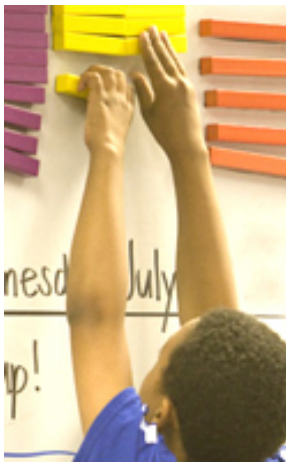




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Imagining and Enacting Inclusive
Teaching as Liberatory Praxis
In a Politically Divisive Era

Camille M. Wilson

University of Michigan

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Imagining and Enacting Inclusive Teaching as Liberatory Praxis
In a Politically Divisive Era

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Abstract:

U.S. teachers are often socialized to believe that teaching should be a politically neutral practice whereby they avoid articulating or advocating for political stances. In this essay, the myth of political neutrality in teaching is critiqued as the author explains how teaching is inherently political and emphasizes the need for teachers to imagine and enact inclusive teaching as liberatory praxis. The author points to U.S. political shifts and changing federal policy in education as catalysts for the social and cultural exclusion of vulnerable children of color. She also marshals recent media profiles that reveal how schoolchildren are navigating increasingly xenophobic and divisive climates that threaten their educational well-being. Critical pedagogy scholarship is drawn upon to assert the value of inclusive teaching and its potential to benefit students and counter oppression. The essay concludes with strategies for supporting educators' inclusive praxis and resistance.

INTRODUCTION

U.S. teachers are often socialized to believe that teaching should be a politically neutral practice whereby they avoid articulating or advocating for political stances. In this essay, I critique the myth of political neutrality in teaching, explain how teaching is inherently political, and emphasize the need for teachers to imagine and enact inclusive teaching as liberatory praxis that links to the sociocultural and political realities of children's lives. Inclusive teaching involves teachers having a critical awareness of, and sensitivity to, broad power dynamics, along with understanding their and their students' positional power, or lack thereof. In addition to taking pedagogical steps to empower marginalized students, inclusive teaching bolsters all students along a path of learning, growth, and self-definition rather than attempting to sort or mold them in cookie cutter ways that reify the status quo.

In the sections below, I specifically point to U.S. political shifts and changing federal policy in education as catalysts for the social and cultural exclusion of vulnerable children of color. Such shifts include an intensifying politics of exclusion and disposability as exemplified by the rising normalization of anti-Black, anti-immigrant, Islamophobic, and other hateful injustices apparent across the U.S. and in the nation's public schools. I also marshal recent media profiles that reveal how schoolchildren are navigating increasingly xenophobic and oppressive climates that threaten their educational well-being. In addition, I draw upon critical pedagogy scholarship to assert the value of inclusive teaching and its potential to benefit students and counter oppression. This essay was inspired by the *TeachingWorks* 2016-17 speaker series, titled: "Inside Teaching: A Powerful Force for Equity"—a series I contributed to along with other top scholars and José Luis Vilson, an accomplished, inclusive teacher of mathematics in New York City and author.¹ I conclude the essay by overviewing strategies for supporting educators' inclusive praxis and resistance.

MYTHS OF TEACHING NEUTRALITY

The idea that schools constitute a positive, safe, cheerful, and inclusive space in which all children can learn and excel is a myth, as is the notion that all teachers are fully committed to well educating all children. The idea that even the teachers who do have equity-oriented commitments should strive to teach students by only engaging the contexts and curriculum of the schoolhouse and ignore the controversies, hard dialogue, and struggles of students' everyday life is faulty as well (Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Rojas & Liou, 2017). The reality is that the macro-politics and aggressions of greater society where people are imprinted with bias, fear, misperceptions, and stereotypes of others matter. As do the instances of people having disdain for those—including children—they deem as inferior or pathologically different. These realities especially affect the lives of students from marginalized groups and influence their consciousness, identities, and how they interpret and experience teaching, learning, and school life (Andrews, Richmond, & Stroupe, 2017; Bartolomé, 1994; Gale, Mills & Cross, 2017; Nieto, 2010; Roberts & Irvine, 2009; Wallace & LaMotte, 2016). The manifestation of bias and bigotry can also appear in exclusive educational policies and practices, and in problematic interrelations among teachers, administrators, staff, students, and parents. This in turn hinders some children's learning, self-esteem, and overall educational experience.

The macropolitical contexts of society and communities, particularly those fraught with division along racial, ethnic, economic, religious, and sexual orientation lines, are rarely acknowledged in schools in ways that call upon educators to explicitly address and counter bigotry through curriculum development, instruction, professional development, or interpersonal relations with students and their families. Directives and training for teachers to move beyond countering personal biases and recognize and disrupt structural inequality and oppression are even more rare (Gorski, 2006). Moreover, controversial topics and activities that grapple with the intricacies of diversity and differences are too often avoided (Hess & McAvoy, 2015).

Even the official curriculum of schools is political since they embody "official knowledge" and ideologies sanctioned by state, district, and sometimes federal

powerholders. Curriculum is often taught under the guise of being universally needed and politically neutral or “correct” for all; yet when such curriculum and teaching practices lack sociocultural relevancy to diverse learners they perpetuate an idea that children are not whole beings affected by their community, mass media, families, cultures, and politics. Thus, teaching practices can easily perpetuate presumptions that students do not bring their familial and community-based knowledge, assets, concerns, questions, and the emotional weight of their worlds to school (Bartolomé, 1994; Gale et al., 2017; Gay, 2014; Gorski, 2006; Nieto, 2010). These types of presumptions and disconnections, whether driven by benign ignorance or conscious avoidance, are harmful.

Within an inclusive teaching framework, teachers are recognized authority figures vested with power and transformative abilities in classrooms and school communities. Hence, they can be active agents who work toward countering colorblind, powerblind, and oppressive dynamics to acknowledge and challenge oppression. Their institutional authority grants them the ability to take a lead in co-constructing, assessing, and validating knowledge (Gale et al., 2017; Gay, 2014; Nayler & Keddie, 2007; Rojas & Liou, 2017), while also facilitating learning, developing and implementing curriculum, and affirming students’ intelligence, identity, and sense of belonging (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Nieto, 2010). Furthermore, during her 2017 *TeachingWorks* keynote address, Professor Langer-Osuna drew upon her research on students’ group interactions to stress that teachers facilitate, negotiate, and can mitigate various “social forms of power” in classrooms. These include social forms of power that students can both co-create and experience with their teachers and peers.ⁱⁱ Because the abilities and charges of all teachers involve power, teaching is political, while inclusive teaching is specific form of liberatory *praxis*. As Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (2000) contended, *praxis* comprises the amalgamation of ones’ “critical consciousness” and “political action,” (p. 34). It is a tradition that many marginalized teachers of color have long implemented in the U.S. as acts of struggle and resistance (Foster, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Milner 2008; Valenzuela, 1998; Wilson et al., 2013;).

LINKING LIBERATORY PRAXIS WITH CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

At its heart, inclusive teaching as liberatory *praxis* is about fostering students’ learning and nurturing their freedom. It partly entails affirming every student’s humanity in ways that: demonstrate care, resist bigotry, acknowledge and counter structural inequalities, promote critical thinking, and make learning enjoyable and socially and culturally relevant. It further involves teachers upholding high learning expectations of all students (Andrews, et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Rojas & Liou, 2017), recognizing the political nature of teaching (Bartolomé, 1994; Freire, 2000; Gutiérrez, 2013; hooks, 1994; Nayler & Keddie, 2007), and striving to advance students on a path to self-determination. As Bartolomé (1994) contends, “In ignoring or negating the political nature of their work with these (marginalized) students, teachers not only reproduce the status quo and their students’ low status, but they also inevitably legitimize schools’ discriminatory practices” (p. 179).

The pedagogical tenets of inclusive teaching derive from critical pedagogy philosophies and frameworks. Critical pedagogy theorists, researchers, and practitioners are highly mindful of, and responsive to, inequitable power relations in teaching. Critical pedagogues strive to not just teach well from an academic, skill-based, or traditional methods standpoint, but to teach well in ways that also advance social justice and are emancipatory. Hence, the raising of critical consciousness is essential in what inclusive teachers aim to do for themselves and with their students (Bartolomé, 1994; Bartolomé & Trueba, 2000; Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Freire, 2000; hooks, 1994; Howard & Milner, 2014).

Decades ago teacher education scholar Lilia Bartolomé’, in her seminal article “Beyond the Methods Fetish” (1994), evoked critical pedagogy tenets and stressed that academic content, teachers’ subject matter and methods expertise are not enough to disrupt structural inequality of schooling and society or rectify the inequalities reflected in the persistent academic disparities found in the achievement rates of White students and

students of color. Still, of course, academically rich content and effective teaching for students' comprehension and application are essential.

TeachingWorks, as a national, non-profit center dedicated to helping develop effective, skillful, equity-oriented teachers, emphasizes a variety of pedagogical methods referred to as "high leverage practices"ⁱⁱⁱ. These practices include but are not limited to: eliciting and interpreting individual students' thinking; building respectful relationships with students; leading a group discussion to build collective knowledge with students; and, learning about students' cultural, religious, family, intellectual, and personal experiences and resources for use in instruction. These practices cohere with inclusive teaching too as long as they are implemented with liberatory intent. It is work that involves "ideological and political clarity" (Bartolomé & Trueba, 2000, p. 279; Cooper, 2003), along with the rejection of any "pedagogy of pathology," which Professor Tyrone Howard stressed in his 2017 *TeachingWorks* keynote address.^{iv}

Indeed, for bell hooks, inclusive teaching is a liberatory praxis that requires teachers to both "transgress" divisive relational boundaries related to ones' identities and ideologies, as well as resist teaching approaches that are "mired in structures of domination" (p. 18). She acknowledges the vulnerability and risk-taking this demands of teachers, yet stresses that "any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process" (p. 21).

While much of this discussion has focused on affecting marginalized students, inclusive teaching for liberatory praxis, as conceived through a critical pedagogy lens, is recommended for all students. It benefits students from both dominant and privileged groups and should be enacted by teachers from all social and cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2013). It is also necessitated by moral imperative, as well as by growing national and global diversity (Howard & Milner, 2014).

NATIONAL POLITICS AND WHY THEY MATTER

The call for inclusive teaching and liberatory praxis that I, and others, issue has become very challenging to heed in the current political climate. Yet, as the Trumpian era unfolds in the U.S., inclusive teaching is also more vital for the learning, nurturing, and protection of marginalized and vulnerable students. The election and current leadership of U.S. President Donald Trump is simultaneously a reflection and catalyst of exclusionary politics, ideologies, discourse, and imagery (Sarlin, 2016). The Trump administration (and Trump's presidential campaign) has constructed and defended an exclusionary platform as part of its "Make American Great" agenda, which is infused at times with White supremacist undertones (Bruynell, 2017; Rothwell & Diego-Rosell, 2016).

Trump is a president who extols nationalist, isolationist, and intolerant ideologies that have targeted people of color, immigrants, Muslims, women, people with disabilities, and those with low incomes (Bruynell, 2017). Indeed, he fast assembled a controversial and powerful administration to translate exclusionary rhetoric and ideology into practice via austere and, arguably, discriminatory public policy. His exclusionary agenda is represented by his appointment of cabinet members like White House Strategist and Presidential Aide Steve Bannon.

Bannon, for instance, is a self-identified nationalist, and leader of the radically conservative group Alt-right. He was endorsed during the election (along with Trump) by the U.S. hate group, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). He was praised by the KKK and other supporters for having White supremacist and anti-Semitic ideologies. Bannon is also the former executive chairman of Breitbart News, an inflammatory media outlet that has published racist, misogynistic, anti-immigrant, and Islamophobic discourse and commentary.

The Trump regime, in total, aims to decrease civil rights protections and repeal education, social welfare, health, immigration, and environmental policies that are often linked to supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion. This includes cutting federal oversight of gender inequity and sexual assault claims on college campuses (Simpson, 2017; Watkins & Tseng, 2017) and cutting afterschool programs for children from poor families (Brown, Strauss, Douglas-Gabriel, 2017), along with safety protections and space accommodations

for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) persons (Peters, Becker & Davis, 2017).

The Emergent U.S. Education Policy Agenda

At the helm of U.S. federal education power structure is the U.S. Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos. DeVos, another controversial Trump cabinet member whose U.S. Senate confirmation process was highly contested, is a neoconservative billionaire and corporate leader. As the leading official of the office that is charged with overseeing federal provision for the nation's public schools, DeVos began her post without any public education experience or exposure. She and her children never attended public schools. DeVos had no professional experience in public education and lacked thorough knowledge of federal educational policy (Richmond, 2017), as she demonstrated during her confirmation hearing (Strauss, 2017). What DeVos possesses is extreme wealth, social capital, neoliberal business acumen, rightist political philosophies, and a long history of lobbying for (and funding) public school privatization initiatives. Now, as secretary of education, she is shaping a national educational policy agenda that has prioritized the expansion of private school voucher programs and for-profit schooling. Child care, mental health programs, teacher training, adult literacy, and other programs aimed at supporting students and families of traditional public schools have been cut to instead fund neoliberal school choice and privatization initiatives (Brown et al., 2017).

Overall, exclusionary U.S. political agendas are currently being ushered in amidst a variety of tense social and cultural conflicts and resistance. There has been an increase of hateful incidents and harassment targeting Muslims, Spanish speaking immigrants, LGBTQI students, and others in schools since Trump's election, including racist graffiti stating "Make America White Again" (Bruyneel, 2017; Wallace & LaMotte, 2016). At the same time, African American students are deeply affected by the oppressive dynamics. For instance, the grassroots, high profile #Black Lives Matter (#BLM) movement is an organizing effort to combat the police brutality (and other forms of racist violence) that has resulted in the killing and beatings of unarmed Black adults and youth (Bruyneel, 2017). Some K-12 students have taken up #BLM protest efforts in schools across the nation as well (Lindberg, 2017).^v

In total, much of US macropolitics amount to the intensifying politics of exclusion that threatens to normalize the sociocultural intolerance and the supremacist ideologies and policies aimed to empower those who are jointly white, Christian, US-born, able-bodied, heterosexual, upper income, males. Oppressive and hateful practices and agendas, such as those that the #BLM movement is responding to, of course pre-dated Trump's administration and the last U.S. presidential election season. Still, they are being explicitly permitted by powerholders in disturbing and dangerous ways. Inclusive teaching, as conceptualized from a critical pedagogical framework, is designed to thwart such politics of exclusion and disposability within school communities. Being able to do this work requires much of teachers, and one characteristic not often emphasized as being part of this work is *pedagogical imagination*.

THE ROLE OF PEDAGOGICAL IMAGINATION

According to Tyson (2016), pedagogical imagination involves teachers pondering various approaches, possibilities, and solutions to practice. She highlights how didactic narratives (e.g. instructional cases or case studies) can be valuable sources of teacher education and development curriculum that generate teachers' pedagogical imagination. Tyson specifically draws upon philosophies of Aristotle and Donald Schon to explain how well contextualized, concise, and thought-provoking narratives can help teachers conceive of how to bridge practical knowledge, pedagogical skills and techniques, with moral impetus and needed solutions. Teacher educators can then use the narratives to center storytelling, and move teachers and teacher candidates from first critically reflecting on others' narratives to then offering and reflecting on their own. I contend that this is a good step too in supporting teachers in the vulnerability, revelation, and risk-taking that can be associated

with advocating for marginalized students and enacting inclusive teaching as liberatory praxis.

MEDIA PROFILES OF STUDENTS' POLITICAL REALITIES

Below, I draw from national media profiles of exclusionary infractions affecting children that represent links between important U.S. political contexts, xenophobic realities, and children's educational lives. The profiles overviewed below highlight students rather than teachers. In my discussion of the profiles, I present an adapted and shortened version of the type of narratives that Tyson (2016) suggests. It is my hope that teachers will be compelled to learn from and sensitively engage contexts and situations like those profiled. As leading educational researcher Professor Kris Gutiérrez stated during her 2016 *TeachingWorks* keynote presentation, part of reflecting a "new pedagogical imagination" means remembering that "learning comes before teaching."^{vi} Also, while showcasing successful teachings practices as Tyson (2016) suggests is certainly valuable, so is conveying some of the harsh realities of students' lives—along with indicating signs of hope and agency. These profiles collectively do so.

Resisting Islamophobia in Schools: San Francisco, California

Violent and harassing incidents of Islamophobia surged after the September 11, 2001 U.S. terrorism bombings, and they have steadily persisted in schools (Jackson, 2014; Rizga 2016). They spiked again during the last presidential election season and once more after Trump's election (Andrews, Richmond, & Stroupe, 2017)—on the heels of his campaign's fear-mongering rhetoric and the travel bans to several, Muslim-majority nations he ordered after assuming office. A 2016 article about the rise of Islamophobia in schools highlighted the activism of Nour, a San Francisco, CA secondary student who immigrated to the US from Syria.^{vii} Nour joined a youth power movement in her California community aimed at advocating for the inclusion and protection of Muslim youth. As part of these efforts she participated in a rally designed to bring awareness to the bias and harassment of students who wear headscarves and turbans face in schools and communities, even though she does not wear either. The article links Nour's advocacy, consciousness, and concerns for her peers with national Islamophobic harassment and hate crimes. This has included the taunting of Muslim students (and non-Muslims erroneously assumed to be) who have been referred to as 'towel head,' a 'terrorist,' and 'the son of ISIS.' It further reports that "one in five Muslim students in California said they experienced discrimination by a teacher or an administrator at school," and notes relevant statistics and political stances of elected officials and candidates, like Trump (Rizga, 2016). (See <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/01/bullying-islamophobia-in-american-schools>). This type of profile of a Muslim youth, bullying, and resistance offers ripe material for instructional cases.

Pleading for Black lives to matter: Charlotte, North Carolina

Video coverage of the tearful testimony of a 9-year old, African American girl pleading to Charlotte, NC city council members after the police killing of an allegedly armless Black man in 2016 represents another potential instructional case (see <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/year-speaks-charlotte-unrest-42404331>). The primary school student, Zianna Oliphant, offered a poignant reminder of the race-related fears—if not trauma—students of color can routinely experience out of school. Her comments closely aligned with the worries, realities, and injustices described by #BLM activists. She spoke of her community and lived experiences as she stressed: "It's a shame that our (African American children's) fathers and mothers are killed, and we can't even see them anymore," and added, "It's a shame we have to go to their graveyard." Zianna urged the council to take African American community members' concerns of police brutality seriously, and hold police accountable for any inappropriate actions. She asserted: "We are black people, and we shouldn't have to feel like this. We shouldn't have to protest because y'all are treating us wrong." She added, "We do this because we need to and (we) have rights." Zianna voiced her standpoint, while advocating for others.

Occurrences like Zianna’s public testimony indicate that harsh sociopolitical realities affect children’s identity and consciousness, and these realities surely matter in how children relate to learning and schooling too. The high-profile cases of unarmed African Americans, including children, being killed in the US (both recently and historically) only lend to the importance of school communities being safe, inclusive, and culturally responsive spaces. They also relate to a number of social conditions and debates that teachers could very sensitively acknowledge and facilitate discussion about, perhaps with the assistance of school counselors and administrators. Doing so would foster children’s emotional wellbeing, especially after disturbing events occur in or near their community. Moreover, the perpetuation of racial injustice that Zianna spoke to affirms Professor Rich Milner’s call for educators to embrace “race as a legitimate space for learning” in and out of the classroom—a call he issued during his 2016 *TeachingWorks* keynote presentation.^{viii} *Teaching Tolerance*, an equity-driven educational magazine of the Southern Poverty Law Center, has published a series of articles profiling teachers and school districts committed to integrating racial injustice topics, like those centered in the #BLM movement, in curriculum and school partnership efforts.^{ix}

Enduring Teacher Shaming: Harlem, New York

Unfortunately, some of the most fervent material that teachers should consider as they plan for inclusive teaching are examples of teacher exclusion and bias. Videos, like one of a White female, first grade teacher instructing her young, African American and Latino students in Harlem, NY reveal the verbal and emotional abuse vulnerable students can endure^x (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIJqbSkb5Jk>). In this instance, the video shows footage the teacher’s assistant secretly recorded of the teacher berating a student for not answering a counting problem correct. The inappropriateness of the teacher’s actions lies partly in her shaming efforts as she scornfully contends: “You’re confusing everyone!,” and then exclaiming that she was “very upset and very disappointed.” One, however, may find the vitriolic tone with which she speaks to her students, and the anger she vents toward the likely 6-year old child who erred, most disturbing. The video captures a snapshot of the microaggressions and macroaggressions children can be subjected to that can demean their sense of educational belonging. Such material may be best developed into an instructional case for teacher professional development purposes that teacher educators and teacher mentors can use to spark critical dialogue, reflection, and preventive action.

Coping with Post-Election Bullying: Royal Oak, Michigan

One of the most prominent and controversial initiatives that Trump campaigned for was the building of a massive wall dividing the U.S.-Mexico border, to be paid for by the Mexican government, to keep Americans “safe” from Mexicans he stereotyped as criminals (Bruyneel, 2017). The discourse surrounding this initiative, which has continued since Trump’s election, has been linked to numerous anti-immigrant and anti-Latina/o harassing incidents in communities and schools. One high profile occurrence was in Royal Oak, Michigan, the day after the election when dozens of mostly white, middle school students chanted “Build the wall” loudly in the school’s cafeteria at their Latina/o peers. A phone recording of the youth went viral, illustrating how the cultural divisiveness and bias that the presidential election stirred has fueled some youth’s ideologies, discourse, and actions too. A CNN news story profiled the event Josie Ramon, a middle school student who discussed being “frightened” and “terrified” after the harassing incident.^{xi} The CNN (2016) reporter also explained how the 7th grader and her best friend were bullied even further after parents posted the video coverage of the chanting on Facebook. Rather than expressing remorse, the students involved allegedly ostracized them and blamed them for the poor media attention that ensued. Josie, twelve years old at the time, withdrew from the middle school in response and stated, “I couldn’t take it any longer.” She said the disdainful treatment made her feel “like an animal.”

The Royal Oak case of bullying has significant potential to be instructive to teachers, administrators, and staff too about the importance of cultivating an inclusive and equitable school climate that would preclude students from verbally assaulting and racially taunting their peers, thereby exacerbating the politics of exclusion and disposability.

Recognizing Agency and Allyship Opportunities: Everywhere

While there is unfortunately a plethora of media profiles highlighting the exclusionary contexts students face in and out of schools, many of these profiles also indicate—if not feature—students' courage, resiliency, and agency. Additional examples of this include a video profiling Dannah Wilson, a Detroit, Michigan high school senior who traveled to Washington, DC with 119 youth, family members, and community organizers to protest the Secretary of Education nomination of Betsy DeVos on Capitol Hill. She addressed federal legislators, their staff, and the national media and spoke of the deficit-based ideologies she feels are reflected in the school privatization initiatives that DeVos, a Michigan native with strong financial ties and political power in the majority Black city, has supported. In video coverage of the event, Dannah noted the high poverty and racially oppressive conditions facing many Detroiters^{xii} (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80a6t7tOuUk>).

In addition, Dannah described the under-resourced and organizationally unstable conditions of many of the city's public schools. She stressed that she and other students in the city are searching for a "satisfaction that our eyes haven't seen...our hearts can only hope for," and, "that has been stolen" given the "naïve and narrow policies pushed by Betsy DeVos." The video illustrates not only the students' political resistance, but also shows a community's unity.

Finally, a *Los Angeles Times* (2016) short documentary profiles the life, struggles, and strivings of 18-year-old, Gaspar Marcos, a Guatemalan immigrant who came to the U.S. as an unaccompanied and undocumented minor at age 13 (see <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/87799831-132.html>). The film shadows Gaspar and highlights the grueling, 19-hour work days he spends not only attending secondary school but working multiple jobs late into the night to sustain himself and educationally persist with little sleep, and while experiencing poverty. The portrait of Gaspar's work ethic, perseverance, integrity, warm-heartedness, and contributions to society, serve as counter-narrative to the biased ideologies and images of Latina/o, undocumented immigrants that dominate conservative rhetoric, media, and political campaigns. It further highlights the perspectives of equity-oriented Los Angeles, CA teachers, administrators, and staff working to support and nurture Gaspar so he can be successful.^{xiii}

The videos about Gaspar and Dannah have the potential of being used as instructional resources in inclusive classrooms, including as tools teachers can use to spark constructive, civil debate among students who have varying political views. The media sources are ideal for group discussion and deliberation in teachers' professional learning communities as well. They could be further linked to school-family-relations matters, given their relevancy to educational partnerships and advocacy.

IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The media profiles discussed here serve as reminders of the importance of educational practitioners, policymakers, and researchers recognizing that our sociopolitical climate is laden with politics of exclusion and disposability. These politics involve acts of structural, emotional, and sometimes physical violence against children. The resulting violence gets sanctioned through both policies adopted by civic officials, and the inaction of everyday people like adult educational professionals. Inclusive teaching that embeds critical pedagogical practices is a vital form of resistance that serves to erode harmful stances of neutrality in a high stakes atmosphere where many children from marginalized groups are at great risk of being further oppressed rather than empowered and protected. As Nobel Peace Laureate and holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel (1986) asserted, "We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."^{xiv}

Of course inclusive teaching is no easy task. I have drawn upon critical pedagogy literature and philosophies to convey it as a complex form of liberatory praxis. I acknowledge that it can also involve controversy and be contentious and emotionally taxing at times. Still, confronting controversy and discord is vital to enriching students' well-being, learning,

engagement, and educational experience (Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Howard & Milner, 2014). As inclusive teacher José Luis Vilson emphasized during his 2017 *TeachingWorks* keynote address, teaching with liberatory aims means “having us (teachers) imagine how to let go of the power” and working from “spaces where our students are most vulnerable” to demonstrate “pedagogies of care, love, and respect.”^{xv}

Inclusive teaching efforts also warrant the political, organizational, and emotional support of others. Teachers too often find themselves feeling disempowered within larger school and district structures as they face testing accountability pressures (Gutiérrez, 2013), work for supervisors who are not critically inclined, and endure and fear professional penalty, stigma, or job loss for their social justice-oriented advocacy and resistance. Vilson (2017) noted these risks as well. Hence, is it essential that school and district administrators, along with parents, community members, teacher educators, and university partners support teachers in being inclusive practitioners.

District and state officials along with universities are implicated in the lack of inclusive teaching and bear responsibility for providing teacher development. Coalition building is therefore needed to create the dialogue, guidance, teacher education, and professional development that helps teachers be effective, as are accountability and reward structures that move toward establishing greater expectations for inclusive and equitable practice. Lopez (2013) offers helpful recommendations related to developing a “collaborative mentoring approach” to help with this, and others offer strategies to promote critical inquiry, self-reflection, and more meaningful internship and field experiences to prepare inclusive teachers (Andrews et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Wilson et al., 2015). No doubt, for inclusive teaching as liberatory praxis to be “a force for equity,” those of us in education must greet the processes of preparing, supporting, learning from, and enacting inclusive teaching as collective work.

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NOTES

ⁱ For my 2017 *Teaching Works* presentation, see <http://www.teachingworks.org/training/seminar-series/event/detail/march-2017>. The presentations of the other speakers are linked below.

ⁱⁱ For more information about Dr. Langer-Osuna's presentation, see <http://www.teachingworks.org/training/seminar-series/event/detail/february-2017>.

ⁱⁱⁱ See <http://www.teachingworks.org/work-of-teaching/high-leverage-practices>

^{iv} See <http://www.teachingworks.org/support-resources/seminars-and-conferences/seminar-series/full-schedule>. Also, for additional details, see Dr. Howard's *TeachingWorks* working paper at http://www.teachingworks.org/images/files/TeachingWorks_T.C.Howard.pdf.

^v <http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-56-summer-2017/feature/district-profile-black-lives-matter-school>

^{vi} For more information about Dr. Gutiérrez's presentation, see <http://www.teachingworks.org/training/seminar-series/event/detail/september-2016-ii-learning-about-students>.

^{vii} N.A. (2016). 9-year-old speaks out on Charlotte unrest. *ABC News*. Retrieved from: <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/year-speaks-charlotte-unrest-42404331>

^{viii} For more information about Dr. Milner's presentation, See <http://www.teachingworks.org/training/seminar-series/event/detail/september-2016>.

^{ix} Search for "Black Lives Matter" at the Teaching Tolerance website to retrieve many links to relevant articles and instructional resources. See, for instance, http://www.tolerance.org/search/apachesolr_search/black%20lives%20matter and resources overviewed at the Lindberg (2017) article cited in the references.

^x N.A. (2016, Feb. 15). Teacher caught berating first grader. Video. *The Young Turks*. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIJqbSkb5Jk>

^{xi} Wallace, K. & LaMotte, S. (2016, Dec. 28). The collateral damage after students' 'build a wall chant' goes viral. Retrieved from: <http://www.cnn.com/2016/12/28/health/build-a-wall-viral-video-collateral-damage-middle-school/index.html>

^{xii} American Federation of Teachers. (2017, Jan. 18). Detroit students' emotional response to DeVos Nomination. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80a6t7t0uUk>

^{xiii} N.A. (2016). The life of an unaccompanied minor in L.A. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from: <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/87799831-132.html>

^{xiv} Quoted from Wiesel's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. Retrieved from https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1986/wiesel-acceptance_en.html

^{xv} For Mr. Vilson's presentation slides, see <http://www.teachingworks.org/training/seminar-series/event/detail/february-2017>. More information about his work can be found at <http://thejosevilson.com/>

^{xvi} I published under the name Camille Wilson Cooper (referenced as Cooper, C.W.) prior to 2011.