

STRUGGLES TO TRANSFORM THE SCHOOL

[mixtape](#) | [slides](#)

Highlights from the Readings

Henry Giroux (2001) "Reproduction, Resistance, & Accommodation in the Schooling Process."

"Dominant ideologies are not simply transmitted in schools, nor are they practiced in a void. On the contrary, they are often met with resistance by teachers, students, or parents, and must therefore, to be successful, repress the production of counter-ideologies. Moreover, schools are not simply static institutions that reproduce the dominant ideology, they are active agents in its construction as well" (91). KS

"The concept of resistance represents more than a new heuristic catchword in the language of radical pedagogy--it represents a mode of discourse that rejects traditional explanations of school failure and oppositional behavior. [...] Resistance in this case redefines the causes and meaning of oppositional behavior by arguing that it has little to do with the logic of deviance, individual pathology, learned helplessness (and, of course, genetic explanation), and a great deal to do [...] with the logic of moral and political indignation" (107). KS

Matthey Countryman (2005) "Community Control of the Schools"

"In the meeting [between school board officials and student leaders of the 1967 student walkout], the students presented a number of demands, including the addition of black history courses taught by black teachers, the assignment of black principals to black schools, increased black representation on the school board, exemption from the requirement that students salute the flag, and the removal of police and nonteaching assistants from all schools" (225). KS

"In this sense, entrenched white support for racialized hierarchies within public institutions like the Philadelphia public schools was as much a cause of the urban violence of the late 1960s as black radical activism. The violent talk and acts of black activists in Philadelphia were less the spontaneous explosion of a dream deferred than the cumulative result of the constant interracial tensions and

violence that existed in the city's schools and on the streets of its working class neighborhoods" (255).
KS

"By combining the demand for black studies courses with the call for community control of the public schools in black neighborhoods, BPUM [Black People's Unity Movement] activists were able to shift the focus of black educational advocacy in the city from school desegregation to efforts to raise the quality of schooling in predominantly black schools" (256). KS

Kristina Rizga (2016) "Black Teachers Matter"

"During the civil rights movement, black educators were leaders in fighting for increased opportunity, including more equitable school funding and a greater voice for communities in running schools and districts. But today, as buildings like Germantown High stand shuttered, these changes are slowly being rolled back. In Philadelphia and across the country, scores of schools have been closed, radically restructured, or replaced by charter schools. And in the process, the face of the teaching workforce has changed. In one of the most far-reaching consequences of the past decade's wave of education reform, the nation has lost thousands of experienced black teachers and principals." KS

"There are so many layers to this pattern of destruction,' Robin Roberts, the parent of three children in Philadelphia's public schools and a physical therapist for the district, told me. "Germantown is such a tight-knit, established community. There is old blood. Collected history. Gorgeous brownstones. And you rip that school out, leaving a huge open lot. No security. It's dead energy, and it invites people and events that you have no control over. Property values of folks living there go down. When a community has a vibrant, living, interactive school, property values increase. Houses look better. All of these closures--its erasure of history of these established communities." KS

Susan Booyesen (ed.) (2016) *Fees Must Fall: Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa.*

"Driven by Frantz Fanon's belief that '...decolonisation, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder' (Fanon 1963: 36), #RhodesMustFall changed the nature of transformation discourse to a broader discussion of access and the success of black students in an institution seen as colonial/apartheid artefact disrupting their progress. [...] Fallism should be understood as the reinvigorated process in which the decolonisation project has been renewed in the higher education system and in society at large" (58-59). KS

“To understand the Must Fall movement’s spread to Euro-America through the lens of Gramsci, Foucault or Marx is already to misunderstand it. Certainly, ‘traditional’ theory can illuminate certain aspects of the movement, but it cannot capture its anti-hegemonic and unmistakably Southern bent. ‘Fallism’ is a nascent, complicated and emerging viewpoint, combining aspects of decolonial thought, black consciousness, radical feminism, and pan-Africanism” (82). KS

Eve L. Ewing (2018) “Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago’s South Side”

“*Institutional mourning* is the social and emotional experience undergone by individuals and communities facing the loss of a shared institution they are affiliated with--such as a school, church, residence, neighborhood, or business district--especially when those individuals or communities occupy a socially marginalized status that amplifies their reliance on the institution or its significance in their lives” (127). KS

“A school closing is much more than the loss of an interchangeable building. It can be a harbinger of things to come, the culmination of multiple generations of racism and injustice and a blatant disregard of the fundamental reality within which a community understands itself. A school closure can thus be a devastating event, that leaves an indelible emotional aftermath” (127). KS

Movement for Black Lives (2016) “A Vision for Black Lives”

“Inequitable funding at the school district, local and state level leave most public schools--where poor communities of color are the majority--unable to provide adequate and high quality education for all students...” KS

“Under the current U.S. constitution, education is not a constitutional right, which means that states within the U.S. make their own laws and allocate their little-to-no resources for public schools. As a result, education in this country is grossly unequal and underfunded.” KS

This American Life. “The Problem We All Live With”

“Your zip code is that anchor that traps you.” KS

“With *Brown v. Board of Education*, we as a nation decided that segregated schooling violated the constitutional rights of black children. We promised that we would fix this wrong. And when it proved difficult, as we knew it would be, we said integration failed instead of the truth, which is that it was working, but we decided that it wasn’t worth the trouble.” KS

Precious Knowledge

Stefano Harney & Fred Moten. (2013). The University and the Undercommons

“To enter this space [the undercommons] is to inhabit the ruptural and enraptured discoloration of the commons that fugitive enlightenment enacts, the criminal, matricidal, queer, in the cistern, on the stroll of the stolen life, the life stolen by enlightenment and stolen back, where the commons give refuge, where the refuge gives the commons. What the beyond of teaching is really about is not finishing oneself, not passing, not completing’ its it’s about allowing subjectivity to be unlawfully overcome by others, a radical passion and passivity such that one becomes unfit for subjection...” (28) RH

“... to be a critical academic in the university is to be against the university, and to be against the university is always to recognize it and be recognized by it, and to institute the negligence of that internal outside, that unassimilated underground, a negligence of it that is precisely, we must insist, the basis of the professions.” (31) RH

“It cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, to be in but not of--this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university” (26). KS

“To distance oneself professionally through critique, is this not the most active consent to privatize the social individual? The undercommons might by contrast be understood as wary of critique, wary of it, and at the same time dedicated to the collectivity of its future, the collectivity that may come to be its future. (38) RH

Abigail Boggs et al. (2019). Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation

“One of the defining features of the university in the U.S. context is the accumulation of lands, lives, resources, and relationships. The university’s appearance of necessity is no mere mirage but rather the effect of its centrality within settler colonial and racial capitalist regimes of accumulation. To turn the university into an object of analysis, a site of intervention, and a resource to be exploited, abolitionist university studies needs to account for the shifting regimes of accumulation that constitute the university as such” (3) KS

“To think through the university through an abolitionist mode entails approaching our study of and relationship to such institutions through a combination of social critique and a willingness to struggle to think and build the impossible. We have chosen this name, a name that positions the university as the object of abolition, in an effort to short-circuit the university’s claims of a priori goodness, as a way of making the university newly available for thinking. For us, an abolitionist approach is one which confronts the foundational epistemological and material violences of the U.S. state, liberalism, and capitalism” (4). KS

“To refuse and replace narratives of university history conditioned by white settler memory, an abolitionist university studies highlights counter-memories from the perspectives of people such as Native Americans, who have been involved in worldmaking projects alternative to liberal-capitalist modernity, and whose perspectives have been obscured or elided in the dominant narratives. Putting their counter-memories in conversation with contemporary movements for liberation offers avenues for building an abolition university.” (12) RH

Bettina Love. (2019) Abolitionist Teaching, Freedom Dreaming, and Black Joy

“Abolitionist teaching starts with freedom dreaming, dreams grounded in a critique of injustice. These dreams are not whimsical, unattainable daydreams, they are critical and imaginative dreams of collective resistance” (101). KS

“Freedom dreaming gives teachers a collective space to methodically tear down the education survival complex and collectively rebuild a school system that truly loves all children and sees schools as children’s homeplaces where students are encouraged to give this world hell” (102). KS

“Finding joy in the midst of pain and trauma is the fight to be fully human” (119). KS

“Restorative Justice in School: An Overview”

Class Notes by JMC

Readings:

Giroux

Up South

Black Teachers Matter

Fees Must Fall - decolonizing the university and societies around the world

Podcast - contemporary segregation

Precious Knowledge (documentary) - Mexican American studies in Arizona

Abolitionism in the context of schooling: Bettina Love, Abolitionist University Studies

Orientations

What have been some of the dominant ways of theorizing The School?

- Giroux - Progression of different theories around cultural reproduction in schools
- If we change the replication of power in schools, what do we replace it with? Or is it possible to create a school that is free of hegemony?
 - “Critique is a... way of imagining oneself is outside of the system, a self-valorization”
 - Critique is necessary, too, to imagine an “otherwise”
 - We have to hold all these things in tension

How do these theories of schooling relate to configurations of power and the relationships between schools, individual actors, collectivities, the state, and society?

- Physical set-up of schools: metal detectors, policing, gates, lead in the water; continued displacement (e.g. Germantown High, West Philadelphia High School, Bok High School)
 - Eve Ewing: Institutional mourning following the loss of institutional spaces. Closures of schools are not just about buildings - culmination of history of racism and a harbinger of things to come (see pg. 127)
- Physical set-up of university: built upon land belonging to indigeneous people
- The Hidden Curriculum - schools teaching students to comply vs. schools teaching engagement, creativity, confidence, etc.

- Discussions of Integration (This American Life, Up South)
 - Who should hold decision-making power? Regarding closures and school integration, communities should get to make decisions about things that affect them.
 - Integration very visible/dominant in conversations as the solution to educational inequality. But Up South discusses Black Nationalist approach - separatism, more resources for predominantly black schools, elevation of Black leadership.
 - Nikole Hannah-Jones (Podcast) - subtext of integration at times can be that proximity to white students is good for outcomes, BUT the reality is that access to resources (which have been attached to white communities) is good for educational outcomes.

What have been some of the struggles to transform or provide alternatives to The School as we know it? What were their challenges and limitations? What can we learn from these examples?

- How have we pushed back? How have we also been complicit?
- Communities can also make decisions to exclude people and to cause harm
- Neoliberal approach to education (Ewing)
- School building is actually very isolating - is this a result of teacher individuality or the structure of schooling?
- Educational Survivor Complex (Bettina Love) - Education built on the oppression of indigenous and Black students. Students learning to survive; schools as a training site for a life of exhaustion. We begin to think that there is something permanent/acceptable about educational inequality (Pg. 27)

What could/should The School, teaching/learning look like given the needs of our societies and world?

- Does a co-op model work? Community controlled schools - students co-create the curriculum and help make decisions about the school. Easier to implement in non-formal education spaces
- Community Organizing
- Anti-racist training for teachers at the Caucus

What ways of being/becoming does abolitionism offer us and how does it inform our praxis?

- We can interrogate where we are, we can theorize our reality, but if we are trying to construct a new reality, the key question is *what do we do?*
- Restorative Justice
- Ella Baker - co-creation of spaces with students and activists, sustaining relationships
- Retention of teachers of color, teachers focused on equality; protection and accountability
- System creates people who feel like they are entitled to every space and others who feel they are unfit for subjectivity. What about staying outside biopower, refusing to participate in system, remain indiscernible? (quote from Arnie)
- Think globally, act locally

- Education beyond the school, building alternative systems - e.g. Abolition University in Hawaii, local movements
 - Why are we talking so much about schools? We know them to be violent, why give them so much power? Schools reproduce power and ideology. Schools are also powerful centers for community. “University’s appearance of necessity is no mere mirage” (pgs. 3 -4 in Abolitionist University Studies article); “It cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment” (Harney and Moten, pg. 26)

*Talk tomorrow on abolitionist university building - See Prof. Strong’s email!

*On Saturday, Melanated Educators is having their annual conference on Saturday. Bettina Love is the keynote!

*Nicole Hannah-Jones speaking next week!

Learning about Podcasts

Things to pay attention to:

- Quality differences
- Balanced sound/volume
- Music - setting the tone, emotion, matching content
- Voice - relaxed conversational natural
- Sound effects - location/geographic
- Introductions
 - Name/guests
 - Poem
 - Key moments hook

How much of aesthetics are related to recording technique versus editing?

*Tutorial on Canvas

*Can also take course on Lynda.com