedagogy, which understands learning not as undertaken by individuals, but through activities situated in an historical and social context.[8] Vygotsky is most well-known for his concept of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) where learners have some understanding of a task or skill, but haven't yet appropriated or integrated that understanding in a way that would allow them to undertake it without help. Ideas that tend to be taken up by contemporary educators and pedagogical theorists from Vygotsky's work are the notion that learning doesn't just happen through modeling and imitation by individuals, but through a process where peers have an important role in bringing learners out of a ZPD and into the practice of a skill through a collaborative, reflective process – a practice that, for Vygotsky, "confirms personal development as an evolutionary force, history's complement."[9]

This usage of scaffolding is important for an inclusive classroom, and for students' survival in college, since it doesn't assume that all students arrive with the same skillset – though it does, problematically, assume a hierarchy of skills and skill development, where "better" students help "less skilled" others along. The term was originally coined by educational psychologists Wood, Bruner, and Ross in 1976 to describe the transition out of a ZPD, a process whereby the educator controls "those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner's capacity, thus permitting him [sic] to concentrate upon and complete those elements that are within his range of competence."[10] In this process, learners engage in a structured dialogue where they are guided both by a teacher and by peers who have better "mastered" the skill. On this traditional definition, scaffolding understands that learning is "not merely conveyed, but mutually created" through reflection and meta-cognition of the learning process itself, resulting in "autonomous" performance of a skill.

In a classroom context where most students went to "teach to the test" public schools and are the first in their families to go to college, this original iteration of scaffolding is important. In order to learn in our classes and to survive their college years, students need support in developing a relationship to reading and writing, and most professors in the humanities are not expecting to have to provide this kind of support. While the "kids these days" complaints are common to hear from professors, I have yet to meet a single PhD student in the humanities who received any kind of training in addressing what many professors perceive, problematically, to be a kind of learning deficiency. The assumption is that students should come to college with a very particular reading and writing skills in hand, and that if they don't, it isn't our responsibility: a widespread attitude that amounts to punishing students who grew up poor, did not have access to college enculturation in their family or community context, and may have the unrecognized skill of being multi-lingual or speaking and writing in languages or dialects other than standard English – a skill widely seen in academic settings as a deficiency rather than the asset that it is. To punish these "less masterful" students with low grades in writing-intensive courses simply reinforces the historical segregation of the education system by race and class and further discourages students' meaningful relationship to reading and writing. In this way, a scaffolded learning process that brings students from point A to point B through dialogue, feedback, and meta-reflection can be a very effective technique for inclusive college education that builds skills beyond the critique-fatiguing recognition of structural racism through theory.

3. "Radical" scaffolding for creative autonomy beyond "proficiency" and "effectiveness"

This original iteration of scaffolding is very useful for creating a classroom environment where students can build collaboratively on what they already know, and it's an especially important concept for professors in the humanities who don't have any training in teaching students writing. I want to take the idea of scaffolding further, though, to move it beyond its "effectiveness" and "mastery" bias and into more transformative territory critical of the way these categories are used in the white-normative, middle-class-conservative college environment. This is not to be cynical about effective writing instruction – I have found that students appreciate, and learn better, when there is a clear set of steps, models, drafts, and feedback built into writing assignments. This idea, while rarely taken up by humanities professors, is not new. Teachers of academic writing like John C. Beam[11] and Nicole Boudreau-Smith have articulated how powerful scaffolded writing instruction can be insofar as it helps students adopt strategies (planning, creating, revising, editing) rather than formulas (like the five-paragraph essay). Boudreau-Smith writes that scaffolding empowers students' relationship to their own

learning process by "maximizing student responsibility and minimizing teacher control,"[12] and develops their "proficiency" by orchestrating "activities and lessons that meet students' level of development and appeal to their passions and concerns". When broadened to include a set of choices about students' political relationship to the institution, and expanded to include goals less limited than "proficiency", this kind of structured skill-building can truly be radical – and I will explain why and how.

"Radical scaffolding" may seem to be a bit of a pretentious coinage, but the term does capture the flexibility and political orientation I intend. Traditional scaffolding, and the way it has been taken up in writing instruction, does the important work of helping students become autonomous in writing skills through a series of peer-guided steps, like brainstorming or visual clustering; peer feedback activities wherein students problem solve in a structured way about issues they are facing with an assignment; and "backwards outlines," through which students evaluate another students' paper by writing a summary sentence about each paragraph and evaluating that outline against a rubric. This kind of instruction could be considered radical in its own right because it gives students tools to develop their own ideas autonomously and creatively in a context that does not train them to do so – and supporting students' creative writing success in punitive contexts that assume their failure is a radical act. But the most radical scaffolding not only teaches skills, but de-hierarchizes the distribution of "skills" in the class so that students are aware of the choices they have when they write in an institutional context– a context deeply structured by, and rewarding of, white middle-class values and behaviors. This expands the notion of "autonomy" to mean not just "accomplishing a task without help", but accomplishing a task by making an active choice about how, and on what motive, that task will be accomplished. Radical scaffolding outlines that set of options and puts the choice in the students' hands without punishing them for what they choose, paying close attention to the context where these choices are taking place, rather than requiring students to write about the patterns of race and class in abstraction from that context.[13] These options can include any of the following, or several at the same time: survival or passing of the course or of a degree program; pleasure; curiosity; connection and community building with other students; creating political or life strategies, proposals, or manifestos (in response to something in the course, in the institution, or outside of these contexts); skill acquisition; and self-expression.

> ### On my view, it is radical to thematize and de-normalize institutional requirements, giving students choices as to how they will follow them.

On my view, it is radical to thematize and de-normalize institutional requirements, giving students choices as to how they will follow them. I'm definitely not advocating for "low expectations" here (because students do need to engage and make choices), but rather a way of structuring writing instruction that gradually guides students through different ways of responding creatively to the critical material covered in the course, as well as the forces at work in their own institutional contexts that might impact the way they engage in the activity of writing. I can't claim to have found a perfect or consistent way to do this, and I acknowledge that many instructors may find their own experimentation with radical scaffolding limited by institutional constraints and the official requirements of composition courses, but I have seen some success using these ideas as broad guidelines. In one writing seminar on the theme of education and segregation, for example, I scaffolded by using in-class, low-stakes, peer-evaluated writing activities in students' development of a research project of their choice, where every activity had a clear description and instructions, steps and examples to follow, and a checklist, but did not require that students use any particular formula. On this model, students could do the activity in a way that was motivated by their own interests and passions, but if they were not invested in the academic exercise and had other, more important things going on in their lives, could pass the course simply by showing up and doing the activities. Requiring students at a working-class school to demonstrate passion for the classroom activities in order to pass doesn't give students autonomy with respect to the role school has in their lives – though I do think it's important to set students up for creative engagement with the course material and the world around them as an educational priority. While passion and creativity weren't strictly required, most students in that course chose research topics where they had a personal stake: whether to send a child to a charter school, how to navigate white fragility in classrooms as a person of color, how forms of micro-resistance can be a form of non-governmental community control in POC-majority public school districts, and why student debt is the way it is in the US. Even though the course topic was loaded and had a high potential for critique fatigue, the scaffolding gave students the support to work creatively and autonomously with their peers in response to the critique being offered, by using their own experiences and interests, through a guided in-class peer feedback process. The atmosphere in this class was very different from the general frustration and despondency of the students in my opening anecdote who were simply asked to break down the argument of an essay on racialization, and the integration of "critique" with creative, scaffolded student-directed "making" made all the difference.

Traditional scaffolding, when employed as a set of sequential, repeated, and peer-led activities, takes as its premise the fact that cognition isn't individual, but involves "the sharing and distribution of mental activity among learners."[14] What I have called "radical scaffolding" takes a version of this premise as its starting point for a guided, structured, gradual creative writing process centered around what students know, experience, and feel. Where traditional scaffolding gradually helps students become autonomous with respect to an academic skill being learned, radical scaffolding does this while also thematizing students' institutional situation and giving them the autonomy to choose different ways of relating to the course and course material. While the kind of critical pedagogy that "educates" students on the forces taken to affect them most directly can often result in critique fatigue, and assumes that students

will want to be on board with a particular vision of liberation, radical scaffolding takes structural factors into account by accommodating a range of possible learning goals students may have, that include survival, passing, emotional expression and exploration, political activity on or off campus, and intellectual engagement for its own sake. As Leonardo and Manning write, an updated version of the ZPD that takes the whiteness and middle-classness of college into account can be understood as a "zone of possibility, which, when accomplished appropriately, threatens the hegemony of whiteness,"[15] rather than shoring it up through teaching practices that ask students to simply affirm the scholarly ventriloquism of their lived experience. Supporting college students from academically underrepresented groups in their own notions of success through transparent, step-by-step, non-punitive skill-building, can be a radical act. By giving students options to respond creatively, emotionally, institutionally, and politically to critical material, students are respected and supported as creative political agents in their own learning process. While this may not foment unified revolutionary upheaval on campus on a radical professor's imagined model, it gives students the power, tools, and space to engage in the forms of resistance that are best for them. And in my view, that is where any education for liberation should begin.

Notes

[1] I'm grateful to David Concepción of the American Association for Philosophy Teachers for the idea that inclusive pedagogy should be centered around "doings" and "makings", rather than on content or vague notions of "critical thinking" or "critique". While those at the AAPT don't necessarily mention Vygotskian pedagogy explicitly, this approach is consistent with his theory of education as an "activity-centered environment" that challenges students to "transcend their actual development as autonomous thinkers" in the interests of intervening in the "practical demands of life" (see Leonardo and Manning, p. 9, reference below).

[2] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "R-Words: Refusing Research", in D. Paris and M.T. Winn, *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, (2014): 227.

[3] Tuck and Yang, 227

[4] hooks, 1990, cited in Tuck and Yang, 227

[5] Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2000.

[6] Colleges have an overwhelmingly white and upper-middle-class professorate acting as role-models and advisors for students in a classroom setting that trains and socializes students into the classed and raced behaviors of middle-class professional life. Course content, program design, and ethos, are designed – often without self-awareness – according to the priorities, ideas, and interests of the middle-class professionals working in those environments. According to the National Center for Educational statistics, and as reported by Matthew Lynch in *The Advocate* in 2016, 84% of full-time professors are white. See https://www.theedadvocate.org/study-nearly-90-percent-of-full-time-professors-are-white/#targetText=According%20to%20the%20National%20Center,numbers%20decrease%20slightly%20with%20faculty. The National Center for Educational Statistics reports that "Black males, Black females, and Hispanic males each accounted for 2% of full-time professors". See https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=61

[7] Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "The University and the Undercommons", in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. New York: Minor Compositions, 2013.

[8] There's much more to say about the Marxist – and specifically Bolshevik – underpinnings of Vygotsky's theory, but it would be too much to take on here.

[9] Zeus Leonardo and Logan Manning, "White historical activity theory: toward a critical understanding of white zones of proximal development", in *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2015.1100988 (2015): 9.

[10] David Wood, Jerome S. Bruner, and Gail Ross, "The Role of Tutoring in Problem Solving", in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, Vol. 17 (1976): 89-100.

[11] John C. Beam, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom.* San Francisco: Wiley, 2011.

[12] Nicole Boudreau-Smith, "A Principled Revolution in the Teaching of Writing", *English Journal*, 106.5 (2017): 17-75.

[13] My view is consistent with Leonardo and Manning's contention that scaffolding and the ZPD are more productively understood as taking place within educational contexts that inculcate students into whiteness.

[14] Boudreau-Smith, 72.

[15] Leonardo and Manning, 11.

RADICAL TEACHER

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

Writing with Blood: The Transformative Pedagogy of Teaching Students to Write Manifestos

by Breanne Fahs
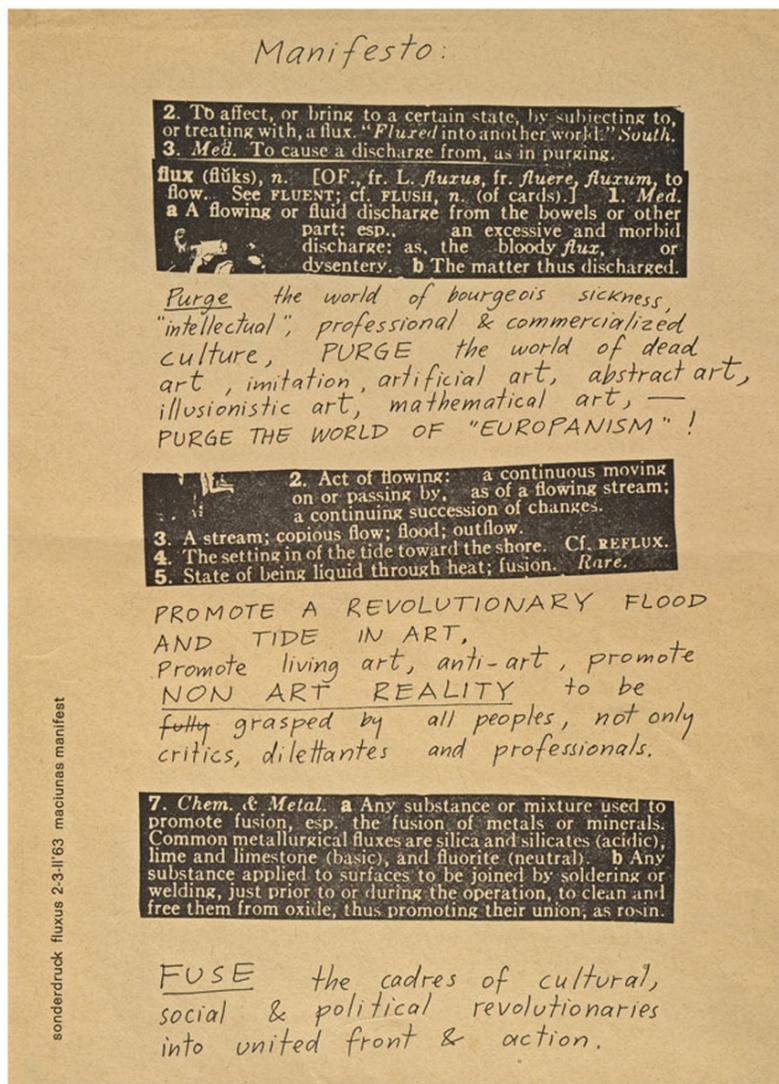
FLUXUS MANIFESTO, GEORGE MACIUNAS (1963)

In 1981, Audre Lorde wrote, "It is not the anger of other women that will destroy us but our refusals to stand still, to listen to its rhythms, to learn within it, to move beyond the manner of presentation to the substance, to tap that anger as an important source of empowerment" (Lorde 130). Drawing from this activist framework of not only learning how to value women's anger, but also "tapping into" anger as a source of social justice and political transformation, I outline here the significance of teaching students to write their own radical agit-prop (i.e., political propaganda) manifestos in the university classroom. In this essay, I first discuss the genre of manifestos and the distinct features of their style and tone, followed by an argument for manifestos as a lively conduit for the expression of rage, anger, and pushing back against oppression. I then describe the "manifesto assignment" I created in one of my courses, alongside my descriptions of the challenges and rewards of using this genre with students. I also discuss the multifaceted applicability of manifestos to courses ranging from English/literature, history, women and gender studies, critical race studies, and sexuality studies, ultimately arguing that they work as a tool for anti-oppressive composition pedagogies.

What are Manifestos?

The genre of manifestos has largely remained understudied and overlooked, seen more as a literary tantrum than as a serious entity worthy of study. Manifestos are, by nature, rather peculiar. They are wild-eyed calls to arms intended to provoke radical social change, often moving at breakneck speed and invoking the collective "we" as they envision a new world order. As I wrote in my introduction to *Burn It Down: Feminist Manifestos for the Revolution,* "The urgency of manifestos—that clear sense that they sit right on the cutting edge—leaves a palpable feeling that the ink has yet to dry, that we are…on the '*bleeding edge*' of things. Regardless of when they were written, manifestos pulsate with newness and freshness. They pry open the eyes we would rather shut, forcing us to reckon with the scummy, dirty, awful truths we would rather not face" (Fahs *Burn It Down* in press). In this regard, manifestos work by immediately feeling out of date, as if they were meant only for an audience of the immediate moment: "Full of contradictions, ironies, and clashes, manifestos operate on unsteady ground. The genre combines a romantic quality of dreamers and artists imagining something new and whimsical together with the crushing power of a Mack truck bulldozing over established traditions, trashing accepted/acceptable modes of thought, and eradicating the past. Manifestos do the transformative work of hoping *and* destroying, reflecting *and* violently ending things" (Fahs *Burn It Down* in press). These contradictions make manifestos all the more exciting and pulsating with life, as they simultaneously create and destroy. As Julian Hanna wrote, "Part of the attraction of the manifesto is that it remains a surprisingly complex and often paradoxical genre: flippant and sincere, prickly and smooth, logical and absurd, material and immaterial, shallow and profound" (Hanna, "Manifestos"). Manifestos are keenly interested only in the new and the fresh, the immediate and the contemporary (Yanoshevsky 257).

In this sense, manifestos may seem performative—full of theatricality and bigness—but they only work when rooted in the author's actual feelings about the world. Manifestos rely upon a deep and profound sense of sincerity at the root of them. And, more importantly, they have little regard for careful or tempered claims and avoid (almost religiously) notions of citational practice, homage to other thinkers, or an imagining of their ideas as "lowly" or "unworthy" of huge overreaching claims about the world. They are meant to communicate and convey an urgent sense that the world *must change*, and that social and political power belongs to *everyone*. They have no regard for "wait and see" politics, tempered claims of incremental social change, or the more liberal sentiments of politeness and respectability. These documents instead present *radical* visions for change that starts at the root structures of things.

Manifestos are hot-tempered and angry, sweeping and smashing, destructive and wildly creative. They challenge many traditions of writing, preferring to use the sweeping "we" pronoun, all capital letters, and frank emotionality (particularly anger). The writing conveys the message that there is no other reality but the author's reality just as the writing also emphasizes differences, polarizes, perturbs, annoys, and commands attention to its subjects. (These work, at times, as a permanent contradiction.) As I previously wrote about feminist manifestos, "Reading manifestos can feel like we as readers have caught fire. We light up, aflame. Manifestos operate as an infectious, contagious kind of document, one that purposefully ignites readers or listeners with its messages, making little room for disagreement or rational back-and-forth discourse. We are left raw and exposed when in the presence of a manifesto. The manifesto author tells us how to think, assumes we agree with them, imagines no possibility for refusal or resistance. They do not invite us to carefully piece apart the claims; rather, they want an *emotional* response. We should laugh, shout, or feel fear" (Fahs *Burn It Down* in press). Pushing this a bit further, Charles Jencks wrote, "The good manifesto mixes a bit of terror, runaway emotion and charisma with a lot of common sense .... The genre demands blood" (Jencks as cited in Hanna "Manifestos").

Can Students Write Manifestos?

In many ways, manifestos stand at odds with the traditions and practices of academia (and certainly oppose the formal training I received in clinical psychology and, to a lesser extent, women and gender studies). Manifestos are hot-blooded and full of passion, unreasonable and "unprofessional" in tone, and revolutionary in intent. When I first imagined the bizarre and somewhat contradictory idea of *teaching* students to write their own manifesto within a university classroom setting, I first had to consider: Can students write manifestos? Is this a genre accessible to them? Will they meaningfully understand the tradition of what the manifesto genre is, and can they extend and apply this to their own realities/lives? Overwhelmingly I believe the answer to all of these questions is: YES. Manifestos tap into a completely different emotional and psychological register than other forms of academic writing. Rather than working on precision and form, citational style and practices

of mastering bodies of literature that have come before them, and writing with small, tempered, nuanced claims that they *earn* through careful research, manifestos reject all of these things. Instead, the manifesto genre asks students to *start* from their own emotional feelings of rage and anger at oppression. It invites students to first think: What angers/enrages/upsets me most about the world? Next, students consider: What kind of world can I imagine that eradicates this oppression, and how can I write forcefully, impactfully, and creatively about such a world? How can I *show others* this world, using emphatic language? The starting point for manifesto writing assumes (rightly) that students are experts on their own emotional experience of the world. And, by stripping away academic conventions, we get to see their voices come through vividly and beautifully, raw and pulsating with energy and vitality.

> *Too often, I think, academic writing strips students (and, to a lesser degree, faculty as well) from their own sense of authority about the world.*

Too often, I think, academic writing strips students (and, to a lesser degree, faculty as well) from their own sense of authority about the world. They learn in conventional academic settings to fear making claims that are too big or too far-reaching (and therefore not supported by empirical or textual evidence). Students hear that they must first cite all of the "big names" on a subject before they are allowed to think anything themselves. They spend a lot of time practicing respectability politics and learning how to "position themselves" and strategically imagine securing jobs or getting into graduate school. Students learn about conventions of academic journals and the gatekeeping practices of nearly all facets of academic life. They are taught to envision themselves (often uncritically) as within this hierarchy and as invested in the institutional dysfunctions of academia, producing distant and sterile academic writing that lacks feminist praxis. Manifestos push back not only against the traditional practices of academic writing, but they also defy traditional ways of academic *thinking*. In this sense, if students write excellent manifestos, they can sense the risky-ness of that document as it collides with conventional academic practices. (I have had students tell me they fear their manifesto would "ruin" their career if it was leaked, or that they imagine it would stop them from getting a job.) Part of the transformative pedagogical process lies in the creation of this consciousness—that writing can be *dangerous* if done well.

The Manifesto Assignment

I first designed the manifesto assignment for a class I teach called "Hate Speech, Manifestos, and Radical Writings." This course revolves around the dual tasks of reading and studying other people's manifestos from the last 200 years alongside students writing their own manifesto on a subject of their choosing. The course typically has between 15-30 upper-division students from women and

gender studies, ethnic studies, American studies, or social justice and human rights. Typically, the class attracts about one-third men and two-thirds women along with at least a few gender nonconforming and non-binary students each semester. As is typical for my university (a public university in Southwest USA), students have a wide range of age, race, class, and sexuality backgrounds, including a fairly sizeable number of students who come from nearby Native American reservations and a relatively high proportion of Latinx, working-class, and LGBT students. Most students have never heard of manifestos prior to taking this course and most have never accurately understood what the word "radical" means (that is, going to the root structures of something) prior to enrolling in the class.

In this course, we read documents from the 19th century to the present, from anarchist texts from the 19th century through to manifestos of the alt-right and, by contrast, anti-Trump manifestos. As stated on the syllabus, together we examine topics as diverse as the problems of marriage, the surveillance implications of Facebook and Twitter, the cultural and symbolic meanings of female suicide bombers, exploitation under capitalism, racial and colonial oppression, internet trolls and online hate speech, and the myth of the vaginal orgasm. We travel through the early days of organizing Chicana/o labor rights to the turbulent and politically progressive 1960s to the present-day struggles about whether pornography is itself a form of hate speech. The course is designed to move far beyond the sanitized and pre-digested writings of typical university textbooks, far beyond the more well-known and well-traveled versions of social movements students may be familiar with (e.g., feminism, queer rights, black power), and into realms that are, by all accounts, radical, perverse, hateful, or transformative.

The manifesto assignment is discussed as the centerpiece of the class, a combination of working with both form and content of the manifesto genre. After reading numerous articles about the history of manifestos and the style/tone of manifestos, they work on writing their own manifesto. I write in the assignment description:

> Your task is now to write your own manifesto, drawing from the stylistic guidelines we have discussed and reviewed during class. Your manifesto can be about anything you like, but it should be something you take seriously, and it should advance the cause of social justice in some way. Try to make it specific, forceful, creative, thought-provoking, and interesting. This project is as much about practicing your 'voice' in the manifesto as it is about the subject matter. Consider what potential impact the manifesto can have if it is circulated. Try hard to step outside of traditional modes of communication, paper writing, or argumentation. Rather, you are writing a sweeping document of social reform that should sound urgent and compelling. Build a case for the necessity of the change you seek and use the methods of radicalism to guide your work.

Students are encouraged to start thinking about their manifestos from the first day in the course, so that they can trace their most raw sense of what angers them through to the more developed sense of this as they read more and

more manifestos throughout the course. I require students to turn in a rough draft of their manifestos halfway through the semester so that I can read it and give some pointers. Typically, my feedback includes comments like, "This part is wonderful—see if you can make it even more explosive" or "I feel like you're holding yourself back from the anger you feel about this—don't hesitate to let it rip!" or "You can't just say 'shit' and 'fuck' to express anger—try to dig in with more precise language instead." Sometimes it feels clear that students are trying to copy or mimic the style of other manifestos, so I also often point out to students that they can make this manifesto whatever they want without homage to others. As long as they understand what manifestos are and what they are for, they produce work that is usually remarkably well-written, dramatic, and startling.

The Rewards of Teaching Manifesto Writing

In the span of the last eight years teaching this course, I have seen manifestos that have addressed a wide range of topics: globalization, fatness, anti-technology, privacy, sexual violence, racism, religion, money, art, politics, bodies, work, immigration, capitalism, and more. Every single semester I have read manifestos that I consider exceptional in their power, tone, style, and expression of anti-oppressive ideologies. Even the less intense and commanding manifestos show creativity, intention, and hone in on students' unique impressions of the world. In addition to showcasing the very real material oppressions students encounter, their manifestos reveal deeply creative and intensely emotional aspects of their lives that otherwise stay hidden in their more conventional academic papers.

In a book chapter I wrote on student manifestos a few years ago, I noted that student manifestos successfully accomplish three major things: 1) Their work resists gendered norms of politeness and deference; 2) Their work inherently functions in intersectional ways, fusing together struggles of race, class, gender, size, and sexuality; and 3) Their work collectively imagines words as contagious and emotional (Fahs "Words on Fire" 228-229). Each of these accomplishments works as a form of anti-oppressive pedagogy, as students not only learn about intersectionality but *embody it* in their work. They imagine other ways to "do academia" via pushing back against respectability discourses and notions of gendered politeness and deference. And, in homage to feminist practice, they embrace emotionality—including emotions not typically ascribed to women (or people of color, or poor people)—rather than running from those emotions.

One of the most rewarding parts of this assignment is that the class collectively works to organize a public manifesto reading event on campus toward the end of the semester. This has taken many forms: one semester students organized a night called "MANICFEST" in conjunction with music students, where students read manifestos while the music students composed background music and "intermission" music that fused electronic and punk genres together. Another semester students organized "MANIFEST THIS," a night that combined manifesto reading, a social gathering for food/drinks, and anti-oppressive art-making. Each of these evenings has given students the chance to read aloud their work, something that I have found profoundly moving as their professor. Even when students are nervous, the words themselves are powerful and real enough to transcend their presentation and infect the room with radical possibilities. Students also learn to support and affirm each other's work, which gives manifestos a different "life" beyond the (rather unfortunate) limitations of me reading and grading it as their primary (or sole) audience. Instead, they express the work through a wide emotional range: ranting and raving, militant anger, timidness, tearfulness, collectivity, deadpan readings (and more). Students invite their friends and family, share their manifestos widely with others, and engage with each other's work in generous and supportive ways. I also see this as a form of transformational pedagogy—that is, pedagogy that pushes students to invest themselves in new and unfamiliar ways into their own work and into the projects of social justice more broadly—as their written work becomes performative (also much in line with the genre of manifestos).

As another unexpected benefit of teaching students to write manifestos, many students have used their manifestos as the foundation for larger academic projects, whether undergraduate thesis work, or masters or dissertation projects later on. While manifestos do not necessarily work as ideal writing samples for graduate school or post-graduate employment, they do tap into students' deeper beliefs about what matters to them and what angers them, which is a good basis upon which to build larger thesis and dissertation projects. In fact, many students told me later on that it helped to focus their attention *not* on what was feasible or pleasing to their dissertation committees, but on what they felt enough passion about, to help them endure and overcome the hardships of dissertation writing. Further, some students use their manifestos as the basis for many of their later activities, whether grassroots activism, picking a career trajectory, or working on finding others interested in similar themes and topics. (Position papers—another type of writing assignment more often taught at the university level—can also do this, but they differ from manifestos in tone, style, urgency, and impact. Manifestos are not only opinions, but rather, an urgent revolutionary document.) In the process of writing their own manifesto, students can better understand that marginalized voices matter and that they can nurture their own radical voices that attack the root structures of patriarchy and misogyny.

In the process of writing their own manifesto, students can better understand that marginalized voices matter and that they can nurture their own radical voices that attack the root structures of patriarchy and misogyny.

The Challenges of the Manifesto Genre

While teaching manifesto writing is primarily a transformational pedagogical practice (both for me and for the students), there are many challenges in teaching manifesto writing as well. One of the bigger challenges revolves around the irony of teaching students to write outlaw manifestos *within the institutional framework of academia*, an educational setting that often reproduces class, race, gender, and sexuality hierarchies. The fact that I have to give them a grade on their manifestos, or the risk of them writing a manifesto to please *me* rather than themselves, may end up undercutting student agency and stripping their work of some of its rawness or "bite." We physically sit in classrooms talking about manifestos, which does not necessarily allow them to engage as much with *the world* when dreaming up their manifesto. Students often struggle to find balance between their respectable student persona and their manifesto writer persona, which can lead to tensions and frustrations for them as they write in a new style and tone.

Consistently I have seen that the manifesto genre seems to work more easily for students who already think about and experience oppression in their lives. Students of color, women students, sexual minority students, poor and working-class students, disabled students, and fat students often generate topics for their manifestos more easily and readily than do straight white thin middle-class male students. Manifestos from straight white male students often include vague, incrementalist, and moderate topics like "improving the music industry" and "better parenting" and rarely land with the same impact when read aloud to other students. They often tell me and the entire class that they cannot think of good topics or feel uncertain about what is wrong with the current world (much to the chagrin of fellow students who are living the social problems that other students can overlook). It is one of the only literary genres that truly *disadvantages* white male (and other privileged) students and *advantages* people from lower status groups, particularly when students *write* manifestos. This is a fascinating reversal of typical academic experiences (as white men are typically catered to within academia to rather extreme degrees, see Armato 578; Styhre and Tienari 442-444).

The writing process for manifestos can also have some jagged edges. Some students struggle to come up with topics (see above), but others find that they do not know how to *write* about anger as a source of political engagement. They only experience anger as an unruly emotion that, when unleashed, sounds like a flurry of "fuck you" expletives rather than a more sophisticated and biting revolutionary argument or analysis. Helping students to write *to an audience* and think about how their words will land matters in this process. Encouraging them to swear less, and write with more *blood*, helps them to make documents that have more impact. (I typically tell them that they can swear as much as they want as long as they *earn* it and do not just use profanity to stand in for more interesting ways of expressing anger and outrage.)

Manifestos themselves also have certain built-in limitations that present challenges when teaching students how to read and write manifestos. The genre operates in a rather reckless and destructive manner; even though this at times can serve as a strength, it also poses certain challenges for students. Understanding the difference between far-right manifestos (e.g., pro-eugenics, Nazi, etc.) and far-left manifestos (e.g., revolutionary anarchy, indigenous taking back of land, etc.) can be tricky if the manifesto genre is generally intended to *over*-stimulate its readers and overwhelm them. I work to contain the far-right manifestos into one or two separate weeks so that we can think about the difference between hate speech and manifestos first, and then move to more of the left-wing based manifestos.

Writing manifestos also has its hazards and limitations. For example, students at times latch onto the notion of *destroying things* without thinking more carefully about what that might mean. "Killing cops," smashing patriarchy, ending capitalism, canceling gender, and destroying the government emerge rather often in student manifestos, but these kinds of concepts can produce some unintended consequences in students' writing: vast overgeneralizations, romanticizing political violence, not seeing beyond one's own experience/life, usurping dogmatic (and obnoxious) language, and idealizing an ethic that moves away from empathy, community, and shared experience. I try to work with students to use manifestos as a way of communicating their own truth rather than using manifestos to sound "extreme" or "cool." Inauthenticity is the death of a good manifesto; they are performative, but students have to actually *mean* what they write. My role is to help them to find a voice that is truly angry, not performatively angry.

The challenges of teaching manifestos also point to the bigger challenges of situating critical fields like women and gender studies and ethnic studies within the academy. Women's studies, for example, began as an extension of the women's movement and was initially seen by feminist activists as the "scholarly wing of an activist movement" (Fahs *Firebrand Feminism* xii). Women's studies was designed as the university extension of feminist grassroots activism and therefore initially served the activist movement (Smith 48-51; Stake and Rose 403). Women's studies morphed over the years away from these activist roots and toward the politics and priorities of scholarly respectability, rarified language, and less teaching about activism, consciousness-raising, and feminist praxis (Sarachild "Feminist Revolution"). Many women's studies professors have exceptional academic credentials but have little connection to grassroots activism or feminist organizations, an idea that would have been unthinkable in 1970 when women's studies courses first appeared on university campuses (Stanley 3). Teaching students to write manifestos serves as a way to connect them with the intentions of what women's studies was designed to do, that is, encourage students to serve the interests of a liberatory *activist movement*.

A Call for Manifesto Writing as Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy

I conclude this essay with a call to other professors to teach students how to write manifestos. While such an assignment does not need to occur only in a course on manifestos, some history and background of what manifestos do, what the genre is, and what others' manifestos sound/feel like is essential. Beyond that, I could imagine feminist manifesto writing as a topic for upper-division women and gender studies courses, performance art or performance studies courses, English or literary courses, women's/black/indigenous history courses, ethnic studies/American studies courses, or courses on community organizing, social movements, protests, and revolutions. I could imagine this as an "extra credit" project, a graduate level collaborative effort, or a women's history month project, on campus and beyond.

Manifesto writing could be a collaborative exercise or an individual one, and it could take many forms and shapes (reading manifestos aloud, performing manifestos at rallies or protests, writing manifestos to university administration, and many others). Getting in touch with anger, tapping it as a source of empowerment (and embodiment), helps students to write themselves into their own work and validate anger as basis for *knowledge-making* and visions for social justice. As professors, we have an obligation to see our students as purveyors of knowledge, not just as recipients of knowledge. We want them to feel that they help to *shape* the field of women and gender studies, for example, rather than merely accept it in its current form. Most importantly, we want students to understand themselves as powerful and fierce, as provocative writers even if they lack some of the formal academic pedigree that permits them to write, and as emboldened forces of resistance in their own right.

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RADICAL TEACHER

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

Publishing Revolution:
Publishing Praxis in the Classroom

by Ela Przybylo

PHOTO BY DESIGNECOLOGIST

In her field-shaping, feminist, queer, and antiracist digital humanities piece, "#transform(ing)DH Writing and Research," Moya Bailey discusses the possibilities for "digital alchemy" that online collaborative writing projects can foster. She writes: "Alchemy is the 'science' of turning regular metals into gold. When I discuss digital alchemy I am thinking of the ways that women of color, Black women in particular, transform everyday digital media into valuable social justice media magic that recodes failed dominant scripts" (n.p.). Propelled by Bailey's model for digital alchemy as arising from both organized and spontaneous "circular collaboration" as well as by other projects in the queer and feminist digital humanities that seek to challenge individualistic conceptualizations of writing and knowledge-making, commercial models of publishing, and narrow understandings of access, this pedagogy piece reflects on a course I had the joy of designing and teaching in Fall 2018 in The Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University (SFU), located on unceded Coast Salish Territory; the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Kwikwetlem First Nations.

"Intersectional Feminist Journal Praxis" was a project-based course that asked students to collectively develop—from start to finish—an inaugural issue of an undergraduate journal. The goal of the course was to mobilize students to partake actively, at all levels, in intersectional, antiracist, and decolonial publishing through learning how to work, write, and create collaboratively while navigating the affordances and limitations of Open Journal Systems Software (OJS) (Public Knowledge Project). There were eight students in the course stemming from diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, sexuality, ability, racialization, and nationality (for example, students identified as Filipinx, black, Latinx, white, brown, of color), most of whom were settlers, and all of whom were in their early twenties. Because this was a 300-level Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies course with prerequisite requirements, students were already well versed in many discussions around gender, sexuality, antiracism, and decolonization, and as such were politically akin in their feminist commitments and outlooks. For example, the value of an intersectional syllabus was never questioned as students were inclined to think of feminisms in the plural and of gender in conversation with race, sexuality, ability, and nationhood. Also, SFU is a university invested, at least theoretically, in decolonization, and it houses the Bill Reid Centre for Northwest Coast Studies (named after the renowned Haida artist), an Indigenous Student Centre, and a First Nations Studies Program. At the same time, the university stands on unceded territory, uses colonial English as its language of operation, and as most educational institutions on Turtle Island (in North America), benefits from the bounties of settler colonialism. While I was not able to access diversity statistics for the university (I am not sure if data on identities other than binary gender has been consistently collected at SFU), from my experience the student body is racially diverse though dominantly of white European and to a smaller extent East Asian descent, reflecting the composition of the city of Vancouver, British Columbia.

Throughout the semester of Fall 2018, students read and discussed readings on intersectionality in publishing studies, as well as conversed with guest speakers about approaches to digital publishing and about practical methods for collaboration. Students worked in teams around specific tasks like a call for papers, peer review, copyediting, and introduction-writing while employing critical publishing practices such as remaining reflexive about, for example, accessibility and power inequalities in processes of knowledge production. The inaugural issue of the journal which the students decided to name *Intersectional Apocalypse* was published on the theme of "Digital Dialogues: Navigating Online Spaces" and is now available online (https://journals.lib.sfu.ca/index.php/ifj). In this piece I begin with the context and framing of the course, exploring in particular the ways in which publishing is necessarily a political praxis, and one that can be effectively utilized in anti-oppressive projects of world-making. Following on this, I discuss the histories and praxes of feminist publishing in particular. In these first two sections, I draw mostly on research that the students themselves read in the course—that is intersectional feminist theories and intersectional approaches to journal-making and publishing studies. In the third section I draw on students' words, as reflected in their assignments, to explore the innovative praxis they developed within the framework of the course. As I will explore, I treat students as authorities on building a feminist journal and on their experiences in the class, citing them as I would cite any other author. In the concluding section, I offer some thoughts for other instructors undertaking journal praxis pedagogy and consider my own role and affects in the project. The piece explores forms of "digital alchemy" that can flourish if students are empowered to work together towards an intersectional feminist online publishing project as well as the need for collaborative approaches that are attuned to crankiness, frustration, tiredness, and anger (Bailey n.p.).[1]

Publishing as an Anti-Oppressive Praxis

As Simone Murray and others have noted, until recently there has been a dearth of scholarly attention to the processes, or as Jennifer Gilley remarks, the "mundane realities" of feminist publishing (Tanselle qtd. in Gilley 142). Even while students routinely read the knowledge produced, curated, and hosted by feminist and social justice-oriented journals, they rarely have opportunities to think about the ways in which that knowledge is made, or the sometimes darker undercurrents of exploitation and emotional labor that fuel knowledge production. Sometimes termed a "labor of love," journal publishing is often feminized work, for no pay and little recognition (McLaughlin). While publication in top-tiered feminist journals remains key to getting hired, becoming tenured, and being seen, read, and recognized in feminist communities, the editorial work that makes this career advancement possible remains largely uncredited. And yet, feminist journals, broadly conceived, have mushroomed over the last decades, creating an intricate galaxy of feminist knowledge-production. Journals such as *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media and Technology; Feral Feminisms; Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*; and before that *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational*

Women's and Gender Studies and many others, are experimenting with the affordances of online spaces and multimodality while pushing the theoretical frames of various fields. Constituting a space accessible to anyone with internet access, open access feminist journals create spaces for community, for sharing and making knowledge without a price tag attached, and for challenging academic journal paywalls. Yet, despite the disruptive potential of online publishing, publishing in all its forms can be both a transformative, justice-oriented cultural practice as much as one that reifies power imbalances, oppresses the already oppressed, and re-states rather than remakes knowledge boundaries.

> *Yet, despite the disruptive potential of online publishing, publishing in all its forms can be both a transformative, justice-oriented cultural practice as much as one that reifies power imbalances, oppresses the already oppressed, and re-states rather than remakes knowledge boundaries.*

For example, while many lauded the rise of online publishing as making possible a new way to access and democratize knowledge, Vincent Larivière, Stefanie Haustein, and Philippe Mongeon in "The Oligopoly of Academic Publishers in the Digital Era," demonstrated that online publishing not only replicates but aggravates power imbalances of traditional publishing models with the ownership of the majority of journals in the hands of 5 commercial publishers (Reed-Elsevier, Wiley-Blackwell, Springer, Taylor and Francis being the top 4, with the social sciences being most affected by this trend). While the costs of production have decreased for these publishers with digitization, the costs at which they sell journal bundles to libraries has increased, dramatically increasing their profit margins to be similarly inflated to those of big pharma and the automobile industry. In response to these outrageous findings, the authors of the study ask: "What do we need publishers for?" indicating that "it is up to the [academic] community to change the system" (Larivière, Haustein, and Mongeon n.p.).

Also, while "open access" has been widely celebrated as increasing access to knowledge and thwarting the commercialization of knowledge, the very idea of "gold standard" open access unloads the responsibility of making work accessible onto authors themselves, asking that they pay thousands of dollars to make their work free to the public. Further, even in its radical so-called "Diamond" forms, open access, as Kimberly Christen discusses, relies on colonial understandings of knowledge sharing that thief and misuse Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge. For example, Christen points out that Indigenous knowledges under settler colonialism have always been regarded as "open" and free for *settler* use, even when they were created with only particular Indigenous nations, genders, or people with specific community roles in mind. In other words, the abuse of settler-Indigenous relations (by settlers) has created expectations that Indigenous knowledges, materials, and ceremonies *should* be free for settler enjoyment and learning. Further still, because some Indigenous knowledges and Traditional Knowledge is held in common by all people of a certain nation rather than by a sole author as is common in Western settler contexts, it has been easy to "take" Indigenous work without seeking consent, permission, or payment. In such cases, knowledge that belongs to a specific Indigenous nation, ends up being legally "owned" by someone else (Younging).

"Openness at any and all costs," according to Christen, while a response to corporate greed, can mask the manners by which knowledge is gathered in colonial contexts, rendering knowledge itself "innocent" and the property of all even while many Indigenous peoples have limited access to their own histories (2874). What is the difference, then, from Indigenous standpoints, in making work developed by one's community accessible to a broader public of settlers from centuries of knowledge theft by explorers and museums? In response to these concerns, scholars and communities have developed alternative access frameworks such as Traditional Knowledge Commons (TK) licensing agreements (as a response to Creative Commons licensing) and Mukurtu CMS. In contrast to other open access platforms and licensing systems, Mukurtu and TK are built with and by Indigenous communities and with Indigenous ethics in mind. Thus, stories, cultural materials, and knowledge can be shared how, if, and to the degree that communities want to share them, restricting, for example, settler access to materials where desirable (Mukurtu CMS; Local Contexts). These technologies are knowledge interventions that challenge Western conceptualizations of "intellectual property regimes" and serve a "wider range of ethical and cultural concerns" (Christen 2888, 2889). Grounded in nation-specific protocol, Indigenous ethics strive for nation-specificity, including around how knowledge is understood and shared, and demand agreements that are mutually beneficial (Younging, 15–16, 95–96).

Questions of peer review are similarly complex and often underexplored. While there needs to be exploration of how peer review operates in relation to settler colonialism, it seems clear that if stemming from Indigenous ethics and knowledges, the paradigm of peer review, as much as all aspects of publishing, would be fundamentally rethought. Scholars such as Korey Jackson consider the genealogies of peer review as a form of knowledge assessment, arguing that while peer review seems like a common-sense practice, it is actually a historically contingent one, a "fluid genre of scholarship" (n.p.). Arguably, peer review today is a labor-intensive and incomplete form of assessment that offloads labor onto academics as a means to save journals time and money (Larivière, Haustein, and Mongeon). Despite efforts at decreasing reviewer bias, double anonymous/"double blind" (rather than eponymous) forms of review can function as a license for meanness, negligence, orthodoxy, and entitlement among reviewers (Pontille and Torny). Instead of accepting this system, as Jackson argues, peer review should continue to evolve, and we should, in his words, "continue to watch the watchers" rather than let one mode of assessment dominate the field (n.p.).

Also, in *Editing as Cultural Practice in Canada,* Dean Irvine and Smaro Kamboureli frame editing itself as a cultural practice, in the sense that it "denotes … collective traditions and customs … operating as a mode of communal labour and agency … bring[ing] forth collective products of lived experiences" (2). In this sense, editors play a key role as creators of culture, as well as its practitioners. Editors, including and especially feminist journal editors, as Kate Eichhorn and Heather Milne frame it, undertake both the material production of bringing work into print (or virtually, into online spaces), and the affective or emotional (immaterial) work of creating networks, communities, worlds, and, sometimes, revolutions. This publishing work can dismantle canons and build up exquisitely curated conversations that center minoritarian voices and communities or it may function as business as usual. Importantly, the very processes and methods of publishing are in many ways the opposite of what is prized and rewarded in academia: collaborative, interactive, grounded in the mundane, and invisible.

Feminist Publishing Histories and Praxes

Historically, publishing, print, and online media have been key to movement struggles and revolutions. For example, publishing played a key role in the resurgence of feminism in the 60s and 70s. The development of countless presses across North America, including such presses as The Kitchen Table Press by Barbara Smith and Audre Lorde (and others) and Daughters, Inc. modeled on Virginia and Leonard Woolf's Hogarth Press, alongside the creation of over 200 women's bookstores that promoted and distributed this work, made possible the amplification of voices otherwise excluded from white male canons (Harker and Konchar Farr). Feminist periodicals likewise exploded over North America, and as Anne Mather's 1974 report on feminist publishing indicates, between March 1968 and August 1973, there were over 560 new feminist periodicals in the US. Similarly, in Canada, over 900 feminist periodical titles (many of them short-lived and in small circulation) emerged between the 60s and early 90s (Mather; Jordan and Meagher). These periodicals not only published some of the most famous feminist pieces of the era but also formed the precursors to contemporary feminist academic publications. In the 60s and 70s, as much as today, writing and publishing was a form of antisexist and antiracist activism in itself, founded on both the material, mundane realities of getting shit done as much as on the affective circuits of feminist famedom and friendship. Feminist communications circuits included writers, readers, editors, printers, publishers, distributors, and retailers (Travis 276; Darnton). This women in print movement was about creating feminist methods for publishing, producing feminist content, building networks, and providing sites for political feminist engagement (Jordan and Meagher). Both the political and the mundane were deemed equally valid, vital, and central. For example, women were encouraged to learn the craft of printing as much as the business of it, fueled by a socialist-inspired class consciousness invested in blurring the hierarchies between manual and mental labor, skill-set acquisition and political development (Travis 280). In other words, *praxis* was at the heart of the women in print

movement of the era, and as Trysh Travis writes, "feminist theory—accurate ideas about what women are and where they are situated within the structures of power and culture—develop[ed] in concert with and as a result of women's development of practical skills" (280). Through a "dialectical relationship between skills and politics" (280) a feminist publishing praxis was formed.

Drawing on theorists of praxis such as Amanda Lock Swarr and Richa Nagar, praxis-based approaches to research and pedagogy are reflexive, alerted to how practice alters theory, refusing top down generation of knowledge. Feminist praxis holds onto the radical notion that we are all theorists in our own right and that knowledge comes in varied forms that should not be subject to a hierarchy. Feminist journals have always been fundamentally about praxis, holding method and process to be as vital as outcome, and being innovative in their inclusion of poetry, art, and hybrid genres as *as* central to the work of building knowledge as the sharing of academic articles. Feminist journals are always in the process of praxis, which in Swarr and Nagar's words involves "constant negotiations and retheorizations … through alliances, languages, and critiques that disrupt dominant logics and imaginaries … creating radicalized practices for institutional transformation and sociopolitical justice" (Swarr and Nagar 18). For many feminist theorists and practitioners, praxis needs to be intersectional in order to "broaden and radically redefine" genealogies of feminism by creating online dialogue, communities, and insisting on the validity of feminist of color perspectives (Loza n.p.). In this sense, building journals is often both collaborative and coalitional work that does not insist on similarity of experience but creates opportunities for multiple forms of engagement.

> ***Praxis is also grounded in a dynamic approach to collaboration, one that involves recognizing the multi-personed work that flows into the publication of an individual author's work and the reality that knowledge production is collaborative.***

Praxis is also grounded in a dynamic approach to collaboration, one that involves recognizing the multi-personed work that flows into the publication of an individual author's work and the reality that knowledge production is collaborative. This involves making visible all labor that is involved in a project. Bailey, with whom I opened this piece, discusses collaboration as a process that needs to benefit all parties involved and be for the benefit of all communities touched by the process. While academia continues to reward single author texts, digital projects including journal projects can foster, in her words, "a different methodological practice" toward inventing, remaking, challenging, and critiquing the powers that be (Bailey n.p.). The same principle holds true for Indigenous ethics, which are founded on reciprocity and relationship-building (Younging). Notably, collaboration should not signify lack of discord, tension, or disagreement. In fact, as students in the class had an

opportunity to explore, journal praxis is entwined in the affective modalities of both concord and discord among journal collaborators and readers. In other words, collaboration does not always feel good and studying these more negative affects and events—frustrations, tiredness, friendship tensions, uneven workloads—is an important entry point to thinking about power in collaborative settings.

Publishing Praxis as a Composition Pedagogy

Drawing on publishing praxis, the "Intersectional Feminist Journal Praxis" course was fundamentally invested in thinking about the ways that journals can function as an arm of postsecondary institutions and as such are often entwined in elitism as well as racist and settler colonial legacies. Bell hooks has argued that while the 60s and 70s saw feminists aggressively challenging the status quo, feminism became depoliticized in the 1980s through both "lifestyle feminisms" and the migration of feminist engagement to the institutionalized worlds of women's studies classrooms (9). In hooks' account, the university depoliticizes and enervates rather than ignites feminist struggle. Educational institutions across North America are well documented in their functioning as sites for the reproduction of sexist values, the stratification of class along racial lines, as well as the fostering of white settler colonial entitlement. All the same, as La paperson argues in *A Third University Is Possible,* universities have also held within them spaces of resurgence and transformation. As part of the work of thinking about postsecondary institutions as sites of power and inequality, it is vital to think about the role that journals play. For example, while online feminist journals provide sites where diverse forms and theoretical traditions of knowledge can be celebrated and shared, it is instrumental to question how journals contribute to anti-oppressive pedagogies in terms of *how* they produce knowledge as much as in terms of what knowledge they produce (Verhaeghe, Przybylo, and Patel).

Thinking about journals presented opportunities for students to explore a "blend of feminist theory and publishing practicability" (Gilley 142) —reflecting on how intersectional feminist theories are put into practice and how praxis can inform grounded theorizing aimed at social justice and anti-oppressive world-making. Or, drawing on Cassius Adair and Lisa Nakamura's reflection on the anthology *This Bridge Called My Back,* which the students read for the class, building feminist knowledge collaboratively through books or anthologies constitutes a "networked pedagogy" that is as much about relationships and forming kin networks as it is about the final product. Through the class, students were encouraged to build such a "networked pedagogy," undertaking the elaborate, lengthy, and detail-oriented process of creating an online journal with the understanding that, in the words of Barbara Smith and the popular slogan from the women in print movement, "freedom of the press belongs to those who own the press" (qtd. in Adair and Nakamura 261; also see Smith).

To explore how learning about collaborative intersectional feminist journal-making looks like from the students' eyes, I rely on a thematic analysis of two course assignments—a reflective logbook and a reading analysis—submitted by the eight students. In drawing on the students' voices (and naming those students who wanted to be named), I employ an attention to the mundane practicalities of journal making as well as write *with* the students, rather than about them, centralizing them as interlocutors in this piece.

For students, this course was a unique opportunity within their degrees to practice theory and hone praxis. Offered in Fall 2018, the course was 13 weeks in length and took place twice a week for 2 hours at a time in classrooms on the Burnaby Campus of SFU. Each class usually involved a discussion of readings, collective decision-making, and a feminist media lab during which students worked together on the journal. Weekly themes included: intersectional genealogies, praxis, peer review, journals and institutionalization, knowledge sharing, publishing and social change, access and disability, collaboration, zines, digital labor, invisibility, and archiving—roughly corresponding to the journal tasks underfoot (for a full syllabus, see Przybylo). Students learned to think critically about publishing and knowledge production, with a focus on topics such as open access, feminist periodicals, and Indigenous and decolonial approaches to copyright and knowledge sharing. For example, through course readings and discussions, student Maki Cairns learned that: "Access to knowledge should not exist as a hierarchical structure, it should be an equal playing field … Also, a lot of journals rely on academic jargon which is inaccessible for a lot of society. Language itself becomes a huge barrier to access to information." Stemming from an understanding of how knowledge—even feminist and anti-oppressive knowledge—can be co-opted, packaged, and resold, students were encouraged to adopt a radical approach to publishing that focused on challenging essentialized stories around knowledge-creation. This can be seen in this statement by anonymous student 2: "By making sure our work is not only free and easily accessible through the internet, but also ethical and anti-oppressive, we are ensuring that our work is not only 'white' feminist, but intersectionally feminist."

Yet early in the course students reviewed how intersectionality itself can often be co-opted, sold, or appropriated by the marketplace, considering the 2011 piece published by Flavia Dzodan, "My Feminism will be Intersectional or it will be Bullshit," and the ways in which Dzodan's words became imprinted on feminist memorabilia, often misquoting her words, misspelling Dzodan's name, and sometimes not citing Dzodan as the originator of the phraseology in the first place (Romano; Dzodan). Therefore, in the words of student Sarah McCarthy, the journal project was "about not just saying things are feminist, but actually engaging with intersectional feminist action." They go on: "In creating our journal, we are actively engaging in bridging theory and practice, embedding our theory into the work we are doing, and working to expand our theory as we work."

One way in which the class focused on action was through the work of collaborative decision-making. When faced with decisions such as what to name the journal or what issue to frame the Call For Papers around, we undertook a decision matrix model introduced to the class

by artist, curator, and guest speaker Xavier Aguirre Palacios. The matrix is a time-intensive but compelling method for decision-making that encourages all voices to be heard in dialogue rather than in competition with one another. It asks that each student present a solution to a task at hand (as, for example, with a suggested theme for the first issue) and then that every option is compared against every other option by every student. The tool encourages each student, regardless of how quiet in class, to offer a solution and to weigh in on *every* decision. As student Navi Rai wrote in her reflection, "I very much appreciate how each individual person in our class is so unique, and each individual creates work differently; yet we somehow can come to a commonplace and collaborative zone." Remarkably, even though each student came to the class with different experiences of marginalization as well as of privilege (as with being mostly settlers), students found a collective voice and celebrated each others' words and work in the class. Kaiya Jacob writes that "we are made up of many different people of different marginalised identities. When discussing topics as a group, we make a point of allowing space for each person to speak, and for their perspectives to be heard and understood. … Through our open and collaborative approach to the course, each person's perspective holds so much weight because we recognise each other's ability to broaden our personal and group frames." Drawing on Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of "frames" as making the tracking of injustice and the instituting of social transformation possible, students were encouraged to see the value of honing their own frames while working with each other to both trouble and expand them.

When reflecting on whether our first issue should be on grounding Indigenous issues, including those of Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Kwikwetlem in the Vancouver-area, the class had difficult discussions around most of us being settlers and whether or not soliciting submissions from Indigenous communities would actually benefit those communities. Naiya Tsang writes: "The process of choosing our topic was lengthy, rather labour-intensive, emotionally-draining, and perhaps not a practical fit for all situations due to the length of time it takes to use it properly, yet it was and is an important aspect in the production of this journal." In the end students chose instead to focus on "Digital Dialogues: Navigating Online Spaces" for the first issue, recognizing that they were not equipped with the time, resources, and connections to facilitate the deep relating work that an issue on Indigenous Vancouver perspectives would demand.[2] One student, Maki Cairns, contemplated the boundaries of the project: "Maybe [Audre] Lorde would disagree with our journal because we are using the 'master's tools' in a way, we are still using a system that was originally created for a privileged few to access (Lorde). The journal is trying to push these confines by doing things like providing transcripts, audio recordings, and being open access, but we are still limited in what we can do." Indeed, as shown by students' reflections, the vast potential of

practicing intersectional and antiracist feminisms and pushing the limits of theory in and through action, comes with its obstacles.

Yet the course was successful in stimulating an empowered sense of competency and motivation in regard to taking feminist action. For example, anonymous student 1, who wrote how little they talk with friends about academic topics usually, reported: "this class was integral [to me] because it gave me the push to reach out to my peers and share the CFP [Call for Papers]." By the end of the course they described how practicing the theory that is learned in class gives them a hope that their actions can make the world better in some way: "I am filled with immense joy to know that, in some small way—as an atom or a cell or a pixel on the screen—we were able to leave our mark on the world through our work."

Thinking about questions of scope, aims and goals, access, peer review, licensing, copyediting, and design, students in the class were unwilling to accept any business as usual model for approaching the praxis of publishing. To challenge the colonial primacy of English, students asked that we compile a list of the languages we were competent in. Our list included English, French, Polish, Hindi, Punjabi, and Spanish, and the students specified on the CFP that they would be accepting submissions in these languages. While all the submissions but one were in English (we received one in Spanish), the class saw its vision for the journal best reflected in holding the possibility for multilingual articulations open.

In a similarly innovative way and in relation to the limitations of peer review as discussed earlier, the students decided to remake peer review as a site of workshopping and collaboration. As they collectively wrote: "*Intersectional Apocalypse* aims to uplift and nurture knowledge in all forms, including through our peer review process. To do this, we believe it is imperative to push the boundaries of what peer review is and how it is conducted" (https://journals.lib.sfu.ca/index.php/ifj/reviewpolicy). Their solution to developing a networked and nurturing model of a workshop-based peer review involved asking contributors to also act as reviewers. While this sounds simple, it was modeled on imagining what both authors and

FIGURE 1: A SCREEN CAPTURE FROM THE OPENING PAGE OF THE JOURNAL, WHICH THE STUDENTS COLLECTIVELY DEVELOPED ON OJS, TITLED *INTERSECTIONAL APOCALYPSE*. AVAILABLE ONLINE AT: HTTPS://JOURNALS.LIB.SFU.CA/INDEX.PHP/IFJ.

reviewers can gain from the process of sharing and improving each others' work toward building a whole greater than its parts. An uncommon practice for most academic peer reviewed journals, this circular model could greatly benefit journal issues, encouraging collaboration, development, and learning, rather than competition. Further, students wanted guidelines for reviewers to keep in mind the humanity of both the reviewer and author, calling for respectful engagement and self-care. Other interventions the class undertook were creating audio files of all the pieces toward greater accessibility and including TK commons licensing as an option for contributors. Through focusing on the methods, processes, and "mundane realities" of how knowledge is created, students undertook a fundamentally political project (Tanselle qtd. in Gilley).[3]

However, the risk of getting involved and absorbed in intersectional and antiracist feminist praxis in class might also prove to be too labor-intensive for full-time undergraduate students. Working as feminist creators is routinely emotionally involved, labor-intensive, feminized work, with little monetary reward or recognition attached to it. As with many things in life, if things go smoothly, no one notices, and if they do not, reputations and bridges can be burned. More broadly, undertaking this project, I continued to be concerned by the possibility that I might engrain in students' habits of free and unpaid work that they already likely face in many other work environments such as student work, activism, and with unpaid internships. In one reflection, an anonymous student comments on the experience of intentionally not identifying as Indigenous in the course so that she would not have to be called upon to do the emotionally taxing work of speaking for multiple Indigenous communities and nations in addition to her own, a position which she was not comfortable with. She discussed how even while she enjoyed the work in the class, she noticed that students assumed that she was like many of them, a settler, leading her to painful moments of invisibility and increased pressure to come out to the class. Exploring some of these more difficult elements of collaborative work within settler colonial contexts—that is the tensions of "using the master's tools"—the final sections of the course focused on reflecting on labor, emotional work, as well as the challenges of being publicly present online as feminist content-makers (Lorde). Students learned firsthand how the realities of limited funding and time can compromise the vision of a project. As Kaiya Jacob wrote, "We've aimed to challenge some of the critiques [of digital labour] by raising money to pay our contributors, but despite our efforts, the reality of unpaid labour remains a part of our journal." While the class sought out fundraising to compensate contributors to the journal and was successful in providing about $50 to each contributor and to the artist featured in the introduction, there was not sufficient money to remunerate their own work as journal publishers and creators.

In her reflection on a class discussion on uncompensated labor, student Naiya Tsang wrote: "Many of us would love to continue with this journal, but also recognize that there is very little financial benefit; at the moment, we are paying (tuition) to produce this journal – trading in financial currency for a tenuous cultural currency."

Not only was the work of this social justice project uncompensated but, on top of it, it was fueled by difficult feelings associated with experiences of injustice, racism, sexism, settler colonialism, and marginalization. According to student Kayla Uren: "Our journal highlights marginalized experiences, and sensitive voices and emotional topics. I feel that there is a lot of anger that initiates the journal's existence." It is then no surprise that in their final reflection, anonymous student 1 wrote: "Having completed my portion of the journal production, I feel … it was draining, … and the most exhausting part was the need to always be 'logged in.'" For example, one of the most intensive periods for students involved hacking OJS technology through learning the basics of coding with PHP language. Because it was my first time offering this course, I myself was unprepared for the challenges that using and hacking OJS would present, as well as the extent to which students would actually need to learn how to code in order to maneuver the journal in the direction that aligned with their aims and vision. The final result was imperfect, providing a living trace of the labor of making a journal from scratch.

Following these accounts of some of the more troubling aspects of collaborative feminist publishing which challenge celebratory ideals of feminist sisterhood and camaraderie, I want to advocate for honing a cranky and killjoy-grounded
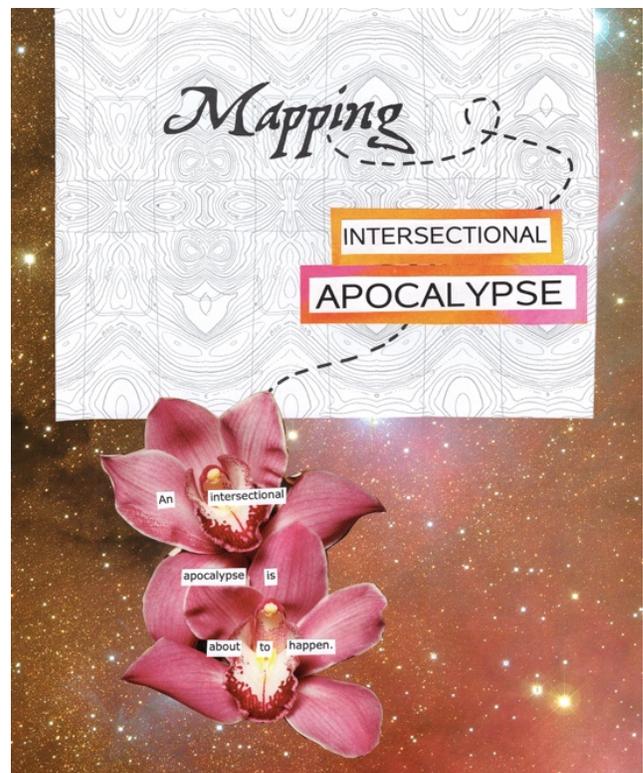

FIGURE 2: A COLLAGE CREATED BY STUDENTS (NAVI RAI, NAIYA TSANG, KAYLA UREN) FOR THE INTRODUCTION TO THE INAUGURAL ISSUE. IT READS: "MAPPING // INTERSECTIONAL APOCALYPSE // AN INTERSECTIONAL APOCALYPSE IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN."

approach to the free labor involved in collaborative writing and making projects. Digital humanities work, especially when feminist, antiracist, queer, and decolonial, is incredibly fulfilling and energizing. It transforms us into doers, makers, and activists. Yet, celebrating the work the class has undertaken, I assert the importance of introducing to

students their right to be dissatisfied, frustrated, angry, tired, and cranky, understanding these modes of unhappiness as integral to the affect arsenal of feminist publishing. Sara Ahmed argued that happiness is used to as a tool of social regulation, and even more so in regard to people who are oppressed. In this sense, happiness and being happy are "not so much a right as a responsibility" (Ahmed 9; Frye 2–3). In relation to the work of digital humanities and feminist anti-oppressive publishing projects, happiness is often packaged as "hope labor"—or the idea that through undertaking difficult, monotonous, thankless, and unpaid tasks a payment scheme such as a job will be lying in wait for us around the bend (Kuehn and Corrigan). This feeds into the capitalist myth that "success happens to good people and failure is just a consequence of a bad attitude" (Halberstam; see also Ehrenreich). Encouraging students to be skeptical of models that defer payment and recognition, the students undertook fundraising to pay journal contributors and together we kept space open for a cranky, angry, and killjoy approach to conditions of labor exploitation within the university. "Cranky collaboration" thus emerged as a possible addition to the "circular collaboration" and "digital alchemy" models with which I started the piece (Bailey). For while there is power in working together, collaboration itself also too frequently becomes co-optable by the marketplace. It is my hope that cranky collaboration indulges in the joy of feminist publishing and digital humanities models while also reminding us that difficult feelings are part of coming together as feminists invested in social change and world-making.

Concluding Thoughts: Can Everyone Teach this Course?

"Intersectional Feminist Journal Praxis" was a nourishing and rewarding experience also for me, the instructor. Due to its collaborative framework, I had the opportunity to invite guest speakers, host field trips (such as to the Vancouver Public Library's zine collection), work with the Public Knowledge Project, and receive feedback from colleagues at The Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines at SFU. Most importantly, the course invited mentorship between the students and I in a way that most courses do not, because of the nature of the project, the small class size, and the inimitable jelling of the group. After the class, I worked with students on other projects, met them for coffees, and some of the class and I went on a hiking daytrip. Yet the reality of innovative teaching, teaching that strives for new combinations of methods and technologies alongside reflexive feminist learning, is that it is itself labor-intensive and emotionally demanding. If I recall correctly, I spent some three months fine-tuning the details of the syllabus so that the intersectional theory, hands-on praxis, and in-class activities would align. In other words, despite the mentorship, collaborative, pedagogical, and friendship opportunities this course afforded me, academic contexts in which teaching innovation is encouraged yet under-rewarded, make the design and delivery of such courses often unthinkable. Tiredness is a difficult affect that I regularly face in my pedagogical practice. I am asking too much not only of my students but also of myself. Ironically, this is just as true of editorial work—it provides an endless stream of work tasks, camouflages this work under the moniker of "Editor" and a published final product, and is too often not properly financially remunerated and professionally rewarded within academia. Editing, like teaching, also demands a happy, accommodating public face that serves to mask tiredness, frustration, anger, and crankiness—not to mention pain, loss, irregularity, and mental health struggles. In both celebrating and remaining critical of the important work of anti-oppressive innovation in composition pedagogies as this special issue strives to do, I suggest that we begin with ourselves. We each need to ask ourselves, persistently, whether our pedagogical commitments to teaching students how to live lives critical of oppression are reflected in how we teach ourselves to work for institutions that are all too hungry for our excitement, commitment, and time.

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RADICAL TEACHER

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

Radical Lessons in the Wake of Black Lives Matter

By Julia Miele Rodas

I WAS BLOWN AWAY WHEN TA-NEHISI COATES WROTE ABOUT REPARATIONS IN THE ATLANTIC: "WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT IS MORE THAN RECOMPENSE FOR PAST INJUSTICES — MORE THAN A HANDOUT, A PAYOFF, HUSH MONEY, OR A RELUCTANT BRIBE. WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT IS

A NATIONAL RECKONING."

I WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT MY CURRICULUM WOULD BE PART OF COATES' "NATIONAL RECKONING" AND . . .

. . . THAT WRITING STUDENTS WOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE CRITICALLY WITH SPURIOUS ARGUMENTS THAT PIT OPPRESSED & MARGINALIZED PEOPLE AGAINST ONE ANOTHER.

First things first: <u>Everyone</u> deserves access to important ideas and information. This is the primary reason behind presenting this essay in comic form as well as the primary motivation underlying the exercise this essay describes. Pictures and emphatic word-art help clarify complex concepts for many. Comics can provide a point of entry to discourse that might otherwise be marginally accessible; and using comics to teach and to learn disciplines readers and writers to pare away the nonessential and prioritize foundational content.

From the outset, though, it's crucial to recognize that using visual tools and platforms to create widespread access often adds barriers for blind and visually impaired people whose participation in political and intellectual life is required as urgently as that of any others.

That's why the following comic is augmented with plain text verbal description for every panel. This not only makes this graphic essay more accessible, it also foregrounds for all readers both a common problem of accessibility and one practical solution.
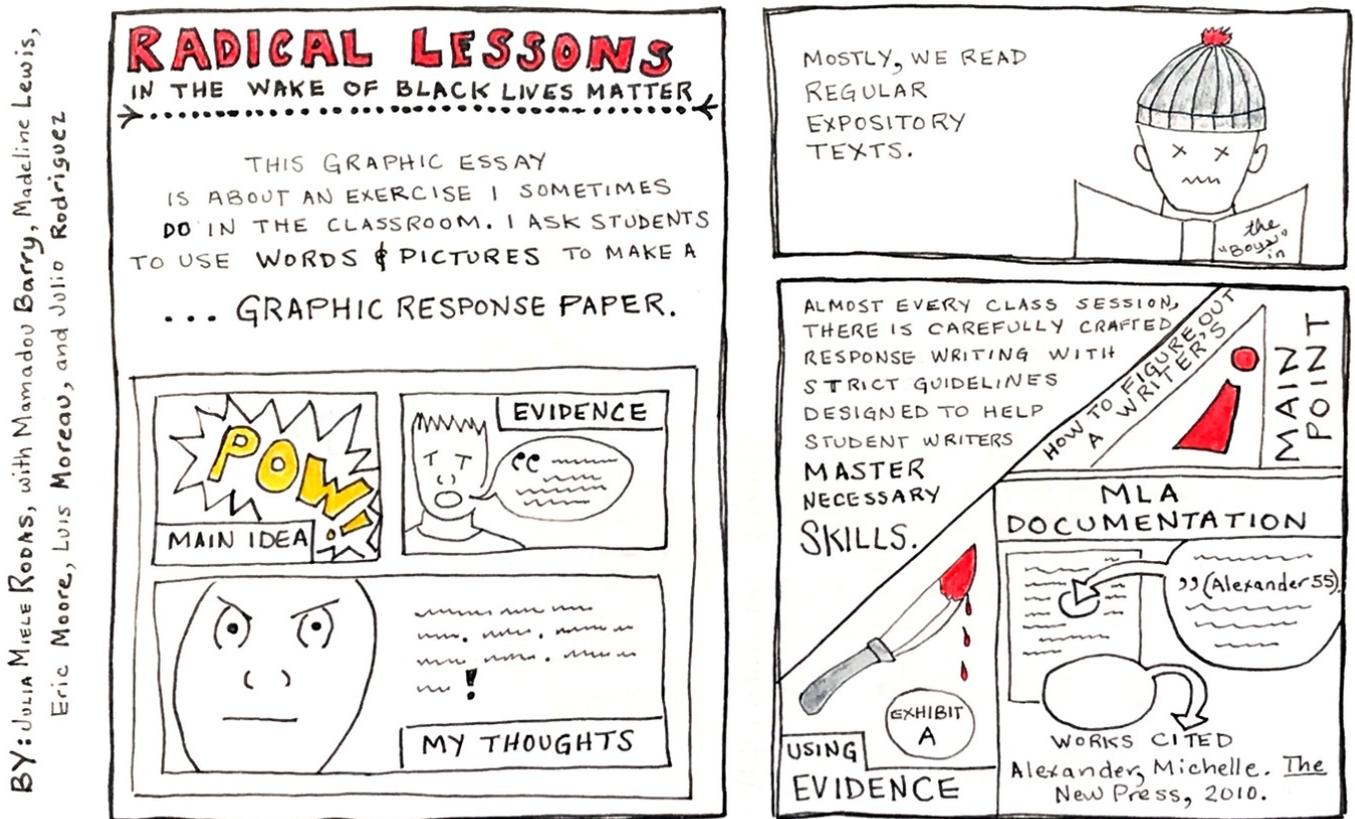
(first of three frames): "Radical Lessons in the Wake of Black Lives Matter," by Julia Miele Rodas, with Mamadou Barry, Madeline Lewis, Eric Moore, Luis Moreau, and Julio Rodriguez. This graphic essay is about an exercise I sometimes do in the classroom. I ask students to use words & pictures to make a … graphic response paper. Illustration: sample three frame comic, first frame has "pow!" in dramatic yellow letters with caption "main idea," second frame shows cartoon head with speech bubble depicting generic text in quotation marks with caption "evidence," third frame shows close up angry cartoon face with generic text at the side punctuated with exclamation point, captioned "my thoughts."

(second of three frames): Mostly, we read regular expository texts. Illustration: Bored cartoon face with knit cap and X-es for eyes reading a hardcover book with partial title, "The 'Boys …"

(third of three frames): Almost every class session, there is carefully crafted response writing with strict guidelines designed to help student writers master necessary skills. Illustration in three parts shows knife marked "exhibit A" dripping blood from

the tip with caption "using evidence," large exclamation point with caption "how to figure out a writer's main point," and magnified view of print page highlighting use of in-text citations and works cited entry with caption "MLA documentation."

N.B. The entire comic is written and drawn by hand in a naïve cartoon style, black ink with watercolor highlights and whimsical borders.
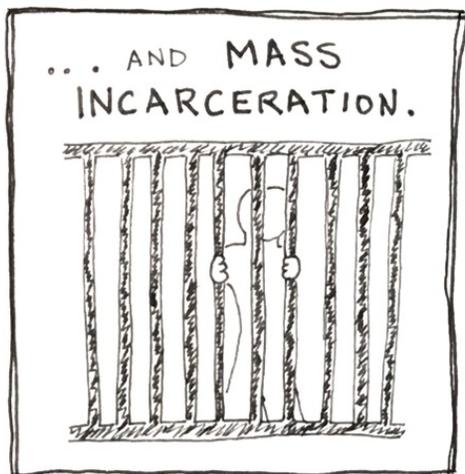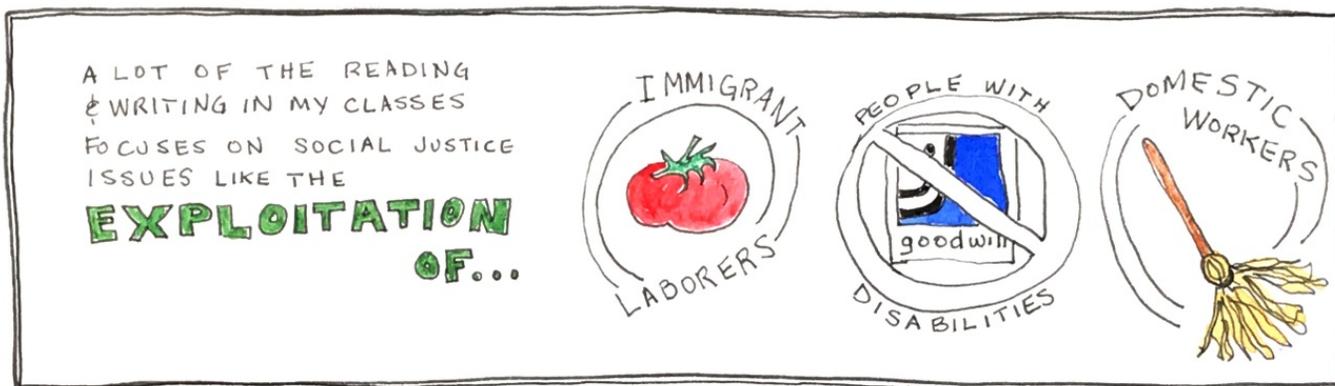
A LOT OF THE READING & WRITING IN MY CLASSES FOCUSES ON SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES LIKE THE **EXPLOITATION OF...**

IMMIGRANT LABORERS

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

DOMESTIC WORKERS

... AND **MASS INCARCERATION.**

THESE COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMPOSITION COURSES ASK NOVICE WRITERS TO **THINK CRITICALLY** ABOUT **EXPLOITATIVE SYSTEMS** & TO CONSIDER **SOLIDARITY** BETWEEN OPPRESSED & MARGINALIZED GROUPS.

IT'S DEMANDING, EXHAUSTING WORK — BOTH INTELLECTUALLY & EMOTIONALLY.

COMBINING WORDS & PICTURES GIVES STUDENTS A BREAK FROM OUR USUAL ROUTINE & CREATES AN OUTLET FOR THOUGHTS, **FEELINGS** & CREATIVITY THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE BE **STIFLED.**
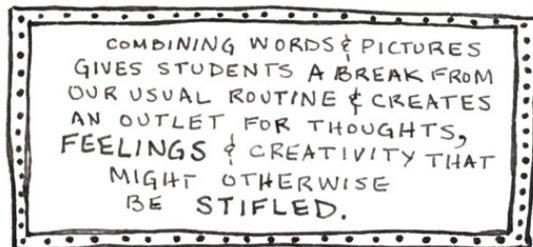
(first of five frames): A lot of the reading & writing in my classes focuses on social justice issues like the exploitation of … immigrant laborers, people with disabilities, domestic workers. Illustrations show a tomato associated with "immigrant laborers," a crossed-out Goodwill logo for "people with disabilities," and a mop for "domestic workers."

(second of five frames): … and mass incarceration (with illustration of silhouetted figure behind bars).

(third of five frames): These community college composition courses ask novice writers to think critically about exploitative systems & to consider solidarity between oppressed & marginalized groups.

(fourth of five frames): It's demanding, exhausting work—both intellectually & emotionally. Illustration: supine figure on the floor, arms and legs akimbo, with X-es for eyes, mouth gaping, and a mop of curly blond hair strewn out on the floor.

(fifth of five frames): Combining words & pictures gives students a break from our usual routine & creates an outlet for thoughts, feelings & creativity that might otherwise be stifled.
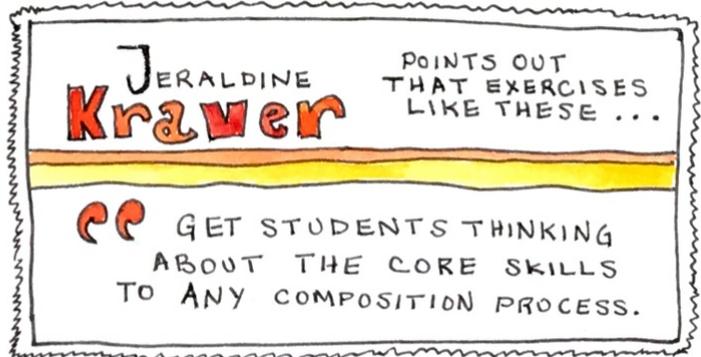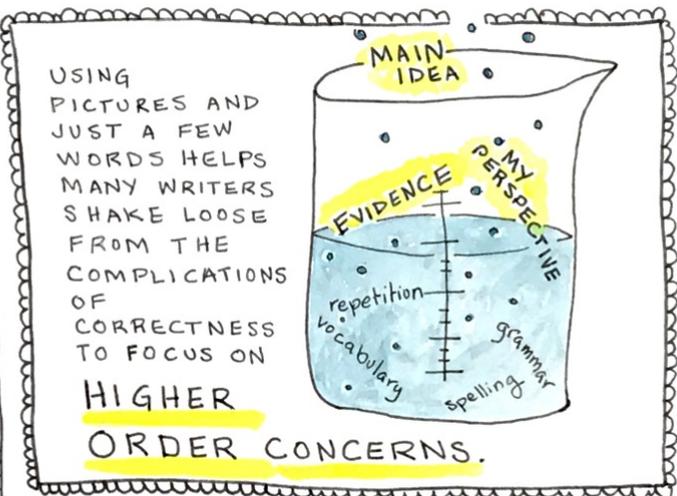
(first of three frames): Another thing … from a composition standpoint, the 'writing' task mimics the framing of conventional written three-part paragraphs, reinforcing everyday lessons about having a topic, using evidence, and offering analysis. Illustration depicts a curly-haired, glasses-wearing composition professor (the author) saying "A good paragraph is a lot like a sandwich! You need substance in the middle!" while pointing at a composition paper with numbered parts for "topic sentence," "evidence," and "explanation," and a heavily loaded sandwich with an arrow pointing to the center and noting "the good stuff."

(second of three frames): Using pictures and just a few words helps many writers shake loose from the complications of correctness to focus on higher order concerns. Illustration is a beaker half filled with fluid, words and bubbles percolating up from the bottom; from bottom to top, words are: "spelling," "vocabulary," "grammar," "repetition," with highlighted terms— "evidence," "my perspective," and "main point" floating to the surface and out of the top of the beaker.

(third of three frames): Jeraldine Kraver points out that exercises like these "get students thinking about the core skills to any composition process." With bold orange and yellow stripes as flourish.

(first of five frames): To model the approach … my instructions <u>also</u> take the form of comics.

(second of five frames): For today's in-class writing, let's combine words + pictures! / Cartoon Time. Illustration shows stick-figure instructor, curly hair in a bun and wearing glasses, with an associated thought bubble, "I'm a genius! What a <u>great</u> idea!" surrounded by a diverse array of stick-figure students, not all of whom are human, with their own respective thought bubbles, including: "I can't draw!" "I don't know what to do!" and "¡No! Julia, don't do it! Terrible idea!"

(third of five frames): Panel 1, In your own words, what's one thing you learned or one idea from Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* that really struck you? Illustration: Stick figure with thought represented by a giant glowing light bulb.

(fourth of five frames): Panel 2, Add a quotation. Use words from Alexander's book to show the reader what you're talking about! Illustration arrow pointing to a specific spot on the page of an open book with generic text.

(fifth of five frames): Panel 3, naïve cartoon figure, with curly hair, wearing dress surrounded by speech bubbles with the following prompts: "Reminds me of …," "I never realized that …," "Unfair because …," and "Connects to another author …"
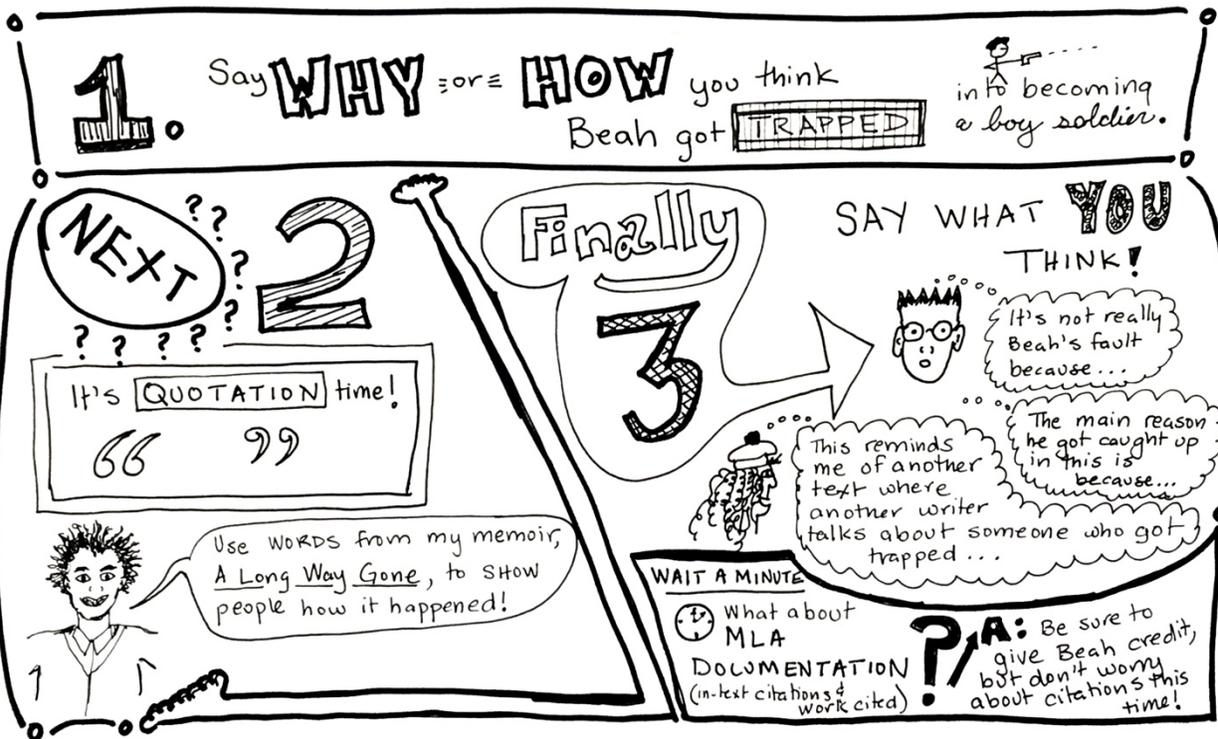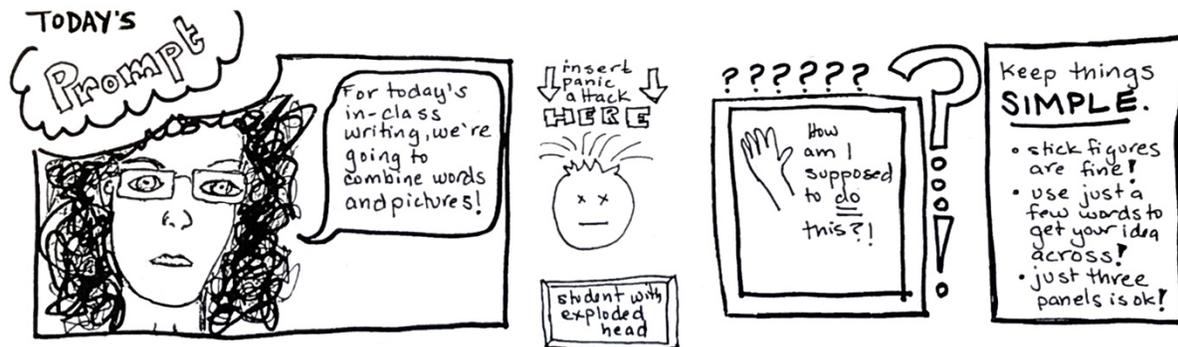
(first of eight frames): Today's prompt. Illustration: Curly haired, glasses-wearing professor face with speech bubble saying, "For today's in-class writing, we're going to combine words and pictures!"

(second of eight frames): Illustration: arrows pointing to abstract face with X-es for eyes, noting "insert panic attack here" and captioned, "student with exploded head."

(third of eight frames): How am I supposed to do this?! Illustration is raised hand.

(fourth of eight frames): Keep things simple. Stick figures are fine! Use just a few words to get your idea across! Just three panels is okay!

(fifth of eight frames): 1. Say why or how you think Beah got trapped into becoming a boy soldier. Illustration: stick figure shooting a handgun.

(sixth of eight frames): Next????? 2. It's quotation time! Illustration: Curly-headed bust representing Ishmael Beah with speech bubble saying, "Use words from my memoir, A Long Way Gone, to show people how it happened!

(seventh of eight frames): Finally, 3, say what you think! Illustration: various student heads with the following thought bubbles, "It's not really Beah's fault because …," "The main reason he got caught up in this is because …," "This reminds me of another text where another writer talks about someone who got trapped …"

(eighth of eight frames): Wait a minute! What about MLA documentation (in-text citations & work cited)? A: Be sure to give Beah credit, but don't worry about citations this time!

(first of four frames): What Purpose Does This Serve?

(second of four frames): For one … it's a break from the grueling business-as-usual of the composition classroom.

(third of four frames): Abigail G. Scheg says: "By offering short creative writing assignments within the first-year composition class, we are giving our students a break from those traditional (and for many students, seemingly insurmountable) assignments to reaffirm their capabilities as unique individuals." Illustration shows a standard-format composition page in portrait orientation with arrow pointing to second page in landscape format with tree, sun, stick figures and minimal text.
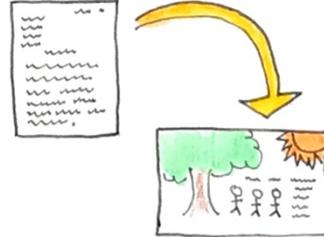
(fourth of four frames): It's also a chance for less advanced readers to get a foothold in an assigned text, especially one that uses difficult language, or, that's theoretically challenging. Illustration is a single bare foot.

(one frame): Illustration is bearded figure with glasses and Yankees baseball cap wearing a BCC t-shirt, with speech bubble saying, "Hi! My name is Julio Rodriguez. I am a sophomore student at Bronx Community College. My major is Biology and I aspire to be a scientist in the future. Also, I really enjoyed the illustration exercise that my awesome professor, Julia Rodas, encouraged us to do because it allowed me to concisely express my interpretation of the material."
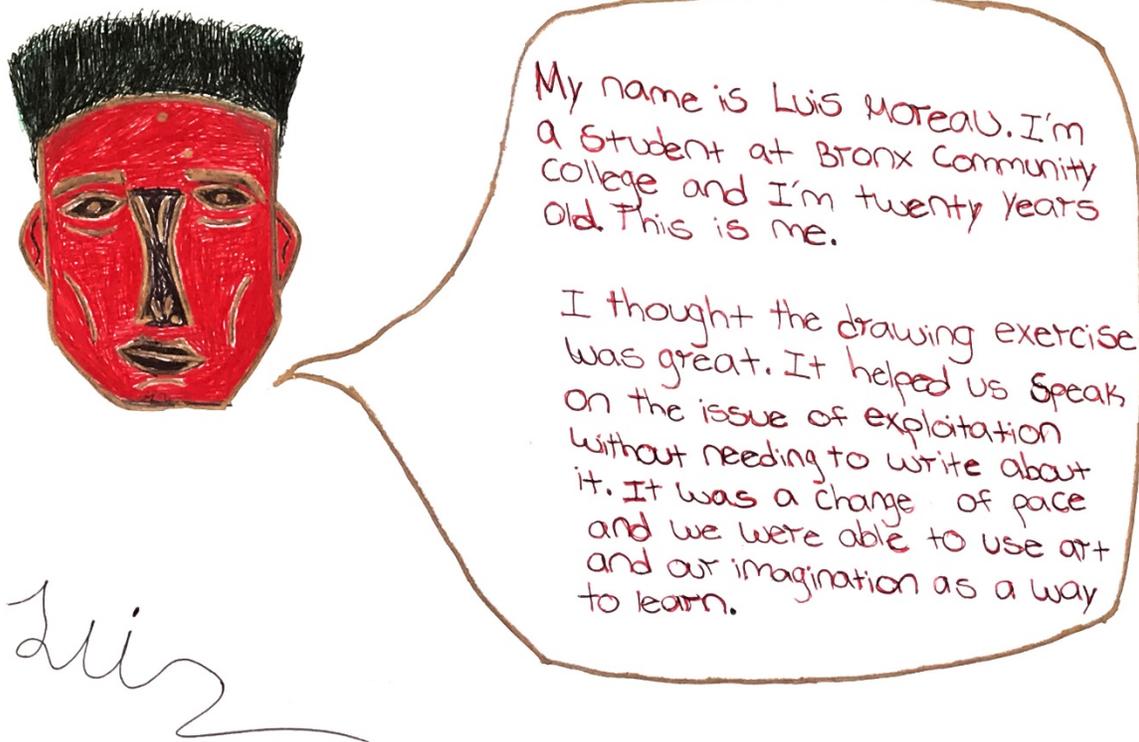
(one frame): Illustration is abstract/stylized red and black face, with speech bubble saying, "My name is Luis Moreau. I'm a student at Bronx Community College and I'm twenty years old. This is me. I thought the drawing exercise was great. It helped us speak on the issue of exploitation without needing to write about it. It was a change of pace and we were able to use art and our imagination as a way to learn."

(one frame): The students who share their off-the-cuff comics in the present essay show powerful clarity regarding the texts they write about. Mamadou Barry, for instance, uses irony to engage with the outrageous racial injustices detailed in Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*.

(first of three frames): One thing I learned was that it was more likely for a man of color to get incarcerated than a white man even if they did the same crime. Illustration: scenario 1: Black man, shows two stick figures with picture of large apartment building labeled "project housing." First figure has speech bubble saying, "Yooooooooo … I got that sour, G.G. Gelato, every kind of weed." Second figure responds, "let me get a dime." Scenario 2: white man, shows stereotypical single-family suburban housing with two stick figures, the first saying, "I got molly, percs, angel dust, Adderall, shrooms, crack, and cocaine." Second figure responds, "Dude, you're loaded. I want everything."

(second of three frames): "How a formally race neutral criminal justice system can manage to round up, arrest, and imprison an extraordinary number of black and brown men, when people of color are actually no more likely to be guilty of drug crimes and many other offenses than whites." Illustration: scenario 1: Black man sold an eighth, shows many NYPD vehicles, including helicopter and SWAT team headed toward apartment tower with walkie-talkie message, "He is armed and dangerous and especially <u>black</u>!!" Scenario 2: white man sold a whole crack brick, shows two stick figures in front of single family house with a single police car. Figure one has arms thrown up in distress, says, "It was only a brick this time." Second figure holds out cuffs, saying, "Ohhhh Jimmy boy, it's time to go. This is your 5th strike."

(third of three frames): I think the justice system is all sorts of messed up, plus there is lots of racism involved which drives this country. Illustration: scenario 1: Black man waiting to get sentenced. Wide-eyed stick figure judge sitting at the bench appointed with a large American flag, says, "You are being sentenced to 15 years for possession of marijuana, multiple gun charges, and for attempted murder." Armed stick figure police officers flank the accused, one of these threatening, "If you move I will beat you." Stick figure accused in the center with frownie-face laments, "I only had weed. I didn't do all of that." Scenario 2: white man waiting for his sentence shows same stick figure judge at same bench saying, "You are going to be under house arrest for 3 months for possession of illegal drugs." Court officer stick figure addresses smiling accused stick figure saying, "You are free to go, sir!"
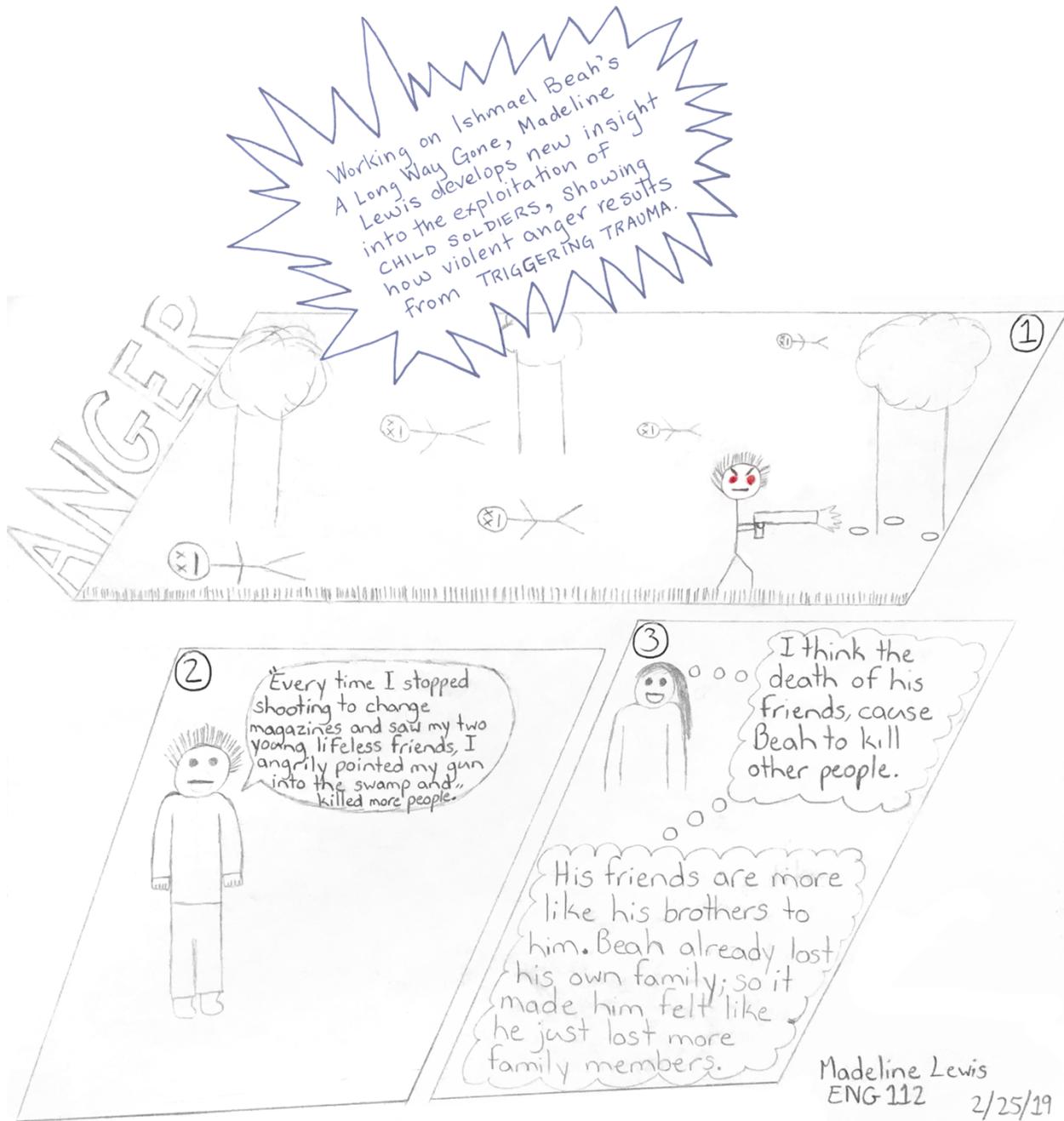
(first of four frames): Working on Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone*, Madeline Lewis develops new insight into the exploitation of child soldiers, showing how violent anger results from triggering trauma.

(second of four frames): Anger. Illustration depicts dead stick figures lying amidst trees while one angry figure shoots a big gun outside the frame.

(third of four frames): Illustration shows shooter figure, now with neutral face, saying, "Every time I stopped shooting to change magazines and saw my two young lifeless friends, I angrily pointed my gun into the swamp and killed more people."

(fourth of four frames): Illustration is smiling long-haired figure with thought bubbles noting, "I think the death of his friends caused Beah to kill other people, and his friends are more like his brothers to him. Beah already lost his own family; so it made him feel like he just lost more family members."
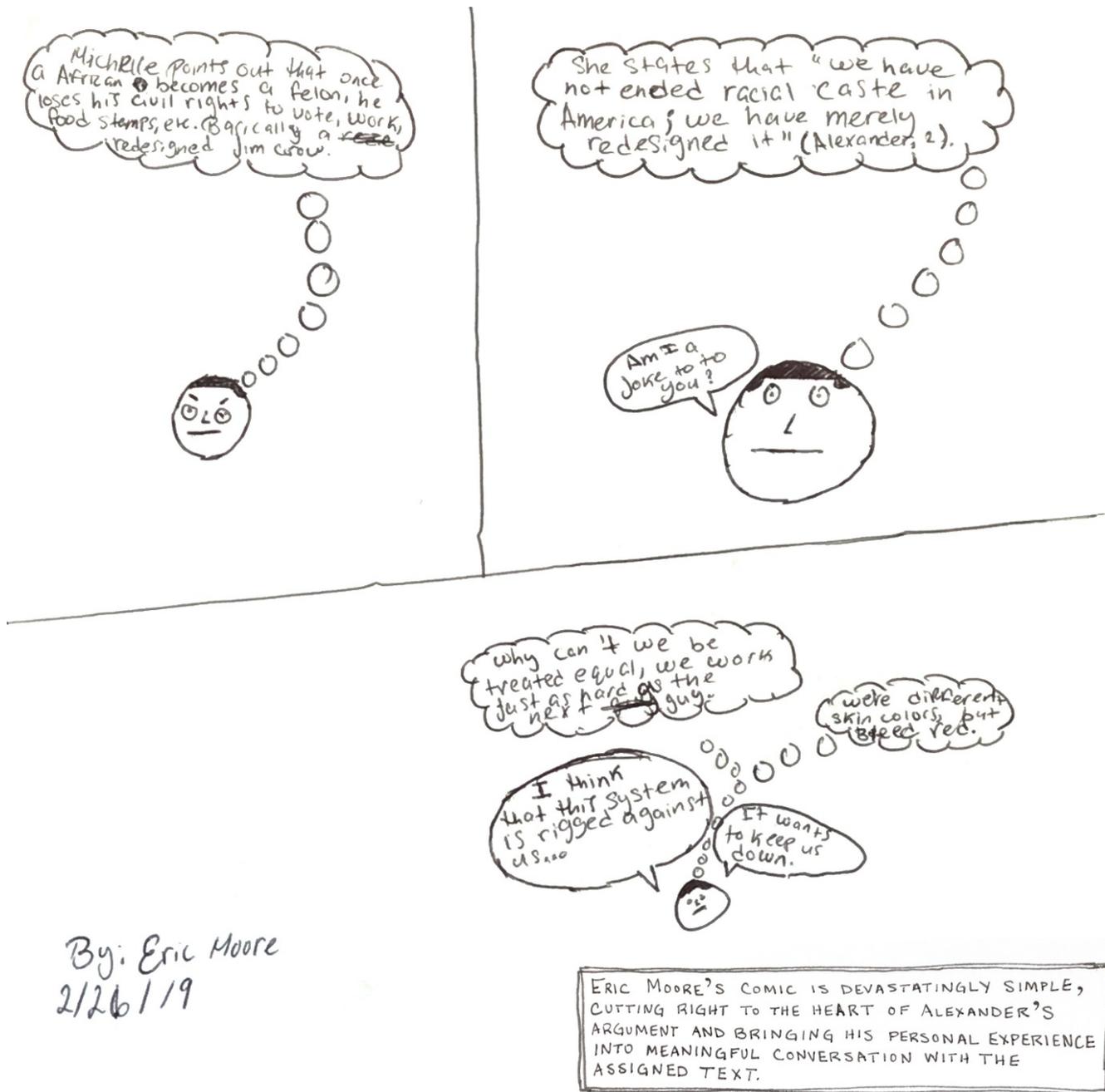
(first of four frames): Eric Moore's comic is devastatingly simple, cutting right to the heart of Alexander's argument and bringing his personal experience into meaningful conversation with the assigned text.

(second of four frames): Illustration is simple cartoon face with sardonic expression, thought bubble noting, "Michelle points out that once an African-American becomes a felon, he loses his civil rights to vote, work, food stamps, etc. Basically, a redesigned Jim Crow."

(third of four frames): Illustration continues with simple cartoon face, bleak expression, thought bubble saying, "She states that 'we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it'" (Alexander 2). Speech bubble asks, "Am I a joke to you?"

(fourth of four frames): Illustration continues with tiny cartoon face, with thought bubbles: "Why can't we be treated equal? We work just as hard as the next guy." And, "We're different skin colors, but bleed red." Two speech bubles comment, "I think that this system is rigged against us …" and "It wants to keep us down."

(first of four frames): Luis Moreau also adopts a simple style, pointing out that power lies in the hands of adults who often manipulate children by taking advantage of them emotionally.

(second of four frames): Illustration: Simple friendly face with spiky hair has speech bubble saying, "Beah transforms from an ordinary child into a hardened killer because he gets manipulated by the lieutenant."

(third of four frames): Illustration: Simple face with curly hair has speech bubble saying, "The lieutenant told all of us that the rebels, 'have lost everything that makes them human. They do not deserve to live. That is why we must kill every single one of them. Think of it as destroying a great evil. It is the highest service you can perform for your country.'"

(fourth of four frames): Illustration: Simple face with spiky hair shows thought bubble with the words, "We need to protect children from adults with bad intentions. Children are easily manipulated and can be taken advantage of like the lieutenant did with Beah. He was made to believe that he was protecting the world from these monsters. He was risking his life for someone he believed cared about him."

(first of four frames): Julio Rodriguez uses bold drawings and title text to drive home a similar point, that the exploitation of Beah is grounded in the death of his parents, drawing a vital abstract thread between all orphaned and abandoned kids.

(second of four frames): What's the reason? He was orphaned!

(third of four frames): Illustration is fragile looking boy figure, hands in pockets, head hanging down with thought bubble showing him wondering, "Where's my mom and dad?" while oversized head of square-jawed military authority, mouth wide open, assault weapon in his clenched fist, shouts, "Fight for us or die!"

(fourth of four frames): Illustration is mournful boy's face saying, "All that darkened the mood of the village was the sight of orphaned children … I was one of them" (Beah 101). Caption reads: Being an orphan makes a young man susceptible to the compulsion and manipulation of authoritative figures when there's no one left to look up to.
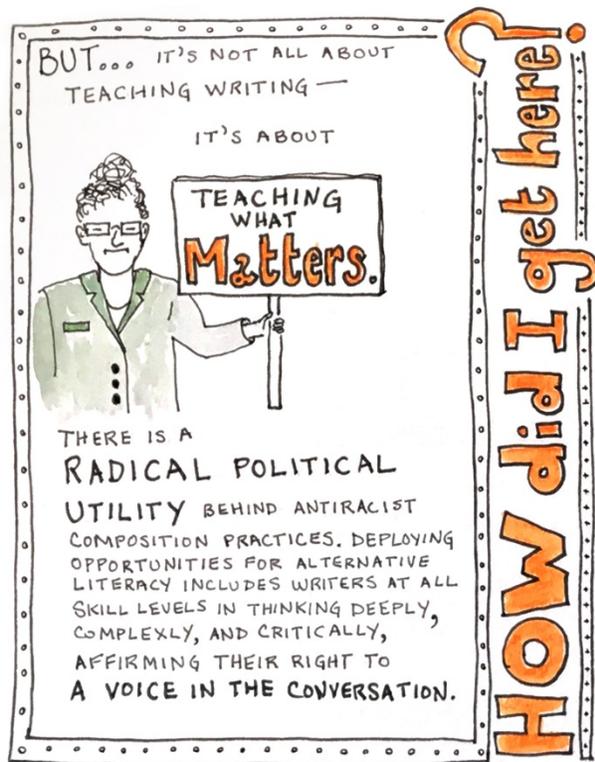
(first of three frames): BUT … it's not all about teaching writing--it's about teaching what matters. There is radical political utility behind antiracist composition practices. Deploying opportunities for alternative literacy includes writers at all skill levels in thinking deeply, complexly, and critically, affirming their right to a voice in the conversation. Illustration: Curly–haired, grim-faced, bespectacled professor figure holds sign reading, "Teaching What Matters."

(second of three frames): How did I get here?

(third of three frames): Ferguson was a vital spark … I listened at the end of *13th* (thank you, again, Ava DuVernay!) when Bryan Stevenson points out our national hypocrisy—that we move through life as though the racial injustices of slavery & Jim Crow are a thing of the past while we are living in the era of mass incarceration, a stupefying humanitarian crisis and … "we are tolerating it." Illustrations show a lit match next to the Ferguson text and a chubby figure on horseback in Klan attire, the horse also draped in white, yielding a torch. The Klan figure is adorned with a MAGA symbol, the horse with a "Trump 2020" patch.
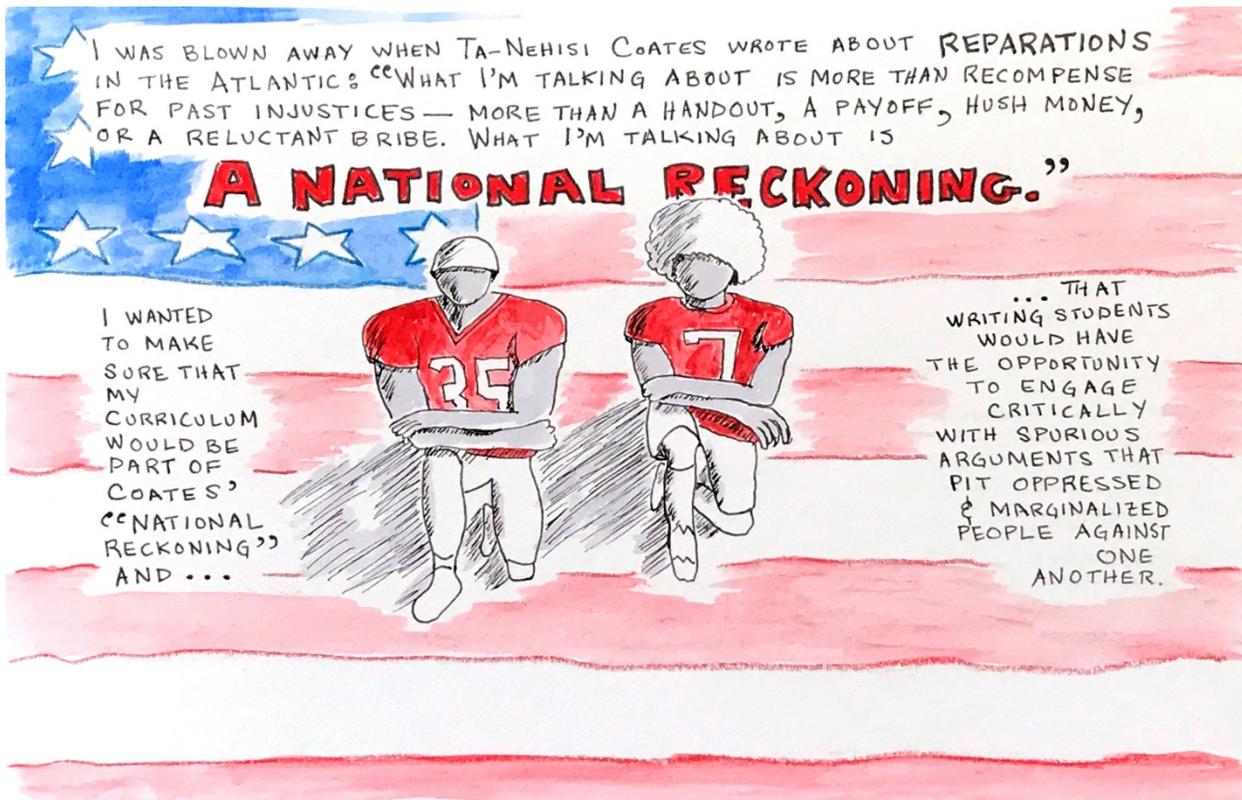
(one frame): I was blown away when Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote about Reparations in the *Atlantic*: "What I'm talking about is more than recompense for past injustices—more than a handout, a payoff, hush money, or a reluctant bribe. What I'm talking about is a national reckoning." I wanted to make sure my curriculum would be part of Coates' "national reckoning" and … that writing students would have the opportunity to engage critically with spurious arguments that pit oppressed and marginalized people against one another. Illustration: Kneeling silhouetted football players in the center of the page against an American flag backdrop.
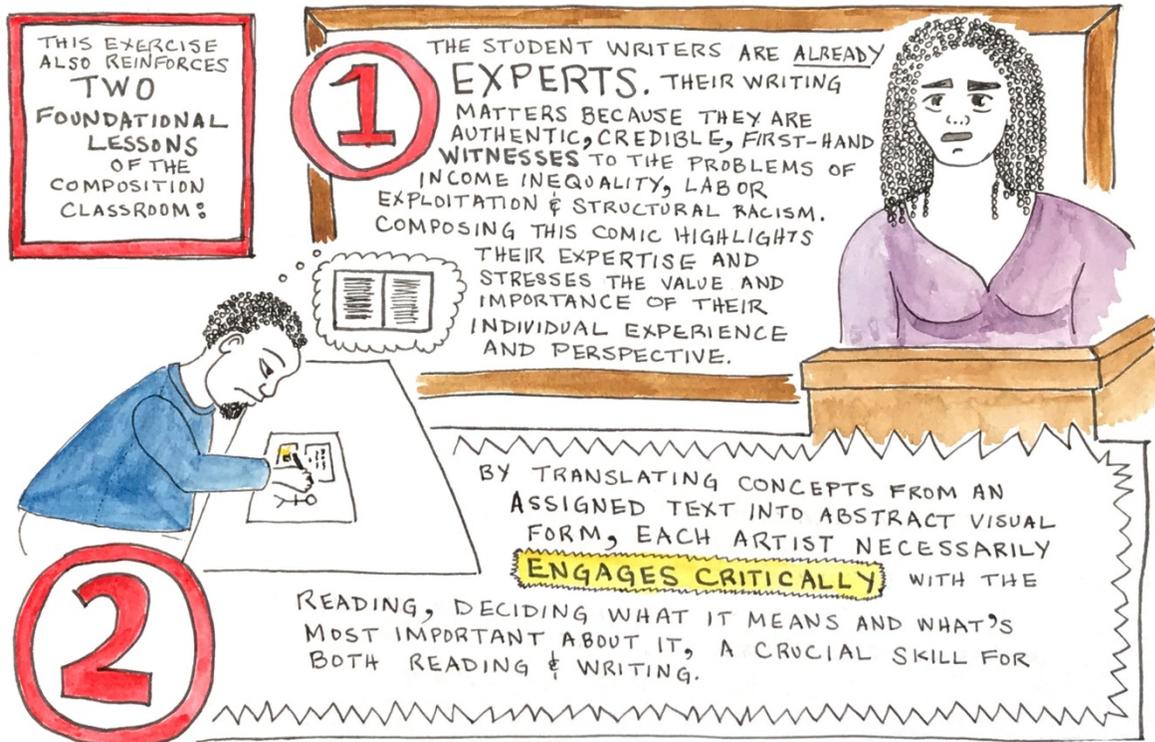
(first of three frames): This exercise also reinforces two foundational lessons of the composition classroom.

(second of three frames): 1. The student writers are already experts. Their writing matters because they are authentic, credible first-hand witnesses to the problems of income inequality, labor exploitation & structural racism. Composing this comic highlights their expertise and stresses the value and importance of their individual experience and perspective. Illustration shows woman with long braids, testifying from a witness box.

(third of three frames): 2. By translating concepts from an assigned text into abstract visual form, each artist necessarily engages critically with the reading, deciding what it means and what's most important about it, a crucial skill for both reading & writing. Illustration depicts bearded, curly-haired figure sitting at a table making a comic; a thought bubble coming from his head shows a picture of generic text on a printed page.

(first of three frames): There are some complications, of course … The first is that students sometimes want to draw even less than they want to write. Illustration shows student in black t-shirt featuring artistic portrait of a black man; student is pulling at his hair in distress, shouting, "No, no no! Drawing is even worse than writing! Don't make me do this!"

(second of three frames): The student contributions to this essay should put that concern to rest. Some are better draftspeople than others, but the level of drawing skill plays no part in the cartoonist's ability to get their point across. Illustration is a detail from Eric Moore's comic, a bleak cartoon face with the words, "Am I a joke to you?"

(third of three frames): A graver concern for me has been what to do with my own whiteness in this context. Sixty-one percent of Bronx Community College Students are Hispanic; only 2% identify as white, which means that I'm often the only white person in the classrooms where I teach. It's important to think about these percentages, who the students are--and who I am--when talking about this lesson. To acknowledge my own white privilege without centering … Illustration is a pie chart demonstrating the racial demographics at Bronx Community College: 33% Black, non-Hispanic; 4% Asian/Pacific Islander; 61% Latino/Hispanic; 2% white/non-Hispanic. *Data based on Fall 2018 enrollment, Spring 2018 survey & 2018 CUNY PMP; BCC Office of Institutional Research.
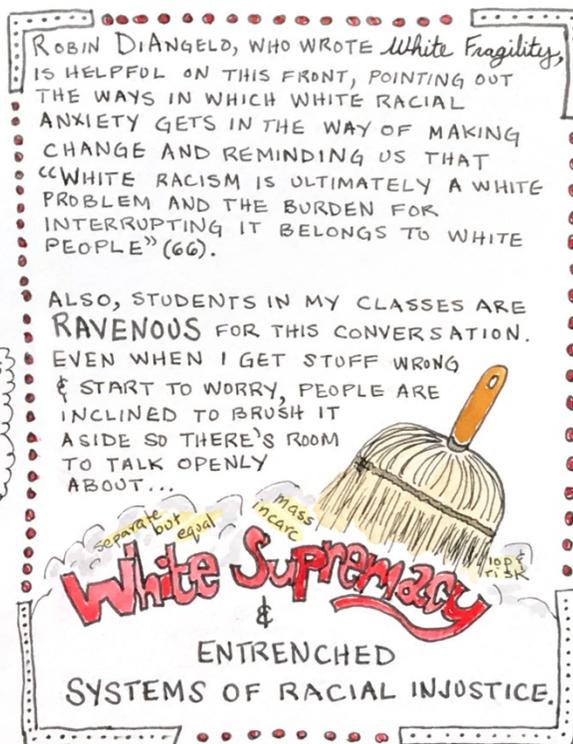
(first of two frames): My own White Guilt. Illustration is wild-haired bespectacled professor, wide-eyed, biting her nails surrounded by multiple thought bubbles, "Is this too much trauma and negativity?" "Am I unconsciously relying on students of color to reassure me & placate my racial anxiety?" "What happens if I say something offensive by accident?" "Is it even okay for me to teach this?" "Maybe I should be leaving this work to my colleagues of color …"

(second of two frames): Robin DiAngelo, who wrote *White Fragility*, is helpful on this front, pointing out the ways in which white racial anxiety gets in the way of making change, and reminding us that "White racism is ultimately a white problem and the burden for interrupting it belongs to white people" (66). Also, students in my classes are ravenous for this conversation. Even when I get stuff wrong & start to worry, people are inclined to brush it aside so there's room to talk openly about … white supremacy & entrenched systems of racial injustice. Illustration shows broom sweeping away dust infused with phrases like "separate but equal," "mass incarceration," and "stop & frisk" to uncover large red letters spelling out "White Supremacy."
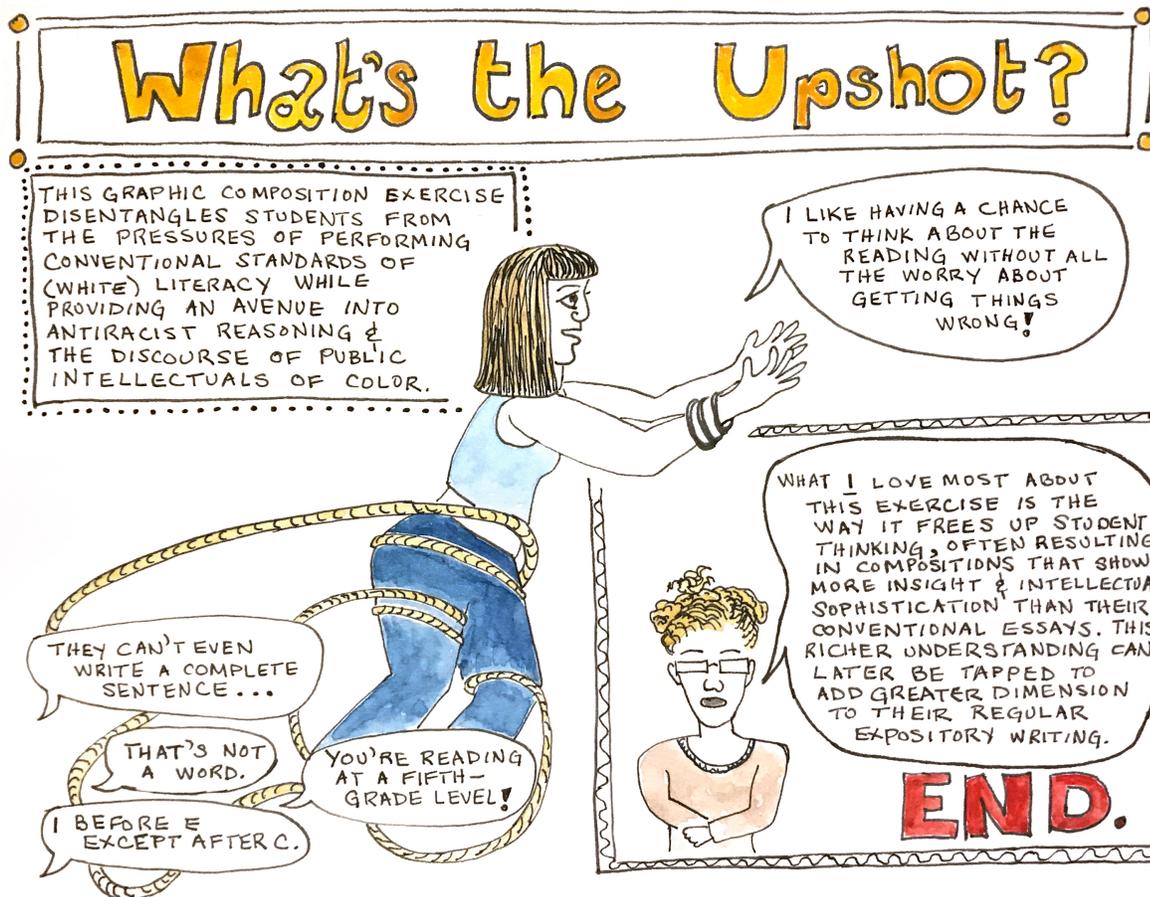
(first of four frames): What's the Upshot?

(second of four frames): This graphic composition exercise disentangles students from the pressures of conforming to conventional standards of (white) literacy while providing an avenue into antiracist reasoning & the discourse of public intellectuals of color.

(third of four frames, spanning the page): Illustration depicts full-bodied figure with straight brown hair and bangs, denim pants and midriff sleeveless top, their bottom half partially encircled with rope unfurling out of disembodied speech bubbles reading, "They can't even write a complete sentence …" "That's not a word." "I before E except after C." and "You're reading at a fifth grade level!" Student's upper body is leaning up and away, arms outstretched, escaping the "entanglement." Student is saying, "I like having a chance to think about the reading without all the worry about getting things wrong!"

(fourth of four frames): Illustration is curly-headed professor figure with glasses, facing forward, arms crossed, saying, "What I love most about this exercise is the way it frees up student thinking, often resulting in compositions that show more insight & intellectual sophistication than their conventional essays. This richer understanding can later be tapped to add greater dimension to their regular expository writing.

END.

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RADICAL TEACHER

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

What Can Our Writing Do in the World?: The Feminist Praxis of Publishing Student Writing

by Danica Savonick

Jeff Mateer, a high-ranking official ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ nominated for ▮▮▮▮ judgeship ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ part of "Satan's plan" ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ open the floodgates for "disgusting" forms ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ a public school has been sued "because" a ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ a girl who ▮▮▮▮▮'s a boy or a boy who ▮▮▮▮▮'s a girl

it's probably that ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ a transgender girl ▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮ is working.

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Mateer also criticized ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ same-sex marriage ▮ taking the nation back ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ I've learned words I didn't know. There are people who marry ▮▮▮▮▮▮. Somebody wanted to marry ▮▮▮. People marrying ▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮ you read ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ and you read ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ and you think, 'Oh, that's not going on in our community.' ▮▮▮ yes it is.▮▮

Last week, Trump nominated Mateer as a district judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas.

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ the LGBT legal advocacy group Lambda Legal called Mateer's nomination the "latest slap in the face with respect to the LGBT community" ▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ advocates were working ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ across the country to ensure Americans know the dangers of these nominations." ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ long record of championing religious ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ liberty.

TAYLOR PRICE, "ERASING MATEER"

Feminist pedagogy is an approach to learning that challenges social hierarchies, focuses on student empowerment, and addresses the uneven distribution of resources along embodied axes of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Today, perhaps more than ever, we need feminist pedagogy, not only in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, but across the curriculum, including in general education and composition courses. In these (often required) courses, where students sometimes "don't like reading" and "aren't good at writing" (or so they think), we have a tremendous opportunity to think together about the power of language and the privileging of certain voices over others in society. In this article, I show how, rather than having students write solely for their instructor's eyes, publishing student writing for audiences beyond the classroom is a key component of feminist pedagogy, both historically and today.

In the digital age, scholars are increasingly arguing that one of the best ways to teach writing is by assigning students to write for audiences beyond the classroom (for instance, by writing blogs, articles, or editorials). In a 2007 longitudinal study, Andrea Lunsford and a team of researchers analyzed the writing practices of Stanford students over the course of five years and found that this generation of students values writing that makes something happen: "They write to shake the world" (Haven). And in her 2009 NCTE report, Kathleen Blake Yancey called for "public writing" as a crucial component of a composition pedagogy that prepares students to write in the 21st century. More recently, Cathy N. Davidson has advocated for these kinds of real-world writing assignments as part of a student-centered approach to learning. And my own experiences have confirmed that having students write for audiences beyond the classroom generates increased investment in the work. And yet, this praxis of publishing student writing is not merely a response to the internet; it has been crucial to genealogies of feminist pedagogy.

This article addresses two questions laid out by the editors of this special issue on "Anti-Oppressive Composition Pedagogies": What are the afterlives of our students' writing? How can students start to see their work as valued? But in order to answer these complex questions, I begin by addressing another set: What are the histories of anti-oppressive pedagogy that inform your practice? How do we connect our pedagogy across generations? By attending to genealogies of feminist writing pedagogy, we can think in more nuanced terms about the transformative potential of publishing student writing today.

Feminist Genealogies of Publishing Student Writing

My adventures in feminist pedagogy are grounded in my research on the reciprocal relations between teaching and writing in the work of four famous feminist and antiracist authors: Audre Lorde, June Jordan, Toni Cade Bambara, and Adrienne Rich. In 1968, at the height of the Women's Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power, and protests against the Vietnam War (and the same year that Paulo Freire was writing his foundational *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed), these authors were teaching down the hall from one another at Harlem's City College. While these figures are most often studied for their literature, my current book project *Insurgent Knowledge* positions them as theorists of feminist pedagogy who drew on their poetic sensibilities to develop student-centered, collaborative, and consciousness-raising pedagogies that transformed their classrooms into sites of social change. Influenced by educators and artists as diverse as Alfred North Whitehead, Mina Shaughnessy, and Amiri Baraka, they challenged students to make crucial decisions about the structure of their courses; to do original place-based research on poverty, housing, food, and education; to write and publish literature; and to become teachers in their classrooms and leaders in their communities. At the same time, the experience of teaching first generation, working class students of color in Open Admissions and educational opportunity programs fundamentally altered their writing and, with it, the course of American literature and feminist theory.

One way these teacher-poets took a feminist approach to classrooms was through publishing student writing, a praxis especially well-developed in the work of June Jordan and Toni Cade Bambara. To better understand this, it is useful to revisit four anthologies from the late 1960s and early 1970s edited by these authors, educators, and activists: *The Black Woman*, *The Voice of the Children*, *Soulscript*, and *Tales and Stories for Black Folks.* While these texts may be familiar to scholars of African American literature and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality studies, scholars rarely consider that all of these relatively well-known anthologies included student writing. In fact, much of the writing in these collections emerged from the courses these authors taught at Tougaloo College, City College, Rutgers Livingston, and in less formal spaces, like weekend writing workshops. Instead of submitting writing solely to be read by the instructor, they organized their courses around the production of texts that could circulate in the world beyond the classroom.

I read these published collections, and their inclusion of student writing, as the enactment of a social justice pedagogy that addressed urgent social issues. For example, *The Voice of the Children* is a poetry collection authored entirely by students in Jordan's weekend writing workshops and published in 1970. In this collection, the young authors, ranging in age from twelve to fourteen, address the offensive and inaccurate stereotypes of illiterate "ghetto" children of color that were circulating in mainstream media in the late 1960s. Journalists regularly described these children as "silent creatures…[who] didn't know the names of things, didn't know that things had names, didn't even know their own names" (Holt 5). And yet, in just the first few pages of *The Voice of the Children,* the young authors respond to prompts such as "what would you do if you were president?" with trenchant critiques of ghetto stereotypes, settler colonialism, U.S. imperialism, and patriarchy, made all the more powerful when we consider that their average age was thirteen. In the opening prose poem, fourteen-year-old Vanessa Howard theorizes the power of stereotypes to reduce the complexity of individuals:

Nine out of ten times when a person hears the word 'ghetto' they think of Black people first of all…Ghetto

has become a definition meaning Black, garbage, slum areas. To me the word 'ghetto' is just as bad as cursing. I think they put all Black people in a box marked 'ghetto' which leaves them having no identity. They should let Black people beseen for themselves, not as one reflection on all. (1)

In contrast to the top-down construction of traditional literary anthologies like the Norton, which are typically produced *for* but not *by* students in the classroom, Jordan and Bambara acted on a conviction that authorship — the power to move people through language — is widely distributed despite cultural institutions that privilege the voices of a narrow, white male elite. The authors they worked with were low-income, women with families to support, people of color, and often students (some as young as 9) and the editorial labor that went into these collections ranged from convincing publishers that these authors had something important to say to convincing the authors themselves. As educator-editors, they put in countless uncompensated hours corresponding with publishers, negotiating contracts, and organizing publicity events. They did so because they understood the multifaceted impact these anthologies could make in people's lives. These publications helped students understand the power of their voices and share survival strategies across the partitioning walls of classrooms and institutions; they addressed gaps in the cultural and literary record; and they called out to collectives of readers who had been ignored by publishers. Reflecting on a course that concluded with a collaboratively-authored anthology, Jordan notes that "the class was producing its own literature: A literature reflecting the ideas and dreams and memories of the actual young Americans at work" ("Merit Review").

These anthologies were part of a grassroots movement for pedagogical, cultural, and social change that emerged not from top-down decisions by school boards, but led by writers and teachers embedded in city classrooms, who witnessed the pernicious gaps among existing curricula, the abundance of Black poetry, and the experiences of students' lives. In doing so, their feminist writing pedagogy drew on a long history of Black self-publishing, which was central to both the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement. And it was from these experiences of trying to publish their and their students' writing that Kitchen Table: Woman of Color Press was later born.

But these anthologies are just some examples of the student writing these teacher-poets would publish. In Bambara's courses on subjects like "Colonialism, Neocolonialism, and Liberation," or "The Text as a Rite of Recovery," rather than dictating the forms their final projects should take, she often asked students to find or invent a form that would best tell the story of their learning and share these lessons with a public audience beyond the classroom. "Do not write term papers for me," Bambara told students, "Make sure they are useful for somebody else as well" (qtd. in Holmes 157), suggesting forms such as a collaborative annotated bibliography, performance art, a short story (for radio or TV), a magazine, puppet theater, a street theater performance, a slide show, or a picture book. The one requirement was that it "can be shared with others." Some examples of Jordan's collaborative projects include a

"Wrath Rally" and letter writing campaign against poverty in Biafra, organized by students in her Upward Bound Class, dramatic radio productions on children's welfare and racial justice in South Central Los Angeles, and *A Revolutionary Blueprint*, a collection of reading lists, syllabi, poetry, and activities that turned the lessons of her Poetry for the People program into a "how to guide" for others interested in democratizing poetry. Reflecting on what happens when students are asked not necessarily to write about literature, but to use what they learn about language through literature to move people to action, Jordan notes that "students' writing leaped into an eloquent fluency that had never even been hinted in their earlier work" ("Partisan Review" 481). Through these assignments, these teacher-poets taught students that their voices, stories, and actions mattered for social change; in short, that each student "has much to teach America" (Jordan *Tomorrow*).

As educators, we are accustomed to thinking about how our classes can be useful to students, but these teacher-poets urge us to consider how the classroom can also become useful to the world beyond its walls. They believed that everyone has something to contribute to the production of a more just, equitable, and pleasurable world, and that classrooms were one site for discovering what that might entail. Especially in their work with working class students of color, this often took the form of intervening in dominant narratives and getting better poems and books into the hands of readers who needed them. While I recognize the specificity of these projects and contexts, I also want to highlight their contributions to feminist pedagogy. Considered together, their work demonstrates how publishing student writing is not merely a response to the digital era, but has long been a component of feminist pedagogy, which encourages students to use what they are learning to make a positive impact in the world.

Publishing Student Writing in the Digital Era

The genealogy of feminist publishing pedagogy analyzed in the previous section has prompted me to do things differently in my own writing and literature classrooms. Based on this research, I have reorganized my courses around the production of digital final projects, all of which challenge students to take what they learn and share it with a public audience. These projects have taken (at least) five different formats.

1. Composing poetry for their peers and college community

2. Submitting writing to an established, peer-reviewed publication

3. Authoring public blogs for the academic network HASTAC.org

4. Making their learning useful for an audience beyond our classroom

5. Co-authoring a digital resource for other students, readers, writers, and educators

In my Spring 2017 course on "The Arts of Dissent," at Queens College, I followed Bambara's lead in challenging students to find or invent a form that would best tell the story of something they had learned throughout the semester and make it useful to an audience beyond the classroom. I suggested formats like a digital poetry collection, timeline, or lesson plan. For this project, one group of students traveled to the Weeksville Heritage Center in Brooklyn - a museum and preserved 19th century African American community - to develop a lesson plan and assignment that would use the Center's resources and Langston Hughes' poem "Let America Be America Again" to teach high school students about racism and discrimination. Among the various writing and digital publishing platforms students were introduced to in class, this pair chose HASTAC.org, a free, open, and secure network of more than 16,000 scholars, students, artists, and activists committed to "changing the way we teach and learn." While one group used the software Tiki-Toki to create a historical timeline that would help readers better understand the acts of racial violence depicted in Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric*, another group drew inspiration from the very same literary text and used Wordpress to create their own poetry collection, "Citizen: An Urban Collegiate Lyric" containing original poetry based on their experiences at Queens College ("Citizen: An Urban Collegiate Lyric"). Although this was by no means a creative writing course, I have come to realize that writing is the experiential way of learning about literature and the power of language. On the final day of class, I presented students with a public, digital gallery of their projects ("Arts of Dissent Final").

IMAGE 1: A PUBLIC, DIGITAL GALLERY OF PROJECTS PRODUCED BY STUDENTS IN PROF. SAVONICK'S SPRING 2017 COURSE ON "THE ARTS OF DISSENT." EACH IMAGE LINKS OUT TO A DIFFERENT PROJECT.
HTTP://FUTURESINITIATIVE.ORG/ARTSOFDISSENTFINAL/

Currently, I teach at a public, regional university in Central New York, where the politics of publishing are quite different from those that I research. My students grew up with the internet, social media, and audiences at their fingertips. They read, write, and share their ideas constantly, though these daily writing practices are often in tension with the messages about writing they receive in schools in an era of high-stakes testing, dominated by the five paragraph essay. Whereas critical pedagogy has been rightly critiqued for its universalism, feminist pedagogy encourages us to attend to these differences and the situatedness, positionality, and particularity of our classrooms. What follows are two ways that I have continued to think about how publishing student writing can facilitate students' learning both about language and the intersecting axes of power.

One way I have used publishing to facilitate feminist pedagogy is by organizing my courses around questions of power, representation, and voice that directly impact my students' lives. I have twice taught a writing course on "The Purpose of Education," which immerses students in contemporary debates in education such as teaching and learning methods, assessment, unequal school funding, and technology in classrooms. So rarely are students' voices included in these debates even though they are the ones most affected by these conversations. This is, in part, because academic hierarchies dictate that students have little, if anything, to contribute to knowledge production. My course took up this issue by preparing students to author or co-author public pieces of writing on these subjects, either for the peer-reviewed journal *Hybrid Pedagogy* or the academic network HASTAC.org. For those who want to learn more about this assignment, I have written about the risks and rewards of digital publishing (Savonick "Write Out Loud") and have written a blog with detailed, step by step instructions (Savonick "Teaching Through Publishing").

This publishing assignment challenged students to think about how their learning can contribute to larger ongoing conversations in ways that are attentive to the intersecting axes of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. For example, in my students' blogs on technology in classrooms, they were asked to consider not only their own, personal relationships to the contemporary wave of "laptop bans" but also to consider how the prohibitive costs of laptops could produce unequal learning conditions and the effects of these bans on students with learning disabilities (see Dynarski and Pryal and Jack). Many students began their research projects either by liking laptops and saying that they should be allowed in classrooms or disliking laptops and saying that they should be banned. Through this writing project, I challenged students to consider not only their personal, idiosyncratic relationships, but to ask how, once published on the HASTAC.org website, different audiences might react to their argument. We discussed questions like: how might this argument sound to a reader with a disability? How might this sentence sound to someone who cannot afford a laptop? When I asked students why they performed exponentially better on this assignment than any of the others, their response was nearly unanimous: because they knew other people would be reading it.
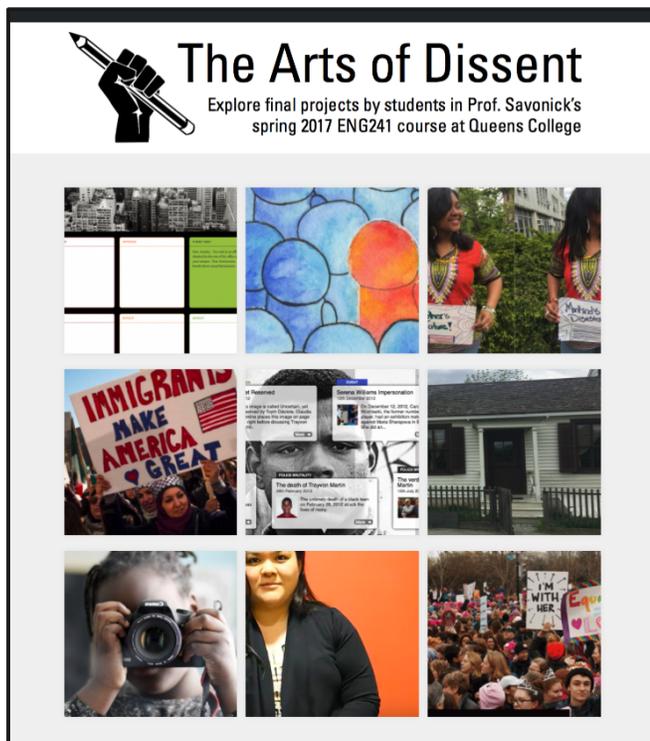
The internet has certainly made it easier to publish student writing, but sometimes "publishing," the act of making public, can be as simple as creating a hallway bulletin board (which K-12 teachers are often much more savvy at than college professors). In general education courses like "Introduction to Multicultural Literature," I teach M. NourbeSe Philip's collection of found poems *Zong!* by having students create their own public gallery of found poems that document their relationships to current conditions of injustice. A found poem takes words, phrases, and passages from a source text and reframes them as poetry by making changes in spaces and lines, or by adding or deleting text, thus imparting new meaning. Philip's found poem takes as its source text the 1783 court case Gregson v. Gilbert, which determined whether slave owners would collect insurance money for the Africans thrown overboard and murdered in what has come to be known as the Zong massacre. After several class sessions analyzing poems in *Zong!*, students are instructed to bring in a text that makes them mad or upset, or that feels inaccurate or offensive, and to be prepared to write on it. While I suggest that a text related to injustice would work well, I do not insist upon it. As a result, students have brought in a wide range of texts, such as parking tickets, offensive song lyrics, biased news articles, and copies of their tuition bills. In class, students think critically about Philip's process of fragmenting,

mutilating, and whiting out her source text by creating their own poems. Their resulting poems have addressed social issues ranging from sexual violence (we did this the week of Christine Blasey Ford's testimony against Brett Kavanaugh) and transphobia to police brutality against African Americans. Once complete, the poems are presented in a gallery to be viewed by anyone on campus.

Very few of the students who enroll in this general education course arrive with a pre-existing interest in poetry. Many think of it as boring, unnecessarily difficult, or intimidating. But this assignment brings poetry to life, encouraging students to use language and the space on the page to convey ideas about the world around them. Rather than having to write their own poem from scratch, conjuring words from thin air, this assignment allows students to create poetry by remixing and rearranging the words of others. While students spend the majority of the semester reading and analyzing literature, with this assignment, they become authors who craft poetry with messages they want to share with their peers. Knowing that their peers will be viewing their work gives the project a sense of urgency, allowing us to discuss how notions of audience and "reader reception" shape literature and how texts are embedded in a particular historical and social context.
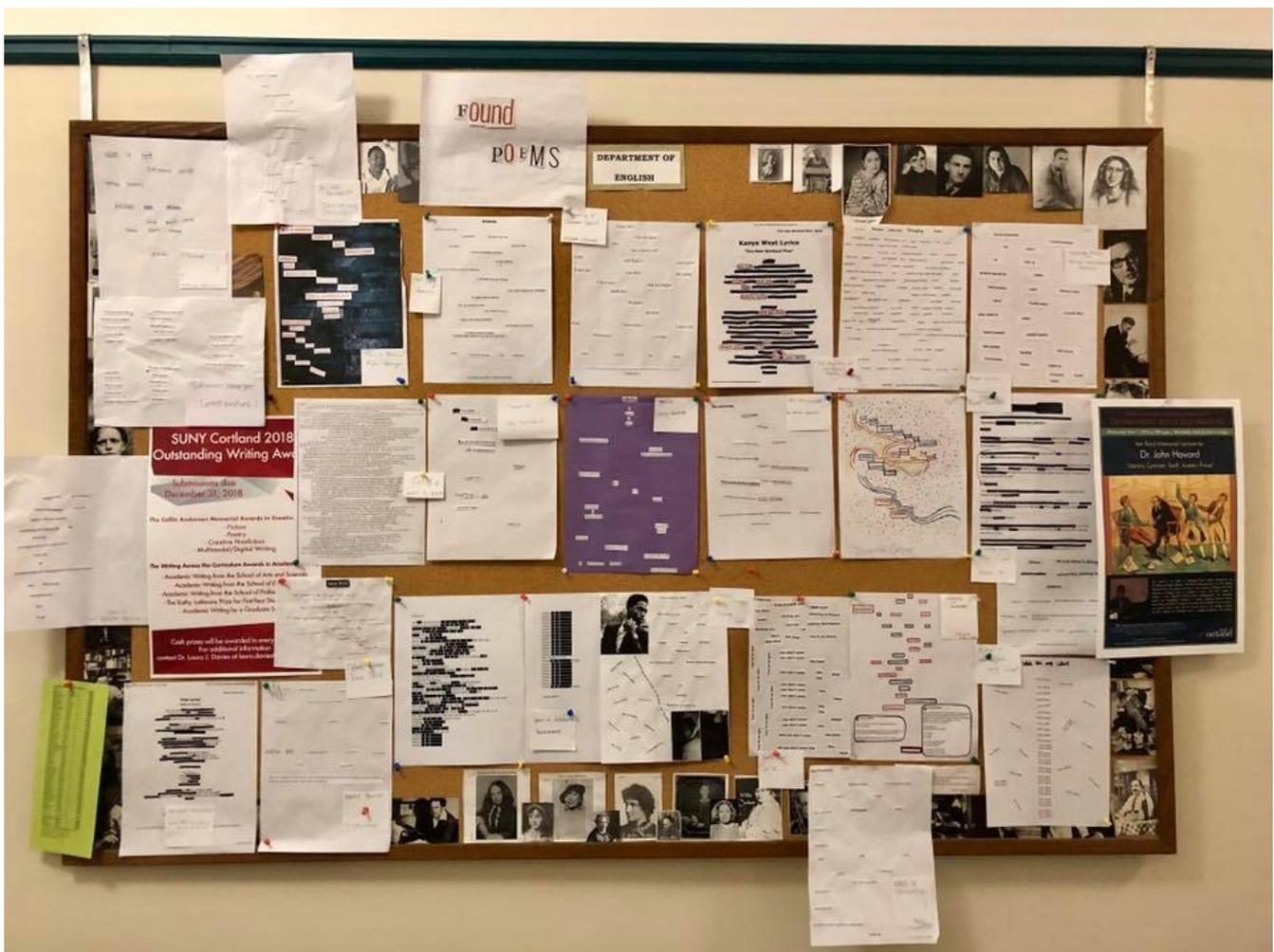

IMAGE 2: A BULLETIN BOARD OF STUDENT FOUND POEMS FROM STUDENTS IN TWO OF PROF. SAVONICK'S FALL 2018 SECTIONS OF "INTRODUCTION TO MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE."

#MeToo

a
culture
of
abuse

uncomfortable situations

misconduct
guise of medical treatment

grave concerns of

girls

and

women

gymnastics
a
culture of abuse

stay silent
Nassar

150 women

allowed to be heard

no matter what it cost

a   gut-wrenching   reckoning

what had taken so long
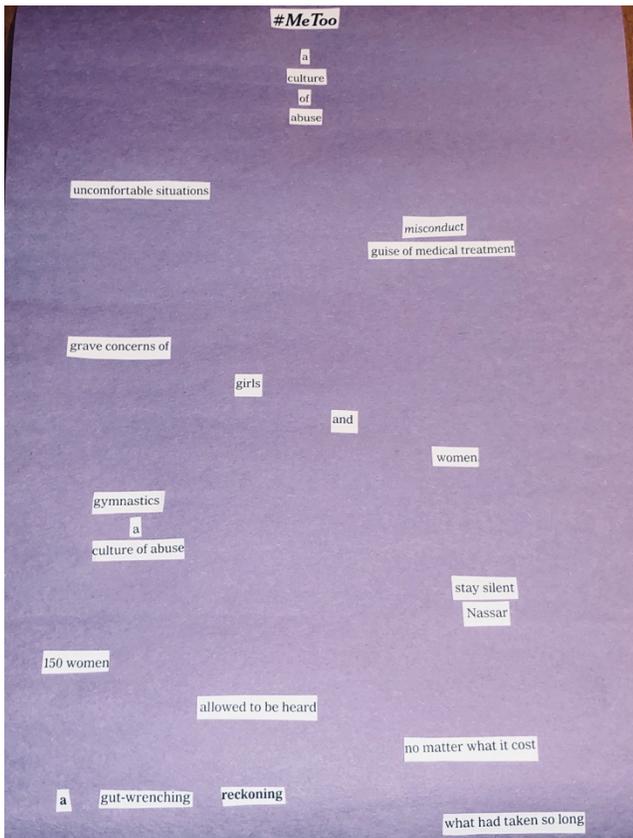
IMAGE 3: LACEY BARTLETT, "#METOO"

Jeff Mateer, a high-ranking official ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ nominated for ▓▓▓ judgeship ▓▓▓▓▓ part of "Satan's plan" ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ open the floodgates for "disgusting" forms ▓▓▓▓▓▓ a public school has been sued "because" a ▓▓▓▓ a girl who ▓▓▓▓'s a boy or a boy who ▓▓▓▓'s a girl

it's probably that ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ a transgender girl ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ is working.

▓▓▓▓▓▓ Mateer also criticized ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ same-sex marriage ▓ taking the nation back ▓▓▓▓▓▓

▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ I've learned words I didn't know. There are people who marry ▓▓▓. Somebody wanted to marry ▓▓▓. People marrying ▓▓▓▓ ▓ ▓▓▓▓ you read ▓▓▓▓▓ and you read ▓▓▓▓▓ and you think, 'Oh, that's not going on in our community.' ▓ yes it is. ▓▓

Last week, Trump nominated Mateer as a district judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas.

▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ the LGBT legal advocacy group Lambda Legal called Mateer's nomination the "latest slap in the face with respect to the LGBT community" ▓▓▓ ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ advocates were working ▓▓▓▓▓▓ across the country to ensure Americans know the dangers of these nominations." ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ long record of championing religious ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ liberty.

IMAGE 4: TAYLOR PRICE, "ERASING MATEER"

Inevitably, the artists' statements students submit to accompany their poems always contain their sharpest insights regarding notions of authorial intent and the ways authors and readers collaborate to give meaning to a text. Reflecting on her poem "#MeToo," created from a news article on the sexual violence perpetrated by gymnastics coach Larry Nassar, student Lacey Bartlett notes, "I decided to take pieces of the article and almost summarize what happened, with harsh words and fragments, and empty spaces to show that justice took too long. I included the 'stay silent/Nassar' part right before the part that says '150 women/allowed to be heard/no matter what it cost' just to reiterate the fact that this is about the women, not about the abuser." Another student, Taylor Price, created a poem from an article on Texas Attorney General Carl Mateer, who made derogatory remarks about transgender children and yet was nominated for a promotion to U.S. District Judge. Reflecting on this poem, Price notes that "I tried to black out as much of the hatred as I possibly could. I subverted the cruel statements by changing their focus."

To conclude, I join writing studies scholars who have shown how publishing can help students improve their writing because it taps into their desire to make things happen in the world. While students may enter our classrooms with an understanding that their compositions can solicit "likes," comments, retweets, and page views, a feminist perspective encourages us to see how this desire to make an impact can be channeled towards the production of a more just and equitable future. A feminist perspective encourages us to see the transformative potential of the question, what can our writing do in the world?

A note of thanks to Lacey Bartlett and Taylor Price for allowing me to include their poetry in this essay.

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RADICAL TEACHER

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

In Memoriam
Remembering Reamy Jansen

by Susan O'Malley

REAMY JANSEN

Reamy Jansen, a founding editor of *Radical Teacher* and co-editor with Susan O'Malley for the first 13 years of the magazine, died of Alzheimers on April 21, 2019 in Lexington, Kentucky. During the early years of *Radical Teacher* in the 1970s the magazine was typeset, and laid out page by page by hand with a cutting knife and a waxer, and then delivered to the printer. Reamy continued on the *RT* editorial board for many years editing and writing articles and blogs.

A Professor of English and Humanities at Rockland Community College and an Adjunct Professor of Media Studies at Fordham University's College at Lincoln Center, Reamy also published poems, many book reviews, a book of personal essays and a memoir, *Available Light, Recollections and Reflections of a Father*, Hamilton Stone Editions, 2010, available on Amazon. A reviewer said of his memoir, "It refines the memoir genre." His poetry and prose have been published in a variety of literature magazines such as *The International Review, Alientum, Gargoyle, The Literature of Food, Oasis, Evansville Review,* and *The Bloomsbury Review*. He has held residencies at Yaddo, Gell House, the Virginia Center for Creative Arts and Cultural Retreat, and the Oberfeltzer Kunstlerhaus in Germany.

Reamy Jansen's awards include the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Creativity and Scholarship, Mellon Fellowship, New Millennium Writing, Talking Rivers Review, seven Pushcart nominations, and two Geraldine R. Dodge fellowships. He was Contributing Editor to *The Bloomsbury Review of Books* and Editor of its short prose section, "The Out of Bounds Essay."

He is survived by his wife, Leslie G. Kingseed, and two sons, Gabriel and Paul, of whom he said in his last email to me, "If I ever had a model of the ideal 'Good Man,' it would be Paul with Gabe a close second. He's a rock climber, which sends my heart racing to the helmet and the ropes."

Wearing his *Radical Teacher* tee-shirt, Reamy ran in several marathons. He also sang in a chorus. He was a valuable comrade and a beloved friend.

RADICAL TEACHER

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3 Poems by MEH

by MEH

MATTHEW E HENRY

blackface party

circa 2015. Oil on canvas.
anonymous. Weston, Ma

at her classroom desk
her eyes and mouth became
mirrors of widening horror.
a flashback to her mother
and step-father laughing
out the door with black sheep
wigs, oversized jerseys,
gaudy jewelry, and bronzer
liberally applied,
one Halloween night.

when asked why "all lives" don't matter

…after a deep breath,
i attempted to explain. my aunt had breast cancer.
despite a healthy dose of science and Scripture,
prayer and prescriptions, the shadows never dimmed.
we celebrated her life, mourned the hole her grave
dug in ours. we lauded her lovingkindness, questioned
the natural shocks flesh is heir to— why this disease
would claim a wife, a co-worker, a friend, an aunt.
at the repast heads turned to the future: saving
other sons and daughters, ourselves. a collection was taken
to fund breast cancer research. a medical scholarship
for oncology study discussed. a proposal for new
from the back of the church hall, a woman no one recognized
screamed, "what about ovarian cancer?! and prostate cancer?!
why aren't you all talking about those? all cancers matter!"

most of my students nodded into the ensuing silence. but some
blank stares and my job description doomed me
to be more didactic: to explain appropriate time, place, and manner,
intent versus impact, the guilt and shame required
to derail communal grief and hijack a narrative
to make oneself more comfortable.

i explained the human duty to choose:
enter the room willing to bear bodies on our shoulders,
or, arms empty, leave and silently stand outside.

i said, "replace 'cancer' with 'lives'" and waited.

muscle memory

when asked about the rampant sexism in our school, my students calmly explained the science of perpetual motion machines, how easily some things are swept under the social rug— arms finely attuned to the associative task. lift, sweep. lift, sweep. lift. spilt milk and skinned knees, they said. like pipe-bombs in the Belfast of my youth, suicide vests in Gaza, school shootings in EveryWhiteTown, USA: an average tuesday. eyes ahead, they file past the covered bodies, and head to A.P. stats.

RADICAL TEACHER

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

Review
Mapping Queer Space(s) of Praxis and Pedagogy

Reviewed by Jake Gogats

MAPPING QUEER SPACE(S) OF PRAXIS AND PEDAGOGY

Mapping Queer Space(s) of Praxis and Pedagogy. Edited by Elizabeth McNeil, James E. Wermers, Joshua O. Lunn. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
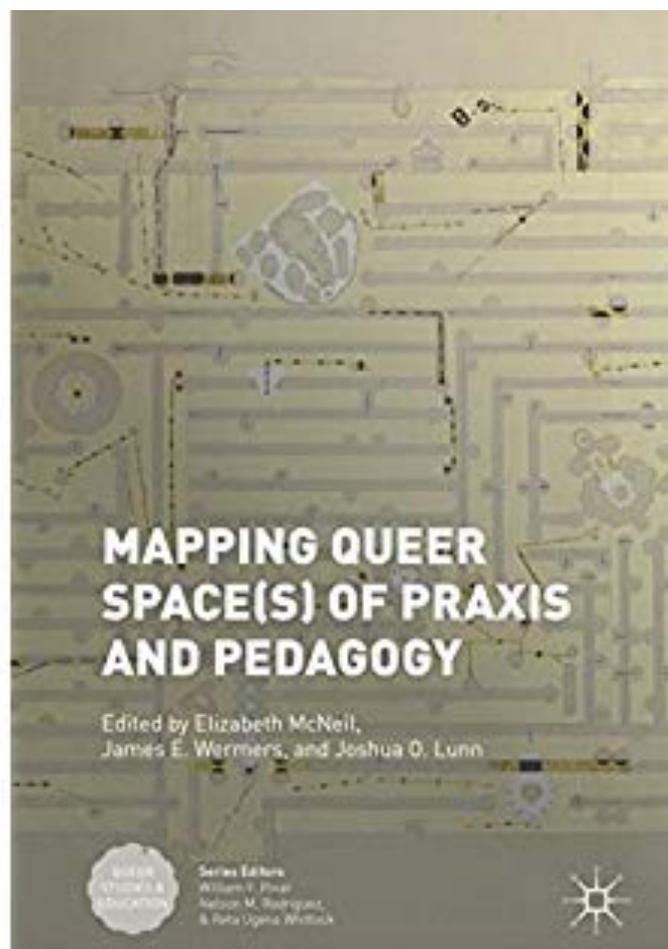
1. As this is a review of an expressly queer book, I don't think its editors and contributing authors would object to a review that rejects a standard approach. Considering the occasion, I can't help but compare the rules of book reviews to gender norms—unspoken, widely acknowledged, ultimately questionable. If I were to teach a lesson on how to write a traditional book review, I might identify its two pillars: (1) summary and (2) judgment. Funnily enough, if I were to critique the typical book review, I would call it an exercise in summary judgment. However, upon reflection, we might say that reviews also point out the implications of, and questions raised by, the work at hand, however peripherally. In bringing the peripheral to the center of this review and heavily incorporating my own experience(s) of reading *Mapping Queer Space(s),* I hope to show (rather than tell) my reader the effect this text has had on me and offer a taste of its variety and unorthodoxy. The list-format of this review is inspired by the text's final chapter "Animalqueer/Queeranimal: Scatterings" by Aneil Rallin, easily the most radical of the 18 chapters. I will return to it later.

2. For those who feel they do not understand what queer theory is and what it has to do with pedagogy, this volume's introduction is not a bad place to start. After a pithy overview of what queer theory is and some seminal articles in the field of queer pedagogy, the editors provide a lengthy summary of the book's contents. Usefully, the editors provide a thorough enough summary of each chapter for the reader to gain a pretty good sense of the breadth of what "queer" scholars do. Editors McNeil, Wermers, and Lunn have carefully selected writers whose interests and methodologies vary widely. Queer scholars are bound together not by discipline or really any concise "standard", which *Mapping Queer Space(s)* demonstrates by including chapters on topics ranging from gentrification and housing organizing to acknowledgment sections and academic networks; from prison pedagogy and narrative to cultural critique of wolf hunting. Thus, reading this introduction may help one, whether interested in further study within this volume or elsewhere, gauge their intrigue for the various missions and impulses that exist under the "queer" umbrella.

3. Self-identified queer writers, including those in *Mapping Queer Space(s)*, like to defy summary and categorization, to reject norms, to experiment with many forms of knowledge production. As such, it can be jarring for a newcomer to grab a hold onto any sort of "center" or coherence. This impulse is often anathema to the very mission of queer academics to keep "queer" from being or becoming a concept that can be easily essentialized. Again, our experiences of gender provide a useful analogy. "Queerness," like gender, never was or is one coherent thing. This does not mean queerness isn't a meaningful concept, merely that it is inherently unstable. Moreover, it appears to be unique in that it seems to bring with it a sort of self-awareness, a recognition of its own volatility. Just as I taught my students in a sociology course to see gender as a normative assortment of associated characteristics and traits, I direct the reader of *Mapping Queer Space(s)* not to read each chapter with a pre-determined sense of what is and is not queer. Instead, attune yourself to each chapter's explicit and implicit understanding of the word. Also attune yourself to your own disposition towards such understandings of queerness. I offer both these pieces of advice because to believe yourself a queer thinker (scholar, teacher, writer, etc.), you do have to have *some* sense of what you want the word to mean, however diffuse and ever-changing. In an effort to introduce my reader to this process of self-identification and discovery (again, the parallels to gender and LGBT experiences should be noted), I offer in the following passages many of my own experiences of what I found "queer" to mean in some of the text's chapters as potential models for your own explorations.

4. One trend in queer studies, and therefore in this book, is the exercise of "finding queerness." This generally includes identifying an object, subject, or experience that is not typically associated with gender or sexuality and arguing that it is, in fact, queer. This exercise often equates queerness to things like Otherness, liminality, marginality, anti-normativity, etc. It is often difficult to see exactly why "queer" is essential to such analysis, and yet I would hesitate to call writers in this tradition disingenuous. Rather, it appears that there is something about the word "queer" that inspires people to conduct such research; a generous reading might simply think of such writers as being upfront about their influences.

5. Chapters such as "Safety in Numbers: On the Queerness of Quantification" and "Queering the First-Year Composition Student (and Teacher): A Democratizing Endeavor" generally fit into this category. The latter, the most relevant chapter to this issue, puts forth a vision of capitalized Queerness to be found in every corner, looming in every crack. Essentially, "Queer" is Other, as the authors write, "I have argued elsewhere that all students I have encountered are Queer: at my urban, commuter, public university, many of my students baffle me with their odd literacy strategies… With all their odd habits, unconventional educational contexts, and quirky strategies, I do not see how they could be Queerer" (58-59). Fittingly, the authors prompt students to find Queerness in themselves. Students respond: "Everybody exhibits some level of 'Queerness.' This… has little to do with sexuality [and more to do with the fact] that college is a space where identities shift…" (65). The authors of this chapter write that they merely wish to "flirt with the idea that all students in the first-year writing class are Queer" (60). I don't mind flirting with this idea either, but I fear a long-term relationship would prove strained rather quickly. I feel towards the act of using the word "queer" to mean the complex, liminal, and Other similarly to how I feel towards

my first "relationship"—I'm glad it happened; I'm glad it ended quickly. If everything is Queer, nothing is queer, and queer is nothing. Using "queer" and "Other" nearly interchangeably seems awkward as systemic divisions and hierarchies persist and harden among queer people. Perhaps, though, I am being overly generous to myself. Perhaps the "finding queerness" method is actually a relationship I am stuck in, something I want to leave but find myself returning to time and time again, as I have done earlier in this review. Upon reflection, this makes sense. There are some lessons I learned in my first relationship I have no intention to forget.

6.
Another pattern found in this volume and the field more generally is the act of "queering." Instead of finding latent queerness in the object of study, queer-as-verb requires an intervention in reality. For example, I could claim that my above indecision over my relationship with the "finding queerness" tradition works to queer my book review by rejecting academia's obsession with certainty and authority. I could also say it's just bad writing.

7.
The act of queering can take place within a piece of scholarship, such as in the chapter "Animalqueer," which I mentioned earlier. Both its format, a poetic list of "scatterings," and its objects of inquiry, non-human animals and queerness, are marginalized in academia. The chapter rebelliously includes lengthy quotes, sharp questions, occasional first person. The piece, if it can be called that, certainly lives up to its title—it is scattered. It is a microcosm of the volume in the sense that it defies summary. What's more, it eschews transition and central argument. Unable to turn off my "search for argument" function, I put forth this chapter as a model of coherent, decentralized writing, a rejection of the decidedly un-scattered form of writing we teach the young writer to painstakingly practice. Where I teach, the paragraph-writing-acronym-of-choice is TELCon: Topic, Evidence, Link, Conclusion. I can't remember the acronym from my own education, only how conscious I was of how difficult it is to break out of such rigidity. The idea that explanation (the Link) should always follow evidence, usually a quote, is a convincing one. How are you supposed to explain something your reader hasn't read? And why would you even want to?

8.
Many types of utility, another concept I perhaps should not impose upon such a radical piece, can be found in Rallin's formatting. Efficiently, Rallin need not grasp desperately at new ways of making similar types of transitions. Concisely, he poses (in)complete thoughts without needing to "flesh them out," such as those found in list-item #6: "How does the 'othering' of nonhuman animals, the constitution of nonhuman animals as animals, limit our imaginaries? And how do our particular co-constitutions of humans and nonhumans matter for who lives and dies in this world, and how?" (323). Honestly, Rallin does not present himself as an authority, but rather a rebel. Coherently, his scatterings are related to each other.

His experiences of learning about suicide among queer youth span many list-items and parallel his thoughts on the phenomenon of beached whales: "… could it be that not only are we are [sic] killing the whales, but that the whales, like the Buddhist monks who immolate themselves, are killing themselves in radical political protest, as witness? Could we read their collective dyings over a span of centuries as the whales fighting back, acting up?" (326). Rallin thus answers his earlier questions concerning the othering of nonhuman animals with *further* questions. Our understandings of the human/nonhuman are tied to our understanding of the political/apolitical. Both divides are a matter of interpretation rather than objective truth.

9.
This and the preceding chapter titled "The Bestiary of Friends" were my first serious introduction to the field of animal studies. Now, I always wonder: How do we imagine animals? And how are they, in spite of that?

10a.
Queering can also take place outside of the written word, as is explored in the chapter "Queering the Campus Gender Landscape Through Visual Arts Praxis." The chapter reproduces "queer images", paintings of nude transgender subjects and discusses the authors' attempts to bring queerness to their Catholic university through biennial exhibits sponsored by the Women and Gender Studies Department. One such attempt stood out to me: "A number of factors would seem to undermine the biennials' ability to genuinely queer the gender landscape of UDM… the artistic focus of the shows risks creating a form of aesthetic containment of the works and ideas within them. We experienced this type of containment when we attempted to publicize our 2012 biennial on campus using Steven Sherrill's painting, *What I Did Last Summer*, as the background of our publicity poster. The woman's exposed breast, while deemed acceptable within the context of an art exhibit, was considered an inappropriate image to display on posting walls in the university at large" (94).

10b.
Tasked with teaching a unit on gender for a high school sociology course, I naturally turned to feminist perspectives on pornography in an effort to both spark interest and find an opportunity to talk about something so embedded into many experiences of adolescence. Alien visitors attempting to understand humans living in the US by subjecting themselves to our K-12 curricula, a misguided approach if there ever was one, would be oblivious to the fact that a majority of US children will have seen porn before they turn 18. My sanitized, academic, roundabout approach to talking about pornography was an attempt to find a way in, to weaponize the acceptability of feminism and academic writing to make the unacceptable acceptable. It didn't work—my supervising teacher told me that he did not want parents to complain. I backed down instantly—I didn't want, god forbid, to appear *passionate* about teaching about porn.

Was this effort "queer"? Did I fail to queer? Am I less queer for it?

11. Part of what can be great about reading works in the field of queer studies, I think, is to "feel seen." To feel represented, understood, or important. Not to just *agree* with an argument, but to identify with experiences of rejection and anti-normativity. It transforms "my" struggle into "our" struggle; it affirms.

12. That this review is appearing in an issue about radical writing pedagogies merits comment. *Mapping Queer Space(s)*'s variety of writing styles, formats, and goals validates the calls for a more diversified approach to writing instruction we hear from many educators and scholars. Like all such practical, buzzword-deprived suggestions directed towards US education, these calls don't seem to have reached most teachers and curriculum designers, at least not convincingly. Yet so many of us seem to go on agreeing that good writing instruction is *essential* in our current political climate to foster critical thinking skills and produce publicly engaged citizens who can effectively exercise their civil rights in order to strengthen democracy and invigorate our public sphere with rigorously informed debate and, oh yeah, to prepare students for college. Teaching students to queer their writing and themselves, if such a thing is possible, would likely involve cutting through all the buzzword-ery and instead conducting inquiry into the self and the status quo. Queer writers and this book do not produce simple answers to society's problems the way civic-engagement discourses do. The latter's philosophy is steeped in more-and-better-is-better thinking—*more* and *better* critical thinking will save you and ultimately us all. More and better debate, more and better speech—more and better college. It's quite optimistic. Queer theory might suggest that better is not always better, or that better might just be different. And more? More is often a mistake.

13. 3All this being said, it would be disingenuous to use this book as evidence that being able to write in nontraditional formats about nontraditional topics is a "useful" skill. Then again, it may even be disingenuous to claim that *critical thinking* at-large is a useful skill for students subject to an economic system bent on offering us the most boring, uncritical jobs imaginable. Few people are profiting off their critical, queer approach to academic writing. I hope to be honest with my students that most of what I teach them in the realm of "social studies" and "history" will probably never make them a cent. I willingly take on the responsibility to convince them that the skills and topics I bring to the classroom have a purpose outside of profiteering.

14. How might re-views be re-imagined? Can reviews be queered, a site for queer rebellion? What is the purpose of my small rebellion, or do we even need to intrude upon book reviews and shake them down for their purpose? Perhaps the act of identifying argument, of finding purpose, is a small act of violence upon a text—one that can certainly be found to have a purpose of its own… and so on…

RADICAL TEACHER

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

Review
Decolonizing Academia: Poverty, Oppression, and Pain

Reviewed by Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz
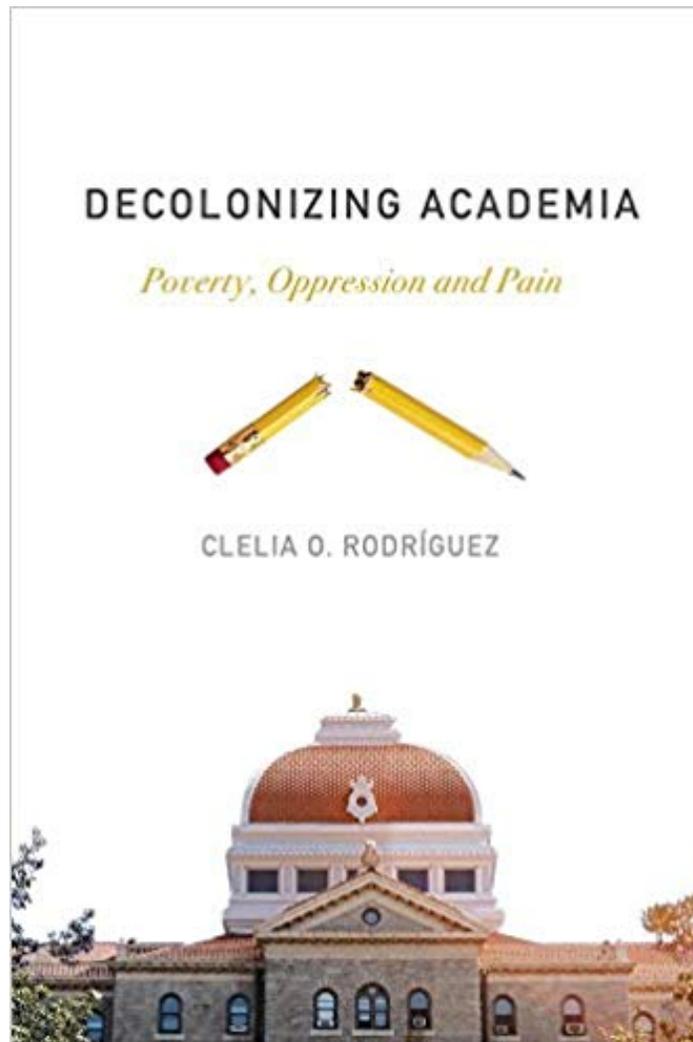
DECOLONIZING ACADEMIA: POVERTY, OPPRESSION, AND PAIN (2018)

Decolonizing Academia: Poverty, Oppression, and Pain by Clelia O. Rodríguez (Fernwood Publishing, 2018)

At a time when NYC Mayor Bill DeBlasio urges, unsuccessfully, an abolishment of specialized high school testing after only seven black students were granted access out of an entering pool of over 900,[1] and when CUNY and SUNY report on the receipt of multi-year million dollar grants to secure open educational resources for undergraduates across the state,[2] and as adjuncts of the very same city university are rallying to strike for an increase of their salary to a basic $7k[3] to be on par with adjunct pay across the city landscape, the book project, *Decolonizing Academia: Poverty, Oppression, and Pain* is published by Fernwood Publishing in Toronto, Canada. These public events of educational access are not unrelated. At CUNY, librarians and educators are realizing that part of the equation for supplying open and equitable education is to also address issues of racial and economic inequity on a global scale. To navigate these disparate points, re-scale our initiatives, and transform our pedagogical perspectives, we must supersede time via ancestral connection and space by denouncing borders. Immediately after reading *Decolonizing Academia: Poverty, Oppression, and Pain,* I contacted the author, Clelia Rodriguez, and asked her to keynote a closed conference of CUNY graduate students, many of whom were adjuncts, some library students, and mostly students of color. She accepted.

Situating itself within a framework of critical race theory, this literary, spiritual, and ancestrally grounded collection of prose, vignettes, letters, poems, manifestos, and odes posits an agenda that rejects the colonial violence of our vastly white and isolating academic landscape and works to awaken our connections to the non-linear knowledge we possess in our bones.

The reader enters the book project with a decolonizing pedagogy articulated as its frame and *Unlearning* as its center. To Unlearn is to peel back layers, for which Rodríguez details twelve: Trespassing, Rawness, Reading "Time," Shame, What About Decolonization, Networking, Who's Counting?, Who's Hiring?, Why Are You Here?, Tragedy, The #Shithole Syllabus, and Intellectual Masturbation. Followed by the unlayering in the Unlearning, the reader is submerged into a decolonizing journey that finally situates us in conversation with each other and ourselves.

Readers of *Radical Teacher* may already be familiar with a part of this journey in Unlearning. "The #shitholes Syllabus: Undoing His(Story)" debuted in the 2018, volume 111 issue of Radical Teacher. Presented as an unconventional syllabus, the article responded to Trumpism or "#45&Co's" designation of shithole countries, situating the reader at the center of this underpinning, curating her rage, and imparting a decolonial perspective onto her students' Unlearning. The differences between the openly accessible *Radical Teacher* publication and that which appears in *Decolonizing Academia* are the additional unapologetic verbiage, the use of a traditional syllabus structure, complete with headers and truncations, and finally the extracted footnotes section, similar to that coined in Junot Diaz's novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, where the "fuku" of his people had been traced, and considered as subtext beyond time and space. These extensions of prose and form alongside an urgency for action are the features of Rodríguez's collection that pull the reader into the text directing us to locate ourselves inside the trappings of academia as they pertain to geography, race, and academic status. Her reimagining of colonial structures is illustrated in her application of unconventional formats like the "#shitholesyllabus," which highlights that "there is no such thing as a safe space. this university was built by slaves,"[4] or "UNapologetic letters" which hold blood-signed contracts[5] and texts-as-poems to name just a couple to start.

To respond to the decolonial frame, Rodriguez acknowledges that "decolonization sounds and means different things to me, a woman of color, than to a white person."[6] This was an apparent truth during Rodriguez's keynote in the room of mostly students of color; many points of entry by Rodriguez were either lost to or a direct calling out of white faculty who were interested in engaging in this process of Unlearning. Discomfort or distance may be felt by white allies (or people of color who grip the notion of privilege similar to those who urged for the maintenance of specialized high school exams) in the reading of this book. Though it is likely not meant for the eyes of the onlooker, I recommend everyone read this important text, as the shift in centering one's positionality, the discomfort in that, may be an important layer to Unlearning. Rodriguez however, professed without concern for those whom she could not reach. And for this, I realized I was witnessing what others may have seen in the great orators of our yesteryear, what I imagine it must have felt to see Audre Lorde or feel the vibrations of Pat Parker's poetry: the embodiment of unapologetic survival. No, Rodriguez was not concerned if the others didn't get it – this talk of decolonization – if they couldn't hear her, or if they shuffled in their seats. The snaps, gasps, and wide-eyed responses in that room of over 80 mostly students of color meant that she was speaking to us head-on and with the intention of breaking Us open.

Rodriguez's keynote was received like her book's layers, as the internal dialog of she who is the audience of this project, a mirroring. The Us that she urges to act is the woman of color scholar, living and working in the United States of America, but whose research and focal point, and potentially place of birth, is on colonized land outside of this country, yet responsive to "geographies of the North, schools of the North, universities of the North, libraries of the North."[7] To this end, Rodríguez has curated a first-person-from-multiple-perspectives narrative that speaks to the isolation of junior scholars of color who face the ingrained contradiction of their academic positions as researchers, grant-recipients, accepted applicants, adjunct professors, doctoral candidates, reminding Us that "one thousand sacrifices later, you're a university professor."[8]

Rodríguez supplied voice to what had, until my reading of her work, felt like my own silent narrative. As a lesbian of color from an immigrant family, becoming a non-teaching faculty member at a doctoral granting public institution, and an adjunct faculty member of a private graduate institution, I internalized what many scholars of color wedge deep into

the contours of our own isolations: micro-aggressive tugs, direct dismissals, tokenized requests, and the resultant imposter syndrome. Beyond the personal daily experience, "survival mode"[9] requires that we feed academia, pacifyingly upholding institutional structures that are bound to our own colonial oppression. "The more one endures the pain, the higher the compensationcompensationcomensationcompensation…"[10]

Decolonizing Academia can be read like a scroll as each section bleeds our collective blood to the next. This direct connection to the text, I attest, means the collection could be used as a tool for social change, as an object passed between hands of scholars as they approach their journeys toward advanced studies, tenure, grant proposing, professing, and content production. This book is that reminder of separation, warning us that academia is and will remain a colonial structure.

I say:

Academics, scholars, and doctoral students of color, I implore you to read *Decolonizing Academia: Poverty, Oppression, and Pain*!

You say:

How can I read this? I am too busy.

I say:

If you do not have an altar, this is the time to build one. Gather a sample of the following:

your "mother's religious *ofrendas",[11]

salt,[12]

with photographs of resilient shadows,[13]

possibly grandfather, grandmother … to feel the spirit of water,[14]

a lock of hair, find,

the rock's mantra[15]

take these things to a space outside of academia, as "there is no space or place in academia for earthy skin tones"[16] because those of us who are too busy within these academic structures to open this book project are those of us who may need it most.

You say:

"[My tears are not for sale.]"[17] But I don't want to be confrontational.

Rodríguez says:

"Note: I, as a woman of colour, do not care about white tears."[18]

This text can be interpreted as a meditation for the academic of color to adequately function or manage inside of the world for which they have been entrapped. Rodríguez's manipulation, and conversation with language is the method of this literary critique on academic culture and its implications for the lives and lineages of people and communities of color. "Sony recorders wrote in their proposals that their findings were going to help address social justice, not realizing that they were also shooting our memories and leaving our hearts drenched in dried bloodbloodbloodbloodbloodbloodbloodbloodbloodbloodblood blood…."[18]

Decolonizing Academia could quickly become a change agent, if it is the medicine for the homesick as they embark on their doctoral program journeys, unknowing that they will experience tokenization, micro-aggressions, and will indeed shed tears.

Decolonizing Academia can be described as the "what I wish someone had told me" self-help bible or code book that every scholar of color ought to have on her nightstand, in her back pocket, and should only be put down if paying it forward. With this radical audience in mind, and the isolation of the academy as the space for which the conversation takes place, each section of the book calls like a whisper, but through its daring text, sounds as raging as a fire aiming to burn down the walls that have been built to sustain these spaces (including those in this presidency "#45&Co"). In the absence of other sister scholars, or in the human missteps of mentors, this book has the tools to act in place of community.

Devouring *Decolonizing Academia* has made me so full because once the layers were pulled back, what could I have left but my whole self ripened? I have come to a mirroring through my grandmother's eyes. Through this reading, I have been cracked wide open, each unlayering bringing me closer and closer to my center. I urge you to take hold of this digestible call to action. Each section reiterates not only the need for personal healing, but by naming the stakeholders of the scholarly world as ourselves and each other, we go on to acknowledge our global footprint, igniting a flame in the heart of the reader.

Notes

1. Elizabeth A. Harris, "De Blasio Proposes Changes to New York's Elite High Schools," *The New York Times*, June 8, 2018, sec. New York, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/02/nyregion/de-blasio-new-york-schools.html.

2. "Governor Cuomo Announces $8 Million for Open Educational Resources Initiative at SUNY and CUNY to Cut High Cost of Textbooks," Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, May 16, 2018, https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-8-million-open-educational-resources-initiative-suny-and-cuny-cut-high.

3. "CUNY Professors Rally; Adjuncts Demand '$7K Or Strike!' – LaborPress," accessed April 5, 2019,

http://laborpress.org/cuny-professors-rally-adjuncts-demand-7k-or-strike/.

4. Clelia O Rodríguez, *Decolonizing Academia: Poverty, Oppression and Pain / Clelia O. Rodríguez.*, 2018, 27.

5. Rodríguez, 101.

6. Rodríguez, 11.

7. Rodríguez, 45.

8. Rodríguez, 93.

9. Rodríguez, 99.

10. Rodríguez, 60.

11. Rodríguez, 98.

12. Rodríguez, 77.

13. Rodríguez, 34.

14. Rodríguez, 75, 131.

15. Rodríguez, 35.

16. Rodríguez, 105.

17. Rodríguez, 72–73.

18. Rodríguez, 27.

19. Rodríguez, 51.

RADICAL TEACHER

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

Teaching Note

Taking Action: Writing To End White Supremacy

by Michele Fazio

The subject of monuments and their historical value in the present, a topic of great debate both politically and culturally in recent years, has brought to the forefront how prevalent white supremacy is in contemporary society. This subject hit close to home for me and my students as the toppling of confederate statues in downtown Durham and Silent Sam on the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill's campus—both results of protests against the rise of white nationalism—occurred just two hours north from our campus, the University of North Carolina-Pembroke. Known as the most diverse campus in the UNC system with nearly 60% of its undergraduate student population identifying as non-White, UNC-P has a rich history steeped in American Indian culture (its school was created by and for American Indians), and it was difficult to ignore how these two local events along with national news coverage of hate crimes and blackface rehashed racial divisions not only in the South, but across the country.

I wanted to give my first-year students a platform to discuss race and racial inequities as they impact their lives, so I made dismantling racism a theme in my composition course. Offered in the Fall 2018 semester, the course introduced students to the intersections among power, race, and class by assigning *Dismantling the Racism Machine: A Manual and Toolbox* by Karen Gaffney. The book provides an historical overview of the invention of whiteness and its ideological power culturally, legally, and politically from the 1700s to the present. Rather than review the syllabus during our first class meeting, I instead asked my students to participate in a free-write assignment answering the following questions: Which social issue concerns you the most and why? What do you think should be done to improve the situation and enable transformation? And how would you implement change? After sharing their answers in small groups, the students composed a sizable list of possible research topics that ranged from the Black Lives Matter movement to transgender and migrant rights. The remainder of the session was spent establishing ground rules to encourage discussion that reflected multiple perspectives related to the study of race*,* and this included instituting a course etiquette policy.

> *Rather than review the syllabus during our first class meeting, I instead asked my students to participate in a free-write assignment answering the following questions: Which social issue concerns you the most and why? What do you think should be done to improve the situation and enable transformation? And how would you implement change?*

I drew upon several advocacy groups (https://colorofchange.org, http://www.dismantlingracism.org, and https://www.tolerance.org) to formulate my approach to the course—one that encouraged critical thinking to move beyond binaries in considering racial oppression and injustice in American society. I explained to my students the goal was not to convert them or instill guilt or blame, but rather to explore how systemic racism functions on many levels in everyday life in which we all play a part. And because of the volatility of the subject matter, I underscored the importance of listening and reflecting before speaking, for all voices to be heard. The uncertainty of class discussion—that conversation would evolve organically rather than by a set agenda—would be challenging for everyone, including myself, but that this discomfort is a necessary part of gaining an understanding of white privilege and how it silences vulnerable communities. Crafting this etiquette policy together, including the use of a signal if class discussion became too much to handle, involved my students in co-producing course content, indicating our engagement in radical discourse from the outset. Course enrollment reflected UNCP's diversity; in a class of twenty, nearly three quarters of the class were students of color, and although I had expected some resistance to the course theme, no one dropped the course—a fact that surprised me. While a few students expressed initial concern over whether talking about racial inequality would make any difference beyond the classroom, most seemed relieved to be able to talk openly about race and injustice, admitting that this class would provide an opportunity to delve into topics that were off-limits in other social settings.

To begin their reflection on the role public space plays in preserving history and, in this case, the historical context of white supremacy, we analyzed Laura Roberto and Joseph Sciorra's essay, "Recontextualizing the Ocean Blue: Italian Americans and the Commemoration of Columbus" (2017). A particularly engaging discussion followed the reading given that UNCP's population is nearly 20% American Indian (Lumbee); moreover, I drew upon my own ethnic background as an Italian American to illustrate how the invention of whiteness impacted the assimilation of Italian immigrants in the early 20th century and helped to preserve dominant culture. We also read Robin DiAngelo's essay, "White Fragility" (2011), to see how these same issues manifest in the workplace. Next, students began reading Gaffney's *Dismantling the Racism Machine.* To review her introduction of systemic racism and how it operates in society, I distributed slips of paper containing one word for each student to define and to provide at least one example for. As we sat in a large circle, students began offering an explanation of the terms "Caucasian," "internalized oppression," "intersectionality," "implicit bias," "heteronormativity," "social construct," and "racial hierarchy," and the examples they provided electrified the class. As we moved through the book's five steps ("Chip Away at the False Ideology that Race is Biological," "See the Racism Machine, Examine the Racism Machine's Powerful Mechanisms," "Analyze the Racism Machine's Recalibration after the Civil Rights Movement," and "Take Apart the Racism Machine"), students wrestled with real questions about history, culture, and legal policy, asking "how did we get here?" and "how could people allow these things to happen?"

Over the course of the semester, students became frustrated. Some shared their own experiences confronting white supremacy and outrage over bias and prejudice, while others revealed deeply personal stories about being stereotyped. One male student, who rarely spoke in class, raised his hand and quietly stated, "I have to speak first today." We were discussing Michelle Alexander's introduction to *The New Jim Crow* (2010) and Ava DuVernay's documentary, *13th* (2016), which made clear the statistic that three out of four black men would be incarcerated in their lifetime. He pointedly addressed the three other males in the room: "Which one of us is going to escape this reality? This is my life. I can't escape being a black man." No one spoke, yet the silence was not uncomfortable; rather, it was a moment rife with reflection, of students recognizing, perhaps for the first time, how systemic racism works individually and collectively to divide and conquer. Admittedly, it is extremely difficult to talk about race even under the best of circumstances and I bear great responsibility for creating a space in the classroom that acknowledges the existence of structural racism. However, it is important for college students, and first-year students at that, to open up and name these often unspoken truths, which proved to be a revelation. Students were beginning to have these conversations on campus and at home and, understandably, some found it uneasy, but necessary territory to navigate.

Toward the midpoint of the semester, students were required to attend UNCP's annual Social Justice Symposium, a campus-wide event that raises awareness about social justice issues, and write a reflective essay about Gaffney's keynote address, who was this year's featured speaker. My students also had the unique experience of Gaffney visiting class beforehand, which gave them the chance to discuss their research projects in progress, ask questions about future solutions, and learn about her own writing process in publishing *Dismantling the Racism Machine*. The invitation to learn together alongside the author of our assigned textbook lessened some of the anxieties they faced in addressing polemical issues such as "reverse racism," stereotypes, and social constructs. At one point, a student exclaimed to Gaffney, "This book really makes me think!"

Inside and outside the classroom, I believe writing can be a form of activism—a time of self-awareness and collective action. The course's final project, "Taking Action," required students to choose a contemporary social problem that emerged out of the reading materials and explore its impacts on American society. Topics included mass incarceration, environmental racism, racial profiling, migrant farmworkers, and economic precarity, examining how local advocacy groups and government agencies addressed these issues. Individual conferences helped students to strengthen their positions as they synthesized academic sources and developed a strategic action plan to effect change. As students presented their work in progress, each had to reflect upon the proposal's efficacy. I made it clear—as Gaffney did during her talks—that change will not

happen immediately, but that we could begin the lifelong process of self-reflection that moves us toward transformative thinking, of learning to undo what we have been taught in order to understand more fully how power and privilege shape the world in which we live.

This assignment was more than simply a grade to be earned—my students' ideas about race and racial justice mattered and I had the pleasure of hearing their voices emerge clearly, articulating valuable claims on revising existing policies that could potentially change people's lives. Class ended by having students compose a formal letter to a politician, media outlet, or organization based on their arguments (part of Step 5 in Gaffney's book). Unfortunately, I did not require them to send the letters, and I realized too late that I should have. I erred on the side of protecting the parameters of my class and learned a valuable lesson about taking the same risks in teaching that I ask my students to tackle in their writing. They wrote courageously and unflinchingly about what needs to be done and their words filled me with hope. Teaching writing in this way sustains me not only as a citizen, but influences my commitment to social justice on campus, where I am developing campus-wide programming focused on working-class and first-generation communities. I owe it to my students to be as unrelenting as they have shown themselves to be by continuing to make the composition classroom active and activist in its approach to resisting the racism machine.

RADICAL TEACHER

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

Teaching Note

Write Back Soon: Mass Incarceration and "Writing Intensive" Vulnerability

by Ianna Hawkins Owen

At a booth in Dolores Park for the Trans March during the summer of 2018, my friend and I struggled to write postcards on the fly to incarcerated folks. The booth was run by volunteers from Black and Pink, a prison abolition organization that matches queer and trans people behind bars with pen pals on the outside. I only had experience writing to someone I knew personally. What did I have to say of consequence or comfort to a total stranger, despite the bonds of affinity drawing their address and my body to the same table? I was surely overthinking it. Instead, I colored in a unicorn with the intensity of the hapless. My friend stared at her card full of half starts.

Throughout that typically chilly Bay Area summer, I was turning over in my mind the problem of satisfying the "writing intensive" designation of my new undergraduate seminar, "Black Writing To/From/About Prison." I struggled to come up with a way to make the course's mandated four papers, or 20-pages of writing, outward facing—an orientation not dictated by the curriculum committee but, rather, by my own flagging optimism. I conceived of the papers as letters but wondered how to do this without succumbing to the trap of reducing the subjects of the class, incarcerated folk and the system that feeds on them, to easy objects for "diversifying" the intellectual project of English courses at a predominantly white and elite northeast institution and nothing more.

There are many models, for sure, of attempting to ensure that those inside and those outside are sharing information instead of merely extracting personal stories and banking information. But, suspicious of empathy projects since reading Saidiya Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection*, yet constantly entangled with them, I wasn't sure there was a way that I could redirect those energies in a single semester as a relatively new teacher working on a new course. Where would those stories go? What would my students do with what they took? How long would it live? How soon would it be forgotten?

I began to think about the role of letter-writing in student lives. Maybe it started as notes in class and evolved into emails, text messages, snapchats. The mode of communication might be more condensed but the desire for—and the kernel of—written contact to people we can be our whole selves with is a regular part of our lives. What if I asked students to write to people they already talk to all the time? Friends, family, other loved ones? There is, to be sure, a certain awkwardness in being directed to make an extended point about a particular topic and knowing that others (not addressed) will read it, but it is not without precedent.

Open letters are a mainstay of African American literature -- perhaps the most well-known of which is Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail," which addresses several clergymen who condemned the pace of the civil rights movement as "too fast." He takes on these addressees as a means of reaching his true audience of concern: a broader mass of white moderates. Indeed, he writes, rather than the Klu Klux Klan, "[s]hallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection" (King, Jr. 97). Another long-standing and powerful example of the open letter is James Baldwin's "My Dungeon Shook," in which Baldwin writes to his nephew to explain the problem of race in America in accessible terms. Pitched at a youth, the letter accomplishes its goal of reaching liberal white folk who might require engagement at an elementary level but would balk at being spoken to directly in such a manner. Baldwin concludes his letter by telling young James that it is not the two of them who are imprisoned by race in America but, actually, "them," his eavesdroppers, who must free themselves (Baldwin 10).

The open letter form allows for both the intimate engagement of individual, familiar contact and the deft inclusion of targeted eavesdroppers in order to raise the consciousness of listeners and affirm the value of personal relationships. And so, in this way, students satisfied the college's writing intensive requirement with me by writing letters with purpose to people that they knew in order to facilitate a felt relationship to the course topic between themselves and another. To take the resources of the classroom and touch people predisposed to hear what they had to say—even if the topic were uncomfortable, unsettling, and implicating.

The letter form allowed me to pursue other writing enhancement objectives including observing comprehension of course material; encouraging curatorial skills in selecting texts for reference; engaging in application of course material to students' lives, the lives of people they know, and the region in which they live; and nurturing creative thinking skills. The course material itself is a wide ranging and eclectic mix of genres and voices on the problem of mass incarceration. Students read poetry and short stories by Terrance Hayes, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Tèa Mutonji, and Jamel Brinkley; first person testimonies from *Inside this Place, Not of It: Narratives from Women's Prisons*, *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*, and *Hell is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*; memoirs like *Assata* and *Angels with Dirty Faces*; scholarship from researchers like Nikki Jones, Michelle Alexander, Victor Rios, Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Andrea Ritchie, and Saidiya Hartman; and they viewed documentaries like *Free CeCe* and *The Last Graduation*.

Below are the prompts for the four letters during the first year of instruction.

Prompt for Letter #1

In this letter write to someone you know personally about the history and structure of prisons in the United States. What are the objectives of this institution? Have they shifted over time? What are the effects of this institution? Please also address one of the following themes: rhetoric, time, or habituation. This is the first of four letters written to the person you choose. This letter is meant to help them to understand that there is something called a "prison industrial complex" operating in the United States today.

Prompt for Letter #2

In this letter write to someone you know personally about how both race and gender are integral factors in mass incarceration in the United States. How are these communities impacted by this system--inside and out? How have particular communities come to be targeted by this system? Please also address one of the following themes: sexuality, disability, or citizenship. This is the second of four letters written to the person you chose. This letter is meant to help them to understand the intersectional reach of the prison industrial complex in the United States today.

Prompt for Letter #3

In this letter write to someone you know personally about any aspect of mass incarceration in the United States you have not yet addressed with them. Be clear about why you make the choice you make. Please also address one of the following themes (but do not make it the center of your letter): memoir, art, political engagement, or education. This is the third of four letters written to the person you chose. This letter's topic is open to you. This letter is meant to help them to understand an aspect of your choice about the prison industrial complex in the United States today.

Prompt for Letter #4

This is the last of your letters written to the person you chose. This letter is meant to give you space to figure out what to do with all that you have learned and, rather than hold that alone, reach out to someone who matters to you about how to tackle one small piece of the larger project of prison abolition in the United States today.

In this letter ask the addressee to help you start a prison abolition organization in Williamstown (or ask their advice about your idea if they are not local). What is your current understanding of the prison industrial complex? What aspect of the system are you challenging? Why does that aspect speak to you or matter to you? What is your organization's goal? Why? What is the organization's strategy/how does it accomplish its goals? Which organizational models are (or are not) useful to you in the design process? Why would your friend want to collaborate with you on this (or how might their perspective on your idea help you to grow it)? You may start a new organization or found a chapter of an existing organization. If founding a chapter, you must discuss how this organization's design would be modified/adapted to succeed in the area.

They chose to write to grandparents, dorm-mates, best friends, neighbors back home, as well as siblings in other countries and contexts than this one. In each letter, student writers negotiated acts of translation between course material and personal habits of speech, reinterpretation of memories held in common, or revelations about private experiences hitherto undisclosed. The most elegant letters loosened the grip of the traditional five-paragraph essay's hold on their voice and experimented creatively with the use of metaphor and simile to generate lasting images, followed the thread of their thoughts, and structured their letters according to the individual logic of their specific relationships to their addressees.

Those letters that opened themselves up to the vulnerability of processing their own personal experiences and emotions in public achieved the greatest persuasiveness. Student letters that had trouble relinquishing the format of the traditional college essay were the most stiff, least effective letters. This is not surprising given that so many people are trained from a young age not to use "I"—let alone to allow feeling to intrude upon the craft of writing and deepen the impact of their words.

Navigating the openness of the letter, students provided a smidge more background to their inside references so that the outside reader (the eavesdropper rendering the letter "open") could follow along without getting bogged down in unnecessary detail. The hybridity of the assignment showed up on the footnotes page, where students could go into more technical detail about their citations and resources without interrupting the flow of the connection and mutual intelligibility they worked to establish with their loved one.

I share this assignment structure as one possibility for navigating teaching open-theme college writing courses, which ideally should be both challenging and rewarding for student, teacher and community alike. I close with a portion of a teaching eval in which one of the few upperclassmen in the course wrote:

> Even though this was a 100 level, I found it challenged me (more than many of my upper level courses) because it asked me to do something we are rarely asked to do in the academy—merge the personal and the political. In theory I loved this womanist concept, but in practice I had no clue how to do this and I was nervous, so thank you for forcing me to self-reflect/introspect and tap into my creativity!

In proposing this course and, now, preparing to teach it for a second time, my goal has been to mobilize writing assignments as strategies that can exceed the walls of the elite New England classroom—tenderly touching the friends and families, using their kinship and mutual trust to politicize vulnerability in writing and to turn more hearts and more resources toward the long project of freedom for all people.

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RADICAL TEACHER

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

Contributors' Notes
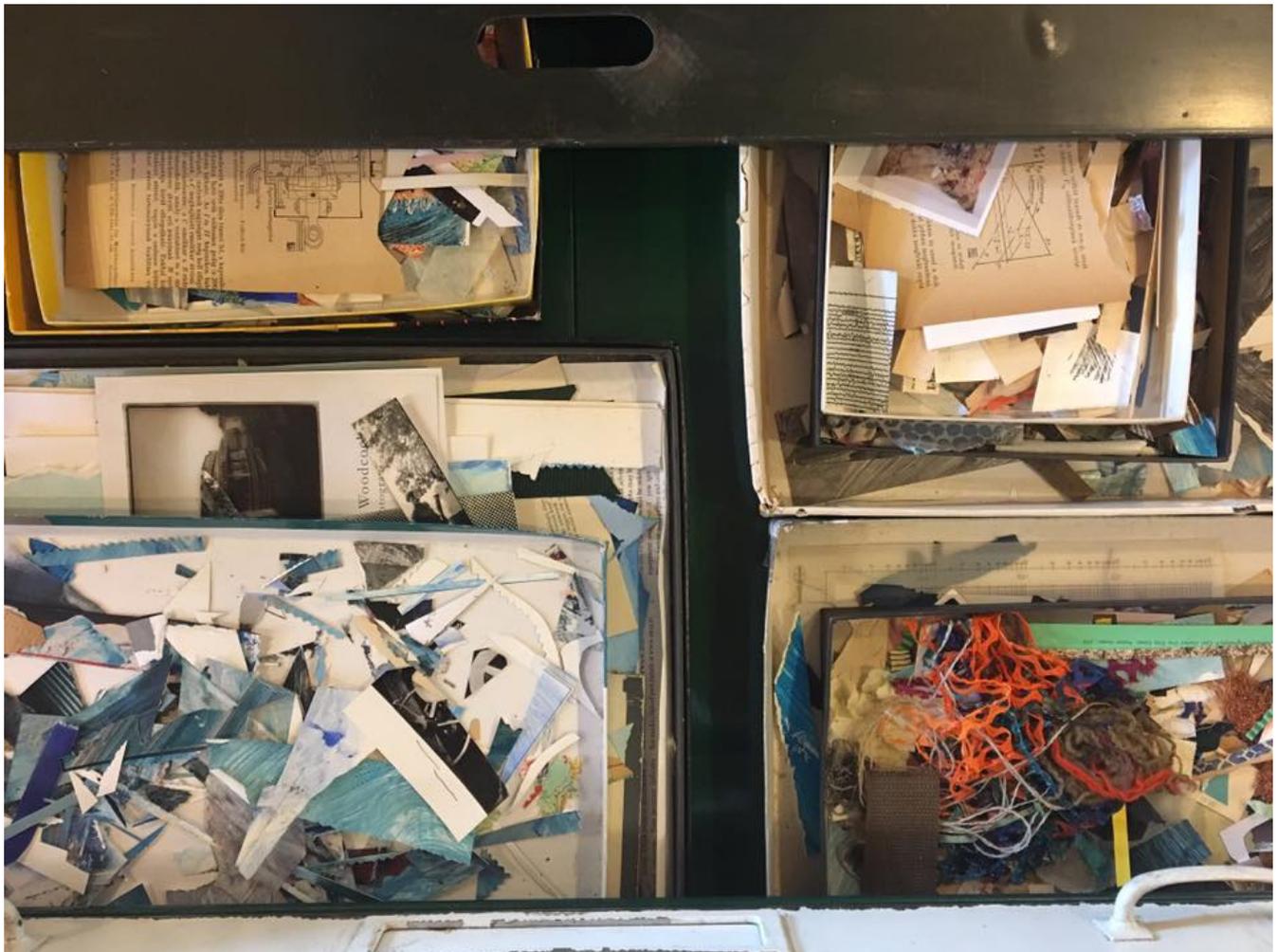
"ISABEL'S DRAWER" PHOTO BY JULIA RODAS (2019)

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MEH is Matthew E. Henry, a multiple Pushcart nominated poet and short story writer. His works appear or are forthcoming in *Radical Teacher*, *Kweli Journa*l, *Longleaf Review*, *Poetry Eas*t, *Spillway*, *Rigorous*, *Rise Up Review*, and *3Elements Review*. MEH is an educator who received his MFA from Seattle Pacific University, yet continued to spend money he didn't have pursuing a M.A. in Theology and a PhD in Education.

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