

THESIS

6

2000

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 1293 02079 9452

This is to certify that the

dissertation entitled

READING AND WRITING THEIR WORLDS:  
PORTRAYALS OF PRACTICE IN TEACHING FOR CRITICAL LITERACY

presented by

Michael J. Michell

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for

Ph.D degree in Curriculum, Teaching, and  
Educational Policy

Dr. Cheryl L. Rosam  
Major professor

Date 12-6-99

**PLACE IN RETURN BOX**  
 to remove this checkout from your record.  
**TO AVOID FINES** return on or before date due.  
**MAY BE RECALLED** with earlier due date if requested.

DATE DUE	DATE DUE
<del>APR 03 2003</del> 06 05 03	
APR 03 2006 04 23 08	
MAR 27 2009	

READING AND WRITING *THEIR* WORLDS:  
PORTRAYALS OF PRACTICE IN TEACHING FOR CRITICAL LITERACY

VOLUME I

By

Michael J. Michell

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Teacher Education

1999

## ABSTRACT

### READING AND WRITING *THEIR* WORLDS: PORTRAYALS OF PRACTICE IN TEACHING FOR CRITICAL LITERACY

By

Michael J. Michell

There is a dearth in the general education and English education literature of rich portrayals and analyses of secondary English teachers teaching for critical literacy. This qualitative study investigates three secondary English teachers, *critical educators*, working in diverse contexts (suburban, mid-size industrial, and urban) teaching for critical literacy. As a participant observer employing a narrative inquiry approach, I conducted in-depth interviews of the teachers, interviewed selected students, carried out classroom observations, and analyzed written and creative work, developing a grounded theory of teaching for critical literacy. A tree rooted in the world serves as a metaphorical concept map to articulate a theoretical framework illuminating the complexities of teaching for critical literacy as seen in the three classrooms presented. The “tap root” of this metaphorical tree is Freire and Macedo’s (1988) conceptualization that critical literacy involves learning to read and write the word and the world. Eight theoretical roots grow out of the tap root that derive from the analysis of the teachers’ practices and function as heuristics: *cultivating learning communities, social constructivist perspectives on learning, teaching practices reflective of critical pedagogies, multicultural perspectives and curriculum, inquiry-oriented teaching, teaching writing as a process, reader-response orientations to teaching literature, and a teacher’s passion for subject and work*. These theoretical elements are interconnected facets of the three

teachers working to cultivate critical literacy. I assert in this study that “the personal” influences “the pedagogical”; therefore, the author includes life stories of each teacher. The lives and work of the three teachers inform the ways in which critical educators can provide students opportunities to read and write their worlds in order to become more than “literate” in the traditional sense, but also to become more socially conscious and disposed to be agents for change in their own lives and the communities in which they live. I have included my own life story in the Prologue and reflections on my own teaching practice in order to situate myself within the study. The combination of life stories, classroom stories, and analysis makes teaching for critical literacy vivid and accessible.

Copyright by  
MICHAEL JOHN MICHELL  
1999

*what I don't know now  
I can still learn...  
if I learn I can teach others  
if others learn first  
I must believe  
they will come back and teach me...  
what I don't know now  
I can still learn*

*Fran Winant*



*Of dates and facts  
some think education is.  
Rather, it is the manner of use  
by the heart and mind  
of all knowledge.*

*Theta Burke*

*"This generation must break  
its neck in order that the next  
may have smooth going."*

*Virginia Woolf*

*When I speak  
let not my words be all that is heard.  
Listen also to the feeling which births them  
And allow that to correct any distortion  
caused by the inaccuracy  
of my speech.*

*Theta Burke*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A teacher is someone who touches the present and future lives of individuals in a myriad of ways. A teacher provokes thought and reflection through dialogue, question, and challenge. A teacher inspires and motivates. A teacher models. A teacher guides. A teacher bridges the known and the unknown. A teacher provides critical intervention. A teacher transforms. A teacher changes the world, one student at a time. A teacher does so much more. Our teachers are thanked too infrequently and with too little vigor. I suspect that most people never know the extent they shape and touch the lives of people they come into contact with, even for a brief time. I want to thank my teachers, near and distant, who have made me who I am today, and by extension affected the substance, form, and spirit of this dissertation.

I thank my mother, Betty Michell, who has guided me as a reader and a writer and a person. Without her I would not be the man I am today, nor the writer. Her contributions to this work go well beyond the transcription of audio tapes and copy-editing that she did. Her caring and sacrificing spirit have permeated my life, and continue to touch the lives of everyone around her. Without her in my life and by my side in this project, the work would be much less than it is.

I thank my sixth grade teachers, Mrs. Casazza who recognized I couldn't read and Mrs. Tachewa who taught me to read, moving me away from guided reading skills in color-coded ability level workbooks and onto actual books.

I thank Mr. Beason my 10th grade English teacher, Mr. Spina my guidance counselor, and John Tachehara of Omega House who provided the first critical intervention in a young life blurred by substance abuse.

I thank Coach Persons who pushed me so hard as an athlete, student, and person that I failed, at first, but only so I could get up and keep going and grow much stronger. And I thank Mr. Squires and Mrs. Boone, two social studies teachers, who believed I could learn, pushed me to learn, and inspired a life of learning.

I thank Karen Hansen, the doctoral student in English, who was my English 101W and 102 instructor. Her caring and guidance as a teacher made the difference in my being able to continue pursuing a college education. And I thank Ron James, a doctoral student in history, who was an inspiring teacher and a wise guide for my beginning journey as a scholar.

I thank Michael Coray, professor of history, and Elizabeth Francis, professor of English, whose efforts to deepen my learning stayed with me, at times haunting me, at times driving me. When they were my teachers, I was not quite ready for what they were pushing me toward, but their efforts proved to be of lasting importance.

I thank Virginia Young, my cooperating teacher, who modeled for me that teaching is intellectual work, demanded the same of me, and opened the door for me in a career as an educator.

I thank Jonathan Lovell and members of the Northern Nevada Writing Project, particularly Denise Gallues and Neil Fockler, who helped me to become a writer and a teacher of writing. Their mentoring was transformative.

I thank Robert Harvey, David Hettich, and Cecile Lindsay who were pivotal teachers in my life, and supported and guided my work as a Masters student. Each, in their unique way, entered my intellectual and personal life, shaping my interests and work.

I thank my former colleagues at Washoe High School, Sparks High School, and Singapore American School who helped me become the educator I am today, particularly Jim Wilding, Jan Miller, Jaci Jones, Neil Fockler, John Lundemo, Mayvonne Wilkins, Gary Glogovac, Jeff Norris, Robert Jerow, Jim Baker, Michael Imperi, Steven Pagaard, Mary Catherine Frazier, Ron Starker, Sarah Christensen, Ginny Donahue, Glenn Chapin, William Reeves, Mike Norman, Steve Reed, Miffie Greer, Dan Scinto, and Brian Lehan.

I thank Peggy McIntosh, Emily Style, and the *Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity* (SEED) family. Their words, writings, and work changed, and continue to change, my personal and professional life.

I thank the Michigan State University doctoral students I have worked with and become friends with, particularly, Elaine Howes, Harold Morgan, Lynne Cavosos, Constanza Hazelwood, Jocelyn Glazier, Loucia Constantinou, Martial Dembele, Leslie Petaway, and the late Steve Kirsner.

I thank the students that I have worked with, so many who have touched and taught me, but especially Christine Jernigan, Greg Frey, Jennifer Bowman, Lynn Webster, Carol Beverwyk, Kate Arvo, Scott Warrow, Scott Harris, Bethany Rinks, and Stacey Anderson. They all give me hope for the future.

I thank the faculty at Michigan State University who have guided my learning and my work as a graduate student, particularly, Susan Melnick, Bruce Burke, Michael Sedlak, Sharon Feiman-Nemser, Marilyn Frye, Kathy Roth, Deborah Ball, Maggie Lampert, David Labaree, Doug Campbell, Perry Lanier, Lauren Young, Patty Stock, Tom Bird, Diane Holt-Reynolds, Suzanne Wilson, Pat Edwards, and Sharon Thomas.

I thank several special friends. David and Cheryl Darnton, and Gary Radke, for providing me with food, shelter, and being interested audiences and respondents for my “stories from the field” during the most intense data collection periods. And Joan Hunault, Laura Roop and Dick Koch, Kathy and Frank Fear, Bill Rosenthal, David Wright and Audrey Petty, Mary Collar, Glenn Waldquist and Laura Waldo, and Reuben Rubio for providing listening hearts and ears, and wisdom to live by.

I thank Chris Clark and members of the 1996-97 and 1998-99 Writers Symposia who read “draftings” of this work and provided vital, often painfully true, feedback. Their connection to my struggles as a researcher and writer helped sustain my progress. And I thank Bill McCall and members of the Michigan State University dissertation writing support group. Their listening, their stories of similar struggles, their openness and honesty helped me forge through the most emotionally trying of times.

I thank my committee members. I have taken multiple courses with each. They have earned my respect – sometimes filled me with awe – as teachers, researchers, and people. Each has responded to particular needs I have had as a learner. Lynn Paine provided the earliest guidance and support in negotiating feminist and critical theory, and remained a consistent influence in my thinking and efforts to work as a teacher educator, particularly as one committed to teaching for social justice. Diane DuBose Brunner has been an inspiration as a critical educator. She introduced me to a world of ideas and voices that has forever changed me. And early in my graduate studies she supported my research and writing in ways no one else could or would. Susan Florio-Ruane has played a special role in shaping my thinking about teaching writing. She has also been an invaluable respondent to the range of my writings – personal narrative, poetry, and

research. I will forever carry with me the public and private conversations I have had with these special teachers in my life. I especially thank them for not giving up on me and pushing me toward a higher standard in my work.

I thank Cheryl Rosaen, my program and dissertation advisor. Cheryl has walked with me every step of the way since I began my doctoral studies. I could never thank her enough or repay the time she has invested in my growth. She has been my strongest source of support in the College of Education. She has been a true and trusted advisor. She has given of her time, given a depth of intellectual and emotional energy, that astounds me. This dissertation is what it is because of her close readings through many drafts, copious and insightful feedback, and the many conversations we have had about this work. I will be forever thankful, and I will forever carry forward the way she has shaped my work as a teacher educator, researcher, and writer.

I thank the teachers – Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, William Harrison – and the students who allowed me to be a part of their lives, together, in the classrooms I studied. They offered me their trust and opened windows into their worlds as teachers, learners, and people.

All of the people that I have named above, and many who have gone unnamed, will continue to play significant roles in my continuing journey, one of the mind, body, and spirit. It feels as if the journey has only begun. I will close these acknowledgments with recognition of Corinna Hasbach, my life partner, and our five furry friends. There are no words I could write that would capture how much Corinna has taught me and how much she means in my life. “Everything” would be an understatement. More than any one person, or the cumulative impact of all, she has helped me grow into the man I am

now. She has lived the writing of this work with me. It is imbued with her insights and spirit. As with several others, but to a greater degree with her, this work is what it is because of her involvement in my life and this project. Our five companion animals – our dogs, Reebok and Underdog, and our cats, Vegan, Tahoe, and Coco – have given so much through their need to convey their love and receive my own. They have provided a warmth to my life, making sacrifices and demands of a dissertation bearable. Corinna and these friends are my family, and they all remind me daily that there are more important things in life than a dissertation, a degree, a driven career... for without them and their love, life would be empty.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	xviii
PROLOGUE:	
IN OUR OWN LIFE STORIES RARELY ARE WE STATIC CHARACTERS .....	1
Introduction .....	1
An Uncritical Beginning .....	4
Conclusion: The Importance of Life Stories .....	15
INTRODUCTION:	
MAPPING THE TERRAIN .....	18
CHAPTER 1	
THEORIZING TEACHING FOR CRITICAL LITERACY .....	21
Introduction .....	21
The Origins of My Own Critical Literacy .....	23
The Critical Turn .....	24
The Growth of My Developing Theory of Teaching for Critical Literacy .....	30
The Tap Root .....	30
The Pitfalls of Definition .....	37
In Teachers' Voices: Describing the Literacy They Cultivate .....	41
Carol Lessing: "I'm Just a Classroom Teacher" .....	43
Alice Terry: "You're Not Going to Be a Silent Person Sitting in the Back of the Room Taking Notes" .....	46
William Harrison: "What You Call Critical Literacy...I Call Literacy" .....	49
Conclusion: Seeing the Students in Front of Them .....	52
CHAPTER 2	
OVERVIEW AND DESIGN OF A NARRATIVE INQUIRY .....	54
Introduction: A Tribute .....	54
Why Case Studies? .....	58
The Call for Rich Portrayals of Teaching for Critical Literacy .....	59
Who Are the Participants and What Is the Context of the Study? .....	66
Narrative Inquiry as Methodology .....	68
Narrative Inquiry as Seeking Connection and Care .....	70
Data Collection .....	75
Ethnographic Field Notes .....	77
Capturing Words, Sights, and Sounds .....	77
Representations of Student Work .....	79
Interviews with Teachers and Students .....	80
Working with the Data .....	84
Writing Life Stories .....	88

Selection of Events for Classroom Narratives .....	91
Writing Classroom Narratives .....	92
A Theory Takes Root .....	94

### CHAPTER 3

#### CASE STUDY OF CAROL LESSING

##### THE ART OF NOT TEACHING:

“WE ARE ALL LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER” .....	99
---	----

An Introduction .....	99
-----------------------	----

The Teacher .....	100
-------------------	-----

The School .....	101
------------------	-----

The Students .....	102
--------------------	-----

The Course .....	103
------------------	-----

##### A Life Story: "I Want the Cultures of All Lands

to Blow about My House" .....	106
-------------------------------	-----

Growing Up in a Small Town: “Cooperation and Collaboration are Essential for Survival” .....	108
---	-----

<u>“My Mom Had Been a Country School Teacher”</u> .....	109
---	-----

<u>“There Was a Certain Self-sufficiency That We Had”</u> .....	110
---	-----

<u>“This Girl Child Would Have an Education”</u> .....	110
--	-----

<u>“I Lived Vicariously Inside Books”</u> .....	111
---	-----

<u>“We Wrote a Theme a Week.... We Memorized the Grammar Book...the Same Way... We Memorized the Bible”</u> .....	112
---	-----

<u>“Allergy to Religion”</u> .....	113
------------------------------------	-----

<u>“I Married a Catholic”</u> .....	114
-------------------------------------	-----

<u>“We Were Fed a Steady Diet of Anticommunist Propaganda”</u> .....	116
--	-----

Jackie Kennedy Was a Role Model .....	117
---------------------------------------	-----

Civil Rights Was an Overriding Issue .....	117
--	-----

<u>“I Was Brought Up to Seek What Was Fair”</u> .....	118
---	-----

Life Story Analysis .....	119
---------------------------	-----

A Context .....	124
-----------------	-----

A Classroom Story: Names, Culture, Identity, and Community .....	126
--	-----

Names: “Everybody helps everybody...everybody knows everybody” .....	127
---	-----

<u>“What Is This Thing Called Culture?”</u> .....	136
---	-----

The First Day: Creating Community Through Names and Knowing ..	141
--	-----

A Community Activist in the Classroom: “Being a Chicana Feminist...I Approach Everything From the Perspective of a Woman First” .....	145
---	-----

Cultural Jumping: “From Where I Sit It Looks to Me Such an Incredible Voyage” .....	162
--	-----

##### An Analysis:

The Journey into Critical Literacy .....	176
--	-----

Collaboration, Discourse, and Enacting Social Constructivism in a “We” Community .....	176
---	-----

Passion for Life, Learning, Language, and Literature . . . . .	184
Reading and Writing Their Worlds: The Power of Naming . . . . .	191
Reading the World Inside and Outside the Classroom Walls . . . . .	197
An Unbounded Multicultural Curriculum . . . . .	198
Teaching for Change, Teaching for Social Action . . . . .	202
Constraints and Opportunities . . . . .	203

## CHAPTER 4

### CASE STUDY OF ALICE TERRY

#### THE ART OF PLANTING THE SEEDS OF LIFE LESSONS:

“HOPEFULLY SOME WILL TAKE” . . . . .	208
An Introduction . . . . .	208
The Teacher . . . . .	210
The School . . . . .	211
The Students . . . . .	212
The Course . . . . .	213
A Life Story: “Teaching Is an Extension of Life for Me” . . . . .	215
<u>“I’m Going to Be a Teacher”</u> . . . . .	216
Sometimes It Was Lonely Growing Up: “I Compensated. I Read a Lot” . . . . .	218
God, Spirituality, and Church: “...An Integral Part of My Life” . . . . .	220
Literature in Her Personal and Professional Life . . . . .	221
<u>“Assembly Is Still a Really Segregated Place”</u> . . . . .	222
Teaching From Her Life: “I Don’t Get on a Soapbox, but I Try to Get My Students to Think” . . . . .	223
Life Story Analysis . . . . .	226
A Context: This Side of the River . . . . .	232
A Classroom Story: Teaching Respect . . . . .	
“You Need to Treat People Like You Want to Be Treated” . . . . .	235
A Conversation With Alice Terry: “If You Don’t Have a Solution Then You Are Part of the Problem” . . . . .	235
Behind Closed Doors: “Why Are We Doing This?” . . . . .	240
Teaching Students to Think About It: What can we as individuals do to ensure liberty and justice for all? . . . . .	242
A Room with a View, Curriculum, and Students . . . . .	243
<u>“You All Have to Do Better Than This”</u> . . . . .	246
The Past as a Lesson for the Present . . . . .	250
<u>“But It Should Make You Think”</u> . . . . .	254
An Analysis: . . . . .	
Planting the Seeds of Critical Literacy . . . . .	264
The First Day: What the Classroom Story Reveals . . . . .	264
Beyond the First Day: What a Semester With Alice Terry Revealed . . . . .	270
A Passion for Literature: The Zora Neale Hurston Unit . . . . .	270
Doing What Needs to Be Done: Retaking the State Proficiency Test . . . . .	278

The Beauty of Dialect and Black English Vernacular . . . . .	280
Lessons About Life, Love, and Relationships: Learning to Respond to and Negotiate Literature . . . . .	284
Kindling Interest: Filling the Room with Her Voice . . . . .	287
Men and Women Together . . . . .	293
Men and Women Together... Interracially . . . . .	297
Broadening Horizons: From Plays to Table Manners . . . . .	301
A Teacher Cannot Do It All . . . . .	304
What is Within and Beyond Reach . . . . .	308

## CHAPTER 5

### CASE STUDY OF WILLIAM HARRISON

THE ART OF STORY, THE ART OF DISCOVERY . . . . .	317
An Introduction . . . . .	317
The Teacher . . . . .	319
The School . . . . .	320
The Students . . . . .	321
The Course . . . . .	323
A Context . . . . .	325
A Life Story: "Stories Speak Better than I Could Ever Teach" . . . . .	331
<u>"I Am a Writer. I Am a Teacher of Writing. I Am a Citizen of the     World..."</u> . . . . .	331
<u>"Growing Up I Was a Pretty Average Guy"</u> . . . . .	333
Learning to Be a Man From "The Trinity": A Grandfather . . . . .	333
Learning to Be a Man From "The Trinity": A Father . . . . .	336
Learning to Be a Man From "The Trinity": A Stepfather . . . . .	338
<u>"I Don't Really Remember Any of the Books I Read in School"</u> . . . . .	338
<u>"I Went to a Catholic High School....They Never Wanted You to     Question"</u> . . . . .	340
Taking Advantage of the System: Getting a "Great Education" . . . . .	342
Life Story Analysis . . . . .	344
A Classroom Story: Education as Hope and Revolution . . . . .	353
Readers and Writers at Work . . . . .	354
The Tools and Resources of a Reading and Writing Workshop . . . . .	356
A Loyal Guide and His Explorers Map the Morning Together . . . . .	360
The Discourse of Equity: "Maybe the Toilet Paper Is Just a Symbol" . . . . .	364
A Community of Writers Writes for Understanding . . . . .	374
Sharing Writing: We Are All Authors and Teachers . . . . .	378
The Path of Students' Best Interests . . . . .	393
An Analysis:	
The Roots of Critical Literacy in William Harrison's Classroom . . . . .	396
Cultivating Learning Communities: "There Is Something About a Quilt That Says People, Friendship, Community, Family, Home, and Love" . . . . .	397

Social Constructivist Perspectives on Learning: “He Educated Me” . .	403
Inquiry-Oriented Teaching: “A Teacher Must Be Willing to Abandon the Lesson Plan and Follow the Students’ Lead” . . . . .	407
Critical Pedagogies: “We Have to Move People to Act” . . . . .	413
Process Approaches to Teaching Writing: A Writer Teaches Writing . . . . .	417
Evoking Readers’ Response Through Multicultural Literature . . . . .	423
Passion for Subject and Work: “Invoking a Passion” . . . . .	426

## CHAPTER 6

### AN EXPANDED THEORY OF TEACHING FOR CRITICAL LITERACY

. . . . .	429
Introduction . . . . .	429
Cultivating Learning Communities . . . . .	435
Social Constructivist Perspectives on Learning . . . . .	443
Teaching Practices Reflective of Critical Pedagogies . . . . .	447
Multicultural Perspectives and Curriculum . . . . .	452
Inquiry-Oriented Teaching . . . . .	457
Teaching Writing as a Process . . . . .	463
Reader-Response Orientations to Teaching Literature . . . . .	470
Passion for Their Subject and Work . . . . .	476
Conclusion: Separated Names, Interconnected Theories . . . . .	484

## CHAPTER 7

### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF TEACHING FOR CRITICAL LITERACY . . . . .

. . . . .	487
Introduction . . . . .	487
Lesson Learned: Life Stories Illuminate Critical Education . . . . .	489
Lesson Learned: Narrative Inquiry Has the Potential to Evoke Identification . . . . .	492
Lesson Learned: There Are Implications for Teachers . . . . .	494
Lesson Learned: There Are Implications for Teacher Educators . . . . .	496
Carol Lessing . . . . .	497
Alice Terry . . . . .	500
William Harrison . . . . .	504
Lesson Learned: There Are Implications for Theorists . . . . .	506
Signs of Things to Come . . . . .	512

## APPENDIX A

### SAMPLE LETTER INVITING TEACHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

. . . . .	517
-----------	-----

**APPENDIX B**

CALENDARS OF OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS .....	519
--	-----

**APPENDIX C**

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS .....	522
-----------------------------------	-----

**APPENDIX D**

SAMPLE STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS .....	526
--	-----

**APPENDIX E**

DATA LOG .....	528
----------------	-----

**APPENDIX F**

WILLIAM'S I-SEARCH ASSIGNMENT .....	533
-------------------------------------	-----

**APPENDIX G**

TEACHERS' SCHOOL SCHEDULES .....	535
----------------------------------	-----

WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED .....	536
---------------------------------	-----

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 – Tree-Rooted-in-the-World Metaphorical Concept Map, Version 1.....	32
Figure 2 – Tree-Rooted-in-the-World Metaphorical Concept Map, Version 2.....	97
Figure 3 – Alice Terry’s “Us & Them” Handout.....	257

PROLOGUE:  
IN OUR OWN LIFE STORIES RARELY ARE WE STATIC CHARACTERS

Introduction

An educated person, first and foremost, understands that one's way of knowing, thinking, and doing flow from who one is. (Aoki, as cited in Pinar, 1995, p. 404)

"We not only teach what we know, we teach who we are" (J. B. Burke, personal communication, January 1993). I believe this strongly, passionately. Teaching is personal. As Aoki says, "knowing, thinking, and doing flow from who one is." Teaching flows from who we are. There is clearly a strong personal dimension to teaching. And what is personal is complex. Hanisch says, "the personal is political" (as cited in Humm, 1990, p. 162), and Steinem says, "the political is personal" (1992, p. 17). I agree with both observations. Therefore, teaching is also political. Feminist and critical social theorists are in agreement that in our teaching and in our research we must make visible what is "personal" (see Middleton, 1993; Grumet, 1988; Ellsworth, 1989; Hasbach, 1995; McLaren, 1989; Sears, 1992). Through honest explorations and representations of who we are as people, as teachers, as researchers, as intellectuals, we can better understand, and help others understand, how "the personal" affects and is effected by "the pedagogical" and "the political." Hasbach has explored the relationship of the personal and the political to teacher education. She writes, "as teacher educators with feminist imaginations: the personal is the pedagogical and the pedagogical is the personal, the political is pedagogical and the pedagogical is political" (1995, p. 37).

In Literacy: Reading the Word and the World (Freire & Macedo, 1987), Paulo Freire chooses to examine his own early literacy development as a way to reach a "critical understanding of the act of reading" (p. 29). Freire writes, "I began writing about the

importance of the act of reading...rereading essential moments in my own practice of reading" (p. 29). In putting forth his "essential moments" in becoming literate, Freire makes central "the personal" in his own practice of critical literacy and his work to help others develop critical literacy.

Each of the authors quoted above helps me to see that when educational researchers separate the pedagogical layer from "the personal" and "the political," much is missed in understanding the work of teachers. It makes sense to try to uncover and explore how the personal and political and pedagogical layers operate together in the work of teachers. In this study I uncover and explore the lives of three critical educators teaching for critical literacy in secondary English classrooms. I have attempted to understand their work, taking into consideration that their ways of "knowing, thinking, and doing flow from who [they are]," as Aoki says. I name the three teachers in this study – Carol Lessing,<sup>1</sup> Alice Terry, and William Harrison – "critical educators." This is *my characterization* of them. I also identify myself as a critical educator. The way I use the concept refers to teachers in primary through post-graduate situations who strive to develop their students' "critical literacy," a literacy that involves reading and writing both the word and the world.<sup>2</sup> The concepts of "critical educator" and "critical literacy" will be addressed at length in Chapter 1, and throughout the study.

---

<sup>1</sup>The names of the three critical educators in this study, their students, the schools and cities in which they teach, and any colleagues or guests that enter into the case studies are all pseudonyms. I have also done my best to omit or alter any information that might reveal the identities of any of the above.

<sup>2</sup>The conception of "reading and writing the word and the world" is used much in contemporary educational discourse. Although I heard it used by others first, I draw my meaning from what I believe to be the original source, Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo's Literacy: Reading the Word and the World (1987).

There has been much written about critical teachers. Yet, there is a “generic” quality to the portrayals of these teachers. Ellsworth warns against presenting images of “generic ‘critical teachers’”:

When educational researchers writing about critical pedagogy fail to examine the implications for the gendered, raced, and classed teacher and students for the theory of critical pedagogy, they reproduce by default, the category of generic “critical teacher”—a specific form of the generic human that underlies classical liberal thought. Like the generic human, the generic critical teacher is not, of course, generic at all. Rather, the term defines a discursive category predicated on the current mythical norm, namely: young, White, Christian, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, thin, rational man. Gender, race, class, and other differences become only variations on or additions to the generic human —“underneath we are all the same.” (1989, p. 310)

In an attempt to counter the tendency toward generic portrayals, I have written life stories of the three critical educators in this study. The life stories challenge any “mythical norm” that may be implied by those who write about critical education. The life stories presented in this study reveal similarities and differences between each individual. These similarities and differences include age, gender, race, socioeconomics, family and community backgrounds, religious roots, educational histories, and life and work experiences. Carol, Alice, and William have lived unique lives. Their life stories support an important reality. Critical educators share similarities and differences, as do individuals within any sizable group of people who are drawn from far and wide. They are women and men, they are young and old, they are from a range of racial, ethnic, and national backgrounds. They have different sexual identities. Their roots are from all socio-economic situations, communities, and family configurations. Their educational and work histories vary. Their spiritual commitment and involvement with religious institutions runs the gamut of possibility. They are involved in and driven by diverse

ideological and political currents. The life stories and classroom narratives in this study illuminate uniqueness and diversity of those who are critical educators, and show that critical educators change, as all people do, and have a great capacity to change. In our own life stories, rarely are we static characters. We are dynamic characters.

Parker Palmer begins The Courage to Teach with the declaration "we teach who we are" (1998, p. 1). Palmer challenges educators to investigate the personal, "Seldom, if ever, do we ask the 'who' question—who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form—or deform—the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, my world?" (p. 4). In the following section, I present a collage of my own "coming to literacy" memories to show how the personal affects, and is effected by, the political and the pedagogical. The life stories of Carol, Alice, and William provide broader background information, but are also concerned with their early coming to literacy memories. The life stories, mine and theirs, are swatches from the fabric of our lives – "essential moments" as Freire calls them – pertinent to understanding who this researcher is, for key life experiences bring me to this study, and essential in understanding who the selves are who teach in each of the three classrooms this study is concerned with. These life stories ground the personal in the political and pedagogical. I begin with my own.

### An Uncritical Beginning

(1972) Michael was told in sixth grade he did not know how to read. He spent half the school day the next three years with the reading teacher. He used the headphones and went through purple workbooks and green workbooks and yellow workbooks... large print pages with lots of questions at the end to test his "comprehension." In seventh grade he read his first novel, Mustang Man by Louis L'Amour, a book he took off the shelf without permission in the reading resource room. He was drawn to the Marlboro Man image on the cover. He was

still in the purple workbook. Later that year he asked his mother to buy him Little Big Man because he had liked the film, and the book had a picture from the film on its cover. He carried the book to school each day, reading little bits whenever he got a chance. When a bigger, older student knocked his book to the ground and trampled it, Michael fought back tears. "What are you crying for?" the kid taunted. "It's just a book." Michael was in the green workbook by then. By his eighth grade year he was picking up the novels his mother and sister read and left on the coffee table, books by Jacqueline Suzanne, Rosemary Rogers, and Joseph Wambaugh. He finished eighth grade in the yellow workbook. (1975) Michael was put into a basic English class when he entered ninth grade. He was given an orange level McDougal/Littell grammar book. They did not read "literature" in basic English. Occasionally the teacher read stories to them. They did a lot of grammar exercises. Michael was put into basic English when he entered tenth grade. He was given a blue level McDougal/Littell grammar book. He got to see the movie To Kill A Mockingbird in the auditorium when it was shown for regular and college bound tenth grade English classes after they had read the novel. Basic English students did not read novels. They did grammar exercises and vocabulary lists. By eleventh grade Michael had read everything by Joseph Wambaugh and Herman Wouk and several other popular fiction authors. Over Christmas vacation he read the entire Kent Family Chronicles by John Jakes, an eight volume American fiction (fiction with a little history). Michael still had not read a "book" for school, nor had he written a paper in an English class.

In the story above, told in the third person, I borrow stylistically from Victor Villanueva's personal and professional autobiography Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color (1993) to portray dramatically how my own early literacy experiences bear on my motivation to undertake this study of teaching for critical literacy, and to underscore the need for cultivating critical literacy. My own path toward "literacy" was full of challenges. I learned to read, and became a reader. However, the substance of my own English education in junior high and high school did little to help me make sense of and negotiate the world I was living in and playing out. The grammar book exercises, spelling and vocabulary lists, and comprehension questions at the end of infrequently read textbook selections did help make me "functionally literate," but did little to help me deal with the death of my father when I was thirteen, did little to help me confront and

deal with substance abuse problems that began in early adolescence and shadowed me through my twenties, did little to help me understand how my efforts to be popular and successful were intertwined with sexism and racism, violence and oppression.

The difficulties I experienced as a learner can be traced to the beginning of my formal education. It was not until I began teaching that I knew what "learning gaps" meant, however, I had lived through them and found ways to function in spite of them. My family made major moves three times in my first five years of schooling. Transferring from coast to coast, it wasn't until I was eleven years old that we settled down. I will never forget the fall day when Mrs. Casaza, my sixth grade teacher, sent me down to the school's basement during math time to see Mrs. Tachewa, the reading teacher. After several visits to Mrs. Tachewa, and undergoing several tests, she arrived at the conclusion that I could not read. It is amazing that neither my parents nor previous teachers had discovered my illiteracy. Through an emphasis on remedial reading for the next three years, and my own reading at home, that particular learning gap was bridged, while others were created. In order to make room for the intensive reading instruction I received, math and science classes were sacrificed.

There was another announcement when I was in sixth grade, one that had considerable repercussions for everyone in my family. On a February afternoon in 1973, my father came home and called my sister and me to the kitchen table where he and my mother were already sitting. In an experience I remember almost ethereally, my father explained that tests revealed he had cancer. He was scared and tried to be strong for his family. He was uncertain of his future, yet he tried to comfort us with positive possible outcomes that would not come true. Over the next several months he had radiation

therapy, and then in May he had a surgery that involved the removal of his voice box. His cancer was terminal. Day to day I watched my father deteriorate, unable to speak, occasionally catching him in the garage sneaking a smoke through a hole in his throat. In his last few months, his six foot three inch frame held the remains of a body that weighed less than 100 pounds. In the last weeks he often could not recognize his visitors. He died the August before I entered eighth grade, eighteen months after that first announcement.

By seventh grade I was already experimenting with marijuana and getting into the family liquor cabinet. By eighth grade I was getting stoned every day, and drinking heavily almost every weekend. By ninth grade I was drinking every day, overshadowing my abuse of narcotics. Labor Day weekend 1975, two friends and I sat in the front of an old Pontiac, driving home drunk over a mountain pass from our day at Lake Tahoe. (During the day we had consumed a case of Schlitz Malt Liquor "tall boys.") Almost passed out from intoxication, I grabbed the steering wheel of the car and caused an accident in which my best friend's back was broken. School and learning were remote concerns. In some classes I missed more days in a grading period than I attended. In the first quarter of the fall semester of my tenth grade year I missed first hour P.E. twice and sixth hour French forty times out of a possible forty-five class meetings. The pattern of destructiveness to myself and others escalated, unabated, until spring of my tenth grade year when I attended several evening meetings at a "House" for teenage runaways and substance abusers. I didn't drink for a thirteen week period, until the pressures of social life called again. From that point on I was aware, far in the back of my mind, that I had a problem. It was only years later, after several critical interventions involving teachers,

coaches, friends, and family that I faced the impact alcohol and drugs had had on my personal life, my academic life, and my professional life for almost twenty years.

It is not surprising that I barely graduated from high school. When I consider my adolescent actions, I know I was fortunate to have lived through the experience and received a diploma. I could have easily been a drop-out statistic. I could have easily been one of a number of students who died in DUI related accidents while I was in high school, or the classmate I did not know who left a pedestrian a quadriplegic, or the classmate I did know who drowned in his own vomit on the football field one night after a dance. I could have been a vital statistic. Sports kept me in school. I only had to pass most of my classes with the bare minimum in order to participate. That I did, most semesters. More importantly, there were a small number of teachers and coaches who reached me, not as a student but as a person. Knowing that people cared and believed in me was enough to keep me plodding ahead. By the time I was a senior I had just begun to enjoy learning, realizing I was capable of more than dunking a basketball, winning a track event, or draining a beer.

Going to the local university became the alternative to beginning a career in the construction industry and moving toward owning my own home and beginning a family. There were other advantages to continuing my schooling. I could continue receiving my father's "death benefits" (the irony pains me) from Social Security and the Veterans Administration; I could be with several friends who were going to school or had already begun; and, I could have the time and space to figure out what I wanted to do with my life.

The consequences of how I spent my time in high school surfaced immediately in the university I attended. The second week of school my instructor in English 101W (the lowest introductory class), Karen Hansen, called me in for a conference to discuss my first essay. I knew something was wrong when she asked me, "Why haven't you broken your essay into paragraphs?" Tears welled up in my eyes as the realization of not knowing what I should know, something very basic, was put before me. I had done so little writing in school I did not even have an understanding of why and how to organize my thoughts into paragraphs. The few papers required of me in high school my mother had typed and "fixed." I was in trouble. Karen Hansen worked closely with me in this course and the required course following it, English 102. Through her understanding, guidance, skill, and my own efforts to learn, I made great strides.

This was my first year of college. I had little sense of what I wanted to study. In order to develop my skills as a writer, Karen Hansen advised me to take classes that would require me to write, primarily English and history courses. The idea of taking extra English and history classes was appealing. I had become a passionate reader, and social studies was the one area I encountered success in my last two years of high school. The recommendation paid off. I became competent as a writer and developed a love for doing research. I experienced what it was like to read a novel and discuss it with other people who had read it. My passion for learning thrived in these classes. For the first time in my life I was feeling academically successful. As a result of this feeling of success, I chose to major in history late in my second year of college, and add English as a second major shortly after.

In hindsight, as I reflect upon my developing literacy, I have come to see this education as "uncritical." I learned to "play the academic game" in college – having the "right" answers to the questions in lectures, getting high scores on tests and quizzes, writing essays and papers that would receive praise from the professor, and maintaining a GPA above 3.5 in my major subject areas (history and English). Being a winner in the college classroom was important to me, especially since I lived the labels "juvenile delinquent" and "dumb jock" as a junior high and high school student. The classroom became a competitive arena that filled the void left by the absence of organized high school athletics.

I worked to pay for the opportunity to go to the local university. I wanted to do well. I did well. And in the process I reveled in my ability to learn, or at least the ability to prove to myself and others that I possessed knowledge (always having an answer, possessing a diploma, etc.). I went into teaching because of this learning/knowledge acquisition passion. It was a career I could pursue and be a student forever. I wanted to instill in students the same burning desire to "acquire" knowledge that I possessed.

Recall was rewarded in my university classrooms. I earned a B.A. in history and English, and later an M.A. in English without ever developing a critical eye or critical consciousness. I had to do little more than reiterate what I heard in lectures and read in books. I do not blame the state university where I earned these diplomas, nor the professors who taught me. I am thankful for the second chance to get an education in spite of my abysmal high school performance and ACT scores. I am also thankful for how far that institution and those professors took me. When I entered I was a student who could not write a paragraph. When I entered I was a student who had read none of

the core works that made up the substance of traditional secondary English education.

When I entered I was a student who thought only the body required exercise. When I left I could write and communicate in academic discourse. When I left I had read novels by Daniel Defoe, Gustav Flaubert, Jane Austen, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Edith Wharton, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Henry James, James Joyce, Dashiell Hammett, Gore Vidal, and so many others, including treasured works in the canon by Shakespeare, Chaucer, Milton, Dante, and Cervantes. It was a Plato to Le Pere Goriot mostly White<sup>3</sup> male diet of literature. My experience in the institution allowed me to acquire the "cultural capital" (Delpit, 1988; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1992) that many argue should be every EDUCATED person's (see Hirsch, 1987; Bloom, 1987). When I left I could say I was "educated." I possessed the credentials to prove it.

As a college student I experienced the self-satisfaction of "banking" (Freire, 1968/1985) information, and learned that investing in the "right" information paid dividends socially and professionally. It is understandable that in my junior year of university, when I decided I might want to be a teacher, my vision of what the educational enterprise is about was shaped by a banking approach to education, or the "mimetic" tradition as Jackson (1986) calls it.

I have already named this education as "uncritical." It did not initiate me into the process of critical literacy that Brannon describes, "a political act of naming the world for oneself, an ability to think critically by using reading and writing as a means of

---

<sup>3</sup>As many "critical scholars" do, such as Ellsworth in the preceding excerpt and McIntosh following, I choose to capitalize White and Black when referring to groups of people. It was Nieto who alerted me to this practice, "You will notice that when the terms *White* and *Black* are used in this text they are capitalized. I do so because they refer to groups of people, as do terms such as *Latino*, *Asian*, and *African*" (1992, p. 26, italics in original), thus making them proper nouns.

intervening in one's own social surroundings" (1991, p. 172). It was an apolitical education. The world worked for *me* – a White male of middle class background. What motivation could I have for changing it?

The notion that even as a diligent student I did not develop a critical eye – that exegesis was only a tool for written and sacred texts and not a multiplicity of texts and contexts – stood before me. Surveying my experiences I realize there were opportunities, though few, for me to develop such a critical perspective. There was Michael Coray, one of only three African American faculty members, whose courses U.S. History 102 and "Black Experience in America" I took. This professor lectured on U.S. history from a perspective that I had never heard before. Unfortunately, I did not come away from those lecture courses questioning, wondering why there was a side(s) I did not know before. I did not come away with an understanding of power relationships in society. I came away with a knowledge of racism and oppression in history, but did not learn to see racism in my immediate surroundings or in my own life. I came away with an impression that the "unheard" stories were important for me to have been exposed to, yet they were supplemental, peripheral to the traditional versions of "real" U.S. history. I came away not seeing how these individual and institutional acts of racism in the past had anything to do with me.

There was Elizabeth Francis, the White feminist, whose Victorian Literature and British Novel II courses I took. I loved the literature, however, I dropped the latter class following our first writing assignment. After having written analytical essays on Thackeray's Vanity Fair, students were asked to rewrite the essays. This time we were to assume a perspective, different from our own. Feminist and Marxist perspectives were

suggested as possibilities. I did not know what it meant to "assume a perspective." I had learned descriptions of theoretical perspectives, characterizations that reflected the dominant paradigm, but I had never learned to apply a theoretical perspective to the texts I read or the world I lived. Worst of all, I did not know how to admit I did not know. I dropped the course because I simply did not understand what this professor was trying to teach.

In the British Novel II course, I did not know that I perceived literature and the world through a White male perspective. McIntosh's discussion of White privilege speaks closely to my own experiences. She writes,

My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will.... (p. 4) I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my [White] group, never in invisible systems conferring unsought racial dominance on my group from birth...the obliviousness of White advantage...is kept strongly enculturated in the United States so as to maintain the myth of meritocracy. (1988, pp. 18-19)

My schooling did not help me to see how my race and gender gave me certain unearned advantages. It did not help me to see that racism goes beyond individual acts of meanness. It did not help me link my life and world to the "unheard" stories I encountered in Michael Coray's history classes. It did not help me step in the shoes of another and read texts or the world from another's experiences. My schooling did not help me develop the skills for critically reading the word and the world, nor my own life.

It is not my intention to make a sweeping statement that "schooling failed me." I know that there were forces at work in my life that undermined much of the curriculum and thoughtful teaching I was exposed to. I know that several high school and university

coaches and teachers reached me in significant ways, ways that only years later began to make sense and help me to grow. The efforts of individuals like Karen Hansen were vital. The curriculum of Michael Coray's history classes was vital. The pedagogical moves of Elizabeth Francis were vital. The kind of transformative teaching that will help students learn to read and write the word and the world takes more than a single teacher, or a change in curriculum content, or an innovative assignment. (The teaching I allude to here, teaching for critical literacy, will be discussed in Chapter 1.) A single frame from a film reel will present a static image; run 100 consecutive frames from the sequence and movement can be seen. In order for schooling experiences to be transformative, transformative approaches to teaching must become pervasive, must provide students with many experiences over time that engage them in the hearing, seeing, and practice of critical literacy.

The uncritical education I experienced – a high school education that gave me grammar exercises I never learned and required of me little reading, writing, discussing, and thinking; a university education that rewarded my ability to remember and regurgitate – "endangered" my self and the selves of students that I would eventually teach. Maxine Greene writes:

If [teachers] undergo a purely technical training or a simplified "competency-based" approach, they are likely to see themselves as mere transmission belts—or clerks. The question of the freedom of those they try to teach, the question of their students' *endangered selves*; these recede before a tide of demands for "basics," "discipline," and preparation for the "world of work." Teachers (artlessly, wearily) become accomplices in mystification. They have neither the time, nor energy, nor inclination to urge their students to critical reflection; they, themselves, have suppressed the questions and avoided backward looks....Learning involves a futuring, a going beyond. (Greene, 1978, p. 38-39, emphasis added)

I do not know what the educations of my teachers and professors were like, but I know that I was the student and teacher of a "technical" approach to education. I was "tracked," low. After receiving my B.A. from the College of Arts and Science in history and English, I spent a year taking education classes and doing an eight week student teaching experience. In that experience, I was "trained" to teach "skills." In my early years of teaching, I reproduced the uncritical apolitical education I experienced myself. We can only teach who we are. It was not until I began pursuing my own personal transformation that a different kind of teacher could walk into the classroom.

### Conclusion: The Importance of Life Stories

I began this prologue by making an argument that understanding the personal lives of teachers is relevant, in many ways necessary, in understanding their work. David Thomas, who uses teacher narratives and life histories in educational research and teacher education, writes “we might say that invitations to teachers to relate the rarely related is, simultaneously, to give us a window on their world and to solicit them to disclose that which has been guarded and privileged” (1995, p. 14). Thomas draws upon the work of Woods, who he believes provides, “one of the clearest statements of the value of personal narrative” in understanding teaching: “...to understand the event fully it was necessary to see how that self had come into being, developed, resisted attack, been mortified, survived, and at times prospered. His philosophy of teaching was rooted in these childhood experiences...” (p. xii).<sup>4</sup> I agree with Thomas. I believe understanding how

---

<sup>4</sup>See Peter J. Woods (1993) “Keys to the past – and to the future: the Empirical Author replies” *British Educational Research Journal* 19(5), 475-488.

critical educators' life histories and work are connected is particularly relevant. Teaching others through multiple texts to understand their own lives and the lives of others, to understand the world close to home and the larger world their community is a part of, is at the core of critical education. That makes such a pedagogy personal. That makes such a pedagogy political. The educational community – teachers, teacher educators, and theorists – need to understand how teachers who teach for critical literacy came to see the world in critical ways, what motivates them to teach others for critical literacy, and what influences their pedagogical and curricular choices.<sup>5</sup>

The life stories of Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison will help deconstruct the myth of generic critical educators that Ellsworth warned against. The diversity of critical educators is important to acknowledge and uncover so that we realize the potential for many different people to teach for critical literacy, even people whose roots are conservative, patriarchal, or racist. This is especially important for teacher educators who seek to help their students read their own lives and worlds, and cultivate dispositions to teach for critical literacy. Life stories allow us to see the great capacity for change. Lives are not static. Our histories are not necessarily our destinies. We teach who we are, but we do not necessarily have to teach who we have been. And the lives of the critical educators in this study have already changed from who they were in the captured moments presented in this study.

---

<sup>5</sup>The intended audience for this study is teachers, teacher educators, and theorists interested in critical education. Throughout this document I will refer to the “educational community” rather than list these groups separately. Additionally, there are two points I wish to clarify. First, when I refer to “theorists” I am thinking of educational researchers and writers of educational literature. Second, I do not intend to narrowly define roles within the educational community, for I know that many are simultaneously teachers and teacher educators and theorists.

I came from a functionally illiterate background, became functionally literate, reproduced many of the same goals and practices of teaching for functional literacy in my early teaching career, and eventually moved toward the practice of critical literacy and being a critical educator. My belief in the desire and ability of teachers to grow motivates this study. I think teachers can learn to teach in ways different from what they experienced as students, ways different from what they were "trained" to do in teacher preparation programs, ways different from what they might have settled into over time. Professional development initiatives like the National Writing Project have shown this. The national/international Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) project has shown this. The work of a single author, such as Nancie Atwell's In the Middle (1987; 1998), is hailed by many teachers of writing as the starting point of their "transformation," as are the works of Paulo Freire hailed by many critical educators. There is hope for all to change and grow.

In many ways this study is about hope. Hope for education to transform lives and the society in which those lives are situated. I believe that through exploring the life stories of Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison, in conjunction with the classroom stories and analysis of each teacher's work, readers will be better prepared to shape a contextualized vision of teaching for critical literacy, and find ways to transform their own work with students.

## INTRODUCTION: MAPPING THE TERRAIN

In the Prologue, I make a case for the importance of understanding *the person* behind the researcher and behind the teacher in order to understand each individual's work more fully, and then I shared a rendering of my own life story, focusing upon critical moments in my learning to read, write, and teach. Sharing my own life story is both an extension of the argument for exploring the personal, and a precursor to sharing the life stories of Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison in the case study chapters.

In Chapter 1, *Theorizing Teaching for Critical Literacy*, I begin by discussing the nature of "theory" and "theorizing," and then follow this with an exploration of my past, present, and still developing understandings of the literature which speaks of and informs teaching for critical literacy. It is in this chapter that I introduce the *tap root* metaphor and the *rooted tree-in-the-world* concept map of my developing theory of teaching for critical literacy, both of which I revisit and build upon throughout the study. Chapter 1 ends with readers hearing for the first time the voices of Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison, in this instance speaking to their own conceptions of the "literacy" they teach for.

In Chapter 2, *Overview and Design of a Narrative Inquiry*, I discuss the nature and motivations behind this study, why such an inquiry is relevant to those interested in critical education and literacy, and the decisions I made concerning design, analysis, and dissemination of the study. This is a qualitative study, framed more specifically as a narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is concerned with the gathering and sharing of the

"stories" people tell, and re-constructing experiences from multiple data sources into "narratives" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This chapter also introduces eight theoretical themes concerning teaching for critical literacy which grew out of data analysis.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are case studies of Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison respectively. Each of the case study chapters is made up of five sections. In *An Introduction* I make several assertions about salient characteristics of the teacher. I provide an overview of the sections in the chapter. And I provide brief introductions to the teacher, school, students, and course focused upon in the case study. In *A Life Story* I present a selection of memories and reflections taken from life history interviews. These selections are followed by analysis which serves to link early life experiences to how and what they teach, illuminating "that we teach who we are." In *A Context* I provide a brief "entering image" portrait of the community and school which will help readers develop a sense of place. In *A Classroom Story* I draw upon one or more classroom events that illuminates and raises questions about teaching for critical literacy. The classroom stories are constructed from multiple data sources (field notes, transcripts and notes made from audio and videotapes, interviews with teachers and students, various classroom documents, and other sources which shed light upon the narrative). Assertions, key arguments, highlighted themes, and interpretations are interwoven throughout the classroom story. In the final section of the case study chapters, *An Analysis*, I discuss in depth the classroom story and other evidence relevant to understanding teaching for critical literacy.

In Chapter 6, *An Expanded Theory of Teaching for Critical Literacy*, I discuss the evolution of my theory of teaching for critical literacy. I return to the *tap root* metaphor

and the *rooted tree-in-the-world* concept map to discuss the eight theoretical themes, introduced in Chapter 2 and used for purposes of analysis in the case studies, as “roots” of the expanded theory. Each root is discussed in light of selected literature, its relevance to teaching for critical literacy, and in relation to aspects of teaching seen and discussed in the case studies.

In Chapter 7, *Implications for the Educational Community*, I discuss a number of “lessons learned” through this study. In the section for teacher educators I draw upon suggestions for teacher preparation given by Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison. I also look at future paths for my own research.

# CHAPTER 1

## THEORIZING TEACHING FOR CRITICAL LITERACY

### Introduction

I see the work of theorizing as being multilayered, and necessitating various depths and levels of formality. Surveying the Oxford English Dictionary, one can see that "theory" has held many meanings over time, both broad and specific, from its Greek origins "looking, contemplation, speculation" to meanings spanning the 16th century through the present:

(3) a conception or mental scheme of...a method; a systematic statement of rules or principles to be followed; (4) a statement of what are held to be general laws, principles, or causes of something known or observed; (5) abstract knowledge, of the formulation of it, often used as implying more or less unsupported hypothesis and distinguished from or opposed to *practice*; (6) a hypothesis proposed as an explanation...speculation, conjecture...an individual view or notion. (1971/1985, p. 3284)

I would argue, by definition, that theory can be many things, from a fluid individual view to a rigid set of laws, from something practical to something abstract. And I would argue that there is a necessity for such a range of theoretical forms. The theorizing I do in this study grows out of systematic action, yet it is based upon looking, contemplation, and speculation; it strives to be fluid and evolving, rather than seek rules and principles, stating laws, or formulating abstract knowledge. It is highly contextualized theorizing, grounded in the particulars of the lives and work of three teachers and their students. The literature on critical theory, critical education, and critical literacy has pushed my thinking and practice considerably; however, I find it leans more toward formulating abstract knowledge, while de-emphasizing practice.

This study is about looking into classrooms and going beyond where the literature has taken me in understanding what it means to teach for critical literacy. This study is a search for what it looks like, and what it means, to help students learn to read and write the word and the world. This study is not about coming up with a “new and improved” universal theory of teaching for critical literacy. It is about entering the worlds of three teachers' classrooms and theorizing what it means *in those sites* to teach for critical literacy. Making sense of other people's theories, whether those theories come from a book or the words and acts of a classroom teacher, is an act of theorizing. I have invested years in making sense of theories in books, written by people who have thought deeply about critical education but do not occupy the world of the classroom, writing about the world they think generic critical teachers occupy. Here I want to explore the theories embedded in the words and practices of classroom teachers, classroom teachers who are critical educators, adding to the field of critical education knowledge. Classroom teachers talk about the worlds they occupy, the day-to-day world of the classroom, a world that is messy and uncertain, a world that is not easily ordered or rationalized. May Stevens, writing about how theory is too often separated from feeling and experience, declares "theory cuts off its roots, loses its connection to reality" (1980, p. 41). I am in search of a rooted theory, one grounded in the lives and work of real people teaching for and engaging in critical literacy. It has been theory of various shapes and sizes that has led me to this investigation, that has driven me to frame this study with the following research questions:

- What does teaching for critical literacy look like in the secondary English classroom? What does it mean to teach for critical literacy, to help students learn to read and write the word and the world?

- What is the relationship between “who we are” and how we teach? How can life stories illuminate this relationship?

In this chapter I do three things. First, I explain the origins of my own developing critical literacy, paying particular attention to several authors and experiences that were especially inspiring and influential. Second, I introduce my developing theory of teaching for critical literacy as it was when I entered this study. In the final section of this chapter I make space for the voices of Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison who describe the literacy they try to cultivate in their students. I will argue in Chapter 2 for the necessity of this study, and provide an overview of the study.

### The Origins of My Own Critical Literacy

Proponents of subjective literary criticism, such as David Bleich, have argued that "interpretations make more sense when critics take the trouble to explain the growth and origin of their views" (Selden, 1985, p. 124). Articulating and making visible one's beliefs, values, and background experiences is also a principle act of feminist and critical theorists. Exploring and making visible my own experiences as a learner and how they affected me as I entered the teaching profession is what I sought to do in the Prologue. This study is personal, it is political, it is pedagogical. By uncovering my own struggles to practice critical literacy, I reveal one of my motivations for undertaking this study: there is great need for critical educators in the education profession. And part of being a critical educator is to take an inquiring stance. The explanations of my own struggles, as a young learner and a teacher, inform the interpretations I make in this study.

When I began my career as a teacher in 1985 I worked to achieve the goals of functional literacy and cultural literacy (Hirsch, 1987). I labored hard to help my students achieve reading comprehension and knowledge acquisition. As I gained experience as a teacher I developed an awareness of the need to create opportunities for critical reflection, however, I did not know how to cultivate critical reflection in my students. It is one thing to resonate to a statement like Greene's – "learning involves a futuring, a going beyond" (1978, p. 39) – and yet another thing to put such an ideal into action as a teacher. Given that my own education – an education that led to a Masters degree – had not prepared me to engage in the practice of critical literacy, it is understandable that I would have difficulty helping my students engage in this practice.

### The Critical Turn

I taught high school English and social studies in several contexts for six years, between 1985-1991. In the three schools I taught in during that time, I worked with students who possessed a great range of physical and intellectual abilities, as well as representing great economic, racial, and cultural diversity. At the point in my career when I encountered critical education literature (McIntosh, 1983, 1988, 1990; Weiler, 1988, 1991; McLaren, 1989; Giroux, 1988; Freire, 1968/1985, 1987; hooks, 1984, 1989; Freire & Macedo, 1987) – literature which has been described as taking a "critical view of the existing society, arguing that the society is both exploitive and oppressive...more critical and utopian than traditional educational theory" (Weiler, 1988, p. 5) – I was struggling with several issues, issues that challenged notions of teaching for functional and cultural literacy. I was moving toward critical literacy objectives: How

can I educate all my students? How can I facilitate a heightened social awareness in my students? How can I make the curriculum and learning process in my classes more equitable? How can I make the curriculum more relevant and meaningful for my students? These questions grew out of my felt needs as a teacher. The authors I read helped me grapple with these questions.

Much of the critical education literature cited above spoke to these questions, but in a language that I had not yet come to understand in concrete terms. As an experienced educator, I used this literature as a tool for envisioning new ways of teaching and shaping curriculum. For example, McIntosh's "White Privilege, Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies" (1988) pushed me to reflect upon the *unearned advantages* I benefit from because I am White and male. This reflection led me to consider the relevance of *power* and *privilege* as issues necessary to inform the texts, materials, and sources that made up the English and social studies curriculum I would teach; this reflection also pushed me to rethink my role as a teacher of young men and women. McIntosh's "Interactive Phases of Curricular Revision: A Feminist Perspective" (1983) and "Interactive Phases of Curricular and Personal Re-vision with Regard to Race" (1990) pushed me to examine closely the *balance* and *bias* of the various English and social studies curricula I taught, and to question my own K-12, undergraduate, and graduate educations in English and history. Exposure to new language – unearned advantages, power, privilege, balance, bias – provoked new thinking and ways of being. Concepts that were once strange and disconcerting, became a part of who I am. I did not run from them as I did in my undergraduate days in Elizabeth Francis' British Novel II course.

Two books provided a deeper initiation into the critical education literature, and were significant in helping me rethink my overall pedagogical approach. Books by Kathleen Weiler and Peter McLaren introduced me to feminist and critical pedagogies. Each spoke to my needs because I heard the voices of teachers in their work.

Weiler, a former student of Henry Giroux's and an ideological disciple of Freire's, provided me with my first general introduction to critical education theory in Women Teaching for Change: Gender, Class and Power (1988). I was inspired by Weiler's articulation of "feminist pedagogy," an approach to teaching I had never encountered before. Weiler provided me with a starting point to begin thinking about this new kind of teaching philosophy: teaching that is human and caring; teaching that makes space for the experiences of teachers and students to be part of the curriculum; teaching that "instigates dialogue" with students about important issues; teaching that helps students confront issues of gender and race and class; teaching that examines the way oppressions are linked; teaching that does not avoid conflict but makes room for it, emphasizes it; teaching that pushes students to question their own perspectives and consciousness, and; teaching that helps students raise their consciousness. To someone who was accustomed to reading curriculum objectives put out by a state department of education, this was radical and revolutionary.

Weiler's book was the product of ethnographic qualitative research that examined the link between theory and practice of several secondary school feminist teachers and administrators, drawing heavily upon interview data and selected classroom incidents. Integrating the voices and perspectives of teachers, administrators, and students was an important element to me as a new reader of critical education theory. Weiler's vision of

"teaching for change" and her belief, shared by Freire and other critical educators, that individuals have the "power... to come to a critical consciousness of their own being in the world" (p. 17), were powerful notions to me.

I knew from reading Weiler's work that I wanted to read what other critical theorists, such as Freire, had to say. The contributions of many others are clear in Weiler's vision of critical education, yet, in her essay "Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference" (1991), Weiler highlights an important difference between Freire's work and her own and other feminist educators:

The role of the teacher in [Freire's process of conscientization]...is to instigate a dialogue between teacher and student, based on their common ability to know the world and to act as subjects in the world. But the question of the authority and power of the teacher, particularly those forms of power based on the teacher's subject position as raced, classed, gendered, and so on, is not addressed by Freire. (1991, p. 454)

The recognition of a teacher's authority and power in relation to elements of race, class, and gender has remained a significant issue for me as a teacher, teacher educator, and theorist.

In Women Teaching for Change, Weiler helps make a large body of theoretical literature accessible through her own synthesis of it, and her entering into the work of several feminist teachers and administrators. The many voices that surface in this work strike me as sage advice – words from teachers (Weiler among them) to other teachers. I was able to begin constructing a comprehensive and relevant vision of pedagogy sensitive to dominance and difference. However, even though Weiler's work brings to the fore the voices of many teachers and administrators who work from a critical perspective, I was left wanting more from them. I wanted to see more than the glimpse of classroom life

readers are provided in one chapter. I still puzzled over what teaching looks and feels like when teachers "instigate a dialogue" with students that is truly consciousness raising. I came to Weiler as fertile ground, and she had planted seeds that would sprout.

My second substantial encounter with critical education theory came through the writing of Peter McLaren. In Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education (1989), McLaren draws on his own teaching journal from four years of work in an inner-city Toronto elementary school to illustrate the experiences that pushed him to seek a teaching method that would best address the needs of children being oppressed, living in an oppressive society. For example, in the following journal entry McLaren writes of his struggle against the "conditioning" he came away with from his teacher preparation and the theorizing he did as a teacher:

*Friday, March 10*

I constantly had to fight the conditioning I had received in my teacher training and in my first year of teaching. But more and more I was recognizing the incidental questions and conversations of the kids as a learning process. I saw that some of the most effective lessons took place spontaneously: what I often thought was disorder was, in fact, kids interacting in another form of learning.

For example, in the Fall T.J. used to bring snakes in from the creek. The kids often crowded around his desk, excited, watching the snake writhe, touching its skin, exclaiming over its colors. It would take me a long time to get them back to their seats and settled down. I decided that what the kids were learning from T.J. was probably as real as any lesson I could have dreamed up. (p. 92)

The journal entries ring sincere and true. Most people who have taught full time can resonate to the frustrations, doubts, characterizations of students, reflections, and so much more McLaren puts forward. McLaren sought theoretical tools which would enable him to understand issues of dominance and difference, and to provide him with possible methods for dealing with these issues in a classroom setting, tools that could assist him in bringing these issues to the forefront of the curriculum to be dealt with in a productive

manner. He posed a question that became central for me: "What is the relationship between what we do in the classroom and our effort to build a better society?" (p. x). Through McLaren's eyes, I was able to see how he "read" the oppressive conditions his students lived in; through his eyes I was able to better understand how as a White male I might be able to teach and "instigate a dialogue" about oppression. Reading Life in Schools, I felt I was walking in McLaren's footsteps.

McLaren recognized that schools and teachers are bound tightly to the system of inequity, are participants in the reproduction of inequity. If teachers practiced and worked from a critical perspective, they could help students to see the inequitable system they are woven into. As McLaren describes, "they are lost in the tapestry of the larger society – subjugated threads, tied tightly in an historical pattern of racism and oppression" (p. 27). McLaren sees critical pedagogy as necessary to help students understand themselves and the world more realistically, which will help them become critical thinkers. McLaren argues that before teachers can teach from a critical pedagogical perspective, they too must undergo personal confrontation and partake in study to better understand issues of inequity.

For teachers, this means that we must begin candidly and critically to face our society's complicity in the roots and structures of inequality and injustice. It means, too, as teachers we must face our own culpability in the reproduction of inequality in our teaching, and that we must strive to develop a pedagogy equipped to provide both intellectual and moral resistance to oppression, one that extends the concept of pedagogy beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and skills and the concept of morality beyond interpersonal relations. This is what critical pedagogy is all about. (McLaren, 1989, p. 21)

I agree. Teachers who teach for critical literacy must exercise their own critical literacy.

McLaren's Life in Schools provides a helpful portrait, even if it is only a single self-

portrait, of a teacher confronting how he is part of a system that reproduces inequity and how he counters this inequity with his students. McLaren speaks to my own story of experiencing an uncritical education. Many teachers and prospective teachers have experienced similar educations. Uncritical educations pose obstacles for teachers learning to engage in the practice of critical literacy, as well as teaching for critical literacy.

Weiler and McLaren provided me with my first serious look at critical education literature. The writings of each raised many questions for me as a teacher, a teacher who learned through these authors' work that he wanted to become a "critical educator." Yet their writings also made it clear that there was much work for me to do in order to understand what it meant to be and teach as a critical educator. My reading of Weiler and McLaren was followed by many others who have contributed significantly to my developing understanding of what "critical literacy" is and what it means to teach for critical literacy.

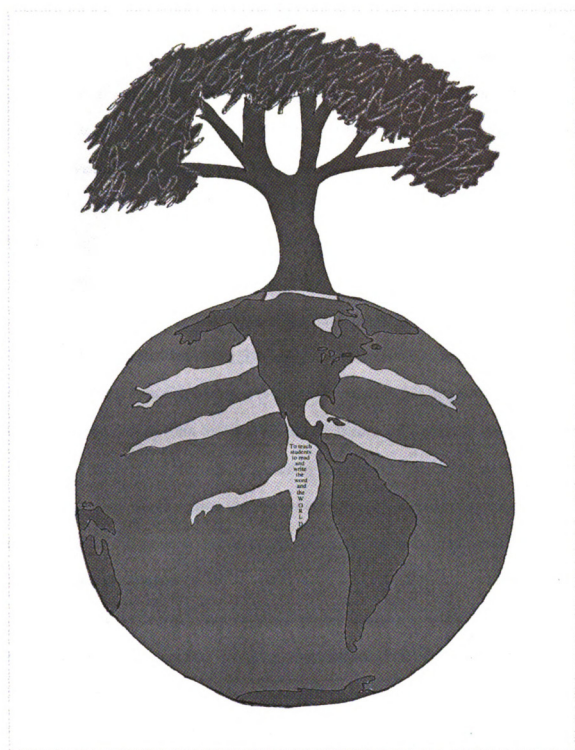
### The Growth of My Developing Theory of Teaching for Critical Literacy

#### The Tap Root

Reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world....[T]his movement from the word to the world is always present; even the spoken word flows from our reading of the world....[W]e can go further and say that reading the word is not preceded merely by reading the world, but by a certain form of *writing* it or *rewriting* it, that is, of transforming it by means of conscious, practical work....[T]his dynamic movement is central to the literacy process....I have always insisted that words used in organizing a literacy program come from what I call the "word universe" of people who are learning, expressing their actual language, their anxieties, fears, demands, and dreams. Words should be laden with the meaning of the people's

existential experience, and not of the teacher's experience. (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 35)

I have dug deep inside my mind and heart to unearth the roots of my own philosophy of teaching for critical literacy, roots that reach beyond the tree's drip line and occasionally stretch into the neighbor's yard, push up segments in the sidewalk, invade pipes, and occasionally go where they might not belong. Paulo Freire's "reading and writing the word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987) is the *tap root*, the most important underpinning, of my developing philosophy. This root reaches down the farthest. It is the lifeline. It is the anchor. All other roots grow out of it. The metaphorical tree that represents my vision of teaching for critical literacy grows stronger and fuller each year as I prune, water, and feed it. But the life of this tree began with, and depends upon, Freire's conception of reading and writing the word and the world. This concept is profound to me, acting as an "operational heuristic" (Putnam & Burke, 1992). For me, this concept represents teaching for critical literacy. One's ability to read the world is of paramount importance, and the ability to read the word is fortified by one's ability to read the world. This concept has been seminal in facilitating the development of my philosophy and practice as a critical educator (see Figure 1 for a pictorial conception of the tap root).



**Figure 1.** Freire and Macedo's (1988) notion of "reading and writing the word and the world" is central to my developing theory of teaching for critical literacy, and functions as the "tap root" of the metaphorical tree-rooted-in-the-world concept map (Version 1).

My understanding of Freire's core concept of teaching for critical literacy involves a pedagogy and curriculum that supports students' learning to read and write *the word*, as well as supporting students' learning to read and write *their worlds*. More concretely, teaching students to read and write "words" – symbols used to communicate within a given language system – aims to prepare students to be able to communicate powerfully in a multiplicity of ways, for a multiplicity of purposes and audiences. Teaching students to read and write their "worlds" aims to prepare students to be critically aware of the content, intent, and context of the multiplicity of "texts" they encounter and participate in composing. These multiple texts include: print (everything from magazine advertisements, to USA Today, to literature within disciplines); visual media (everything from music videos, to television commercials, to poster art, to film), and; speech (everything from conversation among family and friends, to the classroom discourse of teachers and students, to speech by politicians). Therefore, teaching students for critical literacy would prepare them to act with greater understanding and critical awareness in all the contexts they choose to participate, including traditional academic, professional, and life contexts.

Teaching for critical literacy seeks to prepare students to critique and question the texts they encounter, rather than accept and absorb those texts. This adds a clear "political" dimension to teaching for critical literacy. One of the central goals of teaching for critical literacy is to promote a disposition of working for social justice, and cultivate the skills necessary to achieve social justice. By "social justice" I mean that individual teachers and schools embrace a commitment to play a role in social change. Nieto writes "because society is concerned with the distribution of power, status, and rewards,

education must focus on these concerns as well" (1992, pp. 217-218). To do this in schools and classrooms may include involvement with community service, service learning, and most definitely curriculum and instruction that explore issues of equity and justice close to the lives of students in the school. Critical educators teaching for social justice would invite and make space for discussions that are of concern to the students in their classroom and the larger society, for example, the politics of standardized testing or the ethnocentricity of curriculum students' experience. When teachers and students work to bring about social change, however small, in the pursuit of justice, they are enacting what Freire means by writing and rewriting the world, "transforming it by means of conscious, practical work." Teaching for critical literacy, therefore, is "transformative" praxis (Giroux, 1985, 1988; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993) on two levels. On the first level, teachers of critical literacy seek to create a learning environment that supports personal transformation – the development of "critical consciousness" – in students. On the second level, teachers of critical literacy prepare students to be both disposed to and prepared for transforming the world so it is a better place to live for all people, especially those who are oppressed and disenfranchised.

Lilian Brannon and Ann Berthoff help to clarify the "transformative" quality of practicing critical literacy. It is a transformation that is more significant than students learning to read more words, more accurately, more quickly; rather, it is learning to use language in ways that students can transform the world around them. Lilian Brannon surfaces objectives of teaching for critical literacy in her characterization of it as a "transforming process":

“Critical literacy” offers a challenge to the traditional functional view of reading and writing by conceiving of literacy as a transforming process, a political act of naming the world for oneself, an ability to think critically by using reading and writing as a means of intervening in one's own social surroundings. Reading and writing, then, are not simply the mastery of skills, but entail the quality of human consciousness as well. Reading and writing are symbolic acts, not merely the processes of decoding and encoding, but the ability to comprehend and create texts that manifest new ways of being and perceiving the world....[C]ritical literacy is the ability to construct the world through written language and the ability to reconstruct the world through reflection and critique. (1991, pp. 172-173)

Brannon underscores that reading and writing are more than skills, they are acts inherent to the development of human consciousness, inherently part of the transforming process.

Critical literacy is not an arrival point. Critical literacy is a practice to engage in.

Ann E. Berthoff, in explaining Paulo Freire's pragmatic theory of education, reinforces this point when she writes:

[Freire] reminds me of A. J. Muste, the pacifist who so annoyed Reinhold Niebuhr. Muste used to say: "There is no way to Peace; Peace is the way." I think Paulo is saying to us: "There is no way to transformation; transformation is the way." That is not mumbo jumbo, it is not a witty paradox we should resolve: it is a dialectic we should enact. (in Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. xxiii)

Berthoff's explanation serves to underscore the point that if critical literacy is a transformative process, then it must be treated as a practice to engage in and not a fixed goal to attain.

Teachers of critical literacy develop objectives for engaging their students in critical reading and writing of the many texts that make up their worlds. In contrast to objectives of "functional literacy" which aim to prepare individuals to fit in and function in society as it is, critical literacy aims to prepare individuals, as Brannon writes, to develop "new ways of being and perceiving the world" and to possibly "[intervene] in one's own social surroundings." Teaching for functional literacy, achieved through

transmission approaches,<sup>6</sup> on the surface appears apolitical; however, to limit broadening experiences to a select few and maintaining the status quo is political (Rosaen, personal communication, September 1999). In contrast, at the core of teaching for critical literacy are transformative objectives: help students read and understand their worlds, help students mediate and act upon their worlds using language and other modes of communication, help students be disposed to and capable of changing themselves and society. Teaching for critical literacy is characteristically political.

Allan Luke lists several practices critical educators can use to develop students' critical literacy:

Our aim is to get students to construct and to challenge texts, to see how texts provide selective versions of the world. First steps for making students active critics of cultural discourses and texts might include: (1) encouraging children at the earliest stages to contest, debate, and argue with texts; (2) comparing texts which foreground differing versions of the same events or actions; (3) altering traditional classroom talk which puts texts and teachers beyond criticism...; and (4) analyzing print and media texts of popular culture.... Teaching critical literacy requires a rethinking of the social character of literacies in communities, classrooms, and societies, and of larger political issues of power and control. (as cited in Jongsma, 1991, p. 519)

The four teaching strategies Luke presents provide sharp contrasts to traditional practice that promotes functional literacy, in which students are not taught to challenge texts, to compare alternative perspectives or versions, to invite students to disagree with the teacher, and to analyze the many texts that are popular to their world. Luke's strategies provide insight into practices characteristic of those who teach for critical literacy, those who aim toward the transformative objectives Brannon writes of.

---

<sup>6</sup>For critical discussions of "transmission" approaches to teaching, see Freire (1968/1985) on "banking pedagogy," Jackson (1986) on the "mimetic tradition," and Belenky, et al. (1986) in their descriptions of "received knowing" and analysis of transmission in the section on "connected teaching."

## The Pitfalls of Definition

What I have come to understand is that there are many definitions of "critical literacy" and implied definitions of teaching for critical literacy. As stated in the opening of this chapter, this study is not about coming up with a "new and improved" universal theory of teaching for critical literacy – I do not seek to nail down the "essence" of critical literacy or definitive characteristics of teaching for critical literacy. I believe that critical theorists and critical educators are still discovering what is necessary and what is possible. What kind of "theory" they are able to create is still open, therefore, the channels for articulating theory and engaging in practice must be open. I do, however, wish to examine two of the obstacles in broadening the discussion on critical literacy and teaching for critical literacy. It has been my experience, as a student and teacher educator working with the critical education literature, that many who encounter this literature feel excluded on two levels.

Many readers of critical education literature feel excluded because of the inaccessibility of language. I have often had trouble comprehending critical education texts because the messages being conveyed are cast unclearly or packed so tightly in abstract theory. I have heard similar complaints from students and colleagues. However, Leistyna and Woodrum do not take the issue of inaccessibility seriously, arguing instead that the literature has been "superficially dismissed within schools of education":

Critical pedagogy...widely misunderstood and misinterpreted, challenges us to recognize, engage, and critique (so as to transform) any existing undemocratic social practices and institutional structures that produce and sustain inequalities and oppressive social identities and relations. While this type of work has been influential across the social sciences, its vast literature and history have often been *superficially dismissed within schools of education as being too ideological and too opaque*, or as offering simplistic "big bang" solutions. As a result, teacher

education programs and policies, as well as educational research and classroom practices, are largely bereft of the dialogue, insights, and contributions such perspectives offer. (1996, p. 2, emphasis added)

Leistyna and Woodrum raise a tension for me. I am in agreement with their final point that teacher education needs to find ways to bring the “dialogue, insights, and contributions” of critical education theory into K-university programs, policies, and practices. However, I know from my experience as a learner and as a teacher working with prospective and practicing teachers that the incredibly rich and valuable perspectives this literature has to offer is too often difficult to access, too often clouded by opacity. This is a very real problem, and must be taken seriously. The challenge of unpacking meaning from the language in which it is communicated is a reality, a reality worth thoughtfully working through and not disregarding as someone else's problem.

One of my own experiences highlights the challenge of language in the critical education literature. In preparation for this study, I canvassed the literature for what I thought might be the most "authoritative" definition of critical literacy. Lankshear and McLaren's Critical Literacy: Politics, Praxis, and the Postmodern (1993) illuminated ideological, epistemological, ontological, and pedagogical orientations of critical educators teaching for critical literacy. In the study's proposal I used their definition to posit the above orientations critical educators would *probably work from*. The following paragraph, the first paragraph of the excerpt I made use of in the study proposal, does not include the orientations but will serve to illustrate the very real problem of abstract and inaccessible language in critical education literature:

*Critical literacy*, as we are using the term, becomes the interpretation of the social present for the purpose of transforming the cultural life of certain groups, for questioning tacit assumptions and unarticulated presuppositions of current cultural

and social formations and the subjectivities and capacities for agenthood that they foster. It aims at understanding the ongoing social struggles over the signs of culture and over the definition of social reality—over what is considered legitimate and preferred meaning at any given historical moment. Of course, aesthetic concerns mediate such struggles, but their outcomes are largely ideological and economic....[C]ritical literacy can be described as investigating those communicational devices that reinscribe the human subject into prevailing social relations so that these relations are seen as conventional and uncontested. That is, critical literacy asks: How is cultural reality encoded within familiar grids or frames of intelligibility so that literacy practices that unwittingly affirm racism, sexism, and heterosexism, for example, are rendered natural and commonsensical? (p. 413)

I find this excerpt inaccessible, opaque. I also find it, and the body of literature it represents, thought provoking and visionary. However, I have had years to study in a university, removed from the pace and concerns of high school teaching, an intellectual space that pushes and rewards theoretical understanding and development. It took years of immersion and effortful concentration to learn language and modes of thinking that unlock the rich meanings of phrases such as “the social present,” “unarticulated presuppositions,” “subjectivities and capacities for agenthood,” “communicational devices that reinscribe the human subject into prevailing social relations,” “cultural reality encoded within familiar grids or frames of intelligibility,” and so on. I do not underestimate the intelligence of practicing teachers, in the same way I would not underestimate the intelligence of a visitor to my home that speaks a language other than English. Those who wish to make the perspectives of the critical education literature part of the policies and practices of school curriculum and classroom teachers, must be willing to look for ways to bridge language barriers.

This study has given me the opportunity to consider, as I have considered many times before, the inherent tensions between theory and practice, the second obstacle I find

to broadening the discussion on critical literacy and teaching for critical literacy. I no longer believe, as I stated in my study proposal, that “it is reasonable to assume critical educators teaching for critical literacy might *work from*” the ideological, epistemological, ontological, and pedagogical orientations implied in the Lankshear and McLaren definition of critical literacy.

I believe as Freire and others, including Lankshear and McLaren, that teaching for critical literacy is a process of *praxis*. Practice and theory linked in action. However, I have discovered through this study that when it comes to the bridge between the body of critical education literature and the practice of teaching for critical literacy, critical educators may or may not be *working from* what is proposed in the literature. The theoretical literature may not be the starting point, for many, to becoming critical educators. Perspectives and values consistent with the theoretical literature may grow out of any number of sources: their family upbringing, experiences they had in formal and informal educational contexts as children and adults, works of fiction and nonfiction they encountered, experiences they had as teachers and colleagues in schools. Any number of sources. Even if there is no evidence of a connection between “the literature” and critical educators’ articulation of their practice, we must not dismiss their practice and wisdom because of the absence of an apparent link. Their own theories may or may not echo, or resonate with, the language and modes of thinking embodied in the literature. People do not easily fit definitions. We should be cautious in saying who does and does not “fit” the definitions or who does or does not possess the right ideological perspective of a critical educator, for if we are not cautious, for if we measure critical educators only by

what they have read and what they say, and not by what they do with students, we may be overlooking important contributors to critical education.

### **In Teachers' Voices: Describing the Literacy They Cultivate**

In this first chapter I have tried to lay out my own developing conception of teaching for critical literacy. One of the main points I try to make in this study is that not all "critical educators" and those who "teach for critical literacy" use such language to describe themselves and their work. Many are most likely not familiar with or articulate in the theoretical literature. (I would also argue that not all people who identify themselves as critical educators and who are familiar with and articulate in the theoretical literature practice teaching for critical literacy, nor are they successful in their practice.) I have set out to find critical educators who "walk the walk" of critical education, and to explore the theories grounded in their practices. The values, beliefs, and theories that these teachers' practices are rooted in can be seen as "grounded theories" of practice. Such theories should help prospective and practicing teachers, teacher educators, and critical education theorists understand the realities and possibilities of teaching for critical literacy. Freire encourages educators to appreciate and draw on the theory of social movements and critical education, but I believe he is also encouraging us to look at the theory in the practice of critical educators:

The critical educator should make the inherent theory in these practices flourish so that people can appropriate the theories of their own practice. The role of the educator, then, is not to arrive at the level of social movements with a priori theories to explicate the practice taking place, but to discover the theoretical elements rooted in practice. (1987, p. 62)

Nancy Hartsock pushes further the idea that theory grows out of practical activities, such as teaching: "For feminists, theory is the articulation of what our practical activity has already appropriated in reality" (1979, p. 65).

In the next section readers will hear the voices of Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison describe the kind of literacy they try to cultivate in their students. Readers will then learn more about each teacher in Chapter 2 and in the subsequent case study chapters. The subtitle headings I use to introduce each teacher are taken from conversations I had with them as we discussed the proposal for this study and their possible participation (April 1996).<sup>7</sup> However, what each teacher had to say about the kind of literacy they try to cultivate comes from interviews near the conclusion of my data collection.<sup>8</sup> Late in the spring of 1997 I was immersed in the writing of this study. It was not until that point that I realized in all the interviews I did with each teacher, never once did I ask them to describe the literacy they teach for. In follow up interviews with each teacher (May and June 1997), I asked: How do you describe the literacy you try to cultivate in your students?

The responses of each teacher are presented in a style – long quotations that are not interrupted with analysis – which preserves their unique voices.<sup>9</sup> If we listen carefully to what these teachers say, we will hear more than definitions of literacy. Their

---

<sup>7</sup>Each teacher was sent a letter of invitation and a copy of the study proposal in the mail two weeks prior to these conversations; see Appendix A for letters inviting teachers to participate.

<sup>8</sup>The study design will be explained in Chapter 2, however, it is necessary to say at this point that data was collected in Carol Lessing and Alice Terry's classes between August 1996 and January 1997, and in William's class between September 1996 and June 1997.

<sup>9</sup>The rationale for this style of presentation, one that will also be used in the life stories, will be explained in Chapter 2.

responses will foreshadow important qualities of their teaching that will surface in the case study chapters.

Carol Lessing: "I'm Just a Classroom Teacher"

*I received a note from Carol Lessing late in April 1996, less than a week after I had sent her a letter inviting her to participate in this study and a copy of the study proposal. In that note she said she had read my proposal, and that she would be willing to help me in any way she could. I telephoned her back and we discussed the study further. Her initial response when I asked to confirm her willingness for me to study her teaching was, "I'm just a classroom teacher." She qualified this by telling me that her head is not into the kind of literature I cited so heavily in my proposal, particularly the segment on Lankshear and McLaren, "I am into more practical things...I am so removed from theory."*

*That telephone conversation occurred April 1996, several months before I began collecting data for the study. The following response from Carol describing the literacy she tries to cultivate in her students took place June 1997, more than a year after the initial phone discussion and several months after I had completed data collection in her class.*

The literacy question is a real interesting one for me, and puzzling. I think of literacy as reading, writing, thinking, and articulating – and that all four of those components have to be intact in order for it to truly be literacy.... If any one of those four is missing, then it comes up short. In my classroom I try to help my students to become better readers, writers, thinkers, and be more articulate. The interplay between those four gets extraordinarily complicated and I know I am still not very good at being able to truly evaluate if I have got them in balance, or if they really should be in balance, if there are times when one should far outweigh the other. And the problem has been exacerbated for me over time

because students read less. It has become consistently more difficult for me to get them to really engage in text on their own time. I can get them to do it in class with me. That is not a problem. But to get them to really engage with text of any kind outside of the classroom, and to be fairly sure that they have spent an adequate amount of time with that to be able to articulate without having to go back through the text in class, has become increasingly more difficult.

*Carol pauses. She has finished. I ask her if she is familiar with the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and she recognizes the name. I ask her if she would be willing to tell me what she thinks about his notion of literacy being "reading and writing the word and the world." I tell her that this concept has been influential in my own conception of literacy and that I wonder if she has any ideas of what it means to teach students to read and write the world. Carol nods and continues.*

With high schoolers, with the exception of very few, their world is small and it revolves around them. So, for me, that would mean making them constantly connect what they are reading and understanding to themselves, in their own world, the world of their family and their space, and their experiences, whether they are limited or expansive, connecting those to them. I will give you a couple of examples. We talk about this issue a great deal inside our English Department, in terms of how to make students able to articulate what they understand. I think many of us believe the way to do that is to get them to connect it to themselves. There has to be some thread of comparison or contrast that they do to something in the world that they know and can touch and is palpable. When I teach The Scarlet Letter, which is profoundly difficult for 80% of the students in any given classroom, one of the things I ask them to do is to keep a journal, picking one sentence from each chapter and just pulling the sentence out and writing at least a page about something that that sentence conjures from their own memory bank, from their own experience. There is one that stands out in memory. The student's name was Mohammed Abdullah. He graduated several years ago. He's married and has two babies now. He pulled out the sentence in The Scarlet Letter where Hester describes Dimsdale's voice, this beautiful lilting voice that she hears coming out of the church door. And Mohammed Abdullah wrote about his Sunday School teacher when he was a little boy, and how he would close his eyes and just listen to her, and he had fallen in love with her voice. The religious stories that she would tell of David and Goliath were wonderful, but it was really her voice for him that he could still remember if he closed his eyes, this wonderful voice. I have thought about that so often because I have always been very puzzled about why Hester Prinn found anything in Dimsdale to admire because I find him just a totally obnoxious, self-serving idiot. Through Mohammed's piece I began

to understand what it was about Dimsdale that Hester was in love with, clearly infatuated with. So the cycle I think in real literacy goes on, if a connection is truly made and shared, then someone else understands in a new way. And so, the world that you are talking about gets bigger. Their world. I think that is crucial. I absolutely believe it is crucial.

We are trying, in the English Department, very hard to keep the kids connected to the literature so that even the literary analysis that they do isn't so far out there that they don't understand what they are saying. This is a danger in our school, with some students like we have here, who can handle language, they talk the talk, but there must be something in that paper they connect with.

I can think of another example that just happened. As High School Writing Coordinator I work with teachers in all subject areas. Recently I was helping the Psychology teacher set up a writing assignment for his students. I asked him to give extra credit points for students that used examples from their own world. We set up the grading rubric with extra credit points to push students to relate their personal experiences. So when they are writing about the pros and cons of television, or whether or not gender differences are in the brain or if they are instilled by society, they use examples from their own world. Several kids chose to share their personal examples that were in their papers. One student had written about gender differences. Her position in that paper was that parents and society shaped gender differences, that it didn't have anything to do with anything except those two things. And she told the class about the ultrasound that her mother got that said it was a boy. It was her. The G.I. Joes and the blue overalls were all lined up when she was born. Her parents had a very different name ready for the baby. She said she wore all those clothes until they wore out. I think the whole issue of gender differences took on a very different meaning for those students in that classroom that morning as this girl presented new insight by that example. Another student wrote on the issue of whether divorce would irreparably harm children that are inside that family of divorce. She used herself as an example. After giving all this data to show the great harm that can be done, the lasting harm, she used an example of herself and her sister who are not seeing a psychiatrist, are not on Valium, get good grades, seem to have developed a relationship with both of their divorced parents, and said, "We really are just fine." Suddenly I think it was clear to me, and it must have been clear to the rest of the students in the class, that statistics aren't people. That you can look at all the statistics, and the statistics say there is a 30% higher rate of psychiatric treatment in children of divorce than in children in nondivorce, but that 30% doesn't give you the people. It doesn't give you the individual. You don't know the other circumstances surrounding that.

I think kids are writing about their world and there is a literacy inherent in that when they can read something and write about it and talk about it and then think about it. Then I think we are at least in the ball park.

*Carol tells stories of kids and learning. Her description of the literacy she tries to cultivate in her students is rooted in the knowledge of what her students need, and how she can best cultivate their literacy – reading, writing, talking, and thinking. Carol wants to make sure that students connect on a deep and personal level to what they read. She wants them to be able to expand their understandings and their world through the literature they encounter. She wants the encounter to be meaningful and rich. She wants them to go beyond manipulating language, “talking the talk” as she says, and delve deeply into the meaning of text in an authentic way so that they truly make connections. We will see in her case study how important dialogue is to pushing students to critically read the word and their worlds. We will hear students respond in interviews how meaningful it was for them that their teacher’s knew who they were and what their needs were.*

**Alice Terry: “You’re Not Going to Be a Silent Person Sitting in the Back of the Room Taking Notes”**

*After having sent Alice Terry a letter inviting her to participate in this study and a copy of the study proposal, I telephoned her to see if she was interested. She was, and I arranged to visit her after school in early May 1996 to discuss the details of involvement. When I met with her she had only one request, “You’re not going to be a silent person sitting in the back of the room taking notes.” Alice and I had worked together in the past, and it was always collaborative, a rich exchange of ideas and resources between two teachers who shared common goals for young people. I assured her that I would continue the same collaborative relationship we had had in the past.*

*That visit took place May 1996, several months before I began collecting data for the study. The following response from Alice describing the literacy she tries to cultivate in her students took place June 1997, more than a year after the visit and several months after I had completed data collection in her class.*

Well, you know, I think my generation were readers. You know, we were readers. Michael, you talk about how things changed for you because you didn't read. When I was coming up people didn't take reading for granted, going to the library, or having exposure to books. That was the norm. And I know many of my students do not read. They are not readers. So I try to do whatever I can to make students read comfortably, to make them want to read something.

Just this spring, in trying to get my book order ready for next year, I pulled out all the little novels I had in my cupboard. When I began to look at them, I said these are old. These are antiquated. No wonder these kids don't want to read these. I had a catalogue that was kind of an annotated bibliography. So what I did, I took and I read the annotations to the class and had them vote on the books. What kind of books would you like? This big Prentice Hall Anthology that we had, I don't get turned on by it, and I consider myself a reader. So I know that my students won't. And then I let my students pick and choose. The day is gone when we start on page one and by this date we have to read to page 500. Trying to make students understand everything is not a quick fix. Everything is not microwaved. We read Roll Of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred Taylor. And they really read that.... What do you do, what kind of situation are you in? Tomorrow we are going to discuss up to page 50. Nobody but one person was up to page 50. Are you just supposed to go on and keep assigning work because you want to finish by a certain day? So I go, "How far did you read?" And making students realize this is not a trick. At the same time, you are accountable and responsible and I have had students tell me, "I understand it so much better when we read aloud." A lot of people are critical of that, but the students' comprehension is low because they have not had the same silent reading. That is why a lot of our students do not do well on the standardized tests. So we have to just keep hammering it in, making them understand that this is important.

Our English Department was just looking over the curriculum. We were talking about what parents could do to help deal with this situation. I feel like society as a whole, or perhaps the population that I deal with, has to take some responsibility. I feel parents take seriously taking care of students' physical needs, but there are other things that you need to nurture. One of the greatest ways you can do that is to read a book, is to read to them and let them read to you. With more students going to college and finishing college, you know, something is happening that is good. At the same time, I read to my son all of the time, but he

had problems with reading. Later on he caught up and everything worked out fine, but what if I hadn't been his mother. You know, if somebody else had left him to his own, he might have doomed himself, "I can't do this. I'm a failure." And gave up. You can't say enough or often enough, how important it is to read, for students to read and reread, and try to make them understand that if you want to be successful in life you have to have all the skills that are necessary: reading, writing, thinking and listening. Speaking. Listening is a big skill that our students don't have enough of because somewhere along the line they think that what they have to say is far more important than what anybody else has to say. People say to me, "Oh, you've been teaching twenty-seven years, when are you going to retire?" Retire to what! As long as teaching is a joy and I feel like I am making a difference then I am going to keep on going.

*At the time of this interview with Alice we had already talked about moments in her teaching as "life lessons," moments when she shares stories from her own past in an effort to try and help students understand their own pasts, presents, and possible futures. I asked her, "Do you see those life lessons as related to the kind of literacy that you are cultivating or is that something separate from teaching the skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking?"*

I think it's all continual. All of it goes together, being a part of everything that you learn in life, not just from a book but things that happened to you can be compared perhaps to that character, or seeing myself, or being able to see yourself in certain situations, and knowing that you still can be successful. You still can be you. I teach my students, "You are the biggest factor in determining whether or not you are successful in life. You set the parameters as to what is success...What do you view as being successful? What are the things in life that you want to accomplish?"

*Alice talks about her students and who they are. She locates what she does in the students she has in front of her. Alice wants to make sure that the literature her students encounter "speaks" to them, that it is meaningful and relevant to the issues they are grappling with, the books are not "antiquated." She does not want her students to miss the relevance of literature to their lives. She wants them to comprehend what they are exposed to, and if that means she must read out loud then she will read out loud. We will*

*see this in her case study, particularly in her unit on Zora Neale Hurston. Alice knows that if her students are to be successful, they need to read, write, think, listen, and speak well. She knows that for many, this is a formidable task, but this is her job as their teacher, to help them become literate and help them to go out into the world and negotiate everything it will throw at them.*

William Harrison: "What You Call Critical Literacy...I Call Literacy"

*I sent a letter inviting William to participate in this study and a copy of the study proposal. It then took me several weeks before I could reach him by telephone, because of his active professional, recreational, and family schedule. When I finally connected with William, he told me he had read the proposal and he wasn't sure if he was interested in participating. There were several reasons for his uncertainty, but one was that he doesn't talk about his teaching in the way I talk about the teaching I hope to study. His distinction was punctuated by the statement, "What you call critical literacy...I call literacy." After we had discussed the conceptions of teaching practices behind our different terminology, he agreed. The following response from William describing the literacy he tries to cultivate in his students took place after the initial conversation about "literacy."*

Someone who is literate is someone who cannot only sound out the words on a page, use decoding skills, and read for comprehension, but someone who can read something, internalize it, get a picture in his or her head, and then try to put it in their world. That is the hard part. I think a lot of people read like they do everything else. To be told what to do, to read for information, or just to be entertained. A real, real literate person is almost someone who has been away writing another story as they are reading. That is also a sign of an intelligent person. Drawing from what you read. See how this can spin off further. I do that by encouraging the kids to go through activities or discussions that would get

them to do that. Problem solving. Figuring options. That is the beauty of being a human being. We have the ability to use deduction, and critical thinking. I mean...to bring it to its highest levels. That to me is literacy.

Even the art students do in the classroom is connected to literacy. The social studies too. All the work is connected to their developing literacy. There are multiple literacies. How we speak to the text, to the written text. There is literacy of music, of art. We need to deal with people in conversation every day. The thing I like about using art in the classroom is it gives some kids a way in that they wouldn't otherwise have. And really, if you think about it, every artist is a researcher, a historian. They are looking at the world around them, seeing how they fit in, seeing how they relate to it. These are the things I want my students to do. Art is often a great way to develop ideas, to get things really moving, from a work of art. When interpreting art there are really no right or wrong answers. There's thinking that's going on, and kids can play around with their interpretations.

I am also trying to help my students become writers. And teachers of writing should be writers themselves. I think it is absolutely imperative that teachers of writing understand and have worked through a real writer's workshop. Know how that process works from experience, know the writing process in and out because they have used it.

Social action is also important to the literacy teaching I am doing. Everything is all connected. You can't successfully act if you don't know. It is easy to seduce someone if they are not informed. You can dismiss them really easily. It happens all the time. Politicians. Policy makers. Police. In terms of social action, justice may or may not be served if you are not informed. You have to be aware of the problem, and you have to be aware of how to solve the problem.

It is like the foundation of the house. By teaching people, period, whether they are children or not, how to be literate. Their passions, their desires, and their needs will spawn all the social action. I think once someone gets a taste of doing for themselves, not being passive, I don't think you can ever make them go back. Once they have an independent spirit, it is pretty hard to contain it. You can't beat them into submission. You might have to jail them. Seventh and eighth grades are a real critical time where kids are finding out who they are, and they are either going to become a leader or a follower. A thinker or a droid.

*William and I talk about Plato's notion of education being "the turning of the soul."*

There's a flip side. Once that soul is turned, once a person is aware and literate, it might bring more stress in the person's life. Like when we unearth all these

problems and research them, we realize really how powerless we are to do anything. Our social action is pitiful in the scope of the giant topic. And that is something teachers have to help students deal with too. You do what you can, and you go to sleep knowing that you did your best. You are living with your principles, but you can't solve all the world's problems. Dealing with failure is very important. The more I know, the more I live, the less I realize I know. Everything that I thought I knew gets contradicted.

In terms of survival skills, maybe it would be easier to go along unaware. But I don't think it is true. I think people know, and they are just frustrated not knowing how to do anything about them. You know, we call it common sense or whatever, but most people know what is right and wrong. Whether they are getting the shaft or not. As a teacher I try to help my students discover healthier alternatives to their problems than violence, or whatever.

If I taught in a more affluent district, I think one of my main objectives would be to get the students to see, whether it is in college or what, they are not the center of the universe, that there are other people out there. Because it is very easy to think that, living in such circles. That would be important. I am not telling them what to think, but to be made aware. I think rich kids are miseducated too. It is just that the penalty is far less severe because they have stuff to fall back on.

With the students I have now, I try especially hard to make them aware. They want to know what is out there. They want to know.

*In between and around eating our lunch, William talks about the complexity, the messiness, the real dilemmas that exist within the literacy he is trying to cultivate.*

*William talks about "critical literacy," making sure I understand that he refers to this kind of practice as simply "literacy." William wants his students to be able to use what they have read and go beyond it, to use their imaginations and "spin off further." He wants to be sure his students can problem solve, deduce, and engage in critical thinking. He wants them to figure out their options so that they can revel in that which is beautiful in humanity, the ability to make choices. He wants his students to engage in conversation with texts, and connect texts to life and living. He wants his students to be writers, not just know how to write, but internalize the art and craft of writing. He wants his students*

*to be able to act on social problems, to figure out what it takes to engage in social action, but also become aware that they cannot solve all the world's problems. He wants to foster "independent spirits." He wants to guide his students to find healthier alternatives. He knows what his students are dealing with, and tries to meet their needs and take them beyond their constraints. William wants to widen the world of possibilities for his students through education. William calls this teaching for literacy.*

### Conclusion: Seeing the Students in Front of Them

When Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison describe the literacy they try to cultivate in their students, they do not use the same words or sources of inspiration that I do when I define teaching for critical literacy, for instance, the language I use in "The Tap Root." Nor do these teachers sound like one another. They are different people, and the students they teach are also different from one another. Yet, there is compatibility in the substance and spirit of what these critical educators say. When their responses are taken together, the connectedness to kids and classrooms and curriculum each of these critical educators reveals is striking.

What Carol, Alice, and William show us is that when they envision literacy goals, they "see" students in front of them. It is almost as if they have a classroom in front of them. The theories they articulate through these descriptions of the literacy they try to cultivate are nested in the practices they engage in to meet the needs of actual students. This is striking. This is a distinctive quality that is missing for me in much of the critical education literature. If we look back at the definition of critical literacy provided by Lankshear and McLaren excerpted in the section "The Pitfalls of Definition," there is no

real teacher, there is no real classroom, there are no actual students. When these three teachers speak, their words seek to articulate the needs of the students they know. There is a groundedness to their talk of practice, a groundedness that asks us to imagine the real students they recall. Theory nested in practice can illuminate the larger body of theoretical literature to help others become critical educators.

## CHAPTER 2 OVERVIEW AND DESIGN OF A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

### Introduction: A Tribute

In the 1997 graduation celebration for eighth graders at Urban Hope Academy, Max Johnson paid tribute to his teacher, William Harrison. Before an audience of more than one hundred family and community members, Max Johnson, after having thanked his family and God, said, "Mr. Harrison has been my light," and then thanked Mr. Harrison for pushing him to achieve all that he could as a student, a writer, a basketball player, and a person, the way only his mother had previously.

Max Johnson had been a struggling student when he entered William Harrison's seventh grade class in the fall of 1995. At the end of his seventh grade year, Max opted to continue with William Harrison the following year as an eighth grader. One of the interdisciplinary thematic units of study William Harrison's class undertook in the 1996-97 school year was titled "Slavery in America," spanning from the 17th century slave trade to 20th century present day "sweat shops." In February 1997 William Harrison came across an essay contest for area students sponsored by the Metropolitan City Library in celebration of Black History Month. The focus of the essay was to respond to a Frederick Douglass quotation on slavery and freedom. William Harrison worked this essay topic into his unit curriculum and required all his students to write an essay and submit them to the contest. Max Johnson's entry won second place for eighth graders; a classmate of his, Mika, took first place.

Max Johnson's tribute to William Harrison provides a window into the transformative possibilities of teaching for critical literacy. However, more than windows are necessary to understand what teaching for critical literacy in the secondary English classroom looks like. If the educational community is going to better understand

teaching for critical literacy, what it is like in real classrooms with real students, what it is like with all the demands, obstacles, and constraints of public education, then there is a need to portray in sufficient depth the work of critical educators in multiple contexts.

In "Reading and Writing *Their Worlds: Portrayals of Practice in Teaching for Critical Literacy*," I seek to uncover how the thinking and practices of Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison – three critical educators who teach for critical literacy – speak to and inform what is currently believed and proposed about teaching for critical literacy. Through a case study approach, this work reveals how each of these critical educators, whose backgrounds and teaching contexts are strikingly different, think about their purposes and objectives for student learning, specific approaches they employ to teach their students, and representative curriculum they select. These aspects of each critical educator's work are portrayed in case studies made up of life stories, classroom stories, and analysis.<sup>10</sup> The classroom narratives are enhanced by the teachers' articulation of beliefs and theories that undergird their practice. Through life stories of these teachers, I connect their personal histories with what they teach and how they go about their work. Lather writes, "one cannot talk of students learning without talk of teachers teaching" (1991, p. 1). Hasbach has extended this idea, "One cannot talk of teachers teaching without talk of students learning" (1995, p. 320). In the classroom stories relevant classroom discourse, student work, and selected student interviews have been included for what they reveal about "teachers teaching" and what they possibly

---

<sup>10</sup>A description and rationale for these "case studies" will be provided later. I have focused upon one or more classroom events in the classroom stories of each critical educator to construct rich portrayals which exemplify her or his practice.

reveal about "students learning." I write "possibly" reveal about students' learning because I understand how difficult it is to "see learning." In their exploration into the dynamics of pedagogical thinking, Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann write, "While teachers cannot directly observe learning, they can learn to detect signs of understanding and confusion, of feigned interest and genuine absorption" (1985, p. 54). It is only by pulling together many data sources, particularly the voices of the teachers and their students, that I am able to construct an emic perspective on teaching for critical literacy and to "detect" those signs that indicate students developing critical literacy.

The research questions which frame this study are responsive to the need for rich portrayals of teaching for critical literacy:

- What does teaching for critical literacy look like in the secondary English classroom? What does it mean to teach for critical literacy, to help students learn to read and write the word and the world?
- What is the relationship between "who we are" and how we teach? How can life stories illuminate this relationship?

In the Prologue and Chapter 1 I argued that "the personal" – who we are as people, our backgrounds, histories, beliefs, values – is linked and inseparable from "the political" and "the pedagogical" – that what we teach and how we teach signify power relations and dynamics inside and outside the classroom. This premise raises important subsidiary questions to the framing question: To what extent and how might teachers' personal histories shape what and how they teach? What impact, if any, has each teacher's preparation had on their teaching for critical literacy? What people in their lives, authors, specific published works, and professional development experiences have shaped their teaching philosophies and practices? I have made efforts to respond to these subsidiary questions. Inclusion and analysis of the life stories makes it possible to get beneath what

is seen in the classroom stories, and surface what is often invisible. In Chapter 7 I have drawn upon each teacher's insights concerning the preparation of future teachers to better link what we see in classrooms to what we as teacher educators do to prepare a future generation of critical educators.

The purpose of doing this study is to better understand what teaching for critical literacy in the secondary English classroom looks like, in an effort to understand the realities of this work that the theoretical literature has not satisfied for me as a reader and practitioner. I have studied the work of Carol, Alice, and William. I have analyzed the data representing their work, and the words they and their students shared with me. And I have written so I can better understand. I have crafted the writing in ways I believe will best help others understand teaching for critical literacy, at least understand it from the perspective of practitioners working in classrooms. It is my belief that readers will see more in the life stories of these critical educators and classroom stories of their work than my words about their lives and work can reveal. As William says in his life story, "Stories speak better than I could ever teach." The classroom stories are "teaching stories" of critical educators working in public school classrooms. I intend to use these stories with my own students, and hope readers will share them with colleagues and students of their own. In this study I have begun to unpack the meaning these stories have for understanding teaching for critical literacy, and it is my hope that others will continue that meaning-making process beyond the pages here.

As stated in Chapter 1, this study is not about identifying essential elements of critical literacy, or absolute qualities of critical educators. Prescriptive formulas for teaching for critical literacy are not needed. I entered this study with a genuine interest in

extending my understanding of what critical literacy is for real teachers and students, and what it means to teach for critical literacy in real contexts. I have learned, at least in respect to the three critical educators I studied, that life experiences unfold in unique ways in the classroom. I have learned that personal history affects what and how people teach. I have learned that people can confront their personal histories and become the people and educators they desire, that they need not be trapped by personal histories that were sheltered, or sexist, or racist. My experiences studying Carol, Alice, and William have expanded my understanding of what the practice of critical literacy "looks" like in real classrooms, and through case studies of their work I hope readers' understandings of the theory and practice of teaching for critical literacy is also extended.

### Why Case Studies?

Emily Style, high school English teacher and co-director of the national Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity project (SEED), uses the metaphors of "window" and "mirror" to talk about how curriculum provides the opportunity for multiple ways of seeing:

...education needs to enable the student to look through window frames in order to see the realities of others and into mirrors in order to see her/his own reality reflected....I would link hearing and seeing....sometimes when we hear another out, glancing through the window of their humanity, we can see our own image reflected in the glass of their window. The window becomes a mirror! (1998, p. 1)

I believe that case studies, such as the ones I present in this study, should help readers "look through window frames in order to see the realities of others" and through reflection, examination, and discussion of those case studies help readers compare their

own lived and imagined "realities." Beyond rich portrayals of what happens in classrooms, this study embraces the voices of Carol, Alice, and William talking about their own lives and work. Some readers, if they use a "listening eye,"<sup>11</sup> may find in these teachers' words, a window they can see their own image reflected in, becoming, as Style says, a mirror.

In this study readers will enter three separate classrooms, classrooms in which the curriculum is relevant, the students' questions are authentic, and the problems and issues probed are vital to the lives of the students. Teachers reading these case studies can relate what they see and learn through these classrooms in meaningful ways to their own context.

### The Call for Rich Portrayals of Teaching for Critical Literacy

As an elementary school teacher attempting to engage my students in real social and economic issues, I needed clear illustrations of what critical pedagogy could look like in the mainstream, K-12 public school systems of this country. In reviewing the current literature on education for social reform, I found a great deal of information on the theory of critical pedagogy, including work in the fields of adult literacy, higher education, feminist pedagogy, international development, and education for employment. Unfortunately, most of this was written in an abstract fashion, with little explanation of how one could make it work in an actual classroom.. (Sylvester, 1994, p. 310)

As I discussed in Chapter 1, much of the expanding body of literature on critical literacy and critical pedagogies is densely theoretical or only deals with teaching for

---

<sup>11</sup>Donald Murray (1979) uses the "listening eye" metaphor to describe a shift in his approach to conferencing with college students about their writing. Murray learned that if he did not write extensive feedback on drafts, and in conferences allowed the writer to talk about her or his draft without overwhelming the student with questions and suggestions — if Murray listened to what the writer had to say in the draft and in the conference — the student would learn more and he would learn more about the student as a writer. I am asking readers to read with a "listening eye," to hear the teachers' voices and learn from them.

critical literacy in the abstract. Sylvester, a third grade teacher in a Philadelphia inner-city school, echoes the need of many teachers at all levels of instruction who are trying to transform their practices to teach for critical literacy. There seems to be little flesh on the theoretical literature's bones. Rich portrayals of secondary English teachers teaching for critical literacy are necessary to "flesh out" the theory – to make concrete what the theoretical literature has been attempting to promote in the abstract. More importantly, I believe, the need is consequential because without rich portrayals it is difficult for teachers to imagine what this kind of practice "looks" like in real classrooms with real students. And, as my own life story attests, if teachers fail to imagine other possibilities, they reproduce by default their own uncritical educations.

I use a case study approach for the rich portrayals of critical educators teaching for critical literacy. Nieto provides the following rationale for her use of case studies in

Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education:

The case study approach should be understood within the framework of qualitative research. It is defined by Merriam as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit." She further describes the four essential characteristics of a qualitative case study is particularistic (focusing on one person or social unit), descriptive (the end product is a rich, thick description), heuristic (because it illuminates the reader's understanding and brings about the discovery of new meanings), and inductive (because generalizations and hypotheses emerge from the examination of the data)...Case studies can help us look at particular situations so that solutions for more general situations can be hypothesized and developed. According to Erickson, practitioners can learn from a case study "even if the circumstances of the case do not match those of their own situation." (1992, p. 7, emphasis in original)<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>Sharon B. Merriam, Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988; Frederick Erickson "Qualitative Methods in Research on Teaching," in Handbook of Research on Teaching, 3rd ed., Merlin C. Wittrock (Ed.) New York: Macmillan, 1986.

In my own work as a teacher educator using Nieto's case studies of students, I have found them to be effective "tools" (Sykes & Bird, 1992, p. 19) to help teachers construct an understanding of the issues she presents in her text. I have constructed case study chapters on Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison, each made up of five sections: an introduction, a life story, a context, a classroom story, and an analysis. The case studies are particularistic because each focuses on one teacher. The case studies are descriptive – "rich" and "thick" in detail – for I have provided segments of classroom events sufficient in length to show critical moments nested in the realities of daily classroom life. The case studies are heuristic because through careful analysis they illuminate teaching for critical literacy and also create new theoretical meanings. The case studies are inductive because they facilitate theorizing, as in the eight elements discussed in Chapter 7 "An Expanded Theory of Teaching for Critical Literacy." Finally, the combination of life stories, classroom stories, and analyses surface patterns in the work of each critical educator, and across the work of all three. These case studies provide not only flesh to the theoretical bones of teaching for critical literacy, but muscle and heart and soul as well.

Sykes and Bird argue that the case study approach has great potential to mesh social foundations and teaching methods issues which are often dichotomized. They also argue that "cases may be vehicles for representing classroom knowledge and problems directly" (1992, p. 13) in ways that can help bridge theory and practice. Most relevant to the intentions of my own study and use of cases is the belief that, as Sykes and Bird argue, "...if teacher educators hold transformative aims and seek to promote new instructional practices and social ideals not widely available for observation in schools,

then cases might constitute one bridge between hortatory pronouncements and new practices and attitudes" (pp. 29-30). Case studies might be able to bridge valuable critical education theory by someone like Paulo Freire and the practices of classroom teachers.

It can be argued that Paulo Freire has been the most compelling voice inspiring theoreticians and practitioners of critical literacy. As already discussed in Chapter 1, Freire provides the foundation for my own beliefs and practice, the "tap root" of my developing theory of teaching for critical literacy. However, Freire's work, as is the case with anyone's, is not trouble free. Peter Elbow, a highly respected English educator, raises important questions about the value of a work like Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1968/1985) in helping classroom teachers transform their pedagogy and curriculum. In his essay, "The Pedagogy of the Bamboozled," Elbow questions:

Are...[Freire's] own practices, which he only faintly alludes to, fully in accord with the principles that form the substance of the book?...[I]sn't there something suspicious about a book which emphasizes so much the importance of concrete reality, and yet in its language, style, and structure is so wholly abstract, deductive, and without *any* concrete people, places, or incidents? (1973/1986b, p. 87)

Even though Elbow respects Freire's educational goals, he objects to the practices he sees in many English classes where teachers claim to be following Freire's vision. Elbow frames his argument in this way:

Freire gives principles which I think very few institutional teachers in this country follow. But I think many teachers, both in high school and college, *imply* in subtle ways that they do follow these principles. In this way they bamboozle students and themselves. Thus there are two possible reforms: start really doing what Freire describes; or stop implying that you do. (p. 87, emphasis in original)

Elbow is sympathetic to the challenge of trying to transform teaching practice on the basis of an inspiring theoretical vision, even if the above two quotes don't emphasize this.

Elbow is calling for teachers to stop fooling themselves in believing they are following Freire's principles. As long as the "ideal" remains in the abstract, it is too easy for teachers in any context to see themselves as fulfilling the ideal. The entire notion of "an ideal" is problematic, since every teaching context is different and demands situated responses. It is within these situated contexts that "reality" happens.

Elbow's criticism underscores a key problem that motivates this study. It is tremendously difficult for educators to transform their pedagogy and curriculum from theoretical readings that are abstract and do not provide lively examples of how the theory might translate into the practice of real teachers like themselves, in real classrooms like their own, with real students like theirs. Freire, like so many other theoreticians, provides only theoretical models.

Later in his essay Elbow addresses another problem. One theory of teaching and learning, like Freire's, is insufficient to meet the needs of all students in all contexts. I agree. There are many "critical theories" – theories about following critical pedagogies and teaching for critical literacy – as well as other theoretical schools of teaching and learning. It is not advisable or realistic that teachers should follow a single theory of teaching. One value of this study is that we see three critical educators in action, and hear their reflections on practice. Portrayals of these critical educators' work provide examples that illustrate theories – theories that undergird their work, theories that may or may not be consistent with the critical education literature. Because recipes and formulas for teaching fail to meet the needs of particular students, because of the situated nature of teaching and learning, because teaching is inseparable from students' background, curriculum, context, and so many other dynamics, teachers must "construct practices"

(Rosaen, personal communication, 1997) that enable them to create their own versions of teaching practices which grow out of their unique personal and professional histories.

Gary Griest, a high school English teacher at the International School of Amsterdam, reinforces the problem Elbow poses. Griest writes about the difficulty classroom teachers have in learning from critical and literary theoretical texts. Griest says, "In the case of critical theory, it should be obvious that we seldom have time in our schedules to read and reflect upon difficult critical texts" (1992, p. 15). It would seem that descriptions of situated practice would be more helpful to the practitioner in connecting theory to practice because such descriptions are closer to what practitioners see and experience daily.

Diane DuBose Brunner has found it challenging to help prospective English teachers develop critical education frameworks and dispositions through theoretical texts. In Inquiry and Reflection: Framing Narrative Practice in Education (1994), Brunner writes about using "schooling narratives," drawn from imaginative literature and videos, in her classes to help undergraduates and teachers pursuing Masters degrees understand issues of power, culture, and ideology relevant to their work in classrooms. Brunner argues, "...some texts may help readers to more easily reach what Lukacs refers to as experiences of the 'here and now,' or what Rosenblatt calls a lived-through or 'virtual' experience" (p. 99). The theoretical literature on teaching for critical literacy falls short in evoking "here and now" and "virtual" experiences. Brunner has found a way, through the use of literary schooling narratives, to address the problem.

Professional readings alone seem to be inadequate, at least in my classes, for providing prospective teachers with a necessary framework for understanding the meanings their students may make about themselves and school. Although

critical texts provide useful, maybe even necessary, stimulus for questioning the assumptions in aesthetic texts, they tend to fall short of providing enough context for teachers-to-be who may have little or no background in schools outside their own experiences as students. Their lack of "teacherly" backgrounds may make many important concepts difficult to understand. However, despite the difficulty of concepts like the *culture of silence*, or *tracking as a device for reproducing class, gender and racial inequality*, both may be, nonetheless, as important for beginning teachers as they are for experienced teachers. (p. 99, emphasis in original)

Brunner helps us to see that both theory and practice are helpful, and work together. The case studies of Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison are rich in context. It is my hope that the classroom narratives and teachers' words will help evoke "here and now" and "virtual" experiences for readers, even if they lack "teacherly backgrounds."

Connelly and Clandinin, drawing on Deborah Tannen's (1988) work in discourse analysis, explain that case studies can provide vicarious experiences for a reader when she/he "connects with it by recognizing particulars, by imagining the scenes in which the particulars could occur, and by reconstructing them from remembered associations with similar particulars" (1990, p. 8).

The work of the critical educators in this study is portrayed in the "real world" of the classroom. The way in which each critical educator makes sense of what is happening in her or his classroom can help others think more deeply about their own contexts, their own students, their own practices. The case studies provide compelling portraits of critical educators interacting with students – theory in practice, and practice in theory – not just theory on paper.

I have approached this study looking into the future, recognizing the need to help others learn to teach for critical literacy. I believe accessible portrayals of practice have the potential to help others learn how to engage in such practices, that such portrayals

can help teachers make sense of the complexities of teaching for critical literacy similar to the "virtual experiences" Brunner (1994) uses with her students. The existing literature is limited as far as helping to promote teachers teaching for critical literacy in secondary classrooms. Yet, I believe the theory of teaching for critical literacy can be informed and clarified by the practice of those who actually teach for critical literacy. "New theory and new practice...emerge from sharing reflections on teaching experiments, in an educational project which is definable only as people act and reflect on it in-process" (Shor, 1987, p. 104). Through their work and words, Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison reveal wisdom of practice and their own constructed theories of practice. Through the voices of these teachers and their students, our understandings of practice and theory are enriched.

#### Who Are the Participants and What Is the Context of the Study?

All three teachers participating in this study are people I have worked with in the past. Through various projects I had spent limited time in Carol Lessing's classroom and extensive time in Alice Terry and William Harrison's classrooms prior to conducting this study. I was well acquainted with each of the teachers' work, and their beliefs about teaching and learning. In spite of this familiarity, there was, and still is, so much more for me to learn from each of these teachers, particularly in regard to their work and thinking about teaching for critical literacy. Even though a brief introduction to each teacher was included in "In Teachers' Voices: Describing the Literacy They Cultivate" (Chapter 1), and life stories follow in the respective case studies, I am including brief

profiles of each teacher here so the reader can gain a sense of the diversity of these three teachers as research participants:

Carol Lessing is White. She is middle class. She grew up in a small town on a working family farm. She has been a teacher for thirty-one years, most of those at Station High School, a large suburban school in the university bedroom community of Station City. The student population of SHS is predominantly White, however, there is a significant international population because it is located near a large university. Prior to teaching at SHS, Carol taught two years in a small town high school. She has also taught in a community college and international schools at different points in her career. Carol currently teaches regular grade level English classes, and writing and literature semester electives. She had served as the school's writing coordinator for three years at the time of this study. She is active in an area National Writing Project site.

Alice Terry is African American.<sup>13</sup> She is middle class. She was raised by her father, a pastor, and her stepmother. She has lived most of her life in Assembly, the town she currently teaches in. She is active in the National Baptist church. She has been teaching twenty-seven years, all at Assembly High School, the same school she graduated from. The student population of AHS is more than 95% African American and economically diverse. Alice currently teaches regular grade level English classes and multiple sections of a semester elective in African American literature. She is chair of the English department in her school. She is active in state and district-wide efforts to address curriculum and assessment issues. She teaches a writing course and/or literature course each semester for the local community college in Assembly.

William Harrison is White. He is middle class. He grew up in a working class family with active union involvement. He has been teaching five years, all at Urban Hope Academy, the same school where he student taught. Urban Hope Academy is a small urban PK-8 school. The school population is 97% African American, with about half of its children living in public and low income housing in the immediate neighborhood. The entire school is Chapter I, and most students qualify for free or reduced breakfast and lunch programs. William currently teaches an integrated language arts and social studies curriculum to a class made up of seventh and eighth graders. He is active in an area National Writing Project site. He teaches a literature and a writing course each semester at a community college in a neighboring community.

---

<sup>13</sup>I refer to Alice Terry as African American versus Black because this is how she identifies herself.

Even in these brief profiles we begin to see the distinct backgrounds (race, gender, belief systems, where they grew up) these critical educators came from and the different school contexts they work in. Through the stories they tell of themselves and the work they do, and the narratives I will construct of their practice, readers will come to know Carol, Alice, and William.

### Narrative Inquiry as Methodology

Telling stories is...a meaning-making process. When people tell stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness....It is this process of selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them that makes telling stories a meaning-making experience....Every word that people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness (Vygotsky, 1987, pp. 236-237). Individuals' consciousness gives access to the most complicated social and educational issues, because social and educational issues are abstractions based on the concrete experiences of people. W.E.B. DuBois knew this when he wrote, "I seem to see a way of elucidating the inner meaning of life and significance of that race problem by explaining it in terms of the one human life I know best" (Wideman, 1990, p. xiv).<sup>14</sup> (Seidman, 1991, p. 1)

Education and educational research is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; learners, teachers, and researchers are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2)

This study – this work – is a story, a story made up of many linked stories, stories constructed from the experiences of the one life I know best – my own. It is also a story of a teaching life in progress, for it is through the composing that I am making sense of how to deal as an educator with issues of "dominance and difference" (Gannett, 1992, p. 201) in the context of teaching for critical literacy. It is a story with a beginning, a

---

<sup>14</sup>Vygotsky, L. (1987). Thought and language (A. Kozulin, Ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; Wideman, J.E. (1990). Introduction to The souls of black folk by W.E.B. DuBois. New York: Random House, First Vintage Books/Library of America Edition.

middle, and an open end; a story of where I have been, where I am, and where I plan to go as an educator who is committed to understanding these issues and helping others to do the same. I have woven together pieces of my own personal and professional life, the stories of other educators, and portrayals of teaching in their respective classrooms. It is through stories that we come to know ourselves – who we have been, who we are, and who we can become.

I am a storyteller, and I love stories. It has only been in the last few years that I have understood this about myself. In fact, during much of my graduate work I struggled, and puzzled, and felt guilty over the personal reality that, in general, I am both intellectually and emotionally moved more profoundly by the stories people tell of their own and others experience than I am with what constitutes traditional research. As I read widely both qualitative and quantitative work, and worked on a variety of research projects of my own design and as a research assistant, I often reflected on how my own passions and commitments might shape the researcher I hoped to become. It is no surprise that I gravitated toward narrative inquiry.

Connelly and Clandinin, drawing on Eisner's work (1988), place narrative inquiry with "qualitatively oriented educational researchers working with experiential philosophy, psychology, critical theory, curriculum studies, and anthropology" (1990, p. 3). These authors clarify that since "people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives" the role of the narrative researcher is to "describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (p. 2). Narrative inquiry – the collecting, analyzing, and writing of teachers' lives and experiences – is the principle methodology of this study. However, because this study has involved multiple data

sources and extensive analysis within and across stories, the narrative pieces are empirical.

### Narrative Inquiry as Seeking Connection and Care

In similar ways that Sue Middleton strove to ensure her life-histories of feminist teachers would not "alienate the women from their own stories" or "turn into abstracted data the rich emotionality of their narratives" (1993, p. 67), I have sought to preserve the teachers' voices when conveying stories of their lives and incorporate their perspectives when constructing classroom narratives. Through my analysis I have aspired toward connection and care with the teachers in this study and with readers who see themselves as teachers. The desire to do this is supported by narrative inquiry methodology, but it also grows out of an ethic of respect concerning interactions with people and ideas that I developed early as a teacher and intellectual.

I first encountered the work of Peter Elbow in a Masters class on teaching writing in the secondary classroom. We read Writing Without Teachers (1973). In the appendix of that book Elbow included an essay that changed forever the way I read and respond to books and student papers. In "The Doubting Game and the Believing Game—An Analysis of the Intellectual Enterprise," Elbow builds an argument for a way of thinking that underpins his practices as a teacher of writing, practices which position the teacher as a learner side-by-side with students, practices which became foundational to the National Writing Project movement. Elbow begins the essay stating a problem he ran up against as an academic and intellectual:

When people first encounter the teacherless writing class, they often call it anti-intellectual. To academics especially, the idea of listening to everyone else's reading no matter what it is, refraining from arguing, and in fact trying to believe it, seems heretical and self-indulgent. (p. 147)

Elbow goes on to explain that the intellectual enterprise is about seeking truth, and truth should be sought by the best means available. He claims that traditional academics play what he calls the *doubting game*: "The doubting game seeks truth by...seeking error....You must assume it is untrue if you want to find its weakness" (p. 148). The doubting game is an adversarial method. Elbow contrasts this pursuit of truth with another, the *believing game*:

In the believing game we return to Tertullian's original formulation: *credo ut intelligam*: I believe in order to understand. We are trying to find not errors, but truths, and for this it helps to believe....It helps to think of it as trying to get inside the head of someone who saw things this way. (p. 149)

The believing game is a method which seeks connection, and when applied to human interactions it is a caring and collegial method. The impact this had on me as a teacher of writing was profound. I learned to read and respond first, and foremost, to what was there in my students' writing, and not what was missing or "wrong." I believe I grew tremendously from this shift in perspective, as did my students. However, if the teacher of writing is going to best serve his/her students, or the intellectual find truths, then both ways of interacting must be instituted. Actions associated with the doubting game – questioning, challenging, examining, asserting, testing, and so many more – must be exercised, not exclusively, not even initially or predominantly.

I know I have carried that "believing game first-way-of-seeing" ethic into much of my work, including how I planned and conducted studying Carol, Alice, and William's

teaching. I was not surprised when I discovered Connelly and Clandinin drew upon a later version of the Elbow essay when discussing the process of narrative inquiry:

...it is particularly important that all participants have voice within the relationship. It implies, as Elbow (1986) noted, that we play the "believing game," a way of working within a relationship that calls upon connected knowing in which the knower is personally attached to the known....The believing game is a way of knowing that involves a process of self-insertion in the other's story as a way of coming to know the other's story and as giving the other voice. (1990, p. 4)

Connelly and Clandinin relate, as do the authors of Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind (Belenky, et al., 1986), Elbow's believing game to "connected knowing." Belenky and her colleagues contrast "separate knowing," what Elbow would call the doubting game, with "connected knowing," explaining that the ability to have empathy with others is at the heart of this kind of knowing. They write that many women find "believing feels real to them, perhaps because it is founded upon genuine care and because it promises to reveal the kind of truth they value—truth that is personal, particular, and grounded in firsthand experience" (p. 113).<sup>15</sup> My methods of data collection and analysis resonate with a quest for connected knowing with the teachers in this study. I have worked to insert myself into their stories and their work as a way of coming to know them and their work better, as well as to help their voices surface. It was with considerable and genuine care that I listened to the teachers; it is with considerable and genuine care that their experiences, ideas, and voices are included within the pages of this study.

---

<sup>15</sup>The authors only speak for women's experiences based upon their interview research with 135 women. "In our study we chose to listen only to women. The male experience has been so powerfully articulated that we believe we would hear the patterns in women's voices more clearly if we held at bay the powerful templates men have etched in the literature and in our minds" (p. 9). This is not to say that men are not "connected knowers."

Whatever "truths" and understandings there are to be had concerning what teaching for critical literacy looks like in the secondary English classroom, were pursued first through connected and caring belief. This study is about three teachers, and it is about me. The four of us have formed a study that includes life stories, classroom stories, and analyses that honor "the kind of truth [we] value."

I entered this study respecting Carol, Alice, and William as professionals and caring about each of them as individuals. The narrative inquiry I undertook necessitated considerable time in the field, and open and honest collaboration with these teachers. As a participant observer in their classrooms, and someone seeking to nurture a collaborative spirit in this project, I was conscientious about maintaining the caring and equitable relationships I had with them before the study began. Denzin defines the role of participant observation as follows:

Participant observation is a commitment to adopt the perspective of those studied by sharing in their day-to-day experiences. The participation may be known to those observed, so that it is clear they are being studied....[T]he intent is to record the ongoing experiences of those observed, through their symbolic world....[P]articipant observation shall be defined as a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection. (1978, p. 182)

Each of the three teachers, their administrators, and students and their parents or guardians were aware that my presence in the respective classrooms had to do with this research study. In fact, the first day I was present in each class I was introduced and my purposes for being there were explained, either by myself or the teacher. Students were invited to ask questions about the research at any time, and my field notes were available for them to look at whenever they wished. Over the span of time I was in each

classroom, students asked many questions and often looked at my notes to see what I was writing.

It was necessary for me to collect data that would help me construct in-depth case studies of each teacher: to craft life stories of the teachers, to shape descriptive narratives of classroom events, and to develop analyses of the teaching and learning taking place in each classroom that drew upon my own insights, those of the teachers, and those of the students. Like Wolcott, I have tried to "report what I observe and to offer an informed interpretation of those observations, my own or someone else's" (1990, p. 130). In an effort to achieve a degree of triangulation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Erickson, 1987), I collected various data. An overview of the data shows its range: Ethnographic field notes were taken at all times. Audiotaping was done of most interviews and classroom observations. Only a limited number of classroom events were videotaped because of the intrusiveness that videotaping often creates, however, those occasions were usually planned in advance with the teacher's approval. Selected students' written work was requested on the basis of relevance to particular events I was focusing upon.<sup>16</sup>

Photographs of classrooms and student artwork were taken to help reconstruct key visual aspects relevant to the classroom narratives. Planned and unplanned interviews with teachers and students were conducted to get multiple angles and interpretations of the teaching and learning I observed, the teachers' life stories, and to pursue clarification of details I was uncertain of. In addition to the above data, I read articles written by or about

---

<sup>16</sup>For example, we will see in William's case study a petition created by several students in the "Equity in Education" Action Group. This was one of more than seventy student papers, projects, tests, and writings gathered in the three classrooms.

each of the teachers, read transcripts of interviews with each teacher done either by myself or others for purposes outside the scope of this study, and viewed videotapes of these teachers done as part of other projects.<sup>17</sup> These data have been used for background and analytical purposes. I then examined the multiple data sources for patterns. When I saw patterns emerge I was able to form assertions that corresponded to the data in front of me. I was then able to test those assertions by looking at disconfirming evidence to make sure the classroom stories had what Bruner, Van Maanen, and others call “verisimilitude.” The range of data supported the study’s methodological integrity and the integrity of relationships I had established with participants – relationships nurtured through care and connection.

What follows is a brief discussion of my data collection schedule, and more in-depth explanations of principal data sources introduced above in the overview.

### Data Collection

I gathered data for this study between August 1996 and June 1997, but most intensively between September 1996 and January 1997 (see Appendix B for calendars of observations and interviews). My original study proposal planned for data collection three weeks with each teacher to coincide with units they anticipated would best exemplify her/his work teaching for critical literacy. I scheduled with each teacher three-week blocks for an intensive period of data collection that would have put me in Alice

---

<sup>17</sup>In order to preserve the confidentiality of the teachers and the students, I do not provide citations for any of these sources. For example, I do not provide citations for an article written about Alice Terry or an article written by William Harrison which appear in the respective case studies.

Terry's classroom from late September to mid-October, in William Harrison's classroom the first three weeks of November, and Carol Lessing's classroom the two weeks before the Christmas/Winter vacation and the first week back from vacation. In late August, as I was planning my University work and data collection life, it seemed a perfect plan.

As research and life would have it, my carefully laid plans changed. I began visiting Carol, Alice, and William's classrooms in late August so students would be familiar with my presence and so I could learn their names to increase the accuracy of my field notes. I also wanted to make sure all consent forms were taken care of in advance of my intensive data collection periods.

The original data collection plan proved untenable for two reasons. First, I quickly became engrossed in everything that was happening in these classrooms. I became aware after the first several observations that a three week slice of life in each teacher's classroom would give me only insights into a particular unit, but it would not reveal to me the background work with students that made what happened in those units possible. Additionally, those three week slices would not reveal to me how work with students in those units contributed to their cumulative learning. Second, the daily realities of school showed me how I needed to take into account each teacher's life and school schedules. In each of the classes my planned data collection periods shifted for a variety of reasons. One of those reasons was that retake exams for the State Proficiency Test required Alice to spend two weeks preparing her students and then one week in which the retakes were held school-wide. This three week period occurred at the same time I had planned to be in her class every day. This unforeseen event caused overlaps in the two other classes I studied, which presented their own scheduling complications.

However, I ended up observing many more classes than I had originally intended, and found the deeper understanding and insights this extended time provided were quite beneficial.

### Ethnographic Field Notes

Ethnographic field notes were essential to figuring out what teaching for critical literacy looks like in the secondary English classroom. Each time I observed a teacher, I took copiously detailed field notes using field note paper (two and one-half inch right margin). In a single-hour observation my notes would range anywhere between ten and fifty pages in length. In the left two-thirds of the paper I tried to be a human tape and video recorder, noting as much of what I heard and saw, and who was saying or doing it. When possible I made notes of what people were wearing, what their facial expressions were, and what their body language communicated. In the right third of the paper I wrote analytical notes and questions. These notes and questions took on many different forms and purposes. Such notes might concern an interpretation of what I was seeing, or a connection between a particular observation on this day with something that had happened earlier or in another classroom. Such a question might be directed to myself for further consideration later, or something I would ask the teacher or a student later for clarification (see Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, pp. 73-96 for their discussion of field notes).

### Capturing Words, Sights, and Sounds

Audiotapes of classroom events proved invaluable for developing classroom narratives. I carried a small shoulder bag with me that was equipped with several tools:

three palm size standard tape recorders, one micro-cassette recorder, a high-impedance wide-response external microphone, a flat surface microphone specifically designed to pick up conversation, a tie-clip external microphone, two AC adaptors, one extension cord, new batteries, a battery tester, white correction fluid to mark low or dead batteries, plenty of blank tapes, and two 35mm cameras. One would think I were setting off on an expedition for the National Geographic Society, but I am a detail person and I strove to be prepared to capture every detail I could with tools that were available to me. The range of these tools allowed me to use multiple recorders in a single class session. For instance, there were occasions on which I gave tape recorders to groups of students while I shadowed the teacher. In two cases when I could not be in Alice Terry's class on important days, I left a tape recorder with a student for her to record those class sessions. On one occasion I clipped a tape recorder to William Harrison's belt and the tie clip microphone to his shirt collar while he circulated among students holding writing conferences.

In my car I always carried a video camera, tripod, and a supply of tapes. I videotaped a limited number of whole class and selected small group classroom activities. Decisions to videotape particular class sessions were made after consulting with the teachers (Erickson & Wilson, 1982). Several examples serve to illustrate the consultation process. For example, Carol Lessing is not comfortable being videotaped, so only one class session when students performed different versions of the same *Noh* drama was taped. Several class sessions when Alice Terry had the class in a large, crowded circle discussing literature and sharing their writing were videotaped, however, it became clear that because of the number of students in the class and the limited space to work that

videotaping was a significant distraction. Videotaping was a valuable tool in studying William Harrison's work. William took a leading role in identifying which classroom events would be worth videotaping. In total, I videotaped Carol once, Alice twice, and William on six occasions. For instance, there was a session when students debated an issue receiving considerable press and one very close to home for them – Ebonics. When I arrived the morning this event was to take place, William said, "Get your video camera. We're going to want to get this." William made a copy of the tape for purposes of reflecting on his teaching and possible conference presentations. As collaborative research, these decisions concerning when and what to videotape honor the goal of giving these teachers voice and choice in the study.

### Representations of Student Work

Students were never required to provide me with copies of their writing or other work. There were several occasions when what students were doing seemed to be an important source of data to help me understand what students were learning. In such instances I always consulted with the teacher if one of us could ask a student for permission to either copy or photograph the particular work. Several examples reveal the underlying motivations here. In Carol Lessing's class I requested, among other artifacts, copies of several students' Essay #1 titled "What is this thing called culture?" I also requested copies of the students' final examinations in which they were asked to "create your own definition of culture," and using examples from the materials and experiences of the course "[explain] the way each of your examples changed your perspective." Having entering and exiting student interpretations of "culture" allowed for interesting

comparisons. A third example came from a day when Carol had groups of students draw interpretive pictures of Maya Angelou's poem "Africa." At the end of the class session students presented their visual interpretations, which were posted on the wall. With Carol's permission I photographed the students' representations. In Alice Terry's class I requested, among other artifacts, several students' "new endings" for the short story "Sweat" by Zora Neale Hurston, and copies of a test students took on Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God in which students worked in groups to discuss approaches to responding to the test questions. In William Harrison's class I requested, among other artifacts, several student I-Search papers. I was present on a day when William's students were presenting narrative, poetic, or visual interpretations of "slavery in America." With William and the students' permission, I photographed the visual representations many students had prepared. These are just a limited number of examples showing what kind of student work I sought and how I collected them.

### Interviews with Teachers and Students

I conducted at least two in-depth interviews with each teacher about their personal and professional lives. I conducted a number of informal interviews with each teacher after classes to discuss what was happening in particular sessions, what they were planning, and what they thought students were experiencing.

In the planned interviews for acquiring background to construct the life stories, I worked to engage the teachers in telling stories of their growing up experiences, family, education, and professional development, using the in-depth interviewing method (Seidman, 1991). (See Appendix C for interview questions.) Like the sociological

research interview (Middleton, 1993), the in-depth interview, uses open-ended questions whose "task is to build upon and explore their participants' responses to those questions. The goal is to have the participant reconstruct his or her experience within the topic under study" (Seidman, p. 9). Within this role I sought to draw the teachers out to speak at length, avoiding entering a dialogue with them.

I had originally intended to do a second life story interview early in the data collection process, and in this second interview seek to discover about their teacher preparation and significant professional experiences. Because of the pace and demands of each teacher's schedule, I was unable to conduct these second interviews until much later (May and June of 1997). In these second interviews (each lasting sixty to ninety minutes), I asked the teachers clarification questions concerning their life stories and the classroom stories I was developing. Additionally, I asked four questions that had surfaced for me as I worked with the data I had already collected: (1) Do you consider your teaching "political," and if yes, in what ways? (2) How do you describe the "literacy" you attempt to cultivate? (3) What was your own teacher preparation like, and what were significant professional influences and experiences you have had in your career? (4) What recommendations do you have for preparing future teachers, particularly of English? In the case of the first question, I realized that I believe teaching is political, and the theoretical literature on critical education characterizes teaching as political, however, I had no data from any of the teachers that spoke to their beliefs on this issue. In respect to the second question on literacy, I had no articulations of how these teachers defined literacy; and I did not want to leave the defining up to me, nor take for granted what these teachers believed, whether those beliefs were consistent with or in

conflict with my own. Finally, the last two questions grew out of a desire to look ahead at what teacher education can do to support teaching for critical literacy and to honor the practical wisdom of Carol, Alice, and William. What I learned from responses to these last two questions appears in Chapter 7 “Implications for the Educational Community.”

The informal interviews (lasting anywhere from five to thirty minutes) functioned as opportunities to engage in ongoing analysis of events happening day-to-day. These interviews were conversational in tone, and often resulted in dialogues. These opportunities revealed much about the teachers' understanding of events in their classrooms and what they believed students were experiencing. It was also during these informal interviews that we dealt with details such as scheduling future observations or exchanging materials.

I conducted a limited number of interviews with students in an effort to better understand what they were learning, and which aspects of each teacher's practice they identified as most effective for them. When conducting these interviews I sought to create open-ended discussions, conversational in tone, between either myself and the individual student involved, or between students in a group. My intention was to get students to explain in their own words the events of the classroom and how those events impacted them. I sought pair or group interviews for two reasons. First, given time constraints I wanted to hear what as many different students had to say as possible. Therefore, if I could arrange a time when several students could gather and respond to a common set of questions (see Appendix D for interview protocol), I felt my chances were better of hearing multiple voices. Second, I wanted an interview environment that facilitated a constructivist response approach, was conversational, and not intimidating; I

believed that students would feel more comfortable if they were with at least one classmate. The decision to conduct pair and group interviews during students' lunch hours came about through conversations with the teachers and students; from their perspective, to conduct interviews before school, during class, or after school would have been too imposing on students and teachers. Since the interviews would be conducted during their lunch hours, I offered to provide students with food at these meetings. All interviews were conducted at the end of the semester (see Appendix B for schedule of observations and interviews). In deciding which students to interview, I consulted with each teacher to select students who represented a range of ability, interest, and involvement levels in the classes being studied. I interviewed eleven of Carol Lessing's students. I conducted five lunch time interviews with pairs of students, and I conducted an eleventh interview with one student who told me she wanted to be interviewed and could only meet after school. I interviewed twelve of Alice Terry's students. I conducted two group interviews made up of six students each. I did not conduct formal interviews with students in William Harrison's class, for we decided that it would be more appropriate to conduct informal interviews with individual students during class time concerning work they were doing. I was able to conduct seven five to ten minute conversations with individual students about work they were doing in the class. In addition to these formal interviews with students in Carol Lessing and Alice Terry's classes, I conducted several informal student interviews that took place before class when students were arriving early, after class as students were leaving, and in two cases I just happened upon students elsewhere in the school not during class time.

## Working with the Data

As a researcher I was faced with difficult choices. I had an incredible amount of data on each teacher to work with. What was the best way for me to make sense of what I experienced, and show others what I learned? Which classroom events best revealed teaching for critical literacy? Making sense of the data I had collected was my first task.

Between September 1996 and June 1997 I made sixty-four observations between one and five hours in length per visitation (more than 115 hours of observations). Most observations were audiotaped, and several were videotaped. I began the first level of analysis during the data collection period. I always read through my notes and made annotations on the audiotape case sleeve concerning the contents. As often as I could, I would type up the field notes I had written, expanding upon them with comments, observations, questions, and preliminary interpretations enclosed in brackets. If the reading of field notes or the writing of expanded field notes revealed data that I thought might make good case study material, I would listen to the audiotapes and make a copy of the relevant segments for transcription. I developed a data log to keep track of observations, interviews, data that I had on audiotape, data that I had on videotape, and data that had already been transcribed (see Appendix E for data log).

Beginning in February, while still making occasional observations in William's class, I began the second level of data analysis on all three teachers, a level that helped me move to deeper understandings of what I had seen in classrooms and heard in interviews. This second level of analysis played out in two parallel modes. One mode was working with the interview transcripts for each teacher and drafting "life stories." I pulled together "defining moments" concerning people, places, and events that forged

who they are as people and that seemed to re-emerge in pedagogical or curricular ways in the classrooms. Those people, places, or events that seemed tangential to the overall case study were noted but not developed. Working with the life story data helped me to see the centrality of these teachers' personal histories to the teaching I observed in their classrooms. This aided in illuminating the relationship between who they are and how they teach. The life story analysis and writing helped me to make better sense of what I saw in classrooms. For instance, Carol's background growing up on a farm in a small town, Alice's background growing up immersed in the life of her father's church, and William's background growing up the protective "man of the house" surfaced in a variety of ways, one of which was in the kind of classroom learning communities they each cultivated. (This will be explored in the respective case study chapters.)

The second mode consisted of a careful reading of the data for each session observation, teacher by teacher (reading all the data for Carol's class, then moving to all the data for Alice's class, and working on William's class last). As I would read hand written or expanded field notes, and transcripts or other documents such as a student's paper or handout distributed by the teacher, I would create an index card with one or more key words that captured the events (for example, "learning names," "group test," "writing conferences") and/or emerging themes (for example, "developing community," "students as knowers," "promoting social action"). I also kept a chart of the range of themes that surfaced in each teacher's class, and the observation dates these themes were present.

There were times when I believed that a theme was "it" – that is, it captured what I was seeing in the classes in terms of critical literacy – such as social constructivism.

Then I would come up with another that seemed critical to all three teachers, such as passion. Soon I came to understand that each on its own was not enough to explain the occurrences within the classrooms – that there were a number of “theoretical roots” that were emerging. These roots, discussed at length in Chapter 6 “An Expanded Theory of Teaching for Critical Literacy,” were pulled together to construct a coherent and comprehensive analysis of these teachers’ practices. The key words and events were subsumed within these themes; the themes became part of a developing “root system” grounded in the real world of the classroom.

Identifying key events and themes for each teacher allowed me to see that there were vital stories to be told about the work of each teacher. There were moments in the classroom that seemed to illustrate the work of these teachers in ways that would allow readers to “see” what I had seen over time, stories that could make visible their teaching for critical literacy in a contextualized way.

This second level of analysis, focusing on the teachers’ lives and practices, helped to surface a vision for the resulting case study structure. Cazden writes, “Narratives are a universal meaning-making strategy, but there is no one way of transforming experience into a story” (1988, p. 24). In the case studies I have found one way to make sense of those experiences for myself, and to communicate those experiences through story. This second level of analysis merges with the third level of analysis, which is the actual shaping and writing of the case studies. Each case study is similar in its five part design: (1) *An Introduction* provides an overview of the sections in the case study, and brief introductions to the teacher, school, students, and course. (2) *A Life Story*, followed by an analysis and foreshadowing of themes that will surface in the teacher’s practice,

provides the basis for exploring the tenet “we teach who we are.” (3) *A Context* provides an “entering image” description of the community and school. These short pieces are relevant and necessary. For example, descriptions of the parking lots and school context reveal much about social class and the “worlds” students in these different contexts must negotiate. (4) *A Classroom Story*, made up of one or more classroom events and interwoven with analysis, provide a window into teaching for critical literacy in a real context. Part of the narrative and analytical weave are text boxes and footnotes at key places to provide relevant insights into the ongoing flow of action. I have taken the idea of text boxes from Judith Newman's use of them in Interwoven Conversations: Learning and Teaching through Critical Reflection (1991). The content in these text boxes is various; for instance one might have a few lines from a student interview that illuminates a moment in the classroom story, while another may include an excerpt from literature being discussed by teacher and students. I intend these text boxes to function as illuminative asides, shedding light on the action taking place but less disruptive to the flow of the narrative's action than more direct analysis. Parenthetically the reader is directed to “see text box” at the most relevant point. (5) *An Analysis* provides a sustained close examination of the classroom story and additional illustrations of teaching for critical literacy that were observed over the course of the study. It is here that an argument is built for how certain practices and ways of seeing and being with students inform teaching for critical literacy.

Since the process of analysis and writing is so closely linked, it makes sense to go into further discussion of each component of the case study.

## Writing Life Stories

I began my data collection with interviews of each teacher's life, focusing on formative family and educational experiences growing up. I interviewed Carol and Alice before their school years began; I interviewed William the first day I visited his class for an observation. I believed a deeper knowledge of the lives of these teachers might prove useful in helping me understand decisions about curriculum and teaching practice. The idea that "we teach who we are" (Palmer, 1998), previously explored in the Prologue, has become a way of thinking about the personal, political, and pedagogical. Recognition of the interconnectedness of the personal, political, and pedagogical – seeing how one's life story affects one's way of being in the classroom – is invaluable in understanding these three teachers' classroom practices.

As previously mentioned, I was unable to do the second life story interviews with the teachers at the beginning of this study as I had planned. In fact, I was well into the writing of life stories and classroom narratives when I had a chance to do these second interviews. My last life story interview with each teacher occurred at the end of the 1996-97 school year (William on 22 May, Carol on 5 June, Alice on 15 June). This ended up being fortuitous. The delay in doing these second interviews allowed me several months to explore data I had collected and draft life stories for each teacher. The work I was able to do with data in advance of the second life story interviews enabled me to identify important follow-up questions to ask each teacher, questions that may not have been asked had I followed my original data collection plan (see Appendix C).

These interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. I began analysis of the interview data by doing a close reading of the transcripts and highlighting segments that

might illuminate who these people are as teachers. For example, I thought it might be important that Carol grew up on a farm in a small town in which people depended upon one another because of her strong emphasis in the classroom on developing community and interdependence. The parallels in how she grew up and the propensities this cultivated seemed to correspond; there were many key linkages between each teacher's preprofessional life history and her/his work as a critical educator. I could not ignore the synchronicity between their early and professional lives. That is, as I reviewed and began working with data from life history interviews and classroom observations, I was able to see connections between personal values and dispositions these teachers held (a strong sense of community or an inclination toward familial protectiveness) that informed what I was seeing in the classroom (community building and overprotectiveness of students). Several early assumptions proved to be tenuous, lacking sufficient supporting data or not holding up to scrutiny; those that did withstand scrutiny help to show, at least in these teachers, they teach who they are.

The life stories of each teacher appear at the beginning of Chapters 3, 4, and 5. In style of writing and intended purpose, these life stories are inspired by the work of Studs Terkel (1970, 1974, 1980, 1984, 1992), Ruth Behar (1993), John Langston Gwaltney (1980/1993), Mahnaz Afkhami (1994), and Michele Foster (1997). Each of these authors share an approach to presenting lives in which their own role as interviewer/researcher is far behind the scenes, and the voices of the interview subject seems to speak directly to the reader. I have emulated this style. I believe presenting lives in such a way will make an important contribution to this study and the field because it allows teachers to speak in their own authentic voices about their own life experiences. My role in this is to be the

final arbitrator of their stories since I choose what is included and what is excluded from the cases. However, I strive to honor what I believe they would see as essential and crucial.

I see this style as political, for as Connelly and Clandinin point out, "in researcher-practitioner relationships where practitioners have long been silenced through being used as objects for study" (1990, p. 4) privileging the lives and voices of teachers challenges the hierarchy of knowledge in traditional research. Like the authors whose style I emulate, I am looking into the lives of "ordinary" people for the extraordinary in what they do. I select and fit together the pieces of the portraits on the page – oral and visual mosaics. We hear the stories of each teacher's life, narrated by their own sense of what is significant and important to tell, and then what is left is the imprint of the story in the hearer's mind. An analysis follows each life story, and is continued throughout the case study, making links between what we heard in the life story and what we see in the classroom. I have "read" these teachers' lives in certain ways, yet another's interpretation could have validity. A person's life story, told in their own words, seems the most genuine way for teachers to be presented. If my goal is to help the wisdom, experience, and voices of Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison help theorize about teaching for critical literacy, then it is necessary for me to provide them multiple opportunities to speak. This is also in keeping with a social constructivist paradigm of knowledge, that there are multiple "truths" that may be drawn from any single story, mine is one, and I present it as such. Yet, it is true that since I analyze and interpret the teachers' practices, I again become the final teller of the tale. However, I believe the

analyses and interpretation grow out of their own stories and are consistent with what they tell.

### Selection of Events for Classroom Narratives

Laying out over ninety index cards on the living room floor, I viewed the panorama of a very rich data collection period. Each index card represented a snapshot of what took place in a particular classroom on a particular day. These annotated moments served as a filtering device to better see what were important themes, and which events seemed most powerful. This process helped me to make decisions about which events from classrooms to piece together into classroom narratives.

In selecting events to construct classroom stories, I sought moments I had observed that would not only "flesh out" the theoretical bones of critical education theory, but bring muscle and heart and soul as well. That is, I sought classroom events when "restoryed" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) would help readers not only better conceptualize teaching for critical literacy, but see, feel, and vicariously experience teaching for critical literacy within a specific context with real students done by "those who can" (Gwaltney, 1980/1993). I surveyed the potential events I had to choose from trying to determine which helped to illuminate important facets of teaching for critical literacy. I tried to choose events which are not represented in the critical education literature, and that told something of the "real world" context the teachers were immersed in. I also chose ones which included the typical concerns of teaching English (teaching writing, teaching literature, developing listening and speaking skills, teaching students to do research, standardized testing to measure "literacy," etc.). Finally, I chose ones which

seemed to most honor their unique strengths and talents. Combined with the analytical work on themes and grounded theory, they form a comprehensive story of each teacher and her/his classroom.

Classroom events that seemed most clearly linked to helping readers “see” critical literacy in practice came to the fore. The selection of classroom events in itself represents considerable analysis, for the selection process entailed breaking down the event to really discover what about that event illuminates teaching for critical literacy. The basis for my choices changed and developed as my data taught me more about teaching for critical literacy.

### Writing Classroom Narratives

The writing of classroom stories led to a third level of analysis. Once I made decisions about which classroom events to represent, I began using the data available to me to shape representative stories. The transcripts made from audiotapes provide me with a fairly accurate and unbroken record of what each teacher said in their classrooms, and a less consistent record of what students said. My field notes, while capturing some of the dialogue, were more focused on keeping track of which students were speaking, what the mood of the room was, what I could see happening that I knew would not be preserved on the tape. Using these sources and others (documents, photographs, videotape), I wrote narratives that recaptured the experiences I observed. This process of writing the classroom stories has helped me to recognize several important themes and issues.

The themes and assertions that arose from the representative classroom stories were ones that were supported by multiple data sources. As I worked with transcript and field note data to develop the classroom stories, themes emerged and patterns formed. For example, one theme that emerged early was the role a learning community environment seemed to play in each class, yet in unique ways. As with other assertions, I explored interview data with teachers and students to see if what they said supported such an assertion. It was when all these sources seemed to coalesce that I felt I had “a story” that needed to be told – the makings of a narrative. I rejected events that were interesting slices of classroom life, but did not have other sources to support an assertion or link to other themes already well supported.

Ken Macrorie, pioneer of “I-Search” writing (Macrorie, 1988), was one of my “distant teachers” (Hubbard & Power, 1993) mentoring my efforts as a high school teacher of writing. It was Macrorie who helped me see how storytelling is the most fundamental form of human communication, and by focusing on this “fundamental” I could help my students become writers. Macrorie uses the image and metaphor of the Moebius Strip to illustrate that through storytelling, readers and listeners can see the teller as both “learned and learning.”

For the listener or reader, story often reveals where the teller’s attitudes and judgements come from. To abstract or pull out of a complex human event a few conclusions often produces nothing more than resistance and animosity among listeners or readers because they haven’t shared the experiences which gave rise to them. That’s why so many lectures and textbooks are dry—they lack the blood, muscle, rain, and dust of stories, the sound of individual people speaking, that life-giving, dramatic resource of the storyteller. (1988, p. 99)

What is important to say about narrative inquiry as methodology is that story is a powerful way to speak to and teach others, it is the most fundamental form of human

communication. Story is also consistent with the way teachers communicate to one another about their work. Story honors English teachers as a group, but particularly Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison who each reveal a deep love of story. Each speaks about how important story is to their lives and work. Therefore, the methodology – the medium of story – melds with the message.

The way these narratives have been constructed allows the reader an inductive experience, one of the characteristics Nieto (1992) says case studies should have. An inductive approach is also consistent with the work of the teachers in this study. Carol, Alice, and William each allow students to discover and construct their own understandings.

### A Theory Takes Root

Decisions and choices concerning methodology are necessarily dictated by what it is the researcher hopes to discover, and how the researcher can best make sense of those discoveries. Since I sought to better understand what teaching for critical literacy looks like in practice, in ways that the theoretical literature did not satisfy, and because of my own resonance to “story,” a qualitative study framed as a narrative inquiry made most sense.

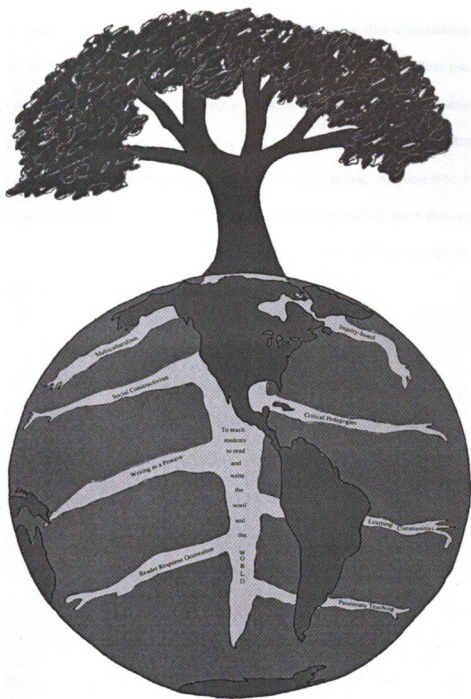
My role as a participant observer in three classrooms spanning the duration of each course allowed me to see much more than I had anticipated entering this study, and more than I would have following other methodologies. I struggled and strove to *believe what I see*, and not *see what I believe*.

There is a level of knowing that comes through field work and analysis that is potentially richer and more connected than reading other people's work. Having read much critical education literature before undertaking this study, and knowing the work of Carol, Alice, and William, I expected to see examples of *critical pedagogy*, *multiculturalism*, and *inquiry-oriented teaching*, characteristics of teaching for critical literacy widely discussed in the existing literature. I remember early in my data collection process being so excited by seeing clear evidence of a *social constructivist* perspective as a key element to all three teachers' work. A ha! A new piece to the critical literacy puzzle I thought. It was not until I began working with the data, and moving back and forth between it and the literature, that I saw social constructivism was already addressed in much of the literature, literature I had already read, highlighted, and drawn upon in my writing. Soon I realized that I was developing a sense of ownership over the knowing that was coming from my research experience, first hand, and not filtered through another's writing.

At the point when I was selecting which classroom events to draw upon to construct classroom stories, I could see emerging themes and patterns that were characteristic of each teacher's practice for cultivating critical literacy. When I took stock of the evidence, eight elements seemed to stand out as fundamental to Carol, Alice, and William's work in teaching for critical literacy: *cultivating learning communities, social constructivist perspectives on learning, teaching practices reflective of critical pedagogies, multicultural perspectives and curriculum, inquiry-oriented teaching, teaching writing as a process, reader-response orientations to teaching literature, and a teacher's passion for subject and work*. As I reflected on these elements emerging from

the data, I was initially a little surprised by what I was seeing. I had not expected *learning communities*, *reader-response orientations to teaching literature*, and *passion* to surface as themes relevant to teaching for critical literacy. However, upon further reflection what I was seeing made sense. For example, when we examine a classroom event in which a dialogue concerning racism is taking place, the critical orientation to facilitate such dialogue cannot, and must not, be separated from factors such as the teacher's personal passion concerning this issue which may grow out of early life experiences, or the foundation of a learning community that created mutual respect among students and made the dialogue possible. Furthermore, that same dialogue could be talked about using any number of theoretical positions: it's about multiculturalism, it's about social constructivism, it's about critical pedagogies, etc. To me such an instance was not about one or the other; it was about all of them. What I was coming to see through analysis of the data was my own grounded theory of teaching for critical literacy.

With these eight thematic elements before me, I returned to my own developing theory of teaching for critical literacy. Freire's concept of "reading and writing the word and the world" still worked for me as the *tap root*, the most important underpinning of my theory. This part of the root system reaches down the farthest. It is the life-line, and the tree's principal anchor. What I was seeing in the data from Carol, Alice, and William's classrooms were *major root offshoots* from the tap root, also feeding and anchoring the tree (see Figure 2 for pictorial representation).



**Figure 2.** The metaphorical tree-rooted-in-the-world concept map (Version 2) with major theoretical root offshoots illustrates the expansion of my theory of teaching for critical literacy which grew out of this study.

In Chapter 3 (Carol Lessing), Chapter 4 (Alice Terry), and Chapter 5 (William Harrison) I analyze the classroom stories which illustrate these thematic elements. In Chapter 6, *An Expanded Theory of Teaching for Critical Literacy*, I explore each of these elements as part of my own evolving theory. It is the nature of roots in a system to go where they can and need to go, working together and often touching one another. Each of the roots intertwine and connect in significant and crucial ways. Anyone who has ever tried to separate roots of an unearthed tree knows that when pulled apart they can tear and break and damage the tree. In my own treatment of the roots of this metaphorical tree, I took care to respect its integrity and well-being.

CHAPTER 3  
CASE STUDY OF CAROL LESSING  
THE ART OF NOT TEACHING:  
“WE ARE ALL LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER”<sup>18</sup>

An Introduction

The title for this chapter comes from my own perceptions of Carol Lessing’s teaching, and the perceptions of her students. As a researcher very much interested in the thinking and actions of teachers, I see Carol as a consummate artist. What is evident to me in her work is her passion, her judgment and skill at developing community, and her resourcefulness in making educative use of the community in which the school is situated by bringing it in the classroom and venturing out into it. The curriculum she develops is richly multicultural and challenging. She works to help students read the word and the world. She teaches for social change and social justice, organizing her class to maximize opportunities for students to construct meaning through discourse. It is this last aspect of Carol’s teaching which inspires the chapter title – “the art of not teaching.” Carol labors in thought and preparation to make her class student-centered. She is so successful at accomplishing this goal that many students named their classmates as the ones they have learned the most from. Similar to Elbow’s “teacherless writing class” (Elbow, 1973), Carol positions herself as a co-learner with students, prepared to embark together with them on a journey of exploration and discovery.

The chapter *The Art of Not Teaching: “We are all learning from each other”* is composed of five sections. In *An Introduction* I provide basic information about Carol Lessing, Station High School, the students, and the Cultural Perspectives class. In *A Life*

---

<sup>18</sup>Taken from interview with Dar, a Cultural Perspectives student (8 November 1996).

*Story* I present a preprofessional life story of Carol, drawing upon her own words to tell that story. The life story is preceded by a descriptive lead (text in italics) and followed by an analysis that highlights several aspects of Carol's life that are integrally connected to her work as a critical educator. In *A Context* I provide a portrait of the community and school environment. In *A Classroom Story* I present a qualitative rendering of three related lessons in Carol's class, one occurring the first full class meeting of the semester and the other two coming almost at the end of the semester. These portrayals of Carol's teaching are shaped through an integration of description, analysis, and carefully selected voices from those in the class and published sources which illuminate the action at hand. The combination of the three lessons, all sharing a substantive focus of naming/being named and exploration of "cultural identity," provides windows into how Carol nurtures a learning community. By the end of the semester, students engage in rich critical discussion of issues vital to their own lives and worlds; for example, the tensions between assimilation and acculturation, as we will see in the classroom story. Finally, in *An Analysis* I discuss the classroom story and other examples of Carol's teaching from across the semester that illuminate teaching for critical literacy.

### The Teacher

Carol Lessing is White, middle class, and grew up in a small town on a working family farm. Carol, the first born in her family, has two brothers close to her in age. Although her mother is religious and Carol went to a small denominational college, she describes herself as "allergic" to religion and has not been active in a church since her

childhood. Even so, Carol has a broad knowledge and appreciation for the literatures and philosophies of many world religions.

Carol has been a teacher for thirty-one years, most of those at Station High School (SHS), a large suburban school in the university bedroom community of Station City. Prior to teaching at SHS, Carol taught two years in a small town high school. Carol left the small town and moved to Station City in 1968, where she taught at the local community college and substituted in area K-12 classrooms for one year. She and her husband, also an educator, met at college and married soon after graduation. Together they have taken several leaves of absence to teach overseas at international schools. Carol currently teaches regular grade level English classes, as well as semester electives in literature and composition. Carol is also active in an area National Writing Project site.

In the year of this study, Carol taught two semester elective courses, Cultural Perspectives (which is the focus of this study) and Contemporary Literature. Carol was also in the final year of a three-year position as the high school's Writing Across the Curriculum Coordinator which had her teaching two classes a day and working with students and faculty throughout the school to integrate writing throughout the curriculum and better prepare students for success on the State Proficiency Test.

### The School

Station High School's student population is approximately 1,250 in number, predominantly White, although it includes a significant international population because of its proximity to a large university. The eighty-six member faculty-administrative-

counseling staff are almost entirely White, and as a group hold a high proportion of advanced degrees: more than half the staff hold M.A.s in a range of fields, six hold Ph.D.s, and four hold Ed. D.s. The first line in the school's mission statement is, "We believe that ALL students can learn." The school offers a full range of Advanced Placement courses. Students traditionally do well on ACT and SAT tests, consistently scoring significantly higher than the national average. Approximately one-third of the student body participate in school-community service learning projects, totaling many thousands of hours.

The school runs on what they call a FLEX schedule. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays the school has a FLEX period in which teachers offer instructional options either related or unrelated to the courses they teach. Carol uses FLEX periods in a variety of ways, some of which I observed included conferences with students about their writing, beginning or completing films she showed in class, showing films that are supplemental to a course, and providing time for her to meet with students concerning extra credit options built into her curriculum.

### The Students

There were twenty-two students who were in the Cultural Perspectives class. In a letter Carol composed for visitors to the class ("Who are we?"), she describes the students' "family root systems" coming from fifteen countries and all regions of the U.S., and students' personal travel/living experiences extending to an additional sixteen countries. Linguistically, in addition to English, there are eleven other primary or secondary languages spoken by these students.

The students' fashion choices seemed to present a range of social groups. Several of the girls wore "retro" clothes from the sixties and seventies. A number of boys and girls were into the "grunge" look made popular across the country via *MTV* by Seattle-based bands like Nirvana. Several of the girls and boys wore more of a "preppy" look – clean cut and conservative. A number of boys who were athletes wore school and professional sports team jerseys. One girl had cultivated a "gothic" look and demeanor, wearing black clothes almost exclusively, heavy white facial foundation with black and dark lip and eye make-up, and multiple body piercings which included her ears, nose, and tongue. One boy wore a combination "skateboarder" and "gangsta" look. At least two girls and one boy had tattoos. It is important to note that, in spite of differences in apparel implying social group affiliations, there was respect and warmth in the interactions between all students in the class. The close friendships among them, and the affection they demonstrated with one another, was striking. For example, girls frequently hugged one another and the boys .

### The Course

Cultural Perspectives is a course Carol designed and piloted the previous year to meet the needs of a school and world growing increasingly diverse and global. Carol hoped to create a course in which the rich cultural resources of the community and the students in the class/school would be tapped. Carol also wanted to create an academically rigorous course that would help students become better readers, writers, and thinkers, as well as more globally aware and minded, through an examination, primarily of literature, of six broadly conceived "cultures."

The curriculum of the course centered on literature (poetry, folk tales, drama, short stories, novels) and film depicting and representing six cultures (Native American, Scandinavian, African, Hispanic/Latino, Russian, and Asian) with the aim of providing students opportunities to think about and begin exploring cultural richness and diversity. The course was demanding for a high school elective. Students were required to do an independent study project that could have included a seventh culture. Major works read or viewed in the semester course included: Barbara Kingsolver Pigs In Heaven (novel), The Gods Must Be Crazy (film), Henrik Ibsen A Doll's House (play), Isaak Dinesen "The Pearl" (short story), Out of Africa (film), Chinua Achebe "Marriage is a Private Affair" (short story), Wole Soyinka "Telephone Conversation" (poem), Nadine Gordimer My Son's Story (novel), A Dry White Season (film), two translations of Garcia Lorca "The Guitar" (poem) and Blood Wedding (play), Gabriel Garcia Marquez "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" (short story), Laura Esquivel Like Water for Chocolate (novel), and two versions of the Noh play The Damask Drum (a traditional version by Seami and a modern version by Mishima). In addition to the above works students read Horace Miner's 1956 essay "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema" and multiple versions of the Cinderella story from Asian, African, Russian, and Native American cultures.

Beyond the demanding reading responsibilities, students had many assignments they were graded on: group presentations to give the class background information of the various cultures the class was studying, reflective journals, independent research projects,

five essays, exams and quizzes, participation in class discussions and activities, and completion of at least two "cultural opportunities."<sup>19</sup>

Carol also tried to involve students' families in the course. She sent letters to parents and guardians describing the course, requesting encouragement and support. In her letter she extended an open invitation for parents to visit the class and teach something (a dance or game or artistic skill) from their own cultural background. She asked for help with transportation and chaperoning when the class took field trips, and welcomed recommendations for films, activities, and people in the area who could enrich the curriculum and might be willing to visit.

---

<sup>19</sup> Carol offered a range of options for fulfilling the cultural opportunity requirement. For instance, students could attend a cultural festival, view a selected foreign or domestic film, read a novel on her supplemental list, and explore another culture in some agreed upon way, among other options.

A Life Story: "I Want the Cultures of All Lands  
to Blow about My House"<sup>20</sup>

*It was a warm morning late in August when I drove through residential Station City to meet with Carol Lessing for a life story interview. Carol's house is on one of those "historic drives," known to many cities that try to preserve the homes that represent the earliest and best of the community. The neighborhood grew up as an outgrowth of a large university. There are beautiful tree-lined narrow streets. Carol's house is less than a quarter mile from Station High School.*

*When I arrived, early for the appointment, Carol answered the door in sweats and rubbing her wet, graying medium brown hair with a towel. She is petite and bursts with energy. She greeted me, and proclaimed chaos. Carol poured a cup of coffee for me and extended an invitation to "look around" while she finished getting ready. I took a seat on the couch and sank into the pillowy cushion. Steam rising from the rich, dark coffee seemed to blend with the image of van Gogh's "Starry Night" on the ten ounce cup.*

*The floors were hardwood and polished, covered in places by treasured and well trafficked Persian rugs. Knowing that Carol has traveled extensively and lived abroad on several occasions, I imagine she acquired them while living in Iran.*

*There is an artistic feeling in this home. Masks of all kinds are displayed on walls and around the room; later she tells me that unpainted masks are her favorite. One mask, made out of an armadillo shell and detailed with coffee beans, leans against a table lamp. There are several framed prints. A couple of Picassos and a Dali. Two*

---

<sup>20</sup>The subtitle, a paraphrase of a Mahatma Gandhi saying, comes from an essay Carol wrote and shared with students in which she defines what "culture" means to her. Readers will encounter the essay in the classroom story.

*small pen and ink drawings. The prints are hung low, the way galleries display works. The furniture is mostly wood, American antique. There are woven baskets in several places.*

*After sitting for ten minutes in her living room, Carol comes downstairs and joins me. She has a highly expressive face and penetrating dark caramel eyes. She is fifty-three years old. We talk. Not about the study, but about the house. She annotates my observations. One of the large framed prints is of a plain white Noh drama mask she picked up while in Japan on a six week sister city exchange program. Two eight by ten inch lithographs, psychologically dark pen and ink portraits of individual men, were gifts from a former student. "He will be well known one day for his work," Carol says. She draws my attention to an undecorated mask, tan in color. She tells a story of tracking down a world renowned Venetian mask maker to acquire this treasure. It is made from a single piece of leather. Very rare. The mask's elongated nose was a Renaissance design to filter infectious air during times of plague.*

*She leads me through the study, a tight working space with desk and computer. Bookcases reach from floor to ceiling. Carol's office. The shelves filled with fiction, poetry, biography, history, art, and more. Eclectic tastes. The shelves' contents project an aura of knowledge and scholarship. It takes two steps to move through this room and out a sliding glass door that opens to a small deck, raised above the lawn and garden.*

*We take seats on heavy wood deck chairs. The voices of many birds sing. It is in this setting that Carol shares stories of her life and learning.*

## Growing Up in a Small Town: “Cooperation and Collaboration are Essential for Survival”

I grew up in a tiny town of 650 people. Definitely a rural community. My dad grew up in this town, and my mom grew up in a town actually a little bit smaller right next door. But they went to the same high school. That was the only school there. It's a very closed and very friendly space where cooperation and collaboration are essential for survival. Everybody helps everybody else. If a farmer is sick and can't put in his crops, then the neighbors do that. And everybody knows everybody else's kids. There was no way to escape, to do anything that the whole town wouldn't know about. So, you lived your life early on knowing that everything you do and say will be widely reported and recorded and that your grandmother and your grandfather and your aunts and uncles, as well as your parents, will know what you did. It is a matter of public record of who you are and who you grow into. What you do is fully visible to the world in which you live.

My dad had begun to purchase the family farm from my grandfather as I was growing up, and when I was about three they moved into the farmhouse and my grandparents moved into town. My dad and grandfather continued to farm jointly until the mid-1960s when my grandfather retired. That farm now has been in our family for well over one hundred years. There were no vacations and no time off. We milked a large herd of dairy cows, as well as raised cash crops of soy beans and corn. My mother had a huge garden, so all summer we canned and froze everything you could possibly imagine. That connection with the land and the work ethic that it requires to live that way I think is probably right at the center of things.

### "My Mom Had Been a Country School Teacher"

I have two brothers, both younger, both considerably larger. For some reason, I was the shrimp of that family. They are very large men, one very aggressive and one very quiet and almost shy. I look now at all of our personalities and what has happened to our lives and realize how much room inside that agrarian society there really was to develop individually.

There are still the same number of people in that town that there were when I grew up. Six hundred and fifty. The school system is still basically the same. There are probably 150 students in the high school, grades nine through twelve. The building is K-12, as it was when I went to school. So we were, in high school as juniors and seniors, the substitute teachers for the elementary students when the teachers were gone. There just aren't enough people in a rural town like that to be substitutes, so there was a "teacher corp," a "future teachers of America" group, that did that subbing at the elementary level when the elementary teachers had to be gone. That was an early introduction to me because I was really never very interested in baby sitting or doing that kind of thing, and my brothers were close enough in age that there wasn't a lot of caretaking of them. So that piece of my background in high school was real important.

My mom had been a country school teacher so I guess that is the other piece that is quite important. She was quite a phenomenal lady in that day and age and out of that particular agricultural society. She went away to college for two years and then she taught country school. She had first through eighth graders in a little country school and I used to go with her whenever I could.

“There Was a Certain Self-sufficiency That We Had”

If survival was very difficult we certainly didn't know it as kids, although there are certain things now, you look back on, and recognize that when you are trying to make a go of a farm you put all the profit back into it in terms of equipment. I didn't have store-bought clothes until I was in high school. My mom made all my clothes except for underwear and winter coats, that kind of thing. There was a certain self-sufficiency that we had. My uncle owned a mill so we had all of our flour ground there for bread and all of that kind of thing and we raised all of our own vegetables. We bought fruit, but we did all our own butchering. And I am now a vegetarian. Have been for twenty-three or twenty-four years. And I think it comes out of the butchering process. It was very bothersome to me as a child. I didn't like it then and don't like it now. When I had the option, I gave up meat quite quickly and readily. I haven't handled it here in the house, any kind of red meat, for years and years. The rest of my family eats meat, they just won't eat it here very often.

“This Girl Child Would Have an Education”

I think I was rewarded early on for anything connected with school. My mom was quite insistent from the get-go that this girl child would have an education. It was evidently of first importance to her, and it wasn't easy because my dad didn't go to college. There was always an undertow of "college people" lacking common sense. Cracks that would emerge in our family scenario. Although I think he's been very proud of the things that we've accomplished, his own lack of education against the fact that my

mother did have one was always somewhat of a raw point. But she rewarded everything having to do with school early on and I loved it.

We played school all summer. Mathematics was always problematic. Other than math, I think pretty much everything was interesting to me. I loved history and I had started reading way before I started school. I don't have any idea how I learned how to read, but I have been able to read as far back as I remember. I may have been born being able to read. I don't know. I don't remember ever struggling with that. It was just kind of natural.

I was fairly aggressive in finding out what I needed in order to be successful. In a class of fifty-two students I was salutatorian, a tenth of a grade point from another girl who was valedictorian. Two girls at the top of their class was actually typical in our community. The boys worked on farms, or in factories in neighboring towns, or both. The small farm was already struggling in the '60s so a lot of those boys whose fathers farmed part time and worked in the factory part time did the same thing and started doing it early on. Very, very few of the males were in school.

#### "I Lived Vicariously Inside Books"

We didn't have much of a library at the high school or the junior high. We had a town library that was divided into three sections. Probably the whole library was the size of the bottom part of my house, but it was divided into three sections. One was the children's section and one was a historical section and one was fiction. The librarian was Mrs. Beem and when I was in the sixth grade I had read all of the books in the children's section and I wanted to check out books from the adult fiction section. She made me get

a note from my mom before I could do that. My mother let me do that and from that point on the adult world of fiction opened up to me. I read my way out of that space – which I found very fulfilling – in a couple of years.

I got punished frequently at home for reading when I was supposed to be doing other things. We all had responsibilities that we were supposed to do and if we didn't do them, then, you know, chickens were hungry or the eggs didn't get collected. We had a big tank that I was supposed to scrub out every day after the milk had been taken. I'd be dorking around and hiding down in the barn or someplace with a book and then my dad would come down, "Where the Hell is Carol? Why isn't this done?" It was just a constant struggle. The same thing was true about going to bed at night. I still don't like to go to bed. I'd read all night if I could possibly get away with it. I kept books under my bed.

I would also get sent to bed for overreacting to things that I read. I would cry and carry on. I really lived very vicariously inside those books. I don't think the punishment was ever doled out with very much cruelty or severity because I continued to do exactly the same thing all through junior and senior high school. Reading really was a way out of that little space. We didn't do any traveling so it was the only way I had to leap out of this tiny, tiny town. I can't even imagine how many hundreds of books I read between elementary school and leaving high school.

“We Wrote a Theme a Week....We Memorized the Grammar Book...the Same Way...We Memorized the Bible”

In school we wrote very rigidly. I had the same English teacher all four years of high school. We wrote a theme a week and she always gave me fairly good grades. There were fifty-two kids in our class and she kept a running tally charging a nickel for every grammatical error we made in class or on our papers. She gave us a paper bill when we graduated of the amount that we owed her. Some kids had accumulated thousands of dollars worth of errors over the years.

We had a little paperback grammar book, I guess it probably was Warriner's. The rules were all like 36a, 36b, 36c and we had to memorize the rule and the number of the rule and the page number it was on. It was very much like Bible school in the summer time. We memorized the grammar book pretty much the same way as we memorized the Bible in the summer. We would have to be able to say the rule number and page number for all the common rules. It was the only time I've ever studied grammar. I have never had any formal training all through college and all through my graduate work. I had a linguistics course in college, but no real study of the way language was put together. I have become very appreciative of those underpinnings. I really respected her. She was an extraordinary woman, taught herself Spanish on records so that she could teach a Spanish class in high school. Just after I graduated she had taught herself enough Spanish to teach it. We later became friends, and we still write one another.

## “Allergy to Religion”

I can remember I was probably in seventh or eighth grade when I stumbled on Of Human Bondage by Somerset Maugham and that has stuck with me and almost that whole idea of if you pray hard enough you know something will change. I always thought he got rooked, got bad advice. My allergy to religion I think began early on with Of Human Bondage, but there are all kinds of things I am sure I tumbled into that were way over my head. I read very eclectically. I mean, anything that had an interesting title for the most part, I flew through it, probably understanding a minimal amount.

My allergy to religion didn't really hit me until I was a young adult. My mother was Methodist and a believer. My father hated church and everything about it. He would go with us once in a while, but my mom always took us. It was also a social thing. The fellowship was Sunday nights. The whole biblical thing for me was about literature. Those stories were fascinating to me. They had the violence and the love stories and the prodigal son and the slaughter of lambs. The whole thing was just fascinating. I loved those stories. Then we did Bible school in the summer. I don't know if my brothers went. I can remember clearly going. We did races to see who could find chapter and verse faster. You would have to hold the Bible over your head and put your thumbs in it and then the Bible teacher would call out, "Leviticus 12:14" and you would have to be fast to find it. I know all the books of the Bible. It was just driven into us, but I am not as good at it anymore because I have been away from it so long.

### "I Married a Catholic"

I married a Catholic. One of only three that were at my private college. My parents just had a fit. In the Sixties and in the region I grew up in, Catholicism and Protestantism sort of was viewed in the same light as Black-White relationships were. We didn't even have a Catholic church in our town. Catholics were these horrible people that went around trying to make everybody Catholic and the Pope gave them all their orders. So my mother was shocked when I went away to college and fell in love with a Catholic.

I took Catholic instruction and John and I were married by a real rebel priest. He taught me that I could become a Catholic and rock my own boat inside that. I didn't have to feel guilty one iota about that. The whole Catholic thing and the merging of our two families was a huge educational endeavor and raised all kinds of high level problems. If I had my choice I would be Jewish. You know, if there was a way to do it that is the way I'd go. I think the "Jesus phenomena" has been very hurtful to the world. God's fine, but I just think they should leave Jesus out of it. We all might be a lot better off. *Carol does not elaborate upon this, nor do I ask. She talks of the "interesting journey" she has embarked upon, feeding her "curiosity about religion and religious belief," recounting a life of reading and searching for experiences that might shed light on her questions, particularly studying Muslim ideology while living in Iran. A smile crosses her face as she recalls one of her earliest puzzlements.*

I had lots of questions about the transformation of bread and wine to the blood and body of Christ. I remember in church very loudly, I must have been maybe in third or fourth grade, insisting that my mother tell me if that was really blood that they were

drinking up there. She kept saying "Shhh." I was just obsessed with that. There were a whole lot of magical and mystical things. I didn't hit magical realism as a form of literature until very recently. That has been a great insight – that hook between the real and the imaginary – to all those religious questions. Writers like Garcia Lorca, one of the early fathers of magical realism, and Garcia Marquez, and Laura Esquivel who wrote Like Water for Chocolate have tapped right into the use of magical realism. I think Like Water for Chocolate is beyond wonderful.

"We Were Fed a Steady Diet of Anticommunist Propaganda"

There was so much going on in this country and the world at the time I was in high school and college that were affecting me profoundly. One was the Cold War and the constant threat of being bombed with some kind of nuclear bomb by the Soviet Union. My friends and I would watch the sky at night and I was sort of obsessed at that time with the story of Chicken Little. The sky is falling and I would have nightmares about that. That whole Cold War mentality. There was a livid hatred of Krushchev and that whole Soviet phenomena. We were fed a steady, steady diet of anticommunist propaganda. That was a huge issue. We didn't build a bomb shelter, but we had a basement and kept stuff like water and food. It was a constant on our minds.

We talked about it a lot at school and that whole "hate Russia" thing. The curious thing was there were a lot of Russian immigrants in the area. Many of the farmers were of Russian descent. My dad always had a lot of words about the "damn Russians." There was kind of an ethnic hatred against that group of people and yet a lot of our friends' grandparents were Russians. A sort of double whammy there that I think maybe kept me

a little bit more balanced later on. When I didn't have first-hand experience with people, Blacks for instance, that were put in a "we're going to hate" group. Experiencing this early dichotomy of hating Russians that lived in Russia but being friends with people in our community who had Russian roots was very helpful to me later.

### Jackie Kennedy Was a Role Model

I was in college when Kennedy was assassinated. That carried a tremendous wallop. That was a huge event. He had certainly fired up a lot of us. Even more important for me was Jackie Kennedy. For women my age, here was a woman who could speak several languages, who was very well educated, who traveled the world, who had had a career of her own, and we all sensed that she was much more than the President's wife. So, with his assassination and with her removal from us as a model, it really left a lot of us floundering. Betty Freidan emerged and came to my college to speak. We had day and night debates about those issues. I can remember I was very much on the other side of that coin. She was way, way ahead of me in terms of modern thinking. I kind of thought she was nuts. Really crazy. These things will never work and women would never be able to have that much power. Interesting. And Kennedy had fired my peers to do international things. To leave the United States and to go see what was happening in the world. To not buy into the status quo. To give something of American's prosperity to groups like the Peace Corp. To go abroad to teach. That fire was clearly lit by the internationalism of both the Kennedys, John and Jackie.

## Civil Rights Was an Overriding Issue

Civil Rights was of great curiosity for me. It became sort of an overwhelming, overriding issue for me personally. It took the place of politics, or religious issues, anything else. The college I went to was in a town that was totally divided with Blacks on one side and Whites on the other. We hired a Black librarian while I was at college who couldn't find a place to live on the "college side" of town.

When John and I started dating in college his roommate was Black. In my English literature class I sat beside a young Black man named Jason Wallace. He was from the town. Few people from the town went to the college. Jason and John's roommate were the first Blacks I had come into contact with. Then my sorority pledged a Black girl and the national chapter closed us. As I was leaving college there were a couple of us that formed a group to mobilize a huge, national letter writing campaign against the national chapter. I was kicked out of the sorority. The president of the college kicked the sorority off the campus for one hundred years because the national chapter was so afraid this Black girl would join at our college and then move South and try to live in a sorority house where the girls actually lived in a house. All of these things between '61 and '65 became real issues in my life. The whole issue of race and equity, particularly for Blacks, was central. I still hadn't become really sensitive to women's issues, but the Civil Rights issue really was central.

My college was actually progressive. The college provided scholarships for several "townies," Black kids from the city, to study. Jason was one. He became, and still is, a very good friend. He asked me out my freshman year. And I called my mother. I really did not have any clue about how to handle it or what to do about that. That

completely threw me into a spin. But there were no Blacks where I grew up. There were migrant workers who were Hispanic, that came up from Mexico to work, but I had absolutely zero experience with Black Americans until I went to college.

#### “I Was Brought Up to Seek What Was Fair”

Even with the prejudice and the anti-'s that I grew up with, mostly because of that little town mind-set and the fact we didn't have much firsthand experience with things, I was brought up to seek what was fair. We teased my mom about having a "fairness gene" that was attached to her DNA someplace. She is such a stickler for fairness. We all got exactly the same number of Christmas packages under the tree. It's just a real equity thing in the deep sense of that word. I think that was the political thing that had been embedded in me. She was such a wonderful model of a "woman that could do it all." My brother used to say he was the only kid he knew who had a mother that drove a tractor and who wore red finger nail polish. And that was true. She loved red finger nail polish. And she jumped on a tractor every day when she got home from work to help my dad on the farm. And she made wedding cakes, and planted a garden. She was just this woman with this incredible range. She was probably one of the better athletes in the family, as well. You know, that equity that everybody should be able to be all that they can do, the model was there, even though sometimes the verbiage wasn't. So when I hit college and had to deal with those issues I think I fell back more on the model than on some of the words.

*We stopped so Carol could get moving for a noon appointment. As she walked me back through the house and toward the front door, we casually discussed how she plans to begin the school year. The wheels were still turning for her concerning the specifics.*

### Life Story Analysis

Carol Lessing's life story foreshadows many themes concerning her pedagogy and curriculum that will surface and resurface in the classroom story and analysis. As the case study will reveal, the "girl child" she was and the woman she has become are reflected in the teacher.

Carol and her family live practically on the doorstep of Station High School. They also live in the community's historical district. Where they have chosen to live facilitates their involvement with the school and larger community. Station High School is an affluent school by comparison to most others in the state and country. Though Carol and her family are not affluent, they fit. Being a part of a community is a theme that will surface again and again in Carol's teaching.

Carol's home is also a reflection of who she is as a person and teacher. She and her family have invested care, time, and resources to make the best they can of their home, much like her father did with the buildings and equipment on the family farm. The art and books reflect the aesthetic and intellectual passions that are so much a part of her as a person and teacher. The Dali print that hangs on her wall, and several of the masks in her home, will be brought into the classroom and used in her teaching the Cultural Perspectives class; the art of past students have made it into her home. The floor to

ceiling shelves of books in her office are reflective of the rich literatures and cultural heritages she immerses her students.

When Carol tells her life story, she provides several keys to understanding her as a person and critical educator. She begins her life story by telling of the community she grew up in. Carol grew up *part* of a small town, and *involved*. Everyone knew each other. Cooperation was essential for survival, yet there was opportunity for her to become an individual and learn to be self-sufficient. Carol's efforts in the classroom to help students get to know one another are significant. What she establishes early, she builds upon over the semester. The range of activities, assignments, and projects she engages her students in help them to recognize and explore how cooperation is essential for survival, yet allows them to demonstrate and develop individuality and self-sufficiency. Carol talks about the "work ethic" that was developed early in her life. We see the hard worker in Carol the teacher.

Carol's world, from her early childhood through her adulthood, has been linked closely to books. She has always been a prolific reader. As a young girl she sought female characters. In a later interview, when asked about how she approaches a book that she will teach, she explains that she "studies texts" and "breaks them down." Looking at all her own copies of books she teaches, they are covered with analytical notes and questions and links made as a reader and teacher. She exposes her students to many works of various genres. She would like her students to be prolific readers. In one class session, after she had laid out a plan to read a short novel in one week, a student called out, "What are you trying to do kill us?" Carol poses questions and creates assignments that require students to examine closely the texts they are reading, to get "inside books"

the way she did growing up, and to relate those texts to their lives and developing cultural perspectives. She would like her students to study texts. But Carol knows that this is not a generation of readers. So she exposes them to many works, and finds ways to give even nonreaders entries, tastes, and insights into all the works they explore as a class, and she works to help this nonreading population develop the skills of visualizing story from printed text.

Carol is not religious; in fact, she claims to be “allergic” to religion. However, something she alludes to in her life story we see evidence of in her teaching; Carol is curious, understanding, and respectful of how “belief” is common to diverse cultures, and that what people believe and how they worship provide windows into their world. In Carol’s teaching she leads students through texts that will provide many windows into different belief systems.

In her life story, Carol tells of learning the Bible and grammar involving similar processes of memorization. “Driven into us” was the teaching style. Carol is appreciative of those underpinnings. However, we see little of such teaching in Carol’s class. She does require students to memorize everyone’s first and last names, including correct spelling. What is significant is that Carol employs a teaching technique she identifies as “embedding,” something that will be addressed in the case study analysis section.

In talking about her life as a college student we see many ways in which Carol challenged the status quo. She had experienced as a child the cognitive and emotional dissonance of being fed “hate Russia” propaganda, while at the same time being neighbors and friends with many in her small community whose family roots were

Russian. As a college student, Carol made friends with the few African Americans at her school. She participated in the push to welcome an African American student into her sorority, and encountered institutional resistance, power, and penalties. We see that as a college student Carol sought diversity in her circle of friends, and as a teacher we will see how important affirming diversity is in her curriculum and teaching. She was sparked by the then radical notion to go outside the United States to see the world, learn about others, and teach. We will see in Carol's teaching how she encourages resistance to the status quo. This idea of challenging the status quo connects with the lessons of seeking fairness that her mother modeled for her, and she espouses and lives those same lessons for the people and students in her own life.

A Context:

*"Their school is not as diverse culturally, and economically it is rich people," says Cor-Taz.*

*"But I think that people say that about us too," says Katrina.<sup>21</sup>*

On a mid-September day I travel through city streets, across train tracks, and down suburban avenues to get to Station High School. I enter the school grounds through the student parking lot and make my way to the faculty lot in back of the school. (I learned quickly not to park in the student lot, for the second time I did school security put a "car boot" on my front wheel for parking in a space reserved for students. Many SHS students pay \$50 for their own parking space.) There are a range of cars in the student lot, many of which project an air of affluence: an older Mercedes sedan, perhaps once the family's car; a new turbo SAAB; a couple of late-model Ford Explorers; several new Hondas and Toyotas. My '88 Nissan Sentra, with bumper sticker declarations of my ideas for a better world, was in the minority of older, hard driven, low end cars.

Station High School is a sprawling multilevel complex, but is mostly single storied. There are wings for business, art and technology, sciences, math, foreign language, English, social studies, and music. The school has a computer center and writing lab, a media center with a cable T.V. studio and audio-visual lab, a college and career information center, a student store, two gymnasiums, a theater/auditorium, and swimming pool. The school grounds, particularly its front courtyard, are lushly landscaped. In the courtyard is a modern iron sculpture, and metal picnic tables and benches painted in school colors, surrounded by an array of perennial flowers and shrubs.

---

<sup>21</sup>These statements were made in a class discussion 20 December 1996. They do not appear elsewhere in the chapter. I have included them in this subtitle because they reveal at least one student's awareness that people perceive SHS as a school for "rich people."

Students socialize in this area, and art students draw and photograph the flowers and landscape design.

Painted in school colors above the double metal doors through which I enter are the words:

**Teamwork Pride Effort Discipline Attitude Excellence**  
**Welcome to**  
**Station High School**

The halls bustle with life. Students socialize in clusters or as they walk to their next class. On this particular day, as there often is, sit parent volunteers at a table distributing information for a fund raising activity. The floors are carpeted. Light flows in from windows and skylights, making it possible for indoor trees and plants to thrive in hallway planters. The walls are adorned with "spirit" posters supporting and advertising athletic teams and extra-curricular events. There are display cases preserving awards of all kinds, student projects, and other information, such as a world map with information tags celebrating what number of students come from which countries and states.

Diversity is celebrated. Over the intercom, breaking through music played on student produced radio segments, comes the announcement that there will be a seminar after school on "social theory," focusing upon the ideas of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, given by a Doctoral Candidate in Sociology from the local university. This is an environment in which students are exposed to and encouraged to participate in an intellectual life that will provide them with the kind of "cultural capital" that will open doors for them to future academic, social, and economic success.

## A Classroom Story: Names, Culture, Identity, and Community

In this classroom story I take the reader through the first full day in Carol Lessing's classroom, and then to two back-to-back sessions three months later. In all three sessions the importance of personal names and naming is underscored, and we see students move from exploring personal definitions of "culture" in the first session to confronting issues of "cultural identity" in the later two. The emergence of a strong learning community and its relevance to Carol teaching for critical literacy is clear in these three sessions.

In "Names" we see Carol begin her first full Cultural Perspectives class meeting with introductions. Students begin to learn one another's names, but indirectly they begin to explore who they are as individuals and as a group. Creating a situation for students to introduce themselves and holding students responsible for knowing and using the names of their classmates is the first of many moves Carol makes to build community. It is a move that is practically and symbolically powerful. This is a stepping stone for students to share, during the second half of the class session, short essays in which they articulate a personal definition of "culture." In "What is this thing called culture?" we see how Carol sets up peer groups to share and respond to these essays, where writing is treated as part of a larger process rather than an end product. In both parts of this class meeting we see Carol begin shaping the kind of learning community she and her students will need in order to engage in the practice of critical literacy, shaping that is as skilled, in its own right, as the work of the Venetian mask-maker we heard about in her life story.

In "A Community Activist in the Classroom," three months later, Carol is almost invisible. Carol and Sky have invited Maria Lopez, a community activist and Sky's

mother, to speak to the Cultural Perspectives class as part of Sky's independent research project in which she explores her own Mexican American heritage. Maria Lopez comes to the class to help students understand "cultural identity" – to make connections to their world and the larger world, by sharing a video and her own stories of entering war zones in Bosnia and Guatemala. Through these stories students are confronted with the tension of "assimilation" versus "acculturation." In "Cultural Jumping" we see how Carol uses the first ten minutes of the next day's session to help students reflect upon what Maria Lopez showed them and shared with them. Carol invites students to share responses from the day before and then subtly initiates a reflective and critical discussion of the questions concerning assimilation and acculturation Maria Lopez put on the table. "Cultural jumping" is the name Carol gives acculturation, a positive and enviable position to be in as a person from her perspective.

In the three class sessions we see a number of characteristics of Carol's which are central to her practice of teaching for critical literacy. The possibilities for developing critical literacy by the "simple acts" of learning names, confronting issues of identity, examining culture, and forming a community provide powerful insight into the work of a critical educator.

**Names: "Everybody helps everybody...everybody knows everybody"**

When I walk into Carol's classroom, just before the third hour bell rings, Carol is **in the** room already arranging desks in clusters of three. It is the first-fifty minute class **session** of the semester. The day before Carol met with her students for eighteen minutes, **gathered** information from the students, and gave a nutshell introduction to the course.

The room is medium-sized as far as classrooms go, only twenty-five by twenty feet, and like all the rooms in the school, carpeted. However, since most of the classes at Station High School have a cap of twenty-five students, there is ample space to move desks around in various configurations. This classroom is completely within the school's interior, therefore, it has no windows.

Carol only uses this room to teach her Cultural Perspectives class. She does not have a room of her own because of her Writing Coordinator position. So Carol travels. She teaches Contemporary Literature down the hall second hour, and Cultural Perspectives in this room third hour.

Each day when Carol rushes into the room third hour, minutes before the bell rings, she finds the desks in neat rows fanning out from one corner of the room where a television monitor is mounted to the ceiling. This configuration works for the teacher whose room this is three hours of the day. This teacher has put only one poster on the wall – a diagram showing how the desks are to be left when third hour is finished. If the desks are not returned to this arrangement, the other teacher "has words" with Carol. As a teaching space, this classroom is not comfortable, inviting, or stimulating to Carol. She is a visitor. The rigidity of this classroom represents everything she is not.

While Carol moves desks, students file into the classroom. Their talk, friendly **and** excited, fills the air. The class is made up almost entirely of seniors. Two minutes **a**fter the bell has rung, Carol's voice cuts through the student talk, telling them they need **t**o get started. She explains to them that today they will be introducing themselves to the **class**. She tells the students that they will need to know the first and last names of **every**one in the class, and how to pronounce and spell those names. Several students

survey the room to assess the implications of this. Carol then announces that next Friday, the end of the first full week of school, there will be a quiz on everyone's name. There is a flurry of gulps, gasps, and glances among the students, but there are no protests. We know from Carol's life story that she had to do considerable memorization, most notably of biblical passages and grammar rules. She said she appreciated those underpinnings. There is little of such teaching in Carol's class. The underpinning most relevant here from her life story is the need for members of a classroom community to know one another, and doing so requires knowing names.

Carol gives them simple directions. "We're going to go around the room and introduce ourselves. Say your first and last name. You should write these names in your notes, and ask questions about the spelling and pronunciation of any names you are not sure of. After you have said your name, recite from memory lines of a poem, song, nursery rhyme, story, etc. – something someone else wrote. Any questions?"

There is silent hesitation. Carol looks around the room. She wears a suppressed smile, clearly enthusiastic, understanding the hesitation comes from the students' uncertainty of what is to come. She anticipates the possible treasures awaiting.

An African American boy says, "I'll go first." Without waiting for permission to proceed, he begins, "I'm Cor-Taz Jones." Smiling, he wags his head back and forth bashfully a couple of times, not because he is shy, but because he imagines everyone in

the class knows who he is. Cor-Taz recites loudly and proudly the first of six stanzas from "In the Morning" by African American poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar (see text box).

Carol calls on Bruno, a boy born in India. He is quiet. He looks up and softly says his name, "Bruno Boothalingom." Two students ask him how to spell his last name.

After he spells his name quickly, he turns to Carol and says he doesn't have anything memorized. Carol tells him to think further and promises to come back to him.

A few students have hands raised, volunteering to go next. "Sandusky?" Carol calls on one. Sandusky, born in the United States but whose family is Egyptian, introduces herself and then rolls her eyes up into her head for a moment, searching to see if there is something worth reciting hidden in a corner of her memory.

"Do you know a nursery rhyme Sandusky?" Carol prompts. There is a pause. One, two, three long seconds of silence. Carol, sensing the class needs more of a push start, launches into a story of her own, how when she taught her two sons traditional nursery rhymes she would often add "a twist." She tells them that she remembers the day one of her son's elementary teachers called her at home and lectured her for teaching her son "Little Miss Muffet" the wrong way. Carol has a wry smile on her face, an expression she often wears when building a dramatic moment. She pauses. She knows she has their attention. She begins to recite,

*Little Miss Muffet*

---

In the Morning  
Paul Laurence Dunbar

'Lias! 'Lias Bless de Lawd!  
Don' you know de day's erbroad?  
Ef you don' git up, you scamp,  
Dey'll be trouble in dis camp.  
T'ink I gwine to let you sleep  
W'ile I meks yo' boa'd an' keep?  
Dat's a putty howdy-do –  
Don' you hyeah me, 'Lias – you?  
(Dunbar, 1913/1988, p. 190)

---

*Sat on a tuffet,  
Eating her curds and whey;  
There came a big spider,  
Who sat down beside her...*

When she gets to the last line in which the spider is supposed to scare Miss Muffet away, she pauses slightly, and says...

*What you doin' bitch?*

There is great surprise and laughter in the room. Several students seek out the eyes of friends to read one another's reactions. Carol's story seems to loosen up the students, make them more at ease, open the door for risks. Alexandria recites, "Eenie, meenie, miney, mo; Catch a tiger by the toe. If it hollers let him go. Eenie, meenie, miney, mo." Many more students go, reciting fragments of rhymes, poems, songs, and quotations.

Carol turns to her right, "Ace?" Ace is White and wears his hair in a crew cut. He has on baggy black pants, a t-shirt, and an unbuttoned flannel shirt. When he entered the room at the beginning of class he walked in with an attitude of ownership. This is my room, my planet. Ace makes eye contact with Carol, expressing a practiced hardness, but says nothing. "Is there a rap you want to do?" Carol asks him. He closes his eyes for a moment, concentrating. Ace starts rapping. He's animated. He's experienced. The early lines are about why he raps and how he raps "slow," and the other lines are about who he is. One of the lines declares the Bible "poison."

When he is finished Carol asks him how many raps he has in his head. Ace says that he has 300 of his own compositions written down. Of those, he has memorized fifty. He points to his head, emphasizing, "But they are all up here."

"Is language a feat of memorization?" Carol asks the class. The students murmur and nod in general agreement that it is. "It most definitely is," she says. Carol turns to another student and invites her to introduce herself.

Hope, born in Hong Kong, introduces herself and quietly says she does not know a line she can recite.

Carol asks her if she can write her Asian name on the

board. Hope walks up to the chalk board and writes, "Ol-Li." Carol then asks her if she can write it in Chinese characters. Hope writes three characters on the board, and then beside each she writes the words Hope-Love-Girl, the meaning of the name her parents gave her.<sup>22</sup> "Hope, how many characters does someone need to know in order to be skilled in Chinese writing?" Hope says she doesn't know. Carol says she thinks it is more than 5,000. The introductions help students see one another in ways they may never have, as Alex's interview response indicates (see text box).

All but five students in the class have introduced themselves. It's now Sheehan's turn. He seems shy. He is only one of two people in this room of twenty-three students who chose a desk isolated from others. He is also the only junior student in this class, and by next week he will have dropped the course. He tells Carol he cannot recite anything. "How many phone numbers do you know by heart?" Carol asks him. Sheehan

---

Ms. Lessing made learning names the first point. Real friendly. She made it so you knew first and last names. Spelling. Kind of knew about the person. So it made it seem like "this is so and so... they are cool." I don't mind saying something in front of them after doing this.  
(Alex, 10 January 1997)

---

---

<sup>22</sup>This is the actual name her parents gave her, but outside of her home she has a common American name. During the Asian Cultures unit, Hope and two other Asian American girls explained that all their parents gave them Western names because they did not want teachers and classmates mispronouncing their Asian names. Hope requested that I use the English translation of her Chinese name as her pseudonym.

looks down at his desk. "Your grandparents?" she asks. Sheehan reels off both sets.

"Your best friend?" He reels off three more, giving the name of each friend as he goes along. "How many do you think you have in your head?" Carol asks again. Sheehan says he thinks he must know about twenty phone numbers by heart.

Carol turns to the class, "Can you guess how many I know?" The students throw out numbers randomly – ten, fifty, sixty-five. She holds up one finger. "My own." Then she checks herself. "Two. I know my parents' number also."

Alajondro, sitting between Cor-Taz and Bruno, has raised his hand inches off the desk. Carol sees his hand and nods to him. Alajondro gets up and walks to a chalk board mounted on a wall. He writes his name in Arabic on the board. "Read from right to left," he tells them. "It is made-up of my first name, my father's name, and my grandfather's name." Carol asks him what the names of girls are. "In my culture, in Sudan, it is the same for girls."

Nicole recites "Alone" by Maya Angelou. Dar recites several lines in Spanish, then she translates it. It has to do with "agreeability," which she explains is part of her way of being in the world.

Carol comes back to Bruno who passed earlier. "Can I do Psalm 23?" Bruno asks.

"Yes, of course," Carol encourages.

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul;  
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;  
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

Bruno pauses after having recited more than half of the Psalm. Carol pushes him to finish, "Can you remember what comes next?" She gives the next line,

*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:*

Bruno blinks, and then Carol gives him another,

*Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*

He picks up there with uncertainty. Together, student and teacher complete the last two lines of the Psalm.

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
And will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

Carol, though "allergic" to religion since her childhood, is still able to recite the poetry and stories of the Bible that were "driven" into her but that she loved so much because of their literary value to her.

"Has everyone gone?" Carol asks. All the students have gone, said their first and last names and clarified pronunciations and spellings. They have also volunteered

something of themselves through the sharing of what is in their memories. Students are positioned and recognized as knowers by Carol and their classmates. This is community in the making, where individual lives are woven together like a basket in which a strand on its own is not as strong as what comes from pulling many strands together. The result is that months later students will be left

---

Hope: I love our class.  
Sky: I love everybody in our class.  
Hope: And we just seem to know each other. Because we introduced each other .... and I remember like whenever we have any questions in our school you always went to a member of your class.... In other classes I still don't know any of them, even after I have been in a classroom with them all year. And I think that is horrible. (Hope and Sky, 7 January 1997)

---

feeling what Hope and Sky do – they love the class and the people in it, and this can only happen from knowing everybody (see text box).

Carol stands up and recites a poem: Frost's "Fire and Ice." She does not give the poet or title. "Does anyone recognize the poem?" Carol asks. Two or three students call out that it is by Robert Frost. Katrina calls out the title. Carol nods and smiles as she hears the responses. Says nothing. Carol's participation in the same process that students are engaging in positions her as a co-learner and echoes Elbow's "teacherless writing classroom" (1973) in which the teacher must be a learner. The poem she chooses is one she expects all the students were exposed to in their American Literature classes, thus allowing the students to demonstrate their knowledge and prior experiences, and in building a community it was important for her not to upstage her students by choosing something complex and erudite that would assert her literariness over them.

Before wrapping up the introductions Carol asks me if I would introduce myself and recite something. I had dreaded this possibility. I wanted to sound knowledgeable and "literary." However, I have never had much success holding passages of literature in my memory. I chose to recite the first fifteen lines of the 1974 song "Walk This Way" by Aerosmith, a band that is still around and a song that was recently remade and did well in the pop music charts. I speak the lyrics with moderate accuracy and only a few intentional slurs through words I am uncertain of. There is little music in my rendering. The students smile and several laugh supportively as I readily accept the risk of embarrassment. After only saying a few lines, Ace is mouthing the words along with me, his body moving rhythmically in his seat. When I stop he declares, "Run DMC does it

better." There is much laughter. Carol has taken the time to make me part of the community too.

### "What Is This Thing Called Culture?"

It has taken less than thirty minutes to do these introductions. Carol checks the time and tells the students that they are going to share their homework assignment: *Essay #1: What is this thing called culture?* In this assignment students were asked to define "culture" and explain the "cultural perspective" they bring to the class. They are encouraged to use two quotations and specific examples from their own life. They were limited to a single page.

Carol had arranged the desks in clusters of three before class for this task. She instructs the class to take turns reading their papers to the two other people in their cluster. Those who are not reading listen. Carol explains to the class that after each paper is read she wants listeners to tell the author one "golden nugget" they heard as the paper was read. A golden nugget is a detail, or line, or section that is most powerful.

This activity is significant for several reasons. We see a glimpse of things to come. Carol treats writing as a process, a process that is meant to help students think, communicate, and become more skilled at both through the support and guidance of the teacher and classmates. This is their first "essay," due on the first full class meeting. Though Carol does not hold students responsible for a "theme" a week like her high school English teacher did with her, she sets high standards for students to actively engage in the questions and issues her curriculum is built around. As with the introduction event the class just experienced, this event also treats students as knowers,

both as writers of their own essays and responders to their peers. Peer support, communication, and participation in the active construction of meaning are held at a premium here, helping to establish a same and caring community where students identities are shared and valued.

Carol walks across the room to Rain and Sheehan, the only two students who chose to sit in isolated desks, and asks them to scoot their desks together. She pulls an empty desk over for herself, and then waves me over to join them. The room is already quite loud with the voices of so many students reading. Before taking a seat, she turns to survey the class. She calls out, "Move closer to one another so you don't have to read so loud. Get your butts in the air so you can hear the papers, the golden nuggets." The screech of desks sliding across the floor follows her instruction. Carol takes a step toward Cor-Taz, Alajondro, and Bruno and asks them to turn down their volume so others can hear.

Carol takes a seat and volunteers to read her piece first, which Rain and Sheehan are visibly relieved to have happen. She begins:

"I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides; and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible, but I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."

Mahatma Gandhi, 1942.

For me culture is the perception of what is right. That might mean the right way to dress or the right fork to use at a fancy dinner or the right for a justice system to cut off the hand of one who steals or the right to deny women an education. Like Gandhi, I want the cultures of all lands to blow about my house. That determination to open the windows has not been painless. I hated the purposeful scarring of children born into beggar families in the Middle East but I loved the miniature paintings and the giggling veiled women. The rowed rigidity in Japanese schools made me uneasy but the saki (rice wine) was as warm and wonderful as sleeping on a mat under a futon. From any culture, even the one that nourished us as children, I believe we as individuals must eventually evaluate

what's right for us to take or leave behind. My father always told me, "There are all kinds of people in the world and you'll find as you go along that not a damn one of them missing." Although it was not what he expected, I keep looking for those people..... Now...I can see [my sons] building their own cultures, their own sense of rightness, which they will hand to their children. If the cycle goes on, no one culture, no one sense of rightness will, as Gandhi warned, blow away another.

After she finishes we each tell her what were "golden nuggets" for us as listeners. Rain zeroes in on the quotation from her father. Sheehan says he liked the part about each person eventually deciding what is right for him. And I tell Carol that how she uses the Ghandi image of cultures blowing around the house but not blowing away any other throughout the paper is most powerful for me. As each of us share the golden nuggets we heard, Carol highlights these on her paper.

Carol's Essay #1 illustrates for her students that she believes she is a learner, a participant in the classroom community. It also clarifies for students her expectations for them, and communicates to them some of her beliefs about "culture" and in subtle ways what she hopes they will grapple with in this course. The Ghandi quotation reveals that Carol desires a multicultural world not dominated by any one culture. The title she has given the course is Cultural Perspectives, and it is no coincidence that she takes on the issue of "perception" directly in her essay. So often cultural conflict grows out of people's inability to embrace diversity and accept different perceptions of what is right. Through this course Carol aims to push her students into critical reflection of their own perceptions and to make sense of other people's. In her own life, Carol has left behind many of the values and practices her culture sought to inculcate in her as a child – religious reverence, the consumption of meat, and xenophobia toward Russians are three examples. In the end of Carol's essay she links the possibility of individuality, a quality

her students aspire toward, as so many young people do, with the reminder that the price is to understand and accept difference.

Sheehan has not written a paper. Rain, who is Korean, reads his. Carol asks me if I heard any golden nuggets. I tell Rain I am drawn to the quotation of his father about culture being something that must be appreciated while it is there – the element that it can be lost and forgotten. Carol hands Rain the highlighter and nods with her head to use it. Rain finds the place of the quotation and reads it again to clarify my choice. Sheehan and Carol both identify the last line of Rain's paper where he declares he is full of "pride" for his culture. Rain smiles and nods and says this line too is most important to him.

There are still fifteen minutes of class time remaining. Over Carol's shoulder I can see Ace walking around with expensive over-the-ear headphones plugged into a portable CD player he carries in his left hand. The students' conversation and movements signal third hour is winding down. Carol hears the signals too. She gets up from her seat and faces the rest of the class, "Did you hear or read a paper that you think everyone must hear?"

Cor-Taz volunteers Alajondro's paper "Naturally Blended," which Alajondro reads to the class. It is powerful in how it shows his exploration of personal experiences and the clash of his own Muslim Sudanese culture with the dominant culture of the United States and Station High School. All the students applaud Alajondro, showing that even in this first class period there is appreciation for individual contributions and the beginning of a community. Over the next several weeks Carol finds ways to invite many other students to share the conceptions of culture they wrote about in the first essay, and to stretch and pull all their perceptions and articulations of culture.

Carol offers advice to the class about revising their writing. She tells them, "In your writing, for this class and others this year and when you go to college, ask others to read and tell you where the 'golden nuggets' are. This will help you as a writer get a sense of what to keep." In her advice about "golden nuggets," Carol underscores qualities of treating writing as a process that are linked to the development of critical literacy. She is encouraging her students to make a habit of sharing their writing with others, treating their writing as works-in-progress, something that can be enhanced through conversation with others. The strategy she has led them through is one which will help them discern ideas and language that have the most impact on their readers. When teachers like Carol treat writing as a process, they are shaping a form of critical reflection about thinking and the communication of ideas. Somewhere along the path of being a student or teacher, Carol rejected the merits of focusing upon correctness and recognized the necessity of privileging ideas if she is going to best help her students as thinkers and writers; this is in contrast to the English teacher she had for all four years of high school, who had students memorize grammar rules by their reference and page numbers in the book and maintained four-year-long bills as penalties for composition errors.

Sandusky asks if she can read Jacqueline's paper. Jacqueline has written about growing up in Kenya and how when she was eight years old she recognized the centrality of dance in her culture.

"You will come to see how much dance is a part of every culture," Carol says.  
"Sandusky, what was the golden nugget for you in Jacqueline's paper?"

"I liked the line about 'you can take a person out of a culture, but not the culture out of a person.'" Carol smiles, nods. The bell rings and students gather their things and

get up to go. Amidst escalating student conversation, Carol calls out to them to have a nice weekend.

### The First Day: Creating Community Through Names and Knowing

In this first full class meeting with her students we see Carol doing several things to begin engaging students in the practice and development of critical literacy, particularly in respect to developing a strong learning community that she will build upon as the semester progresses. Carol knows community. This is part of who she is, part of her innermost identity. She lived in a community that valued and needed collegiality and cooperation. We see this in her classroom. She creates the opportunity for students to know one another. The importance of names in knowing one another is something that she makes explicit. Like the small community in which she grew up, a community in which everyone knew what everyone else did, and cared about each other's well-being enough to contact parents if someone were in trouble or causing trouble, Carol wants her students to *know* one another and care about one another. This is powerfully illustrated in the first full class session when Carol has students introduce themselves and then recite something from memory.

When students know each other's names (first and last, spelling and pronunciation) and use each other's names, students will treat each other more respectfully and be more open to interaction. She encourages students to take notes. She encourages students to ask questions. Students will be held responsible for their knowing each other's names through a quiz. The first step to understanding is learning names and practicing these through genuine interaction. From there, students will be less likely to

allow their perspectives to blow others away. Also knowing and using one another's names facilitates discussion and interaction between students, not just between teacher and student.

Carol assumes a facilitator's role; someone who is a co-learner and “guide-on-the-side” (Kohn, 1993; Burns, 1995). Carol sets up the self-introduction activity, and lets students teach one another their names and share what they can from memory. She asks questions to draw students out. She makes sure everyone participates. She provides a “side story” to help jump start the sharing when it stalls early. She helps one student complete the biblical passage he tries to recite from memory. She recites a poem from memory after all the students have gone. In these ways Carol is very active and present, but her person, voice, knowledge are not the center of attention or what is to be learned.

This is the first step in creating a community in which all members recognize the knowledge that each person has to offer. This is the first step of creating a classroom which is truly student-centered. Because students have the opportunity for self-introduction, their ownership of identity is maximized – they get to name themselves in this class. Students are encouraged to teach one another, for instance, by writing in their home language or talking about their home culture. By having students recite from memory, they are treated as “knowers” (see Belenky, et al., 1986). This oral activity is highly literate, and is supportive of the content goals of the class: developing literacy and broadening cultural awareness.

Carol tries to make the classroom a safe place to take risks. When students have the option to “pass” on speaking out at a particular moment, and given the option to go later, they are more receptive to taking risks. Most important, risk taking is vital to

learning and developing critical literacy, for through risks comes learning about self and others. Carol nudges and assists students to take risks in this first session by having them introduce themselves, and having the students share something/anything from memory (no advance warning given). There is risk of embarrassment, and for those students who prefer not to speak up in class they must break that pattern on this day. Carol takes a risk herself by sharing the "Little Miss Muffet" story, and using the word "bitch." She does not know how her students will respond to this. Some may be offended. Carol knows young people. She takes a chance, I suspect, anticipating her students will get a kick out of an authority figure's irreverence and as a result will probably loosen up.

People come to know one another through the stories they tell of what they think, feel, and have experienced. Carol reveals something of herself – that she is irreverent and a provocateur – when she tells the "Little Miss Muffet" story, and uses the word "bitch." She reveals her knowledge of the Bible when she helps Bruno complete the biblical passage. She reveals that she is a reader and literate person when she recites the Frost poem. In this first session we see the child, adolescent, and woman in who she has become as a teacher. She is a risk taker, a thinker, a reader, a community creator, a challenger. She enacts in her classroom her own life experiences. She teaches who she is (Burke, January 1993, personal communication; Palmer, 1998) and tries to help her students develop into people who know themselves and others.

Carol knows cultures. Her extensive travels and readings show she values cultural awareness and appreciation. She and her husband have taken several leaves of absence to teach overseas at international schools. Carol reveals much about herself in the "Who Are We?" document used to introduce the class and teacher to visitors:

Their teacher has taught in Iran and England; she lived with families in Japan while studying the educational system there. In 1992 she received a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to spend a summer in New York City studying ethnic neighborhoods through Columbia University. She has traveled extensively with her family and both of her sons have "second" families from their experiences living in other cultures: one in Sweden and one in Mexico.

Carol fosters cultural awareness and appreciation in her classroom. She provides multiple opportunities for her students to discover and investigate cultures, while honoring the students as knowers. We see this when Carol invites students to share from their own cultures in Essay #1. Carol instructs students to listen carefully as their classmates read their essays out loud and to identify "golden nuggets" they hear.

Carol is a reflective and introspective person. She thinks deeply about her life, and the influences upon her life. She learns from multiple sources, including literature. She wants the same for her students. She looks for wisdom from others and from literature, and she asks her students to do the same. When they are told to listen for the "golden nuggets" in each other's essays, the theme of learning from stories can be seen. Carol's values become part of the pedagogy within this class. Her passions become part of the pedagogy of this class.

A sense of community inside the classroom and the larger community outside the classroom are of tremendous importance to Carol. She works to merge the two. She works to take her class out into the community and bring the community in her classroom. The classroom story continues more than three months later when a guest comes to the Cultural Perspectives class. Maria Lopez is Sky's mother. Sky's class research project has been to look further into her own Latina culture. She and Carol have invited her mother to speak to the class about culture and identity. This is one of more

than ten other instances in which a relative or some other person visited the class to share something from their own culture.

A Community Activist in the Classroom: "Being a Chicana Feminist...I Approach Everything From the Perspective of a Woman First"

Three months after the session in which students learn one another's names and share their essays *What is this thing called culture?*, Maria Lopez, a community activist and parent of one of the students in class, is a guest. In this visit we see the potential of a "classroom without walls." Carol Lessing works hard to bring the community and students' families into the classroom, and to get her students out into the community as part of her curriculum. Going out into the community and bringing the community into the classroom as primary sources for learning is a central and recurring theme in Carol's classroom. Maria Lopez's time in the classroom and the debriefing of the visit the next day reveals much about the depth of what students are being exposed to regarding culture. The visit is consistent with what Peterson (1994a) says is a key criteria for teaching for social justice, that is, it is necessary to bring students and activists together inside and outside the classroom. Carol goes to great lengths to bring people from the community into her classroom, achieving the same goal she has in her personal life, to allow "the cultures of all lands to blow about my house."

On a Thursday, only two days before the winter holiday break, students are bursting with enthusiasm over events in their lives beyond the Cultural Perspectives class. All week there has been caroling in the halls, students working on community service

project gifts, and friends talking in high pitched anticipation of family vacations to warmer climates or ski trips to the western United States.

The bell rings and Carol seeks to get the students' attention. The desks are still in fanned rows, but pushed to the back of the room to allow for more than a third of the classroom as open space. In this space stand Carol, Sky, and a woman in her late thirties who looks like Sky's older sister or mother. Carol announces, "As part of her research project, Sky has invited a guest who she will introduce to you."

Sky is a shy person. She participates sparingly in discussions, though often at critical moments. Though her shyness comes through as she stands before her classmates, Sky is clearly proud standing beside the woman, proud to be introducing her to the class. "This is my mother, Maria Lopez. Basically my project is on Mexican American history, and I have read a few books and watched a few movies on it." Sky then explains that her grandparents on her mother's side were both born in Mexico, but her mother was born and raised in a small town not far from Station, one of nine children. Sky has invited her mother to speak about growing up as a first generation American and to share what she has seen and learned from her travels the past year as part of a fellowship she received.

Maria Lopez looks at her daughter and touches her arm as she walks toward the desks to take a seat, "Oh, my gosh, I was just a little girl! And now you are already grown up." She shakes her head and addresses the class, "My name is Maria and I would like to tell you a little more about my background and explain a little more about why I had the opportunity to travel around the world the last two years." Maria explains to the class that at this time last year she was on her way to Bosnia, and traveled throughout the

region, including Sarejevo and Croatia. Maria was awarded a substantial three year fellowship to investigate ethnic and racial conflict in several regions around the world. "I went because I wanted to be in a war zone. I wanted to be in a conflict zone. The irony was that the racial conflicts that I have had have always been with White people, European people. So, to me, I thought it ironic as I would watch TV and see all these very European people killing each other and they were calling it an ethnic war. And I was like, I didn't get it. I didn't see it. To me, ethnicity was division of different colors and traditions and that sort of thing. So, I chose to go to Sarejevo and I did."

Maria is a powerful model for the students. She, like Carol, is a passionate learner and her story demonstrates the risks she has been willing to take to learn about others. Maria's visit to the classroom opens a world for Carol's students that they would not have had access to without her. Carol knows that people's stories are powerful tools for learning, and this is a principle reason for making it a priority to bring guests into the classroom.

Maria tells the class that part of her work included videotaping what she was seeing. While in the war zone, Maria was escorted by U.S. soldiers who were part of the international forces that were cleared to fire back if necessary. She has brought along a videotape of Zagreb that she shot while being driven through the streets in a Red Cross Humvee vehicle. She plays the ten minute video with the volume off, narrating what the students see: war torn villages and land, mountains reminiscent of southern Colorado but mostly stripped of their trees, hills of garbage mounting the sidewalks along streets. There is an image of a bombed out market place, "targeted because that is where women and children are" Maria tells the class. There is a segment of her visit to a refugee camp

school; the children there are close in age to the students in Carol's class. Maria tells the class that several of the students and adults she met would say, "We were just like you. Civilized." And they would turn to show her the tags of their Levis. Maria emphasizes the commitment of these young people to get an education, attending classes while constantly confronted with the possibility of bombing and snipers. Maria's narration of the video images makes the horrors of war visible and real. The effects of malnutrition are evident on the faces and frames of the people she meets in the video.

"My God!" escapes from Carol's lips, and can be heard across the room as the Humvey drives past what seems like miles of cemetery overflowing with new markers for all the people who have died. Responses like this one from Carol and those of her students become part of the text of the classroom. As Palmer (1998) says, the emotional is as much a part of teaching as the intellectual and spiritual.

The video ends and Maria asks the students, "What does this have to do with us?" There is no immediate response from the students. Maria answers her own question, "For me, it has everything to do with us. Sarejevo, Bosnia was the first European community I had ever been to. I had never been to any other part of Europe and because of that I had nothing to compare it to. Well, I just returned from London, Paris, Zurich, and Frankfurt and it surprised me how very similar to Sarejevo these big cities were. And it was kind of interesting having come full circle after a year and to actually see that Sarejevo was very much a civilized, progressive community. Very progressive in the sense they had excellent infrastructure, you know, great highways, tourism. You know we had the Olympics there, and yet this happened. This happened there. So, look how old that country is, like 1,000 years old. And their whole country has been in turmoil for years,

off and on. Look how young as a country we are. We are 200 some years old." Maria pauses, hoping that this point sinks into the consciousness of the students. Her eyes search the faces in the room for some evidence of this.

"I know that when Sky asked me to come to this class she wanted me to talk about being a Chicana, a Chicana feminist. Then I talked to your teacher and shared some of the other stuff that I had done. And she wanted me to talk about that also." Maria pauses and gathers herself, considering what she will say next. In a tone that says "listen, I am leveling with you," Maria continues. "I can't separate anything I do from who I am. Obviously. It is just the way it is. I approach everything from the perspective of a woman first. Earlier I was in Guatemala and Peru and much of the time I spent was with mothers. Guatemala and Bosnia are two of the toughest, most emotionally difficult places I've been. I spent a lot of time with mothers and I spent a lot of time with the young women, and I just wanted to know how do you get by in a war zone? Everything from school to where do you get your pads when you have your period? Stuff like that. Very practical stuff. These are things we don't think about it." What Maria "wanted to know," this "very practical stuff," exemplifies her need to read the world, her need to understand how people survive – physically, emotionally, culturally – in war zones so she could better survive in her own world.

Maria asks the class if anyone has read Zlata's Diary? Nobody has, including Carol. Maria explains to the class that Zlata is a young Bosnian girl who kept a diary of what life was like for her when she had to leave her community because the war had reached her village (see text box). "I recommend that you read it just to get a child's perspective." Maria then returns to a key point she wants to help students in this class

un

di

for

eth

ou

sti

cle

ev

ha

th

w

co

se

to

he

U

me

understand, that we are not that different from the people in the former Yugoslavia engaged in ethnic war, "If a country as young as ours has already gone through our stint of genocide and ethnic cleansing, and we have, we have, in every part of this continent, we have. I mean, it doesn't matter, for the most part indigenous people

---

Monday, June 29, 1992

Dear Mimmy,  
BOREDOM!!! SHOOTING!!! SHELLING!!!  
PEOPLE BEING KILLED!!! DESPAIR!!!  
HUNGER!!! MISERY!!! FEAR!!!

That's my life! The life of an innocent eleven-year-old schoolgirl!! A schoolgirl without a school, without the fun and excitement of school. A child without games, without friends, without the sun, without birds, without nature, without fruit, without chocolate or sweets....a child without a childhood. A wartime child. I now realize that I am really living through a war, I am witnessing an ugly, disgusting war. I and thousands of other children in this town that is being destroyed, that is crying, weeping, seeking help, but getting none. God, will this ever stop, will I ever be a schoolgirl again, will I ever enjoy my childhood again?...

Your Zlata

(Filipovic, 1994, pp. 65-66)

---

were eliminated. I am the result of indigenous people." Maria is aiming to make deep connections with the students sitting before her. She has shared with them what she has seen first hand in war zones far away, then encourages them to make connections closer to home, first by recommending they read an account by a child close to their age about how the war in Bosnia affected her, and second by reminding these students that the United States has its own history of ethnic cleansing that they must not forget.

Maria senses the heaviness of her point and shifts into a personal story, hoping to move from pushing students to make individual connections to seeing the

interconnectedness of their history and lives with those beyond the borders of their own community, culture, and country. "I have a little sidebar I want to tell you. I traveled all over the world, and people would say, 'Where are you from? What are you?' And I would say, 'American.' And they were like 'No, no. No you are not.' And I am like,

---

Illegal Alien  
by Pat Mora

Scorro, you free me  
to sit in my yellow kitchen  
waiting for a poem  
while you scrub and iron.

Today you stand before me  
holding cleanser and sponge  
and say you can't sleep at night.  
"My husband's fury is a fire.  
His fist can burn.  
We don't fight with words  
on that side of the Rio Grande."

Your eyes fill. I want  
to comfort you, but my arms  
feel heavy, unaccustomed  
to healing grown-up bodies.

I offer foolish questions  
when I should hug you hard,  
when I should dry your eyes, my sister,  
sister because we are both women,  
both married both warmed  
by Mexican blood.

It is not cool words you need  
but soothing hands.  
My plastic band-aid doesn't fit  
your hurt.  
I am the alien here.

(Mora, 1986)

---

'Yes, I am.' But they have an idea what an

American looks like, and they think Americans

don't look like I do, they look like you. And so,  
they deny me in that sense of who I am.

Really, any way you look at it, I am American.

I am American because I am indigenous to this  
continent. So why do we think this? I think as  
a country, as a people, we have a false sense of

privilege. We have given ourselves a false

sense of privilege to think that we are not ever

going to suffer like the people in Sarejevo have.

Look at all of the tensions that we have right

now. Racial, ethnic, the whole nationalist

movement. I mean, Pat Buchanan wanted to

shut the borders. No immigrants at all for how

many years? Something absurd. The fear is a

self-preservation reaction because we have all these statistics. By the year 2,006 one out of four Americans will be Hispanic or persons of color. Why is this a problem? Why does this scare guys like Pat Buchanan? And people that run organizations like FAIR,

which is counter to what the name implies. It is an acronym for an anti-immigration group. They put out this rhetoric that immigrants are a burden, illegal aliens are a burden." The students are given access to a woman who speaks of the hurt of being Mexican and "alien" in this country, a voice similar to Mora's in "Illegal Alien" (see text box). Some of these students might feel, from time to time, like outsiders themselves, like the Other, for whatever reason. For these students, Maria provides a mirror to help them see their realities reflected back. For those students who do not know what it is like to feel like the Other, Maria gives them a window into that reality.

The students listen intently. Maria then pushes to help the class understand that there are causes in their own community worth fighting for. "In our own community," she tells them, "just two years ago, a radio station ran a parody contest during Cinco de Mayo. The DJ said Mexicans were infectious disease carriers and that if you won your own Mexican you had to delouse and bathe him. I still choke on that. I still choke on that. I fought hard, you know. That experience was actually a big part of why I went to Bosnia. I am not ashamed to admit it. That experience really, really triggered some hate in me. I had a very primitive reaction to what had happened in this community. I pay taxes, doggone it. I am a home owner. I buy things here. How dare you insult me like that. You know, my reaction was very primitive. I was ready for war. I was ready to take somebody out. Somebody got hurt and I didn't want it to be me. I didn't want it to be my kids. I didn't want it to be any of the chicanitos or the chicanitas, the Latinos. It wasn't right that they should turn on the radio at 8:30 in the morning on their way to school and hear this about themselves. So, I had to go to a place and see our future, our potential future." The "seeing" Maria is talking about is "reading the world" to explore

possible action. She reveals to the students racism can incite fear, frustration, hatred, but most importantly the impetus to act for social justice. "I know people think I am a bit of a fanatic. 'That will never happen,' they say. And that is why I know that they are wrong because the people in Sarejevo thought it would never happen. We are civilized, look, we have jeans that say Levis, whatever. We are not a third world country." Maria intentionally stirs the students' consciences, provoking them to weigh the consequences of not fighting for social justice and against racism.

Sensing she has said enough about what she saw and learned through her recent travels, she turns to the issue of cultural identity that Sky had invited her to speak about. "I am a Chicana feminist." When Maria says this she pauses. She makes this as a statement of identity. She is naming herself. The

students feel it too. Several of the young women in class smile, their faces energized by these words.

Paisley is among them, and as she reflected months

later, she felt a special connection with Maria as a

woman (see text box). "I have grown up with labels. I

---

When Sky's Mom came that was really a huge inspiration and I don't know if it was just because us being women and that is why it was so like, finally like it was so cool, just to listen to her. Like, I was speechless.  
(Paisley, 9 January 1997)

---

actually was given a birth name. Maria des Jesus Lopez. That's the name my parents

gave me. Maria des Jesus Lopez. It is my mother's name. But the nurse, or the

administrator at the hospital, took the privilege of translating my name to Mary Lopez on

my birth certificate. So legally my name is Mary Lopez. I am not even who my parents

wanted me to be. Think about it. Think about it. From the time I was born I was denied

the name my parents wanted me to have. I went to a private school and there I was called

Mary. Why not, that is my legal name. My brother Raoul, however, is called Bob. Bob!

I still don't know where that came from. It was like there was so much arrogance just in toying with the names and that sort of thing. I don't think we would have encountered that problem in a district like this because there are so many different cultures here which is really fascinating. I get through the eighth grade. I am Mary Lopez now. I've been Mary Lopez for years. When I went home I was Maria. That was me. My whole life has been split. This personality. At school I was Mary, at home Maria. I constantly, constantly went over this, this cultural line. It is an invisible line, but you are always jumping it. We get very limber. It keeps you in shape. You learn things. You learn how to survive in two different places. In two different worlds. In two different environments." Maria learned to "slide back and forth," to live "bi-laterally." As many people of color have needed to, she became "bi-cultural." Her story helps students see ways in which people of color have had to survive within a dominating culture.

Maria continues, "Then I get to the ninth grade. It is a public school. I was so glad to go to public school. I remember I had to pull everything on my Dad that I knew would get to him in order for him to let me go. So now I could wear jeans to school, which was cool. I had to wear skirts every day for the last eight years. Here, I am sitting in homeroom, the first day and the teacher is doing roll call and she says, 'Maria?' and she is talking to me. And I am looking around thinking she is talking to somebody else. But she is talking to me, saying 'Maria?' and she is looking at me. 'Maria Lopez?' And I said 'Yeah.' And I remember that moment so vividly because I knew if I said yes my name would always be Maria in that school. Do I want to be Mary? Do I want to be Maria? That internal battle lasted like a millisecond. I said, 'Yeah, here.' It was like I regained who I was supposed to be all the time." The theme of naming and identity reverberates

through Maria's story, and her experience of reclaiming her identity through naming is a powerful lesson about power and resistance in a hierarchal society.

Maria continues telling the class her story, of how her high school counselor told her, "Oh, you are just going to get married and have kids. You just take the business classes." Of how she met Sky's father and was forced to give up college so she could support him while he went to school. Of how she went back to school to get a degree after both her daughters were old enough for school. And of how she is now a public relations director for an organization that helps at-risk youths. Maria's early life story is reflected in the adult life stories she shares with the class.

Maria then begins to talk to them about learning, "There's education, like there is in academia, and there is what we call experiential learning which means hanging out, you know, experiencing life. This fellowship has brought me a different type of knowledge. A different type of learning. There were no books preparing me for Bosnia. There were no books to prepare me for Guatemala." Maria then tells them that they need to start reading the newspaper and making sense of what is happening in the world they live in. She tells them to pay attention to the elections coming up in Guatemala, that the person running for president has been responsible for the elimination of many indigenous people. "I have gotten tougher over the years," Maria tells them. "I have gotten smarter. I think some of that had to do with college, but I think most of it had to do with real life. Being able to look back at moments of my life like ones that I defined for you and say 'Okay, what did that mean? How did that affect me? How did that impact me? How did it change my life?'" In so many ways Maria illuminates for them how she has learned to read and write the world, read and write her own life. In effect, she invites them to do the

---

I watch the white women shrink before my eyes, losing their fluidity or argument, of confidence, pause awkwardly at the word, "race," the word, "color." The pauses keeping the voices breathless, the bodies taut, erect—unable to breathe deeply, to laugh, to moan in despair, to cry in regret. I cannot continue to use my body to be walked over to make a connection. Feeling every joint in my body tense this morning, used.  
(Moraga, 1983, p. xv)

---

same. Her naming of herself and the world helps students see the power of names, naming, and identity.

Maria then tells them of how only in the last several years she has begun to sort out how feminism fits in her life, with who she is. Her point about mainstream feminism echoes

Moraga's words (see text box), that as a woman of color she is no longer willing to be used. "The bottom line is I believe in all of the things the feminist movement is trying to do. You know, we should be paid for the work that we do. Fair wages, you know, all of these things. We should be running universities. We should be running huge, international banks. We should be doing all of those things. I believe that. But feminism, mainstream feminism, really ignored my people, the Latinos. We were not brought in to the movement until very late in the game. I think a lot of that is where we start getting into the issue of assimilation versus acculturation." Maria stops for a moment, realizing that the students may not be familiar with the concepts. "Anybody study that in this class?" she asks.

The students have been sitting with eyes fixed on Maria, enthralled by the honesty and power of what she has shared with them of her life and insights. The question catches them off guard. Carol speaks for the class, "Just the edges."

Maria continues, "Assimilation is when you totally immerse into a culture, kind of erasing yourself of your own. Acculturation is embracing other cultures while you still maintain your own. And that is what I think I had to do. I let go of the mainstream

feminism and recognized myself as being different from mainstream feminists because they were not confronting the issues of race and culture and immigration that I am concerned with."

Carol quickly interjects, letting Maria know that there are only a few minutes of class time left and the students have questions.

"Oh, sure, I was just preparing to wrap up," Maria says. "The final word is, 'Chicana feminist' is only one more label. It is one more thing that I am. I am Sky's Mom.

I am Mary Pat's Mom. Because that is the thing that primarily defines me. That is what I am. That is what I do. And I take great pride in it. To me, Chicana feminist is just who I am. It is everything I have done. Not every Chicana is going to be like me. Not every feminist is going to be like me. Which

---

...the basis of our unity is that in the most important way we are all in the same boat all subjected to the violent pernicious ideas we have learned to hate that we must all struggle against them and exchange ways and means hints and how tos that only some of us are victims of sexism only some of us are victims of racism of the directed arrows of oppression but all of us are sexist racist all of us.

(Rosario Morales, from "We're All in the Same Boat" in [This Bridge Called My Back](#))

---

is also very cool. The way I see it, we are all in the same boat. It doesn't matter what our religious background is. It doesn't matter what our ethnic background is. It doesn't matter what our gender is. It doesn't matter what our economic status or level is. We are all in the same boat and we have to be really mindful of this if we are going to survive."

Maria is calling out to students to see their interrelatedness, regardless of names and labels. She implores them that their humanity is the final connectedness. She strengthens the sense of community inside and outside the classroom by situating students within the global community, helping them see, as Morales does (see text box) that "we are all in the

same boat” because of the “pernicious ideas we have all learned” and that if we are to overcome those ideas and the acts they provoke then we must work together and see all as part of the same shared project of social justice.

Sabeena raises her hand and Maria calls on her by her name. Sabeena does not ask a question. She has made connections to what Maria shared about jumping the fine cultural line. Sabeena tells the class about her own struggles being a first generation American. At home she has the old Polish ways which her parents are hanging onto desperately. And here in school she tries to fit in. Sabeena shakes her head in frustration. Maria nods with understanding.

Ace has his hand raised and Maria calls on him. "I noticed that yesterday in the paper five of six Red Cross workers were women that were killed." Ace pauses, and then asks, "Why is that a tactic?" There is shock and disbelief in his voice. Ace has made a connection between an event far away that he read about in the newspaper and the bombing of the market place Maria has borne witness to. Searching for help comprehending the incomprehensible, Ace struggles with what he must already be understanding. Maria nods, acknowledging the emotional impact of this on Ace, and then affirms that in times of war the places where women and children are (market places, schools, hospitals) are often targets.

Maria explains, "Oh, you have to consider what this is about. Ethnic cleansing. If you are going to ethnic cleanse anything, you have got to get rid of the women because we are the ones that reproduce. Kill it or they will grow. Kill the babies, they are roaches. Think about it, in a war situation, the way you are looking at someone. If you guys were in a room for twenty years and all you heard were really, really bad things

about a particular group of people, you would not have anything else to measure against so you would see those people as being really, really bad and needing to be eliminated. One Serb tactic, just so you will know, was to take women prisoners, Muslim women, rape the women, impregnate them, and then keep them prisoners until they were too far along to abort. That was all part of the ethnic cleansing. More Serb blood, less Muslim blood. It doesn't make sense, but that was a reality." The silence in the room is palpable. The shocked expressions on students' faces communicate more than simply reality setting in, there is a look of "knowing" and understanding that signals the beginning of consciousnesses being provoked, like small stones in their shoes that will disturb them as they walk from the classroom.

Daisy asks, "Would they keep the children or would they send the children with the mothers?"

"When I was there," Maria tells them, "I worked with the kids. What started to happen was that the women would give birth and a lot of them kept the babies, at least initially. Then some of them were coming back. The war was over. They don't want this baby there because this baby was not their baby, so when I was leaving what I saw was an increase of orphanages. Kids in orphanages, two years old, three years old, being brought and just left there."

Several students sense the bell is about to ring. Books slide across desks and are picked up off the floor. Carol asks the class, "Are there other questions?"

Paisley speaks up, "You have a daughter named Mary which I thought was interesting because of your story about your name being Mary and how it was a major identity problem for you because you were really Maria. Is Mary's name Mary?"

Maria smiles and suppresses a laugh, "No. Mary's name is Maria Patricia. I named her after her two grandmothers, but Mary Pat is her nickname. It is her short name. This is all part of the same psychology when you think about it. Sky is not her mother anymore than you are yours. I am not my mother anymore than she is hers. When you think about how we are different from our own parents, we always think 'I am never going to be like my mother.' But for Sky and Maria, it is different."

Carol wraps up by pulling on the thread of names, "I have been fascinated by this. We have in this class the makings of a Ph.D. study." Pointing to Rain, "This kid is the youngest in his family, but bears his father's name which is usually reserved for the first born son." Pointing to Hope and Autumn, "These two back here are typical of a number of Asian kids in school. They were given American names, I understand so that basically Americans wouldn't screw up what remained of their native names by mispronouncing them."

"Or changing them to something completely different," Maria adds, "like Bob for Raoul!"

"Are we anywhere close in American high schools to dealing with these issues?" Carol asks the class. "Is there any place where they are really talking about this cultural jumping?" No students take up the question. Carol, a thoughtful and attentive listener, has adapted Maria's image of "an invisible cultural line" in which bi-cultural people must "jump." Carol turns to Maria and asks, "Are you seeing it in your studies?"

"I am not an academic," Maria responds. "I don't do research that way so I can't honestly stand up here and say, 'I think this or this based on studies.' I can tell you from my observations. I am hopeful because of the kids. You guys are not going to have the

same issues that my generation had. Just like my generation isn't dealing with some of the same issues that the generation before me had. If we don't change direction I lose all hope. I really hate to say that to a room full of youths, but the bottom line is there is still so much of that, 'I am afraid of you because you are different' attitude out there. It is not just Anglo versus every person of color. You've got some animosities going both ways, all ways. It is crossing over. You can get into the Black community and you start talking about dimensions of blackness. You get into the Native American peoples and you talk about quantum, 'How native are you?' 'Well, I am 1/16th.' 'Well, you are not Native American enough.' And they just terminate you. And that is a word they use."

Alajondro asks, "Since you have an interracial marriage how does that affect you?"

Maria quickly says, "We are divorced." She explains a little about her marriage and what was behind the divorce and their current relationship. She then responds to what Alajondro was seeking to understand better, "I would really, really think long and hard before I cross marry. It shouldn't be a problem. It should never be a problem, but there are some things that you need to be aware of and it is not just about love. I mean it is serious, serious things about being able to get into that rhythm of the other person's culture."

The bell has already rung and the sound of students moving from class to class, and students ready to enter this classroom, can be heard. As students get up to leave, many approach Maria and thank her for coming. Sky, looking almost at the point of tears, has approached Carol. The two talk quietly, far away from the door so they have a

degree of privacy. Carol has a supportive hand on Sky's shoulder. She gives Sky a hug, and they both turn to Maria, then the three of them walk out of the room together.

The students have had the opportunity to meet a charismatic, brave, and eloquent woman of color. She shares with them her life story and talks to them about racism, culture, identity, and global connectedness – a valuable human learning experience that deepens the community. In the fourth and final section of this classroom story we encounter the debriefing of Maria Lopez's visit.

#### Cultural Jumping: "From Where I Sit It Looks to Me Such an Incredible Voyage"

The day following Maria Lopez's visit, the last class meeting before the winter holiday break, the room is filled with the energy and excitement that so often precedes holidays and vacations. Sky and Sabeena crowd around Hope, who has brought a photo album and class book from when she and several students in this class were all in third grade together. They recall stories from those days together, laugh with joy. Maria Lopez's visit reminded Hope of the long relationship she has enjoyed with many in the class.

In another part of the room, Paisley, wearing a vintage '70s lime green satin prom dress with spaghetti straps, works on a beaded Necklace. She calls out to the class that she will make a bead necklace for anyone in the class who is interested. Dar walks over to her and says she likes her dress. "This is my favorite color green in the whole world," Paisley responds. She then pulls off the cardigan sweater she is wearing and shows Dar and several others a large tattoo of an animal she had done the night before, a tattoo the size of a salad plate between her shoulder blades.

Carol has brought juice, and I have brought Chinese almond cookies. Carol invites students to get juice and cookies. Several students express thanks to Carol and me for bringing refreshments as they get cups and plates. There is a knock on the door and a group of ten students, Nora and Kate among them, enter the room and sing two carols. It is lovely. The beauty of their singing moves me, brings tears to my eyes. After the carolers have left and everyone has juice and cookies, Carol begins, "First of all, we need to do feedback from Mrs. Lopez's visit. Comments about the presentation yesterday?"

"I thought it was really great to see," Paisley says. "You don't see women, I mean, I don't feel like I have a lot of like powerful examples of women who are really into being who they are. And I just felt like she was so strong, and so together. So, it was really cool."

"What did she tell you that surprised or shocked you?" Carol asks the class.

"Anything?"

"How someone just changed her name for her," Bruno says.

"That her name was changed for her," Carol echoes, nodding her head.

"That surprised me. I didn't even know they could do that," Katrina says.

"The fact that the Bosnians were just like, they had everything and, you know, it was just gone like that," Alexandria says.

Carol, nodding, adds to Alexandria's statement, "And they saw themselves as a civilized and cultured people and now they have gotten themselves into a situation. I dreamed about that tape, and I imagine the rest of you did too." What we see Carol do here is open the floor to students' reactions, move the conversation along by joining in the interaction, not in a dominating way but by adding affirmations and additional details

from what Maria shared the day before. She is open with them about how the experience affected her, gave her unsettling dreams, and suggests others might have been too, as a form of invitation to discuss how they were troubled by what they heard and saw.

"I did too," Alajondro says.

"I have seen stuff like this before," Sabeena says, "so it didn't surprise me."

"Anybody else? Was there anything that struck you that has stuck in your mind, that you thought about since Sky's Mom was here?"

"It is Sky," Ace says.

"What Ace?" Carol asks.

"I know Sky," Ace says, "and your Mom is you and you are your Mom."

In an interesting way, Carol is entreating students to do with Maria's visit what she had them do when they responded to their peers' first essay – find the "golden nuggets" in her stories. But instead of finding these to help the teller, Carol wants her students to identify and reflect upon those points most valuable to their own present and future lives.

There are several affirmations of Ace's point among the students. Katrina says, "you are just like your Mom," and Paisley adds, "It was so scary." Sandusky says she was "blown away" by the resemblance. Other students point out facial and verbal expressions the mother and daughter share.

Sky sits and listens. There are tears in her eyes, tears of pride. Carol tells the class, "Sky and I had an interesting

conversation about that after class because

she doesn't see that similarity." As she

does so often, Carol primes discussion

among students by putting on the table just

enough to provoke thought and reaction.

As Nora so aptly characterizes her teacher,

she has a "commanding gentleness" that

comes from truly knowing her students "in

---

She's ended up being definitely one of my favorite, if not my favorite teacher, and I think she has a really kind of commanding gentleness or something about her that just, she seems to know students in a really unique way that kind of transcends the teacher-student relationship. Kind of while retaining those qualities she just really seems to get a feel for a student's personality, where they come from and where they are headed. It is sort of like she exudes it whenever she teaches. It seems like she wants that sense of knowing each other to seep out into the rest of the classroom. I think she is just a really unique teacher in that sense. (Nora, 14 January 1997)

---

a really unique way that...transcends the teacher-student relationship" (see text box).

Carol works to know her students by providing opportunities to share who they are in class, by taking the time to talk with them one-on-one, by living so close to the school and being an active part of the community, and so many other ways. This is no surprise, for as Carol made clear in her life story, she grew up in a small town, where everyone knew each other and cooperation was essential for survival. The small piece of the conversation Carol shares with the class sparks a new dialogue.

"What!!!" Ace calls out in shock.

"You don't," says Alajondro. "You don't see it in your own family." Knowing this from his own experience, he confirms Sky's.

"The other thing I think is worth your doing some thinking about and observing over break is this idea of cultural jumping," Carol, making an instructional transition, echoes Maria Lopez's point from the day before. Carol is demonstrating how the

“personal” is “pedagogical” here. The students resonate to this issue. It is close to home. They relate to it, deeply. Carol seeks to make a pedagogical connection to this personal connection.

"I really can relate to that," Daisy says, "because I think first generation and second generation kids really feel pressures. I mean, like lots of people don't know how that is."

"Believe it or not," Cor-Taz says, "my grandmother is White."

"So visiting her is like jumping into a different culture?" Carol asks.

Cor-Taz say, "Yeah."

"Is it great?" Paisley asks.

Smiling, "Yeah. It's straight," Cor-Taz says.

"That I think is what struck me after I got home last night," Carol says. "I realized that I am personally, deeply jealous of those of you that have the chance to do that cultural jump."

"No, don't be," says Bruno.

"I knew that you would say that, but from where I sit it looks to me such an incredible voyage," Carol says. "Anybody else have that reaction?"

"I remember still going through it and it is so hard," Daisy tells the class. "And I don't know how to deal with it." Carol has helped move the discussion from critical reflection of what Maria Lopez shared to critical reflection of their own lives. The students' lives become the curriculum, their stories the text. Carol is skilled at helping students pull meaning from their own lives, just like finding “golden nuggets” in their essays.

Nodding, Sabeena adds, "I lived it every day of my life, do you know what I mean? There is always going to be good and bad about it."

For the first time Sky speaks up. "I was a generation after you guys. All right. So, I am like your kid's case. But it is hard for me still. It is like hard for women's stuff. I don't know if I am going into it more than I should or whatever but it seems like, it seems like, who should I be? How much should I assimilate? Should I assimilate at all? Why should I change my culture? Why shouldn't my kids be able to experience the kinds of things that my grandmother let me experience and stuff like that." Sky is living the tension between assimilation and acculturation. As a high school senior she is already beginning to tease out and articulate the complex issues of life and culture. She is reading her world, engaging in critical literacy. This is a powerful moment for Sky and her classmates. And the moment is possible because Carol gives her students the time and space to work through these issues in conversation with supportive people they trust.

"I don't even know how I should be," Sabeena says. "My parents yell at me because I am forgetting Polish. I still speak it, but I prefer to speak in English. Because that is what I speak most of the time. And yesterday my parents had friends over and I was telling them a story and they were laughing at me because I pronounced the words differently, in a different accent, or I would ask my Dad for different words."

"In Polish?" Carol asks. Sabeena nods. She doesn't say anything. Her eyes have tears in them. The emotional is sanctioned in this classroom. Tears are okay. Emotions are okay. In a learning community there are multiple ways to know. The personal is pedagogical, is political. "Already the gap is widening," Carol says nodding.

"Sometimes," Alajondro tells, "when my parents have guests over and stuff, like for entertainment, they bring me and my brother out and they ask us stuff like around the house, common household items, and stuff like that, and they ask, 'What is that?' And I say something that would be totally different and they all just laugh. I think it is funny too, but then after I get the right answers they think something like, 'He is crazy.'"

"So you feel almost like a curiosity?" Carol asks.

"Yes," Alajondro answers. "They wonder what is still in my brain, and stuff like that, you know. And I surprise them a lot of times too when I know something they don't think I know. It is pretty curious."

"It is pretty interesting too," Carol says. "Alajondro, will you be sure that your children, if you have them, will speak Arabic?"

"I guess it depends on who I marry," Alajondro answers. "If I marry a Sudanese woman I probably will. But if I marry an American woman it will be harder. I was wanting to go back, like probably in the summer, especially at a young age you can learn the language so quick and you can be bilingual at a young age, like between birth and five years old, if you are back and forth between two countries. Then you could probably start the school year with no problem. Be bilingual."

"You heard almost the same comment from Sandusky's sister when she was here," Carol reminds them. Just two weeks earlier, Sandusky's sister, a graduate of Station High School and currently a university student, visited the class and shared her experiences being a Catholic Egyptian woman living in the United States but still very much connected to Egypt as her home. "When we asked her about marrying she said she probably wouldn't do that because it would be easier to raise her children inside that

cultural spectrum. Those of us that are sitting on the other side, who are basically from one culture, see those of you that do cultural jumping as an advantage. You have access to other worlds we don't no matter how hard we work on it." Carol weaves the strands of issues and stories heard from Sandusky's sister weeks before, from Maria Lopez the previous day, and from those who sit in the classroom with her in the present, pushing them to see the patterns and tease out the marvels and mysteries of a multicultural world. She has surfaced the tension between assimilation and acculturation, an area she had only approached the "edges" of previously but Maria Lopez helped make central, and now she is prepared to let the students delve into the messiness of it.

"Well," Paisley says, "it is an interaction that we don't even see, like it is in their lives all the time. And like I can never have that interaction. I can never have that extra knowledge that is somehow passed on. Do you know what I am saying? It is like you are able to know something that I can't know. It is like me knowing that I can never be Jewish. You know, I am so bummed out about it. I am so bummed I can't be Jewish. Like I can convert and be Jewish, but because I wasn't born Jewish, I can never be Jewish. I think that totally sucks."

"But you have got to ask yourself, is it really fun jumping back and forth between cultures?" Cor-Taz asks, taking a leading role in the direction of the conversation.

"What is the hardest part about it?" Ace questions.

"It is not about fun to me," Paisley cuts in, "it is about knowledge. And I think that is more important than anything."

Leaning into the circle of desks to make eye contact with Daisy, Ace asks again, "What is the hardest part?" Paisley is White. Daisy is a first generation American, her

parents both coming from China. Ace acknowledges Daisy's authority; he wants to hear from her what the hardest part has been.

"I think it is accepting," Daisy pauses, "that I don't know who I am going to be accepted by. I don't know."

"In a sense," Cor-Taz says, "when jumping back and forth you kind of do lose, I feel, you lose a sense of yourself. As an African American, when I go across town to my old 'hood, I mean, I am not accepted because I am trying to get an education. I abandoned them. So, when I go back there I have to jump into this culture that I am not a part of anymore."

"What if you went to Africa, Cor-Taz?" Carol asks.

"If I went to Africa?" Cor-Taz says with some surprise.

Carol waits for Cor-Taz to answer and when she gets no response she articulates the question herself. "That is a whole other question. When an African American who uses 'African American' to define himself, he probably has not ever been there. There would be a few who have, but most African Americans have never gone there and if they did, the question is, could you make the cultural leap. Could you accept the cultural differences." Carol prompts when students are lost and pushes them to think more deeply when necessary.

"I think I could," Cor-Taz answers. "The person that I am would accept it."

"Ace asked Daisy what is the hardest part," Carol reintroduces. "Is that the hardest, losing track of who you are?"

"Well," Daisy starts to try to explain, "there's lots of things. I mean you can't just pinpoint one thing, you know. It is like, I don't know."

"Who you are is who you should be," Paisley says.

"It's not that easy Paisley," Daisy says. "Having your friends come over and like having different food and doing things different."

"It is the skills and the little things that add up?" Carol asks for clarification.

"I mean, like everything," Daisy says.

"Are you afraid that people aren't comfortable?" Kensey asks.

---

Legal Alien  
by Pat Mora

Bi-lingual, Bi-cultural,  
able to slip from "How's life?"  
To "Me'stan volviendo loca,"  
able to sit in a paneled office  
drafting memos in smooth English,  
able to order in fluent Spanish  
at a Mexican restaurant,  
American but hyphenated,  
viewed by Anglos as perhaps exotic,  
perhaps inferior, definitely different,  
viewed by Mexican as alien.  
(Their eyes say, "You may speak Spanish  
but you're not like me")  
an American to Mexicans  
a Mexican to Americans  
a handy token  
sliding back and forth  
between fringes of both worlds  
by smiling  
by masking the discomfort  
of being pre-judged  
Bi-laterally.  
(Mora, 1986)

---

"It is weird," Daisy begins. "It is like,"

she pauses, searching and struggling for words

to articulate an experience she has never tried to

articulate before the Cultural Perspectives class,

"it is just weird because of different things.

Who you are, who you should be, like being

and feeling so different from other people.

That having your friends come over and having

a totally different everything. And having to

explain everything, why." In a learning

community affirming diversity is central, and

Carol makes it possible for students to voice

and make sense of their experiences feeling and

being different. In this particular discussion, Sabeena who is an immigrant, Daisy who is first generation American, and Sky who is second generation American provide poignant and valuable insight into the tensions between assimilation and acculturation. As in Mora's poem "Legal Alien," Daisy and others are often viewed as "exotic, perhaps

inferior, definitely different”; and for Sabeena and others, they are viewed in their home culture as alien (see text box).

"When you go back to your country, what do you say, you are American or what?" Alexandria asks Sabeena.

"People ask me when I go to Poland," Sabeena explains, "and I tell them that I am Polish and they go, 'No, you don't have a Polish accent, you have a different accent.' And I am like, 'Yes, I live in America.' Then here, you are not an American because you have a Polish accent."

Daisy builds on this idea, "Well, I was talking to Sky about this too and I was like, what if I am an exchange student and I go somewhere else and they are expecting, you know..."

"Their idea of an American," Sky finishes her sentence.

"Right," Daisy says, "I think that they will be very surprised when I go. If I go, you know, they will be expecting someone who doesn't look like me."

"Yeah," says Sabeena, "'You don't look American. Who are you? What are you?' Like Maria was saying, you know." Using what they learned from Maria's story, the students draw upon her insights into "naming" and cultural identity in this discussion and most likely will continue to do so.

"I want to ask you guys a question," Sabeena says. "I want to know if people look at me and go, 'Sabeena, that Polish chick'?"

"I don't think of you as Polish at all," Alexandria says. "Doesn't even cross my mind when I think of you."

"I do," Ace, who is Polish himself, says.

th

re

cl

ex

ab

In

cor

g

g

"I just think of you as Sabeena," Paisley says.

"It crosses my mind that you are Polish," Kensey tells her.

"See," Sabeena says, "if I meet people, they just listen to me and then like, 'Where are you from? You have a funny accent.' And then I feel different."

"Does that hurt your feelings?" Daisy asks.

"It doesn't hurt my feelings but, I don't know," Sabeena says.

"It also means unique, Sabeena. That is the plus side," Carol says. Her message to Sabeena is genuine and gentle. She knows about possibilities Sabeena cannot yet see because of the pain she feels being different. The incentive to assimilate is powerful. No words from Carol here, or from Maria Lopez the day before, are going to resolve the conflict she feels at this time. These people can only offer Sabeena support and guidance; the rest she will have to figure out for herself.

"They say different is good," Cor-Taz tells her.

"I don't know how to feel about any of this any more," Sabeena says, "like I never really thought much about it until I came to this class. I thought it would be an interesting experience because, like, people would ask me about how I would feel about stuff like that, and I never knew. And now I am even more confused."

---

Paisley: This class is really strange because you just don't know. It is like you are trying to figure out or at least get a better understanding of things....I don't know as much as I want to know.

Sabeena: I think this class more confused....But it is a better confused.

Paisley: Yeah. Confused as in?

Sabeena: Confused as in more...I want to know more, rather than confused and frustrated...I don't want to know any of this....Confused as in, makes me want to experience more. (December 1996)

---

"Is that a good place to be?" Carol asks Sabeena. She directs a slightly different question to the class, "Is thinking about it a good place to be?"

"Maybe in a situation where you can't really draw solid conclusions," Alex suggests.

"I wonder if that is a positive thing or a negative thing Mrs. Lessing," Daisy says, "so I am confused too. I don't know. I know who I am, but I don't know who I should be, looking through my parents' eyes and looking through American society's eyes."

"Can you remember what Mrs. Lopez said yesterday?" Carol asks. "You will never be your mother. Or you will never be your father."

"That kind of burns me out," Sky says, "because I think my parents are awesome, you know. They are the coolest people in town. I love my folks."

Carol asks the class if anybody else has anything else to add. Nobody does, so she turns to touching base with them about extra credit options she offered for the Russian Culture unit they are in, and then she plays the last fifteen minutes of the film Doctor Zhivago. What has taken place is classroom discourse rich in authentic and personal questions and revelations, discourse in which students talk to one another, not just the teacher. Students who are connected in meaningful ways to the class, students who feel part of an intimate community. The curriculum invites the students to take risks, invites them to be reflective and introspective, invites them to question their identities, lives, and world views.

Sabeena, Daisy, Sky, and others in the class may be confused (see text box), but their confusion is about the complexity of their own and others lives. They are "confused on a higher level about more important things" (Battaglia, 1995). Carol invites this kind of complexity; she wants her students to wrestle with it, for it is through such engagement that critical literacy is developed. Identity is not a dichotomy between assimilation or

acculturation, rather it is a rich continuum of possibilities that these students are beginning to see and experience.

## An Analysis: The Journey into Critical Literacy

Carol Lessing takes us, the readers, on a journey. A journey into teaching for critical literacy. By teaching who she is, we see theory and practice meshing – critical literacy in motion. A passionate teacher who brings us with her into her classroom and shows us how we can learn with her and her students. The richness of the educational opportunities for her students allows us to see what it means to teach for critical literacy. The educational community interested in critical education can learn from Carol, can see the theory in practice and the practice in theory. Through this study of Carol's teaching, we see a rich mix of components that contribute to her work as a critical educator: her efforts to develop a learning community, her ability to put the students at the center of the meaning-making process, her passion for learning and literature, her work to help students name and examine their worlds, her resourcefulness in making use of the community, her skill at designing a multicultural curriculum, and her desire to teach for social change and action. These attributes combine to make Carol Lessing a critical educator effective in cultivating the development of critical literacy in her students.

### Collaboration, Discourse, and Enacting Social Constructivism in a "We" Community

Carol Lessing, as we will see with Alice Terry and William Harrison, skillfully seeks out and makes use of the knowledge and resources her students, colleagues, and community have to offer. As mentioned in the introduction, Carol sent a letter to the parents/guardians of students in the class, soliciting their involvement in several ways (be a special guest, chaperone field trips, and help their children bring the family's culture

into the classroom). We see the power of one parent's visit when Maria Lopez visits the class. There are countless examples of how Carol creates curriculum with the help of others.

Students play an active role in curriculum and help shape a "we" curriculum. Their authentic questions, concerns, and activities they bring to the class help make the classroom and the curriculum co-constructed – students and teacher working together to create a learning community that has a "we" feel to it.

Carol often sought the expertise of her colleagues in the school. In the first half of the class meeting when Carol was kicking off her unit on Hispanic/Latino culture she arranged for one teacher to teach the entire class several Latin dances in the school's "common area"; as would be expected, Carol participated in this herself, dancing with several of her students. Carol also collaborated with the school's ESL teacher to bring their two groups of students together for the ESL students to do "poster sessions" on their cultures.

People from outside the class enter into the community and help shape it into a classroom without walls, expanding it. When students return they bring back what they have learned, enriching all. We see this in how Carol helps her students become aware of the many opportunities to interact with diverse cultural perspectives through her "cultural opportunities" assignment. Carol creates curriculum with the help of others. Carol models powerful ways of being: cooperation is essential for survival, accept and respect others' contributions, be open to diversity, expand your community and world view.

Carol consistently speaks in the language of "we." The ethos she creates is one of collaboration. Kohn (1996) calls such a classroom ethos a "working with" environment

in contrast to a “doing to” environment. Carol values collaboration; she embodies collaboration. Carol models for her students that learning from and with others is valuable. Carol is teaching not only *what she knows* but *who she is* (Burke, January 1993, personal communication; Palmer, 1998). Carol has created an environment where learning from one another is central. In an interview with one student, I asked how the Cultural Perspectives class was different from others. Dar responded,

It is a lot different. It is incorporated more in a group where you can actually interact with people and discuss and work on different levels and it is still okay. Well, in most classes you have to be at a certain place or it is just not okay. Either you’ve got it or you don’t have it. And there is no like personal input because the curriculum is set up to teach you a certain thing. Well, this one is like we are all learning from each other and we are all learning different things about the same things. And it doesn’t matter as long as you get what you want out of it. (8 November 1996)

As Dar explains, students share with each other and learn from each other. The foundation for learning from one another was established early in the course, when Carol required students to learn the first and last names of every student in the class. Learning names was the first critical step in the “we” process. Knowing one another is a key element in the process of being able to learn from one another. This process of learning from one another was the first step in the process of building a “we” community. The establishment of an ethos of valuing others grows out of those early efforts of Carol’s to help students get to know one another, from the correct pronunciation and spelling of names to the understanding and respect of beliefs, backgrounds, and perspectives. Carol has also established the kind of community where members appreciate and respect one another (see Gibbs, 1994). This groundwork makes more substantial support and challenge possible.

A striking quality of Carol's learning community is the rich discourse among students. What students think and have to say to one another, is central. In this way, Carol is enacting social constructivism to teaching and learning. In interviews with students at the end of the semester, many echoed what Dar said about how much they learned from what other students said in discussions, from presentations students had made, and from guests who came to the class. Students saw Carol as being in the background. Jacqueline appreciated the student-centered class:

...and the way she lets us discuss things. She just like starts these topics and sits back and watches what happens. She throws things in but she lets us talk it out. Some teachers would go that is enough, that is enough. But she doesn't even like talk or stuff, she sits back and watches what we are doing....[like today, that whole discussion about use of the word "nigger"]...some teachers would be like, "No, no, we can't say that." She doesn't care. She is like so loose. She lets us sit on the floor. The tables are like crazy. I like her. She is a good teacher. (17 December 1997)

Jacqueline refers to a discussion that came at the end of a student presentation about "Rap Culture," a discussion about the use of the word "nigger" by Black males. The discussion was initiated by a student question, and facilitated by Cor-Taz, the African American student doing the presentation. Carol let the students take it where they needed. She guides and directs, subtly, only stepping in when she feels the students need a probing question or a comment from her can raise the level of their thinking.

Carol actively pushed students to learn from one another. We see this in the first full class meeting when she has the students listen for the "golden nuggets" in their classmates' first essay: "What is this thing called culture?" Projects, in class activities, and discussions are structured to guide and support students in making sense of what they are encountering and being able to articulate that sense-making to others. She

communicates clearly in her class that there are many who hold wisdom and if the students dig for the golden nuggets they will learn from others. Carol does not present herself as *the* expert, instead she is one of many. This is in keeping with constructivist knowing (Belenky, et al., 1986) and constructivist pedagogy (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Brooks and Brooks, 1993). Carol is able and inclined to remove herself from the center of the community.

Jacqueline also remarked on how Carol and the classroom environment are “loose,” how they often sit on the floor to work in groups and how the tables “are like crazy.” Carol arranges her room from class meeting to class meeting to position students in ways that will maximize their learning from one another, sometimes in a large circle, sometimes in small groups, sometimes in learning stations – always with a purpose. Classroom arrangements serve to emphasize the students’ centrality as players in their own learning, as teachers of one another. The students are not afraid to question, not afraid to say that they do not understand, not afraid to make a comment that may go against the flow of what others have said. These are signs of a learning community where students are able to take intellectual and emotional risks, where they know there is a safety in the community – a safety to question, disagree, and say what they feel. When Sabeena cries in the debriefing of Maria Lopez’s visit, we see that the community is a safe place for students to express a full range of emotions. Fried celebrates such moments as evidence of a teacher who is making a difference in the lives of students: “The greatest value of our passionate concerns is that they invite students to feel emotionally alive in our presence” (1995, p. 27). Such safety is vital, and Carol’s

students identify her classroom as a safe place. Katrina confirms the qualities of comfort and safety in the classroom:

I think from the first day she created a comfortable environment. Setting ground rules, like not making fun of people, not hurting people's feelings, and stuff like that....by creating the environment, she was able to make everybody feel safe within at least these walls to discuss stuff without being offended. (17 December 1996)

Carol has structured her learning community to maximize students actively constructing meaning.

Student presentations serve as important examples of how students teach one another, and provide additional evidence of how Carol seeks a background role. In the discussion previously mentioned, where the word "nigger" was problematized by students, we see one such powerful illustration. Following is the point in which this discussion surfaces, as Cor-Taz is responding to a student's question about the name "gangster rap" and preparing to close with a brief video clip of changes in the rap music industry between 1980 and 1990.

Alex asks, "Why do they call it gangster rap? I doubt if any of those gangster rappers actually went out and killed people. Would you say that is fronting or would you say that is representing? Because I mean, I am sure that a lot of these stories are of people killing each other, but I doubt if anybody had the experience."

"I should just stop there with that question. I think some have, but I don't know," Cor-Taz responds. He turns toward the VCR to begin playing a video.

"I have a question," Daisy gets in before Cor-Taz says a few words of introduction about the video he wants to play. "How do you feel about rappers calling each other 'niggers' and stuff? How do you feel about that?"

Eyebrows raised above the rim of his glasses, Cor-Taz points a finger to his chest, "Me, personally?"

"Personally you Cor-Taz," Daisy pushes uncharacteristically.

"I don't like the word 'niggers,'" Cor-Taz exclaims, "I just don't like the word period. They shouldn't use that word, but they say when Black people say the word it means something good. But like if a White person says it, it's like negative."

"Doesn't it seem like disrespectful to use the word, to yourself and to each other?" asks Daisy.

"You've got to understand," Cor-Taz tries to explain, "that to a Black person..."

The conversation gets out of Cor-Taz's court and explodes among several students sitting in a cluster.

"I think," Paisley gets in, "it means something different when a White person..."

Again cutting in, Nora says, "It is making for a racial division right there."

"I am not agreeing with it," Paisley says, "I am just saying that is what I see, that if a white person said it, they would take offense."

"It just seems," Nora pauses, "like it was just making a racial division right there. I don't know."

Cor-Taz gets back into the thick of the discussion, "Now, if I was to go up and say it to one of my boys, we don't take it as slavery, we take it as like, it is just another slang word."

Paisley, a little surprised, asks, "What if one of your White friends said that?"

"You've got to understand," Cor-Taz responds, "that slavery is like..."

Paisley, cutting off Cor-Taz, says, "It is different. It is not a good word. What I am saying is I don't think it should be that way. I think it is screwed up all together and I think it totally speaks of racial division right down the line. I mean, I understand it..."

Nora, cutting off Paisley, says, "So, it is almost like shutting me out, like shutting us out. You know what I am saying?"

Alajondro says, "But the way you talk 'shut' you've never been shut out for so long. You don't know what else to do but shut other people out."

"Exactly," Nora says, "and that is what I think we need to get past."

Cor-Taz cuts in, "I have this video to show you guys and I feel that any questions you have the show can answer. The show talks about the numerous rappers on the street, and shows the rap industry, how the industry changed between 1980 and 1990. It is by Russell Simmons. Simmons explains that gangster rap is very important in the United States. Gangster rappers allow you to learn the lessons in ghetto life. You know, some of the problems. He says, 'If you need to be a gangster to make millions, so be it.' And that is true. That is a very important statement. So many gangsters entered the game, the game is rap music, just to make money, that they talk about killing cops and all that stuff. Now, the kids want to grow up to be gangsters. We as listeners don't understand that the so-called gangster rapper that is rapping about being a gangster, they rap so they don't have to be a gangster. The kids are not learning that message. So we as adults have to tell the kids the reason why they are rapping is so they don't have to be a gangster."

Daisy asks Cor-Taz how he feels about the use of “nigger” and in his response he tries to do two things, explain his personal dislike of the label but also provide perspective on how this is a negative term that Black men have tried to reclaim. Because he is cut off, he is unable to provide as complete an explanation as he would like. However, he respects his classmates and recognizes the undercurrent of emotion in their flurry of responses. Paisley and Nora, as White women, do not want to be “shut out”; they want to move beyond the past injustices that divide. Alajondro, as a first generation African American male, holds up the mirror to them, “you’ve never been shut out for so long.” So he lets them do most of the talking, not blowing away their “right perspective” with his own “right perspective” as Carol’s first essay argued for. It is his final point that is most important to note, when he comes back to Alex’s question and says, “The kids are not learning that message. So we as adults have to tell the kids the reason why they are rapping....” Though we may not agree with his perspective, Cor-Taz is practicing and calling for others to engage in critical literacy. Such moments are possible because Carol has created the kind of community where it is okay to critique dominating paradigms. She gives her students the room and opportunity to do so. When we see classrooms where students are speaking directly with one another, where students are asking authentic questions of one another, where students are able to analyze and critique the dominating systems around them, then we see classrooms where students are engaged in a community where critical literacy is being nurtured.

Carol sees the students “as knowers” in this class, and the students also come to see themselves and each other “as knowers” (see Belenky, et al., 1986). It is also important that the students are knowers and share what they intimately know. For

example, Cor-Taz shares his passion for rap music, and within that lesson he talks with his classmates about the stereotypes of Black males. As a Black male, he is able to speak about his experiences in a genuine and authentic way. He has conveyed a perspective on the culture of rap music that many of the students may not have heard.

Students may not explicitly talk about the learning they see happening for themselves and yet when we hear Sabeena say in the Maria Lopez debriefing session, "I never really thought much about it until I came to this class.... I am even more confused," we can understand the ways in which students are affected, even though it may be a temporary state of confusion. Carol has been able to show the students that sometimes the questions are far more important than the answers.

#### Passion for Life, Learning, Language, and Literature

In so many ways we see the woman mirrored in her teaching. The woman who loves to read and who values writing. She wants to share these joys and gifts with her students. The energy that she brings to the classroom in many ways springs forth from her own energized love of reading and writing. There is passion in her own learning and teaching.

We know from Carol's life story that she is passionate about reading, about stories, about literature. We can also infer this from the curriculum of this course. I have seen her passion teaching literature. We can sense this the first day from her recitation of the Frost poem and from the eloquence of her own draft of the first essay. And we see this in how she is able to recall and recite along with Bruno Psalm 23. Carol may be allergic to religious ideology, institutionality, and missionary zeal, but it is clear that she

still loves the poetry and stories of the Bible *as literature*. “The whole biblical thing for me was about literature,” she says in her life story.

I first met Carol Lessing three years before beginning this study. Our first conversation was in her classroom, during her prep period, where she showed me the latest batch of "essays" by students in her Contemporary Literature class, a semester-long course in the literature, film, art, culture, and society of the '50s, '60s, and '70s. I remember my eyebrows raising, and her mouth forming into a devilish smile. What I saw – mobiles, models, displays, posters – looked nothing like essays, and she knew this. Carol explained that the only stipulations concerning essay format she gave students was it could not be written in the traditional five-paragraph form, nor could it be written on paper. She turned to the window sill and picked up a thirty-two ounce funnel, painted inside and out in swirling colors, with smiley faces and peace signs, and filled with a tangled mass of quarter inch cellophane bearing an endless string of words in a variety of colors. In the way a gemologist might explain the characteristics of a precious stone or an archeologist the significance of a fossilized imprint, Carol explicated the essay. The student had chosen to write about Tom Wolfe's The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, using the funnel reservoir to represent the head, the cellophane tape to represent the brain, and the colors and images to represent the theme of "psychedelics" and the larger context of the “hippy culture” of the American '60s. Through the narrow spout of the funnel Carol slowly pulled the cellophane tape, on which the student's essay was written. Astounding. And there were so many others just as intriguing: a small suitcase inside which an essay about Go Ask Alice was written, a plain lidded cardboard box inside which was a

miniature conference room that the reader had to turn upside down and put her/his head inside to read an essay on The War Room, and so many others.

Carol was taught language and composition very traditionally (memorized grammar rules and wrote weekly themes), practices that helped her develop a solid foundation but probably did not stir her passions *as a writer*. Her own teaching of language and writing reflects the influences of process writing approaches. Carol teaches language and writing to her students differently from how she learned; she wants to stir the passions of her students, to help them *as writers*. We heard from Carol in Chapter 1 talk about her work as the High School Writing Coordinator. She helped a Psychology teacher develop evaluation rubrics and encourage his students to integrate personal examples and connections from their lives into their papers. We saw in the classroom story how Carol set up peer response groups for students to identify “golden nuggets” and then advise students to use this as a strategy for all their papers in this class and beyond. I observed several occasions in which Carol used “writing to learn” (journal writing, mapping, writing interpretive notes), and I have seen her conference with students about their papers, before and after they had been turned in for evaluation. When Carol responds and evaluates student essays she writes numerous “reader responses” to the content and provides substantial feedback concerning the strength of argument and the final draft quality of the piece. One student talked about the impact Carol’s feedback has had on him:

The essays helped me. I got a lot better in my writing. I remember one paper she wrote about like 100 comments on it....Before I would like just get a grade or whatever. Now she is writing “do this,” “change this thing,” and “turn it back in.” And I’m doing the stuff. (Alex, December 1996)

As a teacher of writing, Carol helps students' imaginations soar, she pushes their thinking to deeper levels, and she guides them in becoming more skilled writers about subject matter.

We see in Carol's teaching that the personal is pedagogical. We see and hear the passion in her voice and see the passion that the learning opportunities she provides for her students generates. We learn that Carol's passions – a passion for knowledge about life and cultural diversity, a passion for learning, a passion for spoken and written language, a passion for human stories – are central to who she is as a critical educator. Important to this study is the fact that "passion" is not an element of teaching for critical literacy explicitly addressed in the research literature. Whether it is the literature they read or the real people they meet, Carol is exposing her students to the human stories that the world is made up of. Carol strives to help her students understand and feel human stories in ways that have always affected her – deeply.

Students read poetry and a play by Federico Garcia Lorca, among other works, in their unit on Hispanic/Latino culture. When instructing her students to read their roles in Blood Wedding, Carol said to them, "Please go over your part carefully before class, marking it in pencil. You will be expected to read with great energy, emotion, and passion!" Carol modeled then, as she did repeatedly in the class, what such reading sounded and looked and felt like.

Another work students read in the same unit was Laura Esquivel's novel Like Water for Chocolate. Carol described this book as "beyond wonderful" in her life story. After Carol has read the first ten pages with the students helping them to understand and recognize examples of "magical realism," she does a brief experiential lesson – a

simulation that transports the students into the pages of the novel and helps them get a taste for what the novel's title and main theme mean:

...I need to have you tell me what you think this title might be connected to. Like Water for Chocolate," Carol says in a level tone.

"You need water for chocolate?" Paisley answers in rising intonation.

Carol rises from her seat in the circle and walks to her desk. She picks up a tray of foil covered paper cups. "Take one. Do not uncover it. Be very careful." Carol walks around within the circle to make sure every student gets a cup.

"Are they all the same?" Sabeena asks.

"No, they are not all the same. Be very careful. Do not shake. Take a cup. Do not uncover it."

Ace shakes his cup, "Would be nice if it's M&Ms."

"Will we be allowed to eat what's in the cup?" Daisy asks.

"Nope," says Toni.

"You will be required to eat what is in this cup," Carol tells the students.

The curiosity peaks. Carol has created a simulation that will draw student into the novel. Several students shake their cups. A student says, "I like M&Ms."

Cor-Taz cannot wait for Carol. He uncovers his cup. "I've got M&Ms," he says.

Toni uncovers his cup and shows Cor-Taz he has water. He makes a face. "I like M&Ms," Toni says. "How many you got?"

"Two," Cor-Taz tells him. "I'll give you an M&M for some of that water."

Several other students have uncovered their cups. Paisley calls out, "Whose got water and whose got chocolate?"

Carol says to the class, "Okay, would you take the cover off your cup and put into your mouth whatever is in there?"

Students call out "water" or "M&Ms" when they look in their cups.

"Water," Kate says in disappointment.

"I like that," Sandusky says. "Can I have some water?"

"Did you hear what Kate said?" Carol says to the class. "What did you say to me."

"I said, 'No. I want M&Ms.'" Kate reports.

"Like water for chocolate," Carol says evenly.

"I rather have chocolate," Toni says.

"Not on those hot days when you're thirsty," Cor-Taz tells him.

In an "ah ha" moment, Kate says, "You need water in order to live."

"I don't get it," Kensey says.

"Like water for chocolate," Carol says again.

"Oh, we need water," Alexandria says. "After chocolate don't you need to drink some water?"

"Like water for chocolate," Carol says again.

"Like Kool Aid without sugar?" Alex guesses.

"Like water for chocolate," Carol says a final time. "As you are reading this first part keep in mind the title. What does it mean to have water for chocolate? Think about it."

The students experience "like water for chocolate," they feel the disappointment of receiving water rather than chocolate, they know in a real way the difference that one consumption can mean as compared to another, and they experience on a deeper and more personal level why the author has chosen those symbols. This pedagogical opportunity is part of a strategy Carol calls "embedding":

I have found...over the years that the more things I can *embed* into kids heads, usually the more dramatic I can make their reading experience. They are focused thinkers, and those things sit in there and they sort of percolate and then they almost always come out in their papers.... It was real clear that doing that, just letting it sit there for kids this age, is important.... The other thing I am going to try to do is make them curious some more about what in the world is going to happen.... I am hoping to hook them. Students in this class are not readers. (8 November 1996)

Students feel and live the symbolic nature of the knowledge that has been made real for them – the feelings associated with what the author is trying to do are concretized. Carol has been able to create a learning moment that will excite and energize the reading of the novel, to "hook them." She yearns for them to read with the same "great energy" she does, to love to read the ways she does. On more than one occasion I have heard Carol tell her students: "Read it once more, I can't hear if you know what this means. Read it so we know what it means." This echoes Rosenblatt's contention that,

We must foster the child's delight in the music of words....The teacher who himself possesses a lively awareness of the world about him will seek to develop the student's sensuous endowment so that he may gain from life and literature the greatest measure of enjoyment of sound, color, and rhythm. (1938/1991, p. 50).

It is through such a “sensuous endowment,” the ability to pursue aesthetic dimensions of reading as a way of coming to know literature and the world, that enables a person to “read it so we know what it means,” conveying a text’s music, sound, color, and rhythm.

As Carol said in the preceding interview segment, “these students are not readers,” they are not like she was as a young girl, reading every book she could get her hands on, getting so lost in books she would neglect chores, and getting so caught up in the lives of characters she would “carry on” emotionally. So, understanding these young people are different than she was, Carol tries to nurture them as readers:

I have found at least over the years that the more things I can embed into kids heads usually the more dramatic....There has to be some investment that they put in, some fascination with wanting to see what this looks like from somebody else’s interpretation. But I really want them to read as if they were watching a movie. And almost always, the discussions that I design and the activities require that. So, if they are reading just words, they are not going to be able to answer these questions. I really want them to be able to visualize in their heads what is going on. (Carol, 8 November 1996)

Carol provides multiple opportunities for students to enter the world of literature and become readers of text and the world. However, of the thirteen students I interviewed, most admitted to completing only one of the novels, either Pigs in Heaven or Like Water for Chocolate. Only Katrina read everything, “I love reading the stories. I love like getting glimpses into other cultures.” Yet, these students still talked about experiencing the literature in meaningful ways. Jacqueline claims, “I can analyze books better than I used to....I am better off after taking this class because I know what to look for now and how to go about.” Kate, who said she read most of all of the books, seemed to have taken much from the literature and the course:

I can tell you honestly that this...is my favorite class. I think because I knew that every time I came here there would never be a dull moment. And also the

material that is being presented was really new for me and very valuable to me as well. I think because I had never really gotten such exposure to...different kinds of ethnic literature. I had never been exposed to that, and especially not with...as great a volume of it as in this class. That was really neat. I loved it. (December 1996)

Carol does everything she can to draw students into books, to help them understand and visualize what is happening in books. She invests little time in quizzing and testing students over the specific details in the texts they read, or in expecting they will embrace her interpretations of them. She has them write journals, read dramatically, act out scenes, write essays comparing multiple texts and films – whatever she can to push them to respond as readers. It is only when students can feel their own pulse in response to works they read that they can use those texts to mediate between the fictional and actual worlds.

### Reading and Writing Their Worlds: The Power of Naming

[I]n society, the power of naming is at least two-fold: naming defines the quality and value of that which is named—and it also denies reality and value to that which is never named, never uttered. That which has no name, that for which we have no words or concepts, is rendered mute and invisible: powerless to inform our consciousness of our experiences, our understanding, our vision; powerless to claim its own existence. (Du Bois, 1979, pp. 107-108)

We need to re-claim, name and re-name our experience and thus our knowledge of this social world that we live in and daily help to construct, because only by doing so will it become truly *ours*, ours to use and do with as we will. (Stanley & Wise, 1983, p. 205)

Naming is an important theme in Carol's teaching for critical literacy. The first instance of naming came when Carol required students to learn the first and last names of all students in the class, and how to spell those names. Carol's emphasis on naming was a powerful message for her students and a critical first step to building community. This

message must have certainly been most meaningful to those students whose names are so often mispronounced. I am reminded of the words of one Asian male in the documentary Skin Deep (Reid, 1995): "My name is Kahn and I hope you remember my name when I introduce myself." Through Carol's early efforts, students are connected to each other in a meaningful way through the knowledge of one another's names. There is also a key dimension of critical literacy related to names and naming. When a person has the power to name another person, it gives the namer power over the named. In the discussion concerning Blacks using the word "nigger" with one another that took place at the end of Cor-Taz's "Rap Culture" presentation, the class approached such a moment; yet, neither Cor-Taz nor his classmates were able to articulate this as an instance of an oppressed group reclaiming a racial epithet. The students see this power and its affects on others through the story Maria Lopez tells of her own experience when the nurse put on her birth certificate Mary instead of Maria, the name her parents wanted to give her: "From the time I was born I was denied the name my parents wanted me to have.... It was like there was so much arrogance just in toying with the names."

By seeking out and making use of the family resources of her students, Carol has brought the community into her classroom and made room for the students to learn about the power of naming, and the symbolic violence of being "named" by others, through Maria Lopez's story. Morrison writes in Beloved, "definitions [belong] to the definers—not the defined" (1987, p. 190). Those who have the power to name have the power to define. Heritage is lost by those who get to define another as "Mary" and as "Bob" versus Maria and Raoul. To have the opportunity to understand this symbolic violence, students learn a powerful lesson about those who name and those who get

named. Maria Lopez tells of the reclamation of her name, of how when she went to high school and the teacher called out Maria Lopez instead of Mary it took her little time to weigh her options: "Do I want to be Mary? Do I want to be Maria? That internal battle lasted like a millisecond. I said, 'Yeah, here.' It was like I regained who I was supposed to be all the time." Maria reclaimed who she was supposed to be all the time. She now defines herself and names herself.

It is no coincidence that Maria Lopez names herself as a Chicana feminist. Maria Lopez understands the power of naming herself, and her self-introduction is part of her message to the students. She reclaimed her identity and added to her identity. Reclaiming and finding identity is a major theme in this class. Daisy, a first generation American of Taiwanese parents, reveals in an interview how this class has been a starting point for her appreciating her own cultural identity, challenging a pull toward assimilation, "This class helped me more to be open-minded to Asian cultures and that is weird because I am Asian" (22 January 1997). Carol has created the opportunity for the students to see what it means to have the power to name and what it means to be empowered to name oneself. Maria's story also tells us of the power that teachers wield in the naming of others. These opportunities would not exist without Carol's careful and deliberate planning of a class that deals with issues of power, identity, naming, culture, racism, and so many other issues that work their way to the surface and foreground in Cultural Perspectives.

Maria Lopez is able to share the racism that she has experienced and the low expectations of those who had power over her. She tells the story of how a local radio station parodied a contest during Cinco de Mayo in which callers could win their own

Mexican and that “Mexicans were infectious disease carriers and that if you won your own Mexican you had to delouse and bathe him.” Maria acted. She protested the radio station. She continues to act as she tells this story, using it as an illustration of how those in positions of power often perpetuate racist constructions of people of color and those who are different. Rich speaks of the power of those who can decide that certain people are invisible:

When those who have the power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you, or hear you...*when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing. Yet you know you exist and others like you, that this is a game with mirrors.* It takes some strength of soul—and not just individual strength, but collective understanding to resist this void, this nonbeing, into which you are thrust, and to stand up, demanding to be seen and heard. And to make yourself visible, to claim that your experience is just as real and normative as any other. (1984, p. 199, emphasis added)

Although Carol does not articulate to the students “the social construction of reality,” at least while I observed, she helps lay a foundation for them to understand how those in power are able to construct the reality of others.

Dialogue makes it possible for students to name themselves and their worlds.

Carol creates a community where “Others” are respected and no one is invisible. She has created a community in which dialogue among students is central, in which students understand that all members of the community have valuable insights, perspectives, and knowledge to offer. No one person in the class, not even Carol, dominates. In the spirit of Freire, Carol creates a circle in which dialogue thrives:

[D]ialogue cannot exist without humility. The naming of the world, through which men [and women] constantly re-create that world, cannot be an act of arrogance....Men [and women] who lack humility (or have lost it) cannot come to the people, cannot be their partners in naming the world. (1968/1985, pp.78-79)

In this “we” community, arrogance gives way to collaboration. Ideas and issues are taken up and explored, collectively. Carol leaves issues open for students, for them to walk out the door still puzzling over. I have heard her say on several occasions, when bringing closure to a discussion, “This is an issue your generation is going to have to wrestle with.” In an interview, one student recalled an illustrative discussion I was not present for:

I remember one day Paisley came in and she wanted to like wear like one of those dots on her forehead because she thought they were really cool.... We had a discussion about whether that would be insulting or not. And it is interesting because instead of [Ms. Lessing] saying, “No, that would be completely wrong, don’t do that,” we were able to discuss why that would be a good decision or not. (Jacqueline, December 1996)

Collaboration is essential, yet Carol makes room for students to grow, learn, develop, and disagree as individuals. In so many ways her classroom mirrors what she saw within the agrarian society she grew up in: “I look now at all of our personalities and what has happened to our lives and realize how much room inside that agrarian society there really was to develop individually.” Carol has created a space that values and affirms community and cooperation, dialogue and interaction, yet also values and affirms individual development.

Maria Lopez helps students see there are perceptions of what an “American” looks like to many people outside of the United States. The perceived image is most often not someone who is dark skinned and of Mexican heritage. She implicitly provokes them to question how they define “American.” As many people of color experience, “American” often does not include them (see Wong, 1983; Nieto, 2000). It is also

important that Maria Lopez expressed the diversity within groups and the commonality among human beings. As she says,

To me, Chicana feminist is just who I am. It is everything I have done. Not every Chicana is going to be like me. Not every feminist is going to be like me. Which is also very cool. The way I see it, we are all in the same boat. It doesn't matter what our religious background is. It doesn't matter what our ethnic background is. It doesn't matter what our gender is. It doesn't matter what our economic status or level is. We are all in the same boat and we have to be really mindful of this if we are going to survive.

These coexisting realities – diversity and commonality – are complex and important ideas. These students are getting the opportunity to start exploring them early. Her line about being in the same boat echoes the ideas of difference and commonality that

Morales talks about in her piece, “We Are All in the Same Boat”:

I’m saying that the basis of our unity is that in the most important ways we are all in the same boat all subjected to the violent pernicious ideas we have learned to hate that we must all struggle against them and exchange ways and means hints and how tos that only some of us are victims of sexism only some of us are victims of racism of the directed arrows of oppression but all of us are sexist racist all of us. (1983, p. 93)

Morales is calling out to women – White and of color – to see that they are all unified as being oppressed and oppressors. Maria Lopez evokes the same metaphor to underscore that we are all unified by being “Americans” and human beings. She wants to help these students critically read the world, to make personal connections between the devastation caused by ethnic hatred in Bosnia and elsewhere in the world and their own worlds. She helps them “read” the Cinco de Mayo incident. She calls out to the students before her – White, Black, Asian American, Mexican American, and several international students – read the world and take action to make it a world we can all live in together. We are all in the same boat.

### Reading the World Inside and Outside the Classroom Walls

Carol takes her classroom out into the community and brings the community into her classroom. This venturing out into the world and having the world venture into her classroom is a key component of creating an environment that fosters critical literacy. In Carol's class it is a principal way of helping students "read the world." The students are stretched to see beyond themselves – to see the cultural and intellectual richness and diversity of the world in ways that foster appreciation and understanding. There are several illustrations of this. Carol has built into the course an assignment of at least two "cultural opportunities," in which students must explore other cultures through a variety of occasions open to them, occasions that they choose and are responsible for taking advantage of. An area "global festival" is one of these, as is attending a specially arranged ESL presentation within the school. Carol takes the entire class on field trips to a Japanese cultural center and to a museum exhibit of an African American artist. Carol also brings the world into her classroom. We saw this when Maria Lopez came to the class. Other visitors had similarly powerful impacts. One is when Dr. Skari, a national educational policy maker and administrator in a Scandinavian country, visits the class and they end up examining their own limited opportunities to learn about other cultures through the formal course offerings and curriculum in their school. Several family members visit, such as Daisy's father demonstrating Tai Chi and Sandusky's sister sharing her experiences as a young Egyptian woman straddling two cultures. Carol's classroom becomes a space in which the world ventures within its walls.

Maria Lopez's visit to the class served as a powerful example of bringing the world into the classroom. Her visit exemplifies the need for teachers teaching for social

justice to bring their students into contact with social activists. Maria Lopez is most certainly a social activist. With passion and intensity, she told the class of injustice and terror within and beyond U.S. borders. Through her personal stories and narration of the video images from her visit to Bosnia, Maria Lopez takes the students on a journey – the classroom becomes one without walls.

Carol finds ways to help her students journey beyond their immediate experiences. She herself uses the journey metaphor when talking about “cultural jumping” with the students, a concept she adapted from something Maria Lopez said: “From where I sit it looks to me such an incredible voyage.” This class was on an “incredible voyage,” an adventure for many of the students. Drawing on her own wealth of knowledge and experience with other cultures, Carol facilitates a voyage of self-discovery and thoughtful encounters with others inside and outside the classroom. The theme of “self-discovery” and learning to be thoughtful and respectful of other’s lives, cultures, and perspectives is consistent throughout Carol’s classroom, and will surface throughout the classrooms of Alice Terry and William Harrison. In fact, Alice will emphasize to her students a line from Zora Neale Hurston’s novel Their Eyes Were Watching God: “that oldest human longing–self revelation.” Self-discovery grows out of critical reflection and is essential to developing critical literacy. Carol in many ways creates an incredible voyage of self-discovery and discovery of others.

### An Unbounded Multicultural Curriculum

Carol’s choices concerning curriculum go beyond what any textbook or curriculum guide could provide students. The quality of a dynamic curriculum designed

to connect with a particular group of students is characteristic of Carol's class, a quality we will also see in Alice Terry and William Harrison's classrooms. Carol chooses carefully the books and activities that her students will engage in. Carol shapes curriculum to mesh with the needs of her students. She determines what her students' needs are and creates opportunities for them to grow in important ways as readers, writers, thinkers, and people. She does not accept canonical constraints, instead she selects and constructs appropriate vehicles to meet the needs of her students. Carol does not resemble the "technician" that Greene (1978) reminds us so many teachers "wearily" become. Carol is a teacher who provides an environment where students can do critical reflection about issues of life, the politics of systems, and their own knowledge of the world. Carol crafts her curriculum in ways that merge with and emerge from a learning community she has carefully cultivated, a learning community where students experience what it means to begin to know one another as thinkers and individuals in meaningful ways. Carol, by posing a key question to initiate the debriefing of Maria Lopez's visit the day before, helps students explore the connections they have to their own families, and the ways in which their classmates are or are not shaped by parental influence. This debriefing becomes a powerful forum for her students to make sense of their own lives, and to examine familial relationships. Reading their worlds – the worlds of family and friends – is an important and meaningful life lesson. Teaching "life lessons" is a theme that cuts across all three teachers in this study. Although Carol teaches life lessons differently from Alice Terry and William Harrison, they all allow their students to explore the relationships that are central to them.

Carol has provided powerful women role models. This is an important piece of critical literacy. In a world that often denies the work that women do, Carol has made it a point to make the work and lives of women like Dr. Skari and Maria Lopez central. The students respond to this. As Paisley says, "When Sky's Mom came that was really a huge inspiration and I don't know if it was just because us being women and that is why it was so like, finally like it was so cool, just to listen to her. Like, I was speechless" (Paisley, 9 January 1997).

There is room for students to critique the educational system. When Dr. Skari comes to class she asks the students many questions about the school's curriculum. Several students in Carol's Cultural Perspectives had taken a World Cultures history class the year before. Several of the students complained that all they learned was the history of those in power, where the exploits and accomplishments of great White men and some exceptional people of color were presented:

"All I remember learning," says Katrina, "was about wars everybody knows about. But I'm not really sure where to go."

"You study wars," Sky echoes.

"And royalty," Kate adds. "All of the things that went on with royalty. And then we spent like a week with African cultures. We didn't even do anything on Hispanic cultures at all. It was like, 'I'll give you this worksheet, but you don't have to do it. But it might be fun.' And the little bit we did really was fun. I wanted to do more. And African culture was this open book test because there wasn't any teaching on it."

Later in the conversation Cor-Taz takes the lead in critiquing the World Cultures class and the form of curricular and pedagogical reform necessary:

"You must learn about yourself first," Cor-Taz responds, "'cause if you don't the schools are not going to teach you."

"Should this high school offer an African history class? Inside the curriculum?" Carol asks.

"You should not have to have an African American class," Cor-Taz answers. "You should not have to go to Room 207 to get African American history or Room 208 to get Hispanic."

The conversation is a rich illustration of critical literacy. The students are reading their school world. The students are aware of history being about those in power. These students are astute, and articulate their readings of this world in ways many adults, even many teachers, could not. Katrina, Sky, and Kate described what McIntosh (1983; 1990) characterizes in her *phase theory* for personal and curricular revision as phase one (mostly White and male and about those who reached the "pinnacles") and phase two curriculum (similar to phase one but it includes some women and minorities who are considered "exceptional" by White male standards). Above Cor-Taz has articulated a stance consistent with phase four of McIntosh's theory:

The lives and culture of all women, and "lower caste" men everywhere, as history. In Phase 4 women and people of color do not think of themselves, and refuse to see themselves, only as problems, victims, or anomalies.... a variety of cultures [are treated] on their own terms, trying to see them through the testimony or actions of their people. Instead of just studying the problems the Native peoples had as a result of European settlement/invasion, Phase 4 curriculum explores the richness of American Indian cultures in their own right. Phase 4 recognizes Anglo-European ideas, actions, and standards as ethno-specific." This Phase looks at the "decent survival of all" versus "survival of the fittest."<sup>23</sup>

Cor-Taz continued in the discussion to declare, "You got to teach everything... Like teaching that goes inside. You don't have to go from this to this to this. Just whatever you present, present the whole trip." Here we see a student also using the journey metaphor. Here we see theory into practice. Cor-Taz's vision describes a multicultural curriculum consistent with what Nieto describes, "Multicultural education is by definition

---

<sup>23</sup>This distillation of Phase 4 of McIntosh's Phase Theory (1983; 1990) was created by Kathleen Roth and Corinna Hasbach (personal communication, March 1994).

expansive. Because it is *about* all people, it is also *for* all people, regardless of their ethnicity, language, religion, gender, race, or class” (1996, p. 313).

### Teaching for Change, Teaching for Social Action

In her life story we know that Carol is sensitive to the suffering of others. She explains that she became vegetarian because of her experiences with butchering. Her sensitivity to living beings is evident in her pedagogy. She brings in people who can help her teach students to be sensitive to others, whether it is in this country or beyond. Her values come through in what she does in her classroom. Carol values education as an opportunity to “liberate the human spirit” (Freire, 1968/1985). Carol makes her ideas and beliefs clear, whether it is her desire for students to embrace cultural knowledge or to empower them to make political moves to oppose something like the State Proficiency Test. She wants to liberate her students’ minds and spirits to empower them in multiple ways.

Carol enacts what Bigelow, et al. (1994a) claim is necessary for classrooms to be places where equity and justice are taught and learned – social action. In one class meeting, the day before scores on the State Proficiency Test for all schools in the area were going to be published in the local paper, Carol discussed the realities and politics of testing with her students. Since all the students were seniors, the scores to be published were their scores from the previous spring when they took the test as juniors. Carol had already seen the scores of students in the school. She knew that several of the students in the class, including one who was the school’s best writer, having won contests, been published, and who worked as an editor on the school paper, had earned a “not yet

proficient” evaluation on the writing segment of the test, and would therefore need to retake the test. At one point in the discussion Carol gave them a strategy for resisting the testing process. She told them, “If you don’t want to play the game, you will need to send a note to the principal from you and your parents clearly stating that you do not endorse this test and will not be retaking it.” In characterizing the test as part of a “game,” she explained that the consequences of challenging the test would not be severe for them. She told them that Station High School has an excellent reputation throughout the state. Colleges and universities know that students who graduate from the school are well prepared. It is important to note that there is a certain privilege that exists within this school – the school is known as having a good reputation and, therefore, the consequences would not necessarily be as dire as for students in other schools. Regardless of the buffer they may experience because of their context, it is important that Carol explained to them that what authorities decree may not always make sense to follow and that they do have power and can oppose certain decisions. It is also important to note that Carol has an irreverent streak. A streak that allows her to model that “authority” and “the system” may not be all it pretends to be. Whether it is the proficiency exam or the nursery rhyme, we see Carol’s irreverence in the classroom.

### Constraints and Opportunities

Carol knows that for many of her students, living in two or more worlds may cause identity issues for them, however she tries to help them appreciate and revel in their lives that provide them these opportunities. We see here again how the personal is pedagogical. She wants, intensely, to share with her students values and commitments.

The joy and excitement of being able to enter multiple cultures is personal and is central in her pedagogy. The students' own lives are also central in her pedagogy. Students relate to a curriculum that at its core is about them and for them.

*For* and *about* is what we see Carol enact through her curriculum and pedagogy – for and about her students. Students' lives, needs, and issues are the fabric of her thinking and practice. How different this is from a functionally literate curriculum, one that is all about what adults feel students need, the students' lives being tangential to what goes on in the classroom.

There has been a call to “uncover” curriculum versus “cover” the curriculum (Hawkins, 1974, as cited in Calkins, 1986, p. 275; Strickland & Strickland, 1993). Uncovering curriculum includes the ways in which content is unveiled and revealed for the biases, invisibilities, and hidden messages that are usually unexamined. This is clearly a practice that teachers of critical literacy engage in. What is important about Carol is that she also allows her students to do the uncovering and unveiling of the content and the curriculum of their educations. Two examples of this came when the students critiqued the World Cultures history curriculum. Another example of this is when Carol helped students examine the politics of the State Proficiency Test.

It is important to note that Carol, as well as other teachers of critical literacy, experience the same time constraints all teachers do. Their reality of not having enough time to “uncover the material” is real, yet those who “cover the material,” those who engage in teaching for functional literacy, experience the same time dilemmas. The question needs to be asked: How do the students feel about knowledge, about content in these different kinds of classrooms? In Carol's classroom we see students who are

passionately engaged with authentic questions and relevant issues. Yes, they run out of time, but they seem to wish for more time rather than less because of boredom and routine. Carol so clearly does not engage in what Evans writes about the teaching of history.

For the most part...teachers are part of the seamless web of schooling helping to create a denatured social life, void of controversy, void of causes, void of deep caring; socializing, but not countersocializing.... For most...students [the teaching of any subject] may function as a softened, diffused means of oppression. The boredom and routinization in most...classrooms produce a sense of well being, a drowsy feeling that life is acceptable as it is, and that [the subject]...has little to do with our lives and the decisions we face...and that is very sad. (1990, p. 127)

In the session which the class examines the State Proficiency Test, Paisley asks, "If this is a political thing then it's not about how smart we are?" We hear this student ask a question about how the policies and politics of schooling might be defining who she is – in this pedagogical space, the personal and political merge and are examined. We hear this student being able to ask a question about the politics and how they relate to the politics of their school and their education. Paisley is starting to see the system at work and how it impacts her and other individuals within it. Her question is very important, for it signifies the coming to awareness of an individual within a system and the impact of a system on an individual. "No Paisley, it's not about how smart you are," Carol affirms. She lets Paisley know that what goes on within political structures is not just about what resides in the individual – she affirms Paisley's tentative question and helps her begin to see the complexity. Paisley is beginning to see the political dimensions of an interior colonization (Millett, 1970). Paisley is becoming cognizant that her feelings of not being smart may be more than what they seem.

Mark Conley has questioned: If we really had a critical literacy that embraced constructivism, would the standards that we use to assess students' knowledge reside within them? (personal communication, July 1997). Guba and Lincoln (1989) would encourage us to seek evaluations that teach, that incorporate standards within the evaluation process. That would be a constructivist movement. Right now teachers hope that students who are taught in a way that makes them more critical will still survive on tests that are designed for functional literacy. Yet, in an ideal world more than students' knowledge would be evaluated, and we would do away with existing standardized tests, possibly even standardized tests altogether.<sup>24</sup>

Many of the personal qualities we learn about Carol Lessing through her life story come through in her teaching. She is passionate and energetic. She values collegiality and collaboration. She ventures beyond the borders of her community and her classroom to find provocative experiences for herself and students. By reaching beyond the classroom, we see Carol promoting the development of a global consciousness. She is a multicultural person (see Nieto, 1996), and we see in her curriculum and pedagogy the possibility of a multicultural education. As Nieto says, to be a multicultural teacher one must first become a multicultural person. Carol asks the often unasked questions concerning issues of equity, and challenges her students to do the same. Throughout her life, Carol has been on a journey of self-discovery, and she assists students in doing the same, in figuring out who they are and what they stand for. Carol has worked for social change and justice since she was a college student, and this theme surfaces repeatedly in

---

<sup>24</sup>See Kohn (1993) and Brooks & Brooks (1993) for discussions of assessments and evaluations that are more authentic.

her curriculum. Carol has never been one to passively accept answers or blindly receive authorities' supposed wisdom. She actively constructs meaning, and she has organized her classroom to facilitate the same meaning-making processes for her students. She is a facilitator inviting students to explore different aspects of their own lives, each other, literature, and the world. She is an artist who creates educational opportunities that students are invited to join and learn from. She is a thoughtful teacher whose classroom is student-centered. She is "a guide on the side" versus a "sage on the stage" (Burns, 1995; Kohn, 1993). She teaches by the "art of not teaching."

CHAPTER 4  
CASE STUDY OF ALICE TERRY  
THE ART OF PLANTING THE SEEDS OF LIFE LESSONS:  
“HOPEFULLY SOME WILL TAKE”

An Introduction

The title for this chapter comes from Alice Terry’s own words describing her teaching, “Planting seeds. I’m planting seeds. Hopefully some will take.” What is most striking in Alice’s teaching is her connection with and care for her students. There is a sense of guardianship in her classroom, and a sense of urgency on her part that she must prepare them to take care of themselves once they leave her. Alice knows her students, the community, and the realities they will face within and beyond Assembly. Foster writes of how White female teachers have been upheld as the heroes “negotiating the difficult terrain of urban classrooms” in books like Small Victories and My Posse Don’t Do Homework, which was subsequently made into the film *Dangerous Minds* (1997, p. 1). She is critical of the fact that “the public rarely reads about black teachers like Mamie Williams” who is described in the book Simple Justice:

“A forceful taskmaster and disciplinarian, she was not ogre. Her classroom was never a place for rote learning, and she readily acknowledged that ‘children with their sincerity and candor can teach adults something new every day.’ She was a great one for mottos. One of her favorites was: ‘Life is infinitely rich in fine and adequate compensations. Never a door is shut but several windows are opened.’”<sup>25</sup> (1997, p. 1)

Foster upholds Mamie Williams as one of the heroes of teaching, especially urban Black children. Like Mamie Williams, Alice is strict and demanding, she creates a constructive and active learning environment, she recognizes the contributions young people have to

---

<sup>25</sup>See Kluger, Simple Justice, p. 378.

make, and she is also a “great one for mottos” (as we will see in the classroom stories). Most important, Alice is also a window-opener, helping her students read the world and reach for broader horizons.

The seeds Alice sews are “life lessons,” the name I have given to those frequent occasions in her teaching in which she pushes her students to think about a range of issues vital to their present and future success and survival. These seeds, like Lukacs’ notion of critical intervention – “To explain to the masses their own action is to clarify and illuminate that action” (as cited in Freire, 1968/1985, p. 38) – help to promote critical reflection and transformation. Issues range from personal responsibility to table etiquette. These “life lessons” often have a “sermon-like” quality to them, a quality that will be explored in analysis of the classroom story and supporting illustrations from across the semester.

The chapter *Planting the Seeds of Life Lessons: “Hopefully some will take”* is composed of five sections. In *An Introduction* I provide basic information about Alice Terry, Assembly High School, the students, and her African American Literature class. In *A Life Story* I present a preprofessional life story of Alice, drawing upon her own words to tell that story. The life story is preceded by a descriptive lead (text in italics) and followed by an analysis that highlights several aspects of Alice’s life that are integrally connected to her work as a critical educator. In *A Context* I provide a portrait of the community in which Assembly High School is located. In *A Classroom Story* I present a qualitative rendering of one day in Alice Terry’s class. This portrayal of Alice’s teaching is shaped through an integration of description, analysis, and carefully selected voices which include her own, her students, and published sources that illuminate the

action at hand. The classroom story provides a portrait of classroom life that reveals not only Alice Terry's work, but the subtleties and complexities of teaching for critical literacy in real classrooms. We will see a teacher who strives to teach her predominantly African American students life lessons that will help them negotiate the worlds in their own community and beyond. Footnotes and text boxes are provided to illuminate the narrative, but remain outside the event's immediacy. Parenthetical references direct the reader to consult text boxes at relevant points. Finally, in *An Analysis* I discuss how Alice Terry's practice illuminates teaching for critical literacy, first by examining the classroom story and then by exploring several powerful illustrations of her practice beyond the first day.

### The Teacher

Alice Terry is a striking woman, statuesque in appearance and most often dressed as the epitome of a professional woman. She is African American and middle class, though her childhood years were more modest. She is the daughter of a minister and grew up in the light of her father's church. Alice's faith in God and involvement with the National Baptist Church permeates her personal and professional life. She is generous with her time and talents in school and out of school. She involves herself with the community in a number of ways through her church. For example, Alice teaches Sunday school, leads a women's group, and attends many local, regional, and national church functions.

At the time of this study, Alice was in her twenty-seventh year of teaching, all of them at Assembly High School, the same school she graduated from in 1965. Alice is

known and respected throughout the school and community, having taught many of her current students' parents. The fall semester this study took place, Alice taught two sections of Appreciation of Literature and two sections of a semester elective in African American Literature, although throughout her career she has taught a wide array of required and elective courses. Alice has chaired the English department since 1990. Since 1981 she has also taught a composition course and/or literature course each semester at the local community college.

### The School

Assembly High School is a three story, World War II era, brick structure. The school has a large clock on the front of the building projecting a factory-like feel to it. The physical plant, grounds, and playing fields are well maintained. The campus is closed, so students are not allowed to come and go freely. There is a large cafeteria at the top level of the school in which two fast food franchises operate "Express" outlets. For a short time in the Nineties the school used a metal detector at the entrance to screen for weapons and assist in reducing incidents of violence. At the time of this study, Assembly High School no longer held school-wide pep rallies in an effort to reduce opportunities for violent outbreaks. Throughout the day the halls are monitored by adult African American males from the community, several of whom are retired factory workers.

The year of this study, Assembly High School's student population was less than 1,300 students (100 students fewer than three years before), and of those approximately 95% were African American. School district data shows that 45% of the students received free or reduced lunches, a statistic that represented a five percent decrease over

the previous three year period. The administration, faculty, and staff are diverse and a majority are African American. Scores on State and National standardized tests are significantly lower than “the average.” For example, only ten percent of the students who took the State Proficiency Test received “proficient” scores in reading, writing, math, and science.

### The Students

There were thirty-five students in the class I studied, all seniors. If I were to have described this large class after a handful of observations and no “inside information” from Alice or the students, I could do little more than say that this was a lively group of seniors who appeared eager to learn. Their style of dress seemed generic – jeans and t-shirts, athletic jerseys of famous professional athletes and satin professional sport team jackets, name brand athletic shoes, and always a number of boys and girls who dressed up, though not the same students every day. For the most part, I could not tell rich from poor, or who was in any particular social group. With the exception of a couple of students, how they dressed did not give clear indication of social class or social group affiliation. However, I acknowledge how untrustworthy such indicators are. I make a point of this because I believe many White people who have spent little time, if any, in schools with large populations of students of color hold stereotypical images of how such students dress and act – dark-skinned youths wearing baggy pants falling off their hips, bandanas indicating gang affiliation, tattooed, beepers, speaking in near unintelligible street slang, most of the girls pregnant or already mothers. My experience at Assembly High School, and many other similar schools, belies such stereotypes. Many of the

students worked jobs after school. One girl in the class was visibly pregnant, and another was pregnant but did not start showing until late in the semester. As I got to know the students I learned that at least two were involved with gangs, but such involvements were not apparent to me in how these young people conducted themselves in class. Several of the students proved to be very committed to academic success, and most were willing to engage in the content.

### The Course

African American Literature is a course created by Alice and her colleagues. The course is one part of a two semester elective (the other part is a World Literature course). Students who choose to take this course must also sign up for World Literature the preceding or following semester. The goals of these two courses are to expose students to a diverse body of literature in multiple genres, help students make personal connections to their own and other cultures, and help them develop patterns of thought and communication that will serve them well beyond the walls of the high school classroom, whether those paths lead to further formal education or work.

The curriculum of African American Literature is grounded in the history and literature of African American culture. Students explore multiple genres and “texts.” In literature they read auto/biography, poetry, folk tales, drama, short stories, and novels. Students read a substantial number of selections from their anthology, African American Literature (1992) and several additional works from separate class texts and photocopy sets. Alice encourages her students to read beyond the required works for the class. Film, video, art, and journalism are also woven throughout the course to help students

become familiar with the social context in which the literature grows out of. The students' own lives and the lives of people invited to the class are "oral texts" that are often central to the course. Beyond the reading students do in and out of class, considerable emphasis is placed on processing these texts through discussion and writing.

## A Life Story: "Teaching Is an Extension of Life for Me"

*It is a hot day in the fourth week of August when I walk into Alice Terry's classroom to conduct a life story interview. I last saw her in early May when I visited her to discuss participation in this project.*

*Alice and Wanda Davis, another teacher in the school, are sitting at student desks pushed together side-by-side. There is an open Bible in the middle of the joined desks. Alice and Wanda are discussing a particular passage that Alice is considering using in a talk that she plans to give to her church group.*

*Alice and Wanda look up from their conversation and welcome me into the room. Alice is dressed in vibrant warm colors, mostly peach, and is all smiles and warmth herself.*

*She tells me that she is just getting organized for the year, just starting to set up*

*her classroom. The walls and bulletin boards are still bare.*

---

"All of us have to read and write no matter what we do in life," she explains. "The better we do them, the more successful we are. That's what I try to emphasize with all my students. I'll do anything I can to inspire students, work with them one-on-one, meet with parents, whatever it takes. I try to provide interesting, enjoyable lessons. When we were in school, we did whatever the teacher said. It's different today. We need to make what we are teaching relate to the students and their lives."

"My challenge is to make them realize that the world is out there and it's theirs to conquer, and if they are armed with the right tools nothing is unattainable."

(Alice Terry, from supplementary education section of the weekly Assembly News May 1996)

---

*Wanda gets up to go and tells Alice that she will see her at lunch. I take the seat Wanda just vacated. Alice tells me she has been spending a lot of time this summer with her son who has just completed his first year of university. Alice gives me a copy of an article recently done about her in the local newspaper (see excerpt in text box). I*

*quickly scan the piece and put it aside for later, and then Alice begins to tell me about her life before she became a teacher.*

*She begins by telling me about the responsibility her father took in raising her and her sister. Her father and mother divorced when she was four and her sister six; by then he was a man in his mid-forties. Their home was outside Columbus, Ohio. He was a religious man without a congregation and needing to care for his girls, he turned to roofing and construction work, going where jobs could be found – Baltimore, Philadelphia, anywhere. By the time Alice was entering first grade they were able to return to Ohio where her father became a pastor. Knowing his girls needed a mother he married a woman he had only seen once before. Caring for his girls was his highest priority. With pride and appreciation she states that “he was a better ‘mother’ as a father than a whole lot of mothers.” The role her father has played in her life is clear. A well-educated man at a time when few Black men had the opportunity to be educated, she remembers him always talking about how, “I was the first in my family to go to college.” He'd say, “I sure want my kids to go to college.” Alice beams when she recalls his words. Alice continues....*

### **"I'm Going to Be a Teacher"**

I was a "Daddy's girl," and it was always in my ear. I just wanted to please my Daddy, so at five years old I said I wanted to be a teacher. And you think about the time, this was maybe in 1952, '53, you know, there weren't a whole lot of other things that women did, especially Black women. Women in the professional arena period. You were either a teacher, or a nurse and what else, a housewife. That was about it. A

housewife. I am glad I did. It was a good choice. So, at that time, I said, "I'm going to be a teacher. I'm going to be just like my Daddy – I'm going to college. I'm going to be a teacher. I'm going to be an elementary teacher."

We lived in Toledo until I finished the fourth grade and we moved to Metropolitan. We stayed in Metropolitan for three months and then we moved to Assembly. In this day and age we probably would have gone to a psychiatrist, you know, the family breaks up and you move. But at that times kids weren't audible and didn't put in their wants. You just did what your family did. I remember we moved when we lived in Metropolitan. I went into the fifth grade there in October of 1958. We moved there and I just thought, I did say, "We can't move until January, until the end of the semester." But my father and mother said, "We aren't doing this predicating on what you want, but we are moving." I hated to move. I just did not like being the new girl. But, you know, I could learn easy and I did well. I did well, wasn't a straight "A" student, but I did well. I didn't have trouble with my studies. I think it affected my sister more. Even though she was older, she was not as bright nor interested in education to a great degree, so we were always being compared. You know, I was shining in that light.

When we moved to Assembly I was in the sixth grade and I remember the first day the teacher drew a big circle and numbered from one to twelve, like a clock, and then he, Mr. Onasis, put a number in the middle of that circle and you had to do "time papers." We took the pointer and did time papers. And I did them. Everybody in the class was looking at you and he said, "You did more than any of these students have done all year." You know, that really made me feel good and it didn't make it as hard to blend with the students. But, of course, after school you had to get into fighting. You know, to prove

yourself. You know, being a minister's daughter you were always in the spotlight. You don't want to appear to be "goody two shoes." I guess, you know, you don't know why your parents got divorced, but just looking back on it, one of the reasons my parents got divorced, my mother didn't like my father being a minister. The life style was too stringent for her. I guess it was too stringent for my sister too. She decided to go live with my mother.

### Sometimes It Was Lonely Growing Up: "I Compensated. I Read a Lot"

It was lonely. My mother wasn't used to being the housewife and she decided to flex her muscles and go to beauty school. She wanted to be a beautician. And then a lot of things fell on me to do. And my father, you know, he was raised in the direction that women waited on men. You know, waited on men. It was kind of lonely. I went through puberty and it was difficult. I wanted to hang out and go to parties and do things, but my father was real strict. So I just stopped talking to everybody. I would just sit there and be bored, totally, you know, out of it. I guess it was something that I had to go through, a period, you know. Finally my father sat me down and had a talk with me, saying, "You might as well try and be happy." I was learning a lesson as I was growing up. I remember roller skating was one thing that I could do. My parents would say, "You have to do your work." You know parents would look for excuses, they wouldn't say it right out, "I don't want you to do anything." If I don't want my son to do something, and he was at home, I would explain to him why. I would tell him about the fear I felt, or that I didn't think such a place was a good environment for him to be in. But then parents just said "No." And they would find excuses to say "No." Instead of sitting you down and

saying, "I don't like this or that." They didn't feel they owed you an explanation. I remember one time when we lived in a fairly big house for me to clean up and I cleaned that house from top to bottom because I wanted to go skating that night. I had cleaned and everything was up to par and I wanted to go skating. I know before the excuse had been, "You didn't do your work" or "You should have done this." And I did it and I still couldn't go. That was a lesson. I said, "From now on if they are going to let me go they are going to let me go. I am not working myself to death to try to earn this privilege. I am just going to let my behavior be the same." That was something that I learned from then on. Just do what you are supposed to do. You don't earn, as far as parents are concerned, because they were just "wishy washy." Another thing that stayed with me as a child, and when I was an adult I tried to get my father to admit, "You didn't have to be that strict." He loved me good, but was strict. He never would admit, "No, I didn't have to be strict," or "If I hadn't been you might not have turned out as well as you did." He would only say, "You turned out all right." And we laughed about that.

In seventh grade I went to an inner city school. It was a new junior high, but a phobia in the Black community was that if it belongs to Black people we think that whatever White people have is better. The school was by the projects, but it was a new school and there were excellent teachers. It was my neighborhood school so I went there. I went there for the seventh grade, but for the eighth grade we moved closer to the White side of town. Even though I was closer to the inner city junior high and could still have gone there, my parents didn't want me to go there. So in eighth grade I went to a highly integrated junior high school. I did pretty good in my experience in eighth and nine

grade. I wasn't an honor student, but I was a good student. Looking back on it, I didn't push myself because, like I said, learning came easy to me.

Growing up in the church there were always opportunities to talk at programs, so I became a public speaker at a young age. I won oratorical contests. I won a \$1,000 scholarship when I was a senior. You know, it paid for my first two years of college. This is where it all started. I just had opportunities to grow as an individual. I had a lot of nurturing from my family and from my church family. I always liked people. I always loved to be around people, and not having any sisters or brothers around was kind of lonely. I compensated. I read a lot. That love of books came from my father. Even as a young child I remember his not only taking us to the library and helping us to pick out books, but he always read also. He was a teacher. He would teach other ministers and he would have classes in our home. So I was always around that type of environment and it just came naturally.

#### God, Spirituality, and Church: "...An Integral Part of My Life"

My father was a pastor in the National Baptist Church until he had a stroke in 1992 and retired in 1993. All of my life he's been a pastor. Having a congregation was the only job that he had. The church was just a big part of my life. I remember my father coming home one day, living right next door, saying, "They are having a function at the church, why aren't you all there." And we said, "Nobody told us." And he was fussing at us because we should have known and we should have been over in church. You know, church suppers, trips, church picnics, just anything that went on. I was at church. That's just the power of it. We are very spiritual. I believe in God. I am a very prayerful

person. I surround myself with it. It is still an integral part of my life. At church I am a member of an auxiliary. I am a president of a ladies convention. I spend a lot of time in church. Church is a big part of my life. There are people there that I highly respect, and if I need some advice or counseling I would turn to my church. I try to be that same type in other people's lives. I try to exemplify what I say. I feel like a part of it. It has just been a big part of my heritage. I went to the family reunion in Memphis this year and we had the family picnic on the church ground. We went back out in the country Sunday to the family church. You know, it is just a big part of our lives. My life revolves around it. I often say, "I can't do this because I have to go to church."

#### Literature in Her Personal and Professional Life

I read a lot growing up, and still do. I remember reading Louisa May Alcott's Little Women. There was a book in the family library, and I don't know who the author was, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn. If I liked a book I read it more than once. I remember loving Reader's Digest. I remember trying to read Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin at a young age and I just couldn't read it because it was just too difficult. Too difficult for me. Just vivid memories of things coming.

I don't remember anything outstanding happening to me in school that really stands out until I got to the eleventh grade. I went here to Assembly High. I was kind of, at that time they had tracking, and I was put in an English class with Mr. Roberts and we read Silas Marner. That was the most awful thing I'd ever read. I guess my intelligence and my interests were as broad as that of what I was put in, what they would call a "regular English class." I believe tracking has a lot to do with the way that teachers

encourage their students, peak the interest of their students. I think that had a lot to do with it. But planning the eleventh grade I guess I got on college track and there was a little silver-haired man named Jason Bruce Miller. That little man would get up there and recite "The Raven." Up until that time I wanted to be an elementary teacher. You know, it was the eleventh grade that the light came on for me. I may not have that same interest in the same subjects but I tried to. I came alive through learning literature and poetry. This still happens to me when I read something by Nikki Giovanni or Alice Walker, and Terry McMillan who is my favorite author now, and Gloria Naylor's The Women of Brewster Place. I try to give not only literature that students can get into, but that they can see as being authentic. That these things happen to people. Scenarios that happen to somebody else may not happen to me, but I know they happened to somebody. I don't do it on purpose but it just comes out natural, you know, because teaching is an extension of life for me. I try just giving some real life applications, and we'll talk about men/women relationships. We might get into a whole conversation about that, and you know I try to be neutral. You know the things that happen like, you know, "Girls, be careful of this." And I say, "Well, fellows, you don't really give your all." I think my students appreciate that.

#### "Assembly Is Still a Really Segregated Place"

You know, when I grew up, living in Assembly, and Assembly is still a really segregated place, I could almost count on one hand by the time I graduated from high school the number of minority teachers that were here even in Assembly High. I can remember instances, because I was on college track, maybe there would be only one or

two Black students. I grew up in the time that you had a place as long as you stayed in it. You were accepted. The year that I graduated was the first year that we had an African American who was the Homecoming runner-up. I remember one of the other candidates of the court asking me things about her because the girl was married. She was trying to dig dirt. The next year there was an actual riot because an African American was Homecoming Queen. But you knew your place. I knew my role and I stayed in it. I didn't feel victimized. I didn't feel inferior because I was comfortable with myself. When I went back to my twentieth high school reunion, that would have been 1985, it was still the same stereotypes. Black people were over here. All of the "hoity toitys" were over here. I mean, it was so segregated. It wasn't difficult going to school because you grew up in that kind of environment. You know what I am saying? There were some things that you were just expected to sit through, you were considered okay except you kept your mouth shut. They might have made jokes that were inappropriate. I can remember being up in debate class, there was one guy who was a Jew and myself. There might be, "Okay Alice, go to the back of the bus." Making distasteful jokes. I wasn't offended because I didn't have sense enough to be offended. You know, and later on you might think about it. It makes a difference. You know, we talk about one America, etc. Well it makes a difference. Kids know what you care about. Kids know you see their places and you see their parents and you're part of this and that. I think it makes them feel good.

Teaching From Her Life: "I Don't Get on a Soapbox, but I Try to Get My Students to Think"

When Martin Luther King was killed they tore everything up. You know, it is too bad. I wouldn't participate, but I can understand it. I show to my students the school version of Eyes on the Prize, the years 1955-1965, and when that comes on I remember many of those events and incidents from newspapers and the news, etc. I remember quite vividly, I went to junior college here in Assembly before attending an all Black university. And I remember at the university taking an English class, and there was a poem about Emmett Till, and about the whistling. I don't remember the name of the poem. I think it was an African American literature class. And I didn't know who Emmett Till was. I didn't have it straight. I knew that he was beaten, but I didn't know much more. It didn't stand out in memory. I remember sitting right down stairs in this very building, I was in a Spanish class, when John F. Kennedy was killed. It was 1963. It was in November. I was in a Spanish class and I remember the principal, Mr. Cribbs, coming on the PA saying that John F. Kennedy has been shot. And I remember going, "John F. Kennedy is dead?" They were making the announcement. And you know, just the awful experience, the thing that on TV all the people crying. Everybody talking about how great John F. Kennedy was. I was in college when Martin Luther King got killed. And even though I went to a Black university, I wasn't a militant. I remember Afros first coming out. I said, "Oooh." How it was met with a lot of criticism in the Black community. Who do they think they are, those Black power people, you know. Just the labels that were given. I remember we were listening to the radio, and they came on and said, "This bulletin just in from Memphis. Martin Luther King was shot." There was one

Black radio station and everybody in every room in the dorm had their radio on and you could hear the whole dorm going, "Oooh. Martin Luther King was dead." And we lived in the building where the auditorium was, and we went down to the auditorium and had a prayer and so forth. We had a talk about what kind of impact this was having. Then I remember going on, we had a riot at school that closed the doors. I couldn't understand. Why did we have a riot at a Black school? All these things were just bombarding me. I was at school when Martin Luther King died, but I went on co-op in the spring to Washington, DC and seeing all the areas that were burned and torn down. Things changed. That summer I was in Assembly working for the telephone company and whenever they would have race riots or marches, peaceful demonstrations, they would lift the bridges. The bridges in Assembly, so you can go from the east side to the west side. To preserve the White side they would raise the bridges so you couldn't get across the bridge. So if you burned anything up you were burning your own community. It had an impact on me, when I see the Little Rock Nine and remembering, seeing some of that same footage on TV, the march from Selma to Montgomery and how lightly kids take it. How lightly kids take education. How we will disrespect each other. What people had to go through. I don't get on a soapbox, but I try to get my students to think about this. It just has a strong impact on me. If you don't value education. Things you take as the norm. How you were ostracized as a young girl. When I was coming up if you had a baby. And now it is par for the course. And how my mother would talk to me, "Huh, any girl has a baby she's a woman now because she does things a woman do." Promiscuity was around, but if you got pregnant you got married. And your whole life, your whole life was changed. It was just something that you didn't do. People could say something

to you. Adults could, again, talking about the church as being part of your family, your extended family, any adult could chastise young people and they got that respect. Now, children don't respect their parents. And if they don't respect them you have nothing coming. I demand that you respect me, but it just doesn't come naturally. I'm not going to tolerate that. I'm going to respect you as an individual and I demand respect myself.

*Alice has opened a window into her life for us to look through. She has told her own life story. She has told us who she was and how that has helped shape who she is today as a person and teacher. Threads from her life will be picked up and woven together with threads of her classroom story presenting a tapestry of how “we teach who we are” (Burke, personal communication, 1997; Palmer, 1998).*

### Life Story Analysis

As Alice speaks about her life we see the ways in which the personal becomes the pedagogical for her. Her father was the image of the educated, strong Black man. This enables her to see the possibilities for her Black male students. She wants her African American students, especially her male students, to defy the stereotypes that often exist for them. She tries to reach all her students, never writing anyone off. Her father was a main inspiration for her becoming a teacher, at first to please him, then later it was the subject matter that she was drawn to, and finally it seems that teaching is a calling for her. I have seen, three years prior to collecting data for this study, Alice bring in elders from the community to participate in small group “intergenerational interviews” with students for an Elders Writing Project. The purpose, Alice told her students, “it is important to

reach back to gain knowledge and exposure from our elders because with age comes wisdom” (Alice Terry, May 1993). The community is important to Alice, and she strives to bring the community into her classroom and to help students see they are part of a community and the rich heritage that is theirs.

Growing up, Alice was a good student. She knows that her students can also be successful students, if they push themselves. Again, she wants them to defy the stereotypes that exist in predominantly Black and poor schools, stereotypes that say these students don’t want to learn and can’t learn. She knows this is not true, and acts as a role model challenging these stereotypes. She knows African American students can do well and encourages them to do so. Alice does not “step back from being a teacher,” rather, she steps forward to accept the responsibilities. As van Manen explains, “a teacher who gives up on a child, who no longer knows how to have a sense of hope for that child, immediately steps back from being a teacher” (1986, p. 47).

Alice was raised strictly. At one point, as an adult, she wanted her father to admit that he did not need to be as strict as he was. He would not admit this, only responding, “You turned out all right.” His strictness was tempered with love. This has made a lasting positive impression on Alice, and in the classroom story we will see the role of a strict but loving parent reflected. We will see Alice be strict, at times stern, always fair, and never tyrannical. Alice has said on a number of occasions that many of her students need a mother – “I tend to mother many of my students, because I think they’re missing that” (Alice Terry, April 1994). Taking a parental stance – “tender but firm and positive” – is characteristic of several of the Black teachers in Foster’s study (1997, p. 31).

Alice takes pride in having won contests and a scholarship for her oratorical skills. In the classroom story we will see the orator come through in her teaching presence. She has a gift of captivating her students with the style, power, and grace of her speech. We will hear Alice's students respond to her reading the short story "Sweat" and Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston, and understand that her early training has provided her with a gift for connecting with her students and helping students connect with literature. van Manen writes,

The teacher who reads a story to the class in the right tone creates a sense of community as well as an experience of shared narrative.... in high school too a special mood or atmosphere can be created by reading to the students which may contribute to a heightened appreciation of the power of story and literature, including its communal value.

Teachers create an atmosphere not only by what they say or do but also in the way that they are present to their students.... Children are quite sensitive to the atmosphere in which experiences are shared.... How different is the reading experience where both adult and child are engrossed in the story, and where the child feels that there is shared feeling in the experience. (1991, pp. 183-184)

There is often a ministerial quality to Alice's address. Given the fact that her father was a minister and so much of her life has been spent immersed in the church, she has internalized the sermonizing, preaching style of a minister. There has been research on the ways in which African American students respond to sermon-like teaching (Foster, 1997), and in fact, her students do seem to respond favorably.

Alice grew up around and within books, often to alleviate the boredom. She found great pleasure, joy, and satisfaction in reading. She also learned that literature contained lessons about life – especially about relationships. We will see in the classroom story and analysis that she seeks to help her students discover similar feelings and enlightenment. She was a reader. Her students are not and she knows this. Because

of this reality Alice finds ways to make sure they have access to the power of literature, even if they are not sophisticated readers. She does not write them off, as many teachers might when their students have not done their homework. Alice makes it possible for her students to learn regardless of whether they are prepared for class or not. But she does not take it lightly when they are not prepared. She finds literature that is relevant to them – presents life lessons that they would find helpful. We will see evidence of this in her teaching.

In the life story we hear Alice say, “I try to exemplify what I say.” This comes through in watching Alice. She is all that she presents herself to be. Her students see this too. van Manen writes that

When an adult turns from merely being an example of *behaviors* to being a *real* example, living the great values he or she tells children to uphold, then the adult assumes pedagogic significance in children’s lives. The adult is no longer a mere teacher of skills.... He or she has become a pedagogue—a true educator. What a thoughtful...teacher does is offer the young person a vision of what kind of life is worth living and what image of adulthood is worth aiming for. (1986, p. 44)

When Alice was in high school she experienced tracking. She contrasts her experiences in a “regular” English class, in which they read Silas Marner, to her experience the following year in the “college track,” from which her teacher recited “The Raven.” She remembers the teacher in the lower track class had little enthusiasm and made the experience with the novel dreadful, yet the teacher in the upper track seemed to have a passion that made Poe’s poem come alive. The contrasting memories have left Alice with the impression that “tracking has a lot to do with the way that teachers encourage their students, peak the interest of their students.” Not only did this early experience impact her as a student – “I came alive through learning literature and poetry”

– but it also had an impact on her as a future teacher, for she gives everything she has to all her students.

Alice was a child when the Little Rock Nine endured personal hardships and risked their lives so Black children could go to the same schools as White children. Years later she was able to go to an integrated high school herself, though she knew segregation growing up in Assembly and visiting family down South in the summer time. Alice was in high school and college when John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy were assassinated. Having lived through the most turbulent and transformative times of the Civil Rights movement, Alice knows the power and possibility of social transformation. These lived-through realities made a lasting impression on her. In the classroom story we will see Alice help her students understand the sacrifices and traumas that Blacks, only one and two generations ago, had to endure to get the education they deserved. We will see her try to cultivate in her students an appreciation of all that they have at their disposal, that is, if they choose to take advantage of it.

Alice says in her life story that growing up, like many Blacks, she “knew her place.” We will see in the classroom story Alice work to help her students understand there are times when it makes sense to resist, like when you are fighting for your rights, and times when it makes sense to conform, like when you must pass a test if you want access to further opportunities. At the same time, Alice is helping her students see oppression and understand ways out of it, she also helps them understand the costs and consequences of actions. Alice knows what it is like when actual and symbolic bridges are raised to keep Blacks out. However, she was raised to live by a code that she is trying

I

P

w

bec

rea

to teach her students: they are the “key players” in their own lives, and making excuses or playing the victim will get you nowhere. Alice was taught to take responsibility for herself and the community. This is a “life lesson” she often tries to teach. This theme is captured in the following interview excerpt from Alice when she was describing her role as a teacher:

I am not a teacher that's so regimented we have to cover this amount of pages in this amount of time. The personality, or feeling, of my class can dictate whether we do something more in depth or we just scrap it all together. I try to give my students a foundation. Sometimes I take risks like when I taught Waiting to Exhale. But I know that it feels good when students say, "Ms. Terry, this is the first time I ever read a whole book." That's what I am about. If I can get my students to read and write, I don't care what it is. And to talk about risky subjects in a tasteful manner. We can talk about sexual relations. I show them that this is something that you can talk about. But knowing how to do it, and just trying to model the type of behavior that's acceptable in polite society, to make them think of themselves as being the key player in anything they want to do. You know, not faulting somebody else, not blaming somebody else, not expecting somebody else. NOT MAKING EXCUSES. You know, "I'm the one." That's a lesson I learned, it was really driven home. And I try to make my students understand, you have to want it, you have to do it. You dress nice. You look nice. You have money. Your mother and father are not going to be around forever. If you choose something to do that's against the law, then you are cutting off your life expectancy. You make choices. You have to be responsible. If you go to jail, go because of something you want to do but you knew that this is the consequence that comes from this action, but do it because you want to. Don't blame it on anybody else. (Alice Terry, 22 August 1996)

In who she is and what she teaches, Alice tries to help her students take the kind of personal and social responsibility that will make them valuable members of society. We will see in the classroom story how, through a Tolerance Unit, she strives to help students become more socially responsible. In all her choices, Alice is working to help students read and write their worlds.

## A Context: This Side of the River

It is comfortably warm and clear as I drive to Assembly on a September morning for my first observation of Alice Terry. An hour on the Interstate takes me to a quiet two lane State highway. It seems as if I pass more dead animals on the road than I do cars – a deer, two raccoons, a dog, a cat, countless once-squirrel-size creatures.

The State highway cuts through farm land. Miles of corn fields. Flat harmony disrupted by the occasional stand of green leafed trees, tops swaying in the wind.

There are no housing developments on this highway, just single houses along the roadside with stretches of farmed land behind them, as well as the occasional white-washed small church and unoccupied seasonal fruit and vegetable stand. Some of the houses are quite large, richly landscaped, and have at least one satellite dish. Most are nondescript, only catching the passerby's eye because of a snowmobile on a trailer or stack of tires or car seat set on the grass along the road with a hand-made sign "For Sale." A few of the houses, usually ones that have one or more car corpses on the property, are in various stages of dilapidation. One or two are nearly ramshackles, with sagging porches and roofs, boarded up windows, fences falling down, and tall vegetation overtaking what was once a yard.

On this morning I pass several tractors and a threshing machine.

When I pass the "Welcome to Assembly" sign the highway transforms into the residential thoroughfare of an urban area not more than 200,000 in number. I pass by houses that would indicate a broad range of economic levels, from poor and very modest to upper middle class, but such an assessment is hard to make since I do not know the property values on this side of the Assembly River.

I also pass by several boarded up buildings that were once markets and shops, a couple now adorned by "tag" graffiti and gang symbols. In the same stretch are a couple of bars and one Market/Liquor/Lotto store.

The windowless skeleton of a large four story brick building, probably once a factory of some sort, looms in the background of residential side streets, only one block away from Assembly Middle School, which looks as if it were cut from the same mold.

What stands out most to me as I drive on this thoroughfare are the number of churches. I pass a United Methodist Church with a steeple at the front of the small building, a Garden of Eden Pentecostal Ministers in an unassuming building, a Baptist Church occupying a reclaimed house. So many others. Assembly County has more than 150 Christian houses of worship, one synagogue, and no Islamic temples.

I turn at a busy intersection, onto Howard Avenue, the street that Assembly High School stands on three blocks away. At this intersection there is a "Hair and Nails" beauty shop on one corner, a pharmacy and gift shop on another, a take-out pizza store on a third, and a City Police crime prevention office with two "DARE To Keep Off Drugs" decaled patrol cars on the fourth corner. Beside the crime prevention office is a single level building with no windows which serves as a church. In the back parking lot there is a basketball set up where three boys play football, throwing long bombs to one another. A string of fast food restaurants is a long walk or short drive from the school. Two major fast food chains have their own small operation in the school's lunch room.

The first two blocks of Howard Avenue, before I cross the railroad tracks, have many small houses on one side of the street, most in considerable disrepair; a grass recreation field with a baseball backstop and an Army Reserve building with an eight foot

high fence and curling rolls of barbed wire on top of it stand side-by-side on the other side of the street. Along Howard Avenue, past the railroad tracks and across the street from the school, are well kept small to medium sized single family homes with manicured lawns and well-maintained paint or siding. Hedges are trimmed. Cars are washed. Garbage is picked up.

When I pull into Assembly High School I am reminded of a factory. It is a three story, flat surfaced, unadorned, red brick structure. High above the front doors, at the third story level, is a working clock the size of an Olympic discus ring. The clock is prominent. In my imagination I can hear a steam horn blow and pay cards being stamped with arrival and departure times.

When I enter the parking lot I do not see expensive cars, with the exception of several big shiny American made luxury models parked close to the school's rear entrance. These are the vehicles belonging to several administrators, teachers, security guards, and maintenance staff. The student parking lot, where many of the teachers also park, is mostly populated with rusting and oil burning '70s and '80s vintage Fords and GM cars. Spaces are more defined by the users' sense of working order, for there are multiple generations of faded lines overlapping one another.

The parking lot links the school building to several large playing fields. Gorgeous spruce and deciduous trees, thirty to fifty feet in height, provide a stadium effect to lush green baseball, soccer, and football fields. The football field is surrounded by a black rubbery non-tartan track; the fields are fenced in; swarms of sea gulls feed on discarded scraps of food and fight to get in discarded fast food restaurant bags.

**A Classroom Story: Teaching Respect**  
**“You Need to Treat People Like You Want to Be Treated”**

In this classroom story I take the reader through my early morning conversation with Alice, I take the reader behind the closed door in which I overhear what is taking place in another English classroom, and finally I take the reader with me on my first observation of Alice’s fifth hour class. The theme of respect surfaces in a number of ways throughout the classroom story, both directly and indirectly. We will see how respect for others is a goal Alice teaches to in her Tolerance Unit. We will see how self-respect, respect of her as the teacher, and respect of classmates surfaces in the classroom story and additional illustrations in the analysis. And we will see how respect for African American heritage and culture is foundational to this course and classroom. Woven throughout this story will be analysis, followed by extensive direct analysis of the story and other key incidents across the semester in respect to how Alice Terry’s work with students in her fifth hour African American Literature class illuminates teaching for critical literacy.

**A Conversation With Alice Terry: “If You Don’t Have a Solution Then You Are Part of the Problem”**

Alice thinks deeply about her students and their futures. Even though she has been teaching for twenty-seven years and has taught this very class more than ten years, her curriculum is not fixed. It is based in the present and future needs of her students. At the time of the following conversation, Alice is trying to figure out how to meet several goals she holds for her students: how to take responsibility of their own lives, how to respect themselves and others, how to understand and appreciate the efforts and sacrifices

---

*In the American colonies, anyone convicted of committing a homosexual act could be sentenced to death. Today, gays and lesbians are the most frequent targets of hate crimes. Data presented in 1986 to the U.S. House Judiciary Subcommittee on Criminal Justice showed that homosexuals were four times more likely to be victims of violence than persons in the general population.*

*Like all bias crimes, anti-gay offenses are aimed not just at their individual victims but also at the communities to which those individuals belong. A brick through the window of a lesbian couple's apartment sends a message of hate to every gay person in the area. Graffiti on the door of a church that welcomes homosexuals is a warning to everyone who believes in tolerance. A physical assault on one gay man reminds all others that their turn could be next.*

By the time Charlie Howard reached high school in the late 1970s, he was accustomed to his classmates' taunts and sneers. Charlie was fair-haired and small-boned. He had a learning disability. His severe asthma would have made it difficult for him to participate in sports, even if he had wanted to. The way he walked and talked set him apart from most of the other boys in Portsmouth, N.H. As a little kid, he got laughed at and called a "sissy." In later years, he got shoved around and called a "fag"....

(Opening paragraphs of *A Rose for Charlie*)

---

of African Americans who came before

them, how to provide students with a

foundation for the course in both skills and

knowledge, and how to prepare these

students for retakes of the State

Proficiency Test.

"I began the year with a unit on

'Tolerance,'" Alice says, "using the

book Us and Them<sup>26</sup> and segments from

the video Eyes on the Prize,<sup>27</sup> getting

---

<sup>26</sup>The back cover of Us and Them describes the book as, "...the story of some Americans who were hated by others simply for who they were, what they looked like or what they believed. Their experiences remind us that our democracy is still a work in progress." Us and Them was produced by Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. "Teaching Tolerance was founded in 1991 to provide teachers with resources and ideas to help promote harmony in the classroom. The Southern Poverty Law Center is a nonprofit legal and education foundation based in Montgomery, Alabama. The Center's Executive Chairman is Morris Dees" (Carnes, 1995, p. 3).

<sup>27</sup>Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years (Blackside, 1986) is a six part series available through PBS Video and is widely considered "the most comprehensive television documentary on the American civil rights movement ever produced." The series, which looks at the American Civil Rights movement through several lenses between the years 1954 and 1965, took more than two years to produce. "Through rare historical film and incisive present-day interviews, the events and issues of the second American Revolution come to life. Return to the streets, churches, courts and schools where the struggle

the students to see and talk about how 'difference' is at the root of discrimination. Last week we read several stories from the book and this week have seen the first two segments of ...Prize. First hour is asleep, but fifth hour is lively. I have been trying to approach this from the point of view, tried to help them understand, that you need to treat people like you want to be treated. There's a journal entry on the board that I had them write, you'll see it when you go in there, about individual responsibility and social justice in a democracy. It was really interesting to note, especially, with the issue of homosexuality raised in the story *A Rose for Charlie* (see excerpt in text box). Nobody thought that he should have gotten killed, but some of the students were leaning towards it. A couple students said, 'He provoked it by being homosexual.' And, 'He shouldn't have worn lipstick.' You know what I'm saying? It was really, really interesting. There's one guy in the fifth hour class, Ronnie, who the kids say is gay. He never said it, but he flaunts his differences. In fact I, I couldn't have the discussion about it [homosexuality] without first asking him. I said, 'We're going to talk about *A Rose for Charlie*. Will you have a problem with that?' 'Oh no,' he said. He was too glad to have the opportunity. It was a great conversation. I'm still muddling through how I am going to do more with this."

It is significant that Alice chose to begin her semester by focusing on the theme of "tolerance." A "tolerance" framework serves learning community goals, helps her to build a foundation of African American history to explore African American literature,

---

raged. Meet the people who challenged the system and changed history. Relive the pain, the protest, the sacrifice and triumph of the grass roots struggle for racial equality."

and it allows her to help students see how all oppression is linked. Even for African Americans there is a danger of embracing an “us versus them” mentality. Alice knows her students have experienced discrimination, but

she also knows that they too must be aware of how they discriminate against others who are different from themselves. Given her background in the church, and the knowledge of the church’s centrality in the lives of students and the community, it is not surprising that Alice has approached this from the “golden rule”:

---

Gloria: I think because we went on and on about [“A Rose for Charlie”] and she just, she really put her feelings in it a lot.

Ronnie: It is like things like that they go on like that today. She makes you think you can’t treat nobody any kind of way because of their lifestyle, how they want to be. She makes you think about it.

(Group Interview, 4 December 1996)

---

“treat others as you would like them to treat you” (Matthew 7:12). Her choice of curriculum is important, for the short readings in Us and Them allow students to see several examples of intolerance (religious, race, class, gender, sexual identity, etc.) through only a few class periods of reading and discussion. And the video Eyes on the Prize presents an engaging documentary history of the fight for Civil Rights. Her declaration about “still muddling” over what she will do next shows that Alice, even though a veteran of twenty-seven years teaching, still labors over what and how she will teach to any given group of students. What is most important is what the students take away. Three months after the Tolerance Unit, Gloria, a student in Alice’s fifth hour class, is still struck by the “feeling” that Alice put into helping students understand how Charlie’s experiences are not that different than the discrimination people experience because of their race; and Ronnie, who may be gay himself, has clearly been affected by how Alice has made students think about their own actions (see text box). Alice was able

n

y

no

yo

yo

tha

oka

thin

have

comb

Confo

literacy

accepted

talking a

to create a space where her students who may be gay/lesbian feel that she is their ally and her classroom is a safe place for them since she is working toward tolerance, affirmation, and respect for all. This serves to foster a learning community where diversity is accepted.

Alice turns from what she has been doing to what she will need to do next – preparing her senior students for retakes of the State Proficiency Test they did not pass the year before. “Our school didn't do very well. They're good students. They were really upset about the low scores. I said to them, ‘I think one of the reasons is because you all don't realize that some things you have to conform to. It's fine to be a nonconformist on things you have a say in, but if it's something that's going to evaluate you, something that everybody else has to do and you decide that you're going to do it your own way, you have to expect the consequences.’ I was reading on the score sheets that some didn't respond to the prompt, you know they went off on their way. That's okay if you can take the consequences.

“So, I will have to do some in-class preparation for the retakes. I have been thinking about having the students do some writing, focusing on something they really haven't worked on, using something from Us and Them or Eyes on the Prize or a combination of both. I'm still figuring it out.”

In American society being a “nonconformist” is almost a romantic ideal. Conformity, at first take, might seem to many people to be in conflict with critical literacy goals. We learn from Alice through her life story that when she was younger she accepted some things as “just the way things are.” But here, as a teacher, Alice is not talking about teaching her students to be passive or conformists. Alice is striving to help

c

s

th

l

B

sh

co

off

wo

boo

langu

collec

her students read the realities of their world. She knows the “consequences” of not passing tests and evaluations such as this one can be dire for poor students and students of color. Alice cares about these students, and she knows they care about doing well, being successful. Alice is committed to helping her students learn – learn to be tolerant of all people, learn to read their world so they know when to be individuals and when being different and nonconforming may result in consequences they do not desire. She wants them to be good students and good people, successful and happy in this world. And to do this she is “still muddling” and “still figuring” what curriculum and what approaches she can use that will reach these students, so she moves in the direction of combining the content of her tolerance unit with practicing the skills they will encounter shortly when they retake their test. Alice is teaching for critical literacy. She is aware that ambiguity and uncertainty are part of the complexity inherent in teaching (Cohen, 1988), and rather than fear it, she embraces it.

#### Behind Closed Doors: “Why Are We Doing This?”

After sitting through Alice Terry’s first hour African American Literature class she escorted me down to the Assembly High School English Department office where I could work until we would meet for lunch, and then stay for her fifth hour class. The office is little more than a book and supply room. It does not bear the presence of a working and meeting space. There are bookcases with sets of grade level literature books, some new and some dated. There are dictionaries and thesauruses. There are language skills books. There are several, but not many, worn novels and literature collections, and of these there are not enough in number of any single title to make up a

class set. There is a computer and printer on a cart. There is a microwave and small refrigerator. There is a gray steel desk with nothing on top of it or in its drawers taking up half of a narrow alcove space. To the right of the desk there is a window which provides a view of the lawns and neighborhood in front of the school. The desk is pushed up against a locked door which leads into a classroom adjacent to Alice's. It is at this lone desk in the English office that I sat with my laptop computer writing expanded field notes, and doing other work, for three hours.

Throughout the morning I worked and listened to the noises coming from the classroom beyond the door across the desk. For three consecutive class periods the teacher drilled the same grammar lesson. What I heard coming through this door provides a striking contrast to what I heard in Alice's first hour class. During one class hour I could hear the back of a student's chair bouncing against the door as he or she leaned back. The teacher read a description of the plot and characters in the novel Little Women. After reading each sentence she stopped and asked the class to identify the subject or predicate of the sentence, and then which words were nouns or adjectives. I heard students call out mostly guesses to the teacher's questions. Following one of these sentences a student yelled out "verb," and the teacher respond back, "No, 'and' is a conjunction. The sentence is made up of noun-verb-noun-conjunction-noun-preposition-adjective-noun." I could hear students mutter, "So what!" and "Why are we doing this?" – not loud enough to be considered an answer but probably loud enough for the teacher to hear. The students mocked and joked about the sentence diagraming. There was protest and resistance and disinterest in the tones and words of many student voices I heard. The teacher warned them that the assignment was for a grade and that she would be giving

them a test. I heard her demand repeatedly of individual students to be quiet and pay attention. There was desperation and frustration in the tone and words of this teacher.

It was fortuitous that I should be “in the right place at the right time” to document this incident. The kind of teaching I could hear through the door is not only representative of what happens in many of the English classrooms in Alice’s school, but in classrooms across the country.<sup>28</sup> Knowing it exists is one thing; hearing it makes palpable the stark contrast between possibility and reality, depending upon the teacher. This chance encounter provides a wonderful contrast to what we heard Alice describing she seeks to do and what we will see in her own classroom; the encounter also underscores the need to explore what is not the norm, what teaching for critical literacy is, and how different it can be from traditional grammar teaching.

Teaching Students to Think About It: What can we as individuals do to ensure liberty and justice for all?

Later the same day I went to Alice’s afternoon section of African American Literature. Same course. Different time. Clearly a different group of students in respect to number and energy level. The journal entry that Alice had written on the board for students to respond to – *What can we as individuals do to ensure liberty and justice for all?* – underscores the goals and priorities Alice began to reveal in the morning conversation. We see in this session Alice begin with a recurring life lesson: take personal responsibility for your learning and your life. The session focused on helping

---

<sup>28</sup>See Brooks & Brooks (1993) Chapter 2 for a discussion and description of traditional (mimetic) and constructivist (transformative) classrooms.



students understand the social and political context of the struggle for Civil Rights in the United States during the '50s and '60s. This is an element of a larger picture she is trying to get students to see in her Tolerance Unit: how there is a history of discrimination and oppression in the United States, that race is a part of but not the only part, and that if they are to survive and be successful in such a society they must be “key players” in their own lives and in the community.

### A Room with a View, Curriculum, and Students

A few minutes before fifth hour starts I take the last seat in the row closest to the window, the same seat I had first hour. Less than a minute after settling in, a student, Tricia, five months pregnant but looking more like ten months, tells me I am sitting in her seat. I go up to Alice and ask her where I might find a seat. All thirty-five seats in this class are taken, but she tells me to take the last seat in row four because the student assigned to it has come only once so far this semester. This seat is beside Tricia's seat. Over the semester the girl whose seat this belongs to comes only once when I am there.

All the students in this class are African American, with the exception of LaTena who is fair skinned and white blond. Several of the girls wear on four or more fingers bright gold rings cut out in dramatic filigree shapes and heavy gold chains around their necks and wrists. Hair styles are wide ranging. Most of the girls have straightened hair, wearing it in short to long lengths or in elaborate beehive-like styles. Most of the boys have close cropped hair, though a couple have their hair in corn rows. Over the course of the semester I am struck by the care these students take in their appearance, both boys and girls. Even though jeans and expensive athletic shoes seem to be basic to all the students'

wardrobes, many of these students frequently dress up. Girls often wear dresses and slack/blouse combinations; many manicure and polish their nails (at times in class when they can get away with it). Several of the boys clean and touch-up polish their athletic shoes; a number of them wear ties on occasion.

I look around the room. This is an average size classroom, perhaps twenty feet wide and thirty feet long. Along one side of this second floor classroom are windows that look out over the front of the school. The floors are wood, well worn but not worn uneven, waxed and polished. The thirty-five student desks fill this tiny space in five rows of seven. There are just enough desks to accommodate the thirty-five students, at least when they are all present. When the desks are arranged in a circle there is only enough room for twenty-six; the remaining nine desks must sit outside the circle occupied or in the center of the circle unoccupied.

There are several book carts in the room. Among the volumes these carts hold is a class set of a teal colored hardbound book about 1,000 pages thick, African American Literature: Voices in a Tradition (1992). There are several other class sets of books on the window sill: Earnest Gaines A Gathering of Old Men, Mildred Taylor Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, J. California Cooper A Piece of Mine, Nathan McCall Makes Me Wanna Holler. These student texts, representing the creative work of African Americans writing about the worlds and issues of concern for African Americans, are potential windows to see through and mirrors to understand themselves better.

On the walls are several READ posters put out by the American Association of Librarians: Oprah Winfrey with Their Eyes Were Watching God, Whoopi Goldberg with Nicholas Cricket, Spike Lee with Alex Haley's Malcolm X. There is a calendar hanging

on the wall with a picture of Malcolm X on the month of September and one of his speeches done in an overlay. Alice uses the wall space in her classroom to extend, link, and enhance the oral and written curriculum of her course in African American Literature, frequently changing the materials displayed.

There are two boards at the front of the room. Alice uses the boards in her room to help students keep track of daily and longer assignments and to help them preserve key content information; she uses the boards to model for her students what they should be keeping in their assignment calendars and in their notes. Alice understands the role a classroom environment can play in teaching and learning. Even though one day the desks may be in rows, the next the may be in a large circle for discussion or in clusters for group work (see text box). Below we see representative use of the boards.

---

I grew up in the time when straight rows and students being quiet was a sign that teaching was taking place. I know better now. I can feel comfortable with what I do. I don't mind anybody coming in my classroom on any given day, because I know that I have something to offer and it might not, at first glance, look like it to somebody else, but once they get in there they find out there's a whole lot going on here. Students discussing, group work. People from the community coming in and students interviewing them. Students leading discussion. We move our chairs around a lot and we do a lot of read arounds and discussing things that might not seem relevant, but when you read something the prior knowledge that you bring to it makes you think about things. These moments when we're reading something and students bring up a question or they bring up an incident from their life, I feel like those are really really important gems. If it relates to my life I can understand it a little better. (Alice Terry, 29 April 1994)

---

Board  
(Window Side)

Eyes on the Prize The Civil Rights Years  
1954-56

1. Emmett Till, 1955
2. Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955-56
3. Little Rock 1957
4. Sit-ins 1960
5. Who Shall Lead? 1962
6. Birmingham 1963
7. Power and the Vote 1964
8. Selma

(Hallway Door Side)

AA Lit Journal

What can we as individuals do to ensure liberty and justice for all? Use examples from text.



“You All Have to Do Better Than This”

When the bell rings Alice quietly attends to several organizational details. Greets students. Looks around the room to see who is not present and silently records roll. Checks the VCR operation. Students continue to wander in for several minutes after the tardy bell.

Alice announces that they will continue watching Eyes on the Prize, picking up with segment three on the Little Rock Nine. She draws their attention, using a pointer stick, to the board where journal entry number three is written. ““What can we as individuals do to ensure liberty and justice for all?”” she reads. “There's a statement I like, ‘If you don't have a solution then you are part of the problem.’ You know we always sit back. A survey was taken, and it showed that people may not necessarily do something to harm someone else, but that people tend not to do anything to stop something bad happening to another person.” Alice pauses, and just as she is about to build on this point in the survey, probably to make a link to what they have been seeing and discussing in the video and what she wants them to reflect on in the journal entry, she is interrupted by the opening of the classroom door.

A couple of students, one girl and one boy, enter. They are late. Their entrance distracts Alice and the rest of the class. She is not smiling. She turns to the two students. “You all have to do better than this. I'm not going to spend my time arguing and fussing at you. Attendance is important. It's an important part of class, and attendance points are factored into your grade. Don't take my kindness for weakness. Please get here on time. If it's important to you to be here you will make it to class on time. Can I expect you? Is that too much to ask?”



The boy responds, "I had to go do something at lunch."

"That's what I mean," Alice says, "if it's important to you to be here, you will be on time. Can I expect you to be here on time?"

---

You know, when we get out of line, she put us in shape but it is just, you know, I can't explain, but it is her. I don't get good grades in any other classes...it is like when I had...a bad grade the first time, I wanted to get a good grade to impress Ms.Terry, you know what I mean? Because, it is like, if she care about me I want to get a good grade to show her I appreciate what she did. (MeShell, 4 December 1993)

---

Both respond yes.

"Is that too much to ask?" Alice says to the two students. They both respond, "No." She asks the same question to the rest of the class and there is a louder choral response, "No." Alice shows that she is anything but weak. Students interpret her sternness as caring, and in return want to show they appreciate her, so they try harder (see text box).

Two more students walk in late just as she finishes her sentence. Alice exhales in exasperation, shakes her head, and looks to the class who she knows understands what is going through her head. "You are late, the second time for you Shantel," Alice says with an edge. "I want you to be here every day. This is not college. You can't come when you feel like it. Take a seat."

Alice redirects the focus of the class to immediate needs, delicately weaving several issues of concern for her regarding this class. She does not pick up on the point she was about to make before being interrupted by the late students. Alice is shifting direction, slightly, here. The late students have opened the door for a teachable moment. "Okay, so that was journal number three, 'What can you do as an individual to ensure liberty and justice for all?' A lot of questions I think, depending on where we are as far as



peer pressure is concerned, how important our friends are to us, we answer differently within ourselves than we do when everybody's looking. Can you agree with that?"

There is a murmur of agreement, and several "Yes" responses called out. The responses are tentative. Students understand what she is asking, but seem to be uncertain of where she is going with this.

"Some of us have not come into our own, so it is important what our friends think. As we get older that becomes less important. And it depends upon what it is. We don't want to be too far out in left field, unless we are nonconformists. I also talked about, yesterday, the results of the State Proficiency Test. I was talking to one of my colleagues at another school and she said they got a FAX from the State Department of Education saying that you must pass all four sections of the test – writing, reading, math, science – to receive a State endorsed diploma. This is different information than we had last year, so not understanding this may have affected how seriously you took this test. Right now nobody can really pin down what that really means. But I think, with the emphasis on this, it's going to become really important as far as acceptance into college. Because colleges, if you are aware and have been reading what's been happening, many people have excellent academic records as far as high grade point averages, having all the criteria that used to be necessary to get into college, but because there are so many people applying they are turning down the cream of the crop. And then if you are barely making it what does that say about you? I have lived long enough to know that you can't make people do anything. I can't make you be on time. Even though I talk about it. If it's important to your grade you'll get in here. I'm not going to spend all my time harping on it. There are consequences for everything we do. So if you are willing to accept the



consequences we can move on. I can't make you come in here and do a good job on the State Proficiency Test. Some of you have the skill but say, 'I'm not doing this. I don't feel like writing on this topic. This doesn't mean anything to me.' You do what you have to do to get over it. That's what it's about. You're getting ready to go in the real world believe it or not. Your laid back days of high school will be gone real soon. How you adjust dictates what kind of life you are going to have. It's up to you. You're going to have to make some decisions." There is a purposeful pause. She has their attention. Students do not talk to one another. No one questions or responds to what she has just said. Alice's emphasis on personal responsibility is a principle theme in her classroom. We saw Carol encourage her students to challenge and resist retaking the State Proficiency Test. Carol knows her students, largely because of social class and the status of Station High School, will not be penalized for their resistance. Here we see Alice giving her students a different message, to tow the line of the test. Alice frequently urges them to become agents in their own present and future, to act in their own and the community's best interest. Alice knows that it is in their best interest to retake the State Proficiency Test and do well by their standards, for if they do not they will be penalized. So the message here from Alice is one of personal responsibility and respect. She expects that they will take personal responsibility for themselves now and in their futures, and she demands that while in her classroom they treat her, their classmates, and their learning respectfully.

## The Past as a Lesson for the Present

Alice made her point about how the decisions they make, about whether or not to come to class on time and whether or not to follow through with a task on the State Proficiency Test, have consequences. The message in Alice's life lesson about consequences, both positive and negative, to everything they do is connected to the Civil Rights curriculum they are currently exploring. For the remainder of the class session, Alice turns to helping students understand events portrayed in the video Eyes on the Prize. Alice uses her own life experiences growing up in Assembly to help students comprehend the realities of this time so crucial to African Americans and all others in the United States. We know from her life story that Alice was aware of the "roles" Blacks had to play growing up in Assembly and a segregated society. When Alice tells the class, "there were specific roles that people had to play," she is pushing them to develop perspective of the social context to help them understand the events portrayed in the video. She is also subtly echoing back to her earlier point about the role they will need to play to be successful on the State Proficiency Test. She pushes them to compare self-sacrifices made forty years ago to their own attitudes of not wanting to be put out.

Using her pointer once again, Alice turns to the board and uses the rubber tip to underline the video title and begin her review of what the students have already seen the day before. "Moving on we began looking at the two hour edition of Eyes on the Prize: The Civil Rights Years 1954-1965. This was during my time. I graduated high school in 1965 from here. All of these incidents I know about. I know about some more than others. I lived here when segregation and racism was not overt. That means outright. But then again, when I graduated from Assembly High there was 737 in my graduating

class. Of that number, approximately 200 were African American. The rest of the student body was White. And there were specific roles that people had to play. I know yesterday we were looking at Emmett Till. I didn't get too much of an audible response from you, but somebody asked the question, 'Why did Emmett Till's uncle, when the men came to ask are there two boys here, why did he bring them out?' Think about the times. This was 1954, 1955, in Mississippi. Truly a segregated place where African Americans were treated as second class citizens."

One student from the back, a girl sitting next to me, interjects, "But if he knew he was going to die?"

"He didn't know what they were going to do," Alice responds. "All older folks thought about was the security of their family. He didn't know what they were going to do. In fact, they didn't plan to kill Emmett Till. Why did they kill him? I mean other than whistling at the woman?"

Duane, "He had a White girlfriend."

"Yes, and he talked so cocky about it," Alice explains. "He was from the North. He didn't have enough sense to be scared of these White men. To be scared of being in the South. If he had sense enough he wouldn't ever have done what he did. I'm not saying that he deserved to die, because nobody does. But if he had realized the situation. You know, we live in the age where everybody says, 'Well they can kill me.' There was a time when people valued life. He didn't realize

---

Shakya: She breaks things down, like street wise so that you understand.

Michael Michell: Shakya, could you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by "street wise"?

Shakya: You be on the streets, you see every.... You are just comfortable with the streets and she relates to it.  
(4 December 1996)

---

what type of situation he was putting himself in. Somebody shoots someone and you all run up to see a fight. That tells me you don't value life. Somebody's fighting you don't see the gun, but when the gun comes out you all start knocking each other down and killing each other trying to get away. 'My boy is in there I'm going to go get him.' You jump in. You don't see the knife pulled or the gun pulled. You both get killed. Your boy died. You don't value life. I know it's not that cut and dried, but it's just something to think about." And Alice gives them a moment to let her point sink in before returning to the events portrayed in the video. She wants students to recognize that there are consequences to the decisions they make, and sometimes the cost of a decision is one's life. Alice knows that in this community, especially their side of the river in Assembly, there are greater safety risks than in a community like Station. As someone teaching for critical literacy, she wants her students to be better prepared and disposed to read their world clearly and use their interpretation to inform the decisions they make. She wants them to be mindful of the violence that infiltrates their minds and lives. She contrasts their worlds of violence with what she remembers to show them that alternatives have been and still are within reach. Alice often reaches students because they feel she is "street wise," as Shakyra says – Alice can read their world and help them do the same (see text box).

Alice continues, "Then we saw the Montgomery bus boycott. Do you realize the situation people were putting themselves in refusing to ride the bus. People lost their jobs." Alice tries to give them another point of reference. "Did anyone see that movie with Whoopi Goldberg?" Alice is searching for the title. A girl near the front says, A Long Walk Home. Alice's head raises with affirmation and she continues. "That movie

was based on the bus boycott. Remember, housing patterns were definitely segregated. When we think of Assembly, we know that most of the African Americans live on the East side of town, but there are many living on the West side of town. At that time, you didn't have a choice about where you could live. So many, especially women, most of our ancestors at that time had very little education. So most of their jobs depended on working for White people. Working for White people. And they took public transportation to get there. I mean it wasn't like now, everybody and their brother's got their own car. Public transportation was all they had. That's all we had. See, we have gotten away from being self-sacrificing. All we think about is what's in it for me. 'I'm not walking there.' I had a student the other day use my phone to call his mother to get a ride home. She couldn't pick him up. He was all put out, 'Huh, I got to get on this bus.' I mean like it was a punishment. He had a bus pass and everything. He only had to go a mile. Think about it. It's for you. Sometimes you say, 'I'm not going. I can't do this. I can't do that.' Because it's a little bit discomforting for you. This was a day and age when it was all people had. You have to get into the mind-set. I don't want you to think that this is happening now in the '90s. So try to be understanding from the point of view of what happens to people and how things were during that time." Essential to developing critical literacy is being able to see and understand the world from multiple points of view and perspectives. Here we see Alice holding a mirror up to the students by sharing an anecdote of a schoolmate not wanting to use the school bus, and in light of the sacrifices they see documented in the video the reflection is not admirable.

“But It Should Make You Think”

Alice has finished her review of what the students viewed the previous day and is now ready to begin the next segment of Eyes on the Prize. A video is a special kind of text, requiring a different reading than a textbook, story, or any other printed matter. Alice knows that if students are to be successful drawing significant details from the video, she will need to preview, review, and guide the students in connecting the dots between what is being portrayed and documented and what relevance this all has to their lives. The historical and social context this video program provides is vital to the overall Tolerance Unit and to laying a foundation for this literature class.

Alice intones a transition, "We're going to start here with Malcolm Jamal Warner, he says, 'It will make you mad. It will make you sad. But it should make you think.' I think Little Rock is the third segment. If you missed the first two leave space so that you can go back and write a summary of the other events later. Little Rock 1957, does anyone know what that is dealing with?"

A few words are spoken by students, but nobody comes forth with a clear response.

"The Little Rock Nine? Anybody ever heard of that?" Alice asks.

"Segregated schools," one boy offers.

"Integrating the high schools," a different boy calls out.

"Yes," acknowledging both responses and building upon them, "schools were segregated and these were high school students who are going to integrate the White high school. There are only nine of them. Okay. Anybody have any questions?"

"Should we get our journals?" asks one of the students who came in late. Alice says she should, and six students get up and go to the front of the room to get their journals from a file box.

"See what I mean about being late?" Alice remarks. She makes a couple of other sarcastic comments about the lack of responsibility of some students. Students up at the file box and in their seats laugh.

"You stole on him Mrs. Terry," one girl says.

"I stole on him?" Alice asks.

"Yep."

"Huh." Alice and the students laugh more.<sup>29</sup>

The joking is friendly. It cuts, but does not undercut, the serious tone of what Alice had been saying to them. This kind of talk goes on for several minutes until all students are in their seats again and look ready. It shows the comfort that students have in the classroom and with Alice. Even though she is strict, they know they can joke with her. She is authoritative, but not authoritarian. They know she is only looking out for their best interests and cares deeply about them. Like a caring and strict parent, she tells them from her perspective what is best for them. Like mischievous children, they joke with her. Alice looks around the room, sees they are ready, and starts the video.

The video is on. I look around the room. There are twenty-five students present out of the thirty-five students enrolled. The students watch attentively. Several write

---

<sup>29</sup>I asked Alice what "stole on him" means, and she thought the expression might be taken from baseball when a runner steals a base. I believe in this context students were taking pleasure in how Alice seeks to communicate her "message" to them in a variety of ways, including playful sarcasm.

occasional notes in their journals. As the story of the Little Rock Nine unfolds, the physical and psychological attacks these courageous teenagers had to endure, and the ways in which they depended upon the support of one another and others in their community to survive, is both disturbing and inspiring.

Alice walks over to me and gives me a copy of an assignment the class did last week while reading Us and Them. I read the handout while the video plays. I can see several things that help me understand what Alice is doing (see Figure 3).

1ST AND 5TH HOURS AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE  
September 3-6, 1996  
THE SHADOW OF HATE

Today, as in the past, many young Americans are drawing bold lines between "us" and "them"—between people they view as different. This unit is an attempt to educate students about the importance of tolerance in a democracy. The stories in this text describe events in history in which intolerance arose from the fear and suspicion and anger of ordinary people—the same impulses that still cause discord today. Hopefully, after completing this unit of study, students will examine their own lives and prejudices.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read one story from each section (any additional stories read are worth extra credit) and complete each story's handout (see teacher for handout). Do all discussion questions. Choose one of the writing assignments listed for each story. All handouts and writing due Monday, September 9, 1996.

**RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE:**

"No Promised Land", p. 22

"In the City of Brotherly Love", p. 40

"The Ballad of Leo Frank", p. 66

**AMERICAN INDIAN EXPERIENCE**

"Blankets for the Dead", p. 14

"Ghost Dance at Wounded Knee", p. 58

**IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE**

"A Rumbling in the Mines", p. 48

"Street Justice", p. 120

**AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

"Harriet Jacobs Owns Herself", p. 30

"A Town Called Rosewood", p. 84

**WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE**

"Home was a Horse Stall", p. 92

**YOUTH PERSPECTIVE**

"A Rose for Charlie", p. 112

"Nightriding with the Klan", p. 102

**Figure 3.** The "Shadow of Hate" assignment handout Alice gives students for the Tolerance Unit shows how she seeks to push students to examine prejudice in their own lives.

The handout shows that Alice has chosen twelve of the fourteen stories in the book as options for her students. As I study the handout I am struck by how Alice has adapted the book to meet the needs of her students. It is clear from what Alice communicated in the morning conversation and what the handout reveals that she is pushing them to examine their own fears, suspicions, and anger of those who are different and look at their own lives and the history of African Americans to understand how they may not only be survivors of prejudice but participants in prejudice toward others, making up their own minds and articulating their responses and views.

At the end of the segment Alice turns off the VCR. "Before I color your thinking with mine, what did you think about what you saw? What do you think you would have done?" There is a pause in the classroom. Alice lets students think and waits for responses. Alice is trying to get them to think about what they see and hear. This invitation to share responses, as well as other similar occasions, leads me to believe she wants them to develop the ability to form opinions based on facts and not be influenced by an authority figure, not simply nod their heads in agreement with what she says or accept her interpretation. This is essential to cultivating critical literacy, pushing students to engage in the practice of their own critical literacy.

"I would have done the same," a girl says.

"How would you have felt to have been one of the Nine?" Alice asks.

"Honored. I would have been honored to stand up," a second girl adds.

"Would you have?" Alice pushes. "All the punishment, the abuse, the White people trying to scare you into leaving? You realize what's going on. The year 1954 is a

very important year. It was the year of Brown vs. Board of Education, the Supreme Court case. Do any of you know who Thurgood Marshall was?"

There is a quiet moment. "He was the first Black Supreme Court Justice," Emmett calls from the back of the room.

"The Browns, they lived in Topeka, Kansas and they had a daughter named Linda, and Linda was going to school, but she couldn't go to the school closest in her neighborhood because it was segregated. So this case went all the way to the Supreme Court. Topeka, Kansas tried to prove that the Black school was just as good as the White school. And this case proved that separate is not equal. And this had an impact across the nation. African Americans, Black people, Negroes as they were called then, were rejoicing. Were rejoicing over the fact that schools were going to be integrated. Here's a chance for my child to get just as good an education as anybody else. Black Americans applauded this, equating it with the Emancipation Proclamation. What's the Emancipation Proclamation?"

"It freed Blacks," a male voice booms with certainty.

"Who was the president?" Alice asks.

"President Lincoln," JoJo responds.

"Abraham Lincoln," MeShell adds.

"Abraham Lincoln was the president who signed it and used it to end slavery," says Lewis.

"Okay," Alice continues, "you have to think about what was going on in the country. Civil War. The struggle to end slavery. But Blacks really weren't free with this. Almost a century later White southerners are upset and questioned the right of the

Supreme Court to change their way of life. ' Northerners still coming down here and trying to change our way of life. It's been going on. Everyone is happy.' So we have two opposing points of view when we come down to Little Rock. In fact two branches of government had a disagreement over it..."

"Congress and the Court?" Ronnie asks, cutting Alice off.

Alice corrects herself, "...two different levels of government. President Eisenhower representing the nation, and who was Governor Faubus representing?"

"The State," Tyree calls out.

"Are the two levels of government the State and the National Ms. Terry?" Gloria asks.

"The Federal and the State. What did the State want? What did Governor Faubus order according to this video you are looking at?" Alice clarifies and asks.

"He had the National Guards come in," Curly answers.

"Yes," Alice responds, "he ordered the National Guard to prevent the students from entering the school. It became a nationwide, a worldwide, news story. Finally President Eisenhower saw he was going to have to do something directly. Governor Faubus withdrew the troops but things remained very very hostile. Very hostile. What did Minnie do that day? Do you think you would have done what Minnie did?"

"No, I would have gotten violent," Tyree says.

"I think I wouldn't have gone," Nica admits.

"Okay." Alice pauses, considering her next words carefully, choosing not to respond directly to Tyree's idea of a violent response. She reminds them that keeping cool was essential, for there was far more at stake in the situation than individual feelings.

"The NAACP tried to support them. They would meet with them. And they would talk to them, 'Just keep your cool. You won't be able to make an impact on the situation if you lose your calm, composure. Don't let it get to you.' But day after day after day. I think the analogy of a little dog nipping at your heels. They're not hurting you but gnawing you. But sometimes you just get tired of it. Then you have to do something about it."

"Mrs. Terry, did Faubus close the school down the next year?" Shakyra asks.

"Yes," Alice says emphatically, "and if that's not racist I don't know what is."

Alice names the act – racism. She is not a neutral teacher. She shares her views openly. She calls out critical issues and ideas for her students when she deems it necessary to help them read the world critically. She continues, "Does anyone know another governor in history who had an impact on school integration?"

"George Wallace," Darron says.

"George Wallace," Alice echoes, "and in his later days, all crippled up, he has apologized. He has apologized over and over again. The only thing I feel, and again I am older and lived longer, is I try to have compassion. The only thing I know is that if someone sincerely apologizes to me for something they have done, I have to accept it. I know many of you don't feel that way. I have to accept it." Alice is a spiritual person. This is a life lesson in forgiveness. She is a compassionate person. She is teaching who she is.

A girl has her hand raised and Alice gives her the floor.

"Is George Wallace the man who has said if Black and Whites are going to date he was going to cancel dances?"

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

"No that's somebody current," Alice tells her.

"That was a school principal," a boy says.

"Yeah, and then the school got burned down," a second boy says. "They couldn't have the prom."

"That was last year, last year that happened," Alice says, seemingly enthusiastic over the connection students have made. "No, Governor Wallace was the one who closed the doors of Old Miss." Picking up with what she was saying before about compassion, Alice continues, "The thing that bothers me, when you think about what people went through just to get an education, and so you all come to school and take it so lightly. 'This is where I want to be. This is where everybody else is. This is what I want to do. If I have to go to class I'll go late. I won't pay attention. I'll do whatever.' This is something to think about. Something to think about, what impact this history has on you." And Alice has come full circle in this lesson. She began the class session by calling attention to the actions of several late students and using their behavior as an example of the need to take personal responsibility and understand that there are consequences to decisions made.

Alice checks the clock on the wall. There are less than fifteen minutes of class time remaining. "Okay, I think we have time to watch the next segment before class ends." Alice begins the tape to watch segment four, "Sit-ins." There's a part in this segment where Blacks are doing nonviolent protest. The video shows Whites beating up these nonviolent protestors. Two males, one of them the young man sitting in front of me, make eye contact, shake their heads, and say, "No way, not me."

The video segment ends with a few minutes of class time left. Alice tells them they will continue their discussion tomorrow where this left off. She tells the students to put away their journals.

The bell rings and students file out. Before the next group of students walk in, I approach Alice's desk. She says, "No matter how many times I see *Eyes on the Prize*." She does not finish the statement. She pauses. I understand her meaning. I continue, "It is always powerful." She starts shaking her head about the class. I tell her I was moved by the way she was working to help them relate their own lives – sacrifice, attendance, education, tolerance, peaceful protest – to *Eyes on the Prize*. I comment that for many the words may not change them now, and then I add that I could not begin to count the number of times people talked to me and warned me about my destructive behaviors before I ever changed. Alice's face lights with acknowledgment, "Planting seeds. I'm planting seeds. Hopefully some will take."

An Analysis:  
Planting the Seeds of Critical Literacy

The First Day: What the Classroom Story Reveals

Teaching is most certainly an extension of life for Alice Terry. Her life has cultivated in her certain beliefs, understandings, and ways of being that she now plants as seeds in her students, possibly to grow in their own lives. In his introduction to feature articles for the May/June 1997 issue of Teacher Magazine, publisher Ronald Wolk wrote,

We talk a lot about the importance of preparing children to compete in a global marketplace, to work in a high-tech economy, and to meet the demands of a new century. We rarely ask if our children's schools are likely to humanize them—to shape their values, cultivate their consciences, and make them more understanding and tolerant of the human condition....The lessons we teach in the classroom are seldom as powerful as the lessons we teach through our beliefs and behavior. Students...can read good literature and discuss examples of valor, compassion, fairness, and mercy, but what they see in the character and performance of the adults around them may have a more enduring impact. (p. 3)

Wolk's words speak to what we can learn about teaching for critical literacy from the work of Alice Terry. In the classroom story "Teaching Respect," we see Alice purposefully working toward goals that will shape values of respecting self and others, of taking personal responsibility, of getting one's bearings in the present world by looking toward the past. We see her working to provoke "consciousness" and the development of "consciences." And most importantly, through the Tolerance Unit, to guide her students to and through an understanding and tolerance of the "human condition."

We learn much from Alice's life story that help us understand what we see of her teaching through the classroom story. We see that Christianity and the Church have played central roles in her life. This is reflected in the often sermon-like style she takes in communicating "life lessons," such as her discussion of the students' attitude and

performance on the State Proficiency Test, and her message to them that, "There are consequences for everything we do." Her approach of giving students straightforward direction is rooted in the church and the Black community (see Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Delpit, 1988).

We learn from Alice's life story that she is a person who respects herself and is comfortable with who she is. This is implicit in what she says about the love she received from her father and her church community, implicit in what she reveals about her success as a student and young orator in her church, and implicit in what she reveals about her life choices. The value Alice places on respect comes from more than her family and church, it comes from her reading of her own life and world. Alice learned valuable lessons about respect as she grew up in segregated Assembly during the fiercest days of the struggle for Civil Rights, as she saw the consequences of young women who got pregnant as teenagers, and the decline in respect for parents and elders in the community. Alice declares in her life story, "I demand that you respect me, but it just doesn't come naturally....I'm going to respect you as an individual and I demand respect myself." These qualities, and many of the stories and words she shares in her life story, surface in her classroom with students. "Strength" in teachers is expected and respected in this context. These are qualities that Alice models intentionally; she draws on them in her teaching, as she does when she tells the students, "Don't take my kindness for weakness." Alice is kind, yet strict, like a good parent. She knows that it is important for her students to see her strength, as an African American, as a woman, as their teacher. This is a clear illustration of what Wolk means when he writes, "The lessons we teach in

the classroom are seldom as powerful as the lessons we teach through our beliefs and behaviors."

The words of J. Bruce Burke (personal communication, 1997) and Parker Palmer (1998) – "We teach who we are" – underscore what we see in Alice's life story and the classroom story "Teaching Respect." As she says herself, "teaching is an extension of life for me." Particularly *her life*. Alice guides students through encounters with literature and a variety of materials that instruct them on personal and social responsibility, tolerance and affirmation of diversity, and respect of self and others – a host of values and ways of being that could make the difference in helping these students navigate successful and fulfilled lives. Alice will speak "truth" to them about life, often drawing these "truths" from her own experience. As Wolk highlights, the critical factor is what "students see in the character and performance" of Alice. For many of the students in this class, these lessons will be learned through their relationship with Alice and what they see in her.

The morning I sat in the Assembly High School English Department office doing my work, between Alice's first and fifth hour African American Literature classes, I listened to the teacher in the room next door drill her students on the parts of speech of a long list of sentences about the novel Little Women. In no way would it be fair or responsible of me to judge this teacher on such a "take" of her classroom. I do not know what the teacher's purposes were for this lesson, the specifics of this lesson, or what this teacher does day-in and day-out in her classroom. I assume that the students had not read the novel, and I assume that the sentences came from a grammar workbook. I would not judge this teacher based upon what I heard through a closed door. However, the situation

I found myself in provided a powerful contrast to what I observed more closely in Alice's classroom. Many stakeholders in U.S. education – people who are students, teachers, parents, in business and other professions – desire education to be like what was taking place beyond that English office door. Such a lesson exemplifies the "functional literacy" of the back-to-basics movement, the type of literacy that seeks to keep "reading" as a process of decoding words on the page, what Pattison (1982) describes as a mechanical skill sufficient enough to ensure someone can read the help wanted ads in a newspaper. I heard students question the value of this work. Clearly they were not connected to the curriculum. If we listen to what students say, watch what they do, we can discover perceptive and valuable critiques of teaching and curriculum.

What Alice does in her classroom exemplifies a teacher trying to cultivate critical literacy. "Cultivation" is the perfect metaphor to describe Alice's work. As she says, "Planting seeds. I'm planting seeds. Hopefully some will take." The seeds Alice sows are distributed generously, and frequently. Even the posters Alice chooses to put on her walls – African American popular culture icons sharing books that are a part of their literate identities and beckoning others to READ – provide a richness to the soil. These posters are part of the content Alice employs to teach for critical literacy, they are part of her belief that students need more than simply what a textbook can supply. Over the course of the semester I documented two changes in the posters she put on the walls. At the beginning of her unit on Zora Neale Hurston she put up five posters with the photographs and writings or speeches of Malcolm X, Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, Frederick Douglass, and Martin Luther King, Jr. At the beginning of a short unit on the African oral tradition, focusing upon proverbs and folk tales, five new posters appeared

on the back wall, each with a biblical quotation from *I John* (3:1, 2:28, 5:2, 4:4, 2:13) set against a floral and pastel background. At first I found these to be in striking contrast to the curriculum students were following. Upon further reflection I was able to see how the African proverbs and folk tales and the biblical passages share an intent to instruct and are part of a rich and diverse tradition of the larger African American community. Each of the passages from *I John* carries a theme of caring for children. In the Christian tradition God is given attributes of a caring parent. Through these passages we see God is a care giver, and in this respect a role model for others. Alice views herself as a child of God, and she herself is charged with the same care giving responsibilities communicated in the posters. It is no coincidence that Alice models the same qualities for her students. I also documented on a number of occasions, especially during informal before class conversations, Alice and her students will talk about church services and events they attended or plan to attend.

When I reflect on my own "uncritical education" I know that the grammar lessons in the low track English classes I took as a high school student, classes in which we did not write or read novels or plays, did not help me to negotiate the substance abuse and other obstacles of my adolescence. As Alice says in her life story, this is what she is about:

I try to give my students a foundation. Sometimes I take risks like when I taught Waiting to Exhale. But I know that it feels good when students say, "Ms. Terry, this is the first time I ever read a whole book." That's what I am about. If I can get my students to read and write, I don't care what it is. And to talk about risky subjects in a tasteful manner. We can talk about sexual relations. I show them that this is something that you can talk about. But knowing how to do it, and just trying to model the type of behavior that's acceptable in polite society, to make them think of themselves as being the key player in anything they want to do. (25 June 1997)

We see Alice doing this, artfully, in the classroom story "Teaching Respect." Toward the end of the lesson Alice asks the class how they would have dealt with the harassment the Little Rock Nine were subjected to. Tyree says, "...I would have gotten violent." When Alice wants to push students' critical thinking and consciousness, she will at times challenge students quickly and directly and other times subtly or circuitously. In this instance Alice's response was subtle and indirect. She recounts the message that the NAACP continued to give to the Nine, "Just keep your cool. You won't be able to make an impact on the situation if you lose your calm, composure. Don't let it get to you." By reminding the students how the NAACP counseled the nine students, she is giving Tyree and others additional information to shape their response to the situation themselves. Alice also reinforces the message that returning violence is not the answer when, drawing on her Christian background, she tells the students that she can forgive anyone if they are sincere in their apologies.

Finally, when Alice tells her students at the end of the class session – "something to think about, what impact this history has on you" – it is the last seed of many she has sown on this day. She is trying to help students understand that the sacrifices made by those nine Black students in Little Rock more than forty years ago made possible the many educational opportunities available to each of them today, opportunities she sees many of them taking for granted. She is trying to help them read the texts of Us and Them, Eyes on the Prize, and her own life story as relevant to reading their own lives and writing possible futures.

### Beyond the First Day: What a Semester With Alice Terry Revealed

In the classroom story we see Alice Terry. Passionate about her work and her students' learning, Alice invests thought and energy and herself in the preparation and facilitating of classroom experiences. Learning communities take time to develop, and our window into one day reveals Alice's work to reinforce an essential quality of any learning community – respect. Even in a course on African American Literature, Alice chooses to make the curriculum multicultural by engaging students in stories of intolerance which cut across races and cultures in U.S. society. The curriculum we see through the one classroom story underscores another important aspect of Alice's practice – her commitment to critical pedagogy. Alice pushes students to examine the realities and crucial issues, both past and present, that have and will continue to have an impact on their present and future lives. She does this because she wants them to be agents, “key players” as she says, in their own lives. Alice also works to create space and opportunities for students to be active learners, to construct meaning for themselves within a community exploring and discussing a number of rich sources, not simply reading one account in a textbook or hearing the teacher's account.

Over the course of the semester I documented how each day Alice Terry helped her students practice and develop their own critical literacy. In this last section of the chapter I will highlight several additional illustrations of Alice's teaching practice and make further linkages between her life and work.

See

here

here

and

here

and

here

this

can

and

per

ap

pro

can

has

and

Sh

As

and

and

### A Passion for Literature: The Zora Neale Hurston Unit

Alice tells us in her life story that she has long had a passion for literature. We see in the classroom story that her passion for the historical and social context of the literature she teaches is just as powerful. She links these two worlds – literature and historical/social context – by selecting materials that are both engaging to students and authentic. Alice’s unit on Zora Neale Hurston is representative of her work teaching literature. Consistent with what we saw in the classroom story from her Tolerance Unit, in this unit we also see Alice expose students to the historical and social context of literature. Students learn about the life of the author, and Alice drives the point home that this African American woman, Zora Neale Hurston, is the genuine article, her works considered “classics” and “literature” by most people. It is important that Alice helps her students revere Hurston, for she wants to show them the beauty that has been created by people of color. Her students are learning to appreciate their own rich heritage of artistic expression. In addition to illustrating Alice’s passion for literature and teaching, this unit provides strong evidence for understanding how a learning community, multicultural curriculum, a social constructivist orientation to teaching and learning, and a reader-response orientation to literature contribute to teaching for critical literacy.

Alice knows her students, their community, and what it will take to survive inside and outside of it. She wants them to be literate, to be thinkers and actors, to have choices. She knows that as African American students from the other side of the river in Assembly, they will need to be critically literate inside and outside this world. She understands that many of the boys in her class already are or will soon be fathers; and the girls mothers. Pushing these young men and women to understand relationships, love,

and how to make a life for themselves is of critical importance. This is one of a constellation of reasons she decides to do an in-depth unit on Zora Neale Hurston, culminating with the novel Their Eyes Were Watching God.

Alice spends approximately seven weeks of the eighteen week semester on Zora Neale Hurston. Three of those weeks were spent looking at Hurston's life, the social context, and writing by Hurston other than Their Eyes..... Alice devotes so much time to this unit for two reasons. First, she wants to prepare students for an appreciation and understanding of Their Eyes..... Alice carefully, artfully, weaves what students need to know to understand Hurston's craft as a writer, particularly her use of dialect and metaphor, the historical context that Hurston lived and wrote in, and the range of Hurston's work as a Black woman scholar at a time when men of color and all women were given limited recognition as artists and thinkers. Second, during the time she has chosen for this unit, Alice must spend time helping students prepare for the State Proficiency Test retakes, retake the test during the course of those seven weeks, and help students get started with their college admission particulars (autobiographies, applications, letters, etc.).

The range of texts they explore in the context of this unit is diverse in form and perspective, impressive in its sophistication. Before ever reading Hurston's major novel they read in the African American Literature anthologies an excerpt from Hurston's autobiography Dust Tracks on a Road. They read a Ms. magazine article by Alice Walker, "In Search of Zora Neale Hurston" (1975), and an account of a 1920 race riot written by Zora Neale Hurston, "The Ocoee Riot," published posthumously by Essence (1989). She showed them the PBS video "My Name Is Zora" performed by Ruby Dees.

Alice read to the class “Sweat,” a short story by Hurston, to introduce them to the author’s use of dialect and the “relationship” theme they would encounter in the novel. Several times when they were reading Their Eyes..., Alice brought in commentaries and critiques, among them from Richard Wright and Maya Angelou. Alice uses multiple texts to help students develop deeper understandings of Zora Neale Hurston, and in doing so she opens a world of voices, perspectives, and broader life connections. Such a curriculum is not just about literature, it’s about life. Such a curriculum is a way for Alice to sow seeds. By experiencing what it is like to make a study of an author (life, social milieu, work), students are exposed to a sophisticated model for learning that, if internalized, will help them become better students, more analytical, and deeper thinkers.

The tasks Alice engages students in are challenging and meaningful, tasks which help students construct understandings of Hurston and her work, as well as prepare them to be successful on the State Proficiency Test, as students of English in her class and beyond, and as literate and active participants in society. An essential component of all Alice’s units is the response journal. The journals serve a wide range of purposes, from open reader responses to writing on a specific question or topic to facilitate interpretation and prepare them for discussion. For instance, after the class had read the Alice Walker article, students wrote in their journals responses to the following prompt: *Imagine you are Alice Walker the writer. What have you learned? Explain how this "search" helped you grow as a writer. Use examples and quotes from your text to support your answer.* Helping students to read and appreciate Hurston’s use of dialect was a principal goal of Alice’s, and to show students how Hurston moved fluidly between dialect her characters used and her own standard English as the narrator. To help students achieve this

understanding and appreciation she gave students dialect passages to translate collaboratively. When they had finished the story “Sweat,” Alice had the students write new endings to the story using dialect, read their versions to the class, and then they discussed the role dialect plays in Hurston’s art as well as challenges dialect poses for writers and readers. The class moved through these many texts sometimes reading silently, sometimes voluntarily taking turns to read out loud, and sometimes being read to by Alice. Discussion played a part in almost every class meeting. Midway through reading the novel students were given a take-home test, but Alice had them work on these in small groups in class first. The culmination of the unit was for students to write a final draft quality essay integrating their response and interpretation of the novel. This unit illustrates a social constructivist perspective to learning. Alice helps her students construct understandings of Hurston through multiple sources, assuming the perspective of Alice Walker in a journal, assuming the perspective of Zora Neal Hurston in rewriting the ending of “Sweat,” in discussion of the literature and issues it raises for them, and so much more. Alice shows them that knowledge is not fixed, that there are many perspectives, ranging from the ones they encounter in the texts they read to the ones represented in the classroom.

The curriculum for this unit was diverse and rich, as were the teaching strategies Alice employed. Many observers might challenge, given what they have seen of Alice’s curriculum and practice, that multiculturalism is central to her practice teaching for critical literacy. Aside from the fact that when Alice teaches classes other than African American Literature her curriculum reveals writings by authors from diverse backgrounds and cultures, this class’s curriculum must also be seen as essentially multicultural. Alice

knows that these senior students have had a lifetime of predominantly Eurocentric curriculum. As Nieto points out, "monocultural education is the order of the day in most of our schools" (1996, p. 312). For many of these students, Alice's class may be their one chance to have a curriculum which focuses upon their culture, their one chance to revel in the historical achievements and cultural contributions of African Americans. Alice's multicultural perspective informs her decisions to integrate many sources and perspectives drawn from within African and African American cultures, which is anything but homogeneous. Beyond the representation of authors and texts from multiple perspectives and backgrounds, Alice's curriculum and pedagogy are critical and anti-bias, qualities consistent with Sonia Nieto's (1996) framework for multicultural education.

Critical educators question and challenge their students, and this is what Alice does consistently. Early in the Hurston unit, Alice talks to the class about the genre of autobiography. She explains how through autobiographies a reader can understand the author, people, and themselves. She underscores that reading Hurston's autobiography will help them understand Hurston's writing, her "craft." Alice also relates the genre to the students' immediate lives. She asks them, "How many of you are going to college?" Almost every student in the class raises her or his hand. She follows the first question with, "You say you are going to college, but are you doing the things you need to do to get admitted?" A silence falls heavy over the already quiet students. Alice is questioning and challenging them. She explains that everyone will need to write their own "autobiography" to submit with college applications. She asks the class if anyone can summarize what the focus of the Hurston excerpt was. Two girls, Tone and Charmian, explain that Hurston wrote about her first encounter with White people, that they were

impressed with her ability to read and she was impressed with their skin color and pink fingernails. Using this summary, Alice tells the class,

When you go to write your autobiographies for college you will only be allowed ten pages to write. You can't write everything that has happened to you in the seventeen years you have lived. Find some event or incident like Hurston does. She focuses on a very specific moment, one of her first encounters with White people, and through this we learn several things important to know about her. She was smart and well-educated, even by White standards. We learn that she didn't like school all that much, she liked to read and she liked recess, but she didn't like arithmetic and writing.

By underscoring how Hurston focused her piece around a critical incident, Alice is pushing her students to do similar life excavation when they write their own autobiographies for college applications. Alice then probes her students on what they have been doing to prepare for college, discovers very little and that few have even looked into available scholarships. Alice emphasizes the seriousness and the importance of getting started. "You are the key player. Nobody is going to do this for you, or cry for you if it doesn't get done. You need to go to the college fairs. You need to look into scholarships. You will be competing with students who have already taken college level classes." Alice reminds them of the three scholarships that are available through the school's English department, scholarships that are based upon journal writing reflecting on senior activities over the course of the year.

In the previous illustration, where Alice challenges students to recognize that they are the "key players" in their own futures, we see how a strong learning community and critical pedagogy contribute to her teaching for critical literacy. Alice knows her students and her students know her. There is mutual respect. We hear in her life story say, "I'm going to respect you as an individual and I demand respect myself." In interviews with

students there is overwhelming agreement among students that she shows respect to students by treating them with care and capable learners, and in return students respect her:

It is Ms. Terry that makes you want to learn. It is not like a teacher...she got like a "Mamma Personality." Like she really cares. And the class is interesting....It is like she really, really wants us to learn, not just so she can get paid. I think a lot of people have a lot of respect for Ms. Terry, which is something they don't have for most of these teachers here, which makes us want to learn. (Gloria, 3 December 1997)

Knowing and respecting one another is essential to a learning community. The learning community is strengthened by the high expectations Alice holds for her students. She believes they can achieve their college dreams, but she knows they must act if those dreams are to come true. In her own life, it was Alice's father who planted the seed for a college dream, "I sure want my kids to go to college" she remembers him saying. He was strict, he demanded that she do her work, and he held high expectations for her, teaching her the lesson that she had to do things for herself and "nurturing" in her a love of books. Her church was the community that supported her. In a community, whether it be the church when Alice was growing up or her classroom for the students, people help one another. In this illustration, the help students need most is to be pushed to question if they have done the minimum in order to succeed. This may seem like a basic lesson. Yet, these students must be pushed to question whether or not they are deluding themselves about college. If they are not pushed, their future opportunities could slip away. Alice knows that. What is taken for granted in more affluent and predominantly White schools in respect to college preparatory work, cannot be taken for granted in this context. Alice takes it upon herself to hold a mirror up to her students, help them read the

world, and challenge them to get their acts together. Critical examination of social structures is at the heart of critical pedagogy. Alice pushes her students to see that they must be agents in a social structure that works against them, or else their dreams for a college education will be little more than pipe dreams.

Alice consistently makes use of life lessons to help students read their own lives and develop critical literacy. Alice maintains high expectations and provides sound and certain personal, academic, and professional support and guidance. In the next illustration we see Alice waking students up to the realities of the State Proficiency Test.

#### Doing What Needs to Be Done: Retaking the State Proficiency Test

Alice returned from a State Department of Education (SDE) meeting one day. Her lesson plan called for review and discussion of Alice Walker's "In Search of Zora Neale Hurston," the reading assignment from the day before while Alice was away. It did not take her long to discover that only a few students had actually done the reading. Disappointed, perhaps not surprised, Alice put the article down on her desk and began to relate something she found out the day before at her SDE meeting, relating it to the reading and journal assignment, the students' performance on the State Proficiency Test, and the preparations necessary for going to college. Alice's facial expression and body language signaled she was mounting one of her life lessons.

Yesterday, while I was at the State Department of Education meeting, the woman who was in charge of the State Proficiency Test came in to give information to our group. I got some very helpful information about the test. Across the State, the weakness that was reflected in the writing of students is in the area of "reflection." What we reflect upon. Where you have to look at your writing and think about, talk about, refer to what you were thinking about. What process did you go through? The other weak area that we are finding with students is that you

do not like to read. You do not spend enough time reading silently. You like to be entertained. Life is not all about entertainment. There's too many whiners in here. You are really working my nerves. If you don't want to do it, don't do it, but stop whining. I feel like I am very skilled in my profession. I know what I am doing. I spend a lot of time trying to help you be better students. You claim you are going to college. The thing is not just getting there, but being able to stay there. Are you qualified and capable? You qualify by being capable of doing what is before you. Either do it or don't, but don't spend your time whining.

Alice scolds her students in an attempt to get their attention. She sees how desperate the situation is. She knows that if they do not have the basic skills and cannot pass the standardized tests they are doomed. The cost to poor students and students of color not getting a good education is greater than for other students in this society. Alice uses words to symbolically grab them by the shoulders and shake them awake. She flatly tells them, "You are really working my nerves," rebuking them for not respecting her enough to do the work assigned. She is proud of how skilled she is and is offended that they do not value what she gives of herself. She will not let them get away with whining. She knows the sacrifices made and the long road traveled for African Americans to win the right for an education. She will not let them throw it all away.

Now today will be a day that will be used to silently read. It is not very difficult reading. It is not a lot of reading, compared to a novel. I am sorry you are used to reading three pages and looking for answers. This is just an article written by Alice Walker that appeared in a magazine. I think it will be very beneficial because tomorrow we are going to read a short story, written by Zora Neal Hurston, to get used to the speech patterns she uses in her writing. In writing this journal I want you to have a conversation with the text. Those of you who have had Mrs. Jones, either in the tenth or eleventh grades, you are used to having a conversation with the text. Hi-lighting and then writing things that appealed to you. That is why I don't do rule set. I try to give you your own individualized, personalized copies, so while you read, you can make notes and when it is time to write or respond to some information, you can do it. All you have to do is refer back to the notes that you have made. You all pretend like you want to be in here. Act like it by doing what is assigned.

Alice gives the students another chance at completing the work they should have already done. She reminds them of what it means to “have a conversation with the text,” a strategy she is using here for mining informational writing for important and appealing details about Hurston’s life. She makes sure they have their own copies so they can mark the text, facilitating deeper and more personalized engagement. She creates a pedagogical opportunity for them, then demands that they take it up, “You all pretend like you want to be in here. Act like it by doing what is assigned.” The stern parent is reproaching her children in an attempt to show them the seriousness of the matter. These are matters of consequence.

Alice chastised her students for not doing what they need to do to be successful in her class and beyond. This may go against what many White teachers feel is respectful teacher-student discourse. Yet, Delpit (1988) and Foster (1997) argue that this kind of “waking up” of students is necessary, especially in schools and environments which hold low expectations for academic performance and beyond. Alice wants more for her students, and she wants them to hold themselves to higher expectations. Even if it means lecturing, sermonizing, and chastising. She will do whatever it takes to get this message across, for as many seeds as possible to take.

### The Beauty of Dialect and Black English Vernacular

Alice chose to include Hurston's short story "Sweat,"<sup>30</sup> their first exposure to her fiction, to teach students to have a "conversation with text" and to appreciate the beauty of the author's use of dialect and Black English Vernacular (BEV). So often BEV is rejected by Whites as inferior and deficient (see Nieto, 1996). Alice sought to help her students appreciate the beauty and complexity of BEV.

Alice read the first half of the story out loud to them in class on one day, then she finished reading the story out loud to them the following class meeting. Alice took the story from an anthology of Hurston's short stories. She made photocopies for each student to have their own. Alice encouraged the students to make notations, to make the copy their own by writing on the pages, by having a conversation with the text. Alice frequently does this. She instructs students in how to refer back to the notes they have made when answering questions or writing papers. Alice is teaching students how to decode text, but to also go beyond that. Alice is exposing the students to a rich background on Zora Neale Hurston: her autobiography, biographies about her, her short fiction, and so much more. Students are learning about Hurston, and her art. They are learning about African American culture. Alice works at illustrating for these students that Hurston is "the real thing." "Don't sell her cheap," she tells them. Perhaps what is most significant in the reading of "Sweat" is that Alice provides these students with an in-depth exposure to dialect. These students speak Black English. And in our society,

---

<sup>30</sup>"Sweat," a short story Hurston published in 1926, is about how the hard working washwoman Delia frees herself from her marriage to Sykes Jones, a lazy, abusive, and cheating husband. The story is representative of the rich dialect and powerful themes concerning human relationships characteristic of her novel Their Eyes Were Watching God.

speaking nonstandard English is often put down and bears consequences. “English only” movements, challenges to bilingual education, and the national debate concerning Ebonics have sent powerful messages. Nieto reveals that

students reprimanded for speaking Black English...pick up a powerful message that the language variety they speak has little prestige and power in our society. Rather than use this information to provide students with critical perspectives...about the role that language and culture plays in their lives, dialogue about such issues is frequently silenced. (1996, p. 93)

Alice teaches them the beauty of dialect and Black English. We see this in the students’ positive responses to Hurston’s writing, especially from Ronnie who asks Alice if Their Eyes... is as good as “Sweat,” because he enjoyed the dialect in that story so much, and if Hurston’s autobiography has “dialect” in it, because he wanted to read more of her writing with dialect. Alice shows them, through the Hurston unit, the origins and depth and beauty of Black English Vernacular. She also provides frequent occasions to help students understand what is “standard” English and in what situations it is best, and at times necessary, for them to know and be able to use it. “Sweat” is their initiation to several further discussions about how and when Hurston uses dialect. Alice is careful to help the students understand when and why Hurston uses dialect and when and why standard English. Alice makes clear to them that there are occasions when using standard English is necessary, when they need to “conform.”

The story “Sweat” also serves to introduce themes that are relevant and meaningful to their lives, themes that they will investigate more closely when they turn to the novel Their Eyes Were Watching God – relationships, forms of abuse in relationships, communication, and love. All these motifs reside in the story and this is how she wants

literature to connect to them – through literature they will be able to identify with significant life issues.

In interviews with students at the end of the semester, several students recalled the way Alice's reading and teaching affected them. "We read the whole thing with Ms. Terry and...[ I ] really understood...just the way she read the dialect it just seemed like it flew out of her mouth" (Khalilah, 3 December 1996). Not only do they understand the dialect when Alice read to them – they understand what she is trying to teach them.

The class helped me a lot because I learned a lot of things that I didn't know and Ms. Terry's fluid way of ...teaching, helped me, you know, grow as a learner, and a writer too because, you know, like with the dialogue and [dialect], I thought that was good....Reading it like that, that was a new thing for me and that helped me because it's like...another way of reading with a book. (Tree, 4 December 1997)

Tree was not the only student to describe her teaching as "fluid" (Gloria) or "smooth" (Ronnie). We see the personal (Alice's and the students') and the pedagogical merge and create comfort and security. Alice's students revere her. They sit captive – respectful and engaged as if listening to a minister. Like Dimsdale in The Scarlet Letter, she can see into their hearts and souls, "street wise" as Shakyra says. She uses "story" from literature like an effective minister uses story from the Bible to teach. The stories she helps them to read – from literature, life, her own life, and their lives – are meant to serve them when they step beyond the classroom. This can be said for any teacher who uses literature, but few really understand such goals. Many want to help their students simply understand the plot, be able to recognize what a metaphor is; yet, Alice seeks to use story to help her students better negotiate their present and future lives. We see this especially in the Hurston unit, where the focus is on relationships and love, life territories these young people are currently and will continue to negotiate.

### Lessons About Life, Love, and Relationships: Learning to Respond to and Negotiate Literature

There are themes in Zora Neale Hurston's writing that surface essential life issues, themes Alice pushes her students to grapple with, such as "relationships." One of the essential life issues that surfaces is "abusive relationships." In one discussion Alice makes it clear that women do not need children and men to complete their lives and make them happy. Both take work. Both are responsibilities. Another life issue that comes up is "interracial relationships." Alice uses a discussion of Maya Angelou's interracial marriage to revisit the issue of "tolerance" and help students understand that such life choices are often weighed carefully. We see in the range of discussions that take place in Alice's classroom how exploration of consequential issues is sanctioned. In the following illustrations of teaching from the Zora Neal Hurston Unit, we will see how Alice uses her own reading of literature to evoke aesthetic response and personal connection in her students, and we will see how she uses literature to facilitate the negotiation of life issues.

On the day Alice begins reading the novel Their Eyes Were Watching God she has students help her arrange the desks in a circle before the bell rings. Khalilah walks in the room and sees what they are doing. She calls out, "Discussion time!" Students love it when the desks are in a circle, even though the room becomes painfully cramped. While people are still coming in the room, I overhear Tyree say to Janet, "What's the matter with you bitch?" She turned to see what he said. "What?" she asked. He laughed, and so did the boy next to him. She shook her head and frowned. The bantering does not go any further. All the students' attention is taken by several students who have run into

the room, excited. It appears that during lunch a girl named Mimi was in a fight with a boy and got beat up. There is an explosion of talk about the issue. I hear one student comment that this is the second or third time in recent weeks that a boy has beaten up on a girl.

It's time for class to begin. Alice is frowning and shaking her head at the students so passionately discussing the fight.

I am struck by the very clear connection between what is happening in these students' social lives – Tyree's "joking" misogynistic address of Janice and how she shrugs it off as typical, of how girls are getting beaten up and this seems "normal" – themes in their worlds which parallel the themes of verbal and physical abuse they encountered in "Sweat" and will encounter in Their Eyes..... When Alice does get the class started, she has the last few students read their endings to "Sweat" and then she picks up a piece of chalk from the tray and writes "RELATIONSHIPS" on the board. Alice tells them, "Relationships are a key component of the book. I think that reading the background, reading a part of her autobiography, we've learned about Zora Neale Hurston, and we will learn more about her as we go along. There's a book, The Complete Stories: Zora Neale Hurston." Alice holds up the book for the class to see, and then passes the book to Ronnie. Over the course of the next twenty minutes this book makes its way around the circle. "In reading that over I saw that most of those stories revolve around relationships. In life," Alice pauses, "let's just talk about life in itself. What kind of relationships do you encounter in life?"

Alice opens the discussion to the class so they can begin to process the relationships in their own lives. The curriculum becomes personal and relevant. They

brainstorm a list of relationships that include members of an extended family, friends, God, teachers, employers, pets. Alice points to the board, turns her body to face it for a moment. “All of these are relationships in your lives, and that come up in the book.

When we read I think a lot of times we reject things if we cannot identify with it. A loose definition for literature has to be that it is a reflection of life. Even though the times in the book are different, the places are different, the people are different, the relationships are similar to those that most of us will encounter one way or another in our lives. All of these relationships may not affect each and every one of you, but most of them will.

What I would like to do is give you the format of this book. What I would like to do is to read the first chapter and lead you into understanding what is happening.”

Alice gives them an overview of how they will proceed, letting them know that she will be reading to them the first chapter, that they will be expected to read other chapters on their own, that they will hear an audio version of excerpts being read by Ruby Dees, and that she will also be “hitting spots and places” with them. They will have journals and other assignments, including a formal essay like they will have in college at the end of the book. Alice emphasizes the need for them to assume responsibility for their work. She emphasizes that they will be working together: “If you are not able to be a team player, you will have trouble being successful. There are some that say 'I'd rather work by myself.' In the work place these days you have to be able to work in a group. It's not all about 'I,' 'Me,' and 'My.' You have to be able to share the responsibility.”

Alice reinforces the learning community. She helps them to understand why collaboration is important to their lives as students and beyond. Alice continues to explain to them what to expect, “You are going to sell yourself short if listening to me

and the tape is all you do. 'I can just go in there and listen to this.' There are gaps, there are pieces missing. Our first writing assignment will cover the first five chapters. So when you come back on Tuesday, be ready to discuss the first five chapters. We'll have a writing assignment on Wednesday from chapters one through five."

The students are excited to begin. From the work they have done leading up to this they have really come to appreciate Hurston, respect what she accomplished as an African American woman, and appreciate her craft. Ronnie asks, "Is this book good? If **this** book is good, like the story 'Sweat,' when I go home I'll read the whole thing **through**." Alice smiles, "I'll let you be the judge of that. I want you to tell me when we **get through** chapter one." Alice has been able to spark in Ronnie an appreciation for Hurston's use of dialect. Ronnie has been moved by the story "Sweat," and he is inspired to **read** more. This is no small feat with students who generally do not turn to books for **pleasure** and entertainment.

### Kindling Interest: Filling the Room with Her Voice

van Manen has said that when a teacher reads out loud her voice and presence has **the** potential to forge a connection with the students. When Alice reads out loud to her **students** she is almost larger than life. The power, grade, and beauty of her reading fills **the** room and kindles her students' interest in literature. When Alice reads to the class the **first** chapter of Their Eyes Were Watching God, she also models for the students her own **Process** of interpretation and sense-making. She leads them through a process of **visualizing** the action. For instance, in this first chapter it is essential that readers understand that the main character, Janie, is returning to her home town after having been

away for a long time, and as she enters the small town on foot all eyes are on her and all talk about her. Alice reviews what simile, metaphor, and symbol are as literary devices, and then pulls out for class discussion

---

examples of Hurston's use of metaphor in this chapter, and alerts them to make note of each use of "nature" throughout the book so they can discuss symbolic usage in class.

**Her** eloquent reading engages all students. For example, Emmett comments to his friend Tree at one point while Alice had to take a phone call, "Man, usually I have to fight to stay awake, because, you know,

usually I eat something at lunch and I just got to fight to stay awake. Wow, not today, **this** is great." Tree nods, showing he shares the same feelings about this particular class session. Both of these boys often doze in class. Emmett and Tree are experiencing an aesthetic response to the sound of the language, the images of the story, and the performance Alice is creating. As Tree said in an interview more than a month later, she puts a "curse" on students (see text box). The students are lit up by her reading of the book. The curse she puts on them, is the curse of being inflamed by the words of a great artist delivered by a charismatic orator. They cannot help but be charmed and hypnotized by the power of Alice's reading.

MeShell: I think [reading out loud] helped a lot because I read the book and I liked it and I understood it real good. But for a lot of people that didn't understand it, like Tree didn't understand, well, Ms. Terry would get up, and it seemed like the way she moved her hands and the way she talked about stuff...

Ronnie: Like when she read the parts...

Gloria: She broke it down like before we had a test or something which made it real easy for the test that we had. Made you understand.

Tree: She made a lot of stuff clear. She put a curse on you...

Ronnie: Yeah, the way she talking, I like her as a teacher.

Michael Michell: Tell me what you mean, like she has a "curse" on you. That is descriptive. That is helpful.

Tree: She makes you understand like she can hypnotize and you can sit down and listen to her and get what she is talking about. Like that.

(Group Interview, 4 December 1996)

---

Alice had been reading and walking students through interpretation of the first chapter for thirty minutes. She reads and explains to the students what she wants them to “see,” and what they are unable to see without her assistance at this time. Both the class and chapter were coming to an end. Alice helped the students to visualize and understand the men sitting on the porch watching Janie walk up the street and talk about her, about her history and how they viewed her as a sexual object. Alice continued to read.

*The men noticed her firm buttocks like she had grape fruits in her hip pockets; the great rope of black hair swinging to her waist and unraveling in the wind like a plume; then her pugnacious breasts trying to bore holes in her shirt. They, the men, were saving with the mind what they lost with the eye. The women took the faded shirt and muddy overalls and laid them away for remembrance. It was a weapon against her strength and if it turned out of no significance, still it was hope that she might fall to their level some day.*

“Oh, no.” Simone sighs audibly filling the room with a reaction of disgust. She **sits** next to me in the circle. Her tone, posture, and even the change in her breathing **indicates** she sees and knows. She will continue to utter “Mmm, Mmm” as Alice reads.

“What was that all about?” Alice asks.

Michele answers, “All they cared about was the woman and her clothes.”

“The men were just interested in her sex,” Simone says.

Helping students see the element of human nature in this story and how there are **options** to choose from regarding human conduct, Alice says, “You know, everybody is **the** same. I don’t care how much money you have or don’t have, but you can still have **pride** and dignity and self-respect. Carry yourself with dignity. But sometimes we pull **ourselves** down. And she thinks she’s all alone.” Alice is responding to Simone’s response. Indirectly, Alice is saying that women do not have to allow themselves to be objectified, they can choose not to be pulled down by themselves and others.

"I don't," Gloria says.

"Sometimes people think that," Alice responds. "Other people say that about them. A lot of people think it's a joke. You know, 'I thought you thought she was cute.' You know, people say it." Alice continues this process of reading a few lines and probing students' understanding and

visualization (see text box). She gets near to

the end of the first chapter and shares with the

class, "And this is my favorite line in the whole

book. *'If God don't think no mo' 'bout 'em then*

*Ah do, they's a lost ball in de high grass.*"

Alice pauses. Students want to know what it

means and why it is her favorite. The students seem enchanted by Alice's clear love of

this book and its language. As she reads and talks about what is happening, she relishes

the poetry. Alice asks the students to picture a ball in high grass. Then she asks them to

imagine how that image gives meaning to the character's impression of the people on the

porch talking. There are smiles and laughs among the students as the image gives

meaning to the text. It is at this point Aesha says, "That's a metaphor, Ms. Terry, isn't

it?" Alice, pleased with the connection, smiles and tells her it is. Alice has accomplished

much in her "simple act" of reading. She has entranced her students. She has gotten

them hooked into the story. And she has helped them recognize in context the literary

device they discussed earlier. Aesha now knows metaphor. No longer is it a technical

term that some teachers might ask their students to define. She recognizes it, understands

it, and is clearly pleased with her new understanding.

---

Yolanda: She puts pictures in my head when she reads. I can just picture every little bit that she is saying. Like when I read it I can't stand it.

Darron: She can take the most boringest thing and read it so you like it.

JoJo: Ms. Terry can keep reading because nobody else read like Ms. Terry.

(Group Interview, 3 December 1996)

---

After Alice has finished the first chapter she helps the students put this chapter in perspective of the remainder of the novel, "She was telling a story. The line at the end – *'Janie full of that oldest human longing—self revelation'* – is important. You know when something happens to you and you want to tell somebody? Well that's what Janie and Phoebe are going to do. It was early evening, and she was going to talk until late in the night. I want you to understand, chapter two is the flashback."

"What do you mean?" Charmian asks.

"I want you to understand," Alice explains, "because the bell is going to ring in a couple of minutes. The rest of the book, beginning with chapter two, goes back to Janie's early life. A flashback. You know how when you go to a movie sometimes, this is a flashback because she has to go all the way back to the beginning of her life for Phoebe to understand. I want you to make a notation somewhere on a piece of paper all the times nature is referred to in the book. Tyree?"

Tyree asks, "You said chapter two is a flashback. After chapter two is it a flashback?"

"All of it" Alice explains. "It is going to start back in her childhood and bring us all the way up to now."

Several students turn to others, trying to find out what Alice meant. "What did you say Mrs. Terry?" Tone asks.

Alice reminds them that tomorrow she will be out of town. They will be listening to the audiotope version of the novel. "Throughout the book, when she talks about nature, I want you to make note of it. Anything of nature. Okay, tomorrow, this chapter will be just a few minutes and then it will go on to chapter two. A whole lot of details

have been left out. Mostly it is the dialogue. Okay? When I see you Tuesday have chapter one through chapter five read. Are you going to do that?" Alice asks.

A chorus of "yeses" are called out.

"Okay Ronnie, what do you think about the book? Is it happy, is it a good book?"

"I likes the dialect Ms. Terry," Ronnie answers. "I'll read it all over the weekend." As he leaves he says, "Mmmm. This is a good story." Ronnie's promise of reading the book over the weekend is remarkable. We do not know if he actually did, but his response speaks to a motivation Alice sparked.

Just as the bell rings I ask Simone if I can talk to her about some of her reactions to this first chapter. I was particularly interested in her audible reactions to how the men on the porch were checking Janie out. Simone is seventeen and four months pregnant.

"The story was pretty interesting," Simone says. "I liked it. I think I will enjoy reading it." I ask her if she can explain what initiated those audible responses I heard, what she was thinking. She says, "How they were being cruel to the woman."

"What did you think about that?" I asked her.

"Oh, you know, it is like that." She hesitates and looks up at me. "I am a woman. Men are like that. They check out how you look and if they like you or not."

"Does that bother you?" I ask.

"No," she says, "not really."

Simone leaves and I am left alone with Alice at her desk for a few moments before her eleventh grade Advisory Class comes in. Alice, smiling and obviously pleased with the experience says, "I looked around and everybody, with one or two exceptions, you know, was into it. I enjoyed it," Alice said. "I enjoyed it. You know I do." Alice is

sparkling. The passion she feels for literature and teaching come through. Alice's passion is what enlivens her classroom. Jung has been quoted as saying, "only the seized person can seize another" (as quoted by Hillman, 1997). In Alice's case it would be, "only the passionate teacher can impassion her students." Alice manages to get her students to appreciate literature. If Alice reduced Their Eyes... to reading assignments and multiple choice comprehension quizzes, we would not see the signs of aesthetic response as we do in Simone, Ronnie, or Tree and Emmett. As we heard from students in the interview, Alice's expressive reading "made you understand" and put a "curse on you." The students value her reading to them. She brings "home" the richness of African American heritage and culture. She helps them negotiate their worlds by pushing them to problematize relationships, and challenging the inevitability of self-destructiveness and misogyny. Will Tyree make the connection between what Alice has said in this unit about abusive relationships to his own comment to Janice, "What's the matter with you bitch?" Will Janice make the connection? Will Simone, who is pregnant, make the connection between what Alice has said about self-destructive behavior and personal responsibility to her own life? These remain open questions. What we do know is that Alice has planted seeds.

### Men and Women Together

Over the next several weeks, Alice and her students read and discuss the novel and Hurston's craft as a writer. Issues surface, about love and relationships, and these are related to life issues the students all deal with. These discussions often inspire Alice to give a "life lesson," drawn from her own experiences. For example, one day while

exploring reasons why Janie's relationships with Logan and Jody failed, the students determine that "lack of communication" was key. They discuss how both these men tried to control Janie. Boys and girls in the class easily relate to how Jody's jealousy over the attention Janie gets from men resulted in Jody trying to control her rather than talk to her about his feelings. Their discussion revealed an understanding of how Janie's resentment of Jody's control ended up in violence. Two students share their own examples with boyfriends who they claim are controlling like Jody. The discussion, interpretation of text and life texts, leads Alice to a life lesson.

Being direct with the class, Alice declares that young women need to see themselves as being good enough on their own, that they do not need a man to make them complete. "I teach a class at my church on Tuesday nights for young women. When I say of young women, they are younger than I am. I think the class range is eighteen to thirty-five years in age. One of the issues we talk about is that it seems we are the last of the generations where people made women feel that they had to be married to be considered respectable members of society. If you were unmarried, there was a part missing from your life. So, in many instances, women turned to relationships that were unfulfilling." Alice spells out the life lesson for these students. "But now, if I were to counsel a young woman I would tell her you don't have to be married to be or feel like a whole person. Especially if you go out and get yourself some training. Get a job."

Alice wants her students to develop positive self-concepts, to see themselves as valuable and not "pull themselves down" as she told them the day they began reading Their Eyes.... Alice is a strong woman who has created a full life for herself. She has a meaningful vocation and wants the young women in her class to seek fulfilling lives

themselves, not just be becoming someone's wife. "Many women are opting for careers. A woman friend of mine who works in the corporate world, she has to go to Germany, she has to go to Greece, she has to go to Mexico regularly. And she stays for a period of time. Sometimes she comes home just to change luggage. Just to get some additional clothes and to go back into the office and get some things. And she says, 'I am in the office or on the road. I have to make sure that in my hotel room they have a separate telephone line so I can plug up my laptop, and I can get my email. I have to have several Yale locks at the hotel.' And she was just talking about all of the things. And she knew that if she had family this would alter her career choices, her career path. Many times, if you are not available to travel, to go where you are needed, then you are locked into a certain position. You may never rise higher." In my final interview with Alice we talked about the ways in which her teaching is political. One of those ways concerned the fine line she must walk between the community's values and the kind of cultural capital she knows students will need in order to survive in the world outside this community.

Assembly High is predominantly a minority school. When our students leave, especially if they go into a public domain or to a state university or college, they will not be going into the same type of atmosphere they left. All people don't think like you. Some things are universal. But there are some things that you need to be prepared for. One, people will not be as accepting of you because you are different. There are some things you need to know, things that are not acceptable. People tolerate you but, you know, you will be laughed at. You will be scorned because you don't have table manners, or if you don't know how to talk. This is necessary. It takes sensitivity to teach these things. People in the community trust me. I have taught many of their parents. But it is a very fine line. (Alice Terry, June 1997)

This is one of those "fine line" political moments for Alice. She knows how important family is in the Black community. She knows that getting married and having children is seen as a rite of passage into adulthood by many. But Alice has seen the young people's

lives that do not reach their potential because they became parents too soon. She wants her students to keep their options open and their horizons wide.

She continues, “And I feel that marriage, that a relationship, if it is right, is one of the most beautiful things that can happen between two people. It is not all smiles and grins every day. But if you are committed to each other, then you know, ‘We have problems, we are going to work through this together.’ But just for the sake of being Mrs. So and So, I think we are getting away from that. We need to get away from that. But older people still ask, ‘When are you getting married?’ And then you go through, ‘When are you having a baby?’ It’s treated as if something is wrong with you if you don’t have a baby. Because society was just geared toward families but, you know, if you look at your choices sometimes, and just to say that I am married, just to have a husband, just so that I would be miserable, is that worth it? Same thing with a man. You have choices. I don’t think you have to be a dog, but if you know you are not going to be true to somebody, then don’t mess up their life. Don’t mess up your own life. Something to think about. There are choices to be made. You can be decent and respectable, so forth, and so on.” Alice tells her students directly about what it means to be in a relationship. She makes the young women aware that they do not need a man to be “whole.” On the contrary, she gives an example of a woman who “globe trots” and is successful. Alice does say that a good relationship is a thing of beauty – emphasizing “good.” She knows that her students need the lessons of love and desire, as all adolescents do. She knows several of her students are parents already. So she wants to teach them to critically evaluate what they want and expect from life. She asks them to reevaluate the messages they are receiving to make decisions in their own best interest.

### Men and Women Together... Interracially

Toward the end of the unit, the day before Halloween, Alice began class by walking down the rows and passing out pencils decorated with jack-o-lanterns, witches, and ghosts. She then began sharing something she had recently read. Her intention was to move the students into a critical discussion of Hurston's craft as a writer. However, several critical issues about interracial marriage, tolerance, and homosexuality surfaced instead. Alice and her students have created the kind of community in which it is okay to ask questions or pose challenges that sidetrack the intended lesson. I believe it is in such moments, when Alice is planting the seeds of life

lessons, that her students recognize she is treating them as adult thinkers. Several students said in interviews how much she made them think (see text box).

---

She brings in things from home around here. Like something in a newspaper, current events, she might bring up and she make you think. (Gloria, 4 December 1996)

---

"Over the weekend when I was out of town I went to this bookstore and bought several works by African American authors. I bought Zora Neal Hurston's autobiography, Dust Tracks on the Road. I was reading it this weekend. It was very interesting to see what other people say, you know. This book has a forward by Maya Angelou. In the forward she brings up many of the same issues that some of you brought up about Zora Neal Hurston, that you saw about how she sold her work and she wrote just for White people. One of you said she was a sell-out. Some of the same issues that you brought up, Maya Angelou addressed also. So that was interesting to see. I would like to share...."

"Is there a lot of dialect?" Ronnie asks, hoping there will be.

"There isn't a lot of dialect in it because she was talking about people. When she does talk herself it is not written in dialect," Alice explains. Though she does not discuss the issue here, earlier in the unit, when reading an essay by Hurston, Alice helped students see and understand the circumstances of when the author moved between dialect and her own standard English.

Alice continues with what she was telling the students about Maya Angelou's Forward, "I would like to share something Maya Angelou has written about Zora Neale Hurston. This is interesting to note because Maya Angelou is an acclaimed author and poet, *'This puzzling book.'*" Alice pauses. "She is talking about Dust Tracks on a Road." Alice proceeds to read a long excerpt from the Forward to the book. In the excerpt Alice reads, Angelou questions why Hurston, who was born in the 1890s and wrote the book in 1940/41, does not address race issues and incidents, "*'The southern air around her most assuredly crackled with the flames of Ku Klux Klan raiders, but Ms. Hurston does not allude to any ugly incident.'*" Angelou's tone approaches condemnation of Hurston. What Alice shares in the two page excerpt is Maya Angelou problematizing Hurston's work and the social and professional milieu she worked within. Just as Alice begins to explain, "What Angelou is saying...." she is cut off.

Tone, with rising intonation in her voice, asks, "Who wrote that?"

"Maya Angelou," Alice says again. "She writes, *'There is a strange distance in this book.'*" So, she is questioning this book. She is questioning Zora Neal Hurston."

Sharply, Tone cuts in, "Who is Maya Angelou to talk. She married a White man..."

"She was raising some issues," Alice responds. Continuing to read from the Forward, "*Certainly the language is true and the dialogue authentic, but the author stands between the content and the reader.*" Alice stops. She looks up from the page, eyes on Tone. "That is a serious question that you raised. Does it make anybody any less of their race because they marry somebody of a different race?"

"Yes," Tone says unequivocally.

"Why?" Alice pursues.

JoJo jumps in, "No, it don't make somebody lesser. They still whatever they is. Regardless of what they marry."

"Well, do you look at them as a sell-out?" Alice asks.

Tone, trying to regain the floor, "Yes."

"Why?" Alice asks again.

"Because I don't know how they marry a White," Tone says with sincere frustration. "I am saying, you love whoever you love or whatever, I don't disagree with that. But I disagree with people who date solely outside of their race. I consider them sell-outs." Tone is passionate about this issue. She feels safe enough to raise this controversial topic in Alice's classroom. Alice has created a learning community in which students know their ideas and concerns will be respected.

Pushing them further, Alice asks, "Okay. The reason why?"

Charmian adds, "They just happened to fall in love, a White man, who you know, date two or three Black people, and they fall in love, and they want to marry. But you get some people who marry off with a White man, and they go off to the White side and don't come back to their own side."

"Okay," Alice prepares to bring closure to this discussion, "I think I would deal with this the same way as when, you know, you get all emotional when we talk about homosexuality. I feel that anytime a person lays themselves open to ridicule, to risk, to whatever, I feel that they have a hard time. Sometimes a segment of society gives people who marry interracial a hard time. I think the couple has given it a whole lot of thought. Do you know what I am saying? I don't feel that I should be judgmental of someone who marries someone of a different race. I have already gotten to the point where we accept people just for people. And that is what we are striving for. And it has to start with a generation of people beginning to accept others solely on the basis of their worth as an individual, not based on skin color. Will it ever come? That may be a bit idealistic. Do you think we will ever get to that point?" Alice gives her opinion. She uses her role as an authority figure to help guide her students to being more thoughtful.

"No," says Charmian.

Gloria affirms, "No one else does."

"If it is not that," Alice says, "then there will always be something else to tear us apart? Okay, now let me finish this paragraph." Alice uses Tone's comment as a teachable moment. Tone's vehement response to Angelou's critique and what she knows of her life choices is indicative of the politics of race and gender. Tone believes strongly that Whites and Blacks should not date or marry one another. Alice tries to further the discussion by inserting thoughtfulness and tolerance. She revisits homosexuality and tries to have her students see that love in all its forms may need further contemplation on their part. Alice skillfully returns to her Tolerance Unit in a seamless way. She connects intolerance of interracial marriage to intolerance of homosexuality in an attempt to have

students rethink their judgmental attitudes. Alice inserts herself in meaningful and direct ways when she wants her students to rethink their positions. She consistently tries to broaden their horizons, urging them to want more and be more, whether it is having a more open and tolerant world view or it is their ability to successfully navigate the mores of multiple communities.

### Broadening Horizons: From Plays to Table Manners

On the day Alice is concluding a short unit on African Proverbs and Folk Tales and beginning a short unit on August Wilson and African American Drama, she sees an opening to usher in a life lesson on broadening their horizons. The play they will begin reading before the end of class is Wilson's "The Piano Lesson." She has the class look at an 1894 painting by Bearden in their anthology bearing the same title as the play. She inquires about who plays musical instruments, takes singing, acting, or dancing lessons. She also questions them on their experiences seeing theatrical productions. She takes in the limited number of students who have experience with the range of performing arts. "All of these will widen your horizons," she tells them.

She continues, "You know, we talked a lot about the horizon when we talked about Their Eyes Were Watching God, and how Janie felt that her life was so narrow and so limited because all Nanny knew about was getting married. There is a whole world out there and hopefully you will have the opportunity and take advantage of the opportunity to get exposure. Sometimes I'll be talking to a friend and they'll mention something and I'll say, 'Oh, never done that. I'd like to do that,' just based on what somebody else said. I mean, it is the same thing with food. You might be at a setting

sometime, might be at a job interview, and this company is a Fortune 500 company and they want to see how you will fit in, in the scheme of things, so they take you to lunch at a very classy restaurant. And just knowing that you have some mashed potatoes and you grab a spoon and start eating them. Everyone at the table may look at you and think, 'Oh, no, this person won't work here.' You are not supposed to eat mashed potatoes with a spoon." Alice subtly positions students to visualize themselves as part of a Fortune 500 company, urging them to see themselves as successful.

A second of telling silence falls across the room. The students are genuinely surprised with the last thing Alice said. The silence is followed by a burst of chatter among students and questions for Alice.

Janice asks, "If you don't eat them with a spoon then what do you do."

"With a fork," Gloria answers.

Emmett calls out, "If you don't use a spoon how do you get all the juices?"

"This is just normal table etiquette," Alice tells them. "I'm going to have Ms. Davis come down and do some table etiquette with us before we have our Kwanza celebration. There is a difference. Getting that job may depend upon knowing the difference. You have to go where you are comfortable. And then we have to realize that sometimes our personal preference is not what it is all about. What is important to you? Getting this job? Having this interview? Getting some scholarship money? Understand what is happening? There might be settings, there might be places, that you have to go. That is why there used to be a dress code. Studies show that when people look good they act better. If you've got on your good stuff you are not going to be rolling around,

carrying on. You know what I am saying.

Whenever the opportunity arises to get some exposure or do something, take advantage of it. If you have the opportunity to go away to college and there are plays and speakers, go. Go to learn. Just to say, 'I'm not going because I don't like that...' is not going to broaden your horizons.

---

Assembly High is predominantly a minority school. Many of our students, when they leave, this may not be the type of atmosphere they are entering into, especially if they are going into a...state university or college. They need to realize that all people don't think like them....There are some things I try to tell them that they need to know...one that people will not be as accepting of you because you are different...there are some things you need to know that you don't know that are not acceptable. People tolerate you but, you will be laughed at. You will be scorned because you don't have table manners, or you don't know how to talk to people. And this is necessary.  
(Alice, 25 June 1997)

---

You are not going to be entertained all your life. And there is much more to learn than you already know. Take advantage of opportunities. When you don't, you are cutting yourself off." Alice does more than ask students to imagine themselves as successful. She opens a window for these students to see how they might get there, and what kind of expectations that world will have of those who are a part of it. Alice is blunt with them. She knows they will be judged harshly for being different by those who are in power. She knows they will need to know the conventions of etiquette. She is in the position of being able to help them learn these lessons in the safety of their class – in a community where it is okay to talk about anything.

Alice does so much. She inspires. She kindles interest in literature with her passion and engaging oratorical power. She plants the seeds of life lessons, from taking personal responsibility of their lives to understanding what is socially acceptable in multiple contexts. She does so much to help students stretch and grow and develop. But we need to recognize that no single teacher can do it all.

### A Teacher Cannot Do It All

Alice helps her students become better readers, writers, and thinkers. She exposes them to a body of knowledge and literature that grows out of their own heritage and provides a much fuller window into social history and institutions of the U.S. She helps them confront issues vital to their lives. She broadens their horizons and urges them to continue the process. She creates a community where they learn about themselves and the world, where culture is celebrated, like the end of the semester Kwaanza party, and so much more.

As Alice says, she plants seeds and hopes some will take. Simone's reaction to Alice's reading Their Eyes Were Watching God is an example of a seed starting to sprout. Simone knew "that is how men are." She connected. One day, toward the end of the semester, Simone circulates a photo album. Khalilah has the three-by-five inch photo album. I ask Simone if I can look at it when Khalilah is finished. Simone smiles and says yes. I watch Khalilah. She sees pictures of children and she smiles and she asks Simone who they are. In two of the cases they are nieces. Khalilah smiles. Occasionally she comes across a picture that makes her shake her head, "That gang shit."

The album comes to me. The book has writing on it and in it. It is well worn. The plastic sheaths inside are torn at the seams from fingers reaching in to pull out pictures. The first picture is a photocopy of her baby's ultrasound. As I turn the pages I see several pictures of friends and family, some taken by instamatics, some portrait studios, some school photographs. There is a picture of her mother. There is a picture of her best friend. There is a picture of a young couple all dressed up for a prom. All the subjects of these photographs are smiling. I come across a picture of Tupac Shakur, the

rap singer who led and died a violent life. The picture is the cover of one of his cassette tapes, Me Against the Wind. I have seen several pictures of small groups of mostly boys, young boys ten to seventeen years old, occasionally girls mixed in. In these pictures the boys are making signs with their hands and fingers. I do not know what the signs mean. (Obviously I am not supposed to.) I infer these are the pictures Khalilah was reacting to. Written below one of these photographs is "Lincoln Street Slayas." I assume this is the name of the gang, and that "slaya" means "killer." It is one picture, close to the end, that really shakes me up. It is a picture of five boys and two girls. One boy holds a bottle of beer. Another one holds a large revolver across his abdomen in profile for the camera. In contrast to the subjects in the other photographs, the subjects in the gang photographs are in posed hardness. They are practicing coldness and emotionlessness. This strikes me. I am also struck by the tightness of the group. Power and protection in numbers.

I was very disturbed and saddened for Simone when I saw the gang photographs. Many questions ran through my head. Is Simone in a gang? Is the father of her child in a gang? I have read in Peggy Orenstein's SchoolGirls (1994) that often girls get "raped into" a gang. I wonder if her pregnancy came from this experience. I am saddened because of the limited future I can imagine for Simone and her baby.

The bell rings and students leave. I go up to Alice's desk to talk. She reads the emotion in my face and asks me what's going on.

"Simone was passing around her picture book," I begin, "I asked if I could see it, out of interest. I guess I wasn't prepared for what I saw. I mean, I am not used to seeing people I know, like Simone or any of these students, in gang situations. I guess what hit me was that last week I was sitting next to Simone the first day we read Their Eyes... and

talking to her a little bit, and I felt like this connection with her. And then I felt some sadness today when I looked at the pictures."

"What were the pictures?" Alice asked me.

"Just her friends and family and stuff like that, but in several they were doing gang signs. There was one with a group of young boys doing gang signs and one was holding a revolver. And so, for me, that was unsettling, but I felt that sadness because just talking with her, and especially because she is pregnant, it raised all sorts of questions for me, like whether Simone is part of this."

"Yeah, does she glorify that?" Alice adds.

"Yeah," I say, "and is she okay?"

"It is just a big joke to them," Alice says with certainty. She has covered this territory in her own head before.

"Is it?" I say with surprise.

"It is a big joke," Alice explains. "They don't see themselves and how hopeless it looks. You know what I am saying? You can't help but feel hurt. You know, you just limit the choices you can make by just some of the things that you do."

"And that is exactly what you are talking about with this novel," I make the connection. "That is exactly what I hear you trying to help them think about, relating to this novel. And it goes beyond just relationships. I mean, it is certainly grounded in relationships, with this novel, but I hear very clearly when you are saying that no matter what, you have to make the decisions."

"That is right." Alice says, and with punctuating emphasis, "Ultimate decisions."

"And there are choices, and so that goes across the board." I begin to understand through her more experienced eyes. "Maybe I am just too sensitive about these things."

"You can't help but be," Alice tells me with understanding and support, "because you know what the real world is like. You know what they have to face. You know how hard it is, even when you call yourself doing the right thing, and making wise choices. There's still some times, if crying would help, you would cry. I agree. Because Simone, you know, she seems like a little tomboy to me. And that is why I was surprised when I noticed that she was pregnant. And you just wonder, what kind of life are you setting up?"

We both lament the life Simone and her soon-to-be-born child seem to be moving toward. Alice has seen this situation many times before in this world. I have not. Yet the sadness remains for both of us, for there are many Simones in schools across the country.

It is important for readers to understand that a teacher only has limited capacities to change the lives of students. Alice plants seeds, but cannot make the flowers grow. We hold hope for what our teachers can accomplish, we hope they can change children's lives for the better, and the more desperate the life the more change we hope for. But there are no guarantees. There are so many factors. Not Alice, nor any teacher, can save the world. As a teacher she can position them to be better prepared to save their own lives... some seeds will take and some will not. She is not a miracle worker. There are so many influences upon young people, influences that compete dramatically with the life lessons Alice teaches. A multitude of factors influence the lives and futures of kids,

gangs, and violence among them. Alice does all she can to promote critical literacy. But she can only do so much.

### What is Within and Beyond Reach

How does Alice Terry help her students read and write *their* worlds? How does she cultivate her students' critical literacy? I see a majority of hands raise when she asks the class how many plan to go to college, and then looks of questioning spread across many of their faces as Alice reminds them of the responsibilities that must be met if those dreams of continuing education are to come true. I hear the echo of Tree's statement, "Wow, this is great," and of Simone's groans of recognition and connection as Alice reads dramatically the first chapter of Their Eyes Were Watching God, and helps students to break down and visualize what is happening as Janie returns home. I feel the sense of pain and self-doubt as a pervading silence creeps across the room when Alice tells them, "You are not supposed to eat mashed potatoes with a spoon," and Emmett asks, "If you don't use a spoon how do you get all the juices?" These and so many other moments illuminate Alice's teaching for critical literacy.

When I weigh what is most striking about Alice Terry's work cultivating students' critical literacy, I am reminded of the story of the wise witch:

Once there was a wise old woman, a witch, who lived in a small village. The children of the village were puzzled by her – her wisdom, her gentleness, her strength, and her magic. One day several of the children decided to fool the old woman. They believed that no one could be as wise as everyone said she was, and they were determined to prove it. So the children found a baby bird and one of the little boys cupped it in his hands and said to his playmates, "We'll ask her whether the bird I have in my hands is dead or alive. If she says it's dead, I'll open my hands and let it fly away. If she says it's alive, I'll crush it in my hands and she'll see that it's dead." And the children went to the old witch and

presented her with this puzzle. “Old woman,” the little boy asked, “this bird in my hands – is it dead or alive?” The old woman became very still, studied the boy’s hands, and then looked carefully into his eyes. “It’s in your hands,” she said. And so it is. (story related by Carter Heyward in Our Passion for Justice)

What I am reminded of is Alice’s insight into human nature, and her vision to speak to the present and future needs of her students in ways that touch them. I am reminded of the same simple wisdom the wise witch conveys in the words, “It’s in your hands”; for Alice conveys similar simple wisdom. “You are the key player,” I have heard her say to students on more than one occasion. She understands that nobody can make another person act in certain ways. The wise witch could not stop the boy from killing the bird by saying, “Don’t kill the bird.” Alice cannot make her students come to class, prepare for college, or do all their work by telling them to do so. She cannot keep them from jumping in the middle of a fight to help their “boy,” or keep them from getting pregnant or getting someone pregnant. What both Alice and the wise witch do is help others think for themselves so when they make choices, the choices are their own and they must live with the consequences of those choices. That is a powerful gift, the gift of critical literacy.

In this chapter on Alice Terry we hear through her words and see in her practice how her life experiences have greatly influenced her teaching. She says explicitly, “Teaching is an extension of life for me.” Alice shares with her students the wisdom she has pulled from life. In Alice we see a woman who was raised with strong Black role models around her. Her father, a minister, “He was a teacher. He would teach other ministers and he would have classes in our home. So I was always around that type of environment and it just came naturally.” Alice’s father was her first teacher, and her role

model. He inspired her. Through her father she sees what is possible in strong Black men. She wants that strength for her students, for both men and women. She knows the statistics of Black men in prison versus college. She knows it can be different. She sees herself as part of the solution to make it different. Her critical pedagogy seeks to help students value education, their lives, and the possibilities the world holds for them and they hold for the world.

Alice shaped this course out of an understanding of the needs of students in her community, and a vision of what a unified community can look like. Alice seeks to cultivate that strength of community, in her classroom, in her students. In the same way we saw Carol as a curriculum creator, Alice has created a curriculum that honors the lives in front of her. She has created a curriculum that is responsive to her students' needs. She tries to create curriculum that is meaningful and relevant to her students. Both Alice and Carol are leaders in their school for curriculum change and innovation. It is important to note that both these teachers are hard workers and will do what it takes to meet the needs of their students. Even agreeing to participate in this study says much about how much they are willing to do to learn more about their own teaching and learning. The hours spent in interviews, the reading of new resources, the willingness to make the time and the energy to collaborate with me and others should not be underestimated. Alice is a lifelong learner who reaches out to others for new knowledge. She wants her students to see the price others have paid before them so they could have the right to an equitable education.

In Alice Terry we see a woman who dresses professionally, and stylishly. This may seem to be an insignificant feature, yet, Ladson-Billings argues that dressing well for

work is part of effective teaching of African American students. To illustrate this point, Ladson-Billings writes about Mrs. Dupree, a Black teacher she studied:

The girls in her class sometimes peek around the classroom door in the morning to see what she is wearing. When one of her students asked why she was always 'so dressed up,' Dupree replied that she dressed the way she did because she was coming to work and she worked with very important people, so she wanted to look good." (1994, p. 35)

We see Alice also wants to communicate to her students that they are important enough for her to dress up for. Even subtle messages like this are powerful affirmations and efforts to develop students' self-esteem, and do not go unnoticed, as Michele says, "I like the way she dress. I do" (4 December 1996). Alice also tells the students how they dress will make a difference in how they carry themselves when she speaks about Fortune 500 futures.

Alice's life story speaks of how much she values reading. She was lonely and her reading helped ease her loneliness as a young person. She wants the same for her students. She knows that literature could offer her students so much to combat the loneliness, confusion, and isolation some of them must be feeling at this vulnerable age. She knows they turn to gangs and other avenues to receive succor. She wants them to turn to healthful things, the church, reading, the community. In her teaching, Alice skillfully blends decoding of literature and appreciation of literature at the same time. She enables her students to become both functionally literate and critically literate.

Alice constructs curriculum that is relevant and makes sense to the students her students. She honors the lives in front of her. As she says, "The personality, or feeling of my class can dictate whether we do something more in-depth or we just scrap it all together." When Tone talks with disgust about interracial marriage, Alice uses it as an

opportunity to engage in critical pedagogy. She takes an anti-bias tact, and urges them to reread their perspectives.

When Alice sees something being relevant to the students she will include it if she thinks it will make a difference in students' lives, for example, the life lesson on appropriate table etiquette in formal settings. Again, her own lessons undergird what she wants to teach her students. They have the capacity to create their own world. They are to see themselves as human agents who can construct their world, not as victims. In this way Alice is helping them read their world, and construct their world. She helps them to be people in their own right who can be successful.

Many of us became teachers for reasons of the heart, animated by a passion for some subject and for helping people learn...(p.17) Frederick Buechner offers...[an] image of vocation as "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." (Palmer, 1998, p. 30)

Alice Terry is a woman who sees teaching as her vocation. She knows her students have a "deep hunger" and deep need for her kind of guidance and wisdom. She is a strong, educated, and wise African American woman who has returned to her community to give back to it. Her "deep gladness" is apparent in her passion and depth of commitment to her students. She works hard and expects much of herself – and she expects much of her students. She will tackle whatever topics her students need to address, whether it is personal relationships, intolerance of homosexuality, interracial marriage, or table etiquette. She has crafted a classroom community where forthrightness and bluntness are helpful tools in her students' education.

Alice conveys passion in her lessons to the point where a student claims she has "hypnotized" them. Tree, in his awed reaction, helps us see the power that her pedagogy

holds. She is a passionate teacher and he (as well as others) feel it deeply. Ronnie leaves her classroom after she has read Their Eyes... commenting on how good the story was. Why is this remarkable? It is remarkable because these students are not readers. It is remarkable because there are many who would discount these young African American students as disaffected and disengaged. Alice has been able to demonstrate how if one is “seized” one can “seize others.”

Alice knows that it is her influence in their lives that may help mediate the unfulfilled paths they may be entering. She helps them ask the questions that they need to be asking in order to recreate their futures. She does not let them off easily. She demands that they take their futures seriously, by asking them what they are doing in order to get into college. What are they doing now to get the education that they need to succeed in the future. As Fried says, Alice “helps them discover the right questions”:

Students *need* us, not because we have all the answers, but because we can help them discover the right questions. We don’t always know what’s good for them, but we can try to protect them from having to face life’s dilemmas in ignorance or in despair—doing drugs, dropping out, drifting into a dead-end career or unplanned parenthood. Those adults whom young people look to for guidance know how important they are to kids’ futures. For all teachers, the recovery of passion can mean a recovery of our influence—dynamic and positive influence—in the lives of children. (Fried, 1995, p. 29)

Alice’s students talk about the positive influence she has on their lives. Johnny talked about the impact her high expectations had on him:

When we get out of line, she put us in shape....It is her. I don’t get good grades in any other classes....When I had a...bad grade the first time, I wanted to get a good grade to impress Mrs. Terry. You know what I mean? Because, it is like, if she care about me I want to get a good grade to show her I appreciate what she did. (December 1996)

Alice is a role model in the truest sense of the word. She is what she asks them to be.

Her passion can be heard and it is palpable in the classroom.

Alice is able to help students construct meaning and knowledge in the classroom.

When she reads aloud to them they state how they have come to really understand what is going on.

McShell: I think [reading out loud] helped a lot because I read the book and I liked it and I understood it real good. But for a lot of people that didn't understand it, like Tree didn't understand, well, Ms. Terry would get up, and it seemed like the way she moved her hands and the way she talked about stuff...

Ronnie: Like when she read the parts...

Gloria: She broke it down like before we had a test or something which made it real easy for the test that we had. Made you understand.

Tree: She made a lot of stuff clear.

She has helped them to visualize literature and helped them to connect to it in a visceral way. This kind of construction of meaning is rare and it is the kind that creates excitement and enthusiasm for the subject at hand. Alice also helps her students construct knowledge for they begin to see themselves as knowers and that they are intimately connected to the subject to be known. When they feel Their Eyes... on a visceral level, they have engaged in "connected knowing" (Belenky et al., 1986). It is not a detached way of knowing, rather the students have begun to interact in a deep way with the literature, the "to-be-known" that Alice is inviting them into, "...constructions come about by virtue of the interaction of the knower with the already known and the still knowable or to-be-known" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 143).

Alice has been able to create a learning community where subjects are not taboo and where the real life dilemmas they will face, in relationships and the world, are open for discussion. The surprise and confusion of Janice and Emmett when they question

why at a formal lunch they would not eat mashed potatoes with a spoon, is not dismissed or ridiculed. Instead, she treats the topic seriously. Instead the topic is a serious one and treated as such. These students know that they can ask the questions they need answered and that Alice will be there for them.

Alice engages in critical pedagogy when she talks about the role of women and shares her personal stories. She tells about a globe trotting woman friend of hers. She talks about her church group and the advice she gives the young women there about not needing a man. In these cases she is having her students evaluate the messages that they have been sent about the way “women are supposed to be” and what should make a woman happy. Alice, in indirect and direct ways, manages to insert herself critically into the conversation. She does not want her students to just accept the messages around them, but hear a voice that counters them – her own, so that perhaps they will also be able to counter the seductive messages of becoming a young mother and wife.

Alice teaches her students to appreciate their historical and artistic heritage. The students are able to revel in African American authors. As Nieto reminds us, so much of the current curriculum in schools is monocultural: “Knowledge...is inevitably European, male, and upper class in origin and conception...” (1996, p. 311). Alice provides a contrast to this. She is helping her students see the splendor of African American Literature and dialect, and her students respond. Ronnie, in reference to Their Eyes..., ardently states, “I likes the dialect Ms. Terry....I’ll read it all over the weekend.”

Alice has been able to expand the students’ perspectives by bringing issues of sexual identity. This is not only “anti-bias education,” it is “basic education,” both of which are part of a multicultural education framework: “...we would expect our students

to develop social skills to understand and empathize with a wide diversity of people.

Nothing can be more basic than this” (Nieto, 1996, p. 312).

Alice Terry is a woman who sees teaching as her vocation. She says that “teaching is an extension of life for [her].” She knows her students have that “deep hunger” Frederick Buechner speaks of (Palmer, 1998, p. 30), and a deep need for her kind of guidance and wisdom. She is a strong, educated, and wise African American woman who has returned to her community to give back to it. Her “deep gladness” is apparent in her passion and depth of commitment to her students. She works hard and expects much of herself, and she expects much of her students.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIV. LIBRARIES



31293020799452



THESIS

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 1293 02079 9460

6  
6000

**PLACE IN RETURN BOX**  
 to remove this checkout from your record.  
**TO AVOID FINES** return on or before date due.  
**MAY BE RECALLED** with earlier due date if requested.

DATE DUE	DATE DUE
<del>APR 03 2003</del>	
06 05 03	
APR 03 2006	
04 23 08	

READING AND WRITING *THEIR* WORLDS:  
PORTRAYALS OF PRACTICE IN TEACHING FOR CRITICAL LITERACY

VOLUME II

By

Michael J. Michell

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Teacher Education

1999

CHAPTER 5  
CASE STUDY OF WILLIAM HARRISON  
THE ART OF STORY, THE ART OF DISCOVERY

An Introduction

*The art of teaching  
is the art of assisting discovery.*

Mark Van Doren

I have titled this chapter *The Art of Story, the Art of Discovery* because “story” and “discovery” through inquiry are central to who William Harrison is as a person and teacher. William is a committed guide to his students, doing whatever necessary to help them become better learners and people, helping his students engage in critical literacy. In his role as a teacher, William resembles in many ways the “coach” that Ladson-Billings describes:

...coaches...believe their students are capable of excellence, but they are comfortable sharing the responsibility to help [their students] achieve it with parents, community members, and the students themselves....Coaches understand that the goal is team success. They know that they do not need to gain personal recognition in order to achieve that success. However, they do need a sense of how to blend the talents of the players to form a winning team. Coaches are comfortable operating behind the scenes and on the sidelines. The players are always mindful of the coach’s expectations but they know that even the best game plan will fail without proper execution. The players understand that they work together with the coach to achieve the goal. (1994, pp. 24-25)

The emphasis on collaboration in William’s class underscores a team quality. William makes his high expectations clear to students, and goes out of his way to provide a plan and develop students’ skills in order to help them be successful.

William’s passion, his ability to develop and maintain community, his love and use of story, his work as a writer teaching writing, his unwavering effort to help his students read the social institutions and systems that envelop them, his commitment to

fight for social justice and guide his students to do so also, and his dedication to the present and future well-being of his students are striking and combine to make for a successful game plan and execution. In the I-Search assignment outline he provides his students with, William signs it “Your Loyal Guide” (see Appendix F). This is a symbolic gesture, and it is a genuine commitment he makes to his students. He tells them in writing that he will be loyal to them and he will guide them. William’s students gain more control over their own destinies because he helps them become literate on multiple levels. William helps prepare them to be successful on tests that will play gatekeeping roles in their lives, but he also encourages them to use research and communication as a way to enact change. We will see evidence of these qualities throughout the chapter.

The chapter *The Art of Story, the Art of Discovery* is composed of five sections. In *An Introduction* I provide snapshots of William Harrison, the Urban Hope Academy, the students, and the curriculum of this seventh and eighth grade class. In *A Life Story* I present a preprofessional life story of William, drawing upon his own words to tell that story. The life story is preceded by a descriptive lead (text in italics) and followed by an analysis that highlights several aspects of William’s life that are integrally connected to his work as a critical educator. In *A Context* I provide a portrait of the community and school environment. In *A Classroom Story* I present a qualitative rendering of one morning early in the school year in William’s class. This portrayal of William’s teaching is shaped through an integration of description, analysis, and carefully selected voices which include William’s, those in the class, and published sources that illuminate the action at hand. The classroom story provides a portrait of classroom life that reveals not only William Harrison’s work, but the subtleties and complexities of teaching for critical

literacy in real classrooms. We will see a teacher who, despite economic hardships within the city and school, has created a space where students pursue ambitious learning goals. Footnotes and text boxes are provided to illuminate the narrative, but remain outside the event's immediacy. In most cases there is a parenthetical reference directing the reader to consult the text box at a relevant point. Finally, in *An Analysis* I discuss the classroom story and other examples of William's teaching from across the semester that illuminate teaching for critical literacy.

### The Teacher

William Harrison is White, middle class, and grew up in a working class family, staunch Democrats and active in unions. He was raised Catholic, attended a private boys Catholic high school, but does not consider himself religious. He turned twenty-nine during the course of the study, is married, and has a daughter.

William is in his fifth year of teaching, a career choice that happened almost by accident. William wanted to be a writer since he was in his early twenties. He just happened to take an education course. The instructor of that education course took the class on a visit to Urban Hope Academy (UHA). Before he knew it, he was lobbying to do his student teaching with one of the teachers at the school. The year following his student teaching he was hired to teach sixth grade at UHA.

In the year of this study, William taught a seventh/eighth grade split, the same group of students for language arts and social studies. Students took science, math, physical education, and electives (music, journalism, etc.) with other teachers. William

also taught electives in journalism and model building, and coached the eighth grade boys basketball team. In addition to teaching at UHA, William teaches courses in literature and composition each semester at a community college outside Metropolitan. William is also active in an area National Writing Project site, and frequently presents papers and his students' work at small and large language arts conferences.

### The School

Urban Hope Academy is a pre-K through eighth grade community school in one of the poorest areas of Metropolitan. The community in which UHA serves is highly transient. Approximately half of the children live in surrounding public and low income housing; a number of the children attending UHA live in area homeless shelters. Most of the students' families rank among the working poor, single parents who work long hours at one or more minimum wage jobs. The school population is approximately 600 students, 97% African American. Most of the students qualify for the free or reduced breakfast and lunch programs. Additionally, the school receives considerable Chapter I (formerly known as Title I) assistance. Middle school classrooms follow a block schedule. William, and other Middle School homeroom teachers, teach an integrated reading, writing, and social studies class that provides opportunity for in-depth research, extensive literature and author studies, and the facilitation of writing workshops in which students produce classroom-based publications (see Appendix G for William's block schedule).

The school's mission and efforts are innovative and progressive. The foundation of the school's shared vision of teaching and learning is a student-centered Whole

Language philosophy. In one document the school articulates its mission for the Middle School, which reveals a commitment to social action, authentic learning, community involvement, and working toward a democratic society:

...Crucial to our program is the concept of authentic learning and social action....Underlying our academic work is the belief that learning is social and school is part of the living, real world. We want all middle grade students to go on to high school with a strong sense of self and the knowledge that they are an integral part of our urban community and our democratic society.

Urban Hope Academy has a voluntary school uniform policy which many students follow (blue skirt or slacks, white dress blouse or dress shirt). The school offers before and after school latchkey programs, a conflict resolution program, an open library and publishing center for students, an active service-learning program, and school-wide Kwanzaa. The administration, faculty, and staff are majority African American (including the principal and vice principal of student affairs). The school has had great success on city and state exams, and William's classes consistently pass reading and writing sections with greater than 90% proficiency.

### The Students

Thirty seventh and eighth grade students began the school year with William, however, that number had dropped to twenty-four by October. In February a new student, a Liberian refugee, joined the class. Several of the students lived in the housing projects neighboring the school, and at least one student in the class lived in one of the seven area homeless shelters. Most of the students wore the voluntary school uniform consistently. A small number of eighth grade students never wore the uniform. None of

the students wore expensive clothes, though several students wore expensive basketball shoes.

Student attendance was outstanding, challenging the myth that urban Black families and students do not care about learning or school. For example, one month's attendance record showed five days in which no students were absent, eight days with one student absent, six days with two students absent, three days with three students absent, and a half day where four students were absent.

Close friendships between groups of boys and groups of girls seemed an outgrowth of the students being in the same classroom for one or more years together and working cooperatively. Because the school promotes a Whole Language<sup>31</sup> philosophy in its curriculum and teaching practices, students from the earliest grades are taught to work collaboratively, to engage in projects, to see the curriculum as integrated, and to value reading and writing.

William's students are readers and writers. They all have notebooks and journals in which they write when they have time available to them. When they have time before class, between tasks, and any time given to them for their own choices, many will draw using pens and pencils from the classroom supplies, many will write in their journals, many will read. They bring their own books from the school or public library, or from

---

<sup>31</sup>Whole Language instruction is based upon theories of language learning that recognize the importance of students' experiences, context, culture, and social interaction to developing literacy. Emphasis is placed upon immersion in a rich communicative environment, where students read, write, speak, and listen extensively rather than emphasis placed on the study of distinct "parts" of language out of context (phonics, vocabulary, sentence structure, etc.). Advocates of the approach have come under considerable attack in the '90s (see the February 1996 issue of English Journal devoted to Whole Language). For more developed treatments of Whole Language, see Goodman (1986) and Strickland & Strickland (1993).

home. It is not uncommon to hear on a Monday morning, when students are given the opportunity to tell about their weekends, that they received books of their own choosing as presents, or that they spent their allowance on books.<sup>32</sup>

### The Course

William integrates language arts and social studies through a thematic approach. For instance, two themes that spanned the school year were “Revolution” and “Slavery in America.” The class is student-centered, so many of the specific curricular choices and paths follow the students’ immediate needs and interests. The learning environment William establishes is language rich – talking, reading, and writing. Much of the student work is project and inquiry-oriented. William emphasizes the social nature of learning. Cooperative learning is pervasive in William’s classroom. Responsibilities for the whole class are often handled through a committee system. Writing is approached through a workshop format.<sup>33</sup>

Students do considerable independent reading, but the class read many works of literature as a group during the year. Works included Lawrence Yep “The Rat” (short

---

<sup>32</sup>One day I noted in the trays at tables where students keep personal items the following books: two boys had the Boy Scout's Handbook, three girls had R. L. Stine novels, one girl had a Diane Curtis Regan novel, one boy had Madeleine L’Engle’s Troubling a Star, one girl had Mary Stoltz’s The Noonday Friends, several boys had X-Men comic books, several boys and girls had various novels by Walter Dean Meyers, among them the biography of Malcolm X.

<sup>33</sup>A writing workshop approach, most commonly taken in elementary language arts classrooms and post-secondary composition courses, is a classroom which has structured its physical, material, and temporal environment in ways that best serve a group of writers, over an extended period of time, engaged in developing multiple pieces through various stages of the writing process. Writing done in workshops, even when exposition, is often personal. Teachers and students in workshops view themselves as writers working to improve their craft and become aware and reflective about their own writing processes. For a treatment of how a writing workshop might work in a secondary context, see Atwell (1998).

story), David Wright “Clarity” (short story), Alice Childress Rainbow Jordan (novel), Rodman Philbrick Freak the Mighty (novel), Karl Shapiro “Elegy for a Dead Soldier” (poem), Harper Lee To Kill A Mockingbird (novel), Pete Hautman Mr. Was, and many more. In addition to this published literature, students read much of one another’s writing – the classroom “literature” – which included poetry, short stories, personal narrative, I-Search writing,<sup>34</sup> and at least one student’s novel-in-progress. The class read a considerable number of newspaper and magazine articles. As a class, students published a poetry quilt, “Poetry in Stitches,” and the first draft of what they called the “Gen-X Interactive Instructional Newspaper,” a publication in which they strove to write articles and other works that would “teach” through an invitation to participate in social action (many of these articles and works grew out of their I-Search papers).

---

<sup>34</sup>“The emphasis in an I-Search is on the “I.” The “I” conducts the search, and the “I” records all that is learned or encountered along the way from that perspective—the first person or “I” voice. The “I” in charge is you. The “I” is in control of the research process. Not only is the actual research information important, HOW the “I” found the information is of equal value.” (Taken from William’s I-Search guidelines for his students. See Appendix F.)

A Context:  
"It's Very Safe in This Classroom for the Students.  
As Soon as They Leave It Is a Different Reality."<sup>35</sup>

I make my way into Metropolitan, a large urban industrial center in the Midwest. The interstate, pulsing like a major artery leading into and out of a bleeding city struggling to survive, draws me in. The outlying territory of the city along this interstate takes on the shape of an industrial heartland.

At 6:45 a.m. the sun, large and orange through the city smog, rises. The radio says it is thirty-five degrees. Standing between me and the sun, seemingly in the path of the highway but in reality placed at a bend in the road, is a monstrous billboard of the Marlboro Man, high in the saddle. We only see the Man, hips to hat, cigarette prominent in his mouth. I think of the billboard in The Great Gatsby. Symbolic. Surrealistic. The cowboy so out of place in this place. The Marlboro Man at home.

The interstate leads me to a smaller highway penetrating the city, which leads to the Urban Hope Academy (UHA). On this

road I stop at a traffic light. Spray painted in white on a decaying brick wall of a boarded up building are the words, "Revolution is the hope of the hopeless"; spray painted in black just below this declaration are the words, "Black Panthers." I pull away from this light and take in the

---

...the best explanation I have found for this neighborhood is how people have moved around and largely accepted that this is normal. This is normal. This is life. And that they're really hopeless, real barren in terms of spirit. Really just a state of depression. One of the things that accompanies depression are violent swings, you know, swings of emotion. At times it can be a quiet street and the next moment can be blood....I used to think of this as a war zone, and in some ways it is, but in a lot of ways it isn't....[I]t is a different kind of war.

(William, 11 November 1997)

---

---

<sup>35</sup>The title comes from an interview with William (October 1996). See text box for more of William's characterization of the context.

cityscape. The street is badly pocked, cracked, pitted. Steam bursts through utility cover holes on this cold morning. I imagine revolt. The street boiling with rage. This part of the city seething. Bleeding. But these images in my head are romanticized.

I look further. Factories that once provided jobs and produced goods sit, decaying empty shells. Businesses that once generated a multiplicity of opportunities rest, boarded up or converted into party stores. Houses that once sheltered families crouch, crumble and cave in. The reality of what I see around me is cold. This part of Metropolitan – liquor stores, bars, churches, dying buildings condemned and needing to be condemned, parks with fractured playground equipment and empty lots overgrown with weeds and grass – has been neglected, abandoned, left to die.

There is no revolt.

I continue on my way. I approach a stop sign not more than one hundred feet from the UHA. The day before, returning to the school from lunch with William, I watched a lone man across the street, dressed in a clean felt hat and raincoat, urinate in an alcove doorway of the Rescue Mission that neighbors UHA. As we pulled from the stop sign, the man turned and crossed the street at the same time. We met in the middle of the three lane, one-way road. The man's penis hung out of his pants. He fumbled with one hand to get it back in and close his fly. His other hand held a brown paper bag. His eyes were blank. His face unshaven, that day. He looked cleaner and less in need than the many others who usually frequent the street surrounding the Mission. I was mildly shocked. I was not surprised. I interrupted William in mid-sentence and asked him, "Did you see...?" William said, "No, but I see so much of that." He paused. William sees so much of this. This particular image is a relatively insignificant detail in a mural that has

been painted in his memory over many years of observation. Unlike me, he can't dwell on this detail. "I see the people in front of the Mission every day. When I stay late at school, and I turn the corner out of the alley to go home, the line of people stretches around the block."

This morning, at 7:20, I am at the same stop sign. The temperature has only climbed to forty degrees. As I roll toward the stop sign I notice a young woman, possibly in her mid to late teens, doing a kind of walking spinning dance in the weed and trash covered dirt and crushed gravel back lot of a bar. There are several bars in this area, three close together on this street alone. Her movements make me think she is in ecstasy. The young woman's skin is a creamy mocha color. Her eyes are large. She sparkles. She is tall and thin. She wears a short black skirt, just long enough to cover her buttocks and crotch, but not when she spins. She wears black net stockings that come up to mid-thigh. A white top which falls off the shoulders reveals both cleavage and abdomen. I watch her, perhaps to the point of staring. Not more than twenty-five feet from me as I come to the stop sign, she looks into my car and sees me seeing her. She smiles big. Her right hand raises to shoulder height, palm up, fingers slightly splayed. Slowly her fingers roll inward, from pinky to index, two rounds.

I think about her as I pull away from the sign. I assume that she is high. I assume that she prostitutes. I wonder what it would be like to live or work in an area where images such as these are ever present, not unusual, occasionally unnoticeable. I wonder what it would be like to walk to and from school in this neighborhood. I wonder what it would be like during recess to be separated from this world only by a chain link fence and

dreams. This is the world that William wants his students to resist. He wants them to think critically about this context, and strive for better.

At this hour there are no people outside the Mission that borders the school parking lot. The Mission's sign states, "The Bible Says CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS." I read the words and think of the Patti Smith song lyric, "Jesus died for somebody's sins but not mine." By noon there will be a gathering of men and women, Black and White, below this sign.

I pull into the alley. On one side is the Mission and on the other is a charitable Clothing Center, both strategically placed on a street where the majority of businesses are bars and liquor markets. There is a food distribution center down the block that often has lines of forty or more people outside its doors. Rolling down the street toward the distribution center I see a man in a wheel chair with no legs. At a glance he looks old, but a second look reveals that he is probably not yet middle age. Across the street from the food distribution center is a store that advertises its specialties in giant letters painted on the building's street side:

MARKET LIQUOR  
LOTTO ◦ BEER ◦ WINE ◦ GROC.  
PRODUCE ◦ MONEY ORDERS ◦ DELI

The parking lot at the back of the UHA is dirt, once white crushed gravel, but now has what feel like pond and lake size pits, filled by rain the night before. There are no defined parking spaces. Those who park here regularly maintain the unwritten rules of sharing this small space, and somehow make the system work. I get out of my car and look around. There are several family vans, Dodge Caravans and Plymouth Voyagers, Ford Tauruses and Mercury Sables, a Honda Accord, a Pontiac Grand Prix, a Saturn

coupe, a Dodge Neon, and a Nissan Sentra. One shiny new Lincoln Continental. A teacher's parking lot. About half of the cars have The Club steering wheel locking device in place to discourage theft. The lot is unguarded.

The playground is quite large. A fairly intact backstop and a large area of sandy dirt close to the school building make for a softball/kickball diamond. A large expanse of grass, perhaps as big as a high school football field, stretches behind the school. There is a paved elementary school basketball court with four hoops, no nets, and rims showing the stress of youths learning to dunk like players they see on television. There is some broken playground equipment.

Two double reinforced steel doors with heavy gauge metal meshing covering barely translucent plexiglass windows lead into the school from the back parking lot. Heavy chains and a pad lock rap around the push handles for security at night. There is a single small caliber bullet hole penetrating one of the plexiglass door windows. Other windows along the back of the building have heavy gauge metal cages guarding them.

I open the door and it is a different world. The halls explode with life, color, and joy. Travis Stallworth, UHA's security guard, is at the other end of the hall walking toward me. His hands rest on the shoulders of children, perhaps first or second graders, a boy and girl. He is smiling and talking earnestly with them. He is a grandfather figure in this school. Travis is a retired Metropolitan Police Officer, and his son is currently a member of that force. Since his retirement he has worked for Metropolitan School District Public Safety. He stands about six-feet four-inches tall, wears police blue grey colors, and a police style cap. He carries no visible weapons. His hair is graying and rises about one inch above his scalp. His smile is disarming, welcoming. His voice is

baritone. "Good morning sir," he calls to me. The first day I came to UHA this year he wasted no time meeting me and called, "Can I help you sir?" He then escorted me to the main office to check me in and check me out. Travis made sure that I belonged there.

The world outside Urban Hope Academy and the world inside sharply contrast. One projects death, the other life. One projects hopelessness, the other hope. One projects defeat, the other projects possibility. One projects pain, the other relief. One projects fragmentation, the other connection. There are many in the outer community whose lives are tragic, who can no longer care for themselves, others, or the world; on the inside there is a community which tries to cultivate a caring for oneself, others, and the world.

## A Life Story: “Stories Speak Better than I Could Ever Teach”

*After spending three hours in the morning watching William teach and then grabbing a quick lunch, we had a chance to talk in his classroom during his preparation period. Sitting across from me at a large round table, a Cheshire cat smile stretching across his richly tanned and unshaven stubbly face, William sat. He has lived in the same Midwestern state all his life, with the exception of two years he attended an out of state university. An athletically muscled body fills out his six foot frame. Vibrant and healthy, he exudes energy.*

*Our talk is casual at first. He recounts details of a summer of outdoor adventures, including a two week canoeing trek with his six year old daughter in the waterways of upper Minnesota. The week before school started he took a seven day solo backpacking trip through the Shenandoah Valley so he could catch the wild flowers at their peak, the last three days of which he bushwhacked through trailless terrain to get back to his starting point. William is passionate about living an active life. Away from the classroom he parents, writes, and plays hard, competing in a number of community sports leagues year-round and taking get-aways that involve sailing, skiing, scuba diving, and wilderness explorations.*

“I Am a Writer. I Am a Teacher of Writing. I Am a Citizen of the World...”<sup>36</sup>

*William hands me a draft of an article he will soon send off for publication, and then summarizes the main point of it for me. My idea in this piece was that writing can*

---

<sup>36</sup>This heading is taken from the article draft William shared. (See text box)

get into kids' lives and really help them and be therapeutic or help them deal as some kind of catharsis is nice in theory, and I suppose it does, but there is a point where writing is not enough. More of what we are doing in this classroom, and others like it, is the building of community – a person to listen to, a person to care. The problems didn't go away just because you wrote them down. The realities didn't change. That kind of stuff. So, it is taking a look at that.

---

I am a teacher in this world, and in order to be most effective to my students, we must delve into the complex composites of our lives.

Writing reminds us how we are human. While writing celebrates our individual identities and dreams, it simultaneously shows all that we hold in common. In a culture that sadistically chants, "I told you so" whenever we fall, and "one person can't save the world," writing helps us reclaim power in our lives.

Writing will not cure what is wrong with the human condition, but it won't let us forget either. It refuses to let us stumble around blind if we have the courage to only see. Writing springs us from the prison of our often mundane cruise through the years we call living. Writing will not let us forget all that is wrong with humanity any more than it will let us forget all that is right.

I am a writer. I am a teacher of writing. I am a citizen of the world, and I have deduced that the world can never be isolated from the schools. Our schools are a microcosm of our society. I use writing in the classroom to help students understand for themselves how they fit in that world, how they can make sense of it, and maybe how they can do a little more than merely survive.

(William Harrison, article-draft, September 1996)

---

One boy I write about captures this. After he leaves here he is on his own in a lot of ways and even though he came back and helped with the next year's projects, he's a real legend. He also came back and shared some of his poetry.

I haven't talked to him in about a year, but I believe he moved out. Last thing I knew he was out of the city and then he came back. I don't know where he is right now. He pops in at least once or twice a year. *William opens the article to show me one of the poems the student wrote.* The poem is a contemplation on why kids kill kids in his neighborhood, a heartfelt look outward and inward. *William pushes the article back to me.* You can read it. You can take it.

### “Growing Up I Was a Pretty Average Guy”

I was born in 1968. My dad went on his first tour in Vietnam in '67. I was born when he was over there the first time. He came back on leave from boot camp and got married. And then he shipped out to Vietnam. My mom was eighteen or nineteen. My dad was twenty-one. They were both young.

Growing up I was a pretty average guy. I didn't really care too much about what was going on in the world. The events that really had an impact on me are personal. The day when my father left and the day my grandpa died.

### Learning to Be a Man From “The Trinity”: A Grandfather

*William takes a breath. He weighs the imprint his father and grandfather made on him, and then he adds, “The three men who've most affected me: my grandfather, my father, and also my stepfather. That's the trinity. All three of them gave me both good and bad.” He then calls them to the present with stories of each.*

My family always has been very important to me, even though it hasn't always been the best family. My one grandfather was from Italy, the other was from Quebec, Canada. They both settled in rural areas and brought their trades over. The one from Italy came over as a furniture maker and upholsterer. The other came as a lumberjack, carpenter, builder. Once the lumberjack industry dried up, my family moved back and forth between the northern and southern parts of the state, over many generations, depending on a variety of things, but mainly work. When work was good in the north they would stay, but when it dried up, as it often did, they would move down to Metropolitan and do everything from construction to owning their own furniture shops to

working in the factories. Wherever they could scratch out a living. This went on for many generations. So, I followed that same migration back and forth.

My Italian grandfather in particular, my mother's father, was probably the most influential person in my early life, even more so than my parents. He was a craftsman in furniture making. He would take me down to his workshop and let me just hammer out things, bang away, and that kind of stuff. My earliest memories of life are of him coming to my house in the morning and taking me for walks. My father was in Vietnam at the time and he would come and take me for walks every day, to give my mom a break and to spend time with me. He was never close to any of his other grandchildren. He wasn't that way. He wasn't really close to anyone. He was a man that sought out solitude, but we had an instant kinship or something. Maybe it was because of my father being in Vietnam.

When I was born, both sides of the family, especially my grandma on my dad's side, said my dad wasn't coming back. They thought it was a sign from God that he was going to die because I looked so identical to him when he was a baby. And so they thought I was him, and they had pretty much determined that he was a goner. He did come back, and it was awkward.

The stories that were told to me, and my recollections, are sort of layered memories blurred together, but I was not really crazy about my father and leaned more to my grandfather and that pained him. He came back with a score of problems, which you would expect when you've seen nearly every friend that you've had over there die. He went on a second tour, voluntarily, and came back from that.

I was raised in a blue collar union household. Strong Democrats. A racist household. I didn't realize it at the time. It wasn't overt or anything. They didn't walk around quoting the Klan, but everything was very "ethnic." There was "us" and there was "them." That was the natural order as it seemed for me. My grandfather died when I was relatively young, so I never got to see his flaws. When you are a kid you look at these men and they are perfect. My grandfather died and he was almost deity status because I never had to see him as a man. I later found out he was racist. But I didn't see the flaws. He was a great storyteller. He was a great woodsman, a great farmer. He would rather be outdoors than do anything else, maybe because he didn't like the wife he was married to. He would get away from it all. He was earthy, quiet, really an artist. He was very talented. He'd paint and draw. A man of very few words. When he spoke, they were always calculated and they were always very precise words. None of the men in my family would share stories too much. They would share stories but not about themselves, let me put it that way. They would share stories, but they would never share personal feelings. They'd always tell a story that happened with somebody else, almost like lessons that you were supposed to learn from. They'd never come out and say, "I feel this or I think that." While the women would be more or less in the kitchen doing their thing and I never ventured into that area. They were always talking or "yakking" as the men would say. Both my grandmothers were really consumed by the husbands' families. So I didn't learn a whole lot about them until I became an adult and asked them. It was a very patriarchal family, very male dominated, and their stories didn't seem to count, which is something that bothers me now and something I am trying to correct but something that I have had to research. These were not stories given to me like they were given to me by

my grandfathers. So I didn't think it was anything of value. It was not until later when I've returned and sat with them in the kitchen that I've learned they have a great amount to share too. It also wasn't until later, through sports, that I began to know people from other cultures and other races and look at them as the same as me.

My love of stories and literature comes from, without a doubt, my grandfather. Those are the initial seeds, the love of telling stories, and he would not necessarily sit and tell you how he feels but he would spin story after story. Heroic deeds, everything from, you know, how he came over from Italy, how he went to the Old West – I didn't even realize he wasn't alive in the "Old West" – you know how he ran into Jesse James. I was convinced him and Jesse James squared off. He had these scars on his arms from being out in the sun all the time, and he said those were burns he received as a test pilot, you know, the Air Force, when he crashed or something. All kinds of outlandish stories that my mom would say, "Dad, don't go telling him those stories, he believes them and everything." And he'd say, "Of course he believes them, they are true." And I did believe them, I believed them completely. We were buddies. That's where the stories started, and they progressed.

#### Learning to Be a Man From "The Trinity": A Father

The thing that was impressed upon me was the idea of becoming a "good man," not just a man, but a "good man." I was raised with values that were Christian-based, but we didn't spend much time in church. My family was not perfect by any means. They were heavy drinkers. Every once in a while they would get into their share of fights. But for the most part they didn't bother anyone if they weren't bothered with. They stuck

together. They stuck together tremendously, and if you messed with one you messed with all. There was a real loyalty. My family is important to me.

I was afforded a tremendous amount of privilege. I had everything I could want. No one ever treated me bad.

When my parents divorced I was around ten years old, but when they first split up I was probably around eight. The day my father left the house, it was early Saturday morning, it was raining, he was packing up his old Army duffel bag. My mom was still on the bed. He was by the dresser. My sister was still sleeping. I was up. I always got up early. And I asked him what he was doing and he told me he had to leave the house. All he said was, "You have to be the man of the house now." He didn't say where he was going or anything like that, but to me that was enough to accept the responsibility, to accept the challenge. With both my mom and my sister, but more my sister because she was more under my control, I tried to look out for them and be protective. Really overprotective.

I remember being very aware of the responsibilities. I remember thinking that the man of the house had to work. And that is what I did. As bad as my family was, they worked, and they never missed work, even hungover they still worked. So it was work from the time I was twelve years old. There has not been more than six months at any time, and this is going through college, playing sports, everything, where I haven't had a job at least part time. Since twelve. Even before that I would do things like work in produce markets during harvest time, chop wood during the fall, that kind of stuff, to earn extra money. Sometimes my mom accepted money I offered her, sometimes she didn't. Sometimes she'd let me keep it. I always wanted to give it to her.

### Learning to Be a Man From “The Trinity”: A Stepfather

My mother later remarried. He's the man who became my stepfather. I learned a lot from him and I respect him in a lot of ways, but also I loathe him in a lot of ways. He was the antithesis of a lot of what I'd grown to be as a man, I mean in terms of his greed and his manipulation, his hypocrisy, that kind of stuff. He taught me a lot about hard work. He taught me a lot about respecting myself as a man. He had me working for him in his company. He was an electrical contractor. He and my dad were friends, which made it even harder. While most electricians lived from paycheck to paycheck, my stepdad stored his paychecks away and when times got tough in the construction industry he would loan money to the contractor to pay for the payroll, but every time he loaned money he was getting a percentage of the business in exchange. In so many years he had more or less bought that business, you know, it was a takeover. It was not stock because they didn't have stock issue but it was like that. In exchange for money he loaned for the payroll to keep the company afloat, he would get a percent of the ownership and the promise he'd be able to buy them out. I would do things for him. I would do drafting. I would do things where I would work in the warehouse building control panels, control boxes, relief schematics. When I was sixteen I was driving a truck for his company. I had problems with him because he wanted to establish himself as head of the family. My mother and him were later divorced.

### “I Don't Really Remember Any of the Books I Read in School”

I think the first book I ever liked, the first book I ever read all the way through, was My Side of the Mountain. I read that about the same age as the central character,

twelve, thirteen, fourteen. Somewhere around there. He went to live in the Catskills and lived in this tree and lived by his wits. It was about the land and all that. I loved it, just loved it. But there wasn't a lot of young adult literature out there at that time. I'd pick up little books where I could, but I just more or less kept my story telling to dreams. I always was dreaming of greatness, and sports. I was a consumer of the sports page. Every single statistic of baseball players that were imaginable. That was the literature of my youth. That was the religion of my youth. I played every single day in the summer, and then I'd play hockey and football and stuff in the winter. But it was baseball. Soon as it was warm enough to play until it was too cold to play. That was that. And maybe it was when the sport's career started ending that I started writing stories and writing about it. At the same time I lost all this freedom, I lost this sense of power through sports where you could control outcomes and destinies. You don't have that in the real world.

There is a line in one of David Guterson's stories in A Country Ahead of Us, A Country Behind Us where he talks about no longer being an athlete, but he's now a spectator. He's a good spectator, but there is hidden pain and this is what he writes. I wrote about this in my journal because it's so profound. I think it is the last line of his book, "I have felt in my heart that's seen widening aloneness that buried me when the game was over, the loneliness that boys feel who are afraid of death and becoming men." That theme is really what his collection of different stories is all about.

I don't really remember any of the books I read in school. My schooling, up until high school, was very basic, just stupid, meaningless drivel. Stories speak better than I could ever teach. I don't really have to say too much about it. Just get them to think about what was said. I didn't have that. I went to a Catholic school down here in

Metropolitan. It was a college prep high school, mainly for sports, but I found out I was pretty good in school too. One of the things it taught me as a teacher is that if you expect greatness, really expect it not just say it, demand it I should say, but if you really push your students they will rise to the challenge. Even though we say that sounds great, we don't do that. We don't do that in public education like we should. I grant they put a whole lot of pressure on you, the competition is intense and their greatness is not what I consider greatness. They quantify things with test scores and statistics versus critical knowledge. If you get that, you get it as a by-product. You don't get it directly.

“I Went to a Catholic High School....They Never Wanted You to Question”

I was a much better Catholic until I went to a Catholic high school. That's when I began to question everything that was going on. When I learned their history! Before I was just a Catholic and I went through the sacraments and I went to church twice a year. I went through their indoctrination, then I learned about comparative religions and about the Crusades and the missionaries and the Inquisition. I learned about this and it was like, "What was going on here?" And I read every single word of the Bible and it was like, "What's going on here?" I saw endless gaps and canyons between the Old and the New Testament that I couldn't reconcile. Subsequently, I lost my faith.

They never wanted you to question. They would try to explain what you would consider natural questions that would pop up. They would say something like, "The old story that Jesus told about," and I'm not quoting exactly but, "a rich man has as much chance of getting into Heaven as a camel does of passing through the eye of a needle." Something to that effect. We'd say this is interesting. There were a lot of rich kids at the

Catholic school. I wasn't one of them, but there were a lot of rich kids there. So a biblical story like that automatically caused alarm, actually hurt, so the teachers created this illustrious design that said, "In the old cities in Jerusalem, in the Middle East, they all were walled in and they had these entrances, these openings which were supposedly the needles. So it was not impossible for the camel to get into the city

---

The Camel and the Needle's Eye  
Robert Sheaffer

Many fundamentalists seek to explain away the obvious hostility to wealth in the saying attributed to Jesus, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (*Matthew 19:24*). Fundamentalists today constantly tell each other that the "eye of the needle" was a narrow gate into Jerusalem through which a camel could just barely squeeze, implying that even rich people can get into Heaven, provided that they walk a straight and narrow path.

While believing this no doubt lowers the cognitive dissonance they suffer between the resentment against wealth that is integral to the Christian religion they revere, and their own desire to achieve, it is nonetheless a silly legend, like the alligators in the sewers. *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* is a standard reference work found in many libraries, written by Catholic scholars. Its commentary on *Matthew 19:24* states bluntly, "the figure of the camel and the eye of the needle means exactly what is said; it does not refer to a cable or a small gate of Jerusalem." *The Abingdon Interpreter's Bible* is a major reference work compiled by Protestant scholars, and its analysis of this passage is in full agreement.

(Sheaffer, 1997)

---

through the needle but they would have to crunch down and it was tough." That was their way of explaining it. My take on it was just what Jesus said, "Well, the rich are doing some bad things to get to be rich and you are going to have a hard time. Odds are most rich people make it by stepping on the back of poor people. And you are going to have a hard time when your Judgment Day comes around to get into Heaven." They didn't want that explanation. There were other examples.

I was in the minority when it came to questioning and losing my faith. Also in terms of my financial status and my intellect. I don't mean intellect as in the smartest. I did really well, but in terms of my criticism and introspection. That is something I don't

know if you can teach, but you can definitely create an environment where that type of free thinking is allowed.

### Taking Advantage of the System: Getting a “Great Education”

I was very conscious of being different. It took form in anger. Like these people are all messed up and you know I want nothing to do with them. I probably went 180 degrees the other way in terms of rebellion. When you can't fight the system you just get out of the system, you know, that kind of thing. That's how I dealt with it. But they gave me a great education. I went away to college and I was completely ahead of the game. I had college credit, advanced placement classes, and I knew how to write an essay backward and forward, my vocabulary was probably 2,000 words better than your average freshman. It was not all that bad. We even studied Latin.

I just saw the movie While You Were Sleeping with my wife, a cute, romantic comedy kind of thing. One of the mothers in the movie said, "I liked the Mass in Latin. It was so much nicer when you didn't know what they were saying." I said to my wife that was a perfect assessment of Catholicism because when you break it down some of it was very brutal. Very brutal. At least the history that was secular. The actions of the Church were pretty drastic, still today. But I knew the Mass in Latin and I still, to this day, when Jeopardy comes on I crank more in the biblical categories than I do in the literature. And here I am an English teacher. I know the Bible backward and forward. I can't quote it because I don't consider that important, but I know where each parable is at and I know a lot of the names and other religions too. It sparked a curiosity to learn about other cultures and other religions because I consider it a defining agent for society.

The school intended their education to be a passive indoctrination. It was an indoctrination and make no bones about it. Most of them played the game to get ahead and that is what they did. I was special in the sense that I still succeeded. But they didn't get me either. I was not a convert. In terms of success, I got into every college that I applied to and many were not even athletic related. Even Ivy League schools. I did extremely well on all the tests. Yeah, it was a good education. Would I want my son to go through that? (It was an all boys school so that is why I say son.) I don't know. I would say maybe, knowing what I know I could help him, but alone, I don't know. We had more than one of my classmates that killed themselves. Some after they graduated. Pressure. Others dealing with their sexuality and conflicts. One of them wanted to be a priest and he just didn't feel he was measuring up. Then you also had some guys, their greatest days were when they were seventeen years old. They never ever achieved more glory than playing football for the high school. A big game was life. That's why young men are thrown into war because they are easily manipulated. That is what they did at the high school. They did it to an art form. I mean, those guys would lay down their life, many of them today, for that school. Tremendous alumni support.

My family sent me to this school because they wanted me to go to college. They didn't care how I got there. Especially my dad wanted to make sure I was the first man not to have to work with "the tools" as he would put it. "To wear the tools." He didn't care what I did as long as it wasn't that. Not that it didn't have value, just that it was a real rough life for people, so he didn't want that. Ironically enough, it was my grandmother, she thinks it was my nature of really questioning things, challenging things, argumentative whatever you want to say, was born in college. She believes that college

corrupted me and indoctrinated me in the other direction. She blames college that I have abandoned a lot of the traditions or the rituals or the myths of what our life was like. Even though I accept a lot. I guess what I am saying is that I try to take the good with the bad and look at what I admire and try to adopt that in my life and what I don't I cast off. There are some good things about religion. I'm not going to put someone down who is religious, but I wouldn't expect them to make me religious. I have a different kind of religion.

*At 1:10 William looks up at the clock and realizes that he is already five minutes late to pick his students up at the lunch room. I too must get on the road. We shake hands and say goodbye.*

### Life Story Analysis

William Harrison's life story foreshadows many themes concerning his pedagogy and curriculum that will surface and resurface in the classroom story. The context for this life story interview takes place on a day in which William and I see each other again for the first time in many months. We are colleagues who became friends, and we pick up where we left off almost as if only days separated our last meeting. It is important to note that one of the first things William does is share an article he wrote about his own teaching. He is a writer. He is a teacher. "A writer teaches writing" is a core philosophy of many teachers of writing and composition theorists, such as Donald Murray (1985). It is also a foundational principle of the National Writing Project, of which William is a consultant. We will see in the classroom story that William writes with his students, and shares his writing with them. He teaches writing through a workshop approach. The

substance of what William writes in his article is also of importance. In the text box excerpt, William reveals much about who he is as a person and professional: he is a teacher, he is a citizen of the world, he delves into the complexities of life, he celebrates through writing individual identities and commonalities, he seeks to help his students reclaim power, he helps his students not to forget what is right and wrong with humanity, he seeks to help his students be courageous enough to see reality so they will not stumble over it, he seeks to connect the classroom to the world, he uses writing to help his students understand their place in the world, and he seeks to help his students to so more than just survive in this world. A powerful vision for living and teaching. In the classroom story and other illustrations of his practice we will see how William goes about trying to meet these goals for developing critical literacy, and how these beliefs are modeled and enacted. William theorizes. What he says when he talks about the piece he has written has to do with building “community” in his classroom. For William, building community means to create a safe space where students live, grow, develop skills and knowledge. They are cared about by him and each other. We will see this in the classroom story and other illustrations of his practice discussed in the analysis.

The depth of caring William exhibits in his writing, caring that we will also see in the classroom story, is extended beyond his classroom. By writing about his teaching for other educators, William reveals a commitment to the larger educational enterprise, and a desire to help others by sharing what he thinks and does. His writing is an effort to change the system. This is a strong theme in the case study, because we will see how William views education as a territory where the world can be changed. We will see William support his students in using writing to learn about the world, and to actively

change their world. “You will have to act” William tells them. Through his own writing he models how it can be a tool for action.

When we hear from William how a former student comes back to the class to see him and participate in the teaching of his new students, we better understand the deep bonds established in his classroom learning community. While gathering data in his class, I was present on another day when a former student, a girl, came back to visit him. Like the boy William talks about, this student had awakened as a “writer” in his class. Students become writers and see themselves as writers and identify themselves as writers in William’s class.

We learn from William that his family is very important to him. He admits that his family was male dominated, that the women were subsumed. He has worked to find and make a place for women’s voices in his life and curriculum. William demonstrates an understanding, if only intuitive, that “what you value, you talk about” (Paley, 1979/1989, p. 12). As an adult he has had to work to overcome the patriarchal influences and seek out the stories of the women in his family. He also sees that his family was racist, everything was “ethnic” and the world was divided between “us” and “them.” We learn that he began seeing people as people through his athletic involvements. As he says, he is “introspective.” It is through introspection, holding a mirror up to himself and understanding the man that grew up in this family, that William has been able to negotiate the patriarchal and racist influences he is a product of. We will see William seek to cultivate the skills of “introspection” and “negotiation” in his students. We learn from this aspect of William’s life story, when we hold it beside the man and teacher he is

now, that people can move beyond their personal histories and teach passionately against bias and discrimination. In our own lives rarely are we static characters.

We learn that William grew up in a working class family, active in unions, and staunch Democrats. We hear William's pride in his immigrant roots. His family was made up of hard workers who often struggled, but always put food on the table and did what they had to make sure William would not "wear tools." In the classroom story we will see that William is acutely aware of social class, and often raises economic issues with his students. In his life story William recalls a time in his Catholic schooling when his own interpretation of a certain biblical story – "a rich man has as much chance of getting into Heaven as a camel does of passing through the eye of a needle" – conflicted with the teacher's. William interprets the story,

My take on it was just what Jesus said, "Well, the rich are doing some bad things to get to be rich and you are going to have a hard time. Odds are most rich people make it by stepping on the back of poor people. And you are going to have a hard time when your Judgment Day comes around to get into Heaven."

William's recollection of an interpretation he held as a high school student is consistent with the scholarly interpretation which appears in the text box (p. 337). It appears that William began developing a critical social class consciousness at this time. In the classroom story William will raise social class issues with his students, helping them read their worlds by understanding the power of economics and policies which effect their lives.

We learn that William was eight when his parents separated, and divorced two years later. His father said to him as he left, "You have to be the man of the house now." William understood this as a responsibility, a challenging one. And he responded by

becoming protective of his mother and sister, “really overprotective” he says. We also learn that like many males, especially males who grow up athletes and compete at high levels, William learned to be aggressive and forceful. He is a physically powerful man. As an athlete he experienced a “sense of power through sports where you could control outcomes and destinies.” He knows how to use his physical power, and project his power. He is also a skilled survivor in the wilderness. We will see, in the classroom story of his teaching, elements of William being protective, possibly “overprotective,” of his students’ futures. There is a banner that stretches above the chalk board: “Where success begins and immaturity ends.” We will see William’s intolerance of immaturity in the classroom story. We will see a willingness on his part to use his power, even when it intimidates and reduces a child to tears, to stop immature and disrespectful behaviors. Have William’s life experiences made him forceful and aggressive at times with students, or is it that his context requires stern intervention? This is a question that I wrestle with and readers will need to consider for themselves. In Chapter 2 we heard the tribute that his student Max Johnson paid him. At the same ceremony I observed many fathers and mothers shower him with praise and gratitude for demanding hard work and responsibility from their children.

In one class session William invites an African American writer, David Wright, to spend a day with his students discussing a story of his, “Clarity,” that they have all read. The story is about a Black male, Darryl, who is close in age to William’s students. The story begins with Darryl and his friend being sent home early from work by their White employer for playing around. At the end of the story, when Darryl returns home, he is confronted by his stepfather, Jack Mitchell:

“Boy, you know better than playing around! Laughing! White man sees you playing around and laughing, he thinks you’re not working. He thinks you’re clowning. Just another lazy niggah wanting a handout”—Jack Mitchell never used the word *nigger*; he said it was beneath him—“and now here *you* go, clowning and playing the fool and acting like a niggah. Is that what you want?” Jack Mitchell asked....“You want to grow up to be nothing?”

When discussing the story, David Wright explained that Jack Mitchell is raising Darryl and is responsible for him. Jack was hard on Darryl, teaching him a lesson, because Jack wants Darryl to understand and negotiate the world better, understand how White people will perceive Black people and respond to them. While David Wright shared this explanation, William stood nodding. We will hear William describe his role as a teacher, in part, as being like that of a good parent. William’s hard words and tones and stances may grow out of a willingness to let his students shed some tears now if it means they will be able to understand and negotiate their world better.

William demands high standards for conduct in the same way he expects and demands excellence in their studies. He learned from his own experience as a high school student and athlete that “if you expect greatness...demand it...really push your students, they will rise to the challenge.” William wants to teach his students how to do more than survive. The harshness of any words and tones William may use when disciplining student behavior contrasts sharply with the supportive and nurturing words and tones he consistently uses when holding writing conferences with students.

William grew up not being much of a reader. Sports was his “religion,” the sports page the “literature of his youth.” The one book that William recalls from his adolescence is Jean Craighead George’s My Side of the Mountain, a young adult novel, written at a time when there was little available in this genre. He related to the main

character strongly, a boy like him. It is no surprise, given William's own memorable impression of this novel and the fact that at the age of twelve or thirteen this was the first book he had ever read through, that William uses a lot of young adult literature with his students, students that are similar to the age he was when he read this book. But even though William was not a reader, he loved stories. For William stories have incredible power to teach. The man who was most significant in his life was his grandfather, a storyteller, a poet. For William stories teach lessons.

William's teaching of literature grows out of his past experience. He says he tries to immerse students in story, because story teaches better than he ever can. His aim is to get students to think about what the author says. William says that he didn't experience this in school, which for him was "basic," "stupid," "meaningless drivel." The Catholic boy's school he attended held high expectations for him, yet he is critical of the emphasis on passively accepting information and test scores. He knows that standardized tests don't measure success or greatness. He contrasts this with what he tries to teach: critical knowledge. In contrast to his own education, William encourages his students to question and challenge everything, including institutions and systems. It was William's own practice of critical reading that led to his loss of faith in Catholicism. William's challenge of his teacher's explanation for the biblical passage highlights what he means by "critical knowledge," and will serve to help readers understand the kind of literacy he tries to cultivate in his students. William views the disposition and skill to be introspective and critical as intellect, and works as a teacher to create an environment that invites and teaches such "free thinking." We will see multiple instances of this in the classroom story.

William talks about the process of indoctrination at his Catholic high school. “They didn’t get me,” William says. This quality of resistance will surface in the classroom story. He teaches his students to resist that which is oppressive, that which does not make sense. He knows that if his students are to escape the cycle of poverty, they must become free and critical thinkers. Even though William says he lost his faith, he is curious about other cultures and religions. His curiosity is respectful. We will see William in the classroom story teach his students to be respectful of others. We will also see in one of the analytical illustrations that William pushes his students to critically reflect upon the history of the Catholic church.

William recalls that his grandmother told him that his inclinations to question, challenge, and argue were really born in college. This is significant, because these dispositions and skills were part of his education. We will see that William believes and teaches that an education can be a place to stir revolution, and through education there is hope. Before college William did not really care about what was going on in the world; the world to him was sports. As a teacher he is much different. He works hard to help his students know and care and try to influence positively the world, both their “worlds” close at home and the larger world. Again, this shows that all people, including teachers, are not bound by their personal histories, that we can all grow. It is not uncommon that once an individual begins to come to consciousness, they want to help others become conscious.

Finally, it is no coincidence that William wants to be there for his students, and his own daughter. The two most important people in his life, his grandfather and his father, “left” him when he was young. He knows what it is like to have to make it alone,

to confront great challenges. The energy, commitment, and investment of self we will see William put into his teaching is a testimony to his desire to be there for his students and help them reach their potential.

## A Classroom Story: Education as Hope and Revolution

*Where there is hope there is life,  
where there is life there is possibility  
and where there is possibility change can occur.*

(Rev. Jesse Jackson, Jr.,  
as cited in Terry, 1996, p. 61)

Several themes emerge in this classroom story which reveal the interconnectedness of a learning community, a writing workshop, an inquiry-oriented and multicultural curriculum, critical pedagogy, and the life of a passionate teacher. We will see put in motion the beliefs of William the man and William the teacher voiced in his article draft. We will see the teacher who is passionate about helping his students “do a little more than survive,” and in some cases thrive. We will see the writer teach writing. We will see the man with a strong commitment to the working class and keenly aware of social class issues help his students comprehend how economics and politics play into their lives as children. We will see that the curricular theme of “Equity in Education,” which grows out of the students’ immediate school world, is one that has surfaced before in William’s class the year before; and like this earlier class, William follows the students’ lead in where to go. On both occasions the theme does not blossom into a whole class social action project. High school teacher Neil Hendricks claims, “When the student is ready the teacher will be there” (1995, personal communication). William was prepared to guide the class in this endeavor, but the students were not ready, not interested as a whole class, so William went with what the kids wanted instead. Shaping the curriculum and learning opportunities in response to student needs and interests is an approach to cultivating critical literacy William is highly skilled at. Such teaching involves risk taking, something William does in both his personal and professional life.

We also see a facet of William that may disturb readers, a facet that I have puzzled over. There are times, not often but we will see one of them, when there is a harshness of tone and choice of words that are clearly intimidating to the students they are directed at. We will see how one girl, at a moment William considers very serious, is slow to get into the journal writing task. The entire class is quiet and writing, but she rummages through her purse. William's response to her brings her to tears. These and other events will come through in the classroom story and following analysis.

The classroom story will push us to consider what the risks and benefits of helping students to "read" and articulate the inequities and injustices that surround their lives. It will also position us to evaluate how a curriculum shaped by student interest and choice contribute to the development of community and the practice of critical literacy. As William helps to engage his students in the practice of critical literacy, elements of "revolution" are visible. There is "hope" in William's curriculum and pedagogy.

### Readers and Writers at Work

One morning late in October I walked into William's classroom almost ten minutes before the bell rang. There was much activity in the room. Some students sat at their desks organizing their materials. Many students were already plunging into work, reading magazines and books, writing, drawing. Several were talking and visiting with one another. This kind of activity is characteristic of Room 221 of the Urban Hope Academy.

There always seems to be something in the works that the students and William are excited about. This day was no different. The class had been working on poetry and

accompanying art for a poetry quilt. They knew that on this day they would begin putting their individual squares together to make a large quilt, uniting the work of all twenty-four students in the class. The quilt itself illustrates the way curriculum is thematic and project-based in William's class. For a week William immersed the class in fiction and nonfiction about the role quilts have long played in many cultures, including African American culture, and how quilt making is a forum for story telling and community building. The poetry quilt project symbolizes how students in this class have formed as a community of writers, workshopping their individual poems and pictures, and publishing their work in the quilt; the quilt is a publication.

Nate approaches me and asks if I have seen the title for the quilt. I tell him I haven't. He smiles and holds up a square that has "Poetry in Stitches" boldly written on it. "I came up with the title," he tells me, beaming with pride.

As Nate walked away, Nina came up to me and asked if I want to see her "literature presentation." With genuine enthusiasm I told her I would love to see it. The students have been reading Mildred Taylor's young adult novel The Road to Memphis, the final volume in a trilogy on an African American family. Students read on their own and as a class children's, young adult, and adult literature of multiple genres that traverse cultures and are drawn from inside and outside the canon. Nina brings over a detailed pencil drawn picture of a man climbing a tree and three other men chasing him with dogs on chains. She explains who the characters are and what is happening in the picture, that the scene is one that haunted her when she read the novel. The literature presentations, this time, are a collaborative endeavor. Nina proudly points out the parts she has drawn and the ideas she contributed to the whole picture. Collaboration on projects is common

in this class. Either today or the next day groups will present an interpretation of a particular scene from the first half of the novel, using teaching aids of their own choosing and creation to communicate their understanding of its importance to the work. Nina returns to her group and focuses her attention to further detailing of the picture. Nina and her classmates are exercising their powers of response and expression to literature through the collaboration and support of a group and in the larger context of the classroom community where they are able to stretch themselves and take risks that will serve them beyond this experience.

### The Tools and Resources of a Reading and Writing Workshop

The classroom has windows looking out onto a freeway, and high-rise housing projects emerge further in the background. The room has wood floors and a variety of tables, chairs, and student desks. In several places around the room (at tables, in cabinets, along the window sill) are tools and materials for writing, drawing, and creating various artifacts of their thinking. The

arrangement frequently changes according to the social and curricular needs of the class. The cinder block walls are painted a sky blue, dingy with age. Long fluorescent lights form strips along the twelve foot high ceiling. William has a small metal desk pushed into the corner, out of the way and used

---

“Equalizing educational opportunity for those denied it not only requires local initiatives but federal policies to reallocate resources and protect civil rights, provide access to the kinds of practices that make a difference in achievement, and address more comprehensive issues, including the distribution of economic opportunity, that cannot be dealt with effectively at the local level.

Given the educational effects of unequal community wealth and family income, it is difficult to see how the disparities in achievement between rich and poor children can be overcome without spending more money to equalize educational opportunities for economically disadvantaged students.” (Kantor, 1997, p. 11)

---

rarely. On the desk, between book ends, are several volumes: Amy Ehrlich When I Was Your Age: Original Stories About Growing Up, Georgia Heard Writing Toward Home, Nye This Same Sky, John Feinstein A Civil War: Army vs. Navy, E.D. Hirsch The Schools We Need, Gary Snider Mountains and Rivers Without End, and several language arts reference and resource books. There is a “work in” box and a collection of student papers he has responded to sitting beside it. Another tray beside this holds hand lotion and tissues for students to use, a wooden hall pass, and a roll of toilet paper for students to take to the restroom. On top of his grade/attendance book is the most recent issue of Rethinking Schools: An Urban Educational Journal. The cover story is “Equal Opportunity and the Federal Role in Education: A Response to the Conservative Attack” by Harvey Kantor (see text box excerpt).

In two three-foot-high-by-four-foot-wide book cases along the wall with windows there are individual copies of reference books for language arts and social studies, as well as many works of fiction and nonfiction. The selections provide options for exploring multicultural perspectives and realities, as well as social expose and critique. Among these are Lurlene McDaniel No Time To Cry, Maya Angelou I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Nathan McCall Makes Me Wanna Holler, Deborah Prothrow Stith Deadly Consequences, Sanyika Shakur Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member, Luis Rodriguez Always Running, Susan Sheehan Life for Me Ain't Been No Crystal Stair, Alex Kotlowitz There Are No Children Here, and William Loren Katz A History of Multicultural America. On the window sill are several sets of young adult novels (five to ten copies each), a number reflecting the realities of diverse cultures through male and female protagonists. Among these are Sheila Gordon Waiting of the Rain, Gary Paulsen

The River, Madeleine L'Engle Troubling A Star, Todd Strasser Beyond the Reif, Gaye Hieyilmaz Against the Storm, Karen Cushman The Midwife's Apprentice, and Walter Dean Meyers Scorpions, Fallen Angels, Sweet Illusions, and Hoops.

WHERE SUCCESS BEGINS AND IMMATURITY ENDS boldly calls out from a banner streaming above the chalk board. This intense proclamation reveals what William seeks to nurture and what he tries to eliminate. Above this banner are a series of instructional posters, all about eleven-by-fourteen inches in size: *Standard Reading Process*, *Dimensions of Scientific Literacy*, *Story Map*, *SQ3R Method*, *KWL Method*, *Question-Answer Relationship*. The posters are reference tools for William and the class, reflecting strategies for developing reading comprehension skills. They represent typical approaches for improving functional literacy across the curriculum which, if the situation demands it, can be drawn upon.

The two panel chalkboard is sizable. On one side William writes his daily agenda. The other side is used for notes and assignment descriptions. On this day is written Language Builders, below which are vocabulary words William has pulled from materials students are reading: Constitution, Bill of Rights, Ratify, Amendment, Preamble, Unalienable Rights, Declaration, and about ten others related to their current Civics unit.

On the opposite side of the room is a three panel cork bulletin board covering the back wall. On one panel are three sheets of white presentation poster paper, a material William uses to preserve students' work-in-progress and affirm them as knowers. Two of the sheets contain student generated ideas. One of these has the title, "What is freedom and what does it mean?" circled in the center. Like an octopus with more than eight

arms, lines emanate outward from this circled question, each presenting a student idea. The middle poster has the statement, "I realize I cannot save the world. Our class cannot save the world. But we can make a difference." The students identify themselves as change agents and understand there are ways to be actors in the world. Below this statement are four quotations from students identifying things they can do as individuals and a class that could have a positive impact on the world. This social action theme surfaces regularly in William's pedagogy, the curriculum, and the classroom discourse. The third poster is a published display from a mainstream news magazine, "Race for the Presidency."

William pays little attention to the students in these minutes before the bell rings. His attention and supervision do not seem necessary. The students know the expectations for their morning routine and follow through with them. They have built a self-directed academic community. I watch William as he gets ready for class. He is wearing khaki jeans and an oversized short sleeve pullover shirt. He has on well-worn hiking boots. He unlocks a tall cabinet built into the wall to get something out. In the cabinet are neatly stacked books, organized by set, on the shelves. Among the titles are widely recognized "classics" and young adult novels: Harper Lee To Kill A Mockingbird, Alice Childress Rainbow Jordan, Rodman Philbrick Freak the Mighty, John Steinbeck The Pearl, S. E. Hinton The Outsiders, Walter Dean Myers Somewhere in the Darkness, William Golding Lord of the Flies, Lois Lowry The Giver, and Madeleine L'Engle A Wrinkle In Time. An eclectic mix of works illustrating the broad exposure to story and literature in which students are immersed.

### A Loyal Guide and His Explorers Map the Morning Together

Shortly after the bell rings the voices of two sixth grade boys come over the intercom. Each day a different student or pair of students recites the school's pledge over the intercom. Voices filled with pride recite words focused on learning. Several students in the classroom whisper or mouth the words to themselves:

*I am in school to get an education.  
I will respect myself, my teachers  
and my classmates. I will listen,  
follow instructions and do my work.  
I will act in such a way that I will  
be proud of myself, and others will  
be proud of me, too. I came to  
school to learn, and I will learn. By  
doing these things, I will be the best  
that I can be.*

The UHA message is one of support; this is a place to learn and strive for excellence. In the midst of a poverty stricken community outside the school, William's classroom and the school provide an environment where the joy of learning can be embraced, hope can be nurtured, and preparation for future success can take place.

After the pledge and school announcements are read by the vice-principal, William and the students exchange a "good morning" greeting. His face shows disappointment in low energy of their response. He notices several students still have their noses in books – R. L. Stine, U. S. History, various comic books and magazines. This is a culture of readers, a culture which supports reading for pleasure as well as reading for knowledge. But William is ready to start the day. He asks them to put their books away because he wants to get started. Most of the students quickly respond and join the rest of the class. William has to tell two boys to put away colored pencils and

pens they are using to draw pictures. When he sees the students are physically ready to begin the day, he says again, "Good morning class." With much more energy and volume this time they call out, "Good morning Mr. Harrison."

William turns to the chalk board and gestures to the agenda which includes five main components: Announcements, Equity in Education, Poetry Quilt Independent Work, Literature Presentations, and Civics Review. It is a classroom ritual to review, and at times negotiate, the day's agenda (on most days the agenda is revised in at least some way either at this beginning review or as things unfold during the day). William is a teacher who takes advantage of teachable moments to co-construct curriculum and instruction.

There are several important announcements. William begins by reminding students of the school election. He explains that their school election and the opportunity to vote parallels the local, state, and national elections. Students will be given their own voter i.d. cards. Students will hear campaign speeches from other students in the school. He advises them to listen carefully because "political speeches can be confusing, and often misleading." His message is consistent: think critically and reflectively about all you see, hear, and experience.

William turns again to look at the list of announcements on the agenda and continues. William tells his students that they received a letter from a seventh grade class in the Bronx, New York. The students read an anthology that was prepared by students in William's class last year; several of the eighth graders in this year's class were seventh graders in William's class last year and participated in this publication. The publication William's students prepared last year emerged after reading House on Mango Street by

Sandra Cisneros. The anthology the New York students read was a collection of William's students' "growing up" and "neighborhood" stories.

Nate volunteers to read the letter. The New York students have now also read the Cisneros novel and are in the process of writing their own House on Mango Street-inspired stories. They look forward to sharing their writing with William's students on email. They close their letter with several questions about life in Metropolitan and the work William's students do as writers.

"They've asked you a couple of things in here," William says after Nate finishes reading the letter. "They mentioned that they read House on Mango Street. And they also had read the book you made last year. They already read that too. So that means you were ministers out there for others to read in New York City. You are famous, right? You guys are like a model. They are looking to you for advice. They are looking for you to help them out." William's smile and comments reveal the pride he feels in them. William underscores for them that their words and actions can have an impact on others and provoke response.

William tells them that they will need to respond to this letter and he asks for volunteers to take responsibility for this task. "We'll just say, Return Letter to the Bronx." William writes on the board in the corner where due dates and work responsibilities are listed: Return Letter to the Bronx. He asks, "How many would like to work on it? How many have not worked on any of these pen projects yet?"

About twenty hands raise to volunteer. William looks at the many waving hands and arms, hears the attention getting groans and grunts. "I know many of you are already working on the survey. Raise your hand if you haven't already committed to another

project. I'll put this in a subgroup." William quickly checks with individuals and writes their names on the board below this new subgroup heading. Addressing the five student volunteers who will write the return letter, William provides guidance for the task, "Now, here is what you have to do. You have to in some way answer their questions. We probably won't do it until next week, after we finish our poetry quilt. Maybe you can even tell them about that. Then, also, answer their different questions. And we can just give whatever else you want to tell them too." Room 221 is a classroom without walls in which students are given the opportunities to interact with real audiences in meaningful ways.

William turns back around to face the class, dusting the chalk off his left hand. "Okay, that is enough. Now, there will be other chances to work in subgroups. We'll keep this here." William pins the Bronx letter above the chalk board.

Dee, physically the most powerful student in the class and a leader of sorts, has opened a collector's notebook of X-Men comic hero trading cards. Dee was one of the students who was told just minutes before to close his book and pay attention. He is a student who often turns to drawing during other activities, but still manages to maintain some level of attention. Dee does not often speak in class. When he does, we see his insights, an amalgam of the experiences and street smarts he brings to class combined with the abilities of a quick learner in any context, are astounding. As much as Dee has had to endure on the streets, he has not "hardened," not lost his sensitivity, not rejected the hope and possibility of education. Siblings and friends he runs with are involved with gangs. Not Dee, yet, perhaps never. William sees what Dee is doing, but chooses not to say anything to him. I know from so many observations of William's teaching, and

listening to him talk about these students who he knows so well inside and outside the classroom, that he considers carefully who the child is and what he or she might need before he reprimands.

### The Discourse of Equity: “Maybe the Toilet Paper Is Just a Symbol”

William has finished the class announcements and the day’s schedule. His face grows serious. His voice lowers. Knowing their teacher, the students recognize the cues. They are attentive. There is no playfulness. Everyone's eyes are on William. They are listening, on multiple levels.

William, solemn in tone, tells the class what impact their class discussion from the day before had on him. Parents of students in poorer schools across the city had captured the local media’s attention when they expressed anger at a school board meeting over the school district’s rationing of toilet paper and other necessities because of budget restrictions. The class had talked about the situation at length, and the students were outraged. “I went home yesterday and thought about our morning discussion,” William began. “I was very excited about what we talked about, how the issue over the toilet paper had sparked attention and interest in equity in education. This is a worthwhile issue. I told my wife about this and she was disturbed. She reminded me that I have been buying my kids toilet paper for years. I began to think that maybe the toilet paper is just a symbol. I got upset. Why aren't parents outraged over the fact that we don't have any textbooks more recent than 1980. In the five years I have been teaching here I have never been given a novel. Every novel we have here has been bought through grants I have written or my own paycheck. The computers we have come through the personal efforts

of teachers or grants. I wondered, is the outrage misguided? Do parents not know about the books and stuff? It's our job to get parents on our side advocating for our needs.

How many talked to your parents about this when you went home?"

Seven of the twenty-eight students present raise their hands. William looks around the room and asks, "Does anyone want to report what your parents said?" There is a brief silence. Two students tell how they went home and talked to their parents. They say that their parents were mad about it, but a lack of detail in their accounts indicates it is not likely their parents are going to take action.

William is not afraid to take the lead, a role he assumes whenever there is a need. "Maybe getting angry is the first step." William pauses slightly, "But it's not enough. You have to get even." William's notion of social action is grounded in the belief that awareness and communication to others is essential (see text box).

---

...it is not enough to be angry, you have to be well-informed and have your anger directed in a positive way to get something done. So you cannot be ignored and just be dismissed as some type of lunatic.  
(William, 24 October 1997)

---

William asks, "How many of you are still very interested in doing Equity and Education?" he asks. Several students call out responses, and others talk to tablemates about it. William gives them a moment to consider. He surveys the class. "If we are going to do something about this, why don't you just complain? Like I said, getting angry is the first step, but it is hardly productive to leave it just there. You have to channel that anger, and get even, and get aware, and get acknowledgment." William pushes his students to be inquiring learners, and disposed toward action.

"Okay, class. Do you want to speak a bit?" There is no immediate response, a second or two of silence. William asks, "Are people still brewing? Do you have questions?" William, trying to get a sense of whether or not this is a topic to pursue or if it should be scratched, asks, "How many people are still very excited about the possibility of doing some work with this subject like we did here. I mean still really want to do this? Raise your hand. Raise them high so I can see it."

It looks as if every student's hand is up.

William tells them to put their hands down. He takes a moment to think, and then asks a different question, "Now how many of you don't care, I mean, don't care to do this? How many don't want to?"

No hands go up.

"Anyone?" William asks with some surprise in his voice. "That is a majority. Very good. Wait, how many of you don't care if we do this issue or another?"

Four students raise hands.

"Okay." William is smiling. He has used the last ten minutes to get a sense of where his students are at, and make a decision concerning which direction to head. "Let's see where this goes. I'd like you to clear everything off your desk and put it away except for pen or pencil." William passes out sheets of blank paper. "Put your name on top of this paper. You are going to be writing a journal entry, but I don't have your journals to give back. So you are going to write on this paper and then staple it in your journal when you get it back."

William quickly looks across the room to see what is on top of students' desks. He waits for all students to put away their books and get ready to write. William holds up

the blank paper he has been passing out. "Anyone else?" Everyone has paper. William continues, "All right. We started talking yesterday about what is equity in education? Who can tell me again what equity means?"

Venus responds questioningly, "Something you have a right to?"

"No, that is inalienable rights," William says, but that is good that you are thinking of that."

Several other students offer responses. Ivory says equity means equal and William pursues this, "Equal? Equal education? Equal how? In what way? Compared to whom? Scott?"

"Equal to all people who are getting the education," Scott says.

"Okay. Can you be more specific?" William pushes.

"Equal to other schools," says Scott.

"Other schools where?" There is a burst of voices calling out answers. William instructs them to raise their hands first. "Moesha?"

"In the world?" Moesha says with uncertainty in her voice.

"In the world, the country. Even within Metropolitan and the surrounding area," William responds. "However you want to look at it. You've got the Universe. Basically we are taking a look at the State, but you could look at the whole United States. Now, when you say education, what do you mean? What is meant by education? And think of everything that is meant to get an equal education. What are some of the things that are meant?"

The students start offering their ideas about the "things" that are involved in an equal education. William writes their responses on the chalk board. Joe asks him if he

wants them to write these things down. William responds, "No, we're just generating a list. Right now I just want to get these down so we'll remember them. Okay?" At this point William has written down "learning things," "history," "tools and supplies," and "books."

Mika raises her hand. "At White schools they still learn more than you. They should all learn the same thing."

"So, you want people to learn the same exact thing?" William asks for clarification.

"No," Mika responds. "Like, White schools, like other schools, say somebody in the eighth grade in another school and we in the eighth grade at this school, and they are learning more than we are. And they are getting a better education and everything."

William does not write anything down. He asks Mika to explain why she thinks this. She pauses. He is flooded by responses from other students. One student calls out "supplies" and students burst forth with examples: "books, pencils, paper" are said by several students. "Toilet paper" and "lotion" are two of several other items called out. "Better teachers," "sanitation," "desks," "chairs," "air conditioning," and "vending machines" are among the things students name as equity needs. William writes most of these, but not all, on the board.

Michelle says emphatically, "We need a better place to learn."

"Now," William says with enthusiasm, "what you are starting to do is see priorities. It would be nice to have vending machines, but of course you don't need vending machines to learn do you?"

A choral outburst follows from many students: "Yes. Yes, we do."

"Okay," William says to settle the students down, "it is something that would be nice but, and other schools have them, but it is not what we call an absolute necessity."

William writes "vending machines" on the board among the other ideas. He does not give as much credence to this idea as he does to others, but he does not negate it.

"We manage without them," Nicole says.

Max says boldly, "School is a place to learn."

"Okay, very good," William says. "Say more about that," William encourages. He listens carefully and facilitates critically. He guides and leads. He questions and challenges to demand deeper thinking. Here we see him urging the student to further explore a line of thinking he wants to promote. He knows these students will have to be twice as good to get half the recognition. They need to be able to show the world they are intelligent and articulate.

"We must be ready to learn," Max says.

"Students must be ready to learn," echoes William. "That's good that you thought of that, Max, because a lot of times students have a tendency, as we all do, to say what is wrong with the other people and not take a look and say, 'Well, maybe we are not doing everything we could.' Very good."

Bart brings up the fact that the bathrooms often flood and that this is a health risk. Spontaneously several students start recalling to one another vivid and visceral stories of sights and smells in the school's bathrooms.

Nina says they should have more teachers. William asks her, "More teachers? Okay. Putting in more teachers."

"More teachers in every school," Nina says.

"How do you mean more teachers?" William asks. "What do you mean by that? Keep talking. You might be on to something here. Do you mean just more numbers or good teachers?"

"I don't know," she says.

"Okay, I'll put it in." William writes on the board "more" beside "good teachers" which is already up there. "Anything else?"

Rose says she thinks the school should be prettier.

"I want to know how a pretty building affects your education?" William asks.

Warren jumps in with a response, "Make us feel safer. It will, let's say, I don't know, I think we'll feel safer. It'll look better. And we'll be in a safer environment."

"It will make you want to learn like if you are in a pretty building," Rose adds.

"You don't want to be in a dirty building."

"How does it make you want to learn Autumn? What does it do that makes you want to learn?" William asks.

"You know," Autumn says, "if it looks nice and you feel a sense of pride you will want to learn." Autumn's point reveals a nascent understanding of the potential role of aesthetics in learning, and a desire for aesthetics. William knows that aesthetics is an important concept for students to make sense of, and his questions guide them to do so.

"Good. Well, what else does it do? It gives you a sense of pride. What else?"

William pushes, demanding supporting examples.

"You feel more confident. You feel valued." Autumn adds.

Nodding his head in an appreciation of these explanations William acknowledges,

"All right. You are on to something. Confidence. Okay. They are valued, right. Very

good. So all of that. Value, pride, attitude, confidence, etc. All right. Also safety. Now, I think you would agree that in this building you are fairly safe. For the most part. But you are definitely, that is thrown into jeopardy, when you leave the building. Right? How is safety important? How is it important to learning?"

"If you can't survive, you can't learn," Dee says, looking up from his drawing. An astute observation. Dee, even though a child in years, knows what he needs most, to survive. The t-shirt he wears echos the survival theme. On the front of this black shirt, written boldly in white, is **Urban Assault**, and below that *Black Men have been subjected to lynchings, beatings, shootings, and chemical experimentation. The black man's survival is regarded with the same care and compassion as the buffalo; animals to be hunted and killed at will.* On the back of the shirt is written, "To imagine that we shall be eradicated is absurd and ridiculous. We can be remodified, changed, assimilated, but never extinguished. November 1849," above the portrait of its author, Frederick Douglas.

"Right," William responds. "It should be something you don't even worry about. And, let's face it, if we're talking about necessities and basic needs, surviving is number one. And if you are worried about just surviving and getting through the day, I don't think you are really going to be so concerned about what happened in class today. There are other things on your mind that are a little more pressing. Very good. You guys are starting to see that education is not just learning facts. Not just history. It is a whole lot more. Mika, I'd still like to go back to what you were saying and I think it is a good point. How can we make sure that the eighth grade students here, this class, are prepared or are ready to go up against or go into a world with other eighth grade students. How can we do that? Does anyone have any ideas? How can we make sure that you are

getting the same value education that another eighth grade class someplace place will get? Mika?" William wants his students to understand that education is more than an accumulation of facts, and he links this message with a deep understanding of their lives, as well as their present and future needs. He draws on Mika's previous point to help students build upon it. His active facilitation shows the students he listens, and values what they feel and believe.

"Like what Mr. Michell's doing," Mika gestures over to me. "He comes to our class. One person goes to another school to represent our school and stay in that class with one teacher and see how they teach the students eighth grade and see if we are learning the same things they are."

"Okay. Great. We can go see what is happening in other classes," William says. "Now, this brings up an interesting thing. Right now there is a wave across America that wants to mandate curriculum. Many people want to say 'All eighth graders should learn this' and they'll give you a whole bunch of big lists. 'All seventh graders should learn this' and that is it. 'All sixth graders should learn this' and that is it. How many of you think that sounds like a good idea? That you should learn what someone tells you to learn, not even someone from this school? How many think it is a good idea?" William invites his students to explore a question that is being fiercely debated across the country, a debate over what constitutes "literacy." I suspect he is also painting a picture of curriculum that is quite different from what they are used to from him and other classes at UHA.

Daniel asks, "Someone from the District?"

"Not even necessarily the District," William responds. "It could be the State, could be the Federal Government! Maybe they are telling you to learn stuff you already know. Or maybe they are leaving out important stuff like this discussion on equity and education. Maybe they are not even giving you the opportunity to talk about issues that really affect your lives."

"We might learn about something we already know?" Bart says with concern.

"How are we going to get to the next level?"

"How are we going to learn everything we need to know?" Nate asks.

"Here's a cold hard fact," William begins. "There is no possible way you can learn everything." William explains how computers and other technologies have created an information age explosion in which the quantity of texts is expanding exponentially and rapidly. "What you have to learn how to do is to be able to process all that information. To deal with it. Because it can be a little overwhelming. So, you are not going to learn everything, but you might learn how to learn. And decide what you'll need to learn because there is no human being alive who is going to learn everything. But, then again, maybe there are some things that all educated people should know. Maybe all educated people should know how many planets there are in the Universe. How many continents there are on the globe. How many of you know what photosynthesis is? Maybe all educated people should know how our government works. There are some things that maybe we all should know, together."

William looks at the list on the board and places the chalk back in the tray. "This is a good start." The list has many of the key points that were brought up and discussed:

### Board

learning things  
history  
tools and supplies  
the right tools and supplies (Max)  
books  
good teachers  
desks and equipment  
air conditioning  
good food  
space (physical plant)  
vending machines  
students must be ready to learn  
sanitation  
field trips (Bart)  
more teachers (Rochelle)  
better buildings  
safe and clean environment

William has created a classroom space where students have engaged in a discourse of equity. The students have thought deeply about what is genuinely needed for learning and what is missing from their context. The students have been able to discern wants from needs and have been able to compare and contrast their realities with others. This discourse – this talk of equity – begins what William hopes will be a call to action for these students in their present and future lives.

### A Community of Writers Writes for Understanding

William shifts the direction. He moves the students to “write what they know,” what they understand, feel, and believe about equity in education. They began with talk. They will now write, and through this process we will hear some of the ideas that came up in the discussion, but we will hear others that surfaced as students put pen to paper.

The discussion, the writing, and finally the sharing of what they wrote all play vital parts in helping students construct deeper understandings of equity in education.

"Here is what I want you to do now," William says to the class. "On that sheet of paper I passed out, write about equity and education. Try to look at it from this way. Do you think schools are equal. Talk about what you know. Talk about this area, what you know. Do you think that they should be equal, and why? Some people would say there is no way they should be equal. Why should this school be equal to a school in a district where the people pay more taxes? Shouldn't their kids get a better school? They pay more money. Isn't that correct?"

Several students say "NO" sharply, in outrage.

"Penalize them for being rich?" William asks provokingly. "Penalize them for making it? No? You need to give reasons."

---

I was worried about how I would ask them to write about Equity in Education. I mean, that is a pretty serious topic. I was stuck myself. How do I start? And I thought, "Oh my God, did I explain that well?" I'm going, "Oh my God, this is going to be a disaster." I really thought it was just going to be a waste, and it wasn't.  
(William, 24 October 1996)

---

Students ask if they can write about

Catholic schools, Urban Hope Academy, their teachers, and schools they have heard about. In launching an inquiry, William feels his way forward, reading the students and the moment, weighing in his knowledge of

student needs, anticipating further directions and possibilities. He is often uncertain of outcomes (see text box). William gives them an open field to explore, "You can talk about Catholic schools. You can talk about private schools. You can talk about schools that aren't even in this State. You can talk about whatever you know." This invitation foreshadows what William is like as a writing teacher, a stance that is elemental in his

writing workshop. Writing workshop teachers treat writing as a process. Students are given greater control of what they write, and this initial writing on a shared topic is exploratory, the goal being to get ideas on paper so the writer can make sense of what she knows and believes. "So, basically, what I want you to start doing is start writing down what you think about this equity and education issue. Are schools equal? Should they be equal? What should schools look like? What should schools be doing to make things better? Any of those. You are writing down your thoughts. However it works for you. If you want to write what you think this school needs, that's fine. Maybe you don't want to look at the big picture right now. You just want to say, 'Well, I think this school needs more of this, this, and this.' Tell why. Any other questions? Now take about fifteen minutes to work on it. Try to get some examples. Don't just say, 'Education is unfair. It sucks.' Try to tell why. If it is so unfair, try to tell why. Write it down, quickly. Now, no talking."

William takes a seat at one of the student desks. He has a green letter size hard bound journal. He tells the class this issue is very important to him, and that he would like to write too. Several students get up to sharpen their pencils. Most of the students write as soon as they are given the word. Cassie rummages through her bag and pulls out a mirror. William, disturbed by Cassie's rustling, says to her sharply, "Get your stuff and go. Get your stuff and go. You are playing with the wrong person. This is very serious." I am surprised by William's reaction to Cassie. I do not know what her past history is in this class, and what interactions concerning behavior and discipline have taken place before this moment.

"I'm serious," Cassie says back.

"No, you are not," William declares. "I think you had better heed what Mr. Johnson said. About students who are ready to learn. If you are not ready to learn there is not a school in the world that can teach you. Do you see what I am saying?" William draws a hard line with Cassie. He holds up the preceding conversation about what students need in order to learn as a mirror for Cassie to see her behavior. His words are straightforward. His tone is sharp.

Cassie does not say anything in response. Her head bends to hide the tears already flowing from her eyes. She eventually picks up the pencil on her desk and writes. This is a painful moment, seemingly contradictory to a caring community. Regardless of the effect his words and tone produce in Cassie, or Dee, or any student in the class, there seems to be an understanding by all that William cares enough about them to demand they take their own learning and academics seriously.

The sound of pen and pencil points scrolling on tables through single sheets of paper fills the air. There is a faint noise of children on the playground in the distance. Rush hour long past, only the occasional car on the freeway makes itself known. William skillfully brought the students to the point of generating many ideas, and now is letting them run. He has helped students develop over time the habit of sustained focused writing. Remarkable. Seven minutes into this and most students have more than a page written. Even Cassie. A couple of boys write haltingly. Rochelle is diligent, holding and working a pencil with her malformed hand. William, his journal positioned sideways, works his left arm up and down the page rather than across. Ten minutes pass. Dee stops. He returns to his cards and pulls out a sketch pad to copy the images. Anthony plays with a piece of tape. Autumn and Ivory whisper and pass notes. All others

continue to write. Thirteen minutes pass. Rustling. Staples. Whispers. "How many are still writing?" he asks. Half the hands go up. William tells them two minutes of writing time remain. Fifteen minutes pass. Several students flex hands, stretch bodies. William continues to write. There is a knock on the door. A student has come to get students for the instrumental band class. William holds up his hand to the student and says, "We'll be down there in a minute."

Several students begin to show restlessness. William looks at the clock. "Okay. Tell me if you are in instrumental and want to leave. You may leave. Give me your paper first."

Several students get up from their seats, and pick up instrument cases resting on the floor by their tables. Instrumental is one of a handful of electives students may take at Urban Hope Academy. As these students move toward the door chatter erupts. William tells them, "Leave without saying anything!" William, seeing several students are still writing, as he is, wants to preserve the conditions for thoughtful reflection before turning to sharing their entries.

### Sharing Writing: We Are All Authors and Teachers

Writers need audiences. In this class William is but one audience. Classmates are another. And the letter from a classroom in the Bronx reveals that there are audiences beyond the walls of this classroom. Sharing writing, everything from journals to polished pieces, is part of the culture in this classroom. William stands up carrying his journal, "At this time you are going to share. You will get your notebooks back soon and then we can either staple them in or you can rewrite them. But I'd like to try to keep a record of

all of our Equity and Education writing, or whatever we end up calling this process, this unit. Keep a record of it both for our purposes and maybe for possible publication purposes. If you are going to get out information you need to keep a record of the work. See what you are doing. This is very important." William is taking steps here to move this discussion of Equity in Education toward a more formal inquiry. The allusion to possible publication is consistent with the writing community the class has formed and the role of change agent he is supporting his students in becoming.

William opens his journal up, "I wanted to share mine and maybe have enough time to let other people share theirs. As I said, this is an issue I am very excited about. Last year I wanted to do this, but my students at the time didn't feel inspired by it. They didn't want to do it. Some did, but most didn't. While now, most do and some don't. And, if you are going to live by the majority you have to listen to the majority. And so I decided we wouldn't do that. So this is very interesting that it has come up again. Now it seems like you guys are more ready so I'm going to try this issue again but I'm not guaranteeing that we do this wholly, we're still just playing with it. Here's what I wrote:

I invited my students to write about this important issue equity in education on a day when one of my colleagues came to me and she wanted to share the fact that she was leaving our building for the suburbs and a new position as technical assistant. She is not the greatest teacher, but she is a very good teacher and her loss will be noticed. This invitation also comes the day after parents exploded on camera outside the school board meeting over toilet paper rationing. I wished the same outrage was expressed over the fact that my most recent District-provided textbook was published in 1980. Better yet, nearly every other novel, text, computer supply and any other learning tool I have use for was obtained by me. Where is the outrage over that? What do schools need? On the most basic level I feel a good teacher and a student who wants to learn can tackle most obstacles. But they shouldn't have to overcome all of these hardships in a society as rich as ours. Currently, my students are penning down their concerns and I am sure they are valuable, extremely valuable. The primitive conditions are deplorable. While I refuse to allow the lack of resources and equity defeat us, I am slowly reaching

the conclusion that the time is right for a "revolution." I put that in quotes because that is really our unit we are working on, "Revolutions and Freedom." My attitude is that the lack of equity in inner city schools is all the more reason why I must work harder to assure that these beautiful and deserving students receive the best quality possible in our year or years together. The next question is obvious, yet this is where it gets difficult. What do we do next to change the conditions and bring about more equity?<sup>37</sup>

William closes his journal. There is quiet, I believe because both William and the students are feeling the emotions expressed in his journal. It is clear that William cares deeply for his students, committed to their learning and well-being. William grounds the curriculum in student interests, and his assessment of their needs. He is a passionate teacher. He deplores the educational inequities his students endure. He models for them that writing is a source of action, for he has addressed some of the inequities by writing grants. Here he is using his passion to fuel their own desire for change. "Well," William clears his throat, "I think what we can do to change the conditions may be the next question I ask you guys to take on." He pauses. "Anyway. First, does anyone want to share what they wrote?"

Mika raises her hand and is given permission to read her journal:

I'd like to make this school a better place. I've been in this school since second to eighth grade. I think the teachers at this school have taught me a lot but I don't think they have taught me enough. Some people I know say that when they got into eighth grade they were taught the same things as when they were in sixth grade. They said when they got to ninth grade the teachers did stuff they didn't understand and they said they should have learned when they were in sixth grade. We need more teachers like Mr. Harrison and Mrs. India. Teachers that tell us a lot and explain things we don't know. In all of the years that I have been at this school the most I've learned is in your class this and last years. When I was with Ms. Simon I never picked up a book unless it was assigned and then when I got

---

<sup>37</sup>The journal responses that William and his students share are audio transcriptions of what they read. I did not have access to the actual journal entries which would have different spellings, sentence structures, and punctuation.

you everything changed. You are a type of teacher that will push you too. Push you always to better yourself. He lets you do stuff that will further your education. Last year I did not do so good because all my friends were in this class and now is my chance to make up for that. You don't have to be rich to get a good education, you just have to be willing to learn.

Applause from the students. Tears in William's eyes. "It is very interesting,"

William responds, "last year you had a choice to go into a room where all of your friends were. I gave you that choice even though I didn't want you to leave and you chose to stay. And I appreciate it. Anybody else?" William affirms Mika's choice as one of taking personal responsibility for her own learning and validates her vital role in the classroom community. Her words provide testimony that William inspires learning.

Nina shares her journal which is about a friend of hers who goes to a suburban public junior high school in Minneapolis. Nina writes about how this school has central air conditioning, an indoor swimming pool, a grassy playground with plenty of new equipment, and a gymnasium that does not double as a lunch room. Everything that she writes about is absent in Urban Hope Academy.

William does not challenge the criticisms that Nina raises in her comparison. William reminds the class that Urban Hope Academy was originally an elementary school. He tells them that the boarded up junior high school down the street has a pool, gymnasiums, a metal shop, and a wood shop. "Unfortunately, the nature of demographics, where people live, they moved out of this neighborhood and that school had to close down."

A wave of despair, shown through their sudden silence and facial expressions, ripples across the room with the realization that access to the facility needs they name are so close, yet so far out of reach.

Several other students read their journals. Most talk about the physical inadequacies of the area schools available to them. Others focus on not having sufficient quantities of materials such as books and classroom supplies. Two students mention the desire for field trips. And several relate the obstacles of their neighborhood to the ability of students to be ready to learn. Many students include that students need to have a good attitude about learning.

William has been listening carefully as students read their journals. His experience as a writer and teacher has taught him the necessity of listening, especially since he is asking students to write their own lives. William knows that when students write their lives real and vital issues will surface, and passions will

---

What I see as most powerful through this whole Equity and Education thing is how it emerged. My belief is that if you let students write about their own lives and you don't force them into one line of research, that if you have faith in them, the issues important to them will emerge. This is a very real issue. It is important to their lives. And real issues invoke a passion. It's something they can start writing about. And they did. This came about so naturally. The way that everyone wanted to share, like I had to stop them, and kids who don't normally share did. It was just so powerful. It tells me that there was something there. (William, October 1996)

---

be stirred (see text box). Applause follow each sharing. William speaks up, "You said a couple of things that really made me think, and I even jotted down notes. Once in a while, when someone does that, and makes you think about something, it is okay to jot down notes on your paper and then it will help you think about things later." William articulates to his students how their ideas affect him. They are knowers. They help him construct meaning. By instructing them that it is okay to write notes for later reference, he is guiding them in the social construction of meaning. He is sharing a tool that will help them survive in other contexts. "First off, Rochelle stated that she thinks all schools should be equal. I think that is one of the things we are going to have to think about.

That is a great question: Should all schools be equal? Should they all be the same? Is that American, that all schools are the same? We'll talk more about what that means. That is a very good question that you made me think about that we need to ask ourselves. Is it right to expect that every school be equal? Getting the same amount of money, having the same kind of building, having the same supplies, teaching the same stuff, whatever. Is that what we want? Number two, you were talking about field trips. I don't know if you ever remember but we used to have 'walking field trips.' Does anyone remember those?" Walking field trips will surface again, prominently, in William's class this year as part of a student's inquiry that provoked a policy change.

About a third of the class respond either by calling out yes, or recalling to one another memories of these. William continues, "Okay, we used to go on them all the time. I used to take my classes almost once a month on walking field trips. The Art Museum, Science Expo, Historical Society, City Library, the Park and the Gardens, and area theaters. All of these places are within walking distance to the school."

William gets up and writes "walking field trips" on the board, and then the question "Should all schools be equal?" While William writes these on the board, students barrage him with "why" questions.

"Why can't we get walking field trips anymore?" he calls back to them. "Because the school district superintendent says we can't. Because a couple of teachers and students blew it. They went into a store and I guess some kids stole some stuff or whatever. They were acting crazy at the museum or something like that. Now walking field trips are off-limits. When you think about it, the teachers and the parents of the students simply accepted this fact. Maybe some of you want to pursue this issue in your

writing. Sometimes being a good teacher means you have to go outside the classroom walls to help kids learn. That's a good question, how important are field trips?"

William invites other students to share. Bart raises his hand and reads his journal:

I don't think schools should be equal because everything is not the same. I think our school needs more supplies. Things like more books. That will lead to better students. We need better lesson plans and better teachers who do more teaching and less talking. I think our school needs to be totally remodeled from top to bottom. Like the bathrooms remodeled. We need also to get the plumbers to get the water pipes fixed. We need to get the old school name off the building and a flagpole.

While Bart reads, William makes some notes in his journal. When Bart finishes William offers a reaction, something he has done in only a few cases, "You have a dream. That is very good. One thing I am noticing as people read is that everything is connected to dollars. How practical, or feasible, or likely is it that we're going to be able to get all this? It is nice to just dream. Impractical. But you want to get the plumbing fixed. You might do that. But to get the school remodeled from top to bottom, that is not. You've got to start small to build up. And you've got to have a dream to shoot for." William pushes the students to think in practical ways how to achieve the change they seek. He wants to prime their dreams, but also help them know what it takes to make dreams into realities.

"I have a dream Mr. Harrison," Moesha says.

"You have a dream?" William responds. "Where'd that come from? I'm getting all kinds of good stuff."

Moesha reads her journal. Her dream is that all students will learn. She writes that rich people should not be penalized for their richer environment, but that poor people should not be penalized for their poorer environment. This is a very powerful idea she

has put forth in response to William's provoking question earlier about penalizing people for "making it."

"Great," William says in an almost speechless first reaction. "You made some points that were very similar to Mika's. I really like how you say, 'and we should not penalize kids for their parents' income or lack of income.'" Just as he is about to say something else to Moesha, William looks across the room at Dee who has gotten up from his seat to retrieve a box of colored pencils to work on his art. William is perturbed by the interruption. Dee should be listening and participating in the sharing and discussion, not working on his art. William is quick to discipline undesirable behaviors. William's words and tones can be punishing. William stops Dee with a question, "Mr. Johnson, do you want to read your paper to the class?" William is knowledgeable about his students. He had Dee last year as a seventh grader and has coached him in basketball.

"No," he says in deference.

"You have nothing important to say?" William challenges. "A man of your worldly knowledge, so street smart, so hip to the scene. You have nothing to say?" William's sarcastic questioning words freezes Dee.

Dee does not say anything. "Put the pencils back until we are finished. You can work on that later," William tells him. Dee knows a line has been drawn, and Dee does not cross that line with William. He does not challenge William. Silenced, he puts the pencil box back on the shelf and returns to his seat.

Rock, a White-Hispanic student who struggles academically and socially, raises his hand to share what he wrote. This is a surprise because Rock is one of the few students who rarely writes and even more rarely shares his writing publicly.

I think a good teacher can teach a student with good self-control. I think Mr. Harrison is a man who makes good with what he has to give us a good education. Of course, I am not one of the best students but he doesn't let me quit. I don't do all of my work. I used to be a "not so bright" kid, but the nine months I've been with Mr. Harrison I have pulled up most of my grades.

Rock has chosen an interesting moment to share, on the heels of William's directive to Dee to show better self-control. We see how William does not quit on his students, or let them quit on themselves. William seems emotionally touched by what Rock has written and simply says, "Thank you Rock. Anybody else want to share?" William maintains high expectations for his students, demanding and pushing for the excellence he talked about in his life story, even when it means being hard on them.

Autumn volunteers to read her journal. It begins with, "I think that our school is not equal because we need more computers and more teachers." It continues with a number of "we need more" statements that include supplies, books, toilet paper.

William looks up from his journal when Autumn has finished and says, "You are all proving by your writing here that people can learn even without all the supplies and luxuries like air conditioning. I'd say this is your best writing you've done the whole year. If nothing else, we are going to be working on this subject just for that. That is very good. Think about it though, when I was at that conference a couple of weeks ago they were talking about improving middle schools. I looked around the room we were in and I said to myself, 'Now wouldn't it be nice if the kids could actually go to school in a place like this?' It was beautiful. Woodwork all over the place. Screens that moved up and down electronically. Beautiful nice cushy seats. Wouldn't that be nice to work in a place where everyone has a computer, a lot of space, open wide windows? Wouldn't that be nice? And for me all this raises the question of what is most important for a person to

learn. Several of you have written 'more teachers' and that has got me thinking. How many people are in this room right now? About? Not counting Mr. Michell and myself."

Anthony calls out, "Twenty."

"About twenty or so," William. "Normally we have twenty-five students in here, but some are at instrumental. How many students are in the other classes?"

"Thirty," Joshua says.

William echoes "thirty," and goes on to explain that the reason there are not thirty students in their class is because he has a seventh/eighth grade split and most teachers do not want splits so he negotiated for fewer students. William explains to them from his perspective as a teacher why fewer students in the room is better for students to learn, "If you have only twenty students in a room, you might learn to talk like adults. Adults wait until each person is finished, at least he should if he's an adult. Wait until that person is finished, listen to that person, then make their own conversation. The more people in the room the more competition there is for who gets to speak. But when you have thirty kids it is hard to do. Think how much we could do if we only had fourteen kids, nineteen kids. Why don't they give us that?"

"We don't have the space," Venus says.

"Not enough teachers and not enough kids," Scott says.

"I think," Ivory says, "that because there is a whole bunch of kids, you know, and not enough rooms to put them."

"We've got empty classrooms here in this school," William responds.

"Maybe there aren't enough teachers," Nina says.

To the class, William asks, "So, we just need more of what?"

There is a choral response of "teachers."

William looks at Nicole who has her hand raised, "Is that what you were going to say?"

"I was going to say that too," Nicole says. "I was also going to say that the School Board said there isn't enough money for more teachers."

---

"[New York City] spends \$58,000 yearly on each adult inmate, \$70,000 on each juvenile—nearly ten times what it spends to educate a child in its public schools."  
(Kozol, 1995, p. 142)

---

"Okay," William says. "I think we need to look at how money is spent in this city because we have a bigger budget than most small cities just to educate you guys. And we don't always spend it wisely. Look at it this way. We've got twenty kids in the class. Which by the way, some suburbs do. This is not unheard of. Some have less than that. Like a class like this, a writing class. They only take fifteen sometimes. Because they want the kids, you know how I conference with you, they want you to be able to do that. Well, I still do that with thirty kids. Some teachers won't do that because they say it is too many kids, that it takes too much time or they don't want the kids to work in groups because they say it is too many. If you had, let's say you had four classes or five classes, at twenty kids, how many kids is that?"

Several students respond, "One hundred."

"All right," William says. "Now, how many teachers is that going to take? Five, right. That is at twenty. Let's say if you have thirty-five kids in a class and the same amount of kids, one hundred, how many teachers is it going to take?"

Several students call out, "Three."

"About three, right," William says. "Not exact, but about three. Okay. About on average how much does a teacher get paid? Do you even know?"

Students start throwing out figures: \$20,000, \$25,000, \$35,000. William tells them to raise their hand. He calls on Michelle. "I think \$35,000. No \$60,000," she says.

"Sixty thousand?" William says with raised eyebrows. Warren says with disbelief, "A year?"

"That is actually pretty close," William says, "when you factor in their benefits. You get health care and all that. So, about \$60,000."

There is a collective "What!!" exclaimed in the room. Shock is expressed in the voices and exhalations of students throughout the room, overwhelmed by that amount of money.

William tries to settle them down with an explanation, "We have a dental plan, an eye plan, health plan, retirement benefits and all of that. So, when you factor in all of that, it is about \$60,000 a year. That is not every teacher. That is teachers that have been teaching about ten years, have a Masters degree, and all that. That is just an average. Okay. I don't make that. So, if you use that figure, how much money does the District save?"

There is a pause. Students race to calculate. Two boys in the front of the room search for calculators. Nina has just figured it out on a piece of paper. "One hundred and twenty thousand dollars," she calls out.

"One hundred and twenty thousand dollars. By burdening three classes. So for every three classes, if you stick thirty-five kids, cramming them in like sardines, for every five classes, the District saves \$120,000. Right there."

Considerable excited chatter breaks out. Students turn to one another and exchange reactions.

"Who knows what they spend it on," William says. "I'm just telling you why it is you don't get smaller classes. Not because we don't want them. Teachers would love it. We've been asking for it for years, but they say, 'Sure, we'll give you smaller classes if you take a pay cut.' So, if we only make \$50,000 they'll give us smaller classes because they want to save some money. So, saving money is the bottom line. When you hear 'bottom line,' it means they are conning you. What the bottom line means is they are saving \$120,000 for every three classes and there's probably, I don't know, 1,000 classes in the City of Metropolitan." William is careful to explain key terms. "You add it up. So if there is a million students, 100,000, I don't know, some outrageous number." William helps the students read the realities of their own school. By not backing off of a critical stance, he models for his students how to read the oppression in their own lives. He is trying to educate them on the politics and economics of education and schooling. William does most of the talking, but most of what he says is in response to his students questions and reactions that beg for more information.

William tells them that they have to go to lunch soon. Almost every student in the class has shared. He asks if anybody else wants to read theirs that did not get a chance to. Jade asks to read hers. Like so many others, she has written about material needs, but she closes her journal with, "Also, I agree with what Max said about the student wanting to learn. That is the most important. If you don't want to learn, there is not a school in the world that can teach you."

As with every other student who has read her or his response, applause follow. William asks the students, "Some teachers say that there are certain kids that don't want to learn. How many of you agree that there are certain kids who do not want to? How many of you say there are certain kids who can't learn? I mean, they can learn to tie their shoes but can't learn anything really serious?" A few hands go up and down as these questions are asked.

William, seemingly conscious of the time, poses two questions which are a combination of thinking out loud and laying the groundwork for the next time they discuss this issue. "Now, how about this. How many believe that a teacher can inspire or make a student want to learn? So, how many believe that a teacher can help make a student want to learn? These two are connected. And I will tell you what, the teacher also becomes better when the students are learning. Then they feel like they are doing something. So, those two are very much connected. It is about attitude. We've talked about that before, it is about attitude. We have time for one more. Who else would like to read?"

Daniel reads his. He recalls a time when he visited his cousin in another state and in his cousin's school Pizza Hut sold pizza in the lunchroom. William explains that many schools and hospitals have contracts with fast food franchises. William says, "If your school is big McDonald's and Pizza Hut will come in because they are going to make money off of it. It is all about money. That is what everything is about."

Bart says, "I have money." He reaches in his pocket and pulls out several balled up dollar bills.

"I know," William says, "but they assume you don't because you live here. That is why."

Bart shakes his head, "They'd know I do if they'd come to my house."

"I hear you," William says with empathy. "I am very proud of the morning. You guys did some good work. I think you might have something. I'm glad you guys don't think things are hopeless. One of the best ways to change your life, the best way." William pauses. "I know what you are thinking. It is not to win the lottery or be an NBA basketball player. The odds are pretty

---

The next steps are really to continue with the line of questioning that I did. They are really questions that they raised. I jotted them down. They are not questions that I thought of, they are questions that came about in their writing and some of them actually stated them. Probably a lot more of that, breaking into research teams, and developing them. Yesterday we talked about it is not enough to be angry, you have to be well-informed and have your anger directed in a positive way to get something done. So you cannot be ignored and just be dismissed as some type of lunatic. After that I am thinking that we'll come up with a plan of action and take steps to try to get rid of the inequity. I can see the research taking a lot of different directions... surveys...some strict book research...a pictorial or photographic essay. I can see that taking shape, comparing different buildings, different neighborhoods, and all that.

(William, 24 October 1996)

---

high against you. But to get a good education, that's the best way." William does listen, he does *hear* his students. In this morning session we have seen how he provided a structure for launching a possible extended class inquiry, yet the moves within this structure – his line of questioning – were responsive to his students' ideas and queries (see text box).

William looks at the clock, and then at the agenda. The discussion took up their morning time, meaning that they would not have time to accomplish everything on the agenda. That is okay. "If you want to do literature presentations when you come back or you would rather work on independent work or the poetry quilt we can do that. Let's get

things put away and go to lunch. I want those papers when you leave." William's class is not driven by the daily agenda. He decides to turn the decision about how the afternoon time will be spent over to the students. After lunch they will negotiate an afternoon plan.

### The Path of Students' Best Interests

Eleven days after William had the initial Equity in Education discussion with his students, I see written on one of the chalk boards a list of items that represents a refinement of the original brainstorming list. The list now has the heading "Dreams Come True School," a working project title students came up with.

#### Dreams Come True School

- students and teachers treat each other w/respect
- more books and supplies\*
- more gym\*
- smaller class sizes (20 kids max)
- working, cold water fountains
- Better electives (more fun)
- Air conditioning
- Shower after gym
- restaurants providing lunch
- pool\*
- college prep classes
- nurses station
- technology program\*
- more equipment, computers\*
- more half days
- metal detectors
- halls and classrooms painted and redecorated\*
- carpeted classrooms
- couches
- cafeteria and gym kept separate
- vending machines
- early dismissal on Fridays w/dances
- clean bathrooms\*
- better field trips/walking field trips

-less disturbances

William has helped his students recognize that winning money in the lottery or becoming a professional athlete are empty dreams, whereas a good education can change their lives. Whether they deeply understand and internalize this is the questions, and we can never know until these students are out in the world making choices.

Another two weeks later I arrive to the class early and William and I talk about decisions the class has made concerning

the Equity in Education inquiry. He tells me, "Things have changed some with the Equity and Education unit. At first I was more or less demanding they all work on that because they all said they wanted to for their I-Search. But that is not really a good idea. There are still several people who plan to work on it. Manuel says he wants to look into Walking Field Trips. Three or four girls want to continue with the research they started last year in Ms. India's class related to the topic. They have some data from last year. So what I will try to do is get them to think about one

---

Last year, I decided early on that I didn't want our primary focus to be limited to an examination of open wounds or the scars memory has hidden. Even though tragedy makes for great material, it can be pretty bleak....I wanted the students to do something with their knowledge and ideas. I bought into the service-learning philosophy, as well as the knowledge-into-social-action course, and we were off on a range of projects that aimed to make our corner of the world a little better place....

As for this year, the wheels that spin out great projects and research questions sort of fell off....Everything seemed scattered, forced...the kids wanted to learn about everything. In short, there was no passion driving a quest, an awesome idea that would keep us interested with a semester-long unit. We dabbled with "Equity in Education" as a topic, but to their credit, most concluded the fire was not strong enough to produce a major body of work.

I was struck with a difficult question, myself: What happens in an inquiry-based, student-centered, theme-oriented classroom when there are no questions of consequence? Of course, the students would respond to my prompts such as "How can we make the world a better place?" But for the most part, there was little impetus that would propel a unit.

(Taken from an article William Harrison wrote about his 1995-96 class; not the same class this study is concerned with. Published spring 1996)

---

powerful point: Why should schools be equal? Or why they shouldn't. And then help

them to relate it to their own lives. What do you feel? What do you see? Other schools have a need to know. In other words, I am going to lead them. Not completely, just to get it started because it is a huge, huge topic and if they don't have some guidance it could really just flounder. I think it is better this way. I would hate to just stump the excitement they have for the I-Search." William makes it clear that student choice and interest are central to his decisions as a teacher, yet he is always ready to guide his students when necessary. His decisions concerning curriculum and pedagogy reveal his students' best interests are in his heart and mind. In spite of the harsh tone and words William uses at times, the positive effects on his students are visible. His curriculum is about helping students uncover and examine the social and political realities that impact their lives.

An Analysis:  
The Roots of Critical Literacy in William Harrison's Classroom

Who William is as a person is reflected in his teaching. At twenty-eight, he is still coming into himself. The vibrancy of his growth as a person and a teacher is striking. In his life story and the classroom story we see a man who is passionate about learning and teaching. He strives to help his students “do a little more than survive.” We see the writer teaching writing, journaling and sharing about Equity in Education side-by-side with his students. We see a man who is keenly aware of social class issues, and committed to helping his students comprehend how economics and politics play into their lives as children. To echo the words of Hendricks (1996, personal communication), “When the students are ready the teacher will be there” – we see William “is there” when his students “are ready.” William develops a multicultural and inquiry-oriented curriculum in response to his students’ needs and interests to cultivate their critical literacy.

William shows us that individuals might be shaped by their personal histories, but they need not be trapped by them. In his life story, William describes that his family was racist, “us and them” was a prevailing perspective. Yet, despite this past obstacle, William has created a new reality for himself and consequently for his students. According to his upbringing, William now works in the midst of “them,” yet if we look closely at his teaching he has made it an “us” environment. He connects with his students. His students are predominantly poor and of color. We learned through his life story that William experienced economic tough times growing up. William has learned from his own experience growing up in a patriarchal family, where the women’s “stories

didn't seem to count,” that making room for all people’s stories is important for tellers and listeners alike. Now he is working to “correct” that gap and recover the women’s stories in his family, “something...[he has] had to research.” We see in the classroom story, and will see further illustrations of in this section, that William works to hear the stories of all his students, boys and girls. As William confesses in his life story, he was “afforded a tremendous amount of privilege.” This awareness allows him to see the ways in which privilege works and doesn’t work for some people. Through William’s story we see a man who has moved beyond his life history and has become a critical educator.

Cultivating Learning Communities: “There Is Something About a Quilt That Says People, Friendship, Community, Family, Home, and Love”<sup>38</sup>

William has done what Ladson-Billings says is essential to successfully educate African American children, “[teachers] demonstrate a connectedness with all of their students and encourage that same connection between the students. They encourage a community of learners; they encourage their students to learn collaboratively” (1994, p. 25). William has established a learning community that lasts beyond the time the students are together. Close friendships between groups of boys and groups of girls is a striking feature. This is understandable since many of these students have been in the same classroom for one or more years together, and because William works to create and foster collaboration and the valuing of members as readers and writers.

---

<sup>38</sup>The quotation for this section title comes from an Appalachian quilter recorded in Foxfire (Wigginton, 1972, p. 144).

For example, in the classroom story, before the morning bell rings, students are busy at work. With pride, Nate shares a quilt section with me that bears the project title, “Poetry in Stitches.” The title was his idea. Each student in the class will contribute a quilt panel with their own poetry and accompanying art. The quilt is symbolic of the community in William’s class. There is student ownership. It is a collaborative project. It is a rich and unique form of publishing that culminates a shared writing project. It grows out of a thematic study of how quilting reaches far back into African American tradition as part of their survival, as a way to communicate and preserve stories, and as folk art; the thematic study is a way to celebrate African American cultural heritage. Symbolically this quilt represents the voices, identities, and connectedness of members in William’s classroom community.

Former students return to William’s class to see him and participate in the teaching of his new students; they seek to maintain the connection he established with them. In his life story he tells of one boy who is a “real legend” in the school, went on to high school, and comes back the next year to help with a project and share some of his poetry. One day late in spring while I was observing William, a girl who was in his eighth grade class the year before stopped by to visit with him. They talked about her first year in high school. When he asked about her English class she told him with disappointment that they read a lot, some novels, and mostly from a textbook, and they write response journals and take quizzes. There is little writing other than that. “Are you writing on your own?” William asks her. The enthusiasm of a successful high school student returning to see her former teacher disappears. “It’s not like it was here,” she tells him. “It’s hard to write for yourself.” William nods understandingly. “You should still

try to keep at it. You are a good writer. You can always ask me to respond to your writing.” A smile returns to her face, and her watery eyes sparkle. “Okay,” she tells him.

In his life story, when discussing the article he has written and the role he tries to play in his students’ lives, his purpose is clear, these students need “a person to listen to, a person to care.” William works from a “caring ethic.” Noddings helps to explain the value of “caring”: “Caring involves...a ‘feeling with’ the other.... The notion of ‘feeling with’...involve[s]... reception.... I receive the other into myself, and I see and feel with the other...” (1984, p. 30). In so many instances we see William “feeling with” his students, and so many of his students understand this. It connects he William with his students. It is the glue of this learning community. We see this in the Equity in Education brainstorming, journal writing, and discussion – all are participants in exploring and making sense of an issue that is important to them because it grows out of their lives.

Greene draws upon Noddings’ concept of “care” and Belenky, et al.’s concept of “connected teaching” (1986) to discuss the importance of creating supportive environments and pursuing “spheres of freedom” and personal autonomy:

Rather than posing dilemmas to students or presenting models of expertise, the caring teacher tries to look through students’ eyes, to struggle *with* them as subjects in search of their own projects, their own ways of making sense of the world. Reflectiveness, even logical thinking remain important; but the *point* of cognitive development is not to gain an increasingly complete grasp of abstract principles. It is to interpret from as many vantage points as possible lived experience, the ways there are of being in the world. (1988, p. 120)

William strives for such connected teaching. The community he creates in his class is the kind of supportive environment where critical literacy can thrive. He struggles *with* students. We see this when he tells students about going home and talking with his wife,

“I began to think that maybe the toilet paper is just a symbol.” He shares with his students how he “wondered” and where that led him. He gives them the opportunity to take the lead, and when it is clear they are not ready to, he takes it himself. William’s students thrive as readers and writers in this environment, as thinkers and investigators and actors in their own world. Once they leave it is not “like it was in here,” but they have a foundation of critical literacy to help them move forward.

William’s connectedness to his students, his caring for them, is an important strand in his interconnected philosophy of life, education, and writing. William’s own words, from his article draft, help to expand upon this interconnected philosophy:

I am a teacher in this world, and in order to be most effective to my students, we must delve into the complex composites of our lives. Writing reminds us how we are human. While writing celebrates our individual identities and dreams, it simultaneously shows all that we hold in common. In a culture that sadistically chants, “I told you so” whenever we fall, and “one person can’t save the world,” writing helps us reclaim power in our lives.

Writing will not cure what is wrong with the human condition, but it won’t let us forget either. It refuses to let us stumble around blind if we have the courage to only see. Writing springs us from the prison of our often mundane cruise through the years we call living. Writing will not let us forget all that is wrong with humanity any more than it will let us forget all that is right. I am a writer. I am a teacher of writing. I am a citizen of the world, and I have deduced that the world can never be isolated from the schools. Our schools are a microcosm of our society. I use writing in the classroom to help students understand for themselves how they fit in that world, how they can make sense of it, and maybe how they can do a little more than merely survive. (William Harrison, article draft, September 1996)

It does not always appear that William projects a “caring” and “feeling with” ethic in the classroom the way many would expect. For theorists like Gibbs (1994) and Kohn (1996), classroom communities must be “safe places” to take risks emotionally and intellectually. There are times when his words cut, his tone punishes, his sarcasm hurts. There are moments when William gets annoyed and irritated. He has a short temper. It is

important to note that William expresses a range of emotions in his class. I have been in the classroom when a call from the office over the intercom cuts into a discussion or serious moment, and heard William respond with annoyance, "What now?" In the classroom story we see his temper flare at Cassie. William pushes her to tears when he scolds her for not being serious, warns her that she is "playing with the wrong person," and threatens her with removal from the classroom. Yet, the moment is serious, and to William this is a teachable moment. He points out to Cassie to heed the words of her classmate Max Johnson, "you need to be ready to learn." Ladson-Billings recalls her own schooling experience and praises one of her teachers who was strict with the students, "[S]he warned us that playing around in her class meant that we did not value ourselves. 'This is your chance, don't let it slip away,' she urged" (1994, p. 19).

Several of the Black teachers in Foster's book consistently talk about the importance of holding high expectations, being strict, and disciplining students when they misbehave. "You can't accomplish anything without discipline" claims Ruby Middleton Forsythe (Foster, 1997, p 31). Leroy Lovelace's perspective informs William's stance with his students:

I demanded respect. I was honest, determined, and I expected the best of them. But I demanded as much of myself....By nature I'm serious, concerned, and caring....I expected them to strive and achieve their maximum potential....The one thing that black students don't need is teachers who lets them get away with saying, 'I can't do this. I can't do that'—teachers who feel sympathetic because the students are black, or they are from the inner city, teachers who let them get away with doing nothing. Teachers have to realize that black students—or all students, but I'm talking about black students now—are very clever, especially with white teachers. Too many black students have learned to play the game, to play on a teacher's sympathy in order to get away with doing nothing." (Foster, 1997, pp. 46-47).

William is sympathetic to his students' circumstances, but he does not let any of his students play on his sympathy. He is sensitive, and when touched, he is not afraid to shed a tear, as he did when Mika shared her journal. But he cares too much about them to let them get away with doing nothing. William is quick to tell his students when he is proud of them. He does not give up on his students. He encourages them to keep trying. We see this when Rock, a White-Hispanic student who struggles academically and socially, raises his hand to share what he wrote in his journal. This is especially interesting since Rock is one of the few students who rarely writes, and even more rarely shares his writing publicly. Consistent with what Kohn (1996) would advocate, William did not lavish excessive praise upon Rock; instead, William offered a heartfelt thank you that honored Rock's contribution and implicitly encouraged him to continue his good work.

William has high expectations for his students. He says, "as a teacher...if you expect greatness, really expect it not just say it, demand it I should say, but if you really push your students they will rise to the challenge." His words echo Lovelace's above. Nieto argues that those in education must explore broader-based expectations than what is traditional. She refers to a study by Pollert who "found that the academic performance of African American students is enhanced when they perceive their teachers and other school staff to be supportive and helpful" (1996, p. 45). William's beliefs and his practice, as well as the school's own morning pledge, provide strong evidence of this. Students receive vital support from William and the school to get an education, even when the resources are short in supply and the environment outside the school is often rife with threatening obstacles.

Students know what to do in his class. William pays little attention to the students in the minutes before the bell rings. His attention and supervision are not necessary. The students know the expectations for their morning routine and follow through with them. The students know what is expected. He has built a community that does not need his direction at all times. Kohn (1996) argues that rigid control of students undermines the development of community. William negotiates the content and pedagogy of his class as part of developing and maintaining community. This is in keeping with what Kohn (1995; 1998) has described as a “working with” versus a “doing to” environment.

In William’s life story we hear him talk of how his family was everything to him. The family was his community. The loyalty in the family was fierce. In many ways we see William’s classroom as an extension of his family. Individual students pitch in to share in the work for the common good of the class. William recognizes, both publicly and privately, how students like Mika made a choice to remain another year with him rather than follow her friends into the other eighth grade class. William values such loyalty. It is no accident that William refers to himself as “your loyal guide.” And there are times when we see William play the role of the stern father. He continuously thinks about what these students need to succeed, to read the word and the world, even if sternness is required to preserve each member as integral to the community.

### Social Constructivist Perspectives on Learning: “He Educated Me”

A constructivist perspective on learning clearly underscores William’s pedagogical decisions. William understands that learners make meaning through a

socially interactive process. Such an understanding is foundational to his work as a teacher. It is also vital to cultivating critical literacy because William is not seen as the primary source of knowledge. Students know they can learn from William, from multiple texts, from their own experiences, and from one another.

In the classroom story we see examples of how students collaborate on projects like the poetry quilt and the literature presentation. Simply putting students together in groups to work on assignments does not guarantee they will actively co-construct meaning, but as each of these projects unfolded the students supported one another's work through feedback and collaboration. As William handles the class announcements from his agenda we see the beginnings of a small project forming when he solicits volunteers to write a letter of response to the classroom in the Bronx. I know from watching, on another occasion when four students wrote a letter of thanks to a visiting author, that such joint compositions can be incredible moments of discussion over content, wording, and layout.

The Equity in Education discussion is an excellent illustration of instructional choices based upon a social constructivist perspective on learning. If we consider each part of the event, we will see the way William layered the event to help everyone in the class construct a deeper understanding of the issues. First, William was hoping to launch a larger inquiry. Rather than dictating everything, he led students through a process of reviewing what "equity" means and what they might have discussed with their parents the night before. He then facilitated a brainstorming session about perceived educational "needs," and helped students distinguish these from "wants." This was followed by an exploratory fast-write journal, in which he joined them. Finally, William created a forum

for everyone to share what they wrote and discuss the implications of such issues as they relate to their lived realities. William explains (see interview excerpt in text box, p.362) this very process and how it might lead to further research, “After that I am thinking that we’ll come up with a plan of action....I can see the research taking a lot of different directions.” All answers were not treated as equally important. William openly praised some, pushed and challenged others. We see him praise Mika for her decision, challenge students who argued that vending machines were a necessity, but most importantly, listen to all students and honor their contributions constructively. What is most important to note is that students had opportunities to speak, listen, rework their ideas, and deepen their understanding of an issue within their community that affects them. Students in this class know what it feels like to have to carry a roll of toilet paper to the bathroom if they have to use it; they are personally affected by the very policies they are discussing in William’s class. He is helping them articulate orally and in writing their lived reality. Similar to how Freire (1968/1985) did with oppressed and illiterate Brazilian workers, William helps bring forth the voices of those who are disenfranchised so together they can construct and reconstruct their realities.

As important as it is for students to know they can learn from William and their classmates, it is perhaps even more important and more powerful that they know they can teach William and one another. For example, during the Equity in Education discussion he says, “You said a couple of things that really made me think, and I even jotted down notes.” Another striking example was in one class discussion William gives a student credit for “educating” him. One morning William shared with his students a National Public Radio story he heard on the way to school. It was a “radio essay” by Wendell

Berry titled, “More Information or More Ignorance?” William summarized what he heard, sharing several of Berry’s key illustrations, and then asked the students what they thought the author meant, for he too was puzzling over the larger implications of the author’s point. The discussion lasted for almost thirty minutes. William spoke several times, his own understanding developing as the conversation continued, and more than ten different students contributed their own ideas, most often relating an abundance of information or the consequences of ignorance to their own lives. Toward the end of the discussion Rose offered her only verbalized interpretation, “I think he meant that some people think they know everything but know nothing. If people would realize their ignorance and try to change, the world would be a lot better.”

William’s eyebrows raised, captured in an “aha” moment. He responded,

“I couldn’t say anything any better than that. That is perfect.... Maybe it is not knowing how to get it done. Not being able to. In other words, equity in education issues. If we in fact find out that schools are unequal, if we find out there is inequity here in Metropolitan, right here in the Urban Hope Academy. If we in fact find it out, it is one thing. We might know it, but what do we do about it? This can be hard. That really may be the hardest part because you are fighting a system, you are fighting a whole set of conditions that resist this change. And that is hard to do. Nate?”

Nate, a seventh grader and someone who had been active in the discussion from the start, seemed energized himself by what Rose had said. Normally laid back, his whole body rose as he extended his hand to get his teacher’s attention. In words spoken more to his classmate than to William, he made a statement, “What we have to do is educate people. To try to help do something about the problem. Having more information and more ignorance is having all this information and doing nothing about it. That would be ignorant.”

William was visibly moved as he listened to this young man, his student. William smiled. He picked up chalk from the tray and readied himself at the board. “That was perfect also. I liked the part about having all this information, not doing anything about it, that’s ignorant. Can I quote you on this? I am going to put it on the board. Will you read me exactly what you said for that purpose?” William turned to the board and wrote exactly what Nate had said. “You know what, I am going to bring this to the conference I am going to. Nate managed to sum up what I have been trying to do for an hour in one sentence. He educated me. He’s a better teacher than I am.” It is powerful for students to be told they have good ideas, that they make their teacher think, that they teach him. Several times I heard students refer to themselves as teachers in the classroom. This reveals that students see themselves as knowers and can share their knowledge with others, including the professional educators William will meet at his conference. For young people to know they can play a role in someone’s meaning-making process, especially their teacher’s, is empowering.

**Inquiry-Oriented Teaching: “A Teacher Must Be Willing to Abandon the Lesson Plan and Follow the Students’ Lead”<sup>39</sup>**

The heart of inquiry-oriented teaching is in provoking students’ authentic questions and guiding them through investigation. We see such questions begin to surface in the discussion of Equity in Education and the initial steps of investigation take place. Many other questions circulate on the classroom floor across the school year, and investigations are pushed to varying degrees through discourse and further research

---

<sup>39</sup>From interview with William Harrison (6 November 1996).

beyond the classroom. Each year William and his students decide upon one or more overarching themes to explore across the curriculum and across the school year. In the year of this study, “Revolution in America” was a theme that the class returned to again and again in both literature and history, functioning as a lens to focus discussions and exploration. The revolution theme came up in their discussions of Equity in Education and various “social action” opportunities they took up; it came up throughout their study of American history, not just in units on the Revolutionary War and Civil War; and, it came up in discussions of literature, such as The Road to Memphis and To Kill A Mockingbird, as students grappled with how to battle racism.

The critical literacy William is trying to cultivate is clearly seen in classroom discussions like the one on education and equity. We see that William asks students authentic questions, important questions, often in a Socratic manner. For example, when Mika says that all students should learn the same things, William responds with a probing question, “So you want people to learn the exact same thing?” By rephrasing her idea as a question and posing it back to her, William is pushing her to think again, reconsider, and clarify her meaning for he suspects she does not understand the full implications of such a statement. He has parameters in mind, for instance how “equal” is defined. A question like, “Should all schools be equal?” grows out of the contributions students have made and pushes critical thinking, yet he has a particular conclusion in mind. The questions and discussion tap deeply into assumptions, beliefs, experiences, and emotions.

William’s emphasis on social justice is evident. The equity and education discussion represents a powerful moment of a teacher and students exploring a possible inquiry, of students reading their worlds and critiquing social institutions. Helping

students examine their life situation, their educational opportunities, with a critical lens is empowering. Michelle says, "We need a better place to learn." Max says, "We must be ready to learn." Bart brings up the fact that the bathrooms in their building often flood and that it is a health risk. Then Rose says she thinks the school should be prettier. William seeks to draw Rose out. "I want to know how a pretty building affects your education?" he asks. Before Rose can answer, Joshua jumps in to argue that facilities that look better will make them "feel safer." Rose explains that, "It will make you want to learn.... You don't want to be in a dirty building." William sees Autumn's hand up and asks her, "How does it make you want to learn Autumn?" She adds to the discussion, "If it looks nice and you feel a sense of pride you will want to learn." The students' critique is insightful. But it is Dee's response to William's questions, "How is safety important? How is it important to learning?" that focuses the conversation on the "real world." Dee says, "If you can't survive, you can't learn."

Given the world outside of William's classroom, we know that Dee speaks more than just the obvious. An inquiry into equity in education, even if it goes no further than the exploratory stages, is significant. When considering the collection of student responses from this brief discussion, it is clear that these students "see" the needs their school and their community have. They are also keenly aware of the inequities. They have several astute recommendations. They also push on the edges of the importance of aesthetics. When William tells them that education is much more than just facts, we see he is pushing them to make deeper connections. He links the message with the content of their discussion. He links the concept of education with a deep understanding of their present and future needs. He is facilitating a critical literacy that will help these students

negotiate not only texts, but their lives as well. His emphasis on action will serve them well in many contexts. He validates them as knowers (Belenky et al., 1986) and shows them that they construct meaning and knowledge. They know the situation that they live in and go to school in and he lets them speak from their knowledge and expertise. Their experiences are essential to the inquiry. He has created in his classroom a simulation of the kinds of discussions that adults, inside and outside the educational community, are having about the conditions of today's school and the "savage inequalities" (Kozol, 1991) which exist. William's students live the "savage inequalities," and they are the experts on their realities. Through an inquiry approach, William has emphasized that being educated is more than just gathering information, it needs to be processed critically, otherwise it may be useless.

One of the most striking features of William's curriculum is his use of Macrorie's I-Search process to guide students in sustained inquiry, a "search." In the project guidelines he provides students with (see Appendix F) he uses a quotation from Macrorie as an epigraph: "A meaningful search grows from seeds in the writer's life, which can be revealed immediately to the reader." As discussed earlier, there is great emphasis placed on authentic student questions. As we learn at the end of the classroom story, several weeks after the initial Equity in Education discussion the plan for a "shared inquiry" changed. "At first I was more or less demanding they all work on that because they all said they wanted to for their I-Search. But that is not really a good idea." William understands that in order for students to have ownership of the inquiry process and outcomes they must own the questions. His role is to help guide them through the process and support their learning,

Remember, you are a real researcher, and that means everything that effects your research is relevant. Your job is to learn more about the topic/issue that you deemed worth investigating, write an interesting report, give an oral presentation to the class, and conceptualize ways in which you can better yourself, your family, and society with this new knowledge.

All of our writing has a purpose, and in this case, a social improvement of some kind may be spawned from your research and words. Take complete notes, and let your writer's voice boom. I want to hear the "I" shine through, not someone named Encyclopedia Britannica. As you write about life and important issues, undoubtedly, you will form opinions and articulate your theories into a clear and well-defended position. I have a hunch that we all will learn from your wisdom. Good Luck and Bon Voyage.

Your Loyal Guide,  
Mr. Harrison

Through his guidance, his students, treated as "real researchers," pursued a number of inquiries close to their interests. Daniel investigated "child labor and sweat shops," Venus investigated "the incarceration of Black males" (her brother was in prison at the time), John investigated "violent video games," Rose investigated "deforestation," Donard investigated "kids and violence," and several students continued the investigation of "Equity in Education" and related topics. Manuel's investigation into "walking field trips" was one such paper.

Manuel's I-Search project on Walking Field Trips explored the potential learning benefits of the community resources within walking distance from Urban Hope Academy. Manuel interviewed students, teachers, and administrators about their recollections of Walking Field Trips in the past and their feelings about the existing ban on these activities. Manuel surveyed students in the school about their interest in getting Walking Field Trips reapproved. He also put together a petition with several classmates:

We, the students and staff at the Urban Hope Academy, are working hard to get back walking field trips for our school. We are in the cultural center of Metropolitan, and it's a shame not to take advantage of all the great places just around the corner.

We are surrounded by many different places that are both intriguing and educational....all within walking distance to our school. Not to mention, there are a lot of other great places like a historic stop on the Underground Railroad, and many more that we don't know about right now because we are not allowed to explore the neighborhood. Learning goes beyond the school's walls, and denying us walking field trips limits our learning.

On top of all those good reasons, why not consider the one that always gets people's attention: Money. Our district is in a budget crisis, bus field trips have either been cut way back or eliminated due to transportation problems, and this solution wouldn't cost the district one penny. In fact, it would save money.

We are aware that a few irresponsible actions of some in the past have destroyed everything for us now, but we won't make the same mistakes. Besides, the students who made those mistakes aren't even in middle school now anyway. Are you going to punish the youth forever? Do you assume that we won't be able to behave? We know we are mature enough to conduct ourselves properly in public. We just need a chance to prove it. Why not give schools or classrooms a case by case privilege system?

If you would like to help us have walking field trips returned, then please sign our petition. We feel all students deserve quality education, and having walking field trips would improve the quality of that education.

Sincerely, "Equity In Education" Action Group

The writing is clear and builds on the UHA's stated mission, that students are there to learn. Denying them the surrounding opportunities limits their learning. Consistent with the school's mission, and William's own mission to nurture success and end immaturity, the petition argues that they are capable of conducting themselves respectfully and maturely. They also seem to have learned the importance of financial considerations, possibly from their Equity in Education discussion, for they address the "bottom line" of walking field trips. Manuel sent a copy of the petition and his I-Search project on Walking Field Trips, a project that set out to convince others that Urban Hope Academy should be allowed to go on Walking Field Trips, to the Superintendent and School Board of the Metropolitan Unified School District. In the context of William's class, Manuel and others in the "Equity In Education" Action Group, knew to send the I-Search paper and petition to those who make decisions; they are learning how the system works and

how to use what little power they have to address decision makers asking for a policy change. Several weeks after Manuel sent his I-Search project to representatives of the school district, Walking Field Trips were approved for Urban Hope Academy. With only two weeks remaining in the school year, William Harrison took his class on the school's first Walking Field Trip in more than three years. The class packed lunches and walked to the city's Art Institute to spend the morning there. The petition was a powerful form of action, and coupled with Manuel's study, produced change, thus giving students evidence that they can be agents of change in their immediate world.

#### Critical Pedagogies: "We Have to Move People to Act"

Critical pedagogies help to cultivate critical literacy by pushing students to examine social issues, by pushing students to reflect on their own lives and the world they occupy, and by pushing students to act. William's teaching is overtly political. William says, and I agree, that all "teaching is political" (William Harrison, 22 May 1997). In the classroom story we see William helping students question and reflect upon issues of educational equity in their own school and community. On this day, and in so many others across the school year, William teaches his students to read their world and use their developing literacy to protest. And there is much in their lives worth protesting. We see a school that has reinforced steel doors with metal mesh covering the barely translucent plexiglass windows. There is a single small caliber bullet hole penetrating one of the door windows. As Dee underscores for us in the classroom story, "If you can't survive, you can't learn."

The implication for stakeholders in education is that we must think honestly and critically about the policies which affect children's lives. Kozol (1995) asks us to look at what we as a nation have created for our children. His research in the South Bronx uncovers the horrific lives that many of our nation's children lead, and calls us to action. Kozol (1991; 1995) talks about the White flight, the same White flight that has occurred in the community in which William teaches. In an interesting way, William as a White teacher has "not fled"—he has come into an area that he feels there is a special need for him and other teachers like him. William has been called to action. William tells us what the day was like for him when his father left – an eight year old boy being told, "You have to be the man of the house now." That was a big challenge for such a young boy. In many ways William has accepted another challenge by teaching at Urban Hope Academy, he has taken up the responsibility to make children's lives better. Kozol (1991), as do many others, writes about how our schools need dedicated teachers to go into inner city schools and make a difference in children's lives. More importantly, everyone who is a stakeholder in education, and that is everyone, must take action to change policies that create such situations. If there is to be hope, revolution is needed to achieve equity in education.

William helps his students read the injustice in their lives, allows them the freedom to get angry, but then guides them to move beyond such a place. As he says, "Maybe getting angry is the first step. But it's not enough....You have to channel that anger, and get even, and get aware, and get acknowledgment." Getting even to William does not mean violence. On several occasions, often on Monday mornings when he allows them time to write in their journals and share about their weekends, I have heard

William take a position against violence and push students to think of alternatives.

Getting even to William means seeking equity, righting wrongs, and fighting for justice.

Awareness first, action second.

The emphasis in William's class is on social action. William encourages them to be change agents, as we saw in the case of Manuel and the Walking Field Trips. Another example happened one Monday late in the school year. William began the first morning of the week as he often does, by allowing students to share "stories" of their weekend. Among the typical stories of celebrating a family member's birthday, going to the Big Boy for brunch after church, recounting the plots of novels read or movies watched were several less characteristic stories of violence: a sister who was stabbed at a club, a neighbor who shot off rounds of a shotgun in the street late at night, and a friend's brother who was killed. William listened, and after they shared used the theme of violence as a segue to put an intriguing proposition on the table. For several weeks the students had been working on plans for a "Gen-X" newspaper. This idea grew out of a response they had to an article they all read characterizing "today's youth" (Generation X) as self-centered and apathetic about society and the world. The students were incensed. They had come to see themselves as change agents. Many of them had even been researching and writing I-Search papers on a range of social issues they personally cared about. So, they had decided to publish newspaper articles about their concerns and investigations for the world to see. On this particular day, William had an idea to run by them.

He told them about his weekend, about reading an article in the newspaper that really troubled him. "Die Faggot, Die" is about Jim Calcaterra who was harassed and beaten for being different – for looking and acting effeminate, and for being gay. But

unlike the vast majority of men in his situation, Calcaterra reported the crime and embarked on a crusade to create awareness of hate crimes. The last line of the article makes Calcaterra's message clear, "people have to speak up." William had his students read the article, write responses in their journals, and then share and discuss the article and responses. Then William shared his idea, "We have to do more than speak up. We have to move people to act." William proceeded to tell the students his idea for making their Gen-X newspaper "interactive." William admits to them that this will not be easy. They brainstorm ideas. Ivory's idea is based on a book she read, Walter Dean Myers Sweet Illusions, in which the end of each chapter is unfinished and left up to the reader to complete in her imagination. Anthony's idea is for a cartoon that shows a situation the reader could think about, but it would be left up to the reader to fill in dialogue and captions. "Now is your chance to teach the people who are going to read this paper... [so, make it] fun and interesting, and realistic," William instructs them.

William tells us that the day his father left and the day his grandfather died were events that affected him profoundly. His father did not want him to be a laborer, to "wear tools," yet there is a pride of self and family when he talks about how he has always had jobs since he was a young boy, how he contributed money to support the family, and how people in his family never missed work, even when sick or hungover. This sense of responsibility for the welfare of others comes through in his teaching and his discussion of what he is trying to do in his teaching.

William sees himself as different from his stepfather – different to the point of being the antithesis of what his stepfather represents. His stepfather was a man successful in business, but he was not a "good man" because greed, manipulation, and

hypocrisy drove his success. Economic greed is an issue William is deeply concerned about, it is an issue that is at the core of the inquiry theme “Equity in Education.”

William cares deeply about social justice. He is deeply concerned about class issues and poverty. William has a keen awareness of class that he developed at an early age. When he was in the Catholic high school he became aware that the “odds are most rich people make it by stepping on the back of poor people.” He struggles daily in his class to teach youngsters who are desperately poor. He wants them to be strong readers and writers and people who work toward social justice. He does not want others to step on their backs to achieve wealth.

#### Process Approaches to Teaching Writing: A Writer Teaches Writing

William is a writer who teaches writing (Murray, 1985), and one who has created a writing culture in his classroom. His students come to see themselves as writers, and come to see the power writing can have in their lives. We see multiple instances of this. In their time before class starts, many students choose to write. One Monday morning when I was observing, Dee, the powerful street-smart young man we met in the classroom story, pulled William aside to tell him about a violent incident that happened over the weekend. William listened, and suggested Dee write about this in his journal. Dee took his teacher’s advice. At his desk he wrote furiously on sheets of paper. As he wrote narratively about the weekend’s events, a poem surfaced:

My cusin got stabbed.  
And thats no lie.  
A tear drop from my eye.  
And thats no game.  
By a boy thats a lame.

It made a lot of people cry.  
Now someone has to die.

Dee, less than ten minutes after sitting down to write about the event, races across the room to share his poem with William, “Mr. Harrison, look what I wrote.” William reads the poem. But rather than talk about it as a piece of writing, William spends the next five minutes talking to Dee about his response to this event, possible consequences if the revenge he has written about plays out, and alternatives to responding to violence with violence. Dee and his classmates have learned to use writing to make sense of and negotiate their lives, to write and rewrite their worlds.

We see other examples of how a writing culture has emerged in this classroom. Rose is working on a novel. Manuel and other concerned students formed an Equity in Education Action Group. They drafted a petition to change the school district’s policy banning Walking Field Trips, they circulated it, and Manuel sent it to the school board along with his I-Search paper. The result was a change in policy. That is power.

Although I did not observe how the petition was developed, I have seen other texts co-constructed in this class and suspect similar processes took place. For instance, after author David Wright spent the day with William’s students discussing his life and work and participating in an afternoon writing workshop, William asked for volunteers to write a thank you letter, just as we see him do in the classroom story for students to respond to the Bronx letter. Rose, Ivory, and Michelle are the three students selected. When the class moves to independent work later in the morning, the three girls gather at a table in the center of the room.

The students begin by talking about what they should say in this letter, generating first an oral list of ideas and then moving to put these on paper:

“We just say, ‘Thank you for coming to our class.’” Ivory says.

Michelle says, “We should write a letter thanking him for coming and taking the time to tell us about his life and about his story and about his writing and about his football career, and Europe.”

Rose and Ivory both nod, “I agree with that.”

“I just want to say all of that,” Rose says. Opening her notebook she assumes the role of scribe, “Okay, I am going to write it down.”

The students start rattling off several details from David Wright’s visit, things he told the whole class and things he told them individually during the writing workshop, all the while Rose tried to keep up with the talk and note taking.

Rose seems to want to organize the details and ideas they are generating, “What did he talk about? What should we thank him for?” The three begin taking turns with their contributions.

“We should thank him for talking about, you know, stuff like his football career,” Ivory says. “You didn’t say that.”

Michelle expands upon Ivory’s contribution, “We should thank Mr. Wright, you know, for coming out and telling about his life, his writing, his football career. Your turn.”

“I already wrote that down,” Rose says. “I got a good idea here. I think we should say, ‘Thank you for coming out and you telling....’” While Rose writes her own idea down, Michelle puts a new idea on the table, how to get David Wright to come back to their class.

“We don’t say he should come more to our class to help us with our stories?” Michelle suggests in the form of a question.

“He didn’t get to me,” Ivory says with disappointment.

Rose pauses in her writing and lifts her head to add, “I let him read it and he said mine was good. He helped me on my story and everything. Brainstorming some. How about I say, ‘We hope you come out more to our class?’”

The three students had been talking and drafting ideas for about fifteen minutes. They were surprised by my keen interest in their work and asked me what I was writing about. I told them that I am curious about how three people come together to write a letter. “How do you do it?” I asked them.

“Teamwork,” Ivory says.

“We take each other’s ideas and put it together,” Michelle adds.

“Brainstorming. Teamwork.... Write notes... and everything.... Put it in order,” Rose lists.

“That is what you do,” Michelle says.

Ivory adds, “That is why we are here because we get along. We don’t...play as much. Right now, [Michelle] is playing. Yes, you are. We are

serious. We are not going to team up with somebody that we don't work out with." Ivory and Rose are eighth graders and Michelle is a seventh grader. From my perspective, Michelle seems to be taking the task seriously, though she has become a little giggly since I began talking with them about their work.

"We got to be straight up serious," Rose adds.

Defending herself, Michelle declares, "I'm serious."

They are all smiling and laughing. Rose says in support of Michelle, making sure I understand, "Right. She will when we start writing. She's a good writer."

Rose, Michelle, and Ivory have been talking and writing their ideas down for almost thirty minutes when William announces there are twenty minutes before lunch. He comes by the table to check on their progress and suggest they should begin writing a draft of the letter they can share with the class in the afternoon.

Ivory takes the initiative, "We can come up with something and make it, make it presentable. Don't you think?"

Rose looks at the paper she has been writing on, "Okay. This is our brainstorming. So, what is it going to say?"

"Thank you," Ivory says, giggling because she has said the obvious.

"We can't start with that," Rose says.

"We have to," Michelle says, "it is like a thank you note."

"We got to say 'Hi' first, like, 'Hi, Mr. Wright,'" Rose says.

Before Rose can write this on a clean sheet of paper, Ivory reaches across and table and takes hold of Rose's hand. "It is not a conversation like, 'Hi, how are you doing, what are you doing?'"

"It is going to be like, 'Hi, Mr. Wright,'" Rose says.

Michelle adds, "You've got to identify who you are, 'Thank you for coming out to our class...'"

Ivory looks over to Michelle and tells her, "We do that at the end. We're just going to say 'From the class.'" Looking over to Rose she says, "We should we say, 'Dear Mr. Wright.'"

Rose, wanting to write the beginning of the letter, puts both palms flat on the table, "No. Would you all listen. 'Hi, Mr. Wright. Thank you for coming out to our class and telling us about your inspiring story and your life.'"

Ivory makes a face showing her disapproval, "Hi, Mr. Wright,' doesn't seem right. Let's be more serious. Hello is more formal. It is going to be 'Hello, Mr. Wright.' Hi seems like a conversation."

Rose, giving in, says, "Okay. 'Hello, Mr. Wright.'"

Michelle questions, "Why don't we just say 'Hi' because we are kids?"

Ivory is firm about this. She points to the paper in front of Rose, "'Hello, Mr. Wright.'" Rose writes this down. Having the first line down, the three start negotiating what will come next.

"We should say, 'Thank you for coming out to our classroom to talk about your life and your book...'" In the middle of saying this line, Rose is interrupted by Ivory who is bursting with an idea.

“‘For coming out to tell us about your inspiring life story and football career.’ ‘Inspiring.’ Man, I am a genius, give me an Oscar.” Ivory is thrilled with herself, with her developing sense of control over language.

Before the class breaks for lunch, the students have drafted the first paragraph of the letter. In the afternoon this draft is read by William and is shared with the entire class. Rose, Ivory, and Michelle are given feedback about what to say and how to say it. The next day they continue their work on the letter draft. Their final draft is read by several students and William for editing purposes, circulated around the class for signatures, and sent to David Wright.

*Dear Mr. Wright,*

*Hello, thank you for inspiring us with your knowledge and your career in writing. You taught us the steps how to be like you as a successful writer. We enjoyed the time you spent with us. Your suggestions on how to be a writer were very helpful and interesting.*

*Thank you for reading some of our pieces and giving us ideas how to make them stronger. We appreciate the time you spent with us.*

*Soon our class will do a group search and individual I-Searches that are very similar to your research project process about the Black Coast Guard in South Carolina. We will be following some of the same research steps you took, and we would really appreciate it if you would come and tell us about your experiences on the project. We will be doing a lot of interviewing, and maybe you have some tips.*

*You are always welcome in our classroom. You seemed very nice, and we enjoyed listening to you. Unlike a lot of speakers, you weren't boring at all. We hope to see you again.*

What we see in the development of this letter, crafted by three students but drawing upon the ideas and contributions of everyone in the classroom community, is a window into a writing culture. William has taught these students to understand the processes of real writers and be reflective about their own writing processes. The negotiation of substance and form we see in the group of three students is continued as a whole class, and then again later when the three students complete the draft. Ideas that

they initially discussed – “hello” and “inspiring” – are preserved. Other ideas that seemed prominent, like David Wright having played football, are cast away. And still other contributions are incorporated, like his research into the Pea Island Life Saving Station. When we hear how these students explain how they co-construct a letter, we hear students’ thinking which allows their internalized writing processes to be made visible. They use language familiar to process approaches to teaching writing, such as “brainstorming” and “process.” Most important, they see themselves as writers, able to collaborate in crafting a formal piece of document. What also arose in this classroom segment is the issue of “seriousness.” Ivory and Rose admonish Michelle for not being serious enough. We are reminded of William’s admonishment of Cassie in the classroom story. The students in William’s class seem to be aware that seriousness is required of writers, and will check one another on appropriate demeanor. They are writers, serious writers at work.

In the classroom story we see the role journal writing plays in the ongoing curriculum. We see in the small group construction of the letter to David Wright important elements of the writing process, where brainstorming and drafting and revision happen simultaneously, illustrating the recursive nature of writing. We also see how an idea, saying “thank you,” takes shape into an authentic communication to a real audience. These are but two facets of a rich and complex writing culture. The class holds regular workshops, as the girls alluded to in their discussion, where the class writes and responds and discusses. William’s one-on-one conferencing is also pivotal. Almost daily, he will meet with at least one student to talk about a piece, drawing the students into talking and finding their own paths, similar to what Murray describes in “The Listening Eye” (1979);

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

yet, William also provides specific guidance where necessary, for the purpose of scaffolding students' development as writers. When we take in the whole, we can see how William helps students be reflective about their experiences and their worlds. They draw upon their own lives as subjects in their writing. They make decisions about subject, substance, and craft. These experiences not only help them develop voice, but help them become proficient. In being able to give voice to their own worlds and ideas, they are developing what Giroux calls "language of critique" and "language of possibility" (1992a, p. 15).

### Evoking Readers' Response Through Multicultural Literature

William's classroom and curriculum are filled with literature and perspectives by women and men of color. His curriculum is reflective of a multicultural world and the lives and interests of his students. Yet, in my final interview with William, he is adamant that what he teaches is not "multicultural." To him it is simply "literature" or "history"; just as the "critical literacy" I see him teaching for is, to him, simply "literacy." William knows that the substance of his curriculum is reflected in such theoretical descriptions as "multicultural" and "critical." William is choosing to make a political statement. When he says his work is about teaching literature, history, and for literacy, he is saying that those qualities characteristic of multiculturalism and critical education theory are so basic they should not have to be named as distinct.

William's students, who are in seventh and eighth grades, come to him with a range of reading skills and overall abilities. We know from the Bronx letter that these students have read Sandra Cisneros's House on Mango Street, a highly acclaimed

contemporary novel of Hispanic culture. We see in the classroom story they are reading Mildred Taylor's The Road to Memphis, the third volume in a young adult trilogy written for readers eleven and older. The set of novels chronicles the lives of the Logans, a southern Black family. The time frame of this book is the 1950's, the dawn of Civil Rights. The main protagonist is a young girl. In this novel she is about 19 years old. The characters are "real" – deal with racism, love, friendship. The Logans deal with a range of obstacles that many Blacks at this time and later faced. The novel also explores the range of human emotions and concerns that are universal, regardless of race and time. Later in the year the class read several other novels together: Rainbow Jordan, Freak the Mighty, and To Kill a Mockingbird. Additionally, they read their own chosen books, a wealth of poetry, and the writing of their own classroom and school community.

We can see how writing is used to help students articulate their responses to literature and how this literature speaks to these students' lived realities. An example from the classroom publication in William's class the year before, the same publication that students in the Bronx had read and responded to, serves as an important illustration. The following poem, inspired by the chapter "What Sally Said" in Sandra Cisneros' House on Mango Street, was co-written by Ivory as a seventh grader and her sister who was in eighth grade.

### **On The Fast Track Of Life**

*Look at that girl walking down the street  
With them red pumps on her feet.  
"Your moving too fast." I tell her so.  
But she just keeps walking, strutting toe to toe.  
She should wait until she's older and mentally a little bigger,  
But when you see her mother, you'll see where she got her figure.  
I am telling you that girl, she had better watch her actions,*

*Or she might find herself in a room with contractions.*

This is powerful. These students, as the character Esperanza does in House..., read and write their world. They know that young girls often grow up too fast and end up teenage mothers. This is a sophisticated extension of their response to Cisneros' work.

Rosenblatt argues that, "When the student has been moved by a work of literature, he will be led to ponder on questions of right or wrong, of admirable or antisocial qualities, of justifiable or unjustifiable actions" (1938/1991, p. 17). On several occasions, when observing discussions or presentations about literature, it was evident that students were deeply moved emotionally and intellectually by what they had read.

When discussing the last chapter of Road to Memphis, William gives students ten minutes to find a passage they would like to share and talk about: something that they really liked, something that troubled them, something that they had questions about, something that sheds light on one of the themes they have been discussing – anything. William opens the floor to the class, and the approach produces lively discussion. In each case when a student reads a passage, others join in with additional responses and perspectives. Midway through the discussion, Mika asks if she can share a poem she wrote about the climactic moment in the chapter.

*When you start running you can't stop.  
Especially when your running for your Life...*

*I passed the road to Memphis and I am on my way.  
Stopping only to use the bathroom, and to  
Get a piece of hard bread from my back pocket.  
I can't run forever I say to myself,  
I must stop sometime.  
But as time goes by I still run.  
I am Cold and hungry and I have no place to go.  
I pass sighns.*

*Wanted sighns with my name.  
And my picture on it.  
My Picture...  
The way I looked before I started runing.  
But now...  
Now I'm Cut, bruised up dirty. And I smell bad to.  
I look up at the sky to talk to God.*

*Lord...  
Lord help me Lord.  
Look down on me.  
Do you see me Lord*

*My feet...  
Tired.  
My hands...  
hurt and  
my hart is feeld with hatred, Love, different feelings.  
Lord  
As I run past the road to freedom,  
And enter eartenaty [crossed out] eteraty [crossed out] eternaty  
be with me Lord  
Please be with me.*

Mica's response is connected and meaningful and evocative. She has placed herself in the center of the story in the form of this first draft poem. Her desire to share her poem is important, for this indicates that she believes her writing merits an audience. Students in William's class are willing to share their written pieces within a community they know will be supportive and helpful. In a writing workshop, Mica has the opportunity to take this poem further, perhaps publishing it in any number of forums, as Ivory and her sister did with their poetic response to House on Mango Street.

#### Passion for Subject and Work: "Invoking a Passion"

The community that surrounds Urban Hope Academy is undeniably poverty stricken, yet the inner community of the school and William's classroom explodes with

life, color, and joy. Looks can be deceiving. The obstacles outside do not determine the hope on the inside. There is a richly literate environment in William's class, and curriculum and pedagogy that are potentially life changing. We know from so much of what these students say and do that they care about school and learning. We know there are children in his class who spend their allowance on books. In an overwhelmingly poor school, some children choose to spend their money on books. This fact alone speaks so much. William's curriculum and pedagogy must be at least partially responsible for this.

We see how the students in his class want to share their writing with him and others. They are able to write formally and informally. They are able to use each other as resources and collaborate on group projects. At times, the students' writing is evocative, at other times profound, at other times social action oriented. These skills, dispositions, and abilities do not happen on their own. Instead they need an adult facilitator who is able to foster a learning community which supports this. This adult facilitator also needs to be passionate about the art of writing and for his students' well-being, and needs to be able to express this passion to his students so that they are aware of the depth of his feeling for writing and for them. William is just such a facilitator.

William's energy is a motivating quality he brings to the classroom. He is passionate about the power of reading and writing in children's lives. In my interview with William he talked about "invoking a passion" in students about important and real issues in their lives. He is committed to playing a transformative role. But he also knows the limits. When William talked to me about the article he wrote (see Life Story), he said, "My idea in this piece was that writing can get into kids' lives and really help them and be therapeutic or help them deal as some kind of catharsis is nice in theory, and I

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

suppose it does, but there is a point where writing is not enough.” William goes on to talk about the power of creating a space where students feel like they are listened to and cared about, “More of what we are doing in this classroom, and others like it, is the building of community – a person to listen to, a person to care. The problems didn't go away just because you wrote them down.” William’s professional passion and commitment are revealed in his writing, for he cares so deeply about his students’ learning and future well-being that he devotes time to reflect on his practice and write to share his reflections with a larger professional community.

William is a passionate learner. He is a writer who teaches writing. He is a reader who wants to light the fires for loving literature. More than anything, he is passionate about helping his students do more than survive in this world. He works to help them read and write both the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987), to see, understand, and negotiate what is both beautiful and dreadful (Hanh, 1987). When he is stern they can read the care that is beneath the sternness. He also shows them the full range of his emotions, that he is human and “fully alive” (Fried, 1995). William gets tears in his eyes when he is moved. He smiles and laughs with joy when his students teach him something or have said something profound. He has passionate responses to what occurs in his classroom. The students know this and understand that what happens in this classroom community matters to their teacher, and consequently they feel like they matter to him.



## CHAPTER 6

### AN EXPANDED THEORY OF TEACHING FOR CRITICAL LITERACY

Meditation is to be aware of what is going on—in our bodies, in our feelings, in our minds, and in the world. Each day 40,000 children die of hunger. The superpowers now have more than 50,000 nuclear warheads, enough to destroy our planet many times. Yet the sunrise is beautiful, and the rose that bloomed this morning along the wall is a miracle. Life is both dreadful and wonderful. To practice meditation is to be in touch with both aspects. Please do not think we must be solemn in order to meditate. In fact, to meditate well, we have to smile a lot. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1987, p. 4; emphasis added)

#### Introduction

I first encountered Thich Nhat Hanh reading bell hooks' Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom (1994a). Since the time hooks was an undergraduate planning a career in education, she was a devotee of Paulo Freire's. She embraced Freire's philosophy of *concientization* (awareness and engagement) and critical education as *praxis* – “action and reflection upon the world in order to change it” (p. 14). However, for hooks, Freire's focus on the mind was wanting. It was through Hanh, particularly his practice of “engaged Buddhism” and his notion of “teacher as healer,” that hooks' own critical education theory and practice evolved. “Engaged pedagogy,” like Hanh's Buddhism, emphasizes “wholeness, a union of mind, body, and spirit” (p. 14).

hooks led me to Hanh, and it was in Being Peace (1987) that I saw connections to my own theorizing about critical education, especially connections to “reading the world.” To read the world, one must be aware and be seeking awareness, seeking *concientization* as Freire would say. Hanh's explanation of meditation that begins this chapter raises an important issue, one that is neglected in the critical education literature. Awareness involves seeing and understanding the wonderful and beautiful, not only the

painful and dreadful or the injustice, oppression, and exploitation in the world.

Reflection on my own practice as a teacher educator reveals that I too have neglected this aspect of awareness and its relationship to critical literacy.

On several occasions I have used a “sensory immersion” approach to create an experience in which undergraduate and graduate education students can discuss what “reading the world” might mean. The session where I do the sensory immersion is preceded and followed by sessions in which readings and discussions help students problematize the content and pedagogy of the sensory immersion, a single session that is part of a much larger tapestry intended to engage them in the development of their own critical literacy and explore the field of critical education. The sensory immersion is a fifteen minute experience in which I invite students to enter a classroom I have specially prepared with multiple “texts” on a particular theme, circulate without talking to one another, and “read” the many pieces surrounding them. One theme I have used several times to frame this experience is “violence against women.” When students enter the room they first encounter music, various pop artists whose lyrics either critique violence against women or are blatantly misogynistic; the lyrics of the songs are posted by the stereo. The walls of the room are covered with displays: personal narratives of women who have battled eating disorders, physical and emotional abuse, and a range of assaults from both inside and outside the home; reproductions of many Ms. magazine “No Comment” pages which present an array of sexist and misogynistic advertisements readers send to the publication’s editor; poems and art speaking out against various forms of oppression women encounter; excerpts from fiction and nonfiction portraying violence against women; exposes on women’s health issues, such as breast cancer research and the

physical-psychological dangers of breast implants; lists of statistics about sexual assault, spousal abuse, and other forms of violence women encounter; comic strips and political cartoons holding a mirror up to society. On tables are children's books with sexist stereotypes in their stories and illustrations. In one corner of the room the video Still Killing Us Softly plays. The sensory immersion creates an intense "in your face" encounter. Prior to entering the prepared classroom I explain to students what they will encounter, ask them to circulate without talking with one another, and make it clear that they can choose not to enter the room or that they can leave at any point during the experience.

I developed this sensory immersion approach because I thought it would epitomize what "reading the world is about" – coming to see how the visible and less visible forces in society work together to oppress. Marilyn Frye uses a birdcage metaphor to clarify oppressive structures:

The experience of oppressed people is that the living of one's life is confined and shaped by forces and barriers which are not accidental or occasional and hence avoidable, but are systematically related to each other in such a way as to catch one between and among them and restrict or penalize motion in any direction.... Consider a birdcage. If you look very closely at just one wire in the cage, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire...and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere.... It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one...and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere.... It is perfectly *obvious* that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be that least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon. (1983, pp. 4-5)

Frye explains oppression as a network of systematically related barriers. Each barrier, considered on its own may not seem insurmountable; however it is the cumulative effect

of all the barriers which oppresses. Together the barriers have the power to cage. On more than one occasion when I have used the sensory immersion approach, students have suggested during the processing phase of the experience that I integrate positive illustrations worth celebrating. I understood from my students that in such an intense environment they desired an outlet from all that pain. In using the sensory immersion approach I was trying to push students to confront the birdcage. This approach has had a powerful and positive impact on many, but for some it has not. Hanh helped me to see that awareness involves seeing the range of beautiful and unpleasant. Striving for the full range of awareness that Hanh communicates is especially necessary when working with young people to develop their critical literacy.

Those in the educational community interested in critical education, myself included, may be inclined to look predominantly, perhaps exclusively, for more confrontational examples to represent teaching for critical literacy. Hanh and hooks helped me to rethink my pedagogy. Studying Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison taught me that the work of teaching for critical literacy in secondary English classrooms grows out of pedagogical and curricular choices which are often subtle, which must be considered cumulatively over time, which are embedded in the realities and expectations that teachers in any school must face, and which come about through an interconnected network of beliefs, perspectives, and practices. Hanh's engaged Buddhism – seeing what is beautiful and dreadful in the world – and the “wholeness” of hooks' engaged pedagogy – understanding critical education as “a union of mind, body, and spirit” (hooks, 1994, p. 14) – speak to the theory of teaching for critical literacy which evolved out of this study. I have had the opportunity to spend extensive time in

Carol, Alice, and William's classrooms. I was able to interview them on several occasions. I had considerable access to students and documents within the classroom. And because I have had professional contact with each of them for several years prior to this study, I have seen them teach other classes and groups of students. The panoramic image of each teacher reveals to me a wholeness that makes teaching for critical literacy possible. They help their students read and understand the beautiful and the dreadful in this world. And in order to understand their work, we must consider the unity of mind, body, and spirit. We must consider what they know and have experienced. We must consider their energy and their voices. We must consider their passions and beliefs.

I have come to see the network of elements that contribute to Carol, Alice, and William's teaching for critical literacy as a root system. This root system builds upon the "tree-rooted-in-the-world" concept map I introduced in Chapter 1 to represent my developing theory of teaching for critical literacy. In this map, Freire's conception of "reading and writing the word and the world" functions as the metaphorical tap root. From my earliest explorations of critical education theory, a period of time I described as the "critical turn" in Chapter 1, there have been conceptions and approaches to teaching and curriculum that seemed to fit with this developing theory, most notably critical pedagogies and multiculturalism. The experience of this study has deepened and expanded my theory. Where Freire's concept is the tap root – the lifeline, the anchor – of the tree, these other facets are major roots growing out of the tap root. At this time, analysis of data from the three classrooms has revealed eight offshoot roots: *cultivating learning communities, social constructivist perspectives on learning, teaching practices reflective of critical pedagogies, multicultural perspectives and curriculum, inquiry-*



*oriented teaching, teaching writing as a process, reader-response orientations to teaching literature, and a teacher's passion for subject and work.* I intend for these to function as heuristic categories of my own developing theory rather than prescriptions for other people's practice.

The roots of the metaphorical tree, as with roots of a real tree, work together as part of a system, anchoring and nourishing the whole. The roots, working together, provide integrity (Chris Clark, personal communication, February 1999). In order to understand these roots as heuristic categories that have emerged from the study of Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison's classrooms, I need to discuss each separately. In the remainder of this chapter I will discuss how each theoretical root contributes to teaching for critical literacy, drawing upon literature that has informed my conception and recalling examples of classroom practice discussed in the case study chapters. In the conclusion of this chapter I will discuss the heuristic categories as a system of roots, vital in how they work together in the practice of teaching for critical literacy.

I do not present the following working definitions as absolutes. I anticipate that some readers will disagree with what I have included, left out, or construed as definitions of these concepts. Readers will have their own definitions of these concepts, however similar or dissimilar they are. I know that in the case of each root, with the exception of *passion for subject and work*, there is a body of literature many volumes thick. The roots often overlap and interrelate with one another. Several share similar and parallel characteristics and qualities. In order to define some of the roots, it is necessary to refer to other roots in the network. In studying Carol, Alice, and William, I have come to see

the combination and interconnectedness of these theoretical roots as illustrative of teaching for critical literacy in the secondary English classroom.

### Cultivating Learning Communities

Learning community theory has its roots in Deweyan progressivism, which called for subject matter to be seen as dynamic, for teachers to use nonauthoritarian methods, for students to be treated as active learners, and, above all, for education to be appropriated as a vehicle for democratization and social change.<sup>40</sup> This early push for social justice and transformation, particularly with the publication of Democracy and Education (1916/1966), has long inspired those concerned with education. “Dewey’s concerns to democratize the classroom...promote social goals of cooperation and group work...[and] community unity” (Applebee, 1974, p. 63).

Learning community theory and practices have received considerable attention in current educational research. The emergence of recent learning community theorizing grows out of the work of Joseph Schwab (1975; 1976; 1978), a scholar of Dewey and progressive education. Writers such as Putnam and Burke view the development of learning communities as a process: “Creating a learning community is a process of encouraging and promoting the development of certain propensities as the classroom’s cultural norms” (1992, p. 41). Putnam and Burke have adapted Schwab’s (1976) seven propensities for a learning community: identifying common needs and purposes, seeing peers as colleagues, seeking self-actualization and group actualization, recognizing other

---

<sup>40</sup>See Dewey’s “The Need for a Philosophy of Education” and “The School and Society” in Archambault (1974) and Democracy and Education (1916/1966).

groups as similar, reflecting on past actions, helping and being helped, and celebrating accomplishments. In their elaboration of the seven propensities, Putnam and Burke put forward several ideals and values held by members of a community that seem particularly relevant to teaching for critical literacy. Members of a community develop personal and shared goals to meet their needs. Members of a community value and support one another, help and ask for help; collaboration and partnership are valued, while competition is limited or eliminated (see Kohn, 1993). Members of a community seek challenges and risks, embrace problems and obstacles as opportunities to grow and learn. Members of a community talk openly about their individual and collective experiences, both past and present, so that a “reflective culture” (Putnam & Burke, 1992, p. 42) develops. Members of a community celebrate their efforts and accomplishments in order to create a group memory and future vision. And most importantly, members of a community get to know themselves and each other. As Clark says, “a community of strangers is a contradiction” (1997, p. 11).

Many of these propensities will be evident in classrooms where the teacher and the students have created a learning community together. However, as Burke (personal communication, January 1993) has emphasized, it is essential that we see the range of possibilities that make up learning communities; there is no single model, because learning communities take on the character of the teacher, the students, the school, the larger social context, and the resources and needs each brings to the experience. Clark is in agreement with this perspective: “Learning communities take form in indefinitely great variety – each is unique” (1997, p. 11).

Learning community qualities resonate deeply with people because there is a sense that such an environment can truly recast learning and lives. As Gibbs explains, a learning community “values our differences and ‘calls forth’ each of us to contribute our unique gifts” (1994, p. 12). The experience of coming together and affirming the diversity of who each individual is and what that individual brings is powerful for educators and students who believe in and seek a transformative education.

We see in Carol, Alice, and William’s classrooms many of the propensities and qualities Putnam and Burke articulate, the multiple ways learning communities can take shape, and the power of transformative education. Their special gifts and strengths, as well as their individual histories and struggles, help account for the uniqueness of each community. Yet, there is much each community has in common, particularly the ethic of working toward a greater good. Senge (1991) speaks to this: “These are groups of people who are really committed to something larger than themselves and larger than their own personal desire” (as cited in Gibbs, 1994, p. 24). The three teachers have themselves embraced this desire to work for something larger than themselves – a literacy that embraces social justice and equity. They in turn work to cultivate this in their students. Together the result is a powerful “new way of being and learning together” (Gibbs, 1994).

When I talk of Carol, Alice, and William “cultivating community,” I am considering the combination of personal qualities and pedagogical choices they make which help to create conditions for a certain kind of classroom environment, one in which learning is at the center and participants work together in ways that help themselves and others grow intellectually, emotionally, socially, and psychologically. My own vision of

learning communities has been most influenced by Putnam and Burke (1992), Schwab (1975), Clark (1997), Palmer (1998), and the teachers of this study. Carol, Alice, and William were able to foster communities in which they were co-teachers and co-learners with their students. Learning communities are environments where the development of critical literacy can flourish. Even though the critical education literature I have encountered does not use the language of “learning community,” some theorists discuss classroom conditions that are consistent with learning communities. For instance, Giroux states, “Schools need to provide opportunity for literate occasions...work in social relations that emphasize care and concern for others, to take risks...” (1992, p. 18). Conditions such as “care,” “concern for others,” and “risk-taking” must be actively cultivated, as they are in learning communities. Carol, Alice, and William each exhibit a deep sense of care that is fundamental to the communities they develop. They are caring people. And as caring teachers they know that their students must be guided and supported to learn respectful and thoughtful ways of being in the classroom if a learning community is going to flourish. Noddings argues that caring involves the notion of “feeling with” and of “reception,” a quality she calls “engrossment”:

I have called it “engrossment.” I do not “put myself in the other’s shoes,” so to speak, by analyzing his reality as objective data and then asking, “How would I feel in such a situation?” On the contrary, I set aside my temptation to analyze and to plan. I do not project; I receive the other into myself, and I see and feel with the other....I am not thus caused to see or to feel—that is, for I am committed to the receptivity that permits me to see and to feel in this way. (1984, p. 30)

Carol, Alice, and William create atmospheres of receptivity in their classrooms. Each is receptive to others and otherness, modeling such a stance to their students. We hear this in Carol’s writing about culture, “Like Gandhi, I want the cultures of all lands to blow

about my house [so]....no one culture, no one sense of rightness will, as Gandhi warned, blow away another.” We see this in Alice’s Tolerance Unit, helping students grapple with homophobia, and revisiting the goal of tolerance and respect throughout the semester. We see this in William’s class discussion about Equity in Education; while helping students understand the disparity in educational conditions in different schools and communities, he also pushes them to articulate what all students need to learn in spite of disparities. Receptivity is a quality of care each of these teachers demonstrates and tries to cultivate in their students, a receptivity to who they are and a receptivity to others, however similar or different. Yet, each teacher also exhibits qualities of caring that are unique to who they are and what the needs of their students are, helping to rupture the image of generic critical educators. Carol is unique in the way she makes listening central to her practice, at times “hearing people to speech” (Nell Morton, as cited in Palmer, 1998, p. 46). Alice’s students can count on her to be direct with them and not mince words when it comes to knowing what they need to do in order to better survive in the world inside or outside Assembly. And William, so concerned with his students’ present and future well-being, is swift to draw and enforce boundaries which will help his students mature socially, emotionally, intellectually, and even reach adulthood.

Carol, Alice, and William, in their own ways, have created learning communities based upon an ethic of caring. They have created pedagogical environments where students and teachers work with one another, caring for one another, and taking intellectual, psychological, and emotional risks with one another, all the while further enhancing the richness of their literate environments. We see Carol creating opportunities and space for risk-taking, as in Cor-Taz’s Rap Culture presentation,

particularly during the student-initiated discussion about the use of the word “nigger.”

We see Alice greatly enhance the richness of the students’ literate experiences by caring enough to read aloud to them, doing whatever it takes to help them enter the world of literature, for she knows that for so many of her students this is inaccessible territory. William, by laying the groundwork and providing the guidance for a writing workshop, has created an environment in which students must share responsibility, collaborate, and negotiate decisions. For this to work, students must care about one another and the class as a community. We see evidence of this at work when Ivory, Rose, and Michelle write a thank you letter on behalf of the class to the author David Wright. Within all three classrooms one gets the sense that “we are in this together.” “Teachers create an atmosphere not only by what they say or do but also in the way that they are present to their students” (van Manen, 1991, p. 184). This presence that van Manen speaks about is created by the way the teachers interact, act, and react to their students. In a variety of ways we have seen how these teachers work to cultivate environments conducive to the practice and development of critical literacy.

Maxine Greene provides a compelling vision of community in which members stir each other “to wide-awakeness, to imaginative action, and to renewed consciousness of possibility”:

As teachers, we cannot predict the common world that may be in the making; nor can we finally justify one kind of community more than another. We can bring warmth into places where young persons come together, however; we can bring in the dialogues and laughter that threaten monologues and rigidity. And surely we can affirm and reaffirm the principles that center around belief in justice and freedom and respect for human rights, since without these, we cannot even call for the decency of welcoming and inclusion for everyone, no matter how at risk. Only if more and more persons in their coming together learn to incarnate such principles and choose to live and speak in accord with them, are we likely to bring

a community into being. All we can do is to speak with others as passionately and eloquently as we can; all we can do is to look into each other's eyes and urge each other on to new beginnings. Our classrooms ought to be nurturing and thoughtful and just all at once; they ought to pulsate with multiple conceptions of what it is to be human and alive. They ought to resound with the voices of articulate young people in dialogues always incomplete because there is always more to be discovered and more to be said. We must want our students to achieve friendship as each one stirs to wide-awakeness, to imaginative action, and to renewed consciousness of possibility. (1995, p. 43)

Greene's vision underscores qualities of communities and the power of community which would promote a critical literacy – warmth, friendship, inclusivity, “multiple conceptions of what it is to be human and alive,” respect, dialogue, a commitment to justice and freedom, and so much more. These qualities reflect ways of being and moving through the world that Carol, Alice, and William bring to the classroom. In cultivating their own unique learning communities they are teaching who they are.

Greene also makes the point that we cannot “justify one kind of community more than another.” This is important. While I was still collecting data, I developed working assertions through the writing of reflective journals and the construction of expanded field notes. One of the early assertions was that cultivating learning community was important to teaching for critical literacy. This was clear to me in Carol's class. Carol's classroom resembled an image I had in my head about what a “learning community” is supposed to look like – students learning one another's names, desks almost never in rows, teacher as facilitator, among others. I was not so sure about Alice and William's classrooms. There was so much in both classrooms that was consistent with characteristics of a learning community as I knew it; for example, a pervasive sense of caring in Alice's class and students working collaboratively in William's class. Yet, there were elements in each I had great difficulty with, elements that conflicted with my

own vision. I had come to think that having desks in rows or using threatening words and tones were anathema to learning communities. A conversation with Lauren Young helped me to understand ways in which communication styles and community expectations concerning authority are often different in African American communities (personal communication, February 1997). Young encouraged me to read Ladson-Billings (1994) and Foster (1997). These authors provided evidence for what Young was nudging me to consider. Once I was able to immerse myself in data analysis and writing, I was able to understand all three classrooms as learning communities in their own right. I have tried to show this in the analysis sections of each case study chapter. Alice and William's classrooms helped to "make the familiar strange" (Doug Campbell, personal communication, September 1992), helped me to see that a single ideal learning community would not meet the needs of students in various contexts. Carol, Alice, and William cultivate unique learning communities out of who they are and what they wish their students to become as learners and critically literate people. Cheryl Rosaen has helped me to extend the "cultivating" metaphor:

If you think about what "cultivating" means in relation to gardening, there are things people DO [when they] garden, but just doing those things would make them more like farmers—people growing stuff to get the job done. But gardeners have an artistry to their work, a certain kind of caring and connection to what they're growing. Part of what motivates them is getting to see and appreciate what they have created—something slightly new and different each season—things of beauty. (personal communication, 2 December 1999)

These teachers are "engrossed," as Noddings would say, in the cultivation process. Each in their own way, in response to the students they have and the contexts in which they work, cultivate learning communities. They create, with beauty and artistry, classroom environments in which individual students are nourished, grow, and flourish.

## Social Constructivist Perspectives on Learning

Applied to the classroom, social constructivism is a theory of knowledge whereby students and teachers construct meaning and knowledge together (see Brooks & Brooks, 1993). Teachers who work from a social constructivist perspective understand that students come to school with prior experiences and understandings that play a critical role in developing new understandings, and if voiced are crucial to the development of new understandings in themselves and others. Such teachers structure ways for students to interact with one another. This is an essential piece to developing critical literacy. Beach defines social constructivism as

a theory of knowledge that posits that people formulate knowledge by actively constructing that knowledge within specific social contexts or discourse communities, this theory challenges the idea that knowledge exists as an autonomous, objective entity. Constructivists posit that by actively formulating their own knowledge through talk and writing, students truly understand that knowledge. By formulating their own interpretation of a text, students are more likely to understand the meaning of that interpretation than if they restate their teacher's or a critic's interpretation. (1993, p. 163)

Beach is particularly interested in how social constructivism relates to the teaching of literature from a reader-response orientation, teaching that is rich in student discourse about literature and where students have the opportunity to develop their own interpretations. Clark, writing about shaping education classes from a constructivist perspective, emphasizes the “mutual influence” students have upon one another in such an environment:

Individual learners will inevitably interpret what they read, write, see, hear, and feel using their pre-existing personal sense-making frameworks.... At the same time, learners in a course who are given the opportunity will mutually influence the sense each makes of their common experiences. Discussion, conversation, group projects, presentations of work in progress, reading and responding to one

another's writings all provide opportunities for socially shaping, modifying, and broadening the perspectives of individual learners. (1997, pp. 8-9)

Clark makes an important point. Individual learners will make their own personal sense of what they encounter. However, teachers who design their courses to include interaction and collaboration create opportunities for individual learners to mutually shape one another's personal understandings, to stretch and broaden these personal understandings. Learning is enhanced and shaped by the company students keep in class.

It is plain that *knowledge* emerges as a product of an interaction between humans.... Different interactions will yield different findings. Strange as it may sound to ears socialized to the conventional paradigm, the results are *literally*—we stress *literally*—*created* by that interaction; they are not "discovered" as if they had always been "out there." To put it in our own terminology, *knowledge [SIC] is a human construction*, including, we might add, all theories and methodologies. Hence they cannot be taken as ultimate or objective truths but suffer, and will continue to suffer, from human foibles. (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 67)

Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison want to create spaces for their students where they “learn in good company “ (Featherstone, et al., 1993). It is within such a space that students and teacher construct meaning and knowledge. It is this shared space where the opportunities each participant has will create new understandings, meanings, and knowledge. The community that is created is critical in determining the kind of “company one keeps.” As Wells states,

What we learn depends crucially on the company we keep, on what activities we engage in together, and on how we do and talk about these activities. What emerges...is an image of learners actively engaged in constructing meanings from their personal experience and from the information that is made available to them in the interest of effective participation in social activities to achieve goals that are individually chosen or mutually agreed. And the outcome of such learning is the gradual construction of more systematic knowledge which can and should inform both present and future action.... it leads to the development of understanding. (1992, p. 4)

When students come to see themselves as knowers, thinkers, meaning-makers, and constructors of knowledge, they will be better prepared to read and write both the word and the world. When students come to see knowledge as something constructed, something able to change and shift, to be acted upon, they are able to see themselves as agents in their own learning and in their own worlds. We see in Carol, Alice, and William teachers who try to help students see that they are the ones who are able to interpret, to make meaning, to even create new knowledge. This theory of knowledge that is embedded in each teacher's pedagogy is an important element of their teaching for critical literacy. It is within these "literacy communities" that

students who work with one another as authors and readers of texts discover the many ways in which their personal experiences and knowledge influence the construction of meanings. By reading what others write, listening to what they say, students have a window into lives beyond their own. (IRA/NCTE, 1996, p. 45).

It is understanding their own lives and the "lives beyond their own" that Carol, Alice, and William try to help students accomplish. Their learning communities are undergirded by perspectives on teaching and learning that are constructivist, perspectives that support the critical literacy they are trying to sustain.

Susan Ohanian (1999) argues that when it comes to standards and standardized assessment that "one size fits few." It is important for the educational community to also see this applies to critical education as well. The teacher roles that Carol, Alice, and William play are different from one another. Alice tends to lead from the front of the class. From this standpoint she finds ways to facilitate discussion, open the floor to student ideas, questions, and challenges, and help them mutually shape one another's thinking. For example, having students rewrite the endings to the story "Sweat," using

dialect, and then having students read these aloud in class provided students opportunities to hear multiple interpretations of the story and the use of Black English Vernacular.

Another example, alluded to in the analysis section of Alice's case study, was when she had students work in groups to get started on a take-home essay exam. When Alice introduced this assignment to the class she revealed her beliefs in how understanding is socially constructed:

"This is an open book test on Their Eyes Were Watching God. Pay special attention to all underlined remarks. There are ten questions based on chapters one through seven. We have discussed all these chapters as a class, and if you have read you should do fine. I was thinking of working in groups of four so that we can learn from each other. Sometimes teachers carry on the facade that 'I'm the only source of information in this room and everything that you learn. I'm the one that you learn it from.' And that is not so. That is a very narrow and limited perspective. I have said before, I consider myself a life-long learner. All of us should be able to learn from each other."

Carol, on the other hand, tends to lead from behind. We see in the classroom story how she lets students talk, only entering into the discussion when she feels they need direction or could be pushed further. Jacqueline commented positively on this quality of Carol's, and Dar commented on how much she learned from her classmates. William tends to move back and forth, from front to back. Unlike Carol, who was teaching all seniors in Cultural Perspectives, William had seventh and eighth graders with few of the socioeconomic advantages of Carol's students. His students needed more background information and structure than Carol's to get them moving on their own, but when they were on their own they were clearly in control. We see an especially powerful illustration of a class constructing understanding together in the discussion of the NPR program "Ignorance or Information?", when William praised Nate for "educating him" and doing a better job of articulating the main point than he had been doing.

In laying out this network of roots to my expanded theory of teaching for critical literacy, I have tried to emphasize the interconnectedness of the various elements. Wells also stresses the interconnectedness of making meaning: meanings are always constructed in the making of speech acts....The making of meaning is always part of a larger activity” (1992, p. 3). Larger activities like Alice’s units on Tolerance and Zora Neale Hurston and Carol’s classroom discussions about multiple perspectives on culture are excellent examples. Wells, who is writing about the “inquiry-oriented curriculum,” might have in mind more specifically an inquiry like William was trying to launch into Equity in Education, or his year long theme of Revolution. Wells continues by explaining how these larger activities provide motivation and personal relevance: “a larger activity...provides the motivation for the meaning-making and for the framework of relevance...to empower the learner in his or her dealings with the problems and predicaments of life outside the classroom” (1992, p. 3).

### Teaching Practices Reflective of Critical Pedagogies

Extensive reading through the body of critical theory and critical education literature reveals that writers in this field name and describe “critical pedagogies”

variously.<sup>41</sup> Sonia Nieto links what is currently called critical pedagogy to earlier traditions. She writes,

Critical pedagogy is not new, although it has gone by other terms in other times. In our country, precursors to critical pedagogy can be found in the work of African American educators such as Carter Woodson and W.E.B. DuBois. In Brazil, the historic work of Paulo Freire has influenced literacy and liberation movements throughout the world. Even before Freire, however, what could be called critical pedagogy was being practiced in other parts of the world. Many years ago, Sylvia Ashton-Warner, teaching Maori children in New Zealand, found that...[they] had been failed dismally by New Zealand schools, Ashton-Warner decided to develop a strategy for literacy based on the children's experiences and interests. (1996, p. 321)

It can also be argued that critical pedagogies practiced in the contemporary United States owe a debt to progressive education in the first half of the century. Figures such as Dewey (1859-1952) and DuBois (1868-1963) are inseparable from the emergence of progressive education and consistent "democratic traditions" (Featherstone, 1991). Featherstone identifies several "enduring commitments" of progressive education that are consistent with not only critical pedagogies, but also other roots of the expanded theory presented in this chapter:

The most basic of the commitments are political. There is first of all a rock-bottom commitment to democracy—in politics and education, as a way of shared life.... other grand themes and dilemmas of progressive education: making live experience count for more in learning, making schools and classrooms into communities of learning, helping children learn how to make and remake knowledge, creating a culture commensurate with the dream of democracy,

---

<sup>41</sup> A survey of the critical education literature would reveal a diversity of naming to characterize this kind of teaching. Among the names and representative authors are the following: "critical pedagogy" (Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 1989; Ellsworth, 1989; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993), "feminist pedagogy" (hooks, 1984, 1989; Weiler, 1988, 1991; Lather, 1991), "liberatory pedagogy" (Shor, 1987), "engaged pedagogy" (hooks, 1994), "border pedagogy" (Giroux, 1992b), "radical pedagogy" (O'Malley, et al., 1990), "pedagogy of empowerment" (Kreisberg, 1992), "radical nonviolence" (O'Reilly, 1993), "bicultural education" (Darder, 1991), "feminine pedagogy" (Rivera & Poplin, 1995), and "empowerment pedagogy" (Simon, 1987).

developing schools that can embrace cultural difference instead of smothering it, struggling for peace. (Featherstone, 1991, p. x)

Like progressive education, critical pedagogies share a political commitment, a commitment to practicing and enriching democracy. The commitments Featherstone lists are consistent with learning community theories and social constructivist perspectives already discussed, and multicultural perspectives to be discussed later.

Critical pedagogies all share the aim to create a transformative difference in the lives of learners and in the world. Roger Simon has said that critical pedagogies have the potential to create “moment[s] of transformation,” a transformation Giroux describes as a “project of possibility” in which students come “to believe they can make a difference in the world” (Giroux, 1992a, p. 19). This sense that education can be a “project of possibility” is a key linkage between and among critical pedagogies.

Raising critical social consciousness – an awareness and empathy concerning issues of race, class, gender, power, and others – is fundamental to critical pedagogies and to cultivating critical literacy. A teacher who does not pursue the cultivation of her or his students’ critical social consciousness is not teaching for critical literacy. Critical social consciousness – *conscientization* (Freire, 1968/1985) and “wide-awakeness” (Greene, 1978) – is described by Svi Shapiro:

It is about focusing our critical capacities, our questioning capacity, on the everyday world in which we find ourselves with a purpose. And that purpose is rooted in a moral vision. It has to do with looking at the world, questioning the world as to whether, in fact, it treats people with dignity and respect; whether the world is one in which certain groups of people or individuals are limited or dominated, or whether the world that we live in, in fact, lives up to its democratic and humanistic promises. (Kanpol, 1994, pp. 167-168)

Looking at the world, questioning the world – reading the world and one’s own worlds – is the heart of critical social consciousness. And such consciousness often leads to action, for students come to see, as Alice Terry would say, that they are the “key players,” that they have a responsibility to themselves and society to be actors for a better world. Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison show their students that they are “bodies in the body of the world” (McIntosh, 1983; 1990), members of the human race living, whether they are conscious of it or not, existences connected with all other humans and cultures in a shared world.

Critical educators seek to move their students beyond themselves, and they are invariably committed to educational equity and social justice. Peterson argues that there are five characteristics essential to a critical/social-justice classroom: a curriculum grounded in the lives of students, dialogue, a questioning/problem-posing approach, an emphasis on critiquing bias and attitudes, and teaching which promotes activism for social justice (1994a, p. 30). We see examples of the characteristics in Carol, Alice, and William’s classrooms, though it is important to understand that individual characteristics move from foreground, to background, and back again under different circumstances and contextual needs.

Nieto has embraced critical pedagogy as fundamental to her own theory of multicultural education in a sociopolitical context, stressing the empowering and liberating qualities of critical pedagogy:

A multicultural approach values diversity and encourages critical thinking, reflection, and action. Through this process, students can be empowered as well. This is the basis of critical pedagogy. Its opposite is what Freire calls “domesticating education,” education that emphasizes passivity, acceptance, and submissiveness. According to Freire, education for domestication is a process of

“transferring knowledge,” whereas education for liberation is one of “transforming action.” Liberating education encourages students to take risks, to be curious, and to question. Rather than expecting students to repeat teachers’ words, it expects them to seek their own answers. Empowerment also means that students and teachers recognize their right and responsibility to take action. (1996, p. 319)

Students in Carol, Alice, and William’s classrooms seem to feel empowered, though not in identical ways. Additionally, each of the teachers demonstrates a sense of responsibility to take action for and with their students. As I emphasized in Chapter 1, these teachers do not name themselves “critical educators,” but it is clear that they are working to cultivate critical social consciousness in their students, fundamental to the development of critical literacy.

In the case study chapters we see how each teacher worked to establish respectful and inclusive classrooms with curriculum based upon the lives and interests of their students. We also see teachers who are political, who teach for a critical social consciousness, and who teach their students to make their own future possibilities. When William scaffolds a discussion about Equity in Education he helps students develop a critical social consciousness about the economics and politics of schooling. When Manuel and the Equity in Education Action Group undertake a petition drive and use it to change the school district policy concerning Walking Field Trips, we see students making their own future possibilities. We see Alice pushing her students toward critical social consciousness in the Tolerance Unit. Her life lessons are often political, always about helping her students reach for desirable future possibilities. We see both these qualities in her life lesson about table etiquette. She knows she must tread delicately when teaching her students ways of being and social interaction that conflict with their home

and community culture, but will open doors for them outside of Assembly. Carol, like William and Alice, helps students see and understand what is both dreadful and beautiful in the world, the wholeness that Hanh argues is necessary for consciousness. We know Carol values this duality from what she writes in her own Essay #1 *What is this thing called culture?*:

I want the cultures of all lands to blow about my house. That determination to open the windows has not been painless. I hated the purposeful scarring of children born into beggar families in the Middle East but I loved the miniature paintings and the giggling veiled women. The rowed rigidity in Japanese schools made me uneasy but the saki (rice wine) was as warm and wonderful as sleeping on a mat under a futon. From any culture, even the one that nourished us as children, I believe we as individuals must eventually evaluate what's right for us to take or leave behind.

We see Carol make space for students to explore this territory in the discussion of “Nigger” at the end of Cor-Taz’s Rap Culture presentation.

Mary Rose O’Reilley, a college writing teacher whose practice was nurtured by the philosophies and practices of Ken Macrorie, Peter Elbow, and the National Writing Project among others, writes in The Peaceable Classroom of her efforts to develop a pedagogy built upon “radical nonviolence,” a pedagogy which is her attempt to respond to a question she encountered as a graduate student in 1967: “Is it possible to teach English so that people stop killing each other?” (1993, p. 9). Critical educators, such as Carol, Alice, and William, pursue their practice as if the answer to such a question is “We must try.” Our best chances at success is to pursue the goal of students developing a critical social consciousness and critical literacy.

## Multicultural Perspectives and Curriculum

Multicultural education in the United States grew out of the Civil Rights movement (Banks, 1995). Teachers who work from a multicultural perspective understand the value and implications of diversity in U.S. society, see diversity as positive, and work to make their curriculum and classroom affirm diversity. They also seek to help their students develop a similar positive framework concerning diversity. Sonia Nieto provides a powerful conceptualization of multicultural education; she defines multicultural education, placed in a sociopolitical context, as follows:

Multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers represent. Multicultural education permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, as well as the interactions among teachers, students, and parents, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education promotes the democratic principles of social justice. (1996, p. 307)

Nieto's comprehensive conceptualization states that multicultural education is a process and must become pervasive, approached on several fronts in the context of broad-based school reform. She also argues for multicultural education to promote social change. Banks and McGee Banks have made similar arguments, characterizing multicultural education as "an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions" (1997, p. 1).

Embedded in Nieto's definition and explicated throughout her book are seven elements she argues that multicultural education is: *antiracist education, basic education, important for all students, pervasive, education for social justice, a process,*

*critical pedagogy* (1996, p. 308). Nieto's seven elements of multicultural education reveal the depth and promise multicultural education has for promoting personal and social transformation. Nieto's theory is consistent with what many theorists are calling "critical multiculturalism," the combination of critical pedagogy and multicultural education (see Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Multicultural education is not just a "holidays and festivals" additive curriculum about "Others." Nieto acknowledges that comprehensive multicultural education reform will take many years. Perhaps the most essential piece to making this process successful is the teachers themselves. Nieto writes that, "Becoming a multicultural teacher...means first becoming a multicultural person," and this is done by learning more about others, confronting personal racism and biases, and "learning to see reality from a variety of perspectives" (p. 353). It is a lifelong process with no arrival point – there is always more to learn about others and ourselves. As Nieto says, "Although the transformation of individuals from being monocultural to being multicultural will not by itself guarantee that education will become multicultural, it would certainly lay the groundwork for it" (p. 353).

As the United States grows increasingly diverse, and as global interaction continues to accelerate, the ability to understand, respect, and work successfully with those who are different from oneself will be of paramount value in reading, writing, and negotiating the world. Multicultural perspectives are vital to the development of critical literacy. In my own theorizing about teaching for critical literacy I have embraced Nieto's broad-based theory calling for sweeping educational reform. However, it has especially informed my sense of teachers as curriculum shapers. When teachers become "multicultural people," there is the possibility of a multicultural perspective being

pervasive and permeating all that is done, not simply part of a lesson, or a celebration of a holiday, or a month of special attention. A multicultural perspective can become the teacher's lens, a guiding philosophy for what is covered and uncovered and recovered in the curriculum. Such a curriculum reaches beyond the trivial, which has become commonplace and the source of much criticism (see Sleeter, 1995; Nieto, 1995). Most research in the field focuses attention on the curricular implications of multicultural education, as Banks does in his work on "ethnic studies" (1997).

Curriculum shaped by English teachers working from multicultural perspectives would include voices from several cultures, past and present, in the center and on the margins. Such teachers would strive to make room in the curriculum and classroom for multiple perspectives, the literatures of many people, and writing in multiple forms and for a range of purposes and audiences. Helping students see through multiple perspectives themselves is essential to developing critical literacy. Greene writes, "Learning to look through multiple perspectives, young people may be helped to build bridges among themselves; attending to a range of human stories, they may be provoked to heal and to transform" (1993, p. 18). Of relevance is Aronowitz and Giroux's (1991) characterization of curriculum as a narrative or voice made up of multiple layers in which knowledge is contested. The most important of those voices belong to the students:

Teachers should make an effort to make instruction "multicultural" in ways that go well beyond the inclusion of women and minority writers in literature anthologies. Rather, students' cultural backgrounds should be recognized as legitimate parts of their construction of literary meaning, and a range of possible constructions should be acceptable in the classroom not only for the purpose of democratic expression, but also for the purpose of enriching the perspectives of all students through engaging in transactions with students of varying orientations. (Smagorinsky & Witting, 1995, p. 69)

Teachers working from multicultural perspectives can provide students access to many voices, to join their own in the process of contesting and constructing knowledge. As teachers and students become “multicultural people,” they will be better prepared and more disposed to affirm diversity and work for social justice inside and outside the classroom. This is a tremendous contribution to developing critical literacy.

In my final interview with William, we discussed “multiculturalism.” Similar to his response to my use of the term “critical literacy,” in which he said, “What you call critical literacy, I just call literacy,” William said,

“I wouldn’t call it multicultural. I teach what I would call history, but I try to get as many voices in there as possible. And I try to teach history through stories. Through the ordinary people who lived it as much as the George Washingtons and Thomas Jeffersons. Of course I am going to be culturally specific. Especially with a culture that has been so violated in terms of the academic world, with its lack of representation, honest representation, accurate representation....I teach a combination of class and race issues....What I am doing essentially, hopefully...is planting a seed of revolution or a seed of real growth that maybe later on down the road when someone tries to ramrod a landfill in their neighborhood, or their boss is dissing them for promotions, maybe they have the confidence...and ability...to know how to form an argument...and fix the situation.” (22 May 1997)

I characterize William’s curriculum, as well as Carol’s and Alice’s, as multicultural.

William’s contention that he simply teaches all perspectives is key. He seemingly believes that this kind of teaching is *basic* and should be *pervasive*. Ironically, these are two of Nieto’s components for her theory of multicultural education. It is all too common for teachers to approach curriculum from a monocultural perspective, as we heard in Carol’s students’ critique of their own World Cultures course. Carol’s Cultural Perspectives class is about multiple cultures. A most significant perspective in the class belongs to the students. Their voices make the curriculum rich in multiple perspectives, not only the teachers and texts represented. Alice’s class is Afrocentric. Yet, we must

com-

like

have

mal-

mal-

the

feet

ed

has

the

me

ser-

and

at

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

consider how this curriculum is meaningful and relevant to her student population, and is likely a departure from a White Eurocentric curriculum. Often African Americans are not taught their own history; they are taught a version of history dominated by White and male perspectives and events.

Multiple perspectives do not surface in these classrooms because of a holiday or nationally recognized month of celebration. Multiple perspectives are pervasive, through the texts and voices of all members in the classroom community. Another distinguishing feature of all three classrooms that parallels Nieto's conception of multicultural education, is their anti-bias commitment. We see a very clear example of William's anti-bias teaching when he was setting up the Gen-X Interactive Newspaper and he read with the class Jim Calceterra's piece "Die Faggot, Die." Alice's Tolerance Unit was explicitly meant to provoke an anti-bias ethic in the students, and in interviews at the end of the semester students were still talking about the class discussion of "A Rose for Charlie" and violence against gays and lesbians. And clearly Carol's goals are also to affirm diversity. She created the course and curriculum to help students negotiate an increasingly diverse school, community, and social environment.

### Inquiry-Oriented Teaching

At the heart of inquiries are desires and needs to know and understand. Inquiries are searches for the knowledge and understandings that will satiate these desires and needs. Ken Macrorie, in describing the I-Search process as an inquiry approach, wrote

I-Searches...[are] original searches in which persons scratch an itch they feel, one so marvelously itchy that they begin rubbing a finger tip against it and the rubbing

feels so good that they dig in with a fingernail. A search to fulfill a need, not that the teacher has imagined for them, but one they feel themselves.... (1988, p. 14)

John Dewey felt that the “need-to-know” kind of itch Macrorie indicates was a fertile source of thinking:

Thinking begins in what may fairly enough be called a *forked-road* situation, a situation that is ambiguous, that presents a dilemma, that proposes alternatives.... Difficulty or obstruction in the way of reaching a belief brings us, however, to a pause. In the suspense of uncertainty, we metaphorically climb a tree; we try to find some standpoint from which we may survey additional facts and, getting a more commanding view of the situation, decide how the facts stand related to one another. (Dewey, 1933, p. 14)

Questions, puzzles, dilemmas, obstacles, ambiguities are ideal inspirations for inquiry, for they push an individual to felt needs. Gordon Wells, a leading proponent of inquiry-oriented teaching and curriculum, further reinforces the centrality of the learners’ desire to know:

...a real question expresses a desire to understand. This desire is what moves the questioner to pursue the question until an answer has been made. Desiring to understand opens ourselves to experiencing what is new as new, and the already known under new aspects. (1992, p. 5)

Wells creates a vision for what he calls a “community of inquiry,” a classroom in which the relationship between teacher and students is dialogic. One of the principle roles of the teacher is to challenge and guide students toward real questions which grow out of their interests and needs, and then support them in their searches, which may be undertaken individually or collaboratively. The inquiries take place in a “community” context in which all members of the class are seen as potential resources and co-teachers. The inquiry process promotes action and reflection. Wells presents a model of inquiry composed of four essential elements. The first, which has already been discussed, is that student inquiries are named by them and are for them. The second is that the initial steps

of exploration grow out of “puzzlement” and “wonder.” The third element is the process of evaluation, a “dialogic” and reflexive and reflective examination of personal experience, initial beliefs and understandings of the question, and new information or experiences brought into the mix. Finally, there must be communication with others throughout the process, and at the conclusion of the search in the form of presentation to others. When students can communicate their learnings to others, and there is discussion about those learnings, then reflection can be optimized.

While Wells’ vision and model of inquiry are theoretical, Ann Cook draws upon her own high school teaching experience to describe goals and practices of what she calls Inquiry Teaching:

Inquiry Teaching seeks to promote active learning. Its goal is to encourage students to use their minds well: to formulate appropriate questions, identify relevant sources of information, recognize multiple perspectives, listen and observe critically, exchange views, and participate in shaping the focus of investigation. While Inquiry Teaching by its very nature supports considerable leeway in how each teacher specifically develops curriculum, the inquiry approach is characterized overall by an intensive investigation of central issues or problems, and strives for a balanced interweaving of process and content.... inquiry teachers draw on a repertoire of approaches: guest speakers, panels, debates, mock trials, “sorts,” interviews, surveys, presentations—all such techniques are employed to spark discussion and deepen understanding. (Cook, 1991, p. 149)

Wells and Cook share several commonalities. They both emphasize an active role for students and intensive investigations. However, Wells attends more closely to curriculum, while Cook concentrates on pedagogy. In William’s class we see the two merge, particularly in the Equity in Education whole class discussion and in how a number of students pursue this and related topics in their I-Search inquiries. Carol’s class is framed as an inquiry. The students’ first essay asks them to write about: *What is this*

*thing called culture?* And in their final exam, students are asked to articulate their current understanding of what culture is. Even though Carol names this umbrella inquiry, students have the latitude to select and explore their own “itches that need scratching” through independent research projects. We see Carol support the umbrella inquiry by using literature, film, field trips, and guest speakers; additionally, students’ independent research projects merge with the larger inquiry through their teaching presentations. Cor-Taz’s presentation on Rap Culture was one of many done by students, consistent with Wells’ fourth element of the inquiry-oriented curriculum. All of these approaches provoked dialogue.

An inquiry-oriented curriculum can contribute significantly to the development of critical literacy. It is certainly consistent with essential underpinnings provided by a learning community theory and social constructivist perspectives to teaching and learning. For instance, when Wells draws on sociocultural theory, he reveals how his conception of inquiry embodies a social constructivist perspective on learning and the goal of self- and group-actualization, which is one of Putnam and Burke’s seven propensities:

According to [sociocultural theory] it is only by taking over and making their own the cultural knowledge encoded in the artifacts and practices developed by previous generations, that the young will develop the abilities that enable them to achieve their potential as human beings.... they are apprenticed in the ways of acting and thinking that constitute the intellectual resources of the culture in which they are growing up as members. (Wells, 1992, p. 13)

Further evidence of the learning community connection rests in the centrality of group work and whole class discussion. Wells’ vision of a “community of inquiry” is a richly literate community:

It is clear that discourse, in both spoken and written modes, has a vital function to perform in inquiry-oriented learning, both in the coordination of the hands-on activities of research and in the minds-on deliberation in which the significance of the outcomes of these activities is interpreted, evaluated and integrated with what is already known. (1992, p. 14)

Yet, if the inquiry-oriented teaching is going to promote critical literacy, then there must also be attention to issues of equity and social justice. The classroom must be a place in which teachers pose such questions for students to engage in, and within the class the teacher must model the reasons and ways such questions are necessary to pose and investigate. For their own inquiries students may choose to pursue whatever questions grow out of their felt needs, but the classroom space must be a place where examination of such questions takes place. In all three teachers' classrooms we see them raise social justice issues and model critical examination: Carol does this when she addresses the State Proficiency Test, Alice does this when she opens the floor to students to voice perspectives on interracial relationships, and William does this when he helps students understand the economics behind the inequities of education. In his final words explaining why an "interactive inquiry approach" is so effective in promoting understanding, Wells hints at the potential of an inquiry approach to be personally and socially transformative:

First, what counts as knowledge in all areas of the curriculum is a cultural construct, developed over time through the very same processes of inquiry and discourse that I am advocating that students should experience. And secondly, with its "hands-on, minds-on, hearts-on learning," integrated through the discourse that directs and interprets its component activities, inquiry is...the most effective route to understanding, which should be the goal of learning-and-teaching at *all* levels in the educational system. But perhaps the most important reason for adopting this approach is that it offers a way of transcending the limitations of both sides in the debate on the goals of education. As long as the pendulum of public opinion swings back and forth between 'back-to-the-basics' and 'let-them-discover', neither of the goals will be met. However, when students

are challenged and their learning is driven by the asking of real questions, to which teachers respond by providing them with the cultural tools they need, and with support and guidance in using them to make intellectually worthwhile answers, the debate will be resolved. Students will be empowered by taking over the achievements of the past but, by transforming them to solve the problems that they encounter in the present, they will ensure not only the continuing existence of our culture, but also its ability to adapt to the demands of the future. (1992, p. 25)

Wells' vision of an inquiry-oriented curriculum is dynamic. It is also demanding. For many teachers, to base a course in supporting students' pursuit of interests and needs they name can be overwhelming, especially in semester-length literature electives. Such a curriculum is easier to imagine and realize in year-long courses with broad language arts goals. We see William go where the students' interests lead, dropping the Equity in Education as a whole class inquiry when students' interests divided. All three teachers pursue "hands-on, minds-on, hearts-on learning." This is best captured when students pose authentic questions and the teacher acts responsively. When students ask Alice why they should not eat their mashed potatoes with a spoon at a restaurant, Alice responds by arranging for the "life skills" teacher to do a lesson on table etiquette. In the "cultural jumping" discussion, we hear Carol's students show "puzzlement" when they talk about being "confused." It is through discussions like this, their independent research projects and presentations, and when guests come to class that Carol's students are pushed to reflect and come to deeper understandings of themselves and their worlds. Daisy, one of the students who said she was confused in the "cultural jumping" discussion, said in an interview a month later, "This class helped me more to be open-minded to Asian cultures and that is weird because I am Asian" (22 January 1997). Carol was able to guide, as was

William. In these ways, students' questions drive the learning they will take with them, allowing them the "ability to adapt to the demands of the future" (Wells, 1992, p. 25).

### Teaching Writing as a Process

Tchudi and Mitchell trace the rise of teaching writing as a process to the work of Wallace Douglas in the 1960s, "Douglas wrote about the astonishingly complex body of skills which a student/writer must master....[and] studied the works of professional writers...to develop a multistage view of the writing process" (1989, p.193). The work of Douglas and many others – Elbow (1973; 1983), Murray (1985), and Moffett (1968/1983) to name three – helped to shift the emphasis in writing instruction to *teaching the writer*, and away from prescriptive formulas and procedures that emphasized *teaching the product*. Since its inception in 1974, the National Writing Project has done much to transform the way writing is taught, having worked with more than 1.5 million K-University teachers in workshops and summer institutes and establishing more than 160 National Writing Project sites at colleges and universities throughout the United States and beyond (NWP, 1997).

Applebee describes teaching writing as a process, which by the mid-1980s had already become the "conventional wisdom," as a "radical response" to traditional product-centered approaches to teaching writing, a response he contends was made possible by a flood of professional literature and the success of the National Writing Project (1986, p. 97). By the mid-1990s teaching writing as a process had become "standard" in the United States. The International Reading Association (IRA) and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) embrace teaching writing as a process

in their fifth standard: “Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes” (1996, p. 3). In the following explanation of process writing, the IRA and NCTE provide a more complete image of their perspective, including a principle caution about translating this theory into practice:

In recent years many students have benefitted from what is known as a “process approach” to writing instruction, which focuses on different activities typically involved in effective writing, such as planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing for real audiences. Unfortunately, this approach is sometimes translated into a highly structured sequence of activities, regardless of the task at hand. While it is certainly crucial for students to understand the repertoire of techniques involved in the writing process, it is equally important to teach them flexibility so that they know when to proceed step by step and when to adopt alternative strategies. In reality, the writing process is recursive, not linear. Writers focus on many aspects of a task at once, some general and some particular: what ideas to incorporate, how to organize them, which words to choose, how to arrange them, where to insert commas. Writers move fluidly from whole to part and back again, shaping and defining their overall purpose as they develop specific examples and refine passages. They are problem-solvers, deciding as they go along how to tackle many different challenges that arise. (1996, p. 36)

Applebee and others (Applebee, 1981; Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1984; Applebee, 1986) documented how in the early period of teaching writing as a process, many teachers translated into practicing the writing process as a rigid series of steps all writers go through. Teachers tried to fit this new way of thinking about writing into their old patterns of practice. Applebee, a strong advocate for teaching writing as a process, saw that process-oriented teaching had been “underconceptualized...embraced simplistically and naively” (1986, p. 97). As teachers learned more about the processes writers in the real world go through, as teachers began to write more themselves and see themselves as writers, they better understood that skilled writers, writing for authentic communicative

purposes, employ a variety of strategies for planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. This helped teachers internalize the perspective that writing is a process and should be taught as a process, and that the strategies writers use resemble stages or phases of an evolutionary process.

The kind of thoughtful practice encouraged by the IRA and NCTE standards is becoming more prevalent. However, there is plenty of evidence that “teaching writing as a process” is still being translated into “teaching the stages of the writing process formula.” In an issue of English Journal, Barbara Carney writes of her “compromise” with “reality”:

My attempt to develop the process approach...has evolved into a predictable framework of activities at each stage of the process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing...my students know what type of class session a writing workshop day will be. (Carney, 1996, p. 31)

Unfortunately, approaches that channel students into the same place on the same day cuts against the grain of individual writers’ processes, not to mention how such uniform progression defies a workshop philosophy.

Nancie Atwell’s work has inspired and changed the professional lives of countless teachers. Atwell epitomizes a stance that teachers of writing as a process need to take; the emphasis in her classroom is on what writers – real writers – actually do. Atwell explains how she approaches this with her own middle school students:

I’m careful never to talk about *the writing process*, because the phrase implies one series of steps through which everyone proceeds in creating a piece of writing. I can talk only in general ways about some of the things writers do, or in specific ways about what I or other writers have done on specific occasions. (1998, p. 157).

A staple of Atwell's own teaching practice is to ground her lessons, sometimes to the whole class and sometimes in conferences, in "what writers do" when they develop an idea, write drafts, share their writing and confer with readers, make decisions about revision, polish and edit their writing, proofread, publish, and so much more that is fundamental to writing when seen as a process, a process that changes between writers and between the pieces of one writer. Applebee, drawing upon Vygotsky, characterizes this kind of instruction as focusing "not so much on the ripe as on the ripening functions" (1986, p. 110), instruction that he calls "instructional scaffolding":

[Instructional scaffolding focuses] on such characteristics as allowing students room to develop their own understandings in their reading and writing; ensuring that activities support natural processes of thought and language; and in turn helping students internalize a repertoire of effective strategies of language and thought that they can use in new contexts. All of these features can be thought of as preconditions for dialogue in which students can both participate and, through that participation, gain the knowledge-in-action that will allow them to participate more fully on their own. (1996, pp. 63-64)

Applebee argues that the shift from traditional to process approaches requires a "comprehensive reconceptualization" of teaching:

...these changes require a fundamental shift in what counts as learning in American schools. It would no longer be sufficient, or even particularly necessary, for students to be adept at reciting of their teachers' points of view. Instead, what would count as important would be their ability to solve new problems, to make sense on their own terms of what they have learned and to defend and elaborate upon their own ideas. (1986, p. 111)

We can see how teaching writing as a process is consistent with other facets of teaching for critical literacy, particularly in how the approach reflects a social constructivist perspective of learning and in how a learning community environment would facilitate "shared responsibility" and "transfer of control" (Applebee, 1986, p. 110).

Donald Graves has been one of the most influential forces in helping teachers embrace process approaches to teaching writing.<sup>42</sup> He mentored a number of other key figures in the field of teaching writing, Lucy Calkins and Nancie Atwell to name two. Giroux, in discussing Donald Graves' approach to teaching writing, asserts the following question as undergirding Graves philosophy: "How can we as educators make learning meaningful in order to make it critical and how can we make it critical in order to make it emancipatory?" (1992a, p. 15). Giroux provides considerable affirmation of an educator who emphasizes teaching writing as a process. When writing is taught as a process, in ways authentic to the range of approaches and forms and subjects that skilled and published writers in the real world outside classrooms, then students are being taught to think and give voice to their experiences and ideas. When students are allowed to make decisions about subject and craft in their writing, and are pushed to use writing to reflect upon their experiences and their worlds, they are better prepared to develop their own voice as writers. Helping students develop their own "voice" as writers lays the groundwork for students to develop what Giroux calls "language of critique" and "language of possibility" (p. 15). A teacher's decision to privilege students' voice points to an important shift in the power dynamics between teacher and students, and it signals a shift in the dominant school and curricular paradigm that has always sought to transmit a single knowledge base. In respect to writing, we would see examples of a transmission paradigm in the following instructional practices: never use the first person pronoun in your writing, teaching the five paragraph essay as a universal formula, reading writing as

---

<sup>42</sup>Graves "The Child, the Writing Process, and the Role of the Professional" (1975) and Writing: Teachers and Children at Work (1983) have had tremendous impact on the field.

if on an “error hunt” (Weaver, 1996), failing a paper with more than a given number of errors, and structuring writing assignments to be as uniform as possible (the first sentence of each paragraph is the topic sentence, etc.) in order to facilitate grading.

In all three classrooms, we see various facets of teaching writing as a process. Perhaps the classroom where this is most clearly visible is in William’s. William helps students develop their voices. We see this in multiple ways. The students take pride and ownership over their writing, as seen when Nate joyfully shares with me the title for the class poetry quilt. We see a learning community in which writers thrive, because they are treated as writers. William’s students develop a “language of critique and possibility” when they write about their ideas of Equity in Education. They critique their present reality and imagine new possibilities. Later in the school year we see how this early work leads to writing being used for social action, through the Walking Field Trip petition and Manuel’s I-Search project. William arranges for authentic audiences for his students’ writing. We see an example of this in the letter from students in the Bronx who had read a class publication from the year before and were seeking guidance in their own similar project. Another example is the Gen-X Interactive Newspaper students worked on. In this environment students become skilled writers for a range of purposes and forums. They write to learn, as seen in their journals and Mika’s response poem to Road to Memphis. They write to communicate with others, as in the letter, composed by three students, thanking the author David Wright for spending the day with their class. And they write for themselves, because they are writers, exemplified when Rose approached me with her novel draft, indicating that she felt like a “real writer.” And they write to make sense of their world, as Dee did when he wrote the poem in his journal about his

cousin getting stabbed. All of these examples are powerful illustrations, but of great significance for these students' futures, is the fact that better than 90% of these students passed the Metropolitan School District 8th grade Writing Competency Exam.

In Carol's classroom, we see the students develop their own voice when they write about their own cultural realities. Carol transfers the control over to them in multiple ways, including in their writing, for they are able to speak their own truths and do not need to "recite their teacher's point of view" (Applebee, 1986). Carol has her students engage in revisions – giving them lots of feedback and suggestions. As Aaron states, "I got a lot better in my writing. I remember the paper and she wrote about like 100 comments on it. Before I would like just get a grade or whatever. Now she is writing do this, change this thing, and turn it back in." Carol has also been entrusted with the three year position as High School Writing Coordinator to support her colleagues infuse the teaching of writing as a process across the curriculum.

In Alice's classroom, the emphasis on writing includes focusing on being able to move into the college arena. This real audience, the college admissions' board, is one that Alice tries to help her students understand. She links the need for them to write a college autobiography to Zora Neale Hurston's autobiography. She reminds them to, as they read Hurston's, to think about what they would write in their own. In previous years I have seen Alice work with her colleagues to help students develop creative and personal pieces published in multiclass anthologies and bound volumes, eventually becoming texts read in high school and university classrooms beyond Assembly. In the same spirit of writing for authentic audiences beyond the classroom, one year, after reading Makes Me Wanna Holler, Alice's students wrote letters to author Nathan McCall sharing their

re

th

(R

cha

tax

(Be

und

hier

emo

under

Engli

reader

becom

of Tear

respons

express

The act

responses and asking questions. In these ways we see Alice helping her students express their ideas in meaningful ways.

### Reader-Response Orientations to Teaching Literature

How can the study of literature enable students to understand themselves better and to see human beings and society in a broader context of emotions and ideas? (Rosenblatt, 1938/1991, p. 53)

Reader-response theories have been shaped and applied variously: “transactional” (Rosenblatt, 1978), “audience-oriented” and “actualizing” (Bogdan & Straw, 1990), or characterized by the ways in which readers make personal meaning with a text, ie. “textual,” “social,” “experiential,” psychological,” and “cultural” theories of response (Beach, 1993). Rosenblatt’s opening statement serves as a useful starting point in understanding this body of theories, particularly as they relate to teaching for critical literacy. Reader-response approaches seek to help students develop an intellectual and emotional relationship, what Rosenblatt called a “transaction,” that helps them understand the text, themselves, and the world better.

The teaching of literature dominates most secondary English classrooms. Many English teachers currently practicing, either consciously or unconsciously, draw upon reader-response orientations when teaching literature. These orientations have even become “standard.” The International Reading Association (IRA) and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) have articulated their own perspective on “literary response” in terms solidly grounded in reader-response theory: “Literary response and expression are aesthetic acts involving complex interactions of emotion and intellect. The acts of responding to, interpreting, and creating literary texts enable us to participate

in other lives and worlds beyond our own and to reflect on who we are” (IRA & NCTE, 1996, p. 17).

The origins of reader-response theory began with the work of I. A. Richards (1924/1959) and Louise Rosenblatt (1938/1991). At that time, the New Critical school<sup>43</sup> dominated literary theory and instruction. The New Critical perspective, in contrast to what was considered the Old Criticism of the Romantic period which looked beyond the text to assist in interpretation, treated the text as central and exclusive. Advocates of this perspective called for

precise, technical, objective analysis of the language of the text, particularly figurative language.... this appeal to technical precision and objectivity served to legitimate literary studies within the political arena of the university as a “scientific” endeavor of knowledge production worthy of equal recognition to the emerging fields of the natural and social sciences.... [Steven Mailloux in *Rhetorical Power* (1989) quotes John Crowe Ransom as writing] “criticism must become more scientific, or precise and systematic, and this means that it must be developed by the collective and sustained effort of learned persons –which means that its proper seat is in the universities” (329). (Beach, 1993, p. 15)

This school viewed meaning residing in the text itself, an orientation that led to “determinate,” “linear” (Hynds, 1990) and “behavioristic” (Beach, 1993) approaches to teaching literature concerned with the transmission of information and interpretations through a “learned” other. Careful textual analysis became the hallmark of literature teaching. The entrenched influence of this early orientation to literature teaching can still be seen in many classrooms. In contrast, reader-response orientations treat the reader’s unique interaction with a text as central:

---

<sup>43</sup>The New Critical school grew out of the critical writings of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, John Crowe Ransom (leading member of the Cambridge Critics), and perspectives reflected in prestigious journals such as *The Southern Review* and *The Kenyon Review*.

Transactional theories...are concerned with the ways in which readers make meaning from their experiences with the literary text, thus making them more student-centered, meaning-constructive, and process-oriented. The teacher's role is to help students construct meaning from texts, with the implication that the class should help students develop authority in their interpretations and contribute strongly to the construction of classroom discourse. To New Critical thought the text is primary; to transactional theories, the text has no meaning without a reader. (Smagorinsky & Witting, 1995, p. 63)

Because reader-response orientations are student-centered, constructivist, and process-oriented, they are consistent with a less authoritarian framework of teaching for critical literacy. More important, reader-response orientations have the potential to empower students as knowers and constructors of knowledge, as opposed to seekers of knowledge that already resides in the text or passive recipients of knowledge transmitted through their "learned" teachers.

Teachers play a pivotal role in facilitating relationships between readers and texts that can lead to empowerment. The transactional relationship between reader and text is dialectical, "readers not only act upon texts, but are acted upon in some way" (Hynds, 1990, p. 242), and therefore transformational. Discourse is vital to the facilitation of a dialectical and transformational relationship between reader and text. Hynds notes that in "any community of readers" there is a "variety of possible responses," and that "no two experiences with a text are even the same, even for the same reader" (1990, p. 242). If this is true, and I believe it is, then the possibilities for constructing meaning within a learning community engaged in conversation of text is powerful. In such an environment the teacher's role is pivotal. Purves (1990) uses an "explorer" metaphor to describe students: "They need guides who help them.... The guide does not replace the explorer but is absolutely necessary to a successful exploration'" (as cited in Smagorinsky &

Witting, 1995, p. 65). As a guide striving to support a successful exploration, the teacher will sometimes have to lead by walking ahead and sometimes have to lead by walking behind (van Manen, 1991). Applebee interprets Rosenblatt's perspective concerning the role of teachers working from a reader-response orientation:

It is the response of the student rather than the content of the work of literature which becomes the object of the teacher's attention. It is this response which must be challenged, refined, enlarged—by the process of reflection upon the response and upon the elements in the work which provoked it. In the end it is not important that a student be able to distinguish among the various literary forms; it is important that he learn to respond maturely to more complex writings.... What emerges, finally is the picture of quiet discussion, “a friendly group, come together to exchange ideas.” (Applebee, 1974, p. 124)

Rosenblatt's image of “a friendly group, come together to exchange ideas” reminds me of Atwell's transformation of how she traditionally taught literature – the typical “lit crit” routine which predominates in many classrooms, where the teacher's interpretations, possibly ones she/he acquired in a college literature class from a professor, is passed along – to a “reading workshop,” which is consistent in the beliefs and practices of her writing workshop. Atwell's transformation began with a metaphor, her own “dining room table,” a place where talk about books and authors and reading and the lives of the discussants took place. It is this world she wanted to introduce to her students:

I hope our dining room table will encourage the habit of reading and, with it, literacy, conjuring up a new, sensible image of the good reader that my students want to emulate. And I hope it places a reader's response in its rightful place—at the head of the table and the heart of the curriculum. (1998, p. 35)

Atwell's perspective is consistent with Rosenblatt's; conversation is essential. Beach discusses the role dialogical and social constructivist theories have contributed to reader-response theories: “Bakhtin points to the centrality of articulating response in achieving understanding: ‘Understanding comes to fruition only in the response. Understanding

and response are dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other' (282)" (Beach, 1993, p. 111).

Reader-response theories are also consistent with a learning communities philosophy in several aspects, but one in particular is the goal of self- and group-actualization. Bogdan and Straw see reader-response theories "under the rubric of *actualization models* (after Maslow, 1954) because the purposes of readers in these conceptualizations are to realize their own potential and meaning within their own unique circumstances" (1990, p. 3). They go on to say later that,

readers only apprehend the author's meaning of a text as it meets their own needs and theories of the world. As readers, we will create (or "apprehend") some other meaning than the "intended" meaning if the authorial intent does not both meet our needs and fit into our theories of the world. In fact, if we need to create the author's intent, we will. If we do not, we will create some other "more useful" meaning—or create no meaning at all (i.e., the text will carry no meaning for us at the time we read it). (p. 5)

It is through a strong learning community and creating classroom space for students to socially construct interpretations to texts that self- and group-actualization comes into being. It is through expressions and articulations of textual interpretation, shared in the "good company" of a classroom learning community, that students develop dispositions and abilities to analyze fictional lives and worlds and concomitantly their own lives and worlds.

In the case study chapter on Carol I revealed little of the literature teaching I observed. However, on most of the days I observed her teaching literature was a focal element. We did see her skill at facilitating discussion around issues and in response to experiences. In the brief window into her teaching literature, the first day of the novel Like Water for Chocolate, we see Carol do what she calls "embedding." Her goal is to

help students enter into literature and articulate their interpretations. When she tells students to “read it so we can hear what it means,” she is doing what Nell Morton calls “hearing people to speech” (Palmer, 1998, p. 46). Carol understands that it is a reader’s unique response that must be held central, and used as the starting point to build a critical literacy.

In his life story, William talked extensively about the importance story has played in his life. His response to the stories his grandfather told him, often teaching stories and often false stories to entertain his imagination, was profound. Story is still at the center of his own world. Like Carol’s case study chapter, little attention is paid to his teaching of literature, even though reading and discussing literature is a daily event. We see one student share a drawing which she and three classmates will use in their literature presentation to the class. We also see a poem Mika wrote as a journal response to a passage read in class.

Alice knows her students are not readers. Despite this, she is committed to not giving up on them, as some teachers might. When students do not read outside of class, she finds ways for students to still experience story – she will read out loud to them, she will have students take turns reading aloud, she will use Books-on-Tape, she will have students read silently in class, and sometimes she will read key sections to the students and fill in the gaps herself, an approach she calls “hitting spots and places.” Because her students often do not read on their own, she ends up taking a more textual approach (see Beach, 1993). Beach touches upon the dilemma Alice faces:

If students do not read literature, but rather experience primarily visual media, teachers are faced with a fundamental pedagogical question of how students

acquire knowledge of literary conventions. Can they, for example, be taught the conventions of literature if they do not read literature? (1993, p. 44).

Reading texts in class takes time. Less literature can be read. Less discussion can take place. Often discussion time results in Alice providing students her own interpretive framework and acting as a bridge between the textual world and their worlds. This is a choice she must make. She wants to make sure students have access to cultural capital that will help them beyond Assembly High School. In one class session she advised her students to consult Cliff Notes or Master Plots as a study aid, not to replace reading the literature but to help them comprehend texts they are challenged by. Yet, when these students have experienced story, their responses are often impassioned. We see this when Simone reacts to “how the men are” on the porch watching Janie come up the street in the first chapter of Their Eyes Were Watching God and in Ronnie’s enthusiasm and appreciation for dialect. Alice makes it possible for such reader responses to happen.

All three teachers know the power of personal response and do whatever they can to help students enter into stories in ways they too can feel the power.

### Passion for Their Subject and Work

James Hillman, author of The Soul’s Code (1996), quoted C. G. Jung as saying, “Only the seized person can seize another.”<sup>44</sup> A passionate teacher has the power to pass on the spirit of something. I have learned from studying Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison that it is through their passions that these teachers pass on the spirit of

---

<sup>44</sup>Hillman was being interviewed by Diane Rheme 30 January 1997, The Diane Rheme Show, National Public Radio.

collaboration, of tolerance, of affirming diversity, of being a knower, of questioning and challenging and investigating, of being a reader and a writer, of so many other things, but most importantly of the necessity to self and society to read and write their worlds.

Carol, Alice, and William are people and professionals passionate about learning, teaching, and life. van Manen argues that “a passion for knowing and learning the mysteries of the world” (1991, p. 8) is essential for good pedagogy. Palmer pushes the role that a teacher’s passion for subject matter can play, a role that goes beyond contagious energy:

I...listen...to students’s stories about their great teachers in which “a passion for the subject” is a trait so often named (a passion that need not be noisy but can be quietly intense). I always thought that passion made a teacher great because it brought contagious energy into the classroom, but now I realize its deeper function. Passion for the subject propels that subject, not the teacher, into the center of the learning circle—and when a great thing is in their midst, students have direct access to the energy of learning and life. (Palmer, 1998, p. 120)

Palmer underscores how when a teacher has passion for a subject, students are able to have “direct access” to the heart of the subject. This propulsion into the subject is something we see in all three classrooms.

Passion, unquantifiable, is under represented in research and writing about teaching. The field of critical theory and critical education is no exception. Yet, I believe that it is the passion for social change that theorists possess and communicate through their writing that drives the most recent wave of progressive education. I know that I felt the passion, was moved by the passion, of writers like McLaren (1989), Weiler (1988), McIntosh (1983; 1988; 1990), Freire (1968/1985), and so many others when I first encountered the literature of critical pedagogies. It was not until analyzing the data on Carol, Alice, and William that I recognized these teachers’ passions as essential and

inseparable from the critical literacy they were cultivating. Their passions “seized” students’ attention and curiosity, as it did for Emmett and Tree when Alice began reading the first chapter of Their Eyes Were Watching God. The two boys talk about how difficult it often is for them to stay awake after they have eaten lunch, but not when Alice reads to them. “Wow...this is great,” Emmett says. They are talking about literature. Literature, and its effect on them. And they are responding to it through Alice’s passionate reading and discussion.

The teacher who reads a story to the class in the right tone creates a sense of community as well as an experience of shared narrative....in high school too a special mood or atmosphere can be created by reading to the students which may contribute to a heightened appreciation of the power of story and literature, including its communal value. Teachers create an atmosphere not only by what they say or do but also in the way that they are present to their students.... Children are quite sensitive to the atmosphere in which experiences are shared.... How different is the reading experience where both adult and child are engrossed in the story, and where the child feels that there is shared feeling in the experience. (van Manen, 1991, pp. 183-184)

van Manen’s point about the impact teachers can have on learning through the way they are “present” to their students is about the spirit, the passion that they pass on. We see this in all the teachers’ classrooms – Carol’s passion for questions and discussions that probe deeply become part of who her students are in the classroom, and William, the writer who teaches writing, passes on this same passion to his students. Alice’s passion for literature, her knowledge of literature and her experiences with it, and the skill in which she reads aloud create a sense of community. Through such a communal experience, a door is opened for students to share in a passionate encounter with literature, and enter into it.

Passionate teachers exude an energy that is contagious and motivating. And as Palmer points out, “passion for the subject propels that subject...into the center of the learning circle” (1998, p. 120). Many students seem moved and driven. *What is it about this book that excites my teacher so? Why does my teacher care so deeply about this issue? If I invested the same efforts in my writing as my teacher does in his, could I also be a writer? My teacher seems to care so much that I participate and express my ideas and feelings in the discussion that I must do so.* The questions and responses I have articulated here capture the impact I have come to believe represent what many students feel in the presence of Carol, Alice, and William – a zest for learning that is created through their own passions for learning. Fried is one of the few people in education who has written about the role of passion in teaching: “To be a passionate teacher is to be someone in love with a field of knowledge, deeply stirred by issues and ideas that challenge our world, drawn to the dilemmas and potentials of young people who come into class each day—or captivated by all of these” (1995, p. 1).

Carol, Alice, and William display what Fried calls “instances of passion-in-action” (p. 16). Through their content, through their pedagogy, through their passionate stances, they ignite the fire within their students to become critically literate and able to “read and write the word and the world.” Fried maintains that “passionate people are the ones who make a difference in our lives. By the intensity of their beliefs and actions, they connect us with a sense of value that is within—and beyond—ourselves” (p. 17). There is a partnership quality that is essential to passion, which Fried explains: “Passionate teachers *convey their passion* to novice learners—their students—*by acting as partners in learning*, rather than as ‘experts in the field’” (p. 23). Teachers’ passion to

share what they know and to learn from their students enhances the quality of a learning community by strengthening partnership and offering something of themselves.

Passionate teachers are vital catalysts for transformational experiences in which students begin to develop a critical social consciousness. I believe that most people, particularly young people, need their own passions “moved” or “stirred” or “ignited” to begin developing their own critical literacy, and especially so if they are to become active in working for social change. Passion does not look the same in each teacher. On the contrary. Passion takes different shapes and different forms. Fried explains that “some of the most passionate teachers are quiet, intense, thoughtful people.... On the other hand, a certain amount of abandon can also deliver the message” (p. 22). Carol, Alice, and William are individuals, with different histories, with different ways of being in the classroom, and with passions, some similar and some different. The curriculum, teaching, and classroom climates of these teachers is palpably infused with the passions they bring to their work.

The contexts in which each teacher works likely influences which of their passions surface, when, and to what degree because of the needs of their students. William’s concern to keep his students from joining gangs, resorting to violence, getting caught up in substance abuse, and even becoming prostitutes is paramount. In his short career as a teacher, he has seen these ends come about in students from his school. I was reminded of this one day when we were driving back to the school from lunch, and saw two women walking out of a bar only blocks from the school. I asked William if they were prostitutes. He responded, “Yeah, and the one used to go to our school.” My stomach sank. “She’s only 15,” he added. “She was in Mrs. Dinty’s class last year.” I

did the math in my head and could not believe it. Did not want to believe it. I wanted to cry. This kind of world, these possible realities, stokes William's own passions to cultivate a critical social consciousness in his students and help them develop confidence in themselves as actors in their own futures and worlds. Yet, common to all three teachers is the knowledge that they need to help students ask the questions most pertinent to their own lives. Fried reminds us,

Students *need* us, not because we have all the answers, but because we can help them discover the right questions. We don't always know what's good for them, but we can try to protect them from having to face life's dilemmas in ignorance or in despair—doing drugs, dropping out, drifting into a dead-end career or an unplanned parenthood. Those adults whom young people look to for guidance know how important they are to kid's futures. For all teachers, the recovery of passion can mean a recovery of our influence—dynamic and positive influence—in the lives of children. (1995, p. 29)

It is the passionate engagement in the students' lives, in the students' learning, in their own teaching and subjects that makes Carol, Alice, and William's teaching for critical literacy so powerful.

As mentioned in the case study analysis, I often heard Carol bring discussions to open-ended closure by saying, "This is an issue your generation will have to wrestle with." Carol is passionate about issues and wants to stir similar passions in her students. And the closer to home the issue is for her students, the more passionate she becomes. This was especially so when she helped her students understand the politics of the State Proficiency Test.

Often teachers' passions are conveyed through their feeling and presence. I am reminded of the Theta Burke (1977) poem included on the quotation page at the beginning of this work:

We

the

rea

dev

exa

pas

the

sus

dev

in

arg

arg

of

sp

arg

arg

arg

arg

arg

When I speak  
let not my words be all that is heard.  
Listen also to the feeling which births them  
And allow that to correct any distortion  
caused by the inaccuracy  
of my speech.

We see in all three teachers that they teach not only what they know, but through who they are – passionate people. At the time of this study Carol and Alice had both been teaching for more than twenty-five years. This is significant, for these professionals have devoted their careers to transforming students' lives. Their teaching is a powerful example of social action. There are certainly important implications to the power of passion. Carol and Alice have probably remained in teaching, at least in part, because of their own passions for learning and the success they have had reaching students. And I suspect that much of their success has come from their ongoing pursuit of professional development, particularly understanding their subject and students. William, though still in the beginning of his career, is no different. They are all students of teaching. Dewey argued that to be so, educators need to go beyond reading professional literature and attending workshops – they must “continue to be students of subject-matter, and students of mind activity” (1904/1964, p. 321). Dewey continues, and underscores a point which speaks to passionate teaching: “Unless a teacher is such a student, he may continue to improve in the mechanics of school management, but he can not grow as a teacher, an inspirer and director of soul-life” (p. 321). Carol, Alice, and William are passionate about subject and their students' learning. They are seized and have the power to seize.

As passionate teachers, Carol, Alice, and William are able to connect to their students intellectually, emotionally, and psychologically. Such connections are vital to

cultivating critical literacy. In a world in which conformity prevails, it is essential that young people have adult role models who know when and how to challenge the status quo, and do so, adult role models they are connected to. We heard from interviews with Carol and Alice's students, and from the tribute Max Johnson paid William, that these teachers' students respect and care about them deeply. The connection between teachers and students is powerful. van Manen writes that a "true educator" is one who offers young people "a vision of what kind of life is worth living and what image of adulthood is worth aiming for" (1986, p. 44). What Carol, Alice, and William are most passionate about as teachers – the spirit of collaboration, of tolerance, of affirming diversity, of being a knower, of questioning and challenging and investigating, of being a reader and a writer, of the necessity to self and society to read and write their worlds – provide visions of lives worth living and images of adulthood that they pass on to their students. van Manen goes into the English and Dutch etymology of "to learn" in order to explore the relationship of teacher to learner:

In early English, to "learn" meant to teach or to let learn, as well as to learn. It would then be correct to say that someone could "learn" someone to learn something. In the Dutch language, "to learn" (*leren*) is still used interchangeably for teaching and learning. "Teacher" is *leraar*; "student" is *leering*. Etymologically, to learn means to follow traces, tracks or footprints of one who has gone before. In this sense, the teacher or parent who is able to "let learn" therefore must be an even better learner than the child who is being "let learn." (1986, p. 44)

As powerful adult role models connected to their students, Carol, Alice, and William provide the tracks and footprints for their students to follow into lives made richer by their passion for critical literacy.

research

People

attend

Confer

recom

proces

1988

Projec

many

Conce

workin

throug

own li

develo

kind o

exper

curricu

teach

write

be po

teach

## Conclusion: Separated Names, Interconnected Theories

William Harrison, as already quoted in Chapter 1, told me after reading my research proposal, "What you call critical literacy, I call literacy." This is not surprising. People use the language they are familiar with to describe their worlds. I remember attending the 1991 Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) Leadership Conference and being struck by how the values, processes, conversations, and recommended teaching practices to achieve "equity" were so similar to the values, processes, conversations, and recommended teaching practices that I encountered in the 1988 Northern Nevada Writing Project (NNWP, a branch of the National Writing Project) Summer Institute. Peggy McIntosh, SEED project co-director, confirmed that many people who have been through both experiences come to the same conclusion. Concerning teaching for critical literacy, I believe many educators already do, or are working toward, this kind of teaching. However, their entry-points may be different than through reading critical theory. The entry-point for some teachers may have been their own life experiences in social activism. For others, it may have been a professional development experience like that of SEED or the NWP. Some may have come to this kind of teaching because they were inspired by a critical educator in their own schooling experience. It is more likely that a vast combination of experiences, subtly and cumulatively, have shaped the kind of teaching they do. It is also likely that these teachers name their work variously, as "teaching for social justice," "multicultural," "writer-centered," "democratic education," or simply "good teaching." I believe it would be possible for me to sit down with many teachers like Carol, Alice, and William – teachers I would name "critical educators" – and in the middle of a discussion concerning

critical education they would look at me puzzled and ask, "Paulo Freire? Never heard of him." The fact that Freire has been so instrumental in many teachers' ideas about critical education does not mean that all who practice teaching for critical literacy are familiar with the major critical education works and theoreticians.

In this expanded theory I have laid out eight contributing elements to the teaching for critical literacy in Carol, Alice, and William's classrooms. I do not claim that these teachers fulfill all the characteristics of the descriptions, nor are the theoretical descriptions comprehensive. My observations were limited to one course each teacher taught, for a limited number of visits, and a particular time in their career. The roots representing my theorizing evolved out of what I saw. The interconnection among these roots is of great importance. It is the root system, working together, that makes critical literacy possible. A teacher who works from a reader response orientation or approaches teaching writing as a process does not guarantee students will develop their critical literacy. Nor does a passionate teacher who tries to transmit her or his knowledge of subject. Timothy Lensmire (1991), in his self-study of a third grade writing workshop, came to the realization that it is necessary to "critically appropriate" the approach if it is to become liberatory. This point is paramount. As I consider my own expanded theory of teaching for critical literacy, it is clear to me that the frameworks of multicultural perspectives and curriculum, inquiry-oriented teaching, teaching writing as a process, and reader-response orientations of teaching literature must be critically appropriated if they are to promote students' critical literacy. Educators whose practices are reflective of critical pedagogies are likely to critically appropriate all philosophies and approaches which become part of their repertoire.

CHAPTER 7  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY:  
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF TEACHING FOR CRITICAL LITERACY

Be the change you want to see in the world.  
Ghandi<sup>45</sup>

Introduction

My own conceptualization of teaching for critical literacy has deepened and grown as a result of this study. The tree-rooted-in-the-world concept map is both metaphor and heuristic, representing how the roots of my own theory have pushed further into the shared worlds of classroom practice, critical theory, teacher education, and research. Each of us, in our own ways, is working for transformation of the educational system and society. As we become the change we want to see in the classroom and in the world, so too will our classrooms and our world change.

Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison have become part of the change they are seeking. They are not perfect because they are human, yet what they have done is move toward being the change they seek in the classroom. They are passionate and committed teachers, working to create safe and nurturing learning communities so that their students become all that they can become. Carol's student Sabeena underscores this, providing powerful advice to all educators:

[Mrs. Lessing]...was like, "You have to come here, you have to come here. You are too important not to be here. If you are not here, everyone misses out. You have to. You know, when you are gone, something is missing." And when she said that to me it made me feel like, "Oh, my God, I am important. You know, maybe I do have something to offer everyone, and maybe, obviously, there is something that is offered to me".... You know, if the teacher did that to everyone,

---

<sup>45</sup>James Redfield, author of The Celestine Prophecy and The Tenth Insight, in a 1997 National Public Radio interview about his work, attributed this statement to Ghandi.

everyone in the class, and at some time pulled them aside, and said, “Hey, guess what,...you are really important here, this, that, and the other thing,” I think it makes a difference. *At least it made a difference with me. Every teacher should do that to me because I would probably come to class.* (Sabeena 9 January 1997, emphasis added)

Sabeena’s message helps us to see how a teacher’s caring connection with her students can make a *difference*. What I have shown and argued for in this study is that teaching for critical literacy, and actually making a difference in the lives of students, is complicated. My sense-making of the complexity I observed took shape in the tree-rooted-in-the-world concept map, presenting the following theoretical roots: *cultivating learning communities, social constructivist perspectives on learning, teaching practices reflective of critical pedagogies, multicultural perspectives and curriculum, inquiry-oriented teaching, teaching writing as a process, reader-response orientations to teaching literature, passion for their subject and work*. While I do not believe that recipes or formulas for teaching or learning arise from this study, I do believe everyone in the educational community can learn much from what Carol, Alice, and William say and do. I believe the case study chapters and expanded theory help illuminate what teaching for critical literacy in the secondary English classroom can look like.

This study has offered me a number lessons I believe others in the educational community can benefit from. In this chapter I will explore several of the lessons I think we can take away from this study. In the Prologue I clarified my use of educational community as representing teachers, teacher educators, and theorists interested in critical education. I used the name “theorist” to refer to educational researchers and writers of educational literature. I have maintained the use of educational community throughout. It was not my intention to narrowly define roles within the educational community, for I

know that many are simultaneously teachers and teacher educators and theorists. At this time it seems important to look at the implications for each role: implications for teachers, implications for teacher educators, and implications for theorists. I address other lessons learned as well: life stories illuminate critical education, narrative inquiry has the potential to evoke identification, and there are areas of further research this study will lead me.

### Lesson Learned: Life Stories Illuminate Critical Education

In the Prologue I shared a version of my life story that I felt illuminates who I am as a teacher, teacher educator, and researcher. I began each of the case study chapters with versions of the teachers' life stories for the same reason – I believed these stories illuminated who they are as teachers. When I began this study, I was deeply curious about how a teacher's preprofessional life experiences might shape who they are as teachers. This curiosity evolved during my years as a graduate student. It was as a graduate student that I began a life-long process of plumbing the depths of my personal history. I saw many connections between experiences growing up and who I was as a teacher; for instance, growing up homophobic clearly had an impact on how I failed to respond to the needs of gay and lesbian students (see Michell, 1994). This curiosity was also fueled by reading other people's life stories. For example, I was struck by how Richard Rodriguez, in his autobiography Hunger for Memory (1982), was overcome by the pressures to assimilate in his Catholic schooling, and how he concluded that giving up his native language and culture were essential to his academic success. Rodriguez's memoir, and several of his other writings, are often used to challenge bilingual and

multicultural education. Additionally, my curiosity has been stirred by the undergraduate education students I have worked with. So many of these students – predominantly White, female, and middle class – have their minds set on working with students just like them. It is not difficult to see reproduction theory in action. It was from Burke that I first heard “...we teach who we are” (January 1993, personal communication) articulated. And it was during the writing of this study that I encountered those same words from Palmer (1997).

The teachers’ life stories were essential pieces of the research to include. The personal is pedagogical (Hasbach, 1995). By bringing the two together, we can see how. This is valuable for all in the educational community to see. Palmer, in his book The Courage to Teach (1998), claims that teaching is a reflection of one’s “inner life”:

Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror, and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge—and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject.

In fact, knowing my students and my subject depends heavily on self-knowledge. When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life—and when I cannot see them clearly, I cannot teach them well. When I do not know myself, I cannot know my subject—not at the deepest levels of embodied, personal meaning. I will know it only abstractly, from a distance, a congeries of concepts as far removed from the world as I am from personal truth.

The work required to “know thyself” is neither selfish nor narcissistic. Whatever self-knowledge we attain as teachers will serve our students and our scholarship well. Good teaching requires self-knowledge: it is a secret hidden in plain sight. (pp. 2-3)

There are important implications in what Palmer has to say about teaching being an extension of one’s inner life and the necessity of self-knowledge. Palmer argues that

teachers must seek self-knowledge, look into the mirror at their past and present lives, in order to be successful teachers: “knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and subject.” Palmer is calling for a deeper looking. I agree with his argument and feel that self-knowledge is very much a part of someone learning to read the world more critically. I too am calling for a deeper looking, particularly on the part of researchers, at teachers’ life stories in order to better understand their practice.

Hearing teachers’ life stories told in their own voices, hearing them articulate their self-knowledge and possibly extending self-knowledge in the telling, has revealed several important links in this study. We heard about the young, irreverent Carol who would neglect her chores and became allergic to religion show irreverence in her classroom when she slipped the word “bitch” into a nursery rhyme she recited to her students; the girl we heard about growing up in a small interdependent farming community works so hard as a teacher to build community in her classroom where students can be interdependent learners, yet still grow as individuals. We heard about the young Alice respecting her father and elders, and as a teacher we see her working to help students become respectful themselves; we heard about how the church has always been the center of her life, and we see in her oratorical style the ways in which she has internalized the speech patterns of ministers. We heard how William was fed stories growing up, and we see in his teaching how stories are the foundation of his practice; we also heard how at a young age he had to become the man of the house and was overprotective of his mother and sister, and now as a teacher we see at times his overprotectiveness flare into reprimands to push his students to be more serious and responsible. Burke and Palmer’s conviction that “we teach who we are” is a “secret hidden in plain sight,” and one that I

b

li

P

P

un

li

li

ch

in

te

re

de

de

de

le

ex

wh

re

re

believe needs to be unearthed and become part of the discourse on teaching for critical literacy.

#### Lesson Learned: Narrative Inquiry Has the Potential to Evoke Identification

Susan Hynds' research on reading as a social event criticizes large-scale testing programs as driving research and practice that focuses predominantly upon cognitive processes. Hynds has undertaken research into the "...‘social-cognitive’ competence underlying the personal and social understandings" (1990, p. 252) of readers' response to literature. One facet of her research concerns the extent to which readers identify with literary characters. Literature has the potential to help readers enter into the worlds of characters they identify with, in ways that feel life-like: "In real life, we are most interested in understanding people who affect us in some significant way, and who can teach us about ourselves" (p. 253).

Though I am only at the earliest stage of disseminating my research, I am already receiving responses from readers of the case study chapters that they experienced varying degrees of identification and resonance with the three teachers. It seems quite possible that the same "social construal process" Hynds is interested in with readers of literature is at work with readers of in-depth narratives like the ones in this study. The ways in which I chose to construct the life stories and classroom stories were intended to create "virtual experiences" (Brunner, 1994) in which readers would *feel there*, feel in ways similar to what Hynds argues is essential to readers comprehending and responding to literature: "readers must do more than simply *understand* texts. They must in some way encounter texts as similar to or explicative of 'real life'" (p. 253).

Narrative ways of knowing facilitate connection and understanding of other people's realities (Belenky, et al., 1986). Narrative has the power to strike readers deeply, seemingly viscerally, meshing with their prior experiences and sources of knowledge. What are the possible implications of identification for readers of narrative research? Hynds' "social construal process" is relevant here, for our own personal constructs and experiences impact the way we relate to the characters and research subjects we read about. Whether encountering fictional characters or portrayals of real teachers, we will identify and resonate with some more than others. Palmer's (1998) notion of looking deeply within is significant here, for if we take seriously the possibility of identification through the reading of narrative research, then it begs several questions: Is teaching for critical literacy, or even "good teaching" for that matter, that which most closely meshes with the reader's own self-image? Do readers tend to see the "ideal" in themselves? Are readers challenged to understand and honor those ways of being and teaching that are less like the visions they have of themselves? The role narrative inquiry might play in evoking identification is an area requiring further research. The process of identification needs to be explored further in relation to portrayals of teachers which include the combination of life stories and classroom stories. This research would need to consider what the potential positive and negative outcomes of identification might be for teachers, teacher educators, and researchers. For instance, it is likely that this research indicates that readers need to get beyond their initial responses of identification to fully appreciate a teacher portrayed who is less like them. For readers of this study, it means seeing what Carol, Alice, and William were able to achieve with their students, the depth

of devotion they inspired, and giving credence to their transformative power as teachers of critical literacy, whether we personally identify or not.

#### Lesson Learned: There Are Implications for Teachers

Teachers can learn much from Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison. Seeing what others have done within their own contexts can help teachers envision what they might attempt in their own. Seeing three different teachers take three different paths to teaching for critical literacy is helpful. It communicates that there is no one right way. There are multiple paths to critical literacy. Yet, there are important consistencies, for instance, “being the change you want to see in the world.” All three teachers try to be what they want their students to be. There is great transformative power in this. Teachers can read the case studies of Carol, Alice, and William and be helped in imagining what teaching for critical literacy in the secondary English classroom looks like. The case studies are in no way templates. However, teachers can learn from the underlying ideas and theory. The challenges Carol, Alice, and William meet, as well as the risks they take, are likely to promote “adventurous teaching” (Cohen, 1988). Because Carol, Alice, and William teach in such different contexts, and have such distinct styles, there is a greater possibility that teachers will find at least one imaginable scenario that speaks to their own context and style. Additionally, the variation in the three case studies holds the potential of helping novices see that they can draw upon who they are to work toward constructing their practice, helping them see this practice is “in them” and not “out there” to be discovered (Rosaen, July 1997, personal communication).

The richness of what can be observed in classrooms, what can emerge through conversations about what happens in classrooms, comes through clearly in this study. We learn from what the teachers and students do, and from what they say. This study reinforces what is already known about the value of talking to students about their learning. For instance, Carol's student Katrina reveals how she learns from who her teacher is:

I like the fact that she learns with us. This is just as much a good experience for her as it is for us. And it is fun to watch her sometimes. She acts like a student, like a kid, like us—questioning, wondering, the same way we are.... She is very open minded.... She really cares....She has had experience with other cultures and is interested in them....It is not like a class that you learn...from a textbook, but more like experience-wise. And that is what I like about it. She's the right person. (Katrina, December 1996)

Katrina has learned from Carol modeling what it means to be a lifelong learner, a questioning and curious person, a person who cares about individuals and cultures. Being the change you want to see in the world can have a powerful impact.

One possible outcome from reading this study, particularly the life stories, is that others may be more inclined to examine their own lives. Freire argues that such examination is necessary, that knowing one's own reality is essential to knowing the world (1968/1985). Introspection and reflection about the influences of one's own life story is crucial. It is at the heart of critical praxis. From the life stories in this study, especially William's and my own, we see that a person's early history does not define who he or she may become as a teacher – in our own life stories we are not static characters. People are not trapped by their histories, and change is more likely when we begin reading and writing our lives. Parker Palmer's The Courage To Teach: The Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life (1998) could serve as a guide for all of us.

The teachers in this study are lifelong learners, engaged in the practice of critical literacy. Reading about their personal and pedagogical lives can inspire others. In addition to engaging in their own practice of critical literacy, teachers may begin to reflectively question their own teaching: How can I help my students "read and write their worlds," as well as read and write words? What practices and curriculum would be consistent with the present and future needs of my students?

It is my hope that teachers will want to read other works that link practice and theory closely in the area of critical literacy, professional journals like Rethinking Schools, written by teachers for teachers, which merge theory and practice. Teachers could be moved to reach toward theory that is accessible and enrich their own practice, and to do their own theorizing.

#### Lesson Learned: There Are Implications for Teacher Educators

This study can help teacher educators explore approaches to teaching for critical literacy with preservice and graduate education students. The case study chapters and expanded theory of teaching for critical literacy might be useful in helping preservice and practicing teachers develop their own critical education theory and practice.

Wishing to honor their "wisdom of practice" (Wineburg & Wilson, 1991), I asked Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison to give advice for teacher preparation. I asked them to tell me about their own teacher preparation and significant professional influences. By professional influences I suggested authors or particular books, mentors and other important people, university or in-service courses and workshops, graduate study, involvement with professional organizations, and school and university

collaborations. I also asked them to share whatever insights they have on the preparation of future teachers. I have chosen only a few of their comments to highlight what I believe is important in relation to their own teaching for critical literacy.

### Carol Lessing

As Carol talked about her own preparation, she said that she did not know all the things that were being taught in the high school classroom, but she knew how to get resources. She went on to say, “I knew that there were people I was going to have to find I could trust to go to for help. I was already past the point where I was afraid to say, ‘I don't know’ or ‘I don't have a clue.’” Carol has had a long history of reaching out for collegial support. This is an implication for future teachers. She knows that teachers can never know all they need to know, but if they are able to seek the knowledge and support from others, they will be able to learn what they need as they go along. If we agree that teachers cannot know it all, the implication is that they reach out to others for resources, support, and new knowledge.

Carol talked about her own professional development and how, “It has kept me excited about teaching.” She has had many professional development experiences. She has taught overseas. Two summers she went to a special institute to study the writing and life and world of William Faulkner, and another summer she went to a special institute on Tennessee Williams. She has been involved with the Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) project. She has been through a summer institute for the National Writing Project and has worked as a writing consultant for a local site. She talked about the professional development experiences she has had and said,

I do know they have all kept me excited about teaching. They have given me more doors that I can open for students. In none of these areas would I ever be considered an expert, but at least my world has touched those areas. I know where to send students who I think might be interested in some of those cultural issues, or Southern Literature, or whatever it might be. At least I can get them to the doors.

As her life story and classroom story revealed, Carol is a lifelong learner. She seeks out new opportunities for herself so that she can help her students find what they need to learn. She keeps herself excited and enthusiastic about teaching. The implication for future teachers is that the way to keep enthusiastic and passionate about teaching is to keep learning.

Carol's pursuit of challenging professional development experiences affirms her passion and her courage to teach. As a result of an NEH grant, Carol was able to do research at the Schomburg Library and spend time in several Harlem schools. The experience taught her much:

I figured if I could do that at my age, then I don't have to take any excuses from any kids about being afraid to do stuff, about being apprehensive or thinking they were going to fail. After that experience I pretty much discounted giving kids the option of failing. I said, "Don't give me excuses guys, I am not interested. This is not a factor. I don't care who died, who got divorced, how poor you are, how many times you moved. I don't care." You know, "Here we go, you can do this."

Carol holds high expectations for students to meet challenges, take intellectual risks, and push the boundaries of their comfort zones. We have seen in her teaching that she cares. We have heard from students that she cares. What she does not care for are excuses. Carol demands best efforts from students, and that is a very important demonstration of caring, of "loving your students as learners" (Featherstone, 1984).

Perhaps the most important issue that Carol raises, and one that teacher education programs need to heed, is that “future teachers must have experiences outside their own culture”:

I don't think anybody should be allowed to walk into a classroom, in this country, in the year 2000, unless they have studied abroad.... [Unless] they have had some sort of experience outside of this culture so that they can bring some perspective back to it. [Unless] ...they have had at least a summer job in an area totally unlike the one they grew up in. So, if they are an urban kid, they would be in suburbia; and if they are a suburban kid, they would be...inner city. If they are country, they need to be city; and if they are city, they need to be country.... I think they need to have proof that they have had a real life experience in at least one social, economic, geographic area totally different than the one they are most familiar with....It is the stretch...that is going to make or break us.... If we can't bend to what this education system demands of us now as teachers, we are cooked....We are getting everyone. If you land in a school like Station High School, you have the whole gamut, from kids who really are struggling in their homes financially to every international group you can possibly imagine.

Carol's point that teachers entering the profession must be able to “stretch” and “bend” is important for future teachers and teacher educators to hear. All teachers, not just critical educators, need experiences that will require them to stretch, to grow in ways that familiar home town environments are unable to nurture. Many people who enter the field of education are young, White, and socioeconomically middle class; many have been privileged, few have had sustained experiences in culturally diverse environments, and rarely do they identify themselves as change agents or social activists (Melnick and Zeichner, 1994; Zeichner, 1993; Paine, 1990). As Carol impresses upon us, future teachers need to seek out the kind of cultural opportunities that will help them grow and develop into multicultural persons (Nieto, 1996). Teacher education programs need to create the kind of educational opportunities which invite, and sometimes force, preservice

teachers to face their privilege (see McIntosh, 1988) and come to know the previously unknown.

### Alice Terry

As an early participant in the district's nationally recognized Assessment of Writing Project, ... [Terry] has grown with her students. She was able to work and learn side-by-side with English professors from... [a regional university], who spent countless hours in her classroom over a period of several years. "It was the most rewarding thing that ever happened to me as a teacher," she said. "It has been an avenue for me to be part of different teaching techniques, it exposed me to authorities at the national level and enabled me to interact with my colleagues in the district. I appreciate the diversity of what they all bring to teaching. It has opened up new doors for me.... I used to be a very structured teacher," she laughs. "I thought if I had a quiet classroom, and neat rows of chairs, that I was doing a good job. Over the years, through my experiences with the team from... [the university], and through being a parent myself, I learned to see students in a different light. I became more flexible. I see the good in every child. I want them to know that the sky's the limit." (Assembly Paper, May 1996)

In her interview, Alice explicitly talked about following the teachable moments so as to best help her students. She feels, "the biggest key is flexibility." She explained,

The classroom is ever changing. I think the biggest key is flexibility. I don't want to discourage people from being prepared, but supervisors shouldn't become upset when a student teacher doesn't get from point "A" to "Z". The student teacher may only get to "K" because there was a teachable moment that came up that altered what you had to do. So, I think flexibility is important.

The case study of Alice revealed a teacher who put the people in front of her before the plans. When Alice's students have not done their reading outside of class, she finds ways for them to gain entry to the text. We saw how Alice responded to one student's question about eating mashed potatoes with a spoon. She addressed the question immediately, and then committed to spending class time the following week on table etiquette. She is a teacher who is flexible enough to do what the students need. As teacher educators we can

model and emphasize this same kind of responsive teaching. Preservice teachers can learn from their professors what it means to put the students before the plans, what it means to respond to students' needs, what it means to engage in the practice of critical literacy.

We saw in the case study that Alice is a passionate teacher. In her interview Alice was emphatic that as teachers “you have to enjoy what you do.” Teacher education programs do not have control over the feelings of their students. However, teacher educators can help future teachers see the need for a passionate commitment to teaching. Historically, teaching has been seen as a low status profession. Dominated in numbers by women since the late 19th century, it came to be viewed as “women’s work” (Apple, 1985). We heard Alice say in her life story that, as a Black woman, teaching and nursing were practically her only two professional options in the 1950s. Foster (1997) confirms this reality, for both Black men and women. The pervading historical perception of teaching being a low status profession continues to haunt the field. Many women still choose teaching as a profession because it is a career they can easily leave to have children, and then reenter when their children are old enough to go to school themselves (Clifford, 1982). Additionally, many men and women enter the profession because of the perception that it offers “a more relaxed and varied lifestyle” (Sadker & Sadker, 2000, p. 9) than other fields. People who choose teaching as a career for lifestyle considerations, without a passionate commitment or the knowledge that the work itself is what brings satisfaction, will not likely become critical educators or “good teachers.”

Alice, like Carol, said that future teachers must be prepared for change:

You have to be prepared for change. Everything changes. Change is everything. Every facet of our life. There are people who try to hold on, "It has always been done like this." I mean people need to realize everything around you is changing, society is changing, things that affect students have changed. Things are far different now than when I first started teaching, and I think that I am going to go in my classroom and things are going to be the same as they were twenty years ago?

Alice is a lifelong learner. She expects to change and is prepared to do so. Teacher education programs can promote lifelong learning and positive dispositions toward change. Teacher education programs undergirded by social constructivism, as opposed to positivism, would be more likely to foster such a disposition. If the "knowledge" derived from texts were seen as fluid and shaped by social interaction, then so too could the knowledge derived from teaching practice.

Alice also recommends something that Parker Palmer (1998) argues – you have to know yourself. Critical reflection and introspection are essential in teacher education, essential to cultivating the practice of critical literacy and promoting critical education.

Alice says,

It ruffles my feathers a little bit the way that some teachers talk about students. When they talk about minority students as if they are from another planet. When I hear that I think..."You are in the wrong place." Know that we respond to the same type of things, love, compassion, somebody being nice. You know, those are essential qualities that are taught in the classroom.

Alice's point echoes the need Carol raised, that future teachers must be prepared to stretch beyond their early life experiences, must become familiar with the realities of those different from where they grew up. Alice goes on to say that, "With nineties kids, no matter what their color, they are loveable kids. They are all teachable. Forget the 'Us' and 'Them.'" Alice is emphatic that teachers must get beyond their stereotypes and hold high expectations for all students. In essence, Alice is saying that teachers need to be

able to read their own lives and worlds. Teachers must actively engage in the practice of critical literacy. Teacher education programs can do this by helping preservice teachers become “multicultural people” (Nieto, 1996), by making pervasive the spirit of affirming diversity, and by providing early and multiple experiences working with diverse student populations.

Alice believes that teachers must be prepared to show “the human side” of who they are to their students. This allows teachers to “make that connection with students” that will facilitate development of a learning community. She gives an example of how she does this when teaching literature:

I think the things that literature does for us is to allow us to measure our lives, ...compare and contrast...our own experiences. I think that teachers need to know that it is okay to talk about “this happened to me before.” It allows your students to get an opportunity to see the human side of you. So don't be afraid to. I mean, you aren't going to talk about what you had for dinner last night, but when something comes up that you can equate...make that connection with your students.... When you get a chance to relate something that is reflected in...literature to something in your own life, take advantage of that.

Alice's point is valuable beyond what it suggests for teachers wanting to develop learning communities. Her point also pushes the potential of “stories,” case studies, and other narrative research for educating preservice teachers. As William said in his life story, “stories teach better than I ever could.” Teacher preparation programs can use “stories of schooling,” as Diane DuBose Brunner (1994) has, to help future teachers examine their own lives as learners, question their own assumptions and perceptions of the profession, and problematize issues of schooling and society that will help them become critical educators is an area teacher education must continue to explore.

## William Harrison

William says teaching is an art and you have to teach teachers like you teach artists. In his interview, William talked about what he tries to do with students, "I am trying to get kids to think for themselves and I think you would want to do the same thing with education students. Maybe some of them would end up looking like me, but maybe some wouldn't." Consistent with what Carol argued, he goes on to say that education students need to teach in urban settings, "It is different in so many ways from teaching in other settings. You are expected to deal with way more than any teacher bargains for, than any teacher is prepared for, in any education program that I have ever seen."

William continues by explaining his view that teaching is an art:

The act of teaching is...an art. What I am getting at is, and I grapple with this quite often, is that teaching is not linear. It is explosive. It is boom, boom, boom. It is a lot of spontaneous combustion. That is very, very frustrating for a new teacher, or an old teacher. Any teacher. Anyone new would think, "You expect me to do that? Right." So, if you view teaching as an art, and you are going to try to teach teachers, you teach them like you teach artists.

Teacher education programs which see the artistic dimension to teaching can do much to help future teachers be craftspeople as opposed to technicians. If they see themselves as creators of curriculum and creators of community, they will begin to see the power that they possess within their craft. Perhaps the metaphors that are used to describe teaching in teacher education programs need to be more artistic in nature to help students see themselves as artisans. As William says, "Create a community of artists versus a community of factory workers."

William is emphatic in his belief that, “Real teachers should be teaching education courses. Professors should be required to spend time teaching in classrooms.” He continues:

I think what you can do is set up a program where you have real teachers to teach. That education students are not being taught by professors who have never been in the classroom or haven't been in the classroom in a very long time. I would require that all professors of education, maybe once every couple of years, spend a semester in the classroom. It would be an absolute given.

William believes that theorists and teacher educators need to have regular teaching experiences in the K-12 classrooms that will better inform their work through the realities of public schools. William feels there is much these people could learn from the inner workings of the classroom, and that K-12 teachers have much to offer future teachers.

The work and words of Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison have much to offer teacher education. We have seen in the case studies more than "good teaching"; we have been given a window into the messiness of teaching for critical literacy. In their advice to teacher educators, we have heard from Carol about the importance of being resourceful. Carol and Alice talk of the need for all teachers to be lifelong learners and be prepared for change. Alice tells us we need to be flexible and take those teachable moments as they arise. William makes it clear that teachers should be prepared as artists rather than technicians. All three teachers make it clear that those entering the profession must be committed. Most important, all three teachers call for future teachers to have life and preprofessional experiences in contexts different from where they grew up, particularly urban contexts. We should be human with our students and that teaching is an art and that we are artists not technicians. This advice would help to cultivate teachers with a disposition toward critical literacy.

## Lesson Learned: There Are Implications for Theorists

This study reveals to theorists the need to get into classrooms, watch closely, and listen to teachers and students. Often researchers who theorize about teaching and learning spend little time in the classrooms of the teachers they study.<sup>46</sup> However, to genuinely understand a teacher's practice and students' learning, careful and extended observation must occur. And even when extended observation happens, researchers can never fully “know” the teaching and learning that occurs over the course of the complete term. This is especially true in cases where the pedagogy, and the literacy sought, are of a critical nature, for the complexities of these are not easily ascertained by an outsider. Becoming part of such a classroom's life, entering into the lives of teachers and students who occupy such a classroom, promises a world in which messiness and ambiguity abound, and subtleties can mean everything. Words from one of Alice's students highlights the complexity and subtlety, reminding us that there is no one-to-one correspondence between what a teacher does and the impact on a student:

Like at one time, she heard about a problem I was having, she took me aside and talked to me about it. And I really appreciated that, even though I didn't take her advice. I really appreciated it. She was telling me the best thing for me to do, but as an air-headed teenager sometimes we do what we want to do. (Khalilah 3 December 1996)

Khalilah pushes me to question: Is a teacher's influence inconsequential because the student did not take the advice? Or is it consequential because the student felt appreciated for being taken aside and given advice? Khalilah shows a reflective

---

<sup>46</sup>David Cohen's "A Revolution in One Classroom: The Case of Mrs. Oublier" (1990) is a good example. Based upon two consecutive days of observation and follow-up interviews, Cohen paints a condemning portrait of Mrs. Oublier's mathematical knowledge and teaching practice.

awareness that not taking the advice then was a missed opportunity, so is it possible that the advice could work as a “planted seed,” coming to the surface at a time later in life?

The complexities and subtleties push questions that do not have simple answers. How can I know if the students in this study developed critical literacy and are better prepared to read and write the word and the world? Can I possibly know what they have learned, if they have been changed or transformed? I have evidence that each teacher tried to engage students in the practice of critical literacy. But is that enough? Will Alice’s student Simone raise her baby away from the company of a gang? Will Manuel and other students in William’s class do research and write a petition next time they want to change a policy that should be changed? Quite possibly. But there is just as much a chance that the answer to these questions is no. Carol told me (23 May 1997) that she is certain none of the students in her class will leave that experience and be insensitive to people of other cultures, participate in name calling and harassment. When I interviewed students I felt as confident as Carol in her assertion of their transformation. Several students talked about “personal growth.” Katrina not only said how much she had grown, she even said she was on a “mission” to educate children:

Now my mission is to make sure that children are not going to be so stereotypical and [to be] more tolerant. But I don’t know how I am going to do that. I don’t think I have stayed the same. I am in another English class too. I am in English Literature. That class is fast paced and difficult. The teacher tests the mechanics and the structures. He is very technical. This class is so different. I feel I have grown more as a person in this class. I think that the knowledge that I have is more than in that class, like my basis of knowledge, like I can do facts and I can tell you all of the conventions of a sonnet in that class, but in this class I have grown more. (Katrina, December 1996)

However, we cannot be guaranteed that words equal action. What students do in terms of behavior will only be “seen” over time when neither Carol nor I will be there. There is

also the question of what students “know” since students count on teachers to guide them in what they should learn as well as how they should learn. So I am left with questions. However, I feel more than ever that being “confused on a higher level about more important things” (Battaglia, 1995) is necessary and will help move me and others in the educational community forward. This study cannot answer all the questions we have about the potential of teaching for critical literacy to transform individual lives and society. No study could. But this study helps us to think more deeply about the questions we already have and to raise new ones.

This study has helped me to understand, in ways more real than ever before, that the kind of transformative learning I am interested in, what I claim comes with the practice of critical literacy, cannot be measured in the way we test whether or not a student has learned to identify the branches of government, how to spell and define a list of words, how to write a thesis statement, or how to find a metaphor in a poem. This kind of learning is not as easy to pin down. Perhaps the best we can hope for, is as Alice says, “planting seeds.”

The ambiguity and messiness of teaching remains striking when one listens to students. I believe that theorists who rush to conclusions about teachers, their practice, and their students may be overlooking the intricacies of teaching and learning. This study raises a number of implications for theorists.

How does an understanding of the teaching practices of Carol, Alice, and William inform the theory of teaching for critical literacy? For one, this study, particularly the combination of life stories and classroom stories, has shown there is no such thing as a “generic critical teacher” as Ellsworth (1989) points out the critical education literature

implies. The case studies give life to the theories, create the worlds that are behind and beyond the printed page. For through the case studies we see how three different teachers in their own unique ways have created pedagogical opportunities that help transform lives.

In Chapter 1 I included how Carol, Alice, and William describe the literacy they try to cultivate in their students. I also put forward my entering and developing theory of teaching for critical literacy. There are common themes in all our definitions and descriptions. There can be little doubt that the literacy goals these teachers describe is illustrated by their work. And the description of my own expanded theory of critical literacy is also illustrative of their work. No one definition can capture what is seen in the work of many teachers, especially those in multiple contexts.

The educational community would benefit if more theorists sought practical applications and sought to illustrate implications for their theoretical visions. Without seeking to ground their theories in practice, theorists may undermine the potential of their own visions. We have models in Carol, Alice, and William. Yet they provide us windows into only three classrooms. Additional extended narratives of teachers, students, and classrooms are needed. Seeing critical educators teach and co-construct curriculum with students might help others do the same. Models are needed – models that give deeper and richer accounts of what transpires in a critical educator's classroom. With more complex and multifaceted depictions of teachers and classrooms, the roots of my own and others' theories of teaching for critical literacy can grow firmer and be deepened. Through such portrayals, we are able to see that teaching for critical literacy is not a simple task. We also see that the human stories that are behind the making of a

teacher greatly influences what she or he does in the classroom. “We teach who we are” (Palmer, 1998), and we teach more than we have been. Life stories are often left out of the theoretical literature, and yet they have great potential to help us make sense of what occurs in a given classroom. We also see the actual classrooms that the teachers inhabit – not idealized and sanitized versions of what classrooms are, but real ones that may contain contradictory messages, teachers who use tones, teachers who seat students in rows, students who may not participate in the educational opportunities the teachers create – all very real dilemmas that critical educators face. And these authentic dilemmas are essential for theorists to look at.

Researchers need to spend more than one or two days in a teacher’s classroom. It is they who have the power to name who is and who is not a knowledgeable, revolutionary, good – who is or who is not a critical educator. Teachers often name “their own practice,” and what they say about their own practice honors the wisdom they have developed from experience. For example, when William says he is just teaching literacy, or he is not teaching multicultural education, we come to see that teachers may often believe that they do not do what theorists have labeled as critical literacy or multicultural curriculum. Yet, when one examines the teachers’ classrooms and listens carefully, we see that for William his “basic” education is what some theorists would recognize as both critical literacy and multicultural curriculum. So what can we conclude from this? Perhaps that there are teachers in places all across the nation teaching for critical literacy and multicultural curriculum, yet not giving it a second thought. Or that theorists use language that teachers do not. Or that teachers have not had the opportunities to honor their own achievements because they feel they are not doing anything “grand.” These

and many more questions can be asked. This issue of who gets to name another as teaching for critical literacy is an important matter for me to struggle with as a theorist and as a researcher. I respect the names and descriptions Carol, Alice, and William give to their own teaching. I have recognized through this study that there are many different ways of engaging in critical literacy and teaching for critical literacy – one style or stance does not fit all. To establish a set of rigid criteria would negate the complexity of what teachers do depending on their personal histories, students, school/district requirements, the larger community and beyond. Not all teachers teach for critical literacy; such a claim would be grossly inaccurate. However, the expanded theory which emerged from this study helps to create a flexible framework in which to move, that is the flesh on the bones of “critical educator” and not the generic lifeless one which exists in the critical education literature. A teacher’s personal history and context may reshape this framework. Additional studies of teachers teaching for critical literacy would reveal much more.

We have seen many illustrations of teaching for critical literacy in these classrooms: teachers who help students become proficient at reading and critiquing and responding to texts; teachers who help their students make connections to their worlds and read their worlds; teachers who help to broaden their students’ horizons and see the possible futures that await them; teachers who help students become social activists and see themselves as having power to effect their worlds; teachers who help their students understand what it takes to be successful in the dominant culture, and understand the choices and consequences of different paths; teachers who genuinely care for their students; teachers who create learning communities that are safe and inspiring; teachers

who model what it means to be passionate and committed; teachers who create curricula that is multicultural and relevant to students' lives; and, teachers who create opportunities for students to engage in authentic questions, discourse, and inquiry. Yet, all of these underlying principles are little more than rhetoric if we cannot see how they unfold in classrooms. There have been rich rewards for me, even joy, as I have watched them unfold in Carol, Alice, and William's classrooms and begun to comprehend the interrelatedness of these elements amidst the messiness and ambiguity of their classrooms. I have seen the impact these teachers have had on the lives of their students. Teaching for critical literacy *is* happening in real classrooms with real teachers and students. Critical literacy *is* possible. Theorists could help teachers by engaging in narrative inquiry of teachers negotiating the realities of the school world in order to cultivate their students critical literacy.

### Signs of Things to Come

There are wonderful teachers such as Corla Hawkins almost everywhere in urban schools, and sometimes a number of such teachers in a single school. It is tempting to focus on these teachers and, by doing this, to paint a hopeful portrait of the good things that go on under adverse conditions. There is, indeed, a growing body of such writing; and these books are sometimes very popular, because they are consoling.

The rationale behind much of this writing is that pedagogic problems in our cities are not chiefly matters of injustice, inequality or segregation, but of insufficient information about teaching strategies: If we could simply learn "what works" in Corla Hawkins's room, we'd then be in a position to repeat this all over Chicago and in every other system. (Kozol, 1991, p. 51)

As Kozol portrays Corla Hawkins in Savage Inequalities, she is a powerful model for teachers. So too are Carol Lessing, Alice Terry, and William Harrison. In writing about these teachers, I have not meant to create heroes, even though I do believe these

teachers are thoughtful, talented, courageous, and at times heroic. I do not believe that the answers to teaching and critical education are embedded in “what works” in these teachers’ classrooms. Kozol’s caution about research that portrays “wonderful teachers” makes me think as a theorist, teacher, and teacher educator. As someone pursuing narrative inquiry. Kozol’s caution should make everyone in the educational community think, for we are the constructors and consumers of such portraits. None of us should seek or settle for easy answers. I do believe that such portraits can help all interested in teaching for critical literacy understand the complexities of this work in real classrooms. Teachers like Carol will not be able to make up for the close-mindedness and competitiveness their students will experience outside their classrooms. Society needs to take responsibility for that. Teachers like Alice will not be able to make up for the closed doors and glass ceilings their students will face beyond their classrooms. Society needs to take responsibility for that. Teachers like William will not be able to make up for the poverty and violence their students will negotiate within their communities. Society needs to take responsibility for that.

Narrative inquiry helps to personalize and contextualize teaching for critical literacy. Story is a powerful way to teach, as William credits his grandfather, the greatest teacher he ever had – “He taught by using stories.” The power of stories must not be underestimated. The life stories and classroom stories have helped to show there are human stories inside, beneath, in-between the research on teaching and learning that have the potential to help all of us connect, deeply and meaningfully. Telling the stories of developing critical literacy – in my life and the lives and classrooms of Carol, Alice, and

William – has convinced me that stories should enter more into the teaching and learning research.

Perhaps most significant for me is that telling these stories has allowed me to begin to see and understand something very important. Power is connected to the seven roots. Pushing the metaphor further, I began to see power as the quality which gives this tree-rooted-in-the-world its strength and integrity.<sup>47</sup> I understood then that the similarities I felt between projects like SEED and the NNWP professional development experiences were on a fundamental level about power, a form of power I was not clear about but was drawn to because of its qualities of strength and integrity. I am now much clearer about the form of power I encountered in those two professional development experiences and which I see as elemental to teaching for critical literacy. The conception of power I see at the root of this kind of teaching is *power with*, and not *power over* (Kreisberg, 1992).

Kreisberg critiques prevailing conceptions of “power” in Western culture as *power over*, conceptions that are characterized by domination, control, and competition. His theory of *power with*, informed by the works of Erich Fromm (1947), Jean Baker Miller (1976/1986), Janet Surrey (1987), Rollo May (1972), Starhawk (1987), and Mary Parker Follett (1918, 1924, 1942), is very different. Kreisberg writes that “power...is not by definition a win-lose situation. Power can be an expanding, renewable resource available through shared endeavor, dialogue, and cooperation” (pp. 63-64). Kreisberg advocates a transformed conception of power, one that is characterized by connection, openness, and care; one that promotes reciprocity, nurturing, and agency; one that is

---

<sup>47</sup>Thanks to Chris Clark and members of the 1998 Michigan State University Writer’s Symposium for helping me articulate this part of the metaphor.

achieved through interaction, dialogue, and cooperation. Kreisberg pushes us to think of power as a resource that can potentially help us all grow and thrive. I know the *power with* construct and the eight thematic elements go together in important ways in critical literacy. This is something that I will pursue further in other studies that build on my expanded theory of teaching for critical literacy.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### SAMPLE LETTER INVITING TEACHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

14 April 1996

Dear William,

More than a year has passed since we last spoke. I hope you and your family are doing well. I have thought of you many times in those silent months. I have been busy, as usual. I am sure you have been too. Corinna finished her Ph.D. last spring and took a position at Albion College. So, in addition to the routine work demands we moved over the summer. And for many months following we "settled in," painting and unpacking boxes and repairing. The repairing seems on-going. (Both of us are first time "home owners.") However, I did manage to get the basketball court and dart boards in three rooms set up within the first month. And the hot tub was one of the first things repaired. You can tell where my priorities are at.

I have been teaching three classes this semester – commuting the hour to MSU and back each day. I am continuing to make slow progress on my program. I did not get started on my dissertation proposal until last September, and after four drafts I finally have it to a point where I am ready to begin the dissertation. I have put a lot into the development of the proposal and am excited to undertake the project. It is work I think I can be proud of.

In the past you and I talked of the possibility of your being a participant in the project. I have continued to hope that would happen. The reason you haven't heard from me in so long is that I wanted to make sure I had a proposal that was ready for committee review – I wanted to make sure everything was ready to go the next time the subject came up. I understand that a lot can change over this much time. I would not hold you to anything we discussed previously. I would like to start off fresh and invite you to be a participant. I would greatly value your collaboration on this project.

My dissertation will be a descriptive study that seeks to challenge the current theoretical literature on teaching for "critical literacy." It is my belief that the existing theoretical literature is not helpful for most teachers who are trying to learn to teach for critical literacy. The theoretical literature paints idealistic images of what the practice of critical literacy is, and the qualities of those who teach for critical literacy. I find this very problematic. The overarching question of the study is: What does teaching for critical literacy in the secondary English classroom look like? I hope to develop case studies of three teachers and their practices. I have no desire to analyze the teachers' practices according to the literature. On the contrary, I hope to "inform the theory" by using descriptive case stories of particular classroom events; I hope to foreground the teachers' philosophies of teaching and learning, as well as their interpretations of these classroom events.

William, I would very much like you to be one of the three teachers participating in this study. I am familiar with your work. I see you as someone who teaches for

critical literacy, and I would like to share your work with others. I know that a rich and thoughtful portrayal of your work could help other teachers learn to teach for critical literacy.

If you are still interested in being a participant, we would arrange times for interviews and a period in the fall 1996 (preferably in October or November) in which I would collect data (field notes, audiotaping, and possibly videotaping) in two class hours for a period of up to two weeks. From these class sessions you would help define the classroom event(s) that would become the focus of a descriptive case story. You would play a central role – as central a role as you wish – in the analysis of the descriptive case story.

I have enclosed a copy of the full proposal. Pages 1-34 provide the background and rationale for this study. Pages 38-48 provide an overview of the study. In addition to the proposal I am including a skeletal outline of what the case study would include. This outline has an example of a pilot "descriptive case story." I think the case study outline and pilot case story provide a general picture of what I aim to do regarding the development of case studies.

I am also enclosing two resources not related to the dissertation project. Friday, on my commute to MSU, I heard a program on NPR/Morning Edition that I thought you might like to share with your students. The second resource is a tape of "The Fourteen Stories of Eric Morse," a new journalistic piece by the two boys who did "Ghetto Life 101." I hope you find these materials relevant and useful.

I would enjoy both the professional and personal conversations again, and look forward to speaking with you soon. I will follow up this letter with a phone call Sunday 21 April. If I am unable to reach you, I will try during the week following week.

Peace,

P.S. My current addresses are:

303 Irwin Ave.  
Albion, MI 49224  
(517) 629-3767

118 Erickson Hall  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI 48824  
(517) 353-5213  
email: 23221mm@msu.edu

## APPENDIX B

### CALENDARS OF OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

#### Calendar of Observations: Carol Lessing

The following calendar of observations is included to provide an overview of my involvement with Carol's class, and may prove useful for reference when reading the case stories. I have put in each cell the class hour, field trips (F.T.), cultural opportunities (C.O.), and additional class hours I attended that were cultural opportunities. This calendar does not include representations of the many after class conversations I had with Carol.

Week of...	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
25 Aug.						3rd
1 Sept.						3rd
8 Sept.						3rd
15 Sept.					3rd	
22 Sept.	C.O.				3rd	
29 Sept.					3rd	
6 Oct.						Flex & 3rd
13 Oct.						F.T.
3 Nov.			3rd			3rd
10 Nov.	C.O.					
1 Dec.					3rd	
8 Dec.		3rd	3rd	3rd		3rd
15 Dec.		3rd	2nd/C.O. & 3rd	3rd	3rd	3rd
5 Jan.		3rd	3rd	3rd	3rd	3rd
12 Jan.			3rd			

### Calendar of Observations: Alice Terry

In the fall semester of the 1996-97 school year, during the months September through December, I made eighteen observations of Alice's class, and two additional class sessions (6 and 7 November) were audio-taped for me by a student (noted as AT). The following calendar of observations is included to provide an overview of my involvement with Alice's class, and may prove useful for reference when reading the case stories. I have put in each cell the class hours I attended. This calendar does not include representations of the many after class conversations I had with Alice.

Week of...	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9 Sept.				1st & 5th	
16 Sept.					5th
14 Oct.	5th			5th	5th
21 Oct.	5th	5th	5th		
28 Oct.		5th	5th	5th	5th
4 Nov.		5th	5th (AT)	5th (AT)	
18 Nov.		5th			
2 Dec.		5th	5th		
16 Dec.	5th			5th	

### Calendar of Observations: William Harrison

Over the course of the 1996-97 school year, spanning September to June, I made twenty-two observations of William's class, totaling more than seventy hours when interviews with William are included. The following calendar of observations is included to provide an overview of my involvement with William's class, and may prove useful for reference when reading the vignettes making up the case story. The hours listed in each cell account for my time of arrival in William's class (usually 8:30 a.m.) until I would leave for the day; therefore, this schedule includes classroom observations and conversations with William that would take place during his lunch and prep periods.

Week of...	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
16 Sept.	Four Hours				
23 Sept.					Three Hours
30 Sept.	Four Hours				
21 Oct.				Three Hours	
4 Nov.	Four Hours		Three Hours	Five Hours	
11 Nov.	Four Hours	Three Hours	Three Hours		Three Hours
18 Nov.	Four Hours	Three Hours	Three Hours		
20 Jan.					Two Hours
3 Feb.				Three Hours	
17 Feb.				Three Hours	
17 Mar.					Three Hours
28 April		One Hour			
12 May	Four Hours				
19 May				Three Hours	
2 June				Three Hours	

## APPENDIX C

### TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

#### First Profile Interview (20 August 1996)

##### Overview

From exploring my own biography and reading much biographical writing, "literary memoir" theory, research in the relationship between the personal histories and professional work of teachers, and talking with others interested in these fields I have come to believe that **who we are as people** (particularly the influences in our early life) profoundly affects **who we become as professionals**.

I will be using an "in-depth" interview format (asking broad questions to get you to respond at length) to learn as much as I can about who you are as a person and teacher, and how you have come to be who you are. I will be seeking "salient" stories from your growing up and professional development to help me construct a profile of you.

In this first interview I am most interested in your experiences before you began teaching. In the second interview I will be focusing on your life inside and outside of school since you became a teacher. In a third interview I want to follow up on areas of particular interest that surface in the first two interviews, especially those most likely to illuminate your beliefs about teaching and learning.

##### First Interview Framing Questions

(1) Tell me about your family as you were growing up.

- o Where did you grow up?
- o What size of a family did you grow up in?
- o When you were growing up how did you see your family in terms of social class (poor, middle class, affluent)? How did this affect you?
- o Were you raised a certain faith? What impact did this have on you? Or, were there other non-religious organizations/institutions that impacted you?

(2) Describe yourself as a child. What were you like? What were your interests or dreams? What about as an adolescent? What happened to those interests and dreams as you entered adulthood?

(3) Describe yourself as a learner and as a student through high school.

- o What role did books, writing, art play in your life?
- o What about the social aspects of school? What role did friends, teachers, other significant adolescents and adults play? What about extracurricular activities such as sports, debate, band, foreign language clubs, etc. play?
- o How did you approach the reading of texts in your early life? (Perhaps foreshadowing their development of critical literacy.)

(4) What were one or more family, community, national, or global "events" that you remember having had a significant impact on you. In what ways were you involved? In what ways do you remember others being impacted?

**Starting up questions:**

- o What do you anticipate to be this year's potential challenges? Potential rewards?
- o What is the title of the course(s) I will be collecting data in?
- o How would you describe the content and pedagogy of this course?
- o When and where does this course(s) meet?
- o How do you want your school administration to be informed? Do you want me to write a letter? Make an appointment to see your principal?
- o May I come to your class two or more times before the data collection period so your students can get used to my presence?
- o Discuss a tentative block of time for me to be in the class collecting data.

**Profile Interview #2 (May 1997)**

ALL

(1) Do you view your teaching as "political" in any way? If so, how?

(2) How would you describe the kind of "literacy" you are trying to help students develop?

(3) If I want to help other teacher educators prepare future English teachers to do work that is consistent with your beliefs and practice... what are some things I would want to do?

Alice:

I would like to know more about your personal and professional after college. I'm going to try, like I did last time, to get you to tell stories of personal significance to you that might help me better understand how who you are as a person and teacher informs the work I am studying.

- o Tell me about your "teacher preparation"
- o Were there any significant events you want to tell me about from your early teaching experience – things you were trying to do but struggled with? A particular class that contributed significantly to your learning?
- o What have been key influences that have shaped your vision and practice as a teacher of English? (Include people, books, etc.)
- o How did becoming a parent affect you as a teacher?
- o I have talked to you in the past about your work with [NAMES]. Are there other experiences doing further study in English or education or something else that has been important to your development? Have there been other professional development experiences?
- o Talk to me about the path of your own learning and reading that might inform my understanding of your teaching, particularly this African American literature course.
- o What have been some family, local, state, national, or global events that have had a significant impact on you as a person? Perhaps impacted the way you see the world and people, the way you think about things?
- o Are there any "social action" events or groups that you have been involved with as an adult?
- o It is my interpretation of your work that you try to help students "read and write the word and the world." Would you agree to that? At what point did you begin looking for ways to help students develop this kind of critical literacy?

Carol:

Earlier in the year you said: “For us, this way of teaching and learning about literature is also the way that we want to go about living – in a hope that we can sort out with one another ways of living in the world that nurture the human spirit.” What did you mean by this?

William:

(1) I have noticed over the last several months a complete change of seating arrangement. I have also noticed in May a severe line drawn about talking out of turn and harsh penalties for crossing that line. Explain how these things fit with your goal for the learning of these students.

## APPENDIX D

### SAMPLE STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

#### Cultural Perspectives Interview with Students

**Purpose:** An opportunity for you to speak for yourself concerning the experience in this class. I think students can help me understand the quality of a particular learning experience in ways I could have only guessed at, so their honest words are of vital importance to me.

**Confidentiality:** Anything you say during this interview will not be repeated to Mrs. Lessing, so if you say really good things they won't help you and if you are critical those statements won't hurt you.

(1) I am most interested in anything that will help me understand...

(a) What do you think you have learned about your Self, Others, language, literature, and culture this semester? What aspects of the course and the teacher's practice had the greatest impact on your learning?

(b) Do you think you have changed in terms of your thinking and the way you see "the world"? Has this class had an impact on you as a person outside of this class?

(2) What have been your favorite stories, films, activities, speakers... in this class? Which books have you not been able to finish?

(3) Do you talk about this class to friends or family? What do you say? If you had a friend or younger sibling who was trying to decide whether or not to take this class next semester, what would you say?

(4) Have you made any new friends or strengthened existing relationships as a result of this class?

(5) Tell me about the assignments, tests, and projects for this class. Critique their value to you as a learner. Which ones did you have fun with? Which ones really challenged you? Which ones really helped you learn something of value?

(6) What impact have class discussions had on you? Describe what they are like for you. Are you ever troubled by what is said? Do you feel you have a voice to express your ideas and feelings during discussions?

(7) Tell me about the things Mrs. Lessing does as a teacher that either help or hinder you as a learner.

(8) I have noticed the racial and cultural diversity at SHS. Are the students and other faculty respectful of the diversity? What is it like for you to be a student in this school?

(9) Has this class awakened interest in your own cultural backgrounds?

Dar: (1) I have noticed that you have attended several out-of-class opportunities for learning (the Japanese Cultural Center, the Global Festival, ESL presentations)... I also noticed that you seemed to have "great fun" at the Global Festival. What impact did those experiences have on you?

Sky: (1) What was it like having your mom come to the class, and then the following class session so many students tell you how much you are like her? [I believe many teenagers don't want to be like their parents...]

# APPENDIX E

## DATA LOG

Carol	Alice	William
<p><u>30 Aug</u> Second class session, first full meeting, Names</p> <p><u>6 Sept</u> "Names" test, procedural stuff, <u>Pigs...</u></p> <p><u>13 Sept</u> Critical discussion of HSPT results, discussion of <u>Pigs in Heaven</u></p> <p><u>19 Sept</u> Guest Presentation: Dr. Jan Bernstein, playing the Ba Fa language game</p> <p><u>22 Sept</u> Cultural Opportunity: Shakunage Cultural Foundation</p>	<p><u>12 Sept</u> First observation, review previous viewing of "Shadows of Hate," Alice shares own experiences of segregation, continue viewing "SofH"</p> <p><u>20 Sept</u> "Housekeeping day," details of HSPT retakes (T*)</p> <p><u>14 Oct</u> Writing autobiographies for college applications, biography of ZNH in AA Lit Anthology, Andre "focus children... eyes on me" Ha Ha, senior counselor visits talks about college applications and available scholarships and aid (T*)</p>	<p><u>16 Sept</u> Introduces Michael Michell, discuss "Why confidentiality?", About my weekend... "those Chinese," journal write and share... Tupac, practicing "highlighting skills" for MEAP, Yep "Great Rat Hunt," lunch helps a colleague with a chapter she is writing</p> <p><u>27 Sept</u> MEAP review, poetry writing workshop, (lunch interview) (T)</p> <p><u>30 Sept</u> About my weekend..., quilts, final day of MEAP preparation, poetry writing workshop</p>

<p><u>26 Sept</u> Guest Presentation: Tuya Kurveskari, Department of Ed., Finland (T*)</p> <p><u>3 Oct</u> Conclude reading of "Doll's House," view Act III on film (T)</p> <p><u>11 Oct</u> Group visual analysis of Angelou's "Africa," (Excel "Out of Africa") (T*)</p> <p><u>18 Oct</u> Field Trip: Shakunage Cultural Foundation (T)</p> <p><u>5 Nov</u> Students presentation: Latino Culture (T)</p> <p><u>8 Nov</u> Beginning <u>Like Water for Chocolate</u> (T*)</p> <p><u>10 Nov</u> Cultural Opportunity: MSU Global Festival</p>	<p><u>17 Oct</u> What S. learned about HSPT in Lansing, "give me something... winners," I skilled... prepare you for college...," silent reading (T*)</p> <p><u>18 Oct</u> Form a circle, "discussion time," A. Walker "In Search of Zora," use of dialect, relationship theme, Alice begins reading "Sweat" (T*)</p> <p><u>21 Oct</u> "Sweat" (day two), summary and questions concerning key plot points, students read out loud struggle with dialect, discussion of ending, assign student composition of new ending (T/V)</p>	<p><u>24 Oct</u> "Letter from Bronx," "Equity in Education" Day One – journal write and share, <u>Road to Memphis</u> lit presentations, poetry quilt (T*)</p> <p><u>30 Oct</u></p> <p><u>4 Nov</u> TP, Dream School, Elections and how gov't works, journal writing – DM poem "My Cusin Got Stabed," Revs and Loys, revision and ratification of class Dofl, "Clarity," Revolution brewing (T)</p> <p><u>6 Nov</u> Revs and Loys, K. holds writing conferences, (note lunch interview) (T*)</p> <p><u>7 Nov</u> David Wright visit and writers workshop, student workshop (note lunchtime conversation 'tween D &amp; K) (T*)</p>
---	--	--

<p><u>6 Dec</u> Student/Guest presentation: Dorothy and father on Tai Chi (T)</p> <p><u>9 Dec</u> Pen pals and thank you's to guest presenters, Students presentation: Russian Culture (T)</p> <p><u>10 Dec</u> Review background info on Russian Rev. and "Zhivago" (day 2 of viewing), "Zhivago" (T*)</p> <p><u>11 Dec</u> Offer extra credit optional assignments for Russian culture, "Zhivago" (T*)</p> <p><u>13 Dec</u> Guest presentation: Cindy's sister on balancing Egyptian and American culture, "Zhivago" (T*)</p>	<p><u>22 Oct</u> "Sweat" (last day), "Can we go in a circle?", students read their "new endings" stories, dialect to standard English conversion assignment (T/V)</p> <p><u>23 Oct</u> <u>...Eyes...</u> first day, how to study and get ahead in the "game," Hurston's use of language, "self-revelation" is oldest human longing (T*)</p> <p><u>29 Oct</u> (T)</p> <p><u>30 Oct</u> "What's wrong with you bitch?", fight in halls between two girls, <u>...Eyes...</u> "communication" and "choices" theme and sermon, Miesha's photo album (T*)</p> <p><u>31 Oct</u> Alice shares M. Angelou's observations of ZNH and <u>...Eyes...</u> from <u>Dust Tracks...</u>, discuss chs 5-6, "love" and "communication" themes (T*)</p> <p><u>1 Nov</u> <u>...Eyes...</u>, small group open book test chs 1-7 (T*)</p>	<p><u>11 Nov</u> W. woman looking in my car, Armistice Day, "Elegy for a Dead Soldier" K. teary eyed, <u>RtoM</u>, "Japs" and "Chinks" (interview *) (T)</p> <p><u>12 Nov</u> King George is angry – provoking Revolution, group write/revise of letter to DW, <u>RtoM</u>, racial name calling, quiz bowl, violent hallway incident (T*/V)</p> <p><u>13 Nov</u> Internet hook-up, subversive letters and a plot for Revolution, DM's shirt (T*/V)</p> <p><u>15 Nov</u> Film "Revolution," pizza party, end of <u>RtoM</u> (T)</p> <p><u>18 Nov</u> <u>Road to Memphis</u> passage select, Tamika's poem, sharing and discussion, intro to I-Search (T*/V)</p> <p><u>19 Nov</u> Recap and expansion of intro I-Search, Essays on <u>RtoM</u> themes (T*/V)</p>
---	---	--

<p><u>16 Dec</u> sneaking "Zhivago," Students presentation: Asian culture (T)</p> <p><u>17 Dec</u> 2nd hour optional ESL "culture" presentations (T)</p> <p><u>17 Dec</u> Student presentation: "Rap," "Zhivago" (T*)</p> <p><u>18 Dec</u> "Zhivago" (T)</p> <p><u>19 Dec</u> Guest presentation: Maria Garcia (T*)</p> <p><u>20 Dec</u> Friday before X-Mas break, discuss Maria Garcia visit-impact, last day of "Zhivago" (T*)</p> <p><u>6 Jan</u> Guest presentation: "Clown Culture" (T)</p> <p><u>7 Jan</u> Debrief "clown culture" presentation, Asian culture circulating stations (T*)</p> <p><u>8 Jan</u> Debrief Asian culture circulating stations, assign Noh parts and read play (T*)</p>	<p><u>5 Nov</u> Review open book test, mini-sermons on "golden rule," "communication," "responsibility" (T*)</p> <p><u>6 Nov</u> (T)</p> <p><u>7 Nov</u> (T)</p> <p><u>19 Nov</u> ...Eyes..., "communication" sermon (T)</p> <p><u>3 Dec</u> Student fables based upon African proverbs, background on August Wilson and begin "Piano Lesson" (mashed potatoes with a spoon) (T*)</p> <p><u>4 Dec</u> Reading August Wilson play (day one) (T)</p> <p><u>16 Dec</u> Kwanza background and preparation (T)</p> <p><u>19 Dec</u> Kwanza celebration</p>	<p><u>20 Nov</u> Writing "the literature essay" on <u>RtoM</u>, What's a theme? Journal: More information or more ignorance? (T*/V)</p> <p><u>24 Jan</u> Ebonics debate (T*/V)</p> <p><u>6 Feb</u> Daconte from Liberia first day, independent work, I- Search, Black Americans past-pres-future, interview (T*)</p> <p><u>20 Feb</u> independent work, important conversation w/ K. and between K. and students (T)</p> <p><u>21 March</u> Grant proposal to create newspaper to disseminate I-Search and Gen-X findings, "Roots" (notes on proposal, student clothes and accessories) (T)</p> <p><u>29 April</u> "Civil War" presentations – art and writing that cuts across year's themes of "Freedom and Revolution." (T*)</p>
---	---	---

<p><u>9 Jan</u> Intro to Noh performances, begin rehearsals (T*)</p> <p><u>10 Jan</u> Noh Drama Rehearsal (T/V)</p> <p><u>14 Jan</u> Last class, Noh Drama Performances, Review for Final Exam (T*/V)</p>		<p><u>12 May</u> William introduces and guides students in their writing of the "teaching" part of their WFYL newspaper pieces. (T*)</p> <p><u>22 May</u> Indep. Work, K. confers w/ Glenn, Tameka, Kenneth; DIA responses, Daconte shares, Christina shares novel; interview with William (T*)</p> <p><u>5 June</u> Reading <u>Mr. Was</u>, expressive and interactive, K. &amp; M. discuss science interaction, former student visits (T)</p>
---	--	---

## APPENDIX F

### WILLIAM'S I-SEARCH ASSIGNMENT

"A meaningful search grows from seeds in the writer's life, which can be revealed immediately to the reader."

— Ken Macrorie

The emphasis in an I-Search is on the "I." The "I" conducts the search, and the "I" records all that is learned or encountered along the way from that perspective — the first person or "I" voice. The "I" in charge is you. The "I" is in control of the research process. Not only is the actual research information important, HOW the "I" found the information is of equal value.

You will write about the steps taken in your research course, and if you run into any problems or pitfalls, then those troubles are also recorded. For example, if you have a hard time finding enough information or if your topic is too broad to keep the report focused, then you will write about what you did to overcome these problems. In any research paper there will be problems, your goal is to record them and analyze the cause/effect factors.

Another example might find your trip to the library thwarted or messed-up because an early snow storm hit the city and closed the roads and public municipalities. Maybe you planned to go to the library once your parents got home from work, but when you arrived at the library you found that it had closed only a half hour earlier. In the case of your I-Search, excuses hold value. However, you are still required to produce a final product, no matter how creative the excuse.

Once you have gathered all the information that you need or think you will need, your next step is to construct a method by which you can present your report. One way would be to keep an I-Search log that documents the steps of your research, and write a report using your newly acquired information. A more creative approach would be to write a narrative, or the story of your I-Search with you as the main character. You would write about your search and all that you went through to gain the knowledge, as well as revealing the facts you learned. For example:

Last Saturday morning was the coldest of the year so far. I was comfortable snuggled warm in bed, but when the alarm went off I remembered that I had I-Search work to do. It took some doing and a few hits of the Snooze button, but I finally managed to drag my feet to the floor. I was sockless, and the hardwood floor was ice cold. My Dad let me share his coffee on the way to the library. It tasted bitter, but I felt grown-up taking little sips that burnt my tongue. The library was nearly empty, but the librarian helped me find a whole bunch of stuff about the common cold. I learned that even though modern

medicine has cured many diseases, there is no known cure for the common cold. I also discovered that...

This is just one example of the type of writing style that you could use in your I-Search. Of course, there are countless options; make sure your mind and imagination stays open to all possibilities. Remember, you are a real researcher, and that means everything that effects your research is relevant. Your job is to learn more about the topic/issue that you deemed worth investigating, write an interesting report, give an oral presentation to the class, and conceptualize ways in which you can better yourself, your family, and society with this new knowledge.

All of our writing has a purpose, and in this case, a social improvement of some kind may be spawned from your research and words. Take complete notes, and let your writer's voice boom. I want to hear the "I" shine through, not someone named Encyclopedia Britannica. As you write about life and important issues, undoubtedly, you will form opinions and articulate your theories into a clear and well-defended position. I have a hunch that we all will learn from your wisdom. Good Luck and Bon Voyage.

Your Loyal Guide,

Mr. Harrison

## APPENDIX G

### TEACHERS' SCHOOL SCHEDULES

#### Carol's teaching schedule:

Station High School runs on what they call the FLEX schedule. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays the school has a FLEX period in which teachers offer instructional options either related or unrelated to the courses they teach. Carol uses FLEX periods in a variety of ways, some of which I observed include conferences with students about their writing, beginning or completing films she shows in a course, showing films that are supplemental to a course, and providing time for her to meet with students who had taken advantage of extra credit options. These FLEX periods meant that Carol met with her students at different times during the week, sometimes for forty-five, forty-eight, or fifty-five minutes:

Class Hour	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2nd Hour	8:40-9:25	8:49-9:44	8:40-9:25	8:49-9:44	8:40-9:25
Flex	9:35-10:20	No Flex	9:35-10:20	No Flex	9:35-10:20
3rd Hour	10:25-11:10	9:50-10:45	10:25-11:10	9:50-10:45	10:25-11:10

#### William's block schedule appears:

Class Hour	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1st Hour	Class	Class	Class	Class	Class
2nd Hour	Class	Class	Class	Class	Prep/Math
3rd Hour	Prep/Math	Class	Prep/Math	Class	Class
4th Hour	Class	Prep/Math	Class	Prep/Science	Class
5th Hour	Cluster Prep/ Science	Journalism/ Science	Journalism/ Science	Journalism/ Math	Journalism/ Science
6th Hour	Prep/PE	Class	Class	Model Building	Class

## WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED<sup>48</sup>

- Afkhami, Mahnaz. (1994). Women in exile. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia.
- African American literature: Voices in a tradition. (1992). Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- Apple, Michael. (1985, Spring). Teaching and "women's work": A comparative historical and ideological analysis. Teachers College Record, 3, 445-473.
- Applebee, Arthur N. (1974). Tradition and reform in the teaching of English: A history. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Applebee, Arthur N. (1981). Writing in the secondary school: English in the content areas. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Applebee, Arthur N., Langer, Judith A., & Mullis, Ina V.S. (1984). Writing: Trends across the decade, 1974-84. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Applebee, Arthur N. (1986). Problems in process approaches: Toward a reconceptualization of process instruction. In Anthony R. Petrosky & David Bartholomae (Eds.), The teaching of writing: Eighty-fifth yearbook of the national society for the study of education, Part II (pp. 95-113). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Applebee, Arthur N. (1996). Curriculum as conversation: Transforming traditions of teaching and learning. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Archambault, Reginald D. (Ed.). (1974). John Dewey on education: Selected writings. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Aronowitz, Stanley, & Giroux, Henry A. (1991). Postmodern education: Politics, culture, and social criticism. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Atwell, Nancie. (1987). In the middle: Writing, reading, and learning with adolescents. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Atwell, Nancie. (1998). In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

---

<sup>48</sup>I have taken the idea of including both cited and consulted works from Irene Ward Literacy, Ideology, and Dialogue (1994) because it makes sense to include those works that may not require citation, however, still figure into the development of larger ideas.

- Banks, James A. (1995). Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice. In James A. Banks & Cherry A. McGee Banks (Eds.), Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education (pp. 3-24). New York: Macmillan Publishing.
- Banks, James. (1997). Teaching strategies for ethnic studies (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Banks, James A., & McGee Banks, Cherry. A. (1997). Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives (3rd ed.). Newton, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Banner, James M., & Cannon, Harold C. (1997, November/December). The personal qualities of teaching: What teachers do cannot be distinguished from who they are. Change, 29, 40-43.
- Battaglia, Catherine. (1995). Confused on a higher level about more important things. In Robert B. Stevenson & Susan E. Noffke (Eds.), Educational action research: Becoming practically critical (pp.74-91). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Beach, Richard. (1993). A teacher's introduction to reader-response theories. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Behar, Ruth. (1993). Translated woman: Crossing the border with Esperanza's story. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Belenky, Mary Field, Clinchy, Blythe McVicker, Goldberger, Nancy Rule, & Tarule, Jill Mattuck. (1986). Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind. New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- Berthoff, Ann. (1987). Introduction. In Paulo Freire & Donaldo Macedo Literacy: Reading the word and the world (pp. xi-xxiii). South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey.
- Bigelow, Bill. (1989). Discovering Columbus: Rereading the past. Language Arts, 66(6), 635-643.
- Bigelow, Bill. (1990). Inside the classroom: Social vision and critical pedagogy. Teachers College Record, 91(3), 437-448.
- Blackside, Inc. (Producer). (1986). Eyes on the prize: America's civil rights years [Film]. (Available from PBS Video, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314)
- Bloom, Allan. (1987). The closing of the American mind. New York: Simon & Schuster.

- Bogdan, Deanne, & Straw, Stanley B. (Eds.). (1990). Beyond communication: Reading comprehension and criticism. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.
- Bogdan, Robert C., & Biklen, Sari Knopp. (1982). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, & Passeron, Jean-Claude. (1992). Reproduction in education, society and culture. London: Sage.
- Brannon, Lil. (1991). Reconstructing the classroom: Literacy and the problem of choice. In Edward M. Jennings & Alan C. Purves (Eds.), Literate systems and individual lives: Perspectives on literacy and schooling (pp. 165-178). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Brooks, Jacqueline Grennon, & Brooks, Martin G. (1993). In search of understanding: The case for constructivist classrooms. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Brunner, Diane DuBose. (1994). Inquiry and reflection: Framing narrative practice in education. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Brunner, Diane DuBose. (1992). Teacher resistance and the construction of more educative text. Teacher Education, 4(2).
- Burbules, Nicholas C. (1993). Dialogue in teaching: Theory and practice. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Burke, J. Bruce. (January 1993). Personal communication.
- Burke, Theta. (1977). Sounds of yourself. Ann Arbor, MI: Delafield Press.
- Burns, Rebecca Crawford. (1995). Dissolving the boundaries: Planning for curriculum integration in middle and secondary schools. Charleston, WV: Appalachia Educational Laboratory.
- Calkins, Lucy McCormick. (1986). The art of teaching writing. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann.
- Campbell, Doug. (1992, September). Personal communication.
- Carnes, Jim. (1995). Us and them: A history of intolerance in America. Montgomery, AL: Teaching Tolerance, A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center.
- Carney, Barbara. (1996). Process writing and the secondary school reality: A compromise. English Journal, 85(6), 28-35.

- Cazden, Courtney B. (1988). Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Christensen, Linda. (1994a). Unlearning the myths that bind us: Critiquing fairy tales and films. In Bill Bigelow, Linda Christensen, Stan Karp, Barbara Miner, & Bob Peterson (Eds.), Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice (pp. 8-13). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.
- Christensen, Linda. (1994b). Building community from chaos. In Bill Bigelow, Linda Christensen, Stan Karp, Barbara Miner, & Bob Peterson (Eds.), Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice (pp. 50-55). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.
- Christensen, Linda. (1994c). Whose standard? Teaching standard English. In Bill Bigelow, Linda Christensen, Stan Karp, Barbara Miner, & Bob Peterson (Eds.), Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice (pp. 142-145). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.
- Clark, Christopher M. (1998, Fall/Winter). Hello learners: Living social constructivism. Teaching Education, 10(1), 89-110.
- Clark, Chris. (1999, February). Personal communication.
- Clifford, G. J. (1982). "Marry, stitch, die, or do worse": Educating women for work. In H. Kantor & D. B. Tyack (Eds.), Work, youth, and schooling: Historical perspectives on vocationalism in American education. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Clifford, James, & Marcus, George E. (Eds.). (1986). Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Cochran-Smith, Marilyn. (1991, August). Learning to teach against the grain. Harvard Educational Review, 61, 279-310.
- Cohen, David K. (1988). Teaching practice: Plus ca change..... National Center for Research on Teacher Learning. East Lansing MI: Michigan State University.
- Cohen, David K. (1990). A revolution in one classroom: The case of Mrs. Oublier. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 12(3), 327-345.
- Conley, Mark. (July 1997). Personal communication.
- Connelly, F. Michael, & Clandinin, D. Jean. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. Educational Researcher, 19(5), 2-14.

- Cook, Ann. (1991). The high school inquiry classroom. In Kathe Jervis & Carol Montag (Eds.), Progressive education for the 1990s: Transforming practice (pp. 149-151). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Coulthard, Malcolm. (1985). An introduction to discourse analysis. New York: Longman.
- Darder, Antonia. (1991). Culture and power in the classroom: A critical foundation for bicultural education. New York: Bergin & Garvey.
- Delpit, Lisa. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. Harvard Educational Review, 58(3), 280-298.
- Delpit, Lisa. (1992). Acquisition of literate discourse: Bowing before the master? Theory into Practice, 31(4), 296-302.
- Delpit, Lisa. (1995). Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom. New York: The New Press.
- Denzin, Norman K. (1978). Participant observation: Varieties and strategies of the field method. In Norman K. Denzin (Ed.), The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 182-213). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Dewey, John. (1902/1964). The child and the curriculum. In Reginald D. Archambault (Ed.), John Dewey on education: Selected writings (pp. 341-358). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dewey, John. (1904/1964). The relation of theory to practice in education. In Reginald D. Archambault (Ed.), John Dewey on education: Selected writings (pp. 313-338). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dewey, John. (1916/1966). Democracy and education. New York: Free Press.
- Dewey, John. (1928). Philosophies of freedom. In Richard J. Bernstein (Ed.), John Dewey: On experience, nature, and freedom: Representative selections (pp. 261-287). New York: The Liberal Arts Press.
- Dewey, John. (1938/1963). Experience and education. New York: Macmillan.
- Du Bois, B. (1979). Passionate scholarship: Notes on values, knowing and method in feminist social science. In G. Bowles & R. D. Klein, (Eds.), Theories of women's studies (pp. 105-116). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Dunbar, Paul Laurence. (1913/1988). In the morning. In Joanne M. Braxton (Ed.), The collected poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar (pp. 190-191). Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia.

- Eisner, Elliot W. (1988, Spring). The primacy of experience and the politics of method. Educational Researcher, 20, 15-20.
- Eisner, Elliot W. (1992). Introduction to special section on objectivity, subjectivity, and relativism. Curriculum Inquiry, 22(1), 5-7.
- Eisner, Elliot W. (1992). Objectivity in educational research. Curriculum Inquiry, 22(1), 9-15.
- Eisner, Elliot W. (1993). Forms of understanding and the future of educational research. Educational Researcher, 22(7), 5-11.
- Eisner, Elliot W. (1998). The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Eisner, Elliot W., & Peshkin, Alan. (Eds.). (1990). Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Elbaz, Freema. (1983). Teacher thinking: A study of practical knowledge. London: Croom Helm.
- Elbow, Peter. (1973). The doubting game and the believing game—An analysis of the intellectual enterprise. In Writing without teachers (pp. 147-191). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Elbow, Peter. (1973/1986a). Methodological doubting and believing: Contraries in inquiry. In Embracing contraries: Explorations in learning and teaching (pp. 254-300). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Elbow, Peter. (1973/1986b). The pedagogy of the bamboozled. In Embracing contraries: Explorations in learning and teaching (pp. 87-98). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Elbow, Peter. (1983). Writing with power. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ellsworth, Elizabeth. (1989). Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy. Harvard Educational Review, 59(3), 297-324.
- Ellsworth, Nancy J., Hedley, Carolyn N., & Baratta, Anthony N. (1994). Literacy: A redefinition. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Erickson, Frederick. (1987). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. Wittrock (Ed.), Handbook of research on teaching (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 119-161). New York: Macmillan.

- Erickson, Frederick, & Shultz, Jeffrey. (1981). When is a context? Some issues and methods in the analysis of social competence. In Judith L. Green & Cynthia Wallat (Eds.), Ethnography and language in educational settings (pp. 147-160). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Erickson, Frederick, & Wilson, Jan. (1982). Sights and sounds of life in schools: A resource guide to film and videotape for research and education. Research Series No. 125, Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University.
- Esquivel, Laura. (1992). Like water for chocolate: A novel in monthly installments with recipes, romances, and home remedies. (Carol Christensen & Thomas Christensen, Trans.). New York: Doubleday. (Original work published 1989)
- Evans, R. W. (1990). Teacher conceptions of history revisited: Ideology, curriculum, and student belief. Theory and Research in Social Education, 18(2), 101-138.
- Fairclough, Norman. (1989). Language and power. New York: Longman.
- Featherstone, Helen, Pfeiffer, Lauren, & Smith, Steve. (1993). Learning in good company: Report on a pilot study. (NCRTL Research Report 93-2). East Lansing: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.
- Featherstone, Joseph. (1984). Introduction. In Herbert Kohl Growing minds: On becoming a teacher (pp. ix-xviii). New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.
- Featherstone, Joseph. (1991). Foreward. In Kathe Jersis & Carol Montag (Eds.), Progressive Education for the 1990s: Transforming Practice (pp. ix-xiii). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Feiman-Nemser, Sharon, & Buchmann, Margaret. (1985, Fall). Pitfalls of experience in teacher preparation. Teachers College Record, 87, 53-65.
- Filipovic, Zlata. (1994). Zlata's diary: A child's life in Sarajevo. New York: Viking Penguin.
- Follett, Mary Parker. (1918). The new state: Group organization the solution of popular government. New York: Longmans, Green.
- Follett, Mary Parker. (1924). Creative experience. New York: Longmans, Green.
- Follett, Mary Parker. (1942). Dynamic administration. New York: Harper and Brothers.
- Foster, Michele. (1997). Black teachers on teaching. New York: The New Press.

- Frankenstein, Marilyn. (1987). Critical mathematics education: An application of Paulo Freire's epistemology. In Ira Shor (Ed.), Freire for the classroom: A sourcebook for liberatory teaching (pp. 180-210). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Fried, Robert L. (1995). The passionate teacher. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Freire, Paulo. (1968/1985). Pedagogy of the oppressed. (Myra Bergman Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum. (Original work published in 1968)
- Freire, Paulo. (1987). Letter to North-American teachers (Carman Hunter, Trans.). In Ira Shor (Ed.), Freire for the classroom: A sourcebook for liberatory teaching (pp. 211-214). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Freire, Paulo, & Macedo, Donald. (1987). Literacy: Reading the word and the world. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey.
- Fromm, Erich. (1947). Man for himself. New York: Fawcett.
- Frye, Marilyn. (1983). The politics of reality: Essays in feminist theory. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.
- Fuentes, Carlos. (1981/1988). How I started to write. In Rick Simonson & Scott Walker (Eds.), The Graywolf annual five: Multicultural literacy (pp. 83-111). Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press.
- Fueyo, Judith Macdonald. (1988). Technical literacy versus critical literacy in adult basic education. Journal of Education, 170(1), 107-117.
- Gannett, Cinthia. (1992). Gender and the journal: Diaries and academic discourse. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. (1989, February 26). Whose canon is it, anyway? New York Times Book Review, pp. 1, 44.
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. (1992). Loose canons: Notes on the culture wars. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gee, James Paul. (1987). What is literacy? Teaching & Learning: The Journal of Natural Inquiry, 2(1), 3-11.
- Gee, James. (1990). Social linguistics and literacies. New York: Falmer Press.
- Gibbs, Jeanne. (1994). Tribes: A new way of learning together. Santa Rosa, CA: Center Source Publications.

- Gibson, Rich. (1998). The Michigan social studies standards: Beware the dream censors. Cultural Logic [On-line serial], 1(1) (Retrieved 18 March 1998 from the World Wide Web: <http://eserver.org/clogic/i-1/gibson.html>)
- Giroux, Henry. (1980). Teacher Education and the Ideology of Social Control. Journal of Education, 16(2), 404-420.
- Giroux, Henry A. (1988). Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning. Boston: Bergin & Garvey.
- Giroux, Henry. (1992a). Critical literacy and student experience: Donald Graves' approach to literacy. In Patrick Shannon (Ed.), Becoming political: Readings and writings in the politics of literacy education (pp. 15-20). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Giroux, Henry. (1992b). Border crossings: Cultural workers and the politics of education. New York: Routledge.
- Giroux, Henry. (1992c). Textual authority and the role of teachers as public intellectuals. In C. Mark Hurlbert & Samuel Totten (Eds.), Social issues in the English classroom (pp. 304-321). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Giroux, Henry. (1994). Doing cultural studies: Youth and the challenge of pedagogy. Harvard Educational Review, 64(3), 278-308.
- Goleman, Judith. (1987). Getting there: A freshman course in social dialectics. Journal of Education, 169(3), 48-62.
- Goodman, Ken. (1986). What's whole in whole language?. New York: Scholastic.
- Graves, Donald H. (1983). Writing: Teachers and children at work. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Greco, Norma. (1992, September). Critical literacy and community service: Reading and writing the world. English Journal, 83-85.
- Greene, Maxine. (1978). Landscapes of learning. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Greene, Maxine. (1988). The dialectic of freedom. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Greene, Maxine. (1993). The Passions of Pluralism: Multiculturalism and the Expanding Community. Educational Researcher, 22(1), 13-18.

- Greene, Maxine. (1995). Imagination, community, and the school. In Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Griest, Gary. (1992). English in its postmodern circumstances: Reading, writing, and goggle roving. English Journal, 81(7), 14-18.
- Grumet, Madeleine R. (1987). The politics of personal knowledge. Curriculum Inquiry, 17(3), 319-329.
- Grumet, Madeleine R. (1988). Bitter milk: Women and teaching. Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press.
- Guba & Lincoln. (1989). Fourth generation evaluation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gwaltney, John Langston. (1980/1993). Drylongso: A self-portrait of black America. New York: The New Press.
- Hanh, Thich Nhat. (1987). Being peace (Arnold Kotler, Ed.). Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.
- Hartsock, Nancy. (1979). Feminist theory and the development of revolutionary strategy. In Zillah Eisenstein (Ed.), Capitalist patriarchy and the case for socialist feminism (pp. 56-82). New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Hasbach, Corinna. (1995). The house that feminist imagination builds: Loving presence developing a community of critical friends in teacher education. Dissertation Abstracts International, 56(07A), 2643. (University Microfilms No. AAI9537222)
- Hendricks, Neil. (1996, July). personal communication.
- Heyward, Carter. (1984). Our passion for justice: Images of power, sexuality, and liberation. New York: Pilgrim Press.
- Hillman, James. (1996). The soul's code: In search of character and calling. New York: Random House.
- Hillman, James. (1997, January 30). Interview. The Diane Rheme Show. National Public Radio.
- Hirsch, E. D. (1987). Cultural literacy: What every American needs to know. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- hooks, b. (1984). Feminist theory: From margin to center. Boston, MA: South End Press.

- hooks, b. (1989). Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black. Boston, MA: South End.
- hooks, b. (1990). Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- hooks, bell. (1994a). Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, bell. (1994b). Outlaw culture: Resisting representations. New York: Routledge.
- Hubbard, Ruth Shagoury, & Power, Brenda Miller. (1993). The art of classroom inquiry: A handbook for teacher-researchers. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Humm, M. (1990). The dictionary of feminist theory. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. (1937/1990). Their eyes were watching god: A novel. New York: Harper & Row.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. (1942/1991). Dust tracks on a road: An autobiography. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. (1989). The Ocoee riot. Essence, 19(10), 61-65.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. (1995). The complete stories. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Hynds, Susan. (1990). Reading as a social event: Comprehension and response in the text, classroom, and world. In Deanne Bogdan & Stanley B. Straw (Eds.), Beyond communication: Reading comprehension and criticism, (pp. 237-256). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.
- IRA & NCTE. (1996). Standards for the English language arts. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Jackson, Philip. (1986). The practice of teaching. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Jongsma, Kathleen Stumpf. (1991). Critical literacy. The Reading Teacher, 44(7), 518-519.
- Kanpol, Barry. (1994). Critical pedagogy: An introduction. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

- Kantor, Harvey. (1996/1997). Equal opportunity and the federal role in education: A response to the conservative attack. Rethinking Schools: An Urban Educational Journal, 11(2), 1, 8-12.
- Katz, Michael S. (1982). Critical literacy: A conception of education as a moral right and a social ideal. In Robert B. Everhart (Ed), The public school monopoly: A critical analysis of education and the state of American society (pp. 193-223). Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company.
- Klein, Thomas. (1993). *Facing History* at South Boston High School. English Journal, 82(2), 14-20.
- Knupfer, Anne Meis. (1995). Conflict resolution or "convict revolution"? The problematics of critical pedagogy in the classroom. Urban Education, 30(2), 219-239.
- Kohn, Alfie. (1993). Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise, and other bribes. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Kohn, Alfie. (1996). Beyond discipline: From compliance to community. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Kohn, Alfie. (1998). What to look for in a classroom... and other essays. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kozol, Jonathan. (1991). Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc.
- Kozol, Jonathan. (1995). Amazing grace: The lives of children and the conscience of a nation. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Kramarae, Cheris, & Treichler, Paula A. (1985). A feminist dictionary. London: Pandora Press.
- Kreisberg, Seth. (1992). Transforming power: Domination, empowerment, and education. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Kutz, Eleanor, & Roskelly, Hephzibah. (1991). A unquiet pedagogy: Transforming practice in the English classroom. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Ladson-Billings, Gloria. (1994). The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lankshear, Colin, & McLaren, Peter. (Eds.). (1993). Critical literacy: Politics, praxis, and the postmodern. New York: State University of New York Press.

- Lather, Patti. (1991). Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern. New York: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall.
- Leistyna, Pepi, & Woodrum, Arlie. (1996). Context and culture: What is critical pedagogy? In Pepi Leistyna, Arlie Woodrum, and Stephen A. Sherblom (Eds.), Breaking free: The transformative power of critical pedagogy (pp. 1-7). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review (Reprint Series No. 27).
- Lensmire, Timothy J. (1991). Intention, risk, and writing in a third grade writing workshop. Dissertation Abstracts International, 53(01A), 0089. (University Microfilms No. AAG9216324)
- Lewis, Magda, & Simon, Roger. (1986). A discourse not intended for her: Learning and teaching within patriarchy. Harvard Educational Review, 56(4), 457-472.
- Lopez, Barry. (1989). Crossing open ground. New York: Vintage.
- Macedo, Donaldo P. (1993). Literacy for stupidification: The pedagogy of big lies. Harvard Educational Review, 63(2), 183-206.
- Macrorie, Ken. (1988). The I-search paper: Revised edition of Searching Writing. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- May, Rollo. (1972). Power and innocence. New York: Norton.
- McIntosh, Peggy. (1983). Interactive phases of curricular revision: A feminist perspective. Working Paper No. 124. Wellesley, MA: Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College.
- McIntosh, Peggy. (1988). White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies. Working Paper No. 189. Wellesley, MA: Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College.
- McIntosh, Peggy. (1990). Interactive phases of curricular and personal re-vision with regard to race. Working Paper No. 219. Wellesley, MA: Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College.
- McLaren, Peter. (1989). Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education. New York: Longman.
- McLeod, Alex. (1986). Critical literacy: Taking control of our own lives. Language Arts, 63(1), 37-50.
- Melnick, S., & Zeichner, K. (1994, February). Teacher education for cultural diversity: Enhancing the capacity of teacher education institutions to address diversity

issues. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Chicago, IL.

Michaels, Sarah & O'Connor, Mary Catherine. (1990). Literacy as reasoning within multiple discourses: Implications for policy and educational reform. (Paper prepared as an oral presentation for the Chief State School Officers 1990 Summer Institute). Newton, MA: Literacies Institute at the Education Development Center, Inc.

Michell, Michael. (1994). Michael's story: The struggle to be open minded. In James T. Sears (Ed.), Bound by diversity: Unity emerges from a chorus of different voices (pp. 21-29). Columbia, SC: Sebastian Press.

Middleton, Sue. (1993). Educating feminists: Life histories and pedagogy. New York: Teachers College Press.

Miller, J. B. (1976/1986). Toward a new psychology of women. Boston: Beacon Press.

Millett, Kate. (1970). Sexual politics. New York: Ballantine Books.

Moffett, James. (1968/1983). Teaching the universe of discourse. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Moraga, Cherrie. (1983). Preface. In Cherrie Moraga & Gloria Anzaldua (Eds.), This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color (pp. xiii-xix). New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press.

Morales, Rosario. (1983). We're all in the same boat. In Cherrie Moraga & Gloria Anzaldua (Eds.), This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color (pp.91-93). New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press.

Mora, Pat. (1986). Illegal alien. In Barbara Roche Rico & Sandra Mano (Eds.) (1991), American mosaic: Multicultural readings in context (p. 520). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Mora, Pat. (1986). Legal alien. In Barbara Roche Rico & Sandra Mano (Eds.) (1991), American mosaic: Multicultural readings in context (p. 521). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Morrison, Toni. (1987). Beloved. New York: Knopf.

Murray, Donald. (1979, September). The listening eye: Reflections on the writing conference. College English, 41, 13-18.

Murray, Donald. (1985). A writer teaches writing (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

- NWP. (1997, March). National Writing Project: Annual report, 1996-1997. Berkeley, CA: National Writing Project.
- Newman, Judith M. (1991). Interwoven conversations: Learning and teaching through critical reflection. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Nieto, Sonia. (1992). Affirming diversity: The socio-political context of multicultural education. New York: Longman.
- Nieto, Sonia. (1995). From brown heroes and holidays to assimilationist agendas: Reconsidering the critiques of multicultural education. In Christine E. Sleeter & Peter L. McLaren (Eds.), Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference (pp. 191-220). New York: SUNY Press.
- Nieto, Sonia. (1996). Affirming diversity: The socio-political context of multicultural education (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Longman.
- Nieto, Sonia. (2000). Affirming diversity: The socio-political context of multicultural education (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Longman.
- Noddings, Nel. (1984). Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Noddings, Nel. (1986). Fidelity in teaching, teacher education and research on teaching. Harvard Educational Review, 56(4), 496-510.
- Ohanian, Susan. (1999). One size fits few: The folly of educational standards. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- O'Malley, Susan Gushee, Rosen, Robert C., & Vogt, Leonard. (Eds.). (1990) Politics of education: Essays from Radical Teacher. New York: SUNY Press.
- O'Reilley, Mary Rose. (1993). The peaceable classroom. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Orenstein, Peggy. (1994). SchoolGirls: Young women, self-esteem, and the confidence gap. New York: Doubleday.
- Oxford English Dictionary: Compact Edition (24th printing). (1971/1985). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pagano, Jo Anne. (1990). Exiles and communities: Teaching in the patriarchal wilderness. New York: State University of New York Press.

- Paine, L. (1990). Orientation towards diversity: What do prospective teachers bring? (NCRTL Research report 89-9). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.
- Paley, Vivian Gussin. (1979/1989). White teacher. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Palmer, Parker. (1983/1993). To know as we are known: Education as a spiritual journey. San Francisco: Harper.
- Palmer, Parker. (1997, November/December). The heart of a teacher: Identity and integrity in teaching. Change, 29, 15-21.
- Palmer, Parker. (1998). The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pattison, Robert. (1982). On literacy: The politics of the word from Homer to the age of rock. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Peterson, Bob. (1993). What should kids learn? A teacher looks at E.D. Hirsch's work on "Cultural Literacy." Rethinking Schools: A Urban Educational Journal, 8(2), pp. 1,8-11.
- Peterson, Bob. (1994a). Teaching for social justice: One teacher's journey. In Bill Bigelow, Linda Christensen, Stan Karp, Barbara Miner, & Bob Peterson (Eds.), Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice (pp. 30-33, 35-38). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.
- Peterson, Bob. (1994b). The complexities of encouraging social action. In Bill Bigelow, Linda Christensen, Stan Karp, Barbara Miner, & Bob Peterson (Eds.), Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice (pp. 40-41). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.
- Pinar, William F. (1995). Understanding curriculum: An introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum. New York: Peter Lang.
- Purves, Alan C. (1990). How porcupines make love II: Teaching a response-centered literature curriculum. New York: Longman.
- Putnam, Joyce, & Burke, J. Bruce. (1992). Organizing and managing classroom learning communities. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Reid, Frances. (Producer/Director). (1995). Skin deep: College students confront racism [Film]. (Available from Iris Films, 2600 Tenth Street, Suite 413, Berkeley, CA 94710)

- Rich, Adrienne. (1984). Invisibility in academe. In Adrienne Rich (1986) Blood, bread, and poetry: Selected prose 1979-1985 (pp. 198-201). New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Richards, I. A. (1924/1959). Principles of literary criticism. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co.
- Rivera, John, & Poplin, Mary. (1995). Multicultural, critical, feminine and constructive pedagogies seen through the lives of youth: A call for the revisioning of these and beyond: Toward a pedagogy for the next century. In Christine E. Sleeter & Peter L. McLaren (Eds.), Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference (pp. 221-244). New York: SUNY Press.
- Robinson, Jay L. (1990). What is literacy? In Conversations on the written word: Essays on language and literacy. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, Heinemann Publishers.
- Robinson, Jay L., & Stock, Patricia Lambert. (1989). Literacy as conversation: Classroom talk as text building. In Jay L. Robinson (1990). Conversations on the written word: Essays on language and literacy (pp. 163-238). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Rodriguez, Richard. (1982). Hunger for memory: The education of Richard Rodriguez. New York: Bantam Books.
- Rosaen, Cheryl. (1997, July). Personal communication. (Written response to draft.)
- Rosaen, Cheryl. (1999, September). Personal communication. (Written response to draft.)
- Rosaen, Cheryl. (1999, December). Personal communication. (Written response to draft.)
- Rosenblatt, Louise M. (1938/1991). Literature as exploration (4th ed.). New York: Modern Language Association of America.
- Rosenblatt, Louise M. (1978). The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Roth, Kathleen, & Hasbach, Corinna. (March 1994). Personal communication.
- Sadker, Myra, & Sadker, David. (2000). Teachers, school, and society (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Scholes, Robert. (1985). Textual power: Literary theory and the teaching of English. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

- Schwab, Joseph. (1975, May/June). Learning community. The Center Magazine, 30-44.
- Schwab, Joseph. (1976). Education and the state: Learning community. In Robert M. Hutchins, Mortimer J. Adler, & John Van Doren (Eds.), The Great Ideas Today: 1976 (pp. 234-272). New York: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.
- Schwab, Joseph. (1978). The "impossible" role of the teacher in progressive education. In Ian Westbury & Neil J. Wilkof (Eds.), Science, curriculum, and liberal education: Selected essays (pp. 167-183). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sears, James T. (Ed.). (1992). Sexuality and the curriculum: The politics and practices of sexuality education. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Seidman, I. E. (1991). Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Selden, Raman. (1985). Contemporary literary theory: A reader's guide. Lexington, KT: The University Press of Kentucky.
- Shannon, Patrick. (Ed.). (1992). Becoming political: Readings and writings in the politics of literacy education. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Sheaffer, Robert. (1997). The camel and the needle's eye. [File posted on the World Wide Web]. (Retrieved 11 October 1997 from the World Wide Web: <http://hugin.imat.com/~sheaffer/texts/neeleeeye.html>)
- Shor, Ira. (1986). Educating the educators: A Freirean approach to the crisis in teacher education. Harvard Educational Review, 56(4), 406-424.
- Shor, Ira. (1987). Monday morning fever: Critical literacy and the generative theme of "work." In Ira Shor (Ed.), Freire for the classroom: A sourcebook for liberatory teaching (pp.104-121). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Simon, Roger. (1987). Empowerment as a pedagogy of possibility. Language Arts, 64(4), 370-382.
- Sleeter, Christine E. (1995). An analysis of the critiques of multicultural education. In James A. Banks & Cherry A. McGee Banks (Eds.), Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education (pp. 81-95). New York: Macmillan.
- Sleeter, Christine E., & McLaren, Peter L. (Eds.). (1995). Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference. New York: SUNY Press.

- Smagorinsky, Peter, & Whiting, Melissa E. (1995). How English teachers get taught: Methods of teaching the methods class. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Snow, Catherine E., & Dickinson, David K. (1991). Skills that aren't basic in a new conception of literacy. In Edward M. Jennings & Alan C. Purves (Eds.), Literate systems and individual lives: Perspectives on literacy and schooling. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Stanley, Liz, & Wise, Sue. (1983). Breaking out: Feminist consciousness and feminist research. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul.
- Starhawk. (1987). Truth or dare. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Steinem, Gloria. (1992). Revolution from within: A book of self-esteem. Boston: Little, Brown, & Company.
- Stevens, May. (1980). Taking art to the revolution. Heresies, 3(1), 40-43.
- Stock, Patricia Lambert. (1995). The dialogic curriculum: Teaching and learning in a multicultural society. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Strickland, Kathleen, & Strickland, James. (1993). Un-covering the curriculum: Whole language in secondary and postsecondary classrooms. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Style, Emily. (1998). Curriculum as window and mirror. In Cathy L. Nelson & Kim A. Wilson (Eds.), Seeding the process of multicultural education: An anthology (pp. 149-156). Plymouth, MN: Minnesota Inclusiveness Program.
- Surrey, J. L. (1987). Relationship and empowerment. Work in Progress. Wellesley, MA: Stone Center for Working Papers Series.
- Sykes, Gary, & Bird, Tom. (1992). Teacher education and the case idea (National Center for Research on Teacher Learning Special Report). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.
- Sylvester, Paul Skilton. (1994). Elementary school curricula and urban transformation. Harvard Educational Review, 64(3), 309-331.
- Tannen, Deborah. (1988). Hearing voices in conversation, fiction, and mixed genres. In D. Tannen (Ed.), Linguistics in context: Connecting observations and understanding: Lectures from the 1985 LSA/TESOL and NEH institutes. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp.

- Tannen, Deborah. (1991). Talking voices: Repetition, dialogue, and imagery in conversational discourse. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, Mildred. (1976/1991). Roll of thunder, hear my cry. New York: Puffin Books.
- Taylor, Mildred. (1990). Road to Memphis. New York: Puffin Books.
- Tchudi, Stephen, & Mitchell, Diana. (1989). Explorations in the teaching of English (3rd ed.). New York: Harper Collins.
- Tenorio, Rita. (1994). Race and respect among young children. In Bill Bigelow, Linda Christensen, Stan Karp, Barbara Miner, & Bob Peterson (Eds.), Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice (pp. 24-28). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.
- Terkel, Studs. (1970). Hard times: An oral history of the great depression. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Terkel, Studs. (1974). Working: People talk about what they do all day and how they feel about what they do. New York: Penguin Books.
- Terkel, Studs. (1980). American dreams: Lost and found. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Terkel, Studs. (1984). The good war: An oral history of world war two. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Terkel, Studs. (1992). Race: How blacks and whites think and feel about the American obsession. New York: The New Press.
- Terry, Roderick. (1996). One million strong: A photographic tribute of the million man march & affirmations for the African-American male. Edgewood, MD: Duncan & Duncan.
- Thomas, David. (Ed.). (1995). Teacher's stories. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- van Manen, Max. (1986). The tone of teaching. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann
- van Manen, Max. (1991). The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Villanueva, Victor, Jr. (1993). Bootstraps: From an American academic of color. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Walker, Alice. (1974, May). In search of our mother's gardens. Ms., 2, 64-70+.

- Walker, Alice. (1984). In search of our mothers' gardens: Womanist prose. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Wallace, Ann (Screenwriter), Barnette, Neema (Director). (1989). Zora Is My Name. American Playhouse. WHERE: Public Broadcasting System.
- Ward, Irene. (1994). Literacy, ideology, and dialogue: Towards a dialogic pedagogy. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Weaver, Constance. (1996). Teaching grammar in context. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Weiler, Kathleen. (1988). Women teaching for change: Gender, class and power. Boston, MA: Bergin & Garvey.
- Weiler, Kathleen. (1991, November). Freire and a feminist pedagogy of difference. Harvard Educational Review, 61, 449-473.
- Wells, Gordon. (1992). Language and the inquiry-oriented curriculum. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Council of Teachers of English, Louisville, KY.
- Wigginton, Eliot. (Ed.). (1972). The foxfire book. New York: Anchor Press.
- Winant, Fran. (1980). Dyke jacket: Poems and songs. New York: Violet Press. (As cited in Adams, Carol. (1991). The sexual politics of meat: A feminist-vegetarian critical theory. New York: Continuum. p. 144)
- Wineburg, Samuel S., & Wilson, Suzanne M. (1991). Subject-matter knowledge in the teaching of history. In Jere Brophy (Ed.), Advances in research on teaching (Vol. 2, pp. 305-347). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press Inc.
- Wolcott, Harry F. (1990). On seeking—and rejecting—validity in qualitative research. In Elliot Eisner & Alan Peshkin (Eds.), Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate (pp. 121-152). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Wolk, Ronald A. (1997, May/June). Connections: The human touch. (Editorial). Teacher Magazine, 3.
- Woolf, Virginia. (1922, 25 December). Letter to Gerald Brenan. (As cited in Adams, Carol. (1991). The sexual politics of meat: A feminist-vegetarian critical theory. New York: Continuum. Opening material to book.)
- Wong, Nellie. (1983). When I was growing up. In Cherrie Moraga & Gloria Anzaldua (Eds.), This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color (pp. 7-8). New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press.

Young, Lauren. (1997, February). Personal communication.

Zeichner, K. (1993). Educating teachers for cultural diversity. (NCRTL Special report). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.

Zimmerman, Michael E. (1994). Contesting earth's future: Radical ecology and postmodernity. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Zimmet, Nancy. (1987). More than the basics: Teaching critical reading in high school. In Ira Shor (Ed.), Freire for the classroom: A sourcebook for liberatory teaching (pp. 122-128). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.