

In Conversation... Writing Towards an Antiracist Curriculum

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1: Key Terms

1. **Anti-racism-** Actively seeking to identify, call out, interrogate and dismantle and eradicate harmful and oppressive beliefs, practices and ideologies on an individual and systemic level
2. **Whiteness-**
 - White (Anglo Saxon) cultural practices and beliefs, norms, traditions, language, physical attributes/ standards of beauty etc being depicted as normal, universal and the standard by which all others are judged
 - Whiteness is a way of being, doing and thinking. Someone who has internalised 'whiteness' believes 'white culture, history, intellectual scholarship, institutional practices/standards etc' is the standard that everyone must aspire to
 - Internalising whiteness means that you understand yourself as the eternal teacher and all others, the perpetual learner
 - Whiteness typically benefits cis-gendered, able-bodied/minded, middle class, heterosexual white men.
 - Within the colonial logic of whiteness, the further you are from this archetype the more you are rendered 'the other' and 'inferior' and thus susceptible to institutional and systemic marginalisation, oppression and violence
 - Black and other racialised groups can also internalise and perpetuate whiteness
3. **Power-** 'The ability to make things happen with access to the means of doing so' (Gordon, 2021:21)
4. **Racism-** Discriminatory beliefs and practices against people of a different race and ethnicity, in the belief that their characteristics, abilities and qualities are inferior

Prejudice + Discrimination + Power = Racism

5. **Solidarity-** 'At the core of solidarity is mutual aid: the idea that we give our platform, time, resources, legitimacy and skills to one another. We become accomplices, saboteurs, and disrupters on each others' behalf' (Olufemi,2020: 136).

2: Decolonising Knowledge

At the heart of decolonising knowledge are 3 guiding principles

1. The desire to create balance
2. To change the terms of engagement with white Eurocentric knowledge
3. The desire to heal the colonial wound (the ever-present physical, mental, spiritual, political, and economic experience and consequences of slavery, colonialism and imperialism)

Decolonising knowledge means that we no longer understand or depict a

- ❖ white/ Eurocentric
- ❖ cis-gendered,
- ❖ middle class

- ❖ heterosexual
- ❖ able bodied/minded male

perspective as 'universal' or the measure by which, we value other forms of knowledge. we need to be able to hold multiple forms of systematic forms of oppression in juxtaposition and understand how they intersect and interlock with one another

Decolonising knowledge also requires that we no longer conform to white Eurocentric hegemony regarding; sites of knowledge production and our accepting of who the 'producers' and 'gatekeepers' of knowledge are.

Decolonising knowledge requires us to internalise the reality that knowledge outside this paradigm should not exclusively be utilised as reactionary to white eurocentrism. Neither does it exist as a form of justification. All human beings possess the capacity to think, invent, innovate, theorise and reproduce.

Knowledge from black, brown and other racialised groups (west/ global south) must not be inherently conceptualised and labelled as backwards and a primitive articulation of western/Eurocentric thought.

We must engage with communities, peoples, cultures, traditions etc on their own terms. We must learn how to respectfully learn from and harvest fruit from every part of the world.

The process of decolonising knowledge requires us to continue the anti-racist work of undoing and unlearning harmful ideas that we have been socialised into believing since childhood. This is a life- long journey.

Decolonising, more generally, requires the individual to reconnect with their mind and body. This is not exclusively an intellectual exercise. We must constantly struggle to be holistically present.

My definition draws heavily from the work of Louis Yako (see bibliography below)

Bibliography

Gordon, L., 2021. *Freedom, justice, and decolonization*. New York: Routledge.

Olufemi, L., 2020. *Feminism, Interrupted: Disrupting Power*. London: Pluto Press.

Yako, L., 2021. *Decolonizing Knowledge Production: a Practical Guide - CounterPunch.org*. [online] CounterPunch.org. Available at: <<https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/04/09/decolonizing-knowledge-production-a-practical-guide/>> [Accessed 13 May 2021].

Decolonising the curriculum reference sheet

Whilst it is not possible to explore all of the following at the same time, try to pick a section and follow it consistently throughout the unit/ theme/ particular lesson

- Some may inform your pedagogy/ rhetoric
- Some may be ideas that you will explore with your students

Others may be questions/ themes you ask them to reflect upon beyond the lesson and ask them to consider if and when this occurs in other subjects

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Insider- The world being addressed within traditional engagement

Outsider- How we begin to decolonise

What is the hidden event?- Analyse through a socio-political narrative

- What do we need to 'dig up' in order to complicate the dominant narrative?
- What narratives, acts and realities of violence are being silenced?
- What realities of violence have gone un-mourned?
- What is the 'other life' that all the luxury/ comfort and privilege is predicated on?
- What unsaid and 'hidden' truths needs to be dug up in order to complicate the dominant narrative?

How can we animate the inanimate?

- Analyse the words in the text and their deployment

How can we recentre the story to that of the 'other'

Take an intersectional approach

- Gender
- Race/ Nationality
- Class
- Sexual orientation
- Physical and Psychological ability

Interlocking

- How do they give life, prop up and galvanise one another?
- How do they interrelate with each other?

What does the language used transmit? (Link to recentring other section)

- What ideas are being transported as normal?
- What power dynamics are at play?
- Who/ what is being expropriated or exploited (before during and after the event in question)?

"Allow the flesh to speak"- Allow for the telling of one's own story

- ❖ Engage in first-hand accounts and narratives
- ❖ Eg/ Interviews, extracts from primary resources (autobiographies, memoirs, engage with the voices within that period/ context and time)
- ❖ This also includes students sharing their individual and historical experience

Key Questions that seek to complicate the Narrative

These sets of questions were devised by Womanist theologian Wil Gafney (who engages, interprets and critiques the Bible from a black woman's perspective). Gafney like other Womanist theologians takes a tri-dimensional approach, in which she interlocks gender, race and class whilst engaging with biblical scripture. Within her writings and meditations she considers the following question.

Where it is highlighted in pink insert a group of marginalised people in society/ within your particular context and let this be the consistent theme within the lesson, part of the lesson, unit

1. Who is speaking and/or active?
2. Where are women and girls speaking, what are they doing, and what are their names?
3. When women or other marginalized characters speak and act, whose interests are they serving?
4. Who (and where) are the characters without which the story could not have unfolded as articulated?
5. What are the power dynamics in the narrative?
6. What are the ethical implications of the text when read from the perspective of the dominant character(s)?
7. What are the ethical implications of previous (especially traditional) readings of the text for black women?
8. How have black women historically related to the text?
9. In what ways do the contemporary circumstances of black women readers shape new and renewed interpretations?
10. How do the values articulated in the text and its interpretation affect the well-being of the communities that black women inhabit?
12. Is the construction of the text invested in the wellbeing, flourishing and wholeness of all members of society (including marginalised groups) and if so, to what extent
 - Are the inherent worth of members of society being reflected in the text/ interpretation of the text?
13. Is the construction of the text invested in the wellbeing, flourishing and wholeness of all members of society in relation to
 - Land (ownership/ rights to land)
 - Nation
 - The environment (Ecological issues)