

Class Notes – November 21

Opening Activity

- Map of Schools on the board
- Think about your high school experience. How would you feel if you're school was closed?

Discussion

- Think, Pair, Share:
 - What do we choose to memorialize?
 - What is the purpose of a memorial?
 - How do memorials intersect with race and age?
 - Who should decide what we memorialize?
 - What counts as a memorial?
 - With our bodies? With our actions? What constitutes a memorial?
 - Make connection between high school visit and memorializing -- why did we send you to the high schools?
 - Memorializing student activism, why is student activism not memorialized in the same way as other activism? Why is student activism considered most significant for local histories, and not necessarily of national significance? How can we change/challenge that narrative?

Creating a Memorial

- Thought experiment: How can we memorialize these closed high schools?

Discussion Notes:

- Memorial for MOVE bombing? Row homes are condemned currently
- Location of a memorial is important-what does it mean to take a memorial out of its location?
- What constitutes a memorial? Location?
- Memorials in Germany-physical interaction with it (trips over it, etc.)
- Something that interrupts your day. Something happened there--interrupts the natural flow of a landscape, a city, something that is worth remembering happened there
 - Plaques- really easy to miss-not effective memorials
 - Bricks that might trip you (not ideal for those with disabilities) but the idea of forced consciousness, life has to shift because of it
 - Richmond, VA: NPR article--walking the same path everyday for years, didn't take the time to look and stop, didn't notice that she'd passed those monuments for years
- Statues-not effective memorials-can never know they're there
- Is it possible to make an effective memorial, especially if it's about a controversial topic?
- Yet also a power in memorials that are hidden
 - paintings in an LGBT center bathroom--hidden, but special (Keith Haring)
 - the beauty of happenstance
 - challenge what you perceive a space to be; distinct from surroundings
 - Intention: someone intended for it to be there, in this hidden space-the magic of happenstance

- Memorials have a story, have an intention
- Memorials as a form of collective narrative making, story-telling, accountability
- Germany and holocaust vs. memorials in the US
 - in G, sense of accountability-constant reminders so that this never happens again
 - In the US- people see enough distance between themselves and the institution of slavery
- Who should create memorials? Sometimes used as a PR stunt, or private entities for publicity/money making; but should it be the responsibility of those harmed? There is power in a state (like Germany) taking accountability through memorials
- Publicly funded vs. privately funded? Sometimes private entities are just wrong!
- South Africa- Truth and Reconciliation Commission
 - symbolic reparations-the establishment of memorials to violence that people experienced in SA
- What it means to have a process to create these memorials if people are *not* there to create them? (Germany, Jews were mostly not there; in SA, the victims of apartheid still are)
 - memorials are nice, but we want literal reparations for housing, schools, etc.
- How schools name their buildings? I.e. Penn names their buildings in memorial of those with money? People with a lot of money can build these memorials to themselves
- Tension between building a memorial for people who may no longer be in a place vs. those who still are? Make sure building a memorial does not participate in erasure of a community--they are still--gives a notion that it is something of the past, that may no longer need to be funded, no longer need resources
- The naming of towns, rivers after indigenous nations and further perpetuates the idea of erasure; and without their consent
- What about an experience do we memorialize? It's often war and violence
 - memorialize those who died, but not the actions of youth activists
 - As much as brutality needs to be remembered, our agency does, too
 - Fetishization: violence and pain--> erasing the agency
 - Your entire remembered identity is about suffering, not the rest of your identity
- Intergenerational legacy of memorials--what survives?