SOCIAL JUSTICE MODELS FOR CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT

MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY
FEBRUARY 2017
QUESTIONS FACING EDUCATORS

• What is social justice?
• How are identities, experiences, and structures of intertwined with social justice in our institutional context?
• Why does social justice matter?
• What can individuals and communities do to develop socially just outcomes?

What is Social Justice?
TOO OFTEN WE BEHAVE AS THOUGH THESE ARE NOT QUESTIONS, BUT RATHER AS THOUGH WE ARE CERTAIN OF THE ANSWERS.
AUDACIOUS HUMILITY

1. What truths are missing here?

2. How can we adjudicate between multiple points of view?

3. How has my own thinking been disrupted?

4. Are there solutions for all problems?

5. How do my solutions generate new problems?
A FEW PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT
PRINCIPLE 1

COURAGE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL THE VIRTUES, BECAUSE WITHOUT COURAGE YOU CAN'T PRACTICE ANY OTHER VIRTUE CONSISTENTLY.

- DR. MAYA ANGELOU
“What does this mean for our work?”

— YOU ASK
CLEAR-EYED ASSESSMENT OF WHERE WE ARE.
In this moment...

Many of the young people we work with longer know what it means to be sane.

YES, ALL LIVES MATTER
BUT WE'RE FOCUSED ON THE BLACK ONES RIGHT NOW, OK?
BECAUSE IT IS VERY APPARENT THAT OUR JUDICIAL SYSTEM DOESN'T KNOW THAT.
PLUS, IF YOU CAN'T SEE WHY WE'RE EXCLAIMING #BLACKLIVESMATTER
YOU ARE PART OF THE PROBLEM.
THE MADDENING IS ORDINARY.
UTTERLY ORDINARY.
Unarmed black people were killed by police at 5x the rate of unarmed whites in 2015.
Rates of unarmed people killed by police per million people in the United States.

Data from Jan 1 through Dec 31, 2015

Source: MappingPoliceViolence.org; US Census 2014

EVIDENCE IS EVERYWHERE.
Whites' confidence in local police highest on record

How much confidence do you have in police officers in your community to treat blacks and whites equally: A great deal, a fair amount, just some, or very little confidence? Results show % saying they have a "great deal" of confidence

- 1995
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- Aug. 2014
- Sept. 2014
- Dec. 2014

Among Whites

Among African Americans

BUT SOMEHOW, WE DON’T ALL SEE IT.
Police Are Most Likely to Use Deadly Force Against...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Whites</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A black person</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A white person</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race doesn’t matter</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: CBS News*
GRIEF AND ANGER OF SOME IS DEFINED AS THE TROUBLE.
AND BEING HATED IS THE NEW NORMAL

Average feelings toward social groups on a 0-100 scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gays &amp; Lesbians</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2016 American National Election Study Pilot
THE MONKEY CAGE
AND BEING BANNED FEELS LIKE A DAILY POSSIBILITY

Trump Rescinds Rules on Bathrooms for Transgender Students

By JEREMY W. PETERS, JO BECKER and JULIE HIRSCHFELD DAVIS  FEB. 22, 2017
VULNERABILITY IS REAL

Trump is set to introduce a new ‘Muslim ban.’ This one is nonsense, too.

By Greg Sargent  February 21
AS IS THE SENSE OF TRAUMA MANY FEEL
REMEMBER ... AUDACIOUS HUMILITY

1. What truths are missing here?

2. How can we adjudicate between multiple points of view?

3. How has my own thinking been disrupted?

4. Are there solutions for all problems?

5. How do my solutions generate new problems?
PRINCIPLE 2

INVITE QUESTIONS RATHER THAN OFFER ANSWERS
WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD WE ASK?

"There will never be a n***** at SAE..."
WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD WE ASK?
WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD WE ASK?
Nurturing curiosity is an absolute good within participatory democracy.

Questions are generative rather than final.

"The kind of role that I tried to play was to pick up pieces or put together pieces out of which I hoped organization might come. My theory is, strong people don't need strong leaders"

- Ella Baker
HOW DID WE GET HERE?
WE ARE WHITER

1995 to 2009
People ages 18-24 who were white 68% to 62%.
White share of freshman slots at the USA's most elite colleges 77% to 75%.

2011 full-time professors
84% white (60% white men),
4% Black
3% Hispanic,
8% Asian/Pacific Islander,
<1% percent American Indian/Alaska Native
Our class divide is more stark

Few Poor Students Attend Top Schools

Nearly three-quarters of students entering tier 1 colleges and universities come from the wealthiest families, but only 3 percent of students from the bottom quartile enter top schools. Far more students from poorer backgrounds enroll in less prestigious schools, and even more in community colleges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socioeconomic Status of Entering College Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School prestige level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Colleges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WE READ LESS AND RISK LESS

Proportion of American teens who "never" or "hardly ever" read tripled since 1984.

High stakes testing and admissions.

Tuition costs.

Proficiency over passion.

Success over exploration.
Social Media Changed Our Lives

REDEFINED PUBLIC V. PRIVATE SPACE.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION.

ANONYMITY AND INTERVENTION?

So you got drunk at a party and two people take advantage of you, that's not rape you're just a loose drunk slut #BiasedResults #Steubenville
At a time when we need to understand one another across difference, connect contemporary outcomes to historical trajectories, and craft unique solutions to complex problems.

Our colleges are more economically and racially homogenous.

Education is increasingly defined by narrow measures of performance.

Our lives are increasingly mediated by technology.
Bipartisan Tillis bill establishing protections for victims of state-run eugenics becomes law

By Ripon Advance News Service  |  October 17, 2016

President Barack Obama recently signed legislation into law that U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC) co-authored to establish protections for living eugenics victims receiving compensation payments.

From the 1920s to the 1970s, compulsory sterilization laws and state-run eugenics victimized 60,000 Americans. North Carolina became the first state to create a victim compensation fund for victims of forced sterilization in 2013.

The Treatment of Certain Payments in Eugenics Compensation Act, S. 1698, would exclude eugenics compensation payments from eligibility determinations for federal safety net programs like Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program and Social Security programs.
“Why?”
—YOU ASK
STRATEGY AND HISTORY TEACH

• Enemies and friends are not permanent, interests are.
• Learning and change must be incentivized, not punished.
• It is easy to get miss the target of social change when building movement.
• I am human, therefore nothing human can be alien to me.
LONGLONG BEFORE PRESIDENTTRUMP

FELON DISFRANCHISEMENT affected Approximately

Disenfranchisement Restrictions

- No Restriction
- Inmates Only
- Inmates & Parolees
- Inmates, Parolees, and Probationers
- Inmates, Parolees, Probationers, and Some or All Ex-Felons

Approximately 5.85 million Americans in December 2010...
At least 5100 children who are presently in foster care whose parents have been detained or deported.
Long before President Trump
PRINCIPLE 4
CREATE AND SUPPORT INTENTIONALLY INCLUSIVE, DIVERSE COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACES
• Isolation creates intolerance.

• Arendt: loneliness is the foundation of totalitarianism.

• Meaningful inclusion must be created with intention and reinforced with values and resources at all levels.
We all want and are willing to sacrifice for, accurate, meaningful, and mutual recognition of our humanity and uniqueness. Part of our collective work is to provide space and tools for this just recognition to occur.
DEmOCRACY, LIKE COLLEGE, IS SUPPOSED TO BE HARD.

We are supposed to encounter ideas and experiences that make us uncomfortable, challenge our sense of self, force us to think differently, and disrupt our worldview.
Ideas Matter

- Education, not income, had greater explanatory power in 2016 election choices. This tells us there is something about education that is distinct and interesting.

- Higher education is increasingly a “luxury” item.
PRINCIPLE 5
BE AN ENGINE OF FUN, CREATIVITY, OPTIMISM AND JOY!
“Why?”

—YOU ASK
OPTIMISM MOTIVATES ACTION - FEAR MOTIVATES WITHDRAWAL

- MLK called for “creative maladjustment”

- To be an artist is to believe you can create something wholly new out of existing material.

- This requires *playful* attitude even in dire circumstances.
Get Creative!

Almost always, the creative dedicated minority has made the world better.

--Martin Luther King, Jr.
BECAUSE THE ARTIST RESPECTS NO ARBITRARY BOUNDARY.
BECAUSE THE ARTIST REFUSES TO BE INVISIBLE.
Because the artist refuses to be silent.
FIVE PRINCIPLES IN REVIEW

1. COURAGE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT VIRTUE, BE COURAGEOUS!

2. INVITE QUESTIONS RATHER THAN OFFER ANSWERS

3. DEFEAT BAD IDEAS AND PRACTICES RATHER THAN BAD PEOPLE

4. CREATE AND SUPPORT INTENTIONALLY INCLUSIVE, DIVERSE COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACES

5. BE AN ENGINE OF FUN, CREATIVITY, OPTIMISM AND JOY!
I REMAIN OPTIMISTIC ABOUT OUR ABILITY TO THRIVE IN OUR PERSONAL, COLLECTIVE, AND INSTITUTIONAL BODIES.

NO EASY ANSWERS.
No matter how good our intentions, how well resourced our actions, how engaged our campuses. Failure is certain. So do not be afraid.
DEMOCRACY IS MESSY.
MAKE A MESS.
Thank you