

“For the **master's tools** will never **dismantle the master's house**. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.”

- Audre Lorde

Audre Lorde's quote is the basis of my teaching philosophy. I believe in bringing about change; students must be empowered not to reinvent the wheel but rather to imagine a world without the wheel and build something new. As an educator, I play a crucial role as the catalyst for said change. I encourage my students not only to dream of a culturally open environment but to create one from which strong leaders emerge.

As an educator, my research and practice focus heavily on the decolonization of theatre academia, curriculum reconstruction, centering students' voices, and expanding what we teach in the theatre classroom. The higher education system has long relied on a top-down learning structure. Top-down structures have traditionally forced anyone outside white cis-het standards to conform to that homogeneity. Those standards are detrimental to the mental and emotional well-being of marginalized communities and make progress and learning difficulties in the classroom. To combat that specific conformity and homogeneity, I construct my courses, policies, guidelines, and practices with various anti-racist and liberatory pedagogies and practices in mind. In using Emergent Strategies, Restorative Practices, Anti-Racist Workshopping, and bell hooks' Pedagogy of Freedom - to name a few - I teach from an Anti-Racist pedagogical approach. To teach an anti-racist tradition, I believe teachers must do the following to challenge this traditional model of academia.

Teachers must establish an open learning community culture: In my classrooms, I embrace the bell hooks practice of an Open Learning Community, a radical pedagogical approach that recognizes that everyone influences the classroom dynamic. In its simplest terms: everyone contributes. To create an open learning community, I work to dismantle notions of status. To do so, I foster a community where not only do we learn together but also grow together as one and support one another. My students know that while I, as the instructor, am responsible for their education and fostering a safe learning space, they also hold responsibility. Responsibility to their instructor, themselves, and the communal space we build and learn together within. My courses seek to eliminate status so the community may learn together and move from a place of love and care. I work to expand the curriculum and reconstruct teaching and learning to center the student.

To center the student, however, does not mean to decenter the instructor. What it does mean is to share power and remove ego from learning. ***Teachers must decenter the ego.*** One of the core tenants in my course community agreements is “Embrace ignorance and extend grace.” Ignorance is defined as a lack of knowledge. Thus we are all ignorant of something. Students in my courses embrace that definition and work together to extend grace when someone is ignorant

of something, creating a safe space where we can all learn free of judgment. No one knows everything; together, we know a lot. My students learn through embracing ignorance to acknowledge mistakes and make amends if necessary. When we embrace this practice of embracing ignorance, we remove ego from the equation. When I, as the instructor, remove ego, I remove the pressures of having to “know it all” from the equation. I teach my students that “I don’t know.” can be and is a correct answer to a question. However, they should never stop there. I encourage my students to have an insatiable curiosity for life and how things are, so if they don’t know something, they should seek out the answer, if not for anyone but themselves.

Teachers must work to “complete the canon” and teach an expansive curriculum. Students in my courses engage with texts outside the traditional western canon. I challenge their definitions of theatre by exploring various modes of textual analysis, engaging in conversations around the meaning of the play, exploring history, culture, and language in our analytical process, and exploring the relationship between spectator and player. In teaching outside the traditionally taught canon, I teach modules on: “Magical Realism, The Home and Family within Latinx Communities,” “Intergenerational Memory and Trauma in AAPI Storytelling,” “Shange and Her Contemporaries,” “The Black Arts Movement and Black Theatre Traditions.” When students learn within a more expansive curriculum, they learn how to expand their ideas of theatre beyond the traditional white American theatre systems.

In my courses, students will encounter a variety of methodologies, including new alternatives such as Black Acting Methodology, different approaches to dramatic structures and script analysis for plays of the Global Majority, and Anti Racist workshopping methods. Embracing alternative teaching methods and alternative methods of providing feedback and criticism gives frequent opportunities for growth in the classroom, thus reducing student stress and their need to perfect and please the instructor. ***Teachers need to teach alternative methods.***

Outside of coursework, equitable practices are crucial to students’ success. As a student who grew up financially challenged and without access to materials to succeed, I ensure that my resources and accessibility become my students’ resources and accessibility when formulating materials and reading lists for coursework. ***Teachers must provide access to their students.***

My work does not stop once my students/collaborators and I part. The work I ask my students and o engage with agitates and questions, and sometimes place them in uncomfortable places to show them that the only action they must seek is revolution. They must work not only to shake systems of oppression but dismantle them and build alternatives. One such community guideline in my course is: *Dismantling systems of oppression, building alternatives, and cultural change is difficult but also rewarding, necessary, and benefits everyone.* Whether my students’ activism and assault on oppression begins or continues once they leave my classrooms, I hope that their work, as artists and as people, contributes to collective liberation. Equity, diversity, and inclusion

are not the goals but the tools provided to achieve liberation. To that end, ***teachers must teach that liberation is possible.***

Liberation is a marathon; it is the removal of systems of oppression, dismantling the master's house, and forging a new community that is accepting of all. Liberation means feminist rights, Black rights, LGBTQIA rights, differently abled rights, and more exist *together*. Liberation entails freedom, and Freedom is not real if everyone cannot exercise it. Liberation is a collective effort, and theatre is a collaborative art form. Theatre is liberating, and artists can be liberators. I must provide liberation to my students at every chance I get, for they will continue to build the future so that my children, and their children, and so on can experience true liberation . . . whenever that may come.