THE POWER OF TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING TO DISRUPT RACISM, MARGINALIZATION, AND INEQUITY: THE ROLE OF FACULTY AS TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERS IN THE ACADEMY

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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
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THE POWER OF TEACHING

- For students’ academic learning
- For students’ sense of belonging
- For students’ sense of themselves as smart, capable, and for their perseverance
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BUT—

It works both ways.

Listen to the power of teaching through the voices of students.
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Was there a teacher who had a significant impact on you?
We leave the power of teaching to chance.
(HOW) CAN WE DELIBERATELY MAKE TEACHING’S POWER A FORCE FOR JUSTICE?

- How do we harness the power of teaching for individual flourishing, and for a just society?

- How do we educate so that we stop wasting lives, stop hate and killing? (Maisha Winn, Ihab Hassan)

- How do we use the opportunity of our times?
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION (2017)

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen the student educational experience
2. Increase completion and reduce inequities
3. Control costs and increase affordability
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
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PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

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This means teaching.
The work of teaching is co-constructed

- ... in broad socio-political, historical, economic, cultural, community, family environments
- ... through the interpretations and interactions of teachers, students, and “content”

Cohen, Raudenbush, and Ball (2003), Ball & Forzani (2007)
CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY: A “PEDAGOGY OF OPPOSITION”

- Academic success
- Cultural competence
- Critical consciousness for change

1. Teachers’ conceptions of knowledge, community, themselves as teachers
2. Teachers’ core beliefs in students’ competence and commitment to each student’s success
3. Teachers’ reciprocal relations with students and their communities

Gloria Ladson-Billings
THE WORK OF JUSTICE LIVES INSIDE THE WORK OF TEACHING

- By understanding one’s identity and role as part of a broader system of oppression that is historical and persistent
- By knowing what “normally” happens and how these patterns reproduce oppression, and by deliberately doing things that counter those patterns
- By seeing and affirming each student—their strengths and their academic work
- By opening up “content” and possibilities for students to connect with and do academic work

Mann, Willis, Hickman, Ball, Goffney (2017)

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(Professional) teaching is unnatural work. Why?
WHY IS (PROFESSIONAL) TEACHING UNNATURAL WORK?

Knowing content for teaching

Disrupting deep societal biases

Orienting to others

Communicating across difference

Connecting with communities and also buffering the larger society

Using high-leverage practices of teaching that are different from "natural" instincts

It's not about oneself

Requires professional, not personal judgments

March 19, 2018

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DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
MEET ANIYAH AND TONI, RISING FIFTH GRADERS

ANIYAH

TONI
What number does the orange arrow point to? Explain how you figured it out.
What do Aniyah and Toni know and what can each do?
VIDEO: ANIYAH AND TONI

Teacher: Listen closely and see what you think about her reasoning and her answer.

This video and additional supporting materials are available online here.
WHAT DO MANY “HEAR” IN ANIYAH AND TONI?

ANIYAH

- She has the wrong answer: 1/7

TONI

- She is playing with her hair and trying to get attention
- She is trying to embarrass Aniyah
WHAT DO ANIYAH AND TONI KNOW AND WHAT CAN EACH DO?

ANIYAH

- Uses the definition for a fraction to explain
  - She identifies the “whole”
  - She makes sure the intervals are equal
  - She counts intervals and not tick marks
  - She knows how to write “one-seventh”
- Produces a mathematically well-structured explanation
- Presents her ideas clearly

TONI

- Listens closely to a classmate’s presentation
- Uses the definition for a fraction to ask
  - How Aniyah decided on 7 parts
- Asks a pointed mathematical question
(HOW) CAN TEACHING WORK FOR JUSTICE?

INVISIBLE WORK

- Purposefully and efficiently reads students’ work while circulating
- Selects a student to present who will push the conceptual understanding forward, and for whom this positioning will be significant
- Disrupts racist and gendered patterns by:
  - Believing that Black girls are smart; knowing Aniyah and Toni and their smartness
  - Trusting the children to think, be engaged, try to learn
  - Making choices about how to read children and what not to make an issue of

VISIBLE WORK

- Supports Aniyah to present skillfully at the board, using representations; encourages Toni to ask her on-point question
- Disrupts marginalizing patterns that focus on “error” and focuses instead on concepts and reasoning
- Expects other children to listen and to ask questions and creates structures that support children to listen to others’ ideas
- Models and names “good questions” as an important mathematical practice
- Strategically names and highlights particular children displaying specific forms of competence
(HOW) CAN TEACHING WORK FOR JUSTICE?

**INVISIBLE WORK**
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- Selects a student to present who will push the conceptual understanding forward, and for whom this positioning will be significant
- Disrupts racist and gendered patterns by: believing that Black girls are smart; knowing Aniyah and Toni and their smartness; trusting the children to think, be engaged, try to learn; making choices about how to read children and what not to make an issue of

**VISIBLE WORK**
- Helps children express and think about their ideas
- Establishes norms and routines for classroom discourse and work
- Models and names “good questions” as an important mathematical practice
- Strategically names and highlights particular children displaying specific forms of competence
- Building respectful relationships with and among students
- Eliciting and interpreting students’ thinking
- Leading group discussions
- Modeling and explaining content
- Establishing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work
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CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

[Bar chart showing demographic changes from 1990 to 2013.]

- White: 79 in 1990, 70 in 2000, 58 in 2013
- Black: 10 in 1990, 12 in 2000, 15 in 2013
- Hispanic: 6 in 1990, 10 in 2000, 17 in 2013
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 4 in 1990, 7 in 2000, 6 in 2013
- American Indian/Alaska Native: 1 in 1990, 1 in 2000, 1 in 2013

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DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDE IN THE U.S.: FACULTY AND UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

- Faculty:
  - Of Color: 22%
  - White: 78%

- Students:
  - Of Color: 42%
  - White: 58%
WHY IS THIS GAP SUCH A CRITICAL PROBLEM?

- The profession responsible for developing the primary human capital of our society should reflect our population.
- Importance of students interacting with faculty members with whom they can identify.
- Expanding the diversity of faculty members with whom students interact in college.
- The knowledge base of the profession requires the expertise and experience of people who are diverse with respect to race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, language, gender.
Let’s review the core argument of this talk.
WHAT DOES SUCH A TEACHER, WHO BELIEVES AND HOLDS THESE AIMS, DO?

This is the value of the teacher, who looks at a face and says there’s something behind that and I want to reach that person, I want to influence that person, I want to encourage that person, I want to enrich, I want to call out that person who is behind that face, behind that color, behind that language, behind that tradition, behind that culture. I believe you can do it. I know what was done for me.

Maya Angelou
MY ASKS OF YOU

- Question “the canon.” Select course readings and materials that extend and challenge the representations scholars in your field.
- Ensure that the contexts, content, and people of the examples, representations, illustrations, readings, and other media used in your courses regularly represent communities of color and non-dominant groups.
- Explicitly surface and discuss the ways in which racism underlies many taken-for-granted and normal practices in schooling and classrooms.
- Support students and colleagues to understand their identities and roles as part of a broader system of oppression that is historical and persistent (note: this includes explicit attention to White privilege and White supremacy)
- Directly challenge deficit views of students of color and low-income students
THANK YOU!
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Slides will be available on my website
https://deborahloewenbergball.com/
(“Google” Deborah Ball)
Image on slide 10:

Graphic on slides 9 and 11:


Data on slide 24:
Data on slide 25:

Image on slide 29:
“Maya Angelou visits YCP! 2/4/13” by Flickr user York College ISLGP Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic License: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/