



Read, Make, and Mend the World: College Students Developing an Antiracist, Interdisciplinary Curriculum for Children

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ABSTRACT

After the plurality of crises experienced in 2020, including but not limited to a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, a national reckoning with racial violence, and political violence, one teacher and twelve college students set out to explore and create actively antiracist, self-nourishing pedagogies for elementary students. Using the theoretical approaches of bell hooks, Gholdy Muhammad, Corita Kent, and Gloria Ladson-Billings, the class chose to center the approach of making and crafting as the module to challenge and dismantle systems of oppression. This article charts their journey of using BIPOC-centered books, highlighting marginalized makers and artists, to craft and test curricula that goes beyond simply telling the artists' stories, but allows elementary students to be active participants in those stories through crafting. The class also explored how crafting can be a tool of expression, liberation, and learning. Reflecting on the theoretical underpinnings of their thoughts and the lessons they learned along the way, this article is a reflection on the class's experiences and suggestions for how to read, make, and mend the world.

KEYWORDS

Picture books; crafting education; interdisciplinary; anti-racist pedagogy

All of us -- authors, illustrators, and educators -- will continue our commitment to this work so that children can see themselves in books, see their beauty and intelligence, see the strengths they have inherited from a long line of predecessors, see their ability to overcome difficulties, challenges, pain, and find deep joy and laughter in books, in characters they recognize as themselves.

~ Eloise Greenfield, 2016, Education for Liberation Award from *Teaching for Social Change*

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic hit the world in the spring of 2020 and a reawakening of centuries of racial injustices was once again exposed for all to see, both in the US and our college campus. 2020 was a year riddled with attempts at change that stemmed from systemic issues that were exposed throughout the country. Most notably in the United States, we witnessed significant uproar following the death of George Floyd in May of 2020. Following his death, more attention was drawn to the disparities that many groups of color faced. Social media was flooded with guides, books, and other resources for how to try to begin and address these disparities, but a lot of this work was directed towards adult or older populations.

Although some information was shared for youth, such as *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You: A Remix of Stamped from the Beginning* (Kendi & Reynolds, 2020), young people, at the time, were rarely directly addressed. However, publishers have recently published high-quality picturebooks about BIPOC, women, LGBTQA+, and immigrant artists and makers; we turned our attention to these books as robust resources. Further, the pandemic created serious limits on access to K-12 classrooms and other spaces for research. In response, our professor, Diane Anderson, re-invented her *Literacies Research Seminar* into an *Anti-Racist Literacies Pedagogy Seminar*. Drawing upon previous courses in *Critical Perspectives on Children's Literature & Young Adult Literature* and *Literacies & Social Identities*, she built the pedagogies course around an open-ended project called *Read, Make, and Mend the World: An antiracist, interdisciplinary curriculum* focused on using children's picture books about Black, Indigenous, and persons of color (BIPOC) artists and other makers. At the core of our work was one assumption and one question: We assumed that we must legitimize the use of books with BIPOC, women, immigrants, and LGBTQA+ and not simply put them on the shelves for children to discover. We asked: could we, as one professor and 12 undergraduate students, intentionally create anti-racist elementary, interdisciplinary, literacy curricula, focused on agentive "making and mending"? If so, how might we do that?

In this article we employ a rich description to chronicle our seminar experiences as we did this work. We draw upon Cochrane-Smith and Lytle's concept of inquiry in transformative pedagogical practices (2009) as a valuable contribution to studies of classroom practices, with the goal of more socially-just classrooms. This inquiry, by its very nature, disrupts and challenges the norms of research, context, and authorship. We see this account as a descriptive review of "'creativity' or 'innovation' in learning situations or organizations and the

importance of give-and-take in the flow of activities” (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 51). Thus, we organize this report around the collaborative foundations of the course, its values and activities, and a set of questions that emerged from our work.

Foundations of this Seminar

Who are “we?” We are a diverse seminar of twelve undergraduates at Swarthmore College. We are male and female and non-binary. We are Black, Brown, Indigenous, Asian, and White. We are straight, questioning, and queer. We are sophomores, juniors, seniors, and tenured faculty. Our professor is a white, cis-female professor with 45-plus years in teaching and supervising kindergarten through college. This is the “we” that is embodied in this essay, in addition to the collective we of humankind, the elementary children and teachers that we recall and imagine. We believe that we have much work to do to mend the world.

Our professor began the course with the following assumptions about the course:

- We need to learn about racism and how it works,
- We need to learn theories about language and literacies,
- And we need a broad range of pedagogical practices from which to draw.

We developed questions that map onto the headings in this paper and attempted, through our readings, discussions, seminar papers, and curriculum building, to answer those questions. In the beginning, as we read about racism, we knew that we needed to acknowledge the values that were implicit in our task.

We began by mutually building what we called our “underlying values.” Anyone in the course could add to or edit this document and, by the end of the term it included:

1. Sit with our own assumptions/ biases as educators: acknowledge there are concepts, literature, and practices that make us uncomfortable or that we are not drawn to and we should be able to identify/ investigate those feelings.
2. Do not let fear/ nerves get in the way of stating the uncomfortable truths: try to stray away from the palatable versions of history or literature.
3. Incorporate the 3 C’s- Compassion, Creativity, and Community in our work: Be empathetic, engaged, and focused on the needs of marginalized, POC communities through curriculum and in the classroom.
4. Understand that learning and navigating identity and uncomfortable issues is a two-way street where we as educators both learn and teach these concepts from/to our students.
5. Be intentional about the purpose of our lesson plans: allow space for certain lessons to flourish within the classroom and curriculum.
6. Curriculum units should attend to (from Muhammad, G., 2020; New London Group, 1996):
 - Identity Development—Helping youth to make sense of themselves and others
 - Explicit Skill Development— Developing proficiencies across the academic disciplines, including code-breaking, code-making, and multiple and meta-languages

- Intellectual Development—Gaining knowledge and becoming smarter
 - Criticality—Learning and developing the ability to read texts (including print and social contexts) to understand power, equity, and anti-oppression
 - Transformative practice -- using knowledge to remake the world as a more humane and just place for all.
7. Be explicit - name what we mean and not simply imply. We should stay away from words like “all” or “some.” We need to get away from general multiculturalism and be more conscious about naming the things we really mean within the curriculum and the classroom space.
 8. Instead of framing our curriculum in a trauma and oppression-focused framework, we need to shift to a more agency and power-focused framework. When we are raising public awareness, we shouldn’t depict people as broken. We need to foreground or highlight inspiring stories.
 9. Recognize that racism is a very global issue and we should not have a lens that is just centered in the United States. We should be open to the unique aspects of racism in other contexts that we are not trained to identify yet.
 10. We should be intentional and reflexive on the author’s positionality and their assumptions. Pay attention to not only our positionality but also the positionality of the materials we pull from. For example, ask: Who is the audience this book (or other material) for?
 11. We are all complicit as institutional racism, homophobia, classism, misogyny, and other non-inclusive, anti-intellectual, and anti-community practices have undergirded our schooling. As we build curricula, let’s periodically examine our work in order to see where we have defaulted to soul-crushing and intellect-damaging norms.
 12. We should work to decolonize our minds and be more collective. This is difficult, but we can try, try, try.
 13. We must think about the power of “learning from others, learning through dialogue, and embodied learning” (Frambaugh-Kritzer, et al., 2015, 70) as we develop disciplinary literacies.

From these questions and values, the seminar commenced. Why now? In this course we humbly, but energetically set out to address inequities through antiracist, interdisciplinary picturebook pedagogies. We saw this as a way to begin to “mend the world” and to define what that means. We felt urged on by the reverberations of continued racial injustice because we saw it as necessary work for which we were all responsible. Racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and ableism kill the spirit, soul, and body of children. All of us, in some way, have experienced or witnessed this spirit killing in our own lives and those for whom we care.

Now is not the “right time” for antiracist curricula. The existence of a right time implies the existence of a wrong time, and there is certainly no wrong time for liberatory justice. Communities of immigrants, Black and brown and tan people, women, and indigenous

people's sovereign to this American soil have been leaders in the fight for the liberation of the spirit for centuries. We, a professor and students, enthusiastically join and continue liberatory practices through pedagogy building. Our work is built on generations of sweat and tears and unpaid biopsychosocial labor. It is built on indigenous knowledge that respects not only people, but also the flora and fauna and land we stand on.

The pandemic and its traumatizing effects, especially on children, low-income, and BIPOC persons compels us to do this work. The recent increase in media reports of racist attacks, murders by police, and acts of domestic terrorism against Black and Asian people is a harrowing reminder of the myth of a post-racial world. Through our curricula, we hope to nurture the next generation to be stalwart champions of antiracism and unconditional love. We believed that this is our responsibility and a contribution to mending the world.

What Were Our Orienting Texts and References?

The orienting texts for this course placed authors of color and transnational authors at the forefront of our syllabus as a way of decentering the whiteness of the academy and schools. Some of the books were children's picturebooks; others were written by BIPOC scholars advocating for culturally relevant pedagogies, including those who center care, agency, love, historical accuracies, and embodied experiences in classroom practices. In conceptualizing an anti-racist literacy pedagogy, it is crucial to center the voices of those who have been historically marginalized and excluded from the process of shaping the world. Each text served as a springboard for not only our weekly class discussions, but also confrontations with our own biases in reconceptualizing the curriculum and the classroom in our current projects. In the words of Professor Diane Anderson, "Doing anti-racist work never ends. It is always a process of unlearning (through introspection), unraveling (relearning), and simply doing."

Although introspection, relearning, and doing might not be central in every text we've engaged with, each text functioned to dismantle conventions and oppressive ideologies by naming these structures, theorizing new ways of being, and/or rebuilding frameworks. When paired with the children's picturebooks and pedagogy books that encouraged embodied making, such as art, writing, and music, we felt ready to commence our pedagogical work. While we did not want to skip past the hard work of introspection, we also did not want to simply prepare ourselves to do socially-just curricula *after* graduation. We wanted to *do it now*, in spite of not being able to do this work in actual classrooms. We conceptualized the following three critical themes through our course readings and discussions:

- Deconstructing the World, in which we locate, name, and take responsibility for oppressive frameworks and ideologies by understanding concepts such as caste (Wilkerson, 2020), habitus (Bourdieu, 1977), sociocultural literacy analysis (Albright, 2008), the theory of the utterance (Bakhtin, 1986), and a social and critical view of multiliteracies. (Cazden et al, 1996). We worked to understand how literacy ideologies can be oppressive and how we might resist and reimagine the world.

- Reimagining the World, in which we reframe our thinking through other models and ways of thinking, such as indigenous worldviews (Four Arrows & Narvaez, 2022), critical race theories (Ladson-Billings, 1998), love and care-based classrooms (hooks, 2004), and “plorking” (Burgess, 2021), Corita Kent’s concept of play & work together. Our professor believes that the teaching of theories is really teaching what students already know but discovering ways to *talk* about what we theorize. She talks about theory as “playthings,” tools and building blocks that we can get our hands on and *use*. Theories, in her experience, help teachers to be more reflective and nimbler when the complexities of learners’ surprise teachers, such that they might recreate the world.
- Recreating the World, in which we build historically relevant literacies pedagogies (Muhammad, 2020), use and re-use of available materials; and embody doing and making. We build children’s agency through crafting and mending, as well as knowledge, drawing upon informative children’s picture books about artists and makers. We strove to design critical and antiracist literacies for teachers to work with in classrooms, creating openings for children’s questions. It is in children’s questions where we discover what children are “ready for” in terms of their social, cultural, and historical development and knowledge.

Why Read(ing) and Why These Picture Books?

Racism is negligence, fragmentation, and disembodiment. Racism is an erasure of voices and accomplishments. These books were specifically chosen to remedy those acts of erasure and shed light on untold stories, to begin mending.

Young children are often removed from conversations regarding anti-racist work for a plethora of reasons, but primarily because these “ideas” scare those that belong to the dominant group. Currently, throughout the United States, we are witnessing the removal of critical race theory (CRT) from the classrooms, with this pedagogical framework being messaged as a threat to the development of children. Instead of seeing CRT as a means of highlighting, explaining, and educating scholars on topics of race/racism, parents and some educators see it as a way of promoting anti-white ideologies, which they believe do not belong in the classroom. By removing these conversations on race and racism, our education system continues to perpetuate the racist cycles our country has undergone for centuries, which makes it that much more challenging for any change to truly occur.

The children of today are the future. If we want anti-racist work to be at the forefront of policy and change, we must make space for children to be active participants in an evolving anti-racist world. The books we have compiled allow for the presentation of anti-racist work to children. Our lessons based on the books present age-appropriate information about artists, makers, and their historical contexts. Students will see representations of themselves and people too often left out of the curriculum in schools. Activities and questions that are relevant to the contents provide students with openings for antiracist activities as well as

space for their own questions. Through the authors and illustrators in these books, along with the actual stories, these books appeal to students from all backgrounds.

These particular books about BIPOC artists and makers show the value of creativity and expressiveness that comes through different mediums, ranging from visual arts to creative writing. The artists and makers of these books often worked within racist structures or at the margins of the white, mainstream society. Some practiced antiracist activism through their embodied work. These books shine a hopeful light on antiracism and positive change in society.

While there were many books to choose from, these rose to the top for us at the time of the seminar. They are stories about artists Romare Beardon & Tyree Guyton, illustrator Gyo Fujikawa, basket artist Ruth Asawa, and the quiltmakers of Gee's Bend. Although *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson is not about a particular artist it is by an anti-racist writer and we found it to be uplifting and powerful.

BOX #1:

Harvey, J.W. (2011). *My Hands Sing the Blues: Romare Bearden's Childhood Journey* (E. Zunin, Illus.). Two Lions.

McKissack, P. (2016). *Stitchin' and Pullin' a Gee's Bend Quilt* (C.A Cabrera, Illus.). Dragonfly Press.

Shapiro, J.H. (2015). *Magic Trash: A Story of Tyree Guyton and His Art* (V. Brantley-Newton, Illus.). Charlesbridge.

Maclear, K. (2019). *It Began with a Page: How Gyo Fujikawa Drew the Way* (J. Morstad, Illus.). HarperCollins.

D'Aquino, A. (2019). *A Life Made by Hand: The Story of Ruth Asawa* (A. D'Aquino, Illus.). Princeton Architectural Press.

Why Make?

Practicing embodiment, love, and hope.

Making, crafting, and creating art is central to our curricula. Making is embodied, deeply human, and urgently hopeful. As Himley has said, making is a "common human enterprise, fundamental to our participation in the world" (Himley, 1991, 9). Early on in the semester, reading *Teaching to Transgress* by bell hooks, we learned that traditional schools rely on a separation between the minds and bodies of both students and teachers. Hooks describe the ways that the physical presence of learners and educators is forcefully divorced from their minds and spirits. This split is even more profound for students of color, whose bodies are policed, regulated, and subjected to scrutiny and violence while too often being left out of the learning process. To be human is to have a body—denying the body its place in learning is a means of dehumanization, so, in our class and curricula, we purposefully engaged the powers of making and doing to center all of ourselves and the students we wrote for.

Crafting and art-making became, for us, essential modes of learning that incorporated more traditional school modes, such as mathematical thinking, the language arts, history, and science.

Our stance on crafting and making felt like robust affordances of the picture book biographies we were using. As Pahl and Rowsell, in *Artifactual Literacies*, elucidate, affordances refer to the “specific possibilities resident within a mode, whether these are determined by the material or the cultural possibilities of the mode” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 5). In this logic, a food dish prepared by a student, for example as an unconventional practice is just as educationally and semantically meaningful as a standard, 5-paragraph academic essay. In cooking certain ingredients, students may disclose their socio-economic background (e.g., what kinds of protein they use), their culture, and gender dispositions (e.g., how male and female students approach cooking differently). Hence, it is an invaluable opportunity to address these otherwise indiscernible intersectionalities of students’ identities through this joyous activity.

Additionally, making (such as drawing, knitting, and cooking) engages students with their multiple senses, it is embodied, not merely visual, but also olfactory, auditory, and physical. This heightened level and more thorough inclusion of bodily senses echoes what bell hooks promotes, a co-presence of both “body and mind.”

All of our selected children’s books involve some form of art-making or creative recycling. These curricular activities, which we also completed ourselves, ranged from sculpting with slime to writing and performing a class play to making paper to collaged paper quilts of Sierpinski triangles. As we engaged in making alongside each other, many student pairs reported a new depth of conversation opening up, the kind of conversations we hope that children will have as they make, side by side. *Learning by Heart* discusses at length the duality of working and playing and the ways in which, in good learning, these things are inherently interconnected, what Corita Kent calls *plork*. We experienced firsthand how making things together—in person when we could, on Zoom when we could not—was generative. While we talked about the tendrils of racism that we aim to combat, we also got to know each other more deeply. We laughed, ranted, and created. We learned that an anti-racist, loving pedagogy is one that intentionally connects mind, body, and spirit amidst systems that all too often force the disintegration of these aspects of the human experience. In making, we claimed our right to full, embodied learning, even as college students.

Sister Corita Kent, has said, “Doing and making are acts of hope, and as that hope grows we stop feeling overwhelmed by the troubles of the world. We remember that we—as individuals and groups—can do something about those troubles” (Corita et al., 2008, p. 1) We, too, found ourselves feeling hopeful.

How do we mend the world?

Antiracism is storytelling is seeing is doing is becoming.

Storytelling as a literacy practice or theory is not liberatory or anti-racist by itself; simply recounting a story will not eradicate racism. But what this pedagogy ultimately illuminates is a possibility for us educators to question and challenge some of the ingrained assumptions about literacy/language education so that we can better improve our philosophy and instructions. If racism's phantom is fragmentation and disembodiment, then story-engaging, storytelling, and making can be the light to unite, to embody—to dispel the shadow of racism for our children.

We engaged with this assignment not necessarily by developing a structured outline, but rather by creating tangible works each as imaginative as the children's books our lessons were based on. Repurposing trash, making paper from local flora, and collage-making inspired by our chosen books enabled us to reinforce the importance of anti-racist approaches to educating children about identity, possible selves, and engaging with approaches that are intentionally not standardized.

Given the open and flexible nature of our assignment, the student-designed curricula were entirely up to the discretion of each group. Nonetheless, we worked with several individuals to ground these projects into lessons that could be used directly in the classroom. Professor Anderson made herself available to hear our ideas in their raw state and ensure that our plans were feasible in scope. Additionally, she helped us generate ideas on how we could adapt content from the stories into our lesson plans. We also worked with Gene Witkowski, one of the Teaching Assistants in the course, to specifically address these concerns through math activities. A few weeks before finalizing our projects, each group also met with a teacher consultant. These Swarthmore, Bryn Mawr, and Brown alumni have worked in the education field as teachers or administrators and volunteered to meet with us to place our projects within the context of a public-school classroom and Common Core Standards.

In Box 2 you can see some examples of the activities we developed for upper elementary classrooms.

Box # 2

Stitchin' and Pullin' A Gee's Bend Quilt	<p>Craft & geometry – Make Sapierski triangles as a pattern for collage building and quilt making.</p> <p>History – Explore a chronicle of Gee's Bend quilts and their prominence in the art world. Look at Gee's Bend quilts online, choose a favorite, and write a review of it, contemplating its name and how it appeals to you.</p> <p>Language arts --Interview family members to see if they or any of the elders have been crafters or makers, cooks or bakers. Write a newspaper article about them.</p>
Magic Trash	<p>Craft & recycling – Using safe materials, such as cleaned containers, paper, and old clothes, make something – the class will then stage an art museum for younger students to see and critique.</p> <p>Science & environment – Work with school leadership to figure out recycling efforts in the school. Based on local practices, count categories of waste and graph them to share with the wider community.</p> <p>History – Research and look to see if there is any local art in your community, from neighborhood murals to library installations.</p>
It Began with a Page	<p>Craft & language arts – Make paper using trashed papers, glue, and flower petals; make simple weavings using stems of plants, such as dandelions, grass, etc.</p> <p>Language Arts – Use paper to write thank you notes to teachers and/or family members; use paper to make Valentine cards.</p> <p>History – Explore the history of various immigrant groups in the US and their contributions to literature, science, art, and mathematics.</p>
A Life by Hand	<p>Craft – Make paper from available paper and natural materials; using found materials and plant stems, such as dandelions, weave small baskets</p> <p>Language arts – Find a local artist to explore and write a story about their life and art.</p> <p>Science – Test the structural integrity of natural materials, such as dandelion stems, bindweed, and grass fronds.</p>

What Was Challenging/Hard? What Did We Do Well and Where Did We Fall Short?

Although there were a lot of successes in this experimental seminar, it was not without challenges and limitations. There is only so much transgression and experimentation that we can do when we are still confined to academic expectations and work within a semester and meeting primarily over Zoom. One of the first major problems that we encountered was finalizing a class meeting time, which is normally a four-hour seminar. There were twelve people in total enrolled in the online Zoom class, but students lived in many places in the US and had other online courses. The only workable compromise was to split the class into two sessions based on availability and meet once a week as split groups and once a week with our project partners. Despite having a more intimate discussion space in smaller groups and some occasional interactions with students from the other sections, being split into two class periods kept the conversations somewhat insulated. Some project partnerships did consist of members from both sessions and we were all present during evening classes with guest speakers, but this was the extent of cross-section interactions we had throughout the semester. We did not utilize online discussion forums as consistently as we could have to encourage more dialogue between the different sections; we were naturally limited in hearing different perspectives and ideas from people outside of our respective sections. Honestly, like much of the world, by the spring of 2021, we were tired of screen time.

Another major problem that members have reflected on in the semester is negotiating the amount of freedom we had in shaping our curriculum projects. Although this was arguably the biggest project for this seminar, the students were given the freedom to work outside Common Core Standards and current lesson plan formats. This translated into little to no formal guidelines on how to write this curriculum other than models (Kent & Steward, 2008; Muhammad, G., 2020) This is particularly significant because students came into the seminar with varying levels of experience in writing curriculum; some have a lot of experience in writing curricula for programs or as teachers while others have very little experience of writing curriculum outside of the mandatory lesson writing assignment from *Pedagogy & Power: Introduction to Education*, a required course at Swarthmore that many take during their first year. During the semester write-up, one student expressed, “As much as I thrive from the freedom of not being expected to meet strict guidelines, it felt like we started almost with a blank slate and that can be very difficult for people who don’t have a lot of experience writing curriculum.” On the other hand, having this freedom also allowed students to properly evaluate existing curricular approaches with a critical lens and adapt practices or strategies that placed our underlying values at the forefront of our respective curriculum designs. However, in negotiating this freedom, it is also important to be cognizant of the intended audience of our curricula: the teacher consultants, who stand in as the prospective teachers who will teach our curricula and envisioned students, who are the target learner audience.

During the curriculum presentations in our seminar, one student presenter had expressed that their teacher consultant told them that what they had “wasn’t a curriculum at

all and they needed to fix a lot of things.” It seems that curricula *must* be focused upon “Common Core-based objectives and assessment.” In future iterations of the course, more support could be provided for students who do not have as much experience in designing curricula. Students can be directed earlier to Common Core standards or curricular requirements in their field placements. They can also learn the subversive framing techniques of using Common Core language to justify more expansive and antiracist curricula.

What Did We Ultimately Learn and Conclude?

As the appalling racial violence in 2021, which continues today, further exposes the systemic inequality rooted in American society, educators are seeking answers to “How can we empower our children to combat racism?” This core question was the foundation for everything in the seminar, from curating the readings to leading the in-class discussions each week, from designing the antiracist lessons to crafting our own artifacts. These diverse learning experiences shed light on the complexity and possibility of anti-racist, anti-oppression pedagogy. We have learned:

- *Anti-racist work in teaching and learning requires purposefulness.* It has been too long that the discourse of race evades our everyday pedagogical practice. To see and address that “elephant in the room” is the first step to combat racism in classrooms. We need to have constructive, if difficult, dialogue about racial biases—by heeding and honoring the potentially disheartening, yet true, stories of our marginalized students. We need to get comfortable with the discomfort of racial reality.
- *“Making” is the strongest weapon against bigotry.* Antiracist pedagogy need not be pedantic and dry; instead, everyday objects and activities carry tremendous power to dismantle the prejudice of racism, as it does for the artists and makers of color represented in the children's books that we focused on. Knitting, cooking, drawing, performance arts, music, and storytelling all encourage students to love themselves, to share, and to care for others. We need to incorporate diverse projects, models, and modes of inquiry into the class design—to be creative in conceptualizing antiracist pedagogies. We need to take an asset-based approach to children, and ourselves, to see what we all know and do well, instead of focusing on what we lack. We felt this as we participated in our own making, both crafting and curriculum design, in the course. Because we worked hard to be anti-racist in making pedagogy and crafts and engaging one another, we felt that we could bring our fuller selves to our work.
- *Everything is connected.* The body is connected to the mind; the theory is connected to the practice; the classroom is connected to the world. Disembodiment, detachment, and isolation will not inspire our students to be critical thinkers or courageous fighters. As educators, we need to contextualize, historicize, and synthesize in order to present a more flexible, versatile toolbox by which students can apprehend the world around them, and critique, challenge, and resist injustice. A problematic yet no less exciting

world awaits, and our students will grow even stronger as they explore these complexities and mend the world themselves.

As Carini has said, “Stories (and memory) pluralize us. Stories stretch our narrow, individual frames and minds, making us big and roomy. What was singular, multiplies. Through stories (and memory) we step across eras and even eons of time, glimpsing worlds we never knew but which also remain -- through stories. Stories (and memory) are powerfully educational. Stories (and memory) hook us into humanness.” (Carini, 2001, 54). It is through carefully chosen books, stories, and activities that we wish to create space whereby all children can reclaim their agency as full humans, as readers, thinkers, and makers. Faith Ringgold reminds us that “You can’t sit around and wait for somebody to say who you are. You need to write it and paint it and do it.” It is from this authentic doing that we might begin important mending, fostering hope for all of us.

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