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Content as a Resource in
Democratic, Justice-Oriented
Social Studies Education

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Listening to Students and Using Content as a Resource in Democratic, Justice-Oriented Social Studies Education

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Abstract:

Democratic, justice-oriented practice in social studies education requires careful listening to students' experiences, passions, questions, and concerns. Teachers' knowledge of a broad range of content—especially stories of the oppressed—is a critical resource to bridge students' curiosities and experiences with broader social, political, and historical narratives. This paper explores how listening carefully to students might inform teaching practice focused on democratic, justice-oriented ends, and offers two specific examples of curricular practices in teacher education that provide ways for teacher candidates to listen to young people. The paper then examines what the implications of listening to youth might be for teacher education and elaborates on the role that teachers' knowledge of content plays in disrupting oppression and furthering democratic, justice-oriented social studies teaching practice.

LISTENING TO STUDENTS AND USING CONTENT AS A RESOURCE IN DEMOCRATIC, JUSTICE-ORIENTED SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

In this paper, I examine a central question developed for the TeachingWorks “Preparing Teachers for Practice” strand at the 2019 AACTE annual meeting: (How) does knowing content matter for disrupting the persistence of oppression? This broad question frames one set of vital considerations in the preparation of novice teachers—the “relationship between advancing justice and the teaching of content” (TeachingWorks, 2019). TeachingWorks has posed the following questions to further explore this relationship:

What is involved in knowing and using content in ways that enable teachers to:

1. hear children’s ideas, disrupt deficit narratives, recognize children’s strengths, see potential and resources in families and communities, and struggle with the canon in authentic ways, and
2. select and design content, and know it in ways that allow one to open up and to make change to what knowledge is and who (gets to) make it?

Building on these two questions, and considering the implications for teacher education:

3. How can we support beginning teachers to learn content in ways that are intermeshed with the imperative to use teaching to disrupt racism?

When I began considering these questions, I was immediately drawn to the parts that focus on enabling teachers to “hear children’s ideas...recognize children’s strengths, see potential and resources in families and communities.” While deep and complex content knowledge is essential to thoughtful, anti-oppressive teaching practice, a teacher’s inclination to listen carefully to students is a vital counterpart to this content knowledge that is needed to disrupt racism. In this paper, I draw from my experience in social studies education and in the preparation of elementary and secondary teachers. I contend that democratic, justice-oriented practice in social studies education requires careful listening to students’ experiences, passions, questions, and concerns. When teachers listen carefully to their students, students’ experiences and questions become crucial points of connection to broader social, political, and historical narratives. Teachers’ knowledge of a broad range of content—especially stories of the oppressed—is then a critical resource to bridge students’ curiosities and experiences with these broader social, political, and historical narratives.

In what follows, I begin by elaborating on the notion of democratic, justice-oriented social studies teaching and learning that anchors the ideas in this paper. I then discuss a set of interrelated practices that support democratic, justice-oriented social studies instruction. Through this discussion, I use the word “practice” in multiple ways: I use practice to mean the enactment of particular ideas (ie., “that’s part of her teaching practice”), but also to mean the need to regularly repeat an action in order to make it a well-honed skill (ie., “we should all practice listening more”). I also use practice at multiple levels: in some cases, I reference the work of teacher educators—teacher education practice—but I often discuss teacher education practice as it relates to and informs K-12 teaching practice.

With these distinctions in mind, first, I explain how the practice of listening carefully to students might inform teaching practice focused on democratic, justice-oriented ends. I offer two specific examples of curricular practices in teacher education that provide opportunities for teacher candidates to listen to young people. I then discuss what the implications of listening to youth might be for teacher education and elaborate on the role that teachers’ knowledge of content plays in disrupting oppression and furthering democratic, justice-oriented teaching practice. Thus, I argue for the need for novice teachers to practice listening as a practice in order to inform their broader teaching practice.

What is Democratic, Justice-Oriented Social Studies Education?

Social studies education focused on democratic, justice-oriented practices and outcomes is characterized by several overlapping principles. The notion of *democratic practice* includes the ideas that students are involved in classroom decision-making, problem-solving, and deliberation

of public issues (Hess, 2009; Parker, 2003), and that all voices are valued in the classroom and in the curriculum (e.g., Apple & Beane, 1995). Democratic classrooms particularly elevate and represent voices outside of the dominant culture that are often silenced (Apple & Beane, 1995), and diversity within the classroom is viewed as a democratic asset to be cherished and supported (Parker, 2003). Complementary to these perspectives are notions of *justice-oriented teaching practices*. Such practices necessitate a sociocultural consciousness and understanding of structural inequality, and emphasize culturally responsive and inclusive curriculum and instruction, academic challenge and high expectations for all learners, a focus on students' strengths rather than deficits, and the valuing of and building upon students' existing knowledge, cultural backgrounds, and experiences (Banks et al., 2005; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Through the discussion and examples that follow, I hope to further illuminate what this vision of democratic, justice-oriented social studies education might include.

HOW CAN LISTENING CAREFULLY TO STUDENTS SHAPE TEACHING PRACTICE?

If we aim for such a vision of democratic, justice-oriented social studies education that builds on young people's experiences and knowledge and capitalizes on the rich range of voices within our classrooms and broader communities, how might teacher educators support teacher candidates in enacting a vision of democratic, justice-oriented social studies education? In her teacher education work, Schultz (2003) noted that using listening as a central framework "focuses student teachers' attention on their students—both individually and collectively—as resources for deciding how and what to teach" (p.7). Similarly, I suggest that listening carefully to young people—and helping novice teachers learn this vital practice—is one powerful tool to support this vision of democratic, justice-oriented practice.

By listening to the young adolescents that I taught during my time as a middle school social studies teacher, I came to see that they had profound questions about the world as well as insights that I could draw upon to inform my teaching. My students asked questions like, "Why did people allow slavery?," or, "Why is there so much conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians?" Following the September 11th attacks, my students wanted to learn about Islam, Afghanistan, and racial profiling. Listening to their questions enabled me to better understand their genuine curiosities and concerns about the world and allowed me to shape my curriculum and instruction in ways that were more responsive to their interests.

This personal reflection from my K-12 teaching days is echoed by many others who have written about the value of careful listening to students (Beane, 1993; Brodhagen, 1995; Schultz, 2003). James Beane (1993), for example, wrote about how listening to middle school students can yield important insights into what young people care about. While many adults assume—particularly with young adolescents—that students' concerns are primarily self-centered (Conklin, 2008; Lesko, 2005; Lexmond, 2003; Yeager & Wilson, 1997), Beane noted:

Those who really listen to early adolescents know that at both personal and social levels many are concerned about the environment, prejudice, injustice, poverty, hunger, war, politics, violence and the threat these issues pose to the future of our world. (Beane, 1993, p. 18).

Listening to students, then, can offer educators insights that often defy adult expectations and stereotypes.

Another middle grades educator, Barbara Brodhagen (1995), wrote about her teaching practice and illustrated how careful listening to students could provide the foundation for a democratic curriculum that incorporated students' interests and curiosities. Brodhagen and her colleagues began the school year by asking students: "What questions do you have about your self? What questions do you have about the world?" (1995, p.88). Students wrote questions such as, "Why do some people/groups think they are better?," "How did racism ever start?," "How did religions evolve?," "Why are some people gay?," and "Why do we only hear about the bad stuff?" (Brodhagen, 1995, p.88) Building on these questions, the students then found connections among the self and world questions to form themes—such as "isms," death, war, and violence,"

and “conflict” (Brodhagen, 1995, p.89). These themes, in turn, provided the framework for the curriculum for the year.

Helping Teacher Candidates Learn to Listen to Their Students: Two Cases

If listening to students is a valuable teaching practice, then what might we do in teacher education to help teacher candidates learn to listen to their students? In democratic classrooms, students need to be given opportunities to speak and share their ideas; such opportunities for students to have voice allow teachers, in turn, opportunities to listen. Schultz (2003) explained that, “A focus on listening highlights the centrality of students as resources for the moment-to-moment decisions teachers make as they teach” (p.8). Considering listening as a tool for informing teaching practice, I now turn to two teacher education practices that give K-12 students opportunities to speak and thus provide novice teachers the chance to practice the skill of listening. Developing this habit of listening, then, can shape and inform teachers’ practice.

Student Interview Assignment

Beane’s (1993) and Brodhagen’s (1995) emphasis on the value of listening to students provided the impetus for me to develop a teacher education assignment in which the primary goal was for beginning teachers to listen to their students in ways that highlighted students’ interests, curiosities, and capabilities. Building on an inquiry assignment focused on elementary school children’s historical understandings that Barton, McCully, and Marks (2004) described, I developed a teacher education assignment in which teacher candidates interviewed middle and/or high school students to learn more about students’ ideas and thinking about social studies (see Conklin, Hawley, Powell, & Ritter, 2010 for further discussion).

In this assignment, I provide teacher candidates with a set of intentionally designed questions for them to use to guide their interview with secondary students. These include a set of questions that focus on three historical pictures—a Civil War Era (1862) photograph depicting white soldiers and their families; a photograph from 1906 in downtown Chicago featuring a streetcar, horse drawn wagon, automobile and pedestrians; and a photograph of Black and White, mostly female, protesters at the 1963 March on Washington carrying signs advocating for decent housing, equal rights, voting rights, and jobs for all. Using these pictures, teacher candidates asked students several questions, such as, “which pictures do you think are the most interesting, and why?” The assignment also included questions such as:

- Tell me something in social studies that you would like to know more about...Why does this interest you?
- What do you think are some important issues that the United States needs to do something about?
- What do you think are some important issues that the world needs to do something about?
- What questions or concerns do you have about the world?

Prior to conducting the interview, I ask candidates to predict how they think middle and high school students would respond to these questions as a way to introduce this assignment to teacher candidates and elicit their initial conceptions about students,. Often, this initial exercise surfaces many teacher candidates’ skepticism about what adolescents are interested in and capable of (Conklin, Hawley, Powell, & Ritter, 2010); in many cases, teacher candidates have only their own recollections of their experiences as adolescents to draw upon, and these recollections often center around memories of the social and emotional complexities of adolescence (Conklin, Hawley, Powell, & Ritter, 2010). After teacher candidates interview students, they compare their findings with other candidates, and then write an analysis paper that synthesizes their findings and discusses the implications for their teaching practice.

Teacher candidates’ analysis papers illustrate that providing beginning teachers with structured opportunities to listen carefully to students provides candidates with insights that can inform their practice in important ways. For example, one teacher candidate wrote:

Gabby¹ enjoyed learning about Rosa Parks because the ‘way she stood up for herself’ made Gabby feel ‘strong.’ She also wanted to know more about black history because it made her feel more ‘connected to black people who lived in the past’...This information is useful to me as a future teacher because it highlights how I can engage my students by making material relevant to them as well as appealing to their emotions.

Another teacher candidate wrote:

Student A felt that the picture from 1963 was most interesting simply because it displayed black people. When I asked each student to tell me something they enjoyed learning in social studies Student A said ‘I don’t like social studies. It’s boring, and I never learn anything about my culture.’ Student B said ‘I enjoyed women’s rights. I don’t understand inequality.’ How interesting, the black male mentions culture and the black female mentions women’s rights and inequality.

These sample excerpts highlight how listening to students through this interview project can help teacher candidates surface students’ interests and curiosities, particularly students’ desires to feel connected to the curriculum and to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. While this insight is consistent with research literature on culturally responsive teaching, when teacher candidates glean this information directly from young people, it becomes more salient: hearing these ideas first hand from students allows teacher candidates to construct these theories for themselves. Equipped with this understanding, teacher candidates can then begin to think about how to connect content to students’ interests as a way of building a more democratic, justice-oriented approach to teaching social studies that addresses inequality and brings in people whose stories have been marginalized in the standard curriculum—issues I discuss in more depth later in this paper.

Project Soapbox

Another tool for helping teacher candidates listen carefully to students is a curriculum called *Project Soapbox*. Developed by the Chicago-based, non-profit, non-partisan organization Mikva Challenge, *Project Soapbox* is a one-to-two week program implemented in schools in which middle and high school students choose a community issue that matters deeply to them, learn about the elements of good rhetoric, and prepare and deliver a speech about the issue to their peers as well as adult community members. *Project Soapbox* is considered an “action civics” curriculum because it allows students to learn central democratic principles by, “*do[ing] civics and behav[ing] as citizens...*” (Levinson, 2012, p. 224, emphasis in original) rather than only learning *about* civic principles and actions that others have engaged in. While this curriculum was first implemented in Chicago, it is now being used in more than twenty cities across the United States.

Project Soapbox is notable for many reasons: as a result of participating in this public speaking curriculum, high school students report that they gain confidence in their public speaking skills, show increases in their anticipated political engagement, and develop greater empathy for their peers’ experiences as a result of listening to one another (Andolina & Conklin, 2018). But beyond these important outcomes, *Project Soapbox* is noteworthy because it provides a unique window into what young people care about—the experiences that have shaped their lives, their passions, and their concerns.

In research that my colleague Molly Andolina and I conducted with 204 high school students in Chicago who participated in *Project Soapbox*, we found that most students (76%) cared a great deal about the topics they chose—topics including community violence, domestic violence, racism and discrimination, depression and suicide, and public policies (Andolina & Conklin, 2018). In many cases, these topics were closely connected to students’ personal experiences. Thus, the topics that students choose to focus on—and the speeches themselves—provide another way of listening to students and gaining insights into the concerns and interests

¹ All student names are pseudonyms.

that animate them. For example, in the Washington DC citywide Soapbox competition, student Velonte Chambers spoke poignantly about the ways in which gentrification and the lack of affordable housing created housing insecurity for his own family as well as many other families (watch his speech here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYuSk3Sv9Mc&t=5s>). Because many students' past speeches, like Velonte Chambers', are featured on YouTube, the speeches provide a useful tool for teacher education to illuminate the issues that youth care about. Teachers—both in-service and preservice—stand to learn from these powerful speeches because they showcase students' voices and ideas; if teachers listen carefully to these student speeches and attend to students' concerns, students' ideas can shape teachers' future curricula and practice.



As part of our research, we talked with teachers who use *Project Soapbox* and found that some use the curriculum—and students' speech topics—as a way to guide their curriculum in a way similar to Brodhagen's (1995) democratic teaching approach. One teacher (an English teacher), explained:

Soapbox actually helped me determine the direction of the content...I want the content to be reflecting student interest...what we ended up going into based on Soapbox was a unit on intersectionality...They had a lot of topics about conflicts of different identities; about being a citizen in Chicago and a person of African American ...racial makeup... one girl wrote a Soapbox speech about the conflict of her identifying as a college bound individual but also being from a particular neighborhood in Chicago, and the constant conflict with that intersectional struggle. So that's... one example of a unit that was birthed out of Soapbox.

Thus, attending to the community issues that students choose and listening to the speeches they develop provides another tool to link content to students' existing knowledge and concerns.

In teacher education, providing candidates with a sampling of students' Soapbox speech topics and a selection of speeches using those available on YouTube offers an opportunity for them to practice bridging students' interests with important social studies content. For example, I have provided teacher candidates in my courses with the list of student speech topics in Table 1 below and engaged them in the following exercise. I ask them: How might you use students'

Soapbox speech topics to link to important social studies content? What social studies units would get at themes that interest students—that bridge students’ curiosities and experiences with broader social, political, and historical narratives?

Table 1. Selected Project Soapbox speech topics

<u>Speech Topic</u>	<u>Number of students who chose speech topic</u>
Bullying	7
Depression	3
Suicide/ Suicide prevention	2
Domestic violence/ abusive relationships	11
Child abuse	5
Gang violence/ gangs	17
Gun violence	16
Violence	12
Police brutality/ police misconduct	4
Racism/ black injustice	4
Discrimination (of immigrants; people with disabilities; homophobia)	5
Deportation	2
Dream Act	1
School start times	2
College tuition/ free college	2
Unemployment/ unemployed minority youth	2
Gentrification	2
Legalization of marijuana	2
Media portrayal/ Islamaphobia	2
Bee extinction	1
Climate change	1
<i>Note.</i> The topics above are drawn from the speech topics of 204 students in nine Chicago public high schools. All but one of these schools is comprised of 90% or more low income students; all schools are either majority Latinx or majority African American.) ²	

After considering a list like this, candidates typically come up with broad themes in social studies such as how people historically have engaged in making social change, civil rights movements, the treatment of immigrants across American history, the inclusion and exclusion of groups of people over time, and how economic and other policies shape communities. An exercise like this provides teacher candidates with practice in planning curriculum that builds on students’ experiences and concerns.

Other educators and scholars have done similar work that provides helpful examples for novice teachers. Beth Rubin (2012), for example, has written about her work with high school history teachers and their collaborative efforts to bridge students’ identities and daily lives with United States history content. Rubin and her colleagues worked together to address these essential questions:

- How might the required US History II class be turned into an opportunity for meaningful civic learning while still teaching the required content?

² Adapted from Andolina, M. & Conklin, H. (2018). Speaking with confidence and listening with empathy: The impact of *Project Soapbox* on high school students. *Theory and Research in Social Education*. doi: 10.1080/00933104.2018.1435324

- What would a US History II course look like if it was built upon the notion that students' civic identities are shaped by their daily lives and experiences and the contexts of classroom practices and community life? (Rubin, 2012, p.9)

With these questions framing their planning efforts, they developed a curriculum that included units focused on social change with essential questions such as “How do Americans make social change?; What other forces, other than individuals, shape society?; Who has the power to make change? Do you?” (p.30). The titles for their units included, “African American struggle for rights, Latino struggle for rights, women’s struggle for rights, and social protest” (p.30).

Considering Rubin and her colleagues’ essential questions and emphases, the student interview project described above, and the topics highlighted from *Project Soapbox* speeches, many common threads surface including that all feature students’ interest in understanding and addressing inequality, the pursuit of justice, and the need and desire for social change. And as Rubin’s (2012) curricular work illustrates, content such as the commonly taught high school United States history course can be framed to reflect students’ concerns. In bridging students’ curiosities and experiences with broader social, political, and historical narratives, young people can see how they fit into the larger struggle for justice in society and can begin to make sense of their roles and responsibilities in this struggle.

Implications of Listening to Students for Teacher Preparation

Up to this point, I have made the broad argument that the practice of listening carefully to students has tremendous value for informing the practice of democratic, justice-oriented social studies education. When educators listen carefully to young people, what youth have to say can help educators bridge their interests and concerns with broader social studies themes that can not only engage them but also help them understand and navigate the world. The *Project Soapbox* teacher quoted earlier spoke eloquently about the value of listening to students. In our interview with him, we asked if he had any additional comments about the use of the *Project Soapbox* curriculum or his students’ experience with the curriculum. He said:

It changed my teaching...It made me realize if you don't listen to students, it's one of the main reasons they don't listen to you. And when I am at a loss about where to go next in my curriculum, or I feel like they are not on my side, I go back to the principles...that students have knowledge and that knowledge can impact change, and it's unique and important...When they're listened to, they feel taken seriously, and they take things seriously.

Thus, if we consider what the implications of listening to students are for our work in teacher education, I hope a few implications are already clear. One is that teacher educators need to provide opportunities for beginning teachers to *practice* listening to their students, in order to develop this skill and habit as a teacher. And, I've offered two examples—through the student interview project and *Project Soapbox*—of how teacher educators might help teacher candidates practice this important work. Another implication that I've already suggested is that we need to provide beginning teachers with opportunities to practice linking students’ concerns, interests, knowledge, and experiences to broader social studies content. The examples I discussed above with *Project Soapbox* and Beth Rubin’s work illustrate two ways teacher educators could model this work.

USING CONTENT AS A RESOURCE

What may also become apparent in the implications above is that in order to link students’ concerns, interests, knowledge, and experiences to meaningful social studies content that works to disrupt racism and other forms of oppression, novice teachers must have a deep and complex understanding of that social studies content. This understanding should include a

broad framework that enables novice teachers to recognize the ways in which racial oppression and systemic inequalities have shaped American history, our current society, and the social studies teaching curriculum and practices that are most typical in American schools (Brown & Brown, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2006). For example, novice teachers need to recognize the ways in which school textbooks have historically privileged dominant groups' histories while marginalizing, trivializing, or making invisible the role that oppressed groups have played in history (Brown & Brown, 2011; 2015; Zimmerman, 2002). This broader framework of understanding social studies content must then be buttressed by specific content knowledge: novice teachers need to be deeply knowledgeable about underrepresented content to teach in more socially just ways. They need to be able to choose curriculum that includes the perspectives and influences of diverse groups as well as curriculum that represents the particular students and cultural contexts in which they teach (Banks et al., 2005). This means that teacher educators need to help beginning teachers learn how to seek out stories that are rarely heard and perspectives that have been marginalized and to continually educate themselves on the ways in which structural racism shapes society.

One way to foster this work as teacher educators is to make deliberate decisions to use content examples that model the kind of content novice teachers might incorporate in their work with young people. We should be explicit with novice teachers about the decisions we make in selecting the examples we choose to model as a way of helping them understand the kinds of stories that are rarely heard—that also connect to many of the interests and experiences of young people—and the kinds of stories they should be continually seeking to include. For example, teacher educators might teach a model lesson focused on Bayard Rustin, about whom there is an [accompanying documentary and curriculum guide](#), as an example of an historical figure who was an activist for peace, racial equality, economic justice, and human rights—but who has been marginalized in the historical record because of his own identity. Rustin is known for his leadership in organizing the 1963 March on Washington, for bringing nonviolent strategies to the American Civil Rights Movement, and for helping to make Martin Luther King, Jr. into the symbol of peace and nonviolence for which he is celebrated. At the same time, Rustin was an openly gay man fighting for justice during a very homophobic era, which is largely the reason his name is much less often heard than other civil rights leaders (Bayard Rustin Film Project, 2008).

Teacher educators might also use the content example of the 1963 Birmingham Children's March as an illustration of the powerful role youth can play as civic actors engaging in social change in the present (rather than as potential, future actors)—like the contemporary, student-led March for Our Lives movement to support stronger gun violence prevention policies. In the 1963 Children's March, more than 4,000 black elementary, middle, and high school students organized a week of demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, and ultimately helped to desegregate what was one of the most racially violent cities in America at the time (Zinn Education Project, 2019). Like the Rustin example described above, there are many rich resources for educators about the Children's March, including a documentary film with accompanying teaching resources produced by the non-profit organization Teaching Tolerance (<https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/film-kits/mighty-times-the-childrens-march>), a website dedicated to first-hand accounts of people who were youth in Birmingham in 1963 (<http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/>), and Cynthia Levinson's book "We've got a job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March" (<https://cynthialevinson.com/books/weve-got-a-job/>).

The history of American Indian boarding schools and the Bracero program are two further historical content examples that can be used in social studies teacher education to illustrate the treatment of particular marginalized groups over time, have particular relevance to current issues, and are examples for which many powerful teaching resources exist. Many Americans are not knowledgeable about American Indian boarding schools—schools that were established by the federal government in the late 1800s, operated through the mid 1930's, and were developed to assimilate Native Americans by eradicating their tribal cultures. Children were forcibly taken from their homes, their long hair was cut, they were not allowed to speak their native language, and they were forced to abandon their cultures and assimilate. This history of family separation has gained painful resonance recently: American Indian leaders have recently spoken out about the separation of families at the United States-Mexico border (Rancano, 2018). Photographs and other records of these schools are available through sources such as the National Archives

(<https://www.archives.gov/>), the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (<https://americanindian.si.edu/>), and others, providing teacher educators and novice teachers with thought-provoking tools to teach about this piece of American history. Similarly, the Bracero program was started in 1942 to fill agricultural labor shortages and became the largest guest worker program in history. Understanding this program provides historical context for debates today about undocumented workers, exploitation, and Mexican immigration. The Bracero History archive (<http://braceroarchive.org/>) is one important resource that includes images, documents, and oral histories that can be used to teach about this often-neglected part of American history. Teacher educators might model the ways these historical sources could be used to engage students through a gallery walk (<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/gallery-walk>); a silent conversation (<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/big-paper-silent-conversation>); or an opening up the textbook lesson in which students compare the textbook treatment of these topics to the primary sources (<https://teachinghistory.org/best-practices/teaching-with-textbooks/19438>). Sample lessons like these can illustrate ways to bring this vital content into the classroom and make historical connections to the concerns and questions that students bring to the classroom. Through examples like these, teacher educators model how broad and deep content knowledge of the history of oppressed peoples is linked to careful listening to students and attending to the issues they care about.

Finally, if we return to Velonte Chambers' Soapbox speech on gentrification, the concerns he speaks to about the lack of affordable housing and the ways communities of color are pushed out of neighborhoods suggest the importance of enabling youth to connect their experiences to the history of redlining and racist housing policies. Ta-Nehisi Coates' (2014) article "The case for reparations" offers one compelling analysis of how the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow, and discriminatory federal housing policies have snowballed to systematically exclude black Americans from accumulating wealth through home ownership. The combination of engaging personal narratives, historical context, and compelling maps and other primary source documents make this article one powerful starting point for helping novice teachers and their students investigate the background that has set the stage for current debates about gentrification.

Thus, through incorporating content examples like those described above into our work in teacher education, we can assist beginning teachers in weaving together stories of oppression that provide vital context for young people's concerns today with stories of activism that can help youth see how people across time have worked to enact social change. In other words, we need to help beginning teachers draw upon content that addresses experiences of oppression but also highlights historically marginalized groups' ingenuity, community mobilization, and resilience. Importantly, using such examples in teacher education serves two important purposes. First, modeling the use of this content provides an illustration of a more democratic, justice-oriented curriculum. But second, using content like this in teacher education may introduce beginning teachers to content with which they have previously been unfamiliar, thereby enabling them to act upon the insights they have gleaned from listening to students in their teaching practice.

The fact that the content we use with novice teachers may be their first encounter with it leads to an additional point: we as teacher educators, along with the teacher candidates we prepare, must all keep learning. None of us will know all the important stories we should know. Indeed, when I was a first-year secondary social studies teacher, like many beginning teachers (and particularly beginning white teachers), I unfortunately was not familiar with the content examples I have shared above. Thus, teacher educators have a responsibility to not only continually educate themselves about democratic, justice-oriented content and pedagogy, but also to help beginning teachers locate good resources and learn how to learn more. As the proverb explains, "There is no shame in not knowing. The shame lies in not finding out" (Assyrian proverb, quoted in Palacio, 2014).

Thus, teacher educators should introduce beginning teachers to valuable resources that will enable them to continue their learning. One of the blessings of the digital age is that there is an abundance of curricular resources to support democratic, justice-oriented teaching practice, much of which is freely available. The websites noted above—such as the National Archives, Kids in Birmingham 1963, and the Bracero History Archive—are a small sampling of the kinds of historical archives that are available online to support the teaching of content that brings in

underrepresented stories. Likewise, there are many educational organizations devoted to justice-oriented curriculum and teaching that include anti-oppressive, high quality curricular resources, including Facing History and Ourselves (<https://www.facinghistory.org/>), Teaching Tolerance (<https://www.tolerance.org/>), the Zinn Education Project (<https://www.zinnedproject.org/>), Rethinking Schools (<https://www.rethinkingschools.org/>), and TeachRock (<https://teachrock.org/>). Many of these organizations are well-established and have been producing well-respected materials focused on equity, racial justice, and more inclusive communities for many years. The most recently established organization, TeachRock, is a project of Steven VanZandt, of Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band, and is a curricular resource rooted in the history of music. The lessons on this website explore social history through the songs of former enslaved peoples, sharecroppers, and Appalachian mine workers; other lessons examine Indigenous influences on American music today. Resources like these can serve as examples of places where beginning teachers can locate materials to teach in democratic, justice-oriented ways as well as extend their learning.

Similarly, teacher educators can introduce beginning teachers to professional organizations (e.g., Teachers for Social Justice; National Association for Multicultural Education), professional development opportunities (e.g., through organizations like Facing History and Ourselves), and other resources like young adult literature that focus on justice-oriented social studies themes (Libresco, Balantic, & Battenfeld, 2017; Yokota & Kolar, 2008). Like the modeling of justice-oriented content in teacher education, young adult literature can serve dual functions. Such literature can act as a tool for beginning teachers to learn important stories of oppression and social change. For example, Congressman John Lewis' autobiographical trilogy of graphic novels, *March One, Two, and Three* (Lewis, Aydin, & Powell, 2016) provides an engaging and powerful account of Lewis' involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, educating readers about the non-violent strategies and labor involved throughout the years of the movement. Similarly, *Enrique's Journey* (Nazario, 2013) details the harrowing true story of a 16-year-old Honduran boy's search for his mother, who left the family and entered the United States 11 years before in search of a job that would allow her to send money home to the family. The story brings vivid detail to the larger struggle of Latin American migrants coming to the United States. While literature like this can educate novice teachers and students alike, such literature also offers a powerful form of engagement for young people, providing both windows into others' lives as well as mirrors to their own. While there is a rich and abundant variety of such literature available, one powerful recent example is *The 57 Bus* (Slater, 2017), a book that explores gender identity, racism, and justice through its engaging recounting of a true story of two high school students whose paths intersect on a bus in Oakland, CA. Many adolescents are likely to both resonate with the teenagers in the story and gain insights into experiences beyond their own.

ALWAYS LEARNING: LISTENING TO STUDENTS AND LINKING TO CONTENT

Bringing the ideas above together, then, what I've aimed to argue is that, in democratic, justice-oriented social studies education, listening carefully to students enables teachers to attend to students' passions, questions, and concerns. Teachers' knowledge of content—especially stories of the oppressed—is, in turn, a critical resource to bridge students' curiosities and experiences with broader social, political, and historical narratives. Thus, our work in teacher education is to help beginning teachers develop the practices and inclinations to listen to their students and continually seek out stories that have been in the shadows to use their teaching practice as a tool for greater justice.

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