



Diversity Statement

We are in a moment that demands sensitive, empowered, critically engaged students and teachers. I consider teaching in higher education as an opportunity to support the development of young people as critical thinkers and knowledgeable citizens. Central to my approach to diversity and social justice is the foregrounding of various perspectives, inviting students to reflect on their intersectional identities, and modelling democratic practices through collaborative decision making and reflective dialogue.

In the university classroom, I want students to read widely, experience deeply, and interpret generously. Toward this end, I often use interdisciplinary texts that highlight racially and culturally diverse perspectives, while foregrounding stories that help students develop tolerance, empathy, and a critical awareness of the world in which we live. Whether it is one of Audre Lorde or Naomi Shihab Nye's poems, an excerpt from Cherrie Moraga's *The Bridge Called My Back*, or Ava DuVernay's documentary, *13th*, the curricular materials are deliberate mirrors and windows. They are meant to communicate to students that the experiences of others, as well as their own, count as knowledge that is worthy of representation. Furthermore, because *who we are* shapes *what* and *how* we teach, I frequently invite students to engage in reflexive practices to examine their positionality in regards to race, class, ability, gender and sexuality. These experiences help students develop into more tolerant, empathic learners.

Throughout my career in education, I have advocated for inclusive educational spaces that embody democratic values. I form strong relationships with my students because I want them to *feel* the effects of inclusion, and learn to see education as a participatory experience that liberates and empowers. It is one thing to theoretically know how and why diverse spaces "work", but it's another to experience them working. This critical distinction is the reason why I dedicate time to engaging with my students, and host Town Hall meetings where they can share their ideas about issues of social and political concern.

In addition, I frequently seek out projects whose mission of social justice I can lend my knowledge and support. I maintain ongoing dialogue and collaboration with fellow faculty regarding the development of justice-oriented courses, culturally responsive teaching practices, and equitable programmatic structures and policies. Having also served as a Principal and Advisor at a "Just Community" school, I've worked towards creating a culture where young people feel comfortable challenging structures of power and privilege, and proposing solutions to complex problems – both in school, and in the community at large. As such, my diversity and social justice work extends past the walls of the university classroom.