

TABOO

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Editorial Introduction

Kenny Varner & David Lee Carlson

Many suggest we are living in hard times. We suspect that every generation could make a claim that their times are hard times and they could proffer any number of respectable positions to support their ideas. So, while it appears fair not to claim this time as the only hard time or even the most hard time (perhaps), we feel confident claiming these moments as uniquely hard. The election of what is arguably the most unstable and ill prepared man to occupy 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, a sharp focus and attention to rising white nationalism, mass shooting after mass shooting, a legislative body so disempowered and paralyzed that they seem not to be able to even take the most simple of actions, and a rising tense global climate accented by new trade wars and rising militaristic (often nuclear) discourse from men more obsessed with their nuclear capabilities (and the size of their buttons) than in their capacity and capability to broker peace. These are hard times, and as academics perhaps we have not best engaged the possibilities of our work. That is, what spaces are we leaving unclaimed?, how are we exacerbating issues with our own inaction/s?, how have we shut ourselves out from leading in hard times as opposed to being dictated to in hard times. This journal intentionally stakes a unique claim in the field of scholarly knowledge: namely, *Taboo*, aims to be a space where we can say what often goes unsaid, articulate that which we tend to hold in, and live outside of the comfort and safety of academically sanctioned knowledge claims. As editors, living in this moment, we asked ourselves, what are the radical possibilities in this time of great tumultuousness? How might scholars we respect respond when prompted only by the question “what are your reflections on radical possibilities?” With that question in mind we reached out to a variety of scholars, across levels and institution types, and asked them to write a piece that responded to that prompt. There was to be no more clarification, no safe guiding of an approach, no editorial vision to how these pieces should come together.

This (very) special invited issue is the result of the scholars’ responses to this

prompt. From pieces written in structures that look academically familiar, to poems, to citation-less and raw, the pieces in this collection each offer a unique perspective to push us along in our own efforts (as academics and readers) to ask ourselves, what are the possibilities, radical in nature, given the unpredictability and volatility of the here and now. Cheryl Matias leads off this special issue with one of the most honest, raw, and vulnerably written reflections we have ever read in an academic piece, ripping the Band-Aid off to explore what it means to be a social justice worker in these times. Erica Meiner, through a piece written in four small acts, prompts us to think through ‘Slow Work,’ drawing upon 20 years of engagement to articulate the need and necessity of such an approach. Abraham DeLeon carefully takes us on a stroll, through a daydream metaphor, to understand the possibilities of the intersections of creative and intellectual worlds, pushing the academic and intellectual boundaries of theory and academic practice. Christine Clark uses the writing space of poetry and concept of origin to show the multiplicities of where she is from—a prompting to all thinking through the complexities of where we are from. David Stovall brilliantly articulates a series of seven considerations of educational justice work that lay upon the shoulders and spirit of scholars who work toward abolitionist futures; Stovall’s work brings us underneath the surface, beneath the grass, helping us not get lost in the educational weeds above the surface. The Ayers brothers, Bill and Rick, remind us that the trajectory of the challenges we find ourselves in during Trumpdom (and they draw in part on Betsy DeVos), are not unique but rather far along a path crafted by political ideologies and practices, right and left, over decades, and they masterfully remind us in their piece that “we can always do something—and something is where we [should] begin.” Finally, Valerie Kinloch, in a way that is both beautiful and unique (if you have never engaged with Valerie you should, as she has a powerful way to mix questions, voice, challenge, and care into interactions) in its approach reminds us what is at stake, laying out her commitments, and inviting us to join her in an obligation to Black life and Black love.

This collection of pieces reminds us of the importance of having multiple ways of expressing thought and knowledge. The authors, drawing on such a wide range of approaches, remind us all that a journal like *Taboo*, where content and form challenge the status quo, remains vitally important in a climate that anesthetizes complex conversations and challenges into neat academic packages, censored vis-à-vis the sterile hiding places of peer review. There is a little something for everyone in this issue, and we celebrate the very idea that in these pages something should resonate with everyone. We, and they as contributors, look forward to your joining in the dialogue—reach out and let us all know your thoughts.

In solidarity,
Kenny Varner and David Carlson

Tell the Devil I'm Back

A Self-Reflection on the Radical Possibilities for Racial Justice

Cheryl E. Matias

I'm tired.

Of bullshit, runaround, avoidance, fake support, passive aggressiveness, CCing,
long response emails, backstabbing, and
Routinely performed white emotionalities,
-Guilt, defensiveness, fear, anger, sadness, etc. etc. etc.,-
Perching themselves above the fatigue and trauma of female faculty of Color.

I'm tired of yessums,
House slaves who, upon the favors of white masters and gatekeepers,
Begin to believe they too are better than field slaves,
Tirelessly working to prove I ain't like them, massa.

I'm tired of rhetoric that minimizes the reality of woke Folks of Color
Claiming everyone else experiences the same thing,
"You're not the only one"
"What about me",
Like a good old #alllivesmatter argument.

I'm tired of the refusal to radically listen
To those experiencing macro-aggressions, threats, and intimidations
For who we are, what and how we research, and how we teach,
Instead of validating,
Operating from a place of sisterhood, comadreship (kumare-ship), or community
Find themselves constantly justifying
Behaviors, actions, speech, and decisions.

Tired. I'm tired
Of those who hope that my soul, spirit, heart, and mind will wither away

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*Like a faint hopeful balloon rising to oblivion
 Just so the words of whiteness, white supremacy, and white privilege
 Are never uttered
 Swept under the rug like the history of white terrorism.
 Although I'm tired, I am not beat.
 For my hope for a true loving humanity
 One not defined by hellish racial standards
 Or a purgatory of racial sins
 Rises Above
 So
 Tell the Devil I'm back*

Three Considerations for Radical Possibilities

When asked to reflect on radical possibilities of my work in racial justice I momentarily held my breath. I had many reservations. First, I labored over whether or not to write a strict academic article, only to later opt out of that possibility because my reflection should be accessible to more than academics, precisely because if anyone wants to engage in racial justice—one that actively seeks to dismantle hegemonic whiteness and white supremacy—then they must know what they are in for. *I would be dishonest if I didn't tell what life is truly like as a racial justice worker, specifically for a young-looking Filipina who is constantly racially stereotyped as docile, compliant, and, based upon those stereotypes, is expected to nurse¹ the needs of others.* As such, my reflection will be just that: a honest reflection of the radical possibilities for racial justice that did and did not happen in my career, to caution others who may also envision such possibilities. Unlike most articles, I will not cite in-text so the flow of this reflection remains consistent. I will, however, pay homage to the many scholars who aided in my intellectual journey at the end.

Secondly, I questioned whether or not I should draw from my life experiences, despite one of my in-house tenure reviews minimizing my research to mere autobiography. Regardless to that critique, I knew all too well that this particular reflection is not about adding one more to my publication record—which, by the way, the larger academic field supports—nor is it about stroking the insecurities or egos of those who provided such critique. Instead, I write this reflection as my honest commentary to humanity and, if my “autobiographic” stories shed light to how whiteness operates in dehumanizing ways, then so be it. I will share my stories because the reason as to why I entered the academy was—and will always be—to teach about the dehumanizing effects of race, even if it means engaging myself.

Finally, I also thought about whether or not I should be brutally honest in my reflection or should I, as I often had to do in the past, sugar coat what I have to say in order to make it more palatable for those who are too emotionally instable to handle words like whiteness, emotionalities, and white supremacy? Here, I opt

for the former with all its brutal realness. *Sometimes one just needs to rip off that Band-Aid already.*

Before Radical Possibilities for Racial Justice, Why Emotionalities of Whiteness?

Before I get into whiteness and white supremacy I must reflect on what is most distracting in the radical possibilities of racial justice: white emotionalities characterized by guilt, defensiveness, anger, guilt, sadness, shame, and/or anxiety. Those folks who engage in them are emotionally instable because merely mentioning such terms freaks out most white folks (and folks of Color who subscribe to whiteness ideology) such that they start a routine performance of whiteness: pontificating that they have Black best friends, aggrandizing their support in the 1960 Civil Rights marches, or—specific to People of Color who aren't *woke*—will weave in and out of whiteness ideology by saying stuff like “We need to be colorblind...but as a Latina.” *Wait, I thought you were colorblind so then why are you seeing your Latina-ness now, especially when you're using it as a racial marker to justify whiteness rhetoric?* Opting in and out of whiteness is a privilege yet sadly, those un-woke folks, whether they want to admit it or not, are just pawns to a master game, again benefitting off the ostracism of those Othered further away—a strategy commonly referred to as divide and conquer.

While this happens, some even display neurotic behaviors when hearing the word whiteness. They begin an elaborate performance of defending adamantly that they are not racist, which is interesting especially since work on whiteness rarely identifies racists. Instead, research on whiteness typically focuses on mechanisms of whiteness which, when expressed, impacts folks of Color. *Perhaps, it is a surfacing of inner guilt? And why is it that folks are more afraid to be called a racist than understand how they might be participating in racist behaviors?* So instead of placating the tender fragilities (and I say that sarcastically) of folks who think their discomfort with a word equivocates to the hurt and pain that stem from racism like the systemic murders of Black and indigenous folk, the alienation, denigration, and language-cide of Latinos and Asian Americans, or the terror of being Muslim or gay in a Christian-centric and hetero-aggressively homophobic society, I cannot help but #smh. *What are you so afraid of? History, laws, and government have always protected straight Whites males.*

So, when people ask me why I study the emotionality of whiteness as a way towards enacting racial justice I can't help but say, “Are you fucking kidding me?” These hyper emotionalities of whiteness that seeks to silence my work (e.g., “Just stop talking about it”), intimidate me to submission (e.g., “If you continue this path you may not get tenure”), and threaten my existence (e.g., “You're the racist for bringing up racism! You should kill yourself!”) are what make my work in racial justice so damn difficult. And, it is not only me. I recognize that others, too, are

also inundated with such overwhelming white emotionalities that they end up getting their home address posted on white nationalist pages, swastikas on their front lawn, and/or flyers passed around near their home by neo-Nazis.² It is as if people still believe the world is flat and since they wrongly bounded their identity to that belief, they hysterical react to teachings that prove the world is indeed round. *How do I even begin to teach the manifestations of race, racism, and white supremacy, if these emotionalities of whiteness cannot be checked?* Therefore, in order to begin racially just education that focuses on how white supremacy and hegemonic whiteness influence the educational landscape—expressed by culturally biased testing, racial achievement gap, or Eurocentric curricula—then I must first break down the guilt, defensiveness, shame, anger, sadness, and emotionally frozen feelings of folks who, despite denying race, truly know whiteness is operating. However, are too ashamed to admit that they benefitted from the operations of whiteness at the expense of those Othered. *Hence, the often spoken “I need to give back to urban schools” speech from white teacher candidates who grew up in middle class, white U.S. America. Essentially, what is it that they have taken from urban students of color such that they feel so compelled to give back? Equity, perhaps?*

Some of my critics suggest that I simply need to replace words like whiteness and white supremacy with neoliberal, multicultural kumbaya-esque vocabulary like diversity, culture, and inclusion. In fact, I even had a senior scholar in my own department tell me I just needed to stop saying and making up—*yes he believed I made it up*—words like whiteness! Is the mere word, “whiteness” too scary for them? Instead of silencing me in saying and researching about whiteness perhaps they should consider why such a simple word freaks them out. If, for example, I said the word “australopithecine” would that make one feel nervous, threatened, and/or guilty? Obviously not. The reason the word whiteness freaks out people, particularly white folks, is because such a word is value-laden with privilege, hypocrisy, and historical pillage—a historical fact that folks try to suppress and act as if weren't true. And, in suppressing and denying what they know is true these folks end up feeling guilty or defensive and find themselves oddly compelled to justify their dignity and humanity by propaganda-izing their friendships with Black folks. *If those Black folk happens to be in the likes of Andre Lorde, Angela Davis, or James Baldwin then I digress but true to whiteness, whites self-segregated themselves away from woke Folks of Color.*

Look, we know that Native American genocide was justified under whiteness rhetoric. *Manifest Destiny for us—meant, for white folk—to rule from sea to shining sea—despite who was there in the first place.* We know that African American slavery and discrimination was justified under whiteness rhetoric. *Jim Crow laws, eugenics, racially biased intelligence testing like the Bell Curve, are some examples of how whiteness rhetoric influences policies, laws, and education.* We know the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII and the proliferation of state adopted anti-miscegenation laws were justified under whiteness rhetoric. *Whites are pure and*

thus should not intermix with folks of Color; however white men have always had access to the bodies of women of Color. Asian Americans are to be under suspicion forever because of Orientalism and exoticism. Yet, despite all of these historical facts, white supremacy creates institutions that force historical amnesia, especially in the predominantly white communities, simply to relinquish any culpability of wrongdoings. This in and of itself is what makes folks feel so guilty. They know it's true yet they are taught to act as if it never happened. And, yet, if anyone proves the reality of these truths then they get defensive and ashamed for their complicity. Worse yet, most times the people who get ashamed hold a power position over the person who is bringing it up and instead of working out their shame misuses their power to once again suppress the shame. It's a twisted game of the Emperor and his new clothes because as everyone clearly sees his nakedness to whiteness, the emperor uses his power in whiteness to force others to act as if they didn't see it. It's called "Let's just be colorblind" rhetoric. And since we have been playing this twisted game for so long, we don't even know how to say, "Your whiteness is showing" anymore.

Why Not Diversity in Radical Possibilities for Racial Justice?

In reflecting on my work to identify the emotionalities of whiteness that stifle whites'—and folks who subscribe to whiteness ideology—progression towards a more humane society, I am often met with resistance not only from neo-Nazis, alt-right, or white nationalists. Alas, some so called progressives or liberals also want the candy-coated version of white supremacy that never mentions those two words. Or, the version that solely focuses on institutionalism and grandiose systems without ever looking at how individual behaviors, emotions, speech, and power can also contribute to systemic white supremacy. Instead of the words white supremacy, they favor words that focus on the symptoms of white supremacy like discrimination, prejudice, and racial or cultural bias—all of which would cease to exist if white supremacy was not a reality. *Do we want to address the symptom or do we want to get rid of the disease?* Metaphorically speaking, one can't just put a Band-Aid on a skin boil hoping that the Band Aid will cure the cancer that led to the skin boil. Furthermore, what people forget or, more precisely, refuse to acknowledge, is that in their quest for the elusive cultural diversity, diversity and inclusion, and multicultural celebrations that hopes to combat discrimination, prejudice, and cultural bias is what was the preexisting condition for us to now be demanding for inclusion? Despite the difficulty one may have in digesting the following fact, it must be said. U.S. society, with its educational, political, legal, and social institutions, was historically EXCLUSIVE to whites. And that fact alone is why we now are fighting for inclusion and diversity. *Perhaps, figuring out how it was exclusive first may give us a deeper understanding of why others were not included.*

What Radical Possibilities Are Possible and at What Cost?

Although radical possibilities within a white supremacist society imbued with hegemonic whiteness in all institutions are limited, there were a few possible avenues that led me towards the hope for racial justice. However, in reflecting on my experiences in that hopeful endeavor, I must first admit that those possibilities were exacted at the cost of my health, so much so that I caution incoming scholars to seriously consider negotiating into their tenure-lined contracts the following:

- paid multicultural counseling services,
- additional health care benefits (like a pre-tax flexible account),
- annual funding support to attend faculty of color conferences or quarterly meetings with other race scholars for mentorship,
- security services for office hours and escort services to and from classes
- funds to secure legal services in the face of white supremacist smear campaigns
- a written contract supporting new race based core courses, and/or
- a line item budget specifically dedicated to facilitating an organization dedicated to racial justice.

The argument here is if an institution claims to be serious about retaining faculty of color or faculty members whose research directly relates to issues of diversity then make them back their mouth with their pocketbook. And, I cannot stress enough the importance of this negotiation tactic for scholars, who are female, faculty of color entering a field, discipline, or institution that is predominantly white.

My waiting to exhale moment was finally teaching what I research: whiteness. The course was entitled *Problematizing Whiteness: Education for Racial Justice* and was first offered in spring 2016 with an initial enrollment of close to 50 undergraduate and graduate students. Although it took me almost 6 years, having previously offered the course as an independent studies course that did not count towards my faculty load, it finally saw the light of day. Having the ability to teach a course that directly relates to your research is paramount to your sanity and career. However, beware. Too often institutions hire a race scholar only to have them teach that pesky mandatory diversity course while never offering specific courses on race. The student resistance in these mandatory diversity courses is mind-blowing (and not in a good way) and such mind-blowing behavior will show up in your evaluations, which in turn, will bite you in the rear when tenure comes up. Therefore, support in developing your own courses and eventually programs that acknowledge racial justice as a viable possibility for education must be considered. That is, make sure racial justice is a written aspect in the program's philosophy.

However, in developing such courses one must be prepared for the whitelash (backlash from whites who resist learning or acknowledging racism) that stems from white emotionalities—especially during a time of emboldened misinformed bigots who re-fashion Civil Rights terminologies originally conceptualized to liberate People of Color, to their twisted white nationalist agenda. *No, it is not freedom*

of speech to call people racial epithets when history proves that using such dehumanizing language has led to white terrorism. And no, using the words whiteness and Whites does NOT equate to calling someone an N word simply because there is no historical proof of People of Color interning Whites in camps, forcing Whites into slave labor, mass lynching Whites, or mass deportations of Whites. Therefore, understand that there may be harassments, intimidation, and threats made to you, your career, and your family simply because your class will finally point out the elephant in the living room: whiteness.

Another breath of fresh air is recognizing that there are some woke students and colleagues who have not found a place, moreover a sanctuary, to deepen their understanding of race. Observing this I cofounded with my doctoral students a collaborative think tank that was not strictly a student organization nor did it confine its membership to one university. Instead, in the spirit of community and collaboration, we opened the Research Advocacy in Critical Education, a collaborative think tank of scholars, activists, faculty, staff, students, and community members seeking sanctuary where discussions of and lessons on race can actualize without institutional and individual repercussion, ostracism, and scrutiny. In fact, the acronym (R.A.C.E.) itself was purposefully created to force university stakeholders to simply say the word race and not the semantic discursive synonyms like diversity, urban, low SES, or free reduced lunch that are so commonly used as aversion tactics. In this space we were able to push each other's ideas on race, learn how to engage in race talks, heal each other when news broke of another unarmed murder of Black peoples occurred, share ideas on racially just projects, support each other on projects of race, invite national speakers who conduct racially just research to Denver, involve community members to the "academic" learning of race, and, most importantly, provide a space for a community of people who all invest in humanity by dismantling white supremacy in all its forms. Although this is a radical possibility for racial justice I prefer to refer to R.A.C.E. as my saving grace. I say this because when the devil of whiteness rears its ugly head, threatening with the same white terrorism that has historically intimidated people of color before, we cannot help but want to retreat.

In speaking of retreating, I even had one of my mentor professors in whiteness (who is white) advise me to focus on methods instead of whiteness, knowing that my experiences as a woman of color, particularly a Filipina, would be drastically different from hers. She knew all too well how I would be received in a predominantly white field. Oddly enough, she proved her point. Although my research on whiteness was shunned by senior instructors or clinical professors who ran the teacher education program I was initially hired into, they started posting quotes about white privilege during one of their meetings. And, those quotes were taken from research on whiteness made by my mentor and another white, female race scholar who I even published with! Clearly, the color of the messenger matters to them. Therefore, in the radical possibilities for racial justice the messenger must

consider how possible their work will be within a space that cannot fully accept the expertise, let alone the humanity, of scholars of Color.

In this endeavor to provide a sanctuary for racially just workers, understand that the emotionalities of whiteness will once again surface and be emotionally projected onto you. Because the aim—that of dismantling white supremacy and hegemonic whiteness—of R.A.C.E. threatens whiteness within the ivory tower, the organization may never be formally recognized by an administration, school, or university. In fact, some colleagues who are enmeshed in whiteness ideology will dumbly ask if white people can attend or wrongly assume that the group is against white people. *How many times do I have to say this? Whiteness does not mean only white people; for it can inhabit the mindsets of People of Color, albeit through a distorted sense of survival. With that said, whiteness is typically found in white people because adhering to it provides them racial benefits in a white supremacist society. Meaning, it is in the best interests of Whites to claim to not see race so that they never atone for their amassed accumulation of wealth off the backs of those who were deemed not white.*

Finally, in reflecting on my experiences in the academy, the most effective aspect of racial justice was in my writing. Often times, junior faculty is advised to “tone it down until tenure.” Yet, in toning it down for so long, one can easily forget why they obtained a doctorate degree in the first place. Since my entire rationale behind obtaining a doctorate specific in race and ethnic studies in education was to teach about racial justice I knew the only radically possible avenue for my work to remain true to my purpose was to continue writing with fierceness. And this required a lot of finesse since many people may recognize historical racism but never acknowledge how their behaviors, ideology, and emotions of today may continue to contribute to it. Therefore, I needed to draw from common parlance, popular behaviors, rhetoric, or modern events to highlight the connection between past racist behaviors to modern day ones. Such a strategy is used in teaching history to K-12 students. Meaning, as teachers we often find pedagogical ways for our students to learn past concepts, events, and personas by relating to it today’s speech, events, and rhetoric. Doing so allows students to understand the connection between past to present. Therefore, in my work in writing and teaching about racial justice I often draw from modern day parlance, behaviors, and rhetoric so my readers and students can relate and make past and present connections. Although some critics may erroneously label my deliberate design to relate historical racism to modern day parlance, to simple neologism, I find that as true scholars the message and content that undergirds popular phraseologies is more important. Therefore, in reflecting on the radical possibilities of racial justice one of the most important pieces of advice I was ever given was to “be the scholar I want to be.” After a mere 7 years in the academy, I can say if some folks cannot accept the scholar you have become then re-center your initial purpose for earning the degrees, researching what you study, and why people must learn about what you study. *Why are you here in the academy? Who are you really here for?*

What Say You About the Futurity of Radical Possibilities?

The most dismissive maneuver of whiteness rhetoric is also one that simultaneously displays defensiveness. “But I’ve never owned slaves.” It is as if simply declaring this statement absolves one (particularly a white person) from any historical racism. The statement would not hold its power if it were reframed. Instead of declaring having never owned slaves, how about informing those who say it, that their ancestral family will be researched to see whether or not their family ever either directly or indirectly benefited from an ancestor who partook in the slave trade. Or, suggest those who say it take a DNA test to see whether or not they really did own slaves? Plainly put, if there were any accountability for such a statement that statement would not be so flippantly used as a way to assuage their racist guilt. That is the thing about race. Folks entrenched in whiteness ideology want to say they do not see it, yet use every operating mechanism in the book to deflect their guilt of actually seeing it. However, upon writing this I too understand the permanence of race and how the futurity of race will ever evolve to meet the needs of modernizing societies.

At this historical juncture, we are witnessing an emboldening of racist ideologies repositioning itself as patriotic, moreover, American. Indeed, a part of the American ideal is the devilish hypocrisy of race. Land of free (but not for some). Life, liberty and property (but not for some). Welcomes the sick, poor, and hungry (but not for some). So the honest truth is that (U.S.) America was birthed out of historical racism. A fact many refuse to acknowledge. However, there are two choices. One can take a Faustian deal pretending that America is great again with all its racial hypocrisies. In this deal with the devil the person will lose their humanity because they are expected to bear false witness to the reality of race and, in doing so, will forever be shamed. Or, one can be a true patriot who defends American ideals of freedom, liberty, and multiculturalism. This person stops pretending they have historical amnesia to the atrocities done to People of Color and instead of feigning racial ignorance will bear witness to it. In doing so, they earn their humanity because they refused to sit idly by witnessing the destruction of other human beings. In that heavenly return to humanity—one that thinks of another’s wellbeing instead of selfishly fixating on the self—one faces this father of lies—come hell or high water—with a celestial “I’m back.”

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Notes

¹ In reference to the many Filipina nurses who, upon U.S. occupation of the Philippines, were granted Visitor Exchanges passes to become nurses in the U.S. after the post 1965- immigration law called for highly skilled professionals.

² All these intimidations happened to real tenure-lined faculty members who teach critiques of whiteness, racism, and/or white supremacy and various institutions of higher education.

Our Academic Penalscape Slow Work in Always Urgent Times

Erica R. Meiners

The slogan on the Left, then, *universities, not jails*, marks a choice that may not be possible. In other words, perhaps more universities promote more jails. Perhaps it is necessary finally to see that the university produces incarceration as the product of its negligence. Perhaps there is another relation between the University and the Prison—beyond simple opposition or family resemblance. (Fred Moten, in Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 41)

Two or three things I know for sure, and one is that I'd rather go naked than wear the coat the world has made for me. (Dorothy Allison, 1995, p. 71)

Scene I

It is the first day of my course, *LGBTQ Lives in the Justice System*, and the room overflows with people. Budget cuts in Illinois mean scant upper level electives are available. Further ego squashing: this Tuesday / Thursday mid-day timeslot is prime for those trying to pack their campus schedules into two days a week to accommodate work and life/care commitments.

Similar to many classes I teach at this working-class urban public university, the majority of the students in the room are non-white. However, a significant difference from the classes I teach in Women's and Gender Studies and in the College of Education: at least half the people in the room are cisgendered men.

I always struggle with a rhythm for any first class. I make some jokes and fail to break the awkwardness in the room, a moment rendered just a little more complicated by a class with "LGBTQ" in the title.

We do the compulsory introductory go-around the room and I learn that about

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75% of this class of thirty-five people, including almost all the men of color, want to work in the punishment industry: cops, parole officers, prison guards, probation, state police.

As the term progresses, the line between us in this room and those who we will police and cage grows thin, or simply porous and visible: Darryl has a record, he whispers to me at the end of week two as we walk out of class together. He is caring for his sister's two kids because she is back inside: drugs. "He was a gangbanger," Anthony says stoically and decisively week three about his brother who has been "away" for the last decade and "deserved to be locked up," but he sounds less sure of this by week ten. Julia's hasn't seen her father in years, she started writing about him in her assignments midway through the term but won't say anything in class. Week seven Maritza describes to the class, causally, another time this summer when she and some friends got picked up by the police and spend the night in lock up. And each week there is more.

The line is staked out in our own flesh and blood, and held by the promise of a working future. I think of my own trajectory in rural Canada where jobs in the lumber industry, clear-cutting wasn't a blemish yet, offered one economic anchor to some enviable families. The lure of good union wages, of a profession with stature that is not unmanly, draws these men to corrections and not to teaching.

Scene 2

A maximum-security prison about forty-five minutes from downtown Chicago, Stateville Correctional Center, cages approximately three and half thousand people—overwhelmingly poor, Brown, or Black people serving very long sentences—the people who the Illinois Department of Corrections considers among the "worst of the worst." Many wait years to be admitted to the few GED and adult basic education classes offered - that students report as mainly consisting of worksheets. Long sentences often justify decisions by bureaucrats to deny access to education, why allocate resources to people who will be locked away for life? Death by incarceration is a relatively new invention: In 1955, the warden of Stateville stated, "Ninety-five per cent of all the men committed here are released some day" (Manly & Wright, 1955). Today, many people in maximum-security prisons such as Stateville will die serving extraordinarily long prison terms.

For the last five years I have worked collaboratively with others at this prison to build college level arts and humanities classes. As we build a creative and rich curriculum and recruit faculty to teach for no or little pay, the irony is inescapable. Free college courses, including books and materials, for classes composed of 100% poor people of color taught by faculty from some of the whitest and most restrictive enrollment universities in the region: Only at your local maximum-security prison! *The Fiction and Prose of Richard Wright*, *Religion and the Black Freedom Struggle* are also the kinds of courses that are increasingly unavailable at public

community colleges or four-year state universities, where the majority of poor people do matriculate. A bitter pill: a prison is the only place where poor people, particularly those who are Black and Brown, can access, for example, a free course by a leading artist on digital animation or a seminar on *Art and Science Fiction: Documenting the Future*.

If these folks were free, not caged in prison, would they have access to these kinds of courses and faculty? Probably not, even if they were able to afford the tuition.

Scene 3

Suddenly Regina was just not there. In Social Studies class the previous week, she had seemed, while upbeat and funny and always trying to get in just another question, a little *off*. I chalked it up to stress. One of a cluster of fabulously fierce and smart Black women in the class, Regina was conditioned from years of school failure to hone in on what she was doing wrong: not getting the right answer, not keeping up, not being able to write everything down. When she could breathe and forget about failure, she could learn and teach and be present in the class. It was also mid-November, past the halfway mark in the term, and everyone, including me, was getting restless.

In 2001, I collaboratively started a free high school for formerly incarcerated men and women in Chicago, Sister Jean Hughes Adult High School. Started in a church basement on the city's west side with former and current nuns, teachers, and a mishmash of activists, our school offers a community-based learning environment that values prior learning. Most of our students are between twenty-five and sixty years old, and therefore our classes are designed for people who have been out of formal educational contexts for many years. The twenty to thirty students we admit every January and December seek to earn a high school diploma, to learn, and to have some possibility of economic and academic mobility. The majority of our students and teachers are African American.

Always funny and positive, Regina had been one of the students who had consistently reached out for help. I assumed we would check in later in the week. But there was no later.

A few days after this class, Regina, at fifty-two years old, had a seizure and a massive stroke, and the hospital found cancer throughout her lungs and brain. Mercy Hospital, where the ambulance initially took her after the seizure and stroke, would not keep her because the cancer was too advanced and no treatment was recommended, and, after being transferred to two different care homes, she died weeks later, surrounded by her sisters.

In my years teaching at this high school, the death toll was unavoidable. Of our very first December 2001 graduating class of twelve people, all African Americans, only six are still living by 2017. *Heart attack. Gunshot. Cancer. Diabetes. Stroke.*

Death occupies a front-row desk. Every term, someone's son or nephew dies.

A sister is in treatment for cancer. A sibling's kidneys fail and then stop. People in the class are stretched, tired, over- and undermedicated, wheezing, scarred, gasping. When I first started to organize and teach at this school, I was surprised by the amount of illness and death. I am embarrassed to consider these first thoughts. *Students are scamming. Must be. Can't be this much death, this amount of illness.* After sixteen years of teaching—funerals, asthma attacks and emergency rooms, hospital visits—the classrooms and graduations teem with ghosts.

Incarceration facilitates premature death, as Ruthie Gilmore (2007) suggests. A cursory look at the mainstream news media and advocacy reports on conditions inside prison confirms this assessment. Being locked up shortens people's life spans. With inadequate health care, substandard food, lack of mental and physical exercise, and vulnerability to physical and sexual assault (from prison staff in particular), incarceration kills.

Beyond physical health, like Regina, many exit prison with experience and knowledge but without formal credentials and narrow employment options. Reentry into formal educational institutions, while not impossible, is a formidable challenge.

Regina's death did not go unnoticed by her community at the school. Throughout the term people would reference her humor and questions. Several of the Black women she sat next to in class doubled down on their educational commitment to honor Regina's life. Many people from her graduating class do want to further their education. Many have set short-term technical certification goals they hope might lead to more secure and immediate employment: heating and cooling installation, radiology technician, and certified home health care attendant. Yet even the short walk to these programs, which often do not require entry exams or charge outrageous tuition, is complex. Some days even the local public community college seems to be meant for a different planet of people, another world away.

Scene 4

I am invited to give a talk at a fancy private university where the tuition costs more than what the federal government states a family of four should be able to live on for two years and yet the endowment exceeds the GDP of many nations. I get to this town via plane, train and car service and arrive early and wander around. I walk on the student commercial strip, directly across from the university and I pass Brooks Brothers and Ralph Lauren clothing stores, a private "wealth management" banking center, and an expensive jewelry store. (Yes, there is also a Dunkin' Donuts tucked into a side street but it feels and looks, well, classier than the one in my neighborhood). I wander around the campus which resembles a generic American College film set: Weathered stone statues of great men, bucolic benches under beautiful trees, enormous and bright libraries (plural), sports facilities (plural), laboratories and high tech classrooms (plural) and a surfeit of buildings named after slave-owners, anti-Semites, homophobes and misogynists. I rehearse a line

if I am stopped because I must not belong. *Except I do.*

I think of one of my nieces, only the second woman in our family to finish high school and head to university, and her equally brilliant sisters that each continue to make a way out of no way, and how much a T-shirt from this place might mean to any of them. Yet seems crazy to buy one, *to literally buy in.*

I meet with the active and organized undergraduate anti-prison group. Smart, focused, and full of energy, they are organizing for the university to divest from the private prison industry.¹

Any work that weakens the prison industrial complex is useful, but all the rest swirls around me. The campus asks both prospective students and employees about their criminal histories. No returning adult students, transferring from community colleges or from the loosely affiliated “education in prison program” are enrolled on the campus. Students in the divestment group murmur that classes are probably not that welcoming to the analysis or experiences of people with criminal records or family members, *but it is just that there is no reason to think about these communities.* And while all the people in the room are not all white, it feels, as a white person, like white space.²

One bottom line keeps surfacing throughout my visit: *Why can't we all have access to these resources? What logics naturalize these life pathways for some, and legitimize paucity for others? How does this not only harm those shut out, but the very people shut in—and I count myself squarely in both spaces?* In 1972 James Baldwin wrote about how what white people called “the negro problem” created “monsters.”

This problem, which they invented in order to safeguard their purity, has made of them criminals and monsters, and it is destroying them; and this not from anything blacks may or may not be doing but because of the role a guilty and constricted white imagination has assigned to the blacks.... People pay for what they do, and, still more, for what they have allowed themselves to become. And they pay for it very simply: by the lives they lead. (Baldwin, 2007, p. 54)

Divestment is valuable. As are campaigns to “ban the box” or the question on a wide range of applications that asks about criminal records. But locked out of this private campus are those like Regina, Maritza, and also my nieces, and not only their bodies but the histories and knowledges each represent. *And these are also my people.* What can we steal if we are able to travel here? What do we leave behind? What interruptions are possible? And how to write as if I am not embedded in this academic penalscape, a part of the problem and also part of the necessary and urgent work to build other futures?

Fresh Analytics

I offer these overlapping teaching and learning vignettes to mark both this political moment, and almost twenty years of my collective teaching and learning

work in the heart of the US carceral regime. January 2017 feels like a hard moment to write about anything, given the ascendancy of a Trump administration keen to eviscerate the few scraps of our welfare state. Yet this moment, another “crisis” in the long history of the violence of the US, also feels like a reminder of the need for slow work, a term borrowed from legal scholar and trans activist Dean Spade, who often describes the ongoing and long haul labor to dismantle oppressive regimes and to simultaneously build new structures and modes of relationality. As slow work in our always urgent times demands other analytics, these scenes or snapshots aim to illustrate the imperative of creating a wider landscape for both conceptualizing, and resisting, the role of carcerality in everyday life, and in our schools. This requires policy and curricular shifts including denaturalizing and ending the persistence of police in classrooms (“school resource officers”) and building ethnic studies curriculums, but also means radical rethinking of our own institutional landscapes, and, also, ourselves.

The anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli, in *Economies of Abandonment* (2011), explores how viscerally uneven life pathways necessitate new models of thinking not just about ethics but about corporeality and ontology. In her work in North Australia with and alongside Aboriginal communities, Povinelli (who does not identify as Aboriginal) charts the premature death, rampant staph infections, and chronic life-threatening illnesses while also witnessing resilience, refusal and struggle. She marks these everyday forms of harm and resistance as intimately linked to a wider colonial regime that produced Aboriginal bodies as insensate, a part of the flora and fauna, while for white settlers the same regime marked access to power, health, capital, and full humanity. A persistent dialectic: civilization requires savagery; private property produces dispossession; whiteness needs blackness; Not twinned or symbiotic, these dynamics, Povinelli suggest, shape individual bodies to produce a “shared body” (2011, p. 4), and frame our forms of resistance, refusal and engagement.

Victim and perpetrator, worker and felon, student and prisoner, guilt and innocence—subjectivities are intimately and dynamically relational. Povinelli’s insight is not new. The historian Elsa Barkley Brown wrote over two decades ago: “Middle-class white women’s lives are not just different from working-class white, Black, and Latina women’s lives. It is important to recognize that middle-class women live the lives they do precisely because working-class women live the lives they do. White women and women of color not only live different lives but white women live the lives they do in large part because women of color live the ones they do” (1992, 295). Barkley Brown’s point is not simply that black and Latinas women’s lives are different from white women’s lives, but that these differences circulate in close relation.³ Povinelli and Barkley Brown’s work is also a recognition that place and institutions are marked by the color-line, through and through.

Far from two separate spheres, as I have written about previously with comrade Gillian Harkins (2016), institutions of education are part and parcel of what Joy

James has called the American penalscape (2007).⁴ The prison, the school and the university are a “shared body.” Programs such as policing, corrections, homeland security or military studies (“forensic sciences”) proliferate in postsecondary education and increasingly in K-12 contexts (Nguyen, 2016) and economic ties—from GEO to Sodexo, from our sociology students’ service learning to the grant dollars that line criminologists’ research budgets—define the reality of a prison–industrial complex that includes institutions of education within its workings. Beyond these surface ties, as Fred Moten and Stefano Harney suggest in the opening epigraph, capital and knowledge are institutionally organized so that prison is not in opposition to the university but instead that each institution requires the other. In order to have a restrictive enrollment, curricular-rich university, do we need to have a prison? In order to have an international baccalaureate high school program, must there also be a Sister Jean Hughes Adult High School?⁵

Different Practice

Slow work and new analytics also demand, or invite, other practices. Forms of resistance are both small and individual, and collective. If these institutions and their associated life pathways, for people marked as the “best of the best” and the “worst of the worst,” cannot be disentangled, is it possible to redistribute the affiliated resources? This is clearly not the same work at the site of the prison as at the university or the school, but what might it mean for all, as Dorothy Allison suggests in an opening epigraph, to refuse to wear the coat the world has made for you? A queer project indeed.

Part of the work of refusal and resistance is to make this wider academic penalscape visible, and to map the networks and the contours of state violence, a term used to identify when the harm comes from the state (or from an individual acting on behalf of a state or government) (Richie, 2012; INCITE, 2008). For example, economic disinvestment is a form of state violence, as are hyper-policing and racial profiling, underfunding schools, or supporting institutions that reward misogyny and heteronormativity. Wealth hoarding for some, and nothing for others, is not meritocracy it is sanctioned and scripted disinvestment. Naming state violence creates possibilities for intervention and engagement.

While this work includes dismantling and challenging policies that target communities, engaging a wider terrain also involves profound affective shifts. People want to feel safe, to feel secure, and these feelings have been effectively funneled into a landscape where police and prison expansion and more cameras under the stairways and in the bathrooms, however ineffective, are the dominant response. Security is conceptualized very narrowly and individually and, most centrally, often privately. Eliminating the “cops in our heads and our hearts” as antiviolence organizer Paula X. Rojas writes, is potentially as challenging as removing the cops that line our schools and neighborhoods (Rojas, 2007, p. 213). Not only are the

cops in our heads, as Rojas' notes, but we also have fixed ideas about who merits protection and resources and who does not. These systems clearly harm those they target, but they shape the rest of us who perhaps imagine ourselves either outside, or as benefitting from these systems.

There is no workshop, checklist or course that will support these movements, but our mobilizations and dialogues, however intimately these transpire, must be ignited in public.

Notes

¹ A relatively small proportion of the prison industry is private. According to the Prison Policy Initiative's 2017 report, "the government payroll for corrections employees is over 100 times higher than the private prison industry's profits" (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017).

² Perhaps, just as the theorist Frank Wilderson writes, "whoever says 'prison' says Black" or "absolute dereliction" (2003, p. 25), whoever says university, says white?

³ Also see, James Baldwin again: "And I repeat: The price of the liberation of the white people is the liberation of the blacks—the total liberation, in the cities, in the towns, before the law, and in the mind" (1963, p. 111).

⁴ "Some valued and mimed for their presentations of radicalism may never pay the price of the ticket (to use James Baldwin here) in the academic landscape, a surrogate for and derivative of the American penalscape. (James, 2007, p.7).

⁵ Consider for example, the 2015 international media frenzy generated over maximum-security prisoners at Eastern Correctional Facility in New York beating *Harvard students* at a *debate*. What are the assumptions about institutions and knowledge that make this debate win such a newsworthy surprise to so many people?

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A Schizophrenic Scholar Out for a Stroll Multiplicities, Becomings, Conjurings

Abraham P. DeLeon

I want to lift the veil from the 'normal,' the unrecognized, unsuspected, incredible, enormous normal.¹

This is not an escape, reads the sign at the back of the posh restaurant where Patrick Bateman dines. And indeed it was not for the murderer caught in his webs of consumption and empty bourgeois culture of 1980's New York City. Desperate for meaning, Bateman turns to designer clothing, the particulars of luggage he uses to haul his dead colleague, the contours and design of business cards to the procurement of reservations at exclusive restaurants. Bateman is linked only through a shallow consumerist identity; his unchecked psychosis points towards domination and murder; his paths to becoming-other have been permanently closed. Although neoliberal capitalism produces an identity that seeks and desires the type of wealth that Brett Easton Ellis so brilliantly describes, this paper seeks an escape from these dominant ways of being in/with the world around us. It seeks a crack to escape and conjure a new kind of person.²

Being located in the cracks and in-betweens of educational theory and the social foundations is challenging: between schools of education that are technician and empirical to creative writing that is relegated strictly to the fictional worlds of our collective imaginations. Scholarship within the social foundations has crossed boundaries between disciplinary worlds, opening critiques between the limits of education and social theory. It analyzes schooling from a socio-historical approach that attempts to blend multiple theoretical orientations that examine schooling in its full context(s). The challenge has been the enclosure of educational *research* and *theory* to be cloistered only in the institution itself, a reproductive approach in thinking about the possibilities of the social foundations and its links to educational theory.

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These challenges for the social foundations, and indeed educational theory, are where radically alternative potentials reside, existing within the in-betweens and middle grounds where productive forces collide between intellectual and creative worlds. By engaging a literary flair, a socio-economic critique, and historical and philosophical approach(es), rhizomatic connections can be made. This is not a measurable reality like much of typical educational research tries to be, caught in its webs of empiricism that stresses data collection and the extraction of experiences from communities to be recuperated back into the folds of a surveillance society; to make the invisible visible through the mechanisms in which research becomes known and seen. And although this visibility works on me now producing this particular work for dissemination through an academic venue, my hope is to still work in the margins, fleshing out potentialities and lines of flight in rethinking subjectivity that emerges outside of accepted scholarly parameters.

Accepting and desiring this marginality is a comfortable space, possibly finding a crack to momentarily sidestep the recuperative elements of neoliberal capitalism. Recuperation lurks at every corner, so pointing towards a utopian way of being/thinking must be cautious. I do not tread with a newborn's naiveté; we know what recuperation does for theory, for artistic practices and for outlaw culture that has tried to formulate an identity/ethos/ethic amongst a rebellious spirit. Paul Mann, in a brilliant little book, reminded us that the avant-garde was dead, that, "nothing could appear more exhausted than its theory, its history, its works."³ Its death was its recuperation back into the folds of a capitalist culture bent on profit extraction and value creation.

Graffiti culture now found in elite and posh art galleries and punk culture sold to angsty, suburban youth at shopping malls all signal a death that may never be recovered. There is much that could be expanded from Mann's concerns about the proliferation of death for most utopian potentialities, especially for the radical imagination, when he somewhat pessimistically states, "perhaps there is no resistance but a fiction of resistance that tried to render every truth it touches fictional."⁴ And although he claims that death is, "necessary so that everything can be repeated,"⁵ a utopian imaginary may still be possible. Death is an opportunity for rebirth, resisting notions that, "artists and critics continue exactly as before, endlessly recuperating differential forms, endlessly manufacturing shabbier and shabbier critical goods."⁶ This paper is not repetition, continuing the endless cycle of educational productions that focuses upon STEM, standardization, critical pedagogy or best practices to implement via a shiny new curriculum.

This paper seeks a daydream outside of this, welcoming its place within the pastiche of postmodern traditions that may have no place within academic production. Its existence may possibly be its non-existence; a non-space to point from that remains marginalized because invisibility provides possibilities, escaping the panoptic eyes that recuperates and disciplines dissent. Utopian imaginaries want to find ways to escape these types of shackles because utopian thinking welcomes

a death of the old world (in all of its guises from the far right, liberal, radical, Marxist to the avant-garde), and “only those willing to remain in the death of the avant-garde...will ever have hope of hearing what that death articulates.”⁷ This theoretical and imaginative provocation seeks to listen to these articulations death provides, dancing across disciplinary boundaries.

A utopian imagination possesses beautiful potentialities, providing theoretical tools in which to think about and theorize not only a reality apart from what is given, but also the chance to imagine a different kind of person, birthed from alternative paradigms and epistemological assumptions. Although there is no exteriority to theory or research (the *always-already* of discursive realities), a desire is birthed in the margins, meaning, “no prophecies, no call to arms, no pretense of moral support, no manifestos.”⁸ Some attempt to flee, but they end up imprisoned, shunned, fired, psychoanalyzed, unpublished, drugged or institutionalized. Critical scholarship must come to a new self-awareness that the possibilities of utopian or liberatory critiques are already re-circulated, with, “a thousand inane bohemianisms, daydreams of escape, outlaw romances.”⁹ This means to desire that which is yet to be formulated, still willing to accept it may all be for nothing. Deleuze and Guattari have planted some initial seeds of imagining different political and personal realities, giving us ideas for different kind of people.

Leaving the Couch and Taking a Stroll

Taking cues from Deleuze and Guattari, we look to the literary figure of Lenz.¹⁰ Lenz leaves the confines of the couch to walk outside, “a breath of fresh air, a relationship with the outside world...”¹¹ that connects him more deeply to a different kind of reality. “He felt as if he must pull the storm inside himself, contain all things in himself; he stretched himself out and lay across the earth, he burrowed himself into the universe, as though it were a joy that caused him pain.”¹² For Lenz the power of nature moved him and became a conduit for new possibilities: in the world and the universe, a simple walk for Lenz provided the context for change to occur. Lenz took his line of flight, becoming the “wasp and orchid” of his natural surroundings, doing away with “ontology, foundations, nullifying endings and beginnings.”¹³ Many psychoanalysts might attempt diagnosis, but that proves meaningless when you connect to the grass under your feet, the pavement on your walk, the clouds above your head, and point towards “the summit of the mountain.”¹⁴ Connections like these contain possibilities, existing beyond measurement that standardization demands. Think of a standardized inquisitor or psychoanalyst trying to measure, analyze and capture the connections you feel when your bare feet touch the grass! These old-world practices want to capture you under a disciplinary and medical panoptic eye; label you, diagnose you and eventually drug you in our contemporary era (at one point it would have been off to the asylum!). But bodies resist, as does mine, to these medical technologies

and strategies rooted within the notion of an ideal, still body. Take the couch for example.

The couch, or other confessional strategies and technologies relied upon by priests, analysts, teachers, health inspectors and doctors provide a closed system of meaning. Even religion proved to be a futile exercise for Lenz, its confessions demanded by an omnipotent God and His agents on Earth. For even Lenz raised, “a monstrous fist to the Heavens and tear God down and drag Him through His clouds; as if he could grind the world together with his teeth and spit it out into the Creator’s face.”¹⁵ One would think that confessing to God, or a saint as Lenz attempts to do, would provide a moment of escape or even a breath of fresh air, but that confession proves empty as it, “forces [Lenz] to situate himself socially, in relationship to the God of established religion, in relationship to his father, to his mother.”¹⁶ He desires to understand what father/mother asks of him, keeping him chained to the machines of an Oedipal recuperation.

Lenz wallows in the machinic world because he is disconnected from nature and knows not even himself: “everything is a machine,”¹⁷ Lenz painfully decries. Machines pervade the consciousness of humanity, existing in the subconscious desires of our imaginative creations. They beckon to us promising an easier life, they promise luxuries, they promise ideal bodies that jump and move faster. They are part and parcel to our social order.¹⁸ Bartlett Finchley discovers in *The Twilight Zone* episode “A Thing about Machines” their power, literally driven mad by a machinic nightmare: his car without a driver, sociopathic electric razors inch down the stairs toward him, and typewriters typing gruesome death threats. The television takes on a sinister flare, informing Finchley to leave the house or risk bodily injury. Finchley meets his ultimate demise through one of the symbols of 1950s consumerism, his own car. Machines become the ultimate torment that no one can fully bear.

Finchley is not alone in dealing with the torments of machines that usurp their organic creators. They drive Joey “the machine boy” mad as well, with only his imaginal machines to connect himself: his requirement for using the bathroom, eating, functioning, playing and experiencing joy. Without these connections, Joey becomes nothing, his self that only exists within the nodes/circuits of his imaginary machines. The first impulse was to study the machine boy, analyze him through the confessing moment the couch provides and delink him. The psychoanalytic gaze maps Joey through intersecting panoptic and medical discursive regimes, transecting bodies in the normalizing space of the hospital: “the professional is seen as possessing the power to ‘cure’ mental illness, and the client or patient is positioned as the recipient of any intervention.”¹⁹ Through these techniques, the schizophrenic/manic body is “cured,” the mind freed from its torments and the power of science re-inscribed onto a body that seemingly cannot function within “normal” parameters. Psychiatry triumphs as both savior and intervention; madness effectively recuperated: normalcy restored.

Whether through the institution or the analyst’s couch, the inner self is opened

for confessional techniques. That couch is metaphorical you know; it exists as a closed system of meaning in which the analyst possesses the truths of our hidden, inner selves. The psychoanalytic couch, in which the body is still, encourages a predictable retelling, our “narrative falls into a linear sequence: ‘And then...and then...and then...’”²⁰ Predictable, bland, linear and still: that is what conformity produces, serving particular political and social functions. Still bodies can be fed corporate news to assume particular political positions; still bodies can be tested and standardized to believe only one way of knowing is correct; still bodies can be wrapped within a discourse of nationalism to deport that foreign other and erect a wall to keep them out. To sidestep recuperation we must move, escaping to remain invisible. Invisibility can be thought of as a type of movement; escaping techniques of hierarchical observations. Stillness produces conformity and thinking of this within the context of institutions, like a prison or a school, it becomes easier to visualize its importance. Stillness can be mapped and placed; still bodies can be surveilled through panoptic institutional practices; still bodies tested through an ethics and care of standardization.

Take this imaginative example: when students of a British public school in the classic film *If...*²¹ are disciplined, it happens within the context of silence and stillness. They have a strict curfew and they must be shaved, their hair cut and visibly quiet at all times, as “Shut up! Be quiet!” are consistently barked, even when no sound emanates from the obedient pupils. But Mick Travis has to break free, representing that errant body that cannot be contained with disciplinary practices. He enters the film as a rebellious figure one can relate to that has dreamt of escape, dressed in all black, his face covered. He hides his face and identity as one steeped in metaphor to be that invisible subject that seeks to exist in the cracks of the institution. It is movement and rebellion that ultimately frees Mick Travis, declaring that, “violence and revolution are the only pure acts.” He steals a motorcycle from a trendy dealer, runs amok in the school and defies authority with underhanded comments. Ultimately Mick, in a metaphorical massacre, kills the oppressive Whips (fellow seniors who run the school), firing bullets towards his oppressive tormentors but runs and moves whilst doing it. He *moves*, and that movement is key to his metaphorical act of rebellion.

One cannot be rebellious if still sitting at a desk or lying on the analyst’s couch, missing the necessary connections movement provides. Movement allows a body to be in a constant state of becoming: reaching out to touch you is a political act of cooperation and community, but yet, I do not touch a body that is complete. Instead I touch the body that is *always already* in a constant state of flux: becoming-other and/or becoming-something other than what came before.²² That movement can happen anywhere, found in the yearnings of those who admire nature to our urban compatriots that find solace in steel and cement. When one is experiencing movement through say the tango or a stroll, the movement itself as practice becomes a radical act that is decoupled from a machinic reality. A technology and

tool of power, the couch/desk is that which must make the body still; confessional techniques of extraction depend on stillness, because movement does not allow that capturing to occur. Stillness is the act that exists in the singular experiences of a mapped and charted life, bowing to the panoptic eye that Bentham imagined. Movement (however that is defined by the body that moves) allows us to link with the multiplicities, opening critical potentialities of everyday lives.²³

Manning discusses and theorizes the tango as a possibility that cannot be traced, as its beauty and potentiality existing in its unscripted, unbounded movement that requires a touching and linking of bodies together as one. But for educators this becomes too abstract: we cannot have students moving and dancing, do you want anarchy? Think of the desk of the school pupil when a body occupies it: still, obedient, surveilled, accountable, measured, disciplined, these acts easily accomplished because the youthful body becomes fully accountable through disciplinary gazes, confessional techniques and standardized regimes of testing that operate under the watchful eye of the headmaster. Compare this to a classroom beyond the walls and desks of the institution that has delinked, those anarchist experiments in education without a formal curriculum, devoid of accountability schemes and embracing the chaotic nature of empowering educational experiences.²⁴

Like the confessional techniques of the analyst, schooling demands rigid curricular paradigms tied to accountability measures or you find yourself operating within the realms of the absurd. Education and psychiatry become linked through their confessional and normalizing techniques in which measurement becomes the operation par excellence; what Michel Foucault claimed were the, “minor techniques of multiple and intersecting observations, of eyes that must see without being seen; using techniques of subjection and methods of exploitation, an obscure art of light and the visible was secretly preparing a new knowledge of man.”²⁵ All done in the name of “mental health” and “classroom management,” the couch and the desk become normalizing operations of power, scopic tools in which to detail and map the invisible self that is constructed as wild and unruly, making possible, “a single gaze to see everything constantly.”²⁶

Pointing Towards Becomings

When Mick Travis breaks free from his oppressive British public school experience (or when anyone takes that unexpected stroll), Mick takes the audience with him; I felt a yearning to experience that same type of escape in which authority is shunned, that “hierarchized, continuous and functional surveillance” that inhibits new forms of becoming to emerge.²⁷ The violence of *If...* is purely metaphorical, but when one is captured with no escape possible, the absurd becomes an option, escaping “the uninterrupted play of calculated gazes.”²⁸ Our neoliberal world in the end has no need for unproductive and disobedient bodies; they must be drugged, imprisoned or simply put to death. Unruly bodies are historically and socially

constructed, moving from various constructions of normality to disease. Leprosy and madness immediately come to mind because they have been with us since the beginning.

Madness was the social/medical/political symphony of the Middle Ages in Western Europe, but its overture emerging from leprosy and other types of diseases and plagues, representing unpredictable forces for humanity that could not be tamed.²⁹ These fears emerge in gothic horror from authors like Edgar Allen Poe. When Prince Prospero and his fellow nobles wall themselves in his abbey to escape, even the walls and confining space cannot save them; they each succumb to death's calling through a horrific plague.³⁰ And that imagined disease emanating from Poe's dark imagination is gruesome; "sharp pains, dizziness and a profusion of blood from the pores."³¹ Poe ends his tale in a totalizing reality for the powers of death: "and Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all."³² Poe poetically and imaginatively describes the point of no escape: privilege nor wealth could save the Prince and his guests from their ultimate fate.

Prince Prospero's actions were deemed abnormal, his tastes "peculiar," with a "fine eye for colors and effects" and plans that were "bold and fiery."³³ Some thought him mad, but reaching out and touching the eccentric Prince determined he was quite human. Madness finally grips the guests once the gruesome stranger is revealed to be that being which stalks eternally. Death's cold embrace ultimately waits for us all. I imagine leprosy operated in a similar manner before the discourses/practices of medicine and hospitalization arose in the Western imagination: an unpredictable force that killed and infected indiscriminately. With the advent of cures and exclusion, Foucault argued that leprosy (ideologically, discursively and medically) and its accompanying fears shifted towards those deemed mad: the ship of fools that drifted the ocean, port-to-port, stateless and anarchistic.³⁴ "Madness was allowed free rein; it circulated throughout society, it formed part of the background and language of everyday life..."³⁵ The mad (represented as dark *and* magical), knew no boundaries or social expectations.

These conceptions of madness as a social problem relegate it to a space where production cannot occur. Medical schemes and diagnoses classify and produce an affect of despair, part of the radical project needs to be invested in rethinking and reclaiming diagnosis that mark bodies this or that. The schizophrenic is constantly producing despite the crushing reality of psychiatric schemes, producing new experiences that are not tied to the common scripts some follow. Madness becomes the realm of a new form of resistance. This has historical/artistic/literary precedent. Hamlet, deemed mad by his family, was in quite the predicament. Positioned between the ship of fools and the great internment movement, Hamlet was in the cracks of these medical/psychological practices. How could he expose the traitorous acts of his mother Gertrude that he knew to be true? As she proclaims Hamlet to be in her own motherly diagnosis, "Mad as the sea and wind when both contend..."³⁶ The common tactic would be to retreat to denial, but to ferret out deceit Hamlet chose

a façade; he chose to become mad to uncover the sinister plot. The specter showed him a path of becoming: a specter of the past, the present and future available to him.³⁷ The Oedipal complex is turned on its head, as the Father is victim from the hand of Eve. The mother's embrace for our poor Hamlet is cold and stinks of death and betrayal; what is a man to do when mother abandons him? Did he indeed become mad, or was it a ploy?

To feign madness is to be mad to the world. It interrupted the connections between Hamlet and his murderous mother. Familial and affective flows were delinked out of necessity for Hamlet; severed under the weight of scheming dishonesty. Mother represents the last refuge for a son gone mad. Literary traces of these motherly woes span centuries. It also happened to poor Willard, a social misfit that found kinship amongst his rats.³⁸ Willard's mother, overbearing, controlling and verbally abusive, finds herself at odds with a son who is in the throngs of becoming-rat. She tries to delink his connections to the vermin, but that connection is what Willard feels deeply inside him, transcending the animal/human binary so much that when naming one of his rats Ben, Willard believed that, "its almost as if he forced the name on me."³⁹ Nonhumans become the sanctuary for Willard, as his mother represents the Oedipal rage in which son disappoints a larger-than-life motherly figure.

Hamlet also felt that sting of rejection of motherly love that Willard experienced, and their connections severed as well; the pack for Willard provided new possibilities and ferreting out deceit for Hamlet provided tragic vindication. We must, however, tread lightly, as Willard's connections with the vermin only provided a backdrop for a horrific and macabre tale. And why not become-rat? Rats provide a context in which to rethink our subjectivity: their "feverish" actions and connections with each other as a backdrop for a new sense of self to be born from the swarm/pack: a "pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale," because becomings happen in "multiplicities."⁴⁰ It is a connection to a community with common purposes that provides meaning, "the exhilaration of working with people you like and respect toward an agreed-upon objective, an objective from which all workers will gain. *Happiness is a by-product of function.*"⁴¹ And for Willard, connections to his pack of rats provided that happiness his alienated body desired; alienation severed when connected to the pack; new connections formed. As Leonard Lawlor claims, "writing like a rat—writing no doubt a folktale—would produce a people who thought feverishly,"⁴² and a feverish thought can happen within the multiplicity, the collective: a swarm that seeks to escape its limited confines to become something else.

Does this mean all becomings lead to potential social/political/economic transformations? Unfortunately not, as neoliberal capitalism has its own form of becomings for its ideal subjects that become individualistic, entrepreneurial and self-reliant. Take the work of the neoliberal/libertarian dandy Ayn Rand. In the newly included notes in an appendix to one of her seminal works *The Fountain-head*,⁴³ Rand not only outlines the book and its justifications for setting, character development and overall themes, she describes their physical characteristics in

painstaking details. Their facial features detailed, their bodies outlined, their stature visually described through a language that constructs an ideal body. Rigid, linear, and hard lines laid bare through a celebration of an indomitable capitalist spirit that is seasoned, tough and able to handle a selfish and self-serving society, the pinnacle of human development. The hero of her story, Howard Roark, is described with razor-sharp precision: “angular-straight lines, straight angles, hard muscles...large, long hands—prominent joints and knuckles and wrist-bones...”⁴⁴

For Rand, this figure’s body is not simply rigid, linear, and angular (all the visions of a modernist aesthetic), but his demeanor is also outlined. His “utter selfishness”⁴⁵ is constructed to be part of a virtuous spirit un-phased by the concerns of most ordinary individuals. His individualism becomes a beacon that calls for society to abandon community and human, affective connections. He “seldom laughs,”⁴⁶ and he has found a way in which to transcend weak emotional states that plague human society; he has even transcended the feeling of suffering: “He does not suffer, because he does not believe in suffering. Defeat or disappointment are merely part of the battle.”⁴⁷ His character is a representation par excellence of the experience of neoliberal and modernist triumph: a selfish exploration of exalting oneself over any social or communal concern: a becoming under the auspices of neoliberalism. Roark selfishly and unrepentantly charts a course for himself through a virtuous triumph over real struggle, in which he forgoes even the affect of happiness: “and when he laughs—which happens seldom...”⁴⁸ Stoic, selfish, emotionless, egotistical: these are the traits for the hero in Rand’s vision for a future society. This is her path towards a neoliberal becoming; her utopian vision of a selfish, self-serving society that puts self at the forefront of all concerns.

Becomings proliferate the imagination from a wide variety of ideological frameworks and perspectives, and we contemplate these on our imaginary stroll. Becoming for Willard was not an escape, but a new connection to be explored with the swarming nonhuman. It was the existence of the pack that proved to be his most formidable offering because the pack is *multiplicity*. Within multiplicity, the Eurocentric individualist spirit is secondary, bodies instead pointing towards connections to those around us in the *always-already* forming community. When Christopher Columbus commented on the generous spirit of those indigenous people he first encountered, he found it curious. Instead of celebrating a cultural framework steeped in generosity, his conclusion is that servitude would be a fitting place for these errant bodies, figuring that only 50 or so men could subjugate the whole lot.⁴⁹ Generosity was the connection to domination for this infamous colonizer. What Columbus demonstrated is that these individualist notions were so firmly entrenched in the minds of these colonizers that any threat to this social order must be ferreted out and destroyed; enslaved for their cultural frameworks. This stroll I take imagines that generous spirit is one of the conditions of early humanity, untouched by complex hierarchies found in European society. Hierarchy produces the conditions in which generosity is constructed as weakness because

hierarchy positions bodies or nature or language or social practices within a top-down, competitive ordering in which one must be the *best* and *individuated*—selfish individualism championed by the likes of Ayn Rand. Multiplicity (not in a binary but within a rich continuum of ways of being and knowing) is where the counter to Columbus' reasoning appears to exist. It is a feverish becoming that happens amongst the swarm, the pack and feverish rats because of connections between bodies: “bands, human or animal, proliferate by contagion, epidemics, battlefields, and catastrophes.”⁵⁰ Willard was amongst personal catastrophe because he lacked human connections and friendships, finding solace only amongst his swarm.

But for our poor Willard this proves to be no escape; he cannot move beyond his petty thirst for revenge, eventually trapping him and bringing his connections to the swarm to a bitter end. It becomes a good lesson to heed as the old world and its ways of being are still hidden deep inside of us, ready to subvert the possibilities of a future apart from this one we have created. And these ties to our past will continue to haunt us as we discover new connections, new ways of being, new swarms to join. Willard unfortunately cannot escape, and his becoming becomes the backdrop of a tragic tale. Escape proves to be the real challenge of the hegemony of the era we are historically, socially, economically and politically located. What about the castaway that has the path of escape there for the taking, the body flung from the comforts of her/his home to be stranded like the character of *Robinson Crusoe*? He was stranded on an island, but still unable to leave behind the European modernism that defined his time and his sense of self.⁵¹

Willard could not leave the rejection of his society behind him and move forward to sustain different kinds of connections. Crusoe the same, bound to a European civility that, despite the crushing reality of total isolation, he remained clothed.⁵² When another human being joins him, what happens? He enslaves him; Friday becomes an extension of the will of European modernism towards domination much like The One Ring that dominated any being in Middle Earth that found and donned its metallic embrace; modernism becomes the analogy of The One Ring of power that has the potential to rule them all.⁵³ Despite the reality of total isolation for Crusoe and The One Ring lost in the River Anduin for two and a half thousand years, the old world and its sensibilities live on.

Ideologies forever haunt us till the grave, and maybe that is why Dr. Frankenstein's monstrous creation is such an abomination because death's slumber is interrupted for a perverted vision of scientific creation. The dead body, animated by the will and knowledge of Western science, is too monstrous to bear because the flesh holds the memories of the past. Although death abounds and philosophical inquiry could be thought of as a way to prepare for an organic body's ultimate fate, possibilities exist. Archival research, for example, is an opportunity to uncover the lost voices of those forgotten.⁵⁴ Exploring voices lost to history and to dominant narratives is one of production. Think about it this way: a social foundations scholar discovers the liberating, avant-garde musings of the French surrealists and that moment

becomes a point to uncover lost voices. S/he is so excited about their find, they fashion a class activity, research project or graduate student experience immersed in those uncovered voices. And although the death of the avant-garde is amongst us like the walking dead, possibilities may still exist.

Retracing the steps of Deleuze and Guattari through an examination of their primary sources reveals much. They scoured accounts for the productive nature of schizophrenia, delving into the work of Henri Michaux for the account of the schizophrenic who produced a table, made from, “continual manipulation” in which its creator “never stopped reworking it, complicating it, ‘overstuffing’ it.”⁵⁵ Despite not being a functioning table, the patient toiled to create that which defied categorization. “A dehumanized table, nothing cozy about it, nothing ‘middle class,’ nothing rustic, nothing countrified, not a kitchen table or a work table. A table which lent itself to no function, self-protective, denying itself to service and communication alike.”⁵⁶ And although Deleuze and Guattari remained fixated on this patient’s productive impulse to create a table that had no real function nor reference point to what we would consider a “real table,” there was another interesting point about this patient Michaux named “E”: his productive capacities in his interaction with others.

Not satisfied with what polite society might deem “normal” hellos and good-byes, E “composed a kind of festival of welcome, a whole pantomime of gestures, expressing approbation and delight, as well as playfulness, banter, resistance... a veritable ritual, mocking, enigmatic, with perhaps a touch of defiance.”⁵⁷ A new type of interaction was being produced, wanting to inhabit the realm of the absurd instead of commonly held social expectations. And the realm of the absurd is where madness is often placed, misunderstood outside the logics of psychotherapy. It becomes the true absence of work, the “paradoxically and tautologically doubled or absent: it is only decipherable in terms of a given set of articulations, and these articulations can only signify madness.”⁵⁸ Madness is that inherent double that Foucault explored, because madness is both known and unknown through the binary logics of Western society.

This is the point at which the social foundations scholar couples with the imaginal machines of her/his creations and says goodbye to social/scholarly expectations; we become intertwined within a critical historical past that connects us with traditions that are disparate. We produce concepts and tools that will show classroom teachers a different approach that seems absurd to a standardized reality. But we also realize the disparate connections made outside of institutions and we create a practice and intellectual tradition that is creatively interdisciplinary, finding inspiration in sources outside a strictly “educational” framework. We are told to remain tethered to schools. However the possibilities existing outside of the school walls becomes too much to bear. The chance of escape is recuperated; the internal logics keep us within boundaries so that our research and theories remain “relevant.” We are expected to chase grants that reward only particular ways of knowing and we are urged to remain within the throngs of educational practice that wants technocratic solutions to complex

educational and social problems. A traditional experience of schooling is too steeped in the State and its practices: its confessional techniques and modes of surveillance immediately capture and recuperate youth resistance techniques.

This capturing is what the unbounded stroll resists, crossing manufactured boundaries trying to find its line of flight. In the documentary, *An Examined Life*, Judith Butler declares with Sunnia Taylor that taking a walk becomes a revolutionary act.⁵⁹ It becomes an uncharted zigzag that cannot be predicted. Who will we see? Where shall we cross the street? What does a cool breeze feel like while your gait is quick? The sunlight blinds you as it bounces off the leaves of the trees and hits your eyes at that perfect moment. What does this curriculum look like that escapes standardization? So let's walk to experience these new connections and to ponder amongst an uncharted experience where complexity exists. To what destination, if any however, is where the theoretical imagining can be ignited to think of a new type of person expressed in multiplicity through this imaginative stroll.

The networks of capitalism have been clever, disappearing and reappearing at different points of its networks.⁶⁰ So we have to match this complexity by becoming the clever fox: thinking of more ways in which to feed new swarms and rhizomes to be made amongst a crushing totality. That totality is the end point we are forced that always has to happen: the ends of songs, the ends of stories to the ends of films, the recuperative moment. The point of this intervention is not to end at a fixed point, but to open the connections for future scholars and those "people yet to come"⁶¹ amongst the forming nodes of political/social/historical rhizomes.

Escaping with the Mycelium

The rhizomes of Deleuze and Guattari famously theorized is equipped to handle complexity and the possibilities of new connections. Unfortunately, many educational theorists have rested their imaginative and theoretical visions within a strictly *human* experience that happens institutionally, not opening ways other beings (plants and/or animals) socially organize themselves outside of institutions. Think of the process of becoming-other. Becoming is not imitation, replication or fixed towards a stationary telos nor is it concerned with a Romantic project that seeks a coherent and unified whole self. Becoming is multiplicity and not an end game; becoming can be other-than-the-human but does not seek the coherent whole in which to construct a new sense of self through a strictly human lens; becoming can be the invisible subterranean that exists beyond a panoptic regime that says goodbye to the dogmas of Western subjectivities; becoming is the specter that awaits discovery in our unknown past and haunts those futures still yet to materialize on our collective horizons.

I would imagine these networks to be much like the mycelium's root networks that exist underground, a rhizome with no beginnings or endings. "Mycelial networks interact with its host environment in a symbiotic manner with the health of

the greater system in mind.”⁶² Radical mycology has theorized the connections that mushrooms have with not only each other but also those plants and animals that surround it, forming rhizomatic connections, or, “a metaphor for the way humans can choose to interact in and within Gaia, our one world.”⁶³ It is these spores that become nodes for complex, rhizomatic, underground connections: spores and mycelia that decompose a dead culture, propagate at other times and places, destroyers of oppressive ideologies, affinity groups and collectives formulated and that point where conscious and theoretical liberation explodes. Deleuze and Guattari tried to think of the multiplicity of departures available in these types of ways, thinking about becoming-Other that possibly can escape the limited and singular idea of what it means to be “human.”

Human as a subjectivity and identity is a finite end-point whose script is already written: a belief in the idea of the primacy of humanity at the top of a manufactured pyramid. This has extended to the knowledge and discursive domains that have helped us construct our understandings of those worlds outside of our own. Non-humans have been studied and classified by Science to be this or that within these dominating schemas, but Deleuze and Guattari remind us, “we are not interested in characteristics (as told to us by science); what interests us are modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling. I am legion.”⁶⁴ And when they establish themselves as legion, they connect to the multiplicity and the unbounded nature of the multitudes.⁶⁵

Nonhuman animals have been categorized through artificial hierarchies, when European scientists wanted to classify plant and animal life.⁶⁶ To take a stroll and think differently about the world around us would mean rethinking these dated and tired practices that emerged from the European Enlightenment and Scientific Revolutions in which Europeans celebrated finally grasping what they believed Truth to be in its purest forms. Let us escape these hierarchies and linear models and point towards rhizomes. The nodes and networks of mycelium are the organic rhizome that exhibit this radical form of inter-connectedness; lines that connect at every possible point with not only plant life, but with animals as well; “a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles.”⁶⁷

It is these connections that concern this imaginary stroll I wish to take that connects me to my surroundings in a radically different way. And I don’t reify nature as some Romantic vision, as these strolls can connect us to each other even within manufactured environments like city life provides. Connections are connections and some ideal form must be thrown into question (reifying nature for example) as conversations about planetary exploration on places like Mars and Europa stoke the imaginations of our current era and will place our bodies in alien environments. For Peter McCoy, the mushroom demonstrates a radical connection that humanity can learn from. And for an educational theory imagined within rhizomes, schools are severed from an ethics of domination and connections made upon learning

experiences that are interdisciplinary and steeped within a language of resistance. Like the multiplicity contained within our language systems, these connections are vast. And because a, “ideal speaker-listener” does not exist, language morphs and becomes something else within the throngs of a political multiplicity.⁶⁸

Here is where a real organizational idea becomes germane imagined within rhizomatic connections: the Spore Liberation Front. Determined to advocate for the potentialities of mushrooms outside just a food source, fungi become a metaphorical way in which to think of community and connections that gives birth to an emerging, always-formulating and connected community; a germane idea for educational theory and philosophy. They think of propagation in terms of spores that spread new ideas; ideas that tell us to, “quit our jobs, learn a trade, seed a garden, to fall in love, to care. The spores that alone may not germinate beyond a few steps but, when combined with those like them and surrounded by soil awaiting a new force of life, have the potential to transform whole ecosystems.”⁶⁹ This being just *one* of the possible nodes of this rhizome we conjure through direct action politics, connections between communities and new ways to organize ourselves.

This is a rhizomatic imagining, and for McCoy, the mushroom is linked together with other fungi, but also the trees, plants, shrubs, aphid and even those it “senses,” such as when we take a walk in a forest. “Mycelia change their behavior in response to the environment. When you walk through the forest, they leap up. They know you’re there.”⁷⁰ This is a radical connection little understood by humanity, but pushes us towards being with each other in radically new and organic ways, banding together, forming networks, pooling information and resources, what mushrooms might do when they spread their spores. And to people a new world, it would be through a radical connectivity because “multiplicities are rhizomatic,” without “subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature.”⁷¹

These multiple connections create the possibility for new nodes to formulate alternative social and political organization. Strangely, to rethink and recast bodies conceptually, epistemologically and politically is not a recent undertaking. During the Middle Ages in Europe, for example, the King was cast as a binary: the body politic and the organic body in which he was born. These formed an “indivisible unit,” “more ample and large than the body natural, but there dwell in the former certain truly mysterious forces which reduce, or even remove, the imperfections of the fragile human nature.”⁷² The despot’s body was one but also separate; an organic body whose flesh housed the power and legitimacy of the crown.

Unfortunately, this was not undertaken in which to bring about human rights or a forward thinking imaginary. Instead it was to solidify the power of the King and to remove any doubt about his potential weaknesses or failings. In the end, “an attack against the king’s natural person was, at the same time, an attack against the body corporate of the realm.”⁷³ The King thus was sovereign to himself and to the kingdom, which he ruled through both political and divine revelations. That medieval

conception of the State remained intact through a double-sided, royal existence. Think of this in another way linked to our metaphorical stroll: the sovereignty of the King was a closed system of becoming because it was relegated to only the *singular* binary; divine grace and legitimacy.

We desire to think in terms of multiplicities *and* connections, eschewing hierarchies for horizontal approaches to social organizations and resistant practices. The singular becomes antithesis to a newly formed swarm thinking in which community and connections are valued and nurtured; singularity becoming a barrier to the agitations of radical packs pointing towards connectivity. Barriers are traps and navigating them becomes the challenge set forth for radically inclined bodies, as shoots of the rhizomes take us in possibly different directions. These rhizomatic shoots take us to art, to pedagogy, to theory, to praxis, to resistance to the many more possibilities that can be dreamt by communities that resist. That is why the next section explores the conjuring sorcerer that captured the imagination of Deleuze and Guattari in which we call forth a new people (*a materializing multiplicity*) still yet on the horizon.

Legion and the Multiplicities of the Sorcerers

Deleuze and Guattari cultivated an interest in learning and exploring multiplicities; the multiplicity of the saying “I am legion and we are many.” And Legion is many and one at the same time; not losing a sense of self along with what is newly cultivated within the identity of many; the multiplicity; the swarm. Sorcerers in multiplicity evoke otherworldly forces outside of singularities because energies are always within the many. *Singularity is a dead end*. Sorcerers conjure through connections with the many and their packs, escaping dogmatic pragmatism of “reality” and enter the absurd. They think utopian, dreaming up alternative ways to socially organize and educate us. The naysayers will yell that utopian thinking is too trapped within past formations to be useful anymore; the haters will decry we are too tied to past failures, and the positivists will want us to quantify it so that we can erect a new exam like a statue of commemoration.

But new formulations have the possibility of escaping its past by reclaiming it for a new time; cutting it up and making a body with new parts that contain traces of the past, the present and the future. An amalgamation of the history of language and the ways formulated for trying to escape it. The Romantics wanted a place in which to begin again, that glimmering city in the distance with its promises of redemption. Utopian ways of being/doing/thinking conjured in this provocation seek not space or place; we desire to *think* and *scheme* like a utopian daydreamer. I want to reclaim dreaming not as a futile act but as a way in which to prepare for alternatives: daydreaming at the heart of the creative process in which we leave something behind for the future to ponder on their own terms. I don't wish to build a home on a utopian plot of land, ready for the good society to materialize before my very eyes. My only hope is to point towards a becoming that not only influ-

ences my scholarship now, but also my teaching to demonstrate to my students that alternatives are not only a possibility, but viable in today's current climate. The becoming-body needs to be daydreamed so that we are prepared to slip through the cracks when they arise.

Deleuze and Guattari found the sorcery in their philosophical tool-kit to be that of the becoming-other, that moment when a body experiences a transformation. But their plan appears too vague for us locked within the tentacles of empiricism that structures contemporary, celebrated research in education. What is conjured when we seek those cracks of an empirical world, crawl through them and run?

There is an entire politics of becomings-animal, as well as a politics of sorcery, which is elaborated in assemblages that are neither those of the family nor of religion nor of the State. Instead, they express minoritarian groups, or groups that are oppressed, prohibited, in revolt, or always on the fringe of recognized institutions, groups all the more secret for being extrinsic, in other words, anomic. If becoming-animal takes the form of a Temptation, and of monsters aroused in the imagination by the demon, it is because it is accompanied, at its origin as in its undertaking, by a rupture with the central institutions that have established themselves or seek to become established.⁷⁴

These two becoming bodies (might they even be *as mad* as the *March Hare*?) evoke with their language the cracks many of us on “the fringes of recognized institutions” seek: types of becomings that force us to examine and reconstruct our sense of self that escapes neoliberal subjectification. The fringe has already tempted me with ruptures as Deleuze and Guattari so poetically describe, and I hope to evoke these types of affective resonances in those that read this tale. My pedagogical practice is structured within the spaces of cognitive dissonance created when *one leaves the boat and is willing to go all the way*.⁷⁵ My students, with whom I deconstruct society, schooling, research, knowledge and power, discover there are multiple tales to tell and ways to tell them; we conjure others discursively. We welcome the ghosts of a painful past by working through them as a community, never demanding that each other takes up a way of believing or being. We resist pre-packaged identity formations, rather pointing to the pastiche as a way in which to think of a new self. We are comfortable with difference. We conjure within a multiplicity of a becoming-academic class. And it's messy, confusing, disheartening, captivating, joyous and challenging: inquisitors becoming-other within an affective experience that pushes and tests the contours of self.

Conjuring writers welcome these moments of escape that pedagogy provides a different kind of people that seeks to throw empiricism completely on its head. Let the empiricists call our work absurd; absurdity stands apart from neoliberal institutional realities and the realm of the assemblage/pack becomes a new domain for practice and thought. “Death to the old world in all of its guises!” the elders will say. Death, not as an end in which mourning the loss of our former world, nor our old, tired selves is necessary, but death as an opportunity to begin again; rebirth not

as the horrific undead called from their eternal slumber, but as vitally new beings seeking the spaces of becoming outside of that dead world we left behind. This is the work of an intellectual sorcerer, conjuring alternatives from interdisciplinary and epistemological explorations, escaping the panoptic eyes of empirical thought and practices. Bury the past where it belongs to feed the future, that's what the Romantics would say. But the body of the old will serve not as mere fertilizer, but memory rhizomes on what not to do; a simple reminder to never go back to those oppressive spaces of the 1%ers, the wealthy or the Donald Trumps of the old world. "Make America Great Again" will be the calling card of those bodies dying from the old world; tired ways of practicing what used to be considered "politics" or "scholarship" or "learning." We seek to formulate new bonds amongst other becoming-bodies.

Bonds form between packs and exteriors; interiorities becoming secondary to those connections happening across multiple peoples, bodies, times, spaces, affects and other ways human animals and vegetable life connect. It escapes the neoliberal utopian project through the nonhuman and plant life available to us; mycelium connects an invisible network of vegetation that is life: connecting underground and unseen from panoptic eyes. We can learn from these connections. Even when we walk, amongst an uncharted gait that crosses boundaries, the underground connections elude us, but I turn towards them, making connections to the natural world from which we are birthed. It is in the middles that we must begin once again, "in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*."⁷⁶

Escape is not a possibility in the sense that we become singular and move away from the pack, the multitudes; make connections for other ways of being. "Making a clean slate, starting or beginning again from ground zero... imply a false conception of voyage and movement."⁷⁷ We do not make something from ground zero, we build upon the rubble and catastrophes, learning vital lessons from our past mistakes and follies.⁷⁸ It is within the in-betweens we are after, "a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other way."⁷⁹ To cut through the logics of present-day normality means to stroll through reality differently, to understand the networks between, above and below us that make radically new connections possible. We must find opportunities to push boundaries of who we are as a species and the possibilities for the world around us. We must connect to the multitudes, to the swarms, to the packs.

As critical scholars that want to actualize differences, we must take a stroll outside. Not to evoke the language, the imaginations and discourses of those European Romantics that captured our hearts with the yearnings of a gilded past/present/future to be found in a return to that reified space called "nature," but we are searching for new types of cuttings that traverse borders and boundaries allowing for lines of flight to take shape; urban, suburban, nature, imaginal, west, downtown, east, north and/or south. So as you, the reader, finish this academic tale born from an interdisciplinary walk amongst the mountains, downtown urban spaces, the sky and

those connections underfoot, were you afraid to leave the analyst's couch or your school desk? Or, did you let the adventure take you somewhere...different? Find a way to subvert your reality! Think like the schizophrenic but do not get trapped in the logics of psychoanalysis. Break and sabotage those machines that want to quantify and measure us! Be weird; reject the telos of normality. Plot for the future: rhizomatic roots that begin to produce the conditions for a different humanity to be realized.

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³² Ibid, 490.

³³ Ibid, 487.

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⁴⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 241.

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Where I'm from . . .

Christine Clark

I am from *Underdog*, *Road Runner*, *Fat Albert*, *Peppermint Patty*, *Speed Racer*, *Jonny Quest*, *Gilligan's Island*, *Good Times*, *The Partridge Family*, *The Waltons*, and *The Brady Bunch*

I am from *Wild Kingdom* and *Jacques Cousteau*

I am from *The [VERY] Mod Squad* and the iconic Clarence Williams III

I am from "Best Girl Athlete" in nursery school, "I can go backwards on the monkey bars, can you?," playgrounds, jungle gyms, kickball, dodgeball, hide n' seek (hide and go *get*), capture the flag, tree-climbing and tree houses (that my Dad built) hopscotch, jacks, "I can pogo stick around the block, can you?," hoolahoops, and mud pies

I am from *Riot*, a poem by a child author whose name I cannot recall nor find, that I read by chance in a book in my elementary school library...it stirred my awakening consciousness

I am from *Why Are You Angry?* and *Christina's World*, Audre Lorde, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Gloria Anzaldúa, *Esta Puete*, *Mi Espalda*, Frida Kahlo, Ernie Barnes, the Graffiti Hall of Fame, and Diego Rivera

I am from curly hair ("I married your father so you would have curly hair") and hazel eyes, handstands in the hallway, roller skating on bumpy sidewalks, gymnastics in the backyard, ice skating across the street, Scrabble games in the basement, summer camp songs, swimming, canoeing, arts and crafts, and archery, sailing and Chautauqua

Christine Clark is a professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her email address is chris.clark.unlv@me.com

I am from friends, critical friends, and *not* friends... anymore... who have taught me so much

I am from a wild tongue and festive spirit

I am from the original *X-Files*, *Spawn*, *Sam and Twitch*, the original *Twin Peaks* (“yes people can too get stuck in doorknobs!”), and *Northern Exposure*—chaos and conspiracy theories, psychological intrigue, and the intellectually quirky

I am from thank you Shonda Rhimes for making primetime reflect multiculturalism as “the normal human condition”

I am from Gumba, Christabelle, “Christine Elise Clark get down here right now!,” Chrissie, Chris, Christie, Christine Clarque or Christine Jerine (no patriarchal surnames), Christine, and Crystal and Crystal Gayle

I am from the Jackson Five and *ABC*...

I am from blue jeans, groovy jackets, and Birkenstocks, patchouli, dangly earrings, embroidered clothes, and moccasins, sweatpants, t-shirts, and sneakers

I am from the “Mart of K” and the “Osco of Jewel,” street vendors, and haute couture

I am *not* from pantyhose or, better, I am from any place pantyhose are *not!* ... and yet I still wear them

I am from unicycles, tandem riders, ten speeds, and mountain bikes

I am from suburbia and city, mansions and projects, el barrio, da’ ‘hood, and the rez, outdoors in Colorado and New England mountains and lakes, Massachusetts snow and Nuevo México deserts, to finding an unlikely home in the city of Lost Vegans :-)

Yo soy de las Sandinistas y Nicaragua, las Indígenas y Guatemala, los Macheteros y Puerto Rico, Subcomandante Marcos, las Zapatistas y Chiapas México, de las oprimidas del mundo

Yo soy de “hablo Español como un idioma segunda pero como si fuera el idioma de mi alma y corazón, de mi cultura propia”

I am from the sociopolitical, the paradigmatic, the postmodern, and the reconstructivistic, critical consciousness, meta-analysis, the dialectical, and praxis, the ontological (the “to be”), the epistemological (the “to know”), the axiomatic (the “to know how to do the right thing”), the abstract and the everyday

I am from an iPhone, I have a relationship with my computer, and *not* social networking, but, yes, social media and digital revolution, especially its power to cultivate, inspire, and fan the flames of the fire in the streets in these times

I am from I don't Tweet, or even Black Tweet, and I don't post to "my FB page," (but may read your feed if someone else sends me a link through email or text)...

I am from when I want to catch up with my peoples I reach out by telephone (like the ones that used to have long ass cords), but would still rather see and touch those I love f2f

I am from Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, Richard Delgado, Critical Race Theory, and Black, Womynist, Tribal and Lat Crit

I am from Fred Hampton, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, voter registration, the Young Lords, community health, the Black Panthers, school lunches, Assata Shakur, the Weather Underground, Bastards of the Party, the Deacons of Defense, and the next generations of Radical Brownies...Monarchs...

I am from John Brown Against the Klan and Free Puerto Rico

I am from I'm Pro-Black (not anti-white), its not just racism its anti-Blackness

I am from "to be a man, to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being...*by any means necessary!*"

I am from Black Lives Matter...Black is Beautiful...I Am Somebody...I Am a Man...Ain't I a Woman...get it...yet?

I am from #WoketheWorkLasVegas, Teachers for Social Justice...Las Vegas (TFSJLV), making educational change happen here, now

I am from CSIEME, See Me, it's good to be seen, Sawubona, and Critical and Restorative Studies (CRiTs)

I am from Occupy Wallstreet, Can I get a mic check?, Sanctuary movements, NoDAPL, and Welcome Home Oscar!

I am from Black Lives Matter...so, so, so very much...

I am from Miss Fannie, Fannie Robinson's boy, Ma, Pops, Chuck, and Douglas "Charles" Davis

I am from Gally, the very DefofDeaf (LOL!), terps, culturally diverse interpreters and culturally responsive interpreting, ASL, Black ASL, and unpacking whiteness in Deafhood

I am from stick shift SUV's, I love the WNBA, Motown, Carlos Santana, Salsa, Merengue, y Tejano, Johnny Cash, Ole Skool Rap, Hip Hop, Hip Hop, Hip Hop, the Gypsy Kings, A.R. Rahman and other world music

I am from *24 and Stanley*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Curious George*, *Charlotte's Web*, and Snoopy

I am from “What Time Is It? It’s Nation Time,” and “*Vieques Sí, Marina No,*” marches and protests, civil disobedience, subversive activities, and revolution

Yo soy de la izquierda, ándale pués...

I am from the color brown in all its shades

I am from trying to get pregnant, complete a pregnancy, and birth a healthy child . . . to there are other ways to plant seeds and help grow current and future generations

I am from [a] *Phenomenal Woman* and Maya Angelou, *The Color Purple* and Alice Walker, among so, so, so many others

I am from a radical reconceptualization of Christianity, liberation theology, the science in Islam, the K/Qabalas, Wicca, Pantheism, Gaia, Paganism, the laying on of hands, woman and earth-centered faith and deity, and the *possibility* of Star People

I am from Karl Marx, Betty Friedan, James Banks, Ché Guevara, Paulo Freire, and Mab Segrest—I’m a race traitor too

I am from Claudia Boatright, Antonio Callari, Jack Amariglio, Sean Flaherty, Bailey Jackson, John Bracey, and Sonia Nieto

I am from justice, or is it just us?

I am from social justice and multicultural education

I am from “I love to teach,” multicultural teacher education, and NAME

I am from MESA, Abriendo Caminos, #Love2TeachLV!, diversifying the teacher pipeline, restoring the diverse teacher ranks, and providing the scaffolding necessary for white teachers to go high, not low, no matter what others do/don’t do for students in high needs schools

I am from teaching to transgress and bell hooks, youth participatory action research, problem-posing and emergent pedagogy, community theatre/*teatro campesino* and Augusto Boal

I am from other people’s children are my children too and creating and sustaining spaces that are utterly inhospitable to deficit thinking

I am from activating, accessing, assessing, and adding (props to Dr. Walls!), and from cultural funds of knowledge and community cultural wealth in the teaching of all (re)new(ed) things

I am from layering into and out of all learning, situating all teaching in the learner’s experience, sharing the cognitive load, showing not telling, and the reciprocity of theory and practice

I am from the grassiest of grassy grassroots (*jmil gracias RosemaryQ!*), community organizing, and family engagement

I am from public education is worth fighting for...despite its flawed roots, unrealized imperfect promises, and persistent fidelity to hegemonic interest convergence

I am from a radical reimagination of schooling and schools, without walls, borders, time, and place

I am from fighting against neoliberalism's toxic impacts on all things communal, shared, collaborative, cooperative, and distributive

I am from fixed water and cardinal fire, earth and air, and the mutable

I am from buffalo and dinosaurs

Yo soy de "Qué Chévere" y "Órale Vata"

I am from a Lesbian/Queer-identified place, but the whole preferred pronouns thing doesn't work for the tomboy, tomgirl who is me, she, (cousin) it, they, and . . . well . . . maybe not he

I am from self-hatred and anorexia to loving myself as a woman with a fuller figure

I am from not speaking in high school to finding voice in college to exploring voice in grad school to refining voice for leadership for change today and tomorrow

I am from activist-scholar/scholar-activist

I am from *The Master's Tools Will Not Dismantle the Master's House*, but they can sure f@#* it up a lot

Yo soy de El Júnque, tropical breezes, sun-drenched and overcast skies

I am from Kung Fu, *Enter the Dragon*, Chen Style Tai Chi, and Yoga

I am from white privilege and anti-racism, being a formerly battered woman and on the receiving end of other forms of gendered violence, and engaging critical, sociopolitically-located multicultural education to disarm violence, mass incarceration, the prison/military/poverty industrial complex, and the school-to-prison/freedom-to-confinement pipeline

I am from an abolitionist mindset—emancipation, decarceration, *defronterizando*, and deschooling—focused on the disruption and dismantling of the global accumulation of capital

I am from the hidden imagery in El Prieto's pencil drawings—*The Wolf Within the Wolf Within*, rubber bands and art shows, pow-wows and Carlos Nakai

I am from *Deep Cover*, “the money don’t know where it came from,” and *Jurassic Park*, “nature finds a way” and “just because we can, doesn’t mean we should”

I am from Def Jam, Spoken Word, Slam Poetry, *The Puerto Rican Obituary*, the Nuyorican Poets Café, and *Down These Mean Streets*

Yo soy de realismo mágico, *Smoke Signals*, *The Man Facing Southeast*, *y Alsino y El Condór*

I am from I watched my father die and my mother died and I was not there

I am from family dysfunction, therapy, self talk

I am from I love(d) my parents, cats (Cicero and Colby), the best Halloween costumes and snow sculptures (that my Dad made), building blocks, matchbox cars, Lego, school carnivals, dunking booths, face painting, and cotton candy, school and church plays, singing in choirs, playing in a bell choir, strawberry festivals, and talent shows (dance and jump rope routines)

I am from public and private school, public speaking and term papers

I am from field hockey, distance running, and rugby

I am from “*Hijola!*” and “Child of Mine”

I am from men who love smart women, feign the roughneck image, and look like Idris Elba, Esai Morales, and, of course, you baby

I am from I am blown away by the genius of Luís Guzmán, Savion Glover, Selena Quintanilla, Bruce Lee, and on and on and on...

I am from vegetarianism, cappuccinos, and death by chocolate

I am from a mixed-race marriage, Brontasaurus booty, “that must be a white thing,” “you get Blacker everyday,” Fat (Phat) man and Fat (Phat) Booty

I am from lightening, Thunder and rain, Jazz, rhythm, and Blues, *la décima* and soul, and big muddy dogs

I am from Manuela and Teresa, Cuba and Ché, Jamaila and Vívian, Xelajú Imani, DaVinci and Brooklyn, and, *pahleese*, can-I-get-just-a-little-bit-closer Diego

I am from fluvial geology and volcanology, meandering streams and lava flows

Yo soy de San Martín de Porres y La Virgen de Guadalupe, *Espirismo y Santería*, Tarot and Numerology, Astrology and Witchcraft

I am from tough and mean to it’s okay to be something else, *grácias a* Roberto Rodríguez, Patrísia González, and the wisdom of elders

I am from anger and passion, giving and having dignity, and struggle to become more fully human

I am from the heart and soul of my life partner and his amazing patience with and love for me, "I love you 'endless' too"

I am from Tyrone Marcellus Robinson whom I have known and loved in every single one of my past lives, whom I adore in this one, and whom I will embrace *con mi cuerpo, corazón, mente, alma, y espíritu* in every single life I have yet to begin with him

I am from love and laughter thanks to you *Amor Mio*

Are We Ready for 'School' Abolition? Thoughts and Practices of Radical Imaginary in Education

David Stovall

The following document seeks to engage a set of questions traditionally associated with the organized, grassroots activist and scholarly resistance to abolish the prison industrial complex (PIC). While new directions of this inquiry have challenged us to think about a school and prison nexus (Davis, 2003; Meiners & Winn, 2010; Rodriguez, 2008; Schnyder, 2010,; Sojourner, 2016; Wun, 2015), like prison abolitionists, we should also entertain a process that is willing to “demand the impossible” (Ayers, 2016). Claims to this end include a reframing and revisiting of ideas that clearly delineate the difference between ‘school’ and education. Utilizing the ideas offered by proponents of prison abolition, I consider traditional ‘school’ in its material and ideological form. It should be considered part of a radical imaginary in that it seeks to understand the world in its current state while vehemently working with others to change the current condition. In this instance, ‘school’ as an US institution primarily rewards students for order and compliance, which should also be considered part and parcel of the larger projects of settler colonialism and white supremacy/racism. Similar to the rationales provided to us by prison abolitionists, the call in this document is for radical educators to challenge themselves to think of ‘school’ beyond the building that houses young people for 8-10 hours a day. Imperative to the separation of ‘school’ and education, ‘school’ abolition in this sense seeks to eliminate the order, compliance and dehumanization that happens in said buildings while allowing for the capacity to imagine and enact a radical imaginary. In the spirit of scholars willing to engage in an abolitionist future (DuBois, 2014; Meiners, 2011; Rodriguez & Davis 2000; Richie, 2015), I am intentional in my attempt to challenge conventional thinking around what we currently know as ‘school.’

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'School' v. Education

Similar to the take of prison abolitionists, it should be understood in the practical sense that we are not talking about the destruction of buildings currently used as schools in the immediate future. Instead, what I am suggesting is a systemic account of 'schooling' in historically disinvested and isolated communities. 'School' is placed in parentheses because I am thinking beyond the school's physical space. As an ideological and material formation, 'school' in its most familiar form is not connected to any project of liberation. 'Schooling' in this sense is "is a process *intended* to perpetuate and maintain the society's existing power relations and the institutional structures that support those arrangements" (Shujaa, 1994, 15). For some groups, and parallel to prisons, this idea is steeped in containment, control and isolation. Directly contrasting the idea of 'school,' Shujaa considers education to be "the process of transmitting from one generation to the next knowledge of the values, aesthetics, spiritual beliefs and all things that give a particular cultural orientation its uniqueness" (ibid). Because 'school' in its current form seeks to impose the assumed beliefs and cultural values of White, Western European, protestant, heterosexual, able-bodied cis-gendered males as the normative standard, education also includes the rejection of the aforementioned. Education in this form also becomes the political exercise that seeks to end repression while simultaneously supporting the capacity of historically oppressed and marginalized peoples to think and create.

In the most practical sense, I often place a question to my high school and college students about what makes a good teacher. Once they start to identify what they did for them as students (listening to them, challenging notions of deficits, caring for them, positioning families as equitable partners in the education process, etc.), I ask them a second question: *are they good teachers because of the school system or is it something else*. After more conversation, I ask them do they think those teachers are skilled because they reject common notions of school. In short, *are they skilled at what they do in spite of the system?* Going deeper into the analysis, I ask *them how much of what they do as good teachers do you think was learned in 'school'?* Because these teachers committed themselves to a process of education over the traditional expectations of schooling, I am placing their work in line with prison abolitionists in that they embrace a radical imaginary. In looking at the 'school' for what it is, these teachers dared to imagine another space for their students and engaged a process to build it. Where these efforts sometimes are thought of as singular, one-off individual efforts, the more I engage people in different locales throughout the U.S., I have come to find that there are people who have made both individual and collective attempts to reimagine 'school' through a commitment to education. In recognition of this dynamic, a 'school' abolition, similar to prison abolition, would seek to end the conditions that sustain and support white supremacy through a endemic system of training rooted in dehumanization (Spring, 2010). At a practical level, a question that should be considered for the

remainder of this document is as follows: *given the constraints and foundations of state-sanctioned violence as 'schooling,' can education happen in the institution commonly known as 'school'?*

For the purposes of this account, my questions are less ideological than they are practical, given the current conditions of many schools in urban centers. Understanding the systemic positionality of Black and Latinx youth as disposable, a radical imaginary challenges us to think about the world as it is while committing to a process that systemically changes it. Dumas captures the conundrum succinctly in his account of school as a site of Black suffering.

Schooling is not merely a sight of suffering, but I believe it is the suffering that we have been least willing or able to acknowledge or give voice to in educational scholarship, and more specifically in educational policy analysis. (Dumas, 2014, 2)

Embracing this dynamic has the greatest opportunity to shift our thinking to one that allows for a re-tooling of the practices used to oppose state-sanctioned violence in the form of school. For these reasons, the suggestion here is to approach the dynamic of 'school' abolition as one that challenges the idea that what happens in 'school' is intended to support those who have historically had the least.

We should also understand that in many ways, this document does not necessarily purport anything "new". Instead, my attempt here is to call on the age-old practices invoked by oppressed peoples across the planet to claim liberation from the tyranny of white supremacy, colonialism, imperialism and other forms of state sanctioned violence. Rodriguez is correct that the assumption of the 'school' for marginalized people under imperialist colonial rule is that its function in the project of nation building is "reformable, redeemable and forgivable" despite the carnage of Black and Brown bodies left in its aftermath. Through a rhetoric that peace "requires a normalize, culturally legitimated proliferation of state violence", 'school' becomes the conduit by which to justify the genocidal practices of the nation-state (Rodriguez, 2008, 11).

Given the perceived totalizing power of the state, education represents the resistance to state-sanctioned violence. From slave rebellions in the Western Hemisphere to maroon movements in the Caribbean in the 18th and 19th centuries to the Zapatista Movement of Chiapas, Mexico to Quilombo movement of Brazil to the most recent iterations of the Movement for Black Lives (Black Lives Matter), there is always a demand to build and create in the face of extreme repression. These fugitive spaces are imperfect, but are necessary in reminding us of our capacity to do things differently. In the process of creating different spaces, a process of 'school' abolition should be considered part of Harney and Moten's concept of an undercommons. Operating as the space that is created for the purpose of reimagining and building outside of the current system for survival and self-determination, their discussion of justice and debt is extremely timely, as 'school' is now considered to be a product to be exchanged on the free market.

Justice is only possible where debt never obliges, never demands, never equals credit, payment, payback. Justice is only possible only where it is never asked in the refuge of bad debt, in the fugitive public of strangers not communities, of undercommons not neighbourhoods, among those who have been there all along from somewhere. (Harney & Moten, 2013, 63).

A 'school' abolitionist interpretation of this quote would replace "justice" with "education" and "debt with "school."

Education is only possible where school never obliges, never demands, never equals credit, payment, payback. *Education* is possible only where it is never asked in the refuge of bad *schools*, in the fugitive public of strangers not communities, of undercommons not neighbourhoods, among those who have been there all along from somewhere.

In the spirit of Harney and Moten's recognition of the ability of marginalized and isolated peoples to resist, 'school' abolition is a challenge with an uncertain, but necessary future. The remaining pages, in an attempt to push my own thinking, is one that seeks an abolitionist future, attempting to reconstruct "the structures and traditions that safeguard power and privilege, just as much as taking down those that visibly punish and oppress" (DuBois in Meiners & Winn, 2010, 273).

Lessons from Prison Abolitionists

Scholarship over the last 40-plus years on prison abolition provides context for the thinking around 'school' abolition. As some of the earlier work centers on the reform of prisons, seeking to end the "degrading, humiliating, alienation-producing character of prison" (Mathiesen, 1986, 91). Where this is viewed as a constructive start in rethinking the prison, my work aligns itself with the radical emergent trend, seeking to understand abolition from a societal level. This strand of scholarship reaches back to W.E.B. DuBois' analysis of how Reconstruction represented an abolitionist democracy, in that it called for a rethinking of social landscape. Given the instances of wrongful imprisonment for petty and arbitrary crimes (i.e., mischief, insulting gestures, cruel treatment to animals, collaborating with Whites, etc.) in the years directly after the Civil War, Southern slave states sought to control the bodies of newly manumitted Black people (DuBois in McLeod, 2015, 1188). As Black people were wrongly imprisoned and often could not pay the fines associated with their imprisonment, many were leased to corporations to build railroads and other forms of infrastructure. Commonly known as the convict leasing system, many people who were imprisoned served inordinate sentences, disallowing their re-entry into society and the right to engage in employment that would support self-sufficiency. Given the prison's deeply entrenched relationship with chattel slavery and the convenience clause of the 13th amendment that ends slavery "except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted" (U.S. Constitution), abolition stands to interrupt the commonly accepted trend of overrepresentation of people of color in prison.

Borrowing from a conversation between prison abolitionist scholars Angela Davis and Dylan Rodriguez, prison abolition should be considered a long-term project. In their exchange, Davis reminds us that

Prison abolition, like the abolition of slavery, is a long-range goal... an abolitionist approach requires an analysis of “crime” that links it with social structures, as opposed to individual pathology, as well as “anticrime” strategies that focus on the provision of social resources... prison needs to be abolished as the dominant mode of addressing social problems that are better solved by other institutions and other means. The call for prison abolition urges us to imagine and strive for a very different social landscape. (Davis in Davis & Rodriguez, 2000, 215)

For these reasons, abolition is also centered in the explicit interruption of the belief of the Black body as permanently criminal and deserving of gratuitous punishment in perpetuity (Sexton, 2016; Wun, 2015). In the same vein, ‘school’ abolition should also be a long-term goal, centered in the activity of students, parents, teachers, and activists to revisit and build an abolitionist future in education. Abolition, in this sense is “not a utopian dream, but a necessity” (Meiners, 2011, 5).

From the School-to-Prison Nexus to ‘School’ Abolition

Over the last decade I have taken to the work of education scholars engaged in the work of prison abolition and the ending of what is commonly known as the “school-to-prison pipeline” (STPP). Similar to scholars in the mid 1990’s who took the contributions of legal scholars in Critical Race Theory (CRT) and applied them to education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano, 1997; etc.), a set of educational scholars are engaging in a similar task in using prison abolition scholarship, advocating for an end to STPP. As STPP is thought of as a “consequence of schools which criminalize minor disciplinary infractions via zero-tolerance policies, have a police presence and the school and rely on suspensions and expulsions for minor infractions”, we have reached a moment that needs to intensify the dynamic (Heitzeg, 2009, 2). Where the language of STPP has been championed in many organizing spaces and grassroots organizations, I take the work of Krueger and Rodriguez to reframe the dynamic as a school-prison nexus (Krueger, 2010; Rodriguez, 2008).

Within the schooling regime/prison regime nexus, many are taught into freedom in order to administer, enforce, and passively reproduce the unfreedom of others, while some are trained into a tentative and always-temporary avoidance of unfreedom, meagerly rewarded with the accouterments of civic inclusion (a job, a vote, a home address. (Rodriguez, 2008, 12)

Instead of viewing the ‘school’ as a place that potentially leads to prison, I agree with Krueger and Rodriguez that depending on the particular instance, the school operates as a jail, hence a nexus between school and prison. If you think about a place where students are punished if they do not walk on demarcated lines in the

floor, are required to remain silent during lunch, required to wear uniforms (including clear backpacks), subject to random searches, and are fined for being out of uniform, this place is not “leading” you to prison. Instead, we should understand that space as an operative prison, with the main difference being that you are allowed to go home every afternoon. As prison abolitionists understand prison as a corrosive, deadening place intended to dislodge people of color from social fabrics that affirm and protect their existence, ‘school’ in the traditional sense should be considered in a similar vein.

In my home state of Illinois, one of the wealthiest school districts in the state, Winnetka School District 36, spends \$19,774 per student (<http://www.ilraiseyourhand.org/statefunding>). Conversely, the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice spends \$111,000 per incarcerated youth (<http://northernpublicradio.org/post/illinois-spends-111000-jail-each-young-offender>). Despite the alarming data points, there’s another point that is just as poignant. The Winnetka School District is over 85% white. The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice is 77.9% Black and Latinx (64.6 and 13.3% respectively) (Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, 2015). If it costs five times less to educate young people in a district with one of the highest expenditures than it does to incarcerate a population that is currently primarily Black and Latinx, how can we not understand the school and prison nexus as a continuation of genocidal state-sanctioned violence in the name of safety and security? As Illinois provides one example of exorbitant expenditures for youth incarceration, it should be noted that there are similar situations in Pennsylvania, California, Texas, Florida and Louisiana. As Black and Latinx youth in urban centers are pushed towards the educational track of low-wage service sector disposable employment, this process is one deserving of abolition.

In light of the oppressive conditions, ‘school’ abolition should also include a pedagogy that dares to teach “against the carceral common sense” while also asks “the unaskable, posits the necessity of the impossible, and embraces the creative danger inherent in liberationist futures (Rodriguez, 2008, 12). By ridding ourselves of the constraints of “age appropriate material” and high stakes testing, an embrace of the politics of abolition is no longer safe by definition. Instead, it is imbued in perpetual risk. Nevertheless, historical and contemporary iterations of ‘school’ abolition reveal themselves in the work of the Raza Studies Program of Tucson, Arizona, Students at the Center in New Orleans Louisiana, the Pin@y Education Partnerships of the Bay Area and the Peoples Education Movement (Los Angeles and Bay Area). Where some of these formations may not consider themselves to embrace an abolitionist politic, all share the idea that the current ‘school’ system continues to justify slavery, genocide, and wrongful land appropriation.

Abolition and the Future of Education

In learning from our comrades who are engaged in the project of prison aboli-

tion, it should be understood that in the practical sense we are not solely talking about the destruction of school buildings. Instead, the demand is for a systemic account of ‘schooling’ in historically disinvested and isolated communities. Because these spaces are primarily populated by low-income/working class people of color, we must also contend with the idea that this population has historically been declared disposable by the state. In recognition of this dynamic, a ‘school’ abolition, similar to prison abolition, would seek to end the conditions that sustain and support white supremacy through an endemic system of training rooted in dehumanization and white supremacy. Where the terminology leaves more questions than answers (i.e., what do we call the places where education happens if we are abolishing ‘school’?), we must also be careful that ‘school’ abolition does not go the co-optation route of the language of ‘social justice.’ Once thought to be a radical term, the term now encompasses a loose description of actions that may or may not be connected to the development of conditions that allow people to self-determine the justice condition. As Meiners reminds us to be deftly cognizant of the prevailing opportunity for state actors to appropriate our justice work, it will be critical to remain steadfast in making sure that ‘school’ abolition is reduced to mere reform strategies (Meiners, 2011, 9).

Because this is a call to both build and resist, we should understand that the response to detract and upend the movement for ‘school’ abolition from the state to be imminent and in perpetuity. Earlier iterations of abolitions have received drastic responses from government. State legislation was developed to end Raza Studies in Tucson *despite* demonstrated educational gains. Teachers are fired for engaging in acts of resistance to support the education of their students. In many instances, these teachers are often women of color. Ethnic studies departments in universities across the country are perpetually under threat of closure. Because this work suggests risk, a process to this end echoes the sentiment of Michael Dumas’ comments on the challenge to educational researchers that operate from a critical perspective.

We need to pursue a similar project in educational research—scholarship that vividly reveals the nature of racial suffering in schools and incisively analyzes the infliction of power on racialized bodies, yet insists that this is hardly a surprise ending to generations of racial assault. (Dumas, 2014, 26)

Because ‘school’ abolition at this point is primarily conceptual and incomplete, below is a set of considerations to engage in the attempt to build spaces where education is supported over ‘school’. I am reminded by a colleague that an abolitionist politics makes the point clear: after all that has been done to us, what else can the oppressor do? For these reasons, we cannot live in fear of the state. Instead, we should expect them at every instantiation of our work. At the same time, I agree with Rodriguez in that “no teaching formula or pedagogical system finally fulfills the abolitionist social vision.” He is correct that “there is only a political desire that understands the immediacy of struggling for human liberation from precisely those forms of systemic violence and institutionalized dehumanization that are

most culturally and politically sanctioned... within one's own pedagogical moment (Rodriguez, 2008, 14). For these reasons and the myriad of others, the following suggestions should be considered a humble continuation of the work put forward by my colleagues in earlier iterations of educational justice work.

1. ***Challenge and resist the proliferation of corporate charter school networks in historically disenfranchised communities.*** As New Orleans Louisiana has served as ground zero for corporate charter school proliferation, Philadelphia, New York City, Chicago and Newark, New Jersey are witnessing an exponential growth in corporate charter networks. A number of community organizations have collectivized their efforts to resist the growth of charters.

2. ***Build resistance in communities and amongst educators against vouchers.*** The recent appointment of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education under the Trump administration is of particular importance as she prepares to provide incentives to states in support of vouchers for private education. Mired under the problematic rhetoric of 'choice', vouchers siphon public dollars from state general education funds, leaving fewer resources for public schools.

3. ***Build resistance in communities and amongst educators against teacher merit-based pay.*** Where the push for merit-based pay has died down somewhat, we need to remain on watch for the debate to reveal itself once more. The new DeVos administration has championed the idea of providing salary incentives to teachers based on student test scores.

4. ***Support efforts to challenge the proliferation of high-stakes standardized testing in historically, disinvested, marginalized and isolated schools.*** The organization Fair Test has served as the vanguard against high stakes testing in schools. Their support of performance-based assessment eliminates high-stakes testing based on a singular performance. Over the years high-stakes testing has not proven to be beneficial for students of color in urban areas who have been isolated and marginalized in their 'school' experience.

5. ***Support the movement for quality education in the form of accessible neighborhood, community-centered sites of education.*** We have no conclusive evidence that new educational "innovations" (charter schools, STEM academies, virtual academies, etc.) are more effective sites of education. Instead, the preparation and support of teachers, along with viable resources for historically disenfranchised schools are what communities have called for historically in the battle for quality education.

6. ***Support efforts to preserve and grow the work of radical educators inside and outside of traditional school spaces.*** Collectives of critical

educators are organizing themselves to fight collectively for quality education. A key example of this is the shift in the Chicago Teachers Union from a traditional employment union to a social justice union. There are also grassroots efforts from teachers to support themselves around developing relevant curriculum and pedagogy. We should also support and pay close attention to the attempts to abolish prisons and ‘schools’ (e.g. The Movement for Black Lives, Critical Resistance, Prison Neighborhood Arts Project, Black Youth Project 100, etc.).

7. *Build spaces where teachers and community members can support each other in the fight for quality education.* The struggle for education rooted in self-determination is a collective process. The aforementioned groups are doing amazing work, but there is always room to support their efforts. Through this collective work, there is the greater opportunity to resist and create viable means to educate ourselves.

Below is a listing of some of the organizations that engage in this work. Much like the work of prison abolition, ‘school’ abolition is representative of an aspirational politic, but one that should be considered given the lessons from those who staunchly advocate for a prison abolition. The following incomplete list of organizations have information on the previously considerations on ‘school’ abolition:

Journey for Justice Alliance (www.j4jalliance.com)
Teachers for Social Justice Bay Area (www.t4sj.org)
Teachers for Social Justice Chicago (www.teachersforjustice.org)
Chicago Teachers Union (www.ctunet.org)
Substance News (www.substancenews.net)
New York Collective of Radical Educators (www.nycore.org)
Citizens for Public Schools—Boston (www.citizensforpublicschools.org)
Students at the Center (New Orleans)
Peoples Education Movement (Bay Area)
Peoples Education Movement (Los Angeles)
The Movement for Black Lives (<https://m4bl.net>)
Black Youth Project 100 (www.byp100.org)
Critical Resistance (www.criticalresistance.org)
Prison Neighborhood Arts Project (www.p-nap.org)
Fair Test (www.fairtest.org)
Grassroots Education Movement (New York)
Grassroots Education Movement (Chicago)
Educator’s Network for Social Justice (Milwaukee)
Teacher Activist Groups (www.teacheractivistgroups.org)
Free Minds Free People (www.finfp.org)
Education for Liberation Network (www.edliberation.org)

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Singing in Dark Times

Bill Ayers & Rick Ayers

*In the dark times
Will there also be singing?
Yes, there will also be singing.
About the dark times.*
—Bertolt Brecht

What does it mean to be human today?
Where are we on the clock of the universe?
What does this political and social moment demand of us?
How shall we live?

Betsy DeVos, Secretary of Education in the Donald Trump cabinet (aka the Monster's Ball) is by now quite well known as an opponent of public education in any form whatsoever. She's a self-styled "disruptor" and an avid promoter of for-profit education and privatizing this essential public good; she's campaigned tirelessly in her home state of Michigan to force the public to pay for charter and private schools while bypassing any meaningful public oversight; and she's built businesses and promoted schemes designed to take money from the public treasuries and hand it over to private hands and parochial schools.

Yes, Betsy DeVos is terrible, but she's not quite as unique as one might think; she's not an absolute aberration nor an entirely rare bird; and she did not fly to her current sinecure in Washington out of the blue from her gilded aviary. Rather, Betsy DeVos lies at the end of a well-worn road taken by both major political parties, the capitalist media (liberal and conservative alike—the *New York Times* and the

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Chicago Tribune, MSNBC, NPR and Fox), the financial elite, and the major foundations. She is the natural heir to John King and Arne Duncan, William Bennett, Richard Riley, Rod Paige, and Margaret Spellings; and she is the logical extension of a poisonous idea shared by the powerful for decades: education is not a universal human right nor a public imperative that must be equitably available to all children in a free and democratic society; education is, rather, a commodity (like a car or a washing machine or a hammer) to be bought and sold at the marketplace.

The corporate campaign to undo public education under the seductive rhetoric of “choice” and the broad rubric of “school reform” attempts to topple the very idea of education as a right by pulling down three sturdy pillars upon which public education rests:

1. Educational success, like human development, is dynamic, complex, and multi-faceted, and it cannot be reduced to a single standardized metric;
2. The collective voice of teachers and other educational professionals on matters of educational policy and school practice is necessary and good;
3. The public educational space is a common good, and it is not for sale to private operators.

Undermining any one of these pillars is destructive, and chopping away at all three is potentially catastrophic—and that’s exactly what every Secretary of Education has done since 1980. Betsy DeVos will surely continue the attack, and possibly ramp it up, taking a jackhammer to all three pillars simultaneously in an attempt to topple the temple. Private profit, testing and sorting, teachers as passive clerks in an enterprise that allows them no agency—this is the Holy Trinity Betsy DeVos genuflects before.

But interestingly, while the corporate reformers have wielded the big megaphone, captured major political officials, and commandeered vast resources, in decades of effort they have failed to win the moral or the political argument. They’ve done serious damage, but they’ve been consistently (and sometimes successfully) opposed by teachers, parents, and students. These opponents of corporate encroachments on schools argue that education is a human right, enshrined as Article 26 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, written into every US state constitution as the right to a free and equitable education for all children. The Supreme Court has upheld this right again and again—in the famous 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision the court noted that “education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments,” and that it stands as “the very foundation of good citizenship.”

Every educational leader and every school makes lofty claims about their hopes for and intentions regarding their students and their graduates. The aspirational consensus points toward independent learners and critical thinkers, productive people and thoughtful, caring citizens or residents. Overwhelmingly these same schools fail dismally when it comes to delivering on their own high-minded mis-

sion statements—they typically build a school experience that is hierarchical and hyper-individualistic, where “learning” is externally motivated and constantly competitive. They ignore everything we know about authentic learning, including the demonstrable fact that learning and living are twins, for example, and that learning starts naturally at birth with no external rewards or punishments whatsoever needed to get busy on the endless journey to know and to be. They dismiss in practice the key understanding that curiosity, agency, and imagination are our common human heritage and must be nourished and challenged in order to breathe.

Schools develop and promote an unhealthy obsession with obedience, standardization, conformity, and control—especially in those spaces attended by the descendants of enslaved people, Latinx and immigrant children from poor countries, and First Nations youth. Knowing and accepting one’s place on the grand pyramid of winners and losers becomes the core lesson in these places, and as schools develop elaborate schemes for managing the unruly mob, they turn to the familiar technologies of constraint—ID cards, transparent backpacks, uniform dress codes, cameras, armed guards, metal detectors, random searches. The knotted system of rules, the exhaustive machinery of schedules and surveillance, the prison architecture, the laborious programs of regulating, indoctrinating, inspecting, disciplining, censoring, correcting, counting, appraising, assessing and judging, testing and grading—all of it makes these places feel like institutions of punishment rather than sites of enlightenment and liberation, places to recover from rather than experiences to carry forward. We note something even more insidious and destructive than the school-to-prison pipeline for disadvantaged students—schools become transformed in some communities into a school/prison nexus.

Up against the repressive, authoritarian forces that use schools to colonize and coerce oppressed communities, resistance typically takes the form of a demand for freedom. From the first free schools built by Black-led states in the Reconstruction era to the cry for “Freedom Now!” in the 60’s, to the campaigns for “Black Lives Matter,” open immigration, community control, an end to patriarchy—students and teachers and families consistently hold forth the goal of education for free people.

Education for free people—public education—is powered by a particularly precious if vulnerable ideal: *every human being is of infinite and incalculable value*, each a work in progress and a force in motion, each a unique intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual, moral, and creative force, each of us born equal in dignity and rights, each endowed with reason and conscience and agency, each deserving a dedicated place in a community of solidarity as well as a vital sense of brotherhood and sisterhood, recognition and respect. School people who embrace that basic ethic and spirit struggle to resist the sorting of students into winners and losers as well as the relentless deficit-oriented labeling of youth, and recognize that the fullest development of each individual—given the tremendous range of ability and the delicious stew of race, ethnicity, points of origin, and background—is the necessary condition

for the full development of the entire community, and, conversely, that the fullest development of all is essential for the full development of each.

Free people strive and scuffle to find ways to refuse obedience and conformity in favor of initiative, questioning, courage, audacity, imagination, creativity, inventiveness, and empathy. These are the arts of liberty and these are qualities that cannot be delivered in top-down ways, but must be modeled and nourished, fought for and defended, and mostly practiced again and again and again.

Free students struggle to become major actors in constructing their own educations, transforming themselves from objects of a regime of “discipline and punish” into active agents, authors, and artists of their own lives; they demand that education become decoupled from the inadequate and illegitimate “meritocracy model,” and that the public good become understood more fundamentally. And certainly for those who have been invaded by the US or internally colonized, education for freedom means the struggle for self-determination—outside of and beyond the narrow framing of the federal and state authorities. And for those who have grown up in a bubble of privilege and oblivion, meaningful education means learning to join a world beyond and after empire, to work in solidarity and deep internationalism. There is ultimately greater satisfaction in uniting with humanity and the future than in losing one’s soul to protect the toys and trinkets of our parasitic economy.

Instead of schooling-as-credentialing, sorting, gate keeping, and controlling, education for freedom enables students to become smarter and more aware, more able to work effectively in community and across communities, and more capable of imagining a better world that is possible and working to make it so. This can mean building alternative and insurgent classrooms and schools and community spaces as small-scale models of a society driven by norms of equality and reciprocity, a sense of shared community in which people care about and for one another, mutual respect, recognition of differences including distinct capacities and interests and needs, shared wealth, cooperation, attempts to account for and correct all disadvantages, and so on – everybody in, nobody out. These spaces can focus on what we know we need rather than what we are told we must endure. Action-oriented, child-centered teaching engages and motivates students, and it can also enliven and fire teachers and other adults as well. Everyone can learn to embrace the deeper, always generative discipline of getting things done collectively and learning *from* rather than *about* life.

Imagination “ignites the slow fuse of possibility,” as Emily Dickinson says, and it remains an indispensable weapon in the hands of the powerless. Yes, the powerful—the casino capitalists and the predatory financiers, the banksters and their hedge-fund homies—control the massive military-industrial complex, the media and the sophisticated surveillance systems, the prison cells, and the organized propaganda, and these are on constant display as if to remind us every minute that there is no hope of a world without the instruments of death and oppression, while we have only our minds, our desires, and our dreams—and each other. And, yes,

in a traditional conflict we are finished before we start, but it's also true that there's no power on earth stronger than the imagination unleashed and the collective human soul on fire. In an irregular struggle that pits our free imaginations against the stillborn and stunted imaginations of the war-makers, the profiteers, and the mercenaries, we can win.

More process than product, more stance than conclusion, engaging the imagination involves the dynamic work of mapping the world as it really is and then purposely stepping outside and leaning toward a possible world. We ignite that fuse. For the descendants of captured and enslaved people, for Latinx children and First-Nations youth, for the poor and oppressed who, as James Baldwin, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, and Ta-Nehisi Coates point out, are already condemned, labeled disposable, and marked for extermination, the imagination is a means of survival, and hope is an essential vehicle for the fights that will necessarily come—hope that things can change because they must; imagining a better world because the status quo is itself an act of violence.

Hope is a collective antidote to cynicism and despair. It is the capacity to notice or invent alternatives, and then to do something about it, to get busy in projects of repair. Choosing hopefulness—or having hope imposed simply because the alternative is exploitation and extermination—is holding out the possibility of change. Hope is never a matter of sitting down and waiting patiently; hope is nourished in action, and it assumes that we are—each and all of us—incomplete as human beings. Of course we live in dark times, and some of us inhabit even darker places, and yes, we act mostly in the dark. But we are never freer than when we refuse to see the situation or the world before us as the absolute end of the matter.

Dark times indeed: the word fascism has become an electrifying political pejorative, stripped of substance, and so historically freighted and so overused and misused that the word can seem wildly inappropriate if one hopes to speak plainly. But “fascism” does have a precise meaning beyond the optics of swastikas and jack-booted SS men. Fascism is not consigned to a particular place or a specific moment—Europe in the mid-Twentieth Century, for example. Fascism is sometimes, but not necessarily, the result of a coup or a military putsch, and yet the most notorious fascist regime in history came to power through a legal and democratic process. It's long been said that if fascism ever came to America it would come with a familiar face wrapped in an American flag.

So, let's talk a moment about fascism.

Simply put, fascism is a right-wing form of government that unites the state and big business with more and more centralized power. Fascism opposes liberal democracy, Marxism, socialism, and anarchism, and attempts to forge national unity under an autocratic leader with a totalitarian program advocating stability and law and order, claiming all of this is necessary in order to defend the homeland, and to respond effectively to economic instability. Fascist states attempt to mobilize a mass base through deliberately constructed fear and hatred as they prepare for armed

conflict and permanent war by appealing to patriotic nationalism and militarizing all aspects of society.

Fascism arises in capitalist countries in response to loss of or challenge to their colonial holdings. And fascist violence is simply colonial methods (round-ups, exterminations, registration) brought home to the mother country. In other words, the oppressed and colonized have been experiencing fascism, or its core practices, as a constant.

Fascists agitate “popular” movements in the streets, apparently spontaneous but in reality well-funded and highly organized, based on bigotry, intolerance, and the threat of violence, all of it fueled by the demonization of targeted, distinct racial, religious, or gendered vulnerable populations and the creation of convenient sacrificial scapegoats who are repeatedly blamed for every social or economic problem people experience. Fascist regimes promote disdain for the arts, for intellectual life, for reason and evidence, as well as deep contempt for the necessary back and forth of serious argument or discussion.

That’s fascism.

An authentic and effective opposition cannot be led by the Democrats because a bipartisan effort got us to this spot: permanent war, austerity, privatization, trade unions, destroyed, mass incarceration, income inequality, hyper-segregation, the take-down of public schools, and more. Donald Trump ran an explicitly fascist campaign, and no one should now be surprised that he’s moving quickly to promote a fascist program and consolidate a fascist government. The Trump project of these years is to implement fascism and what we do or fail to do now can be decisive. The fight-back is inspiring—but we must keep organizing, gathering, staying mobilized, joining hands and rising up.

So, we must build the opposition, unite all who can be united, and offer an alternative to both neoliberalism and fascism. The US empire is in a steady and irreversible decline, a moment of great danger and real possibility.

Trump’s inauguration speech is a textbook of the whining of the privileged. Here are the richest, the most coddled, the most comfortable people on earth finding a way to name themselves as victims. His version of “America first” depicts the country as damaged—“American carnage”—and in need of radical restoration; claiming legitimacy exclusively from the people who voted for him; stating that he alone stands above the corrupt political class and has a mandate to sweep the slate clean and start over; warning his is a law and order regime, and anyone who disrespects the police or questions their legitimacy is “on notice.”

We must announce through our lives and our work and our play that a new world is in the making. We can construct spaces of liberating education inside and outside of schools, places where fascism is discussed and exposed and where resistance is developed. We can create a community of agitators and transform this corner of the world into a place that we want to inhabit. The government can declare all kinds of people who have been forced to move here—forced by the destruction of

their economies and the imperial wars—as illegal. But we can declare them legal in our space. Vast liberated spaces, in parallel universes of resistance, have always existed—millions of undocumented workers, millions of others who participate in the underground economy—and will only expand.

Schools have always been sites of contention, of struggle over the kind of world we want to live in. There were no good old days. Families, kids, teachers, communities have always had to struggle. We can identify ourselves as citizens of a country that does not yet exist and has no map, and become that new nation's pioneers and cartographers—and through our cooperative actions bring a more assertive and vibrant public into being.

We can always do something—and something is where we begin. The tools are everywhere—humor and art, games and stories, protest and spectacle, the quiet, patient intervention and the angry and urgent thrust—and the rhythm is always the same: we open our eyes and look unblinkingly at the immense and dynamic world we find before us; we allow ourselves to be astonished by the beauty and horrified at the suffering all around us; we organize ourselves, link hands with others, dive in, speak up, and act out; we doubt that our efforts have made the important difference we'd hoped for, and so we rethink, recalibrate, look again, and dive in once more. The days of the regime are numbered.

Commitment and Danger, Black Life and Black Love Toward Radical Possibilities

Valerie Kinloch

In her provocatively moving and powerful TED talk titled, “2053,” Jamila Lyiscott (2017)¹ envisions a future in which her then grandkids will pointedly ask, “Were you there during the Divided States of America?/My history teacher says that the social climate was lethal/That the country bled/In a curious shade of red/Under the principle of prophet before people.” For Lyiscott and other critically and socially conscious people, “there” is the year 2017, a time when this free, democratic, multiracial, multiethnic, and multilingual country elected, yet again, another white male president who publicly and unapologetically spews classist, fascist, racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and xenophobic comments. “There” is also the year 2016 when Terence Crutcher, whose car had stalled in the middle of the road and who was walking with arms held up in the air, was killed by police officers in Tulsa, Oklahoma. “There” is also when, in 2016, Tanisha Anderson was experiencing a mental health episode before being murdered by police officers in Cleveland, Ohio. Lest we forget, “there” is also the year 2015 when Sandra Bland, who was stopped for a minor traffic violation, was killed, found dead in a jail cell in Waller County, Texas, and Freddie Gray died of a spinal cord injury that he sustained while in police custody in Baltimore, Maryland. “There” also signifies the year 2014 when Walter Scott was shot in the back and killed by a police officer in North Charleston, South Carolina, and Eric Garner was placed in a deadly chokehold on Staten Island, New York after pleading with officers, “I can’t breathe.”

“There” is also the year 2013, when Miriam Carey was killed by U.S. Secret Service and Capitol Police officers in Washington, D.C., and when Kimani Gray was killed by plainclothes police officers in Brooklyn, New York, as he stood with a group of friends. The year 2012, representing another “there,” is when Trayvon

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Benjamin Martin was fatally shot by a white man in Sanford, Florida, and when Rekia Boyd was shot in the back of her head by a police detective in Chicago, Illinois. “There,” which has a long history of systemic violence, state sanctioned physical, sexual, and verbal forms of dehumanization, institutional racism, socio-emotional neglect, mental abuse, bullying, economic oppression, community destruction, structural inequality, educational inequity, and mass incarceration, to name just a few, never seems to end for Black people. In fact, “there” continuously makes us feel as if we are “trapped in a bad storyline like a cinematic sequel,” to use Lyiscott’s words, given “that deepening social siloes sustained hate, division, and misogyny, that social safety was severed by a stratified economy...[and] hyper-racial hatred hacked away at the hope of the people.”

Undoubtedly, “there” is painful, destructive, hateful, and harm-ridden. It’s both a place and a time, undefined by boundaries and exceeding any limitation. “There,” unfortunately, is also a discourse and a system, heavily imbued with patriarchal, white supremacist, hetero-normative dispositions, behaviors, and economies that seek and often result in the perpetual oppression and, hence, the violent deaths of Black people. Without question, this type of “there” is difficult and dangerous, devastating and deadly, particularly for Black people. And, yet, it is this “there” that requires us to stand in solidarity, walk with purpose, and rely on revolutionary, humanizing, critical, and community-centric methods by which to seek and sustain our freedom. As Black people who have always lived under this guise, this “peculiar sensation...this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (DuBois, 1965, p. 45), we must engage in radical possibilities, transformative practices. We have no other choice but to act because, as Audre Lorde (1984) reminds us, our lives, all of our lives, depend on us taking and engaging in action, now. We. Have. No. Choice.

Choosing Commitment and Danger

It is this same type of acting/action, being/becoming, and life/living, according to James Baldwin (1962), that requires us “to be committed,” even when “to be committed is to be in danger” (p. 9). And being in constant danger, under surveillance, always being watched and followed, stopped and frisked are not new phenomena for Black people. These painful, debilitating, and often deadly experiences—while visibly a part of our current discussions about racism and violence—have always been a part of the historical fabric of this country. Take, for example, the 1942 lynching of Cleo Wright, a Black man in Sikeston, Missouri. After being accused of assaulting a white woman, Wright was arrested, multiply shot by a city marshal, refused admittance into a hospital for his injuries, returned home to die, removed from his home and placed, again, in jail. Nearly unconscious, he was then abducted from jail by a mob of white men who dragged his half-conscious body through the

city's Black neighborhood. Unsurprisingly, his murderers were neither indicted nor convicted. Hence, in the United States, being Black, as seen through the lens of many white people and through a criminal injustice system that vilifies Blackness, has been horrifically constructed to signify a permanent mark of danger that some want to erase by the most violent, vicious, and cruel forms of death. The commitment that we must embody against this type of danger requires that we remember the life of Cleo Wright, speak against the lynching of Black people, enact strategies that reject white consumption and appropriation of Blackness, and stand, as a united community, in opposition to the system of white supremacy.

A more recent example of the danger that has been imposed on Black people is the 2014 shooting death of 18-year-old Black and unarmed Michael Brown by a white police officer in the northern St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, Missouri. Accused of robbing a convenience store, "Brown's killing," as reported in the *New York Times* (11/27/2014), "laid bare myriad issues of racial inequality. And when the St. Louis County prosecutor announced that a grand jury had not indicted Officer Wilson [the white man who killed Brown], many saw it as another injustice for blacks." Yet again, another white officer was exonerated of any criminal wrongdoing in the death of a Black person, further heightening tensions among law enforcement officers and their practices, the criminal justice system, and Black lives and safety in the context of the United States. In an attempt to control Black rage and Black anger, the Justice Department highlighted multiple constitutional violations in Ferguson and required the community to overhaul its criminal injustice system. Nevertheless, Michael Brown is still dead, killed by a white police officer, and Black America, again, remains "in danger" (Baldwin, 1962, p. 9). We must resist this type of danger by demonstrating a commitment to Black life and by valuing calls from national and global communities to organize, protest, and disrupt all forms of systemic racism.

Baldwin's (1962) sentiment about the connection between commitment and danger surfaces, yet again, when one thinks about the systemic, legal attempts to deny education to Black people in this country. One needs only turn to the year 1957 when Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas deployed the Arkansas National Guard to block nine Black students from integrating Central High School in Little Rock. Not until President Dwight Eisenhower ordered troops to escort the students (who came to be known as the Little Rock Nine) into the school, were they allowed entrance. Or, one can turn to the year 1955 when Black parents in New Orleans, Louisiana sued the Orleans Parish School Board for failing to comply with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to desegregate schools. Five years later, in 1960, Ruby Bridges entered the all-white William Frantz Elementary School as a first grader, and was escorted into the school building by federal marshals at the greeting of a disorderly, angry, riotous mob of white people.

At the collegiate level, we have a plethora of historical examples of commitment and danger. One particular example is from the year 1956 when Autherine Lucy

from Shiloh, Alabama, became the first Black student to enroll at the University of Alabama in the presence of threats and mob protests. Before attending, Lucy and Pollie Ann Myers, another Black woman, initially applied and were accepted to the university in 1952, but were prevented from enrolling when university officials realized that they were Black. It was not until after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and with the support of attorneys Thurgood Marshall and Arthur Shores that Lucy was “allowed” admittance. Another example is from the year 1961 when Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes became the first Black students to register at and attend the University of Georgia, to the overt disgust of protesting white students, white residents, and robed Klansmen. Hunter and Holmes’ presence on campus infuriated people to the point that they were escorted away from campus by state troopers after deciding to withdraw from the university. However, Hunter and Holmes returned to the university and, in 1963, became the first Black students to graduate from the University of Georgia.

This seemingly normalized, yet overtly state-sanctioned violence against Black people, however, is not the shameful remnant of a distant past. Unfortunately, racist incidences remain—yes, still today—regular phenomena on many public and private college campuses in this country, including at: American University (signs with the confederate flag and cotton were posted on campus), Boston University (posters of Uncle Sam and a logo of white supremacy were found on campus), Claremont McKenna College (students wearing racist Halloween costumes), Ithaca College (a Black woman being referred to as “the savage”), Kansas State University (graffiti and racial slurs painted on a car), Princeton University (anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic, and racist fliers found on campus), The Ohio State University (tweets about lynching and photos of students in blackface), Towson University (hate speech directed at Black students), University of Pittsburgh (racist social media posts of children eating cotton candy), University of Louisville (photo of the president and staff members in sombreros, ponchos and fake mustaches), and, among many others on a constantly growing list, the University of Missouri (racial slurs directed at Black students). To deny that “racist and abusive histories and the discourses of white supremacy” have not continued to collude in maintaining Black oppression and preventing the dismantling of “systemic oppression, educational inequity, and racial violence” is dangerous, to say the least (Kinloch, 2016), and highlights the importance of choosing commitment and danger in the fight against oppression, hate, and unnecessary and violent forms of Black death.

One needs only turn to recent racially motivated and visibly public events at the University of Missouri. In one instance, a white man who interrupted a rehearsal for an upcoming performance sponsored by the university’s Legion of Black Collegians verbally threw racial insults at Black students. He commented, “These niggers are getting aggressive with me.” In another incident, members of the Legion of Black Collegians issued a statement that opens, “At approximately 11:50PM on Tuesday September 27th, 2016, two Black students were verbally assaulted in an obscene

manner with regards to their racial identity; again, two more Black students were called “Niggers” on the University of Missouri’s campus.” It continues, “As a group of six to seven white male and female students passed the members of the Legion of Black Collegians Activities Committee, one of the white female students from the group shouted, ‘look at those niggers looking at us.’” Members of the Legion of Black Collegians were outraged, and their words encapsulate how I feel and how I hope we all feel: “Quite frankly, WE. ARE. SICK. OF. THIS!” (Twitter). These are but a few of the many racist events that have recently occurred and that continue to occur on university campuses across the nation.

It is quite clear that there are many institutions of higher education—particularly those that are predominately white institutions (PWIs)—that refuse to “acknowledge the injustices that have been taking place throughout the country and the lack of judicial accountability” (The Black Student Forum Open Letter, 2014). This was the case at Boston College when, in 2014, the college’s Black Student Forum wrote an open letter to senior administration about its silence with regard to national and global forms of injustices experienced by Black people. Situating the letter in the Black Lives Matter movement, members of the Black Student Forum declared: “We interpret the administration’s silence as a sign of neutrality and, as Desmond Tutu states, ‘If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality’” (The Black Student Forum Open Letter; see also Penn, Kinloch, & Burkhard, 2016). Education systems, such as our own, that avoid discussions on and make invisible the devastation of racism, brutality, systemic oppression, and myriad other forms of injustices undermine the work of commitment. It is this commitment that must serve as a response to imposed forms of danger that get directed at Black people. These forms of danger also prevent the occurrence of any serious attempts to engage in radical possibilities for the sustainability of Black life and Black love.

There are many more examples, both historical and contemporary, of the interconnection between Black people’s commitment and Black people’s endangerment. This interconnection becomes even more evident in the ongoing fights, protests, and demonstrations against the criminalization, racial oppression, racial profiling, mass killings, and other sanctioned forms of violence directed at Black people in this country, let alone across the world. In fact, it is this interconnection that is viewed as a threat to whiteness and white privilege, and that calls out the nonsense of white fragility and the privileged level of ridiculousness of white tears (DiAngelo, 2011; Matias, 2013). Let’s continue with the process of calling these things out, and as we do, let’s move toward a humanizing, radical form of transformation that rejects Black hate and honors Black lives.

The Threat of Identity Loss

In light of our ongoing individual and collective attempts to be Black, to live Black, to love Black, there is undeniably a perpetual rejection, or abnegation, of the value, purpose, and dignity of Black life and Black bodies in this country. This is possibly the case because of the perceived magnitude of our commitment against danger. Or, to borrow the words of Baldwin (1962), “the danger, in the minds of most white Americans, is the loss of their identity” (p. 9). Thus, the relics of slavery and the Jim Crow era, which are still alive and real, and now the danger of the Trump administration—these things all seek to produce and re-produce a narrative of and about Black people. It is a narrative that wants to negatively shape our consciousness, excuse our murders, and erase our history of innovation and ingenuity. It is a narrative steeped in a patriarchy so deep that it enabled a presidential candidate to tweet, “26,000 unreported sexual assaults in the military—only 238 convictions. What did these geniuses expect when they put men & women together?” (May 7, 2013). Or, to tweet: “If Hillary Clinton can’t satisfy her husband what makes her think she can satisfy America?” (original misspelling, April 16, 2015). It is also a narrative that shuns any movements toward Black life, Black love, and Black justice. This is a narrative that allows people like Rudy Giuliani to describe the Black Lives Matter movement as

...inherently racist because, number one, it divides us...All lives matter: White lives, black lives, all lives and number two: Black Lives Matter never protests when every 14 hours somebody is killed in Chicago, probably 70-80% of the time (by) a black person...Where are they when a young black child is killed? (qtd. in Lim, 2016)

What Giuliani and other critics of Black resisters and Black resistance refuse to recognize is that in this country, Black lives have not mattered, Black lives still do not matter, and Black lives remain, perpetually, under daily surveillance and constant attack. The enslavement and brutality of Black people, hence, white American history, teaches us that. Thus, an overarching goal of both grassroots activism and civil rights movements in this country was, in part, to end racial segregation and violence against Black people, and to stop voter suppression and the unconstitutional treatment of Black people in all walks of life (Armstrong, 2015; Lawson, 1991). In many ways, this goal materialized in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, and the Black Power Movement of the late 1960s to the mid 1970s. I believe that this goal connects to, even as it differs from, the goal of today’s Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which is to “affirm the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum” (<https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>). In fact, BLM “centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements” (<https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>) because BLM

... is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks' contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression." (<https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/herstory/>)

Black Lives Matter—the movement, the organization, the hashtag, and the reality—all intersect in their rejection of the silencing and killing of Black people, on the one hand, and in their pursuit of freedom and justice for Black people, on the other hand. It is, individually and collectively, a movement, an organization, a hashtag, and a reality *for* and *of* social justice, social restoration, diversity, globalization, and the dismantling of cis-gender privilege. It is, in essence, a movement *of* action and *for* justice for Black communities, for Black lives, and for Black love.

Founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, Black Lives Matter is for Tanisha Anderson, Sandra Bland, Rekia Boyd, Michael Brown, Miriam Carey, and William Chapman. Black Lives Matter is for Jamar Clark, John Crawford III, Terence Crutcher, Samuel DuBose, and Ezell Ford. It is for Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Kimani Gray, Akai Gurly, Dontre Hamilton, and Eric Harris. Black Lives Matter is for Anthony Hill, Meagan Hockaday, Corey Jones, Charley Leundeun Keunang, and Renisha McBride. It is for Jeremy McDole, Laquan McDonald, Antonio Martin, Trayvon Benjamin Martin, Jerame Reid, Tamir Rice, Tony Robinson, Jonathan Sanders, and Walter Scott. Among many, many others, Black Lives Matter is also for The Charleston Nine.

Black. Lives. Matter.

So, when critics of BLM and other social justice movements (e.g., #NoDAPL, #FlintWaterCrisis, #EqualPay for Women, Occupy Movement, Chicago Teachers' Strike) refuse to understand their significance, they are clearly reiterating what Baldwin (1962) observed—that some white people believe that their identities, properties, and privileges will be endangered in the presence and sustainability (even in the talk) of Black freedom and liberation. This refusal to understand strengthens the production of the negative, racist narrative about Black people, which ignores the promise, from the *Declaration of Independence* (1776), of “unalienable rights” and of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of justice” for all human beings. It is a narrative that we must resist and reject, and one way to do so is through commitment and danger, which requires us to engage in radical possibilities, knowing that there are others out there who see this engagement not *as* love and not *of* love, but as a threat to their identities and privileges.

Toward Radical Possibilities for Black Life and Black Love

The opening stanza of “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” written by James Weldon Johnson (1899), beckons us to sing “Till earth and heaven ring,/Ring with the harmonies of Liberty.” It encourages us to “Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,” and to “march on till victory is won.” However, victory will

not be won until all Black people are free. Victory will not be won until all Black people have, undeniably, a right to life and liberty, a right to education and housing, a right to full participation in all aspects of society. Victory will not be won until all Black people are free from the fear of violence, from the fear of being killed for being Black, from the fear of being watched and harassed in a clothing store or choked to death on a street corner. Victory will not be won until all Black people are free from the fear of being killed for walking in a neighborhood where their fathers or mothers or brothers or sisters or aunts or uncles or cousins or friends or their children live. Victory will not be won until all Black people are free from the fear of being thrown racial slurs, from the fear of being traumatized by institutionalized forms of racism. Victory is yet to be won and, thus, victory gets wrapped tightly in the reality of “there,” to return to Jamila Lyiscott’s (2017) “2053.”

It is “there” that would intentionally “snatch the breath from the lungs of an innocent Black body on a Tuesday and shrug it off as historical retribution.” It is this same “there” that would make “healthcare...a game of Russian roulette-style execution” and that would “attempt to build a wall” (Lyiscott, 2017). Because of the danger and pain of “there,” and the paralysis that “there” causes, I think it is important for us to heed Lyiscott’s advice. We must stand “at the precipice of pandemonium,” fight “for a palpable peace,” and create “together a quilt of hope out of every fiber of our being.”

To stand “at the precipice of pandemonium”—to stand, tall and bravely, in the face and at the edge of chaos, disruption, harm. To stand for justice for Black people and other people of color who have been murdered by police officers. To stand against the criminalization and high rates of mass incarceration of Black and Brown people in this country. To stand in rejection of the ongoing hate crimes against Muslims and their Mosques across the world, and especially under the administration of the 45th president of the United States. To interrogate whiteness as well as the norms and expectations of monolingualism and monoculturalism. That is, to stand “at the precipice of pandemonium.”

To fight “for a palpable peace”—to contest the rhetoric of, and the actions directed toward, strategic, sanctioned forms of deadly discord. To stand against the mass shooting of more than 50 LGBTQ people at a nightclub in Orlando, Florida. To stand against the killing of nine Black church members in Charleston, South Carolina. To stand against the victimization of women whose perpetrators go unpunished or are minimally sentenced. To stand and fight for peace and against the threat of the building of a wall between the United States and Mexico. To fight, that is, “for a palpable peace.”

To create “together a quilt of hope out of every fiber of our being”—to collaborate and connect, to form a collective, to build, one with another, against policies that allow stop and frisk, stand your ground, zero tolerance, and racial profiling practices. To stand with Standing Rock Sioux Tribe’s refusal of the Dakota Access pipeline by standing for Indigenous lands, human life, and the sacredness of water.

To create movements against hateful anti-race, anti-LGBTQ, and anti-immigration legislation. To create programs grounded in justice and equity, and dedicated to social, civil, and educational rights. To create a revolutionary agenda for human life and human survival that is predicated upon anti-racist, non-deficit research, outreach, and advocacy efforts within community contexts and institutional infrastructures. To create “together a quilt of hope out of every fiber of our being.”

If we can engage in these actions, then we can begin to “lift every voice and sing” as an act of healing, organizing, resisting, and resistance. That is, we can seriously create and participate in social movements and protests that have as primary goals the overhaul of inequitable education and economic systems, the rejection of deficit, racist, and bigoted narratives about Black people and other marginalized peoples, and the creation and sustainability of spaces and places that are and must remain sanctuaries against potential harm and the threat to Black love and Black life.

This is my commitment against danger, and my unwavering obligation to Black life and Black love. This is how I work toward radical possibilities. Will you join me?

Note

¹ Used with permission obtained from Jamila Lyiscott on January 27, 2017.

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Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education
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Vision and Scope

Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education is an academic forum for the transdisciplinary study of the dynamic and complex relationship between the various competing and complementary aspects of education broadly defined. *Taboo* is grounded on the notion of radical contextualization. To investigate the notion of radical contextualization, we encourage scholars to draw from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives to contest current taken-for-granted approaches in education and in the academy. Some of these approaches include, Post-Structuralism, Feminist Studies, Actor-Network Theory, Queer Theory, New Materialism, Historical/Genealogical, Affect Theory, and Critical approaches to race, class, and gender studies. Beyond simply articulating critical perspectives we seek contributions willing to stake the unsaid and the previous and current unconsiderable and/or irreconcilable. We encourage work that seeks to wrap its lips around the complex, chaotic, and cutting edges of the sayable and knowable. We want to push readers and contributors to perform complex questioning of the very ideas that have become all too common-place within traditional academic journals. We specifically foster discussions across and through different disciplines including explorations into how intertextualities and intersectionalities operate throughout and within different educational times/spaces/places. The journal encourages papers from a wide range of contributors who work within these general areas. We also encourage research that pushes the methodological boundaries. *Taboo* seeks a dialogic series of interactions that push place, space, and time boundaries as well as invites a leaning in and pushing back approach. Not only do we seek content that engages these values, but we also favor unique, controversial, and continually complicated forms and modes of presentations. As its title suggests, *Taboo* seeks provocative and controversial submissions.

Reviewer Questions and Criteria

When submitting a piece for consideration, please know that reviewers will be asked the following questions about your manuscript:

How does the manuscript take up a transdisciplinary study of the dynamic and complex relationship between the various competing and complementary aspects of education broadly defined?

How and to what extent does the manuscript address the notion of radical contextualization?

How does the manuscript investigate the notion of radical contextualization?

How do scholars draw from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives to contest current taken-for-granted approaches in education and in the academy? (Some of these approaches include, Post-Structuralism, Feminist Studies, Actor-Network Theory, Queer Theory, New Materialism, Historical/Genealogical, Affect Theory, and Critical approaches to race, class, and gender studies).

Beyond simply articulating critical perspectives how does the manuscript stake the unsaid and the previous and current unconsiderable and/or irreconcilable?

How and to what extent does the work seeks to wrap its lips around the complex, chaotic, and cutting edges of the sayable and knowable?

How does the manuscript push readers and contributors to perform complex questioning of the very ideas that have become all too common-place within traditional academic journals?

How does the manuscript foster discussions across and through different disciplines including explorations into how intertextualities and intersectionalities operate throughout and within different educational times/spaces/places?

How does the manuscript foster research that pushes the methodological boundaries?

How and to what extent does the manuscript foster a dialogic series of interactions that push place, space, and time boundaries as well as invites a leaning in and pushing back approach?

To what extent is the content of the manuscript provocative and controversial?

Types of Manuscripts

Articles: *Taboo* accepts what might be called traditional academic articles. We also encourage scholars to write and produce research that exposes the limits of this form as well as compose research in modes that would not be considered in mainstream academic journals. We expect thoughtful, provocative, and well-researched articles, but we also encourage authors to play with form and content. There is no word limit. Articles will go through a double-blind peer-review process. Authors can expect to receive a decision in 3-4 months.

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Taboo

The Journal of Culture and Education

Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education is an academic forum featuring the study of teaching and pedagogy that focuses on the relationship between education and its sociocultural context. Grounded on the notion of “radical contextualization,” **Taboo** presents compelling and controversial pieces from a wide range of contributors.

Taboo began as a publication of Peter Lang Publishing, with two issues published each year in 1995, 1996, and 1997. **Taboo** has since been acquired by Caddo Gap Press, which renewed publication of the journal with the Spring-Summer 2000 issue.

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