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"I AM A REFUGEE AND I AM OK": INSTRUCTOR IDENTITY IN RESISTING CLASSROOMS

LAVA ASAAD

Imagine that most students, on their first day in our composition classes, formulate their own viewpoints on the identity of the instructor, viewpoints that sometimes propel them to ask personal questions. My graduate school advisor had told me to anticipate this, and I was and am mentally prepared for their inquiries. The questions students ask—sometimes but not always out of curiosity—almost always begin with “Where are you from?” and then continue with questions like “Are you a citizen?”, “Can you vote?”, “Are you on a student visa?” I listen, perplexed, gazing on the twenty or so students in front of me, always reminding myself that I might be the only Syrian they will ever meet. I debate whether I should answer their questions, and more often than not I end up giving them answers: “I am from Syria,” “I am not a citizen,” “No, I cannot vote.” I evade their questions about my visa, which is a Temporary Protected Status, but I always assure them that I entered the country as a student, meaning legally. I tell them that I am a PhD student in English and a teaching assistant. Dead silence falls on the room as I lay bare my nationality; it is a silence filled with more questions, but classroom decorum often prohibits further investigation into the teacher. Reactions to these first encounters have been various. Sometimes a student asks to be relocated to another class without providing a substantial reason. At other times, like during the time of the 2016 presidential election, male students will offer to escort me to my car for safety. As echoed in Shereen Inayatulla and Michael T. MacDonald’s chapter in this collection, “Sans Papiers: Humanizing Documentation,” I too am undoubtedly aware that my identity triggers a certain reaction in the classroom, and thus I am propelled to understand my evolving teaching persona.

Since narratives of international graduate students whose liminal positions become more intensified in teaching writing have not been discussed in first-year composition (FYC) experience, in this chapter I draw on my personal experience in classrooms to reconsider the ways that theories of embodiment and transnational pedagogies intersect with my particular position as an international graduate teaching assistant of writing. Towards the end of the chapter, I discuss a few writing assignments that reflect the way I approach differences in my classrooms to illustrate what I mean by reconsidering performative and transnational approaches to literacy to include the embodied

instructor. I understand that my experience is my own, but it is fair to generalize at this juncture that most instructors during our troubling times have felt, in one way or another, the need to reevaluate their identity in their classrooms.

“The Personal Is Political”

To situate my personal experience within a pedagogical trajectory, it is necessary to lay out the geopolitical context of my institution and its student body. At my institution (a third-tier research institution in Tennessee with a class size of 20 students), the pedagogical approaches in writing classes were mainly targeted to be apolitical; at least this was true when it came to powerless teaching assistants who are always reminded of their contingent position in the university. For better or for worse, silence was the easy option, chosen by some instructors and students alike. When I tried to have my class discuss a timely political issue, students would come up to me after class to explain why they preferred to be silent and not to share their opinions. Universities, at least the ones where I have taught, are no longer a place for freedom of speech. Students have learned how to become reticent and disengaged. Our classrooms have become so apathetic to important matters in our society. This may have resulted from policing the self, wrongly determining that certain issues cannot be discussed on campus, such as when one of my students openly told me that he was not going to talk about politics in class. This apathy could also, unfortunately, be the result of lack of motivation in confronting bigger socio-political problems. When we keep our heads down, firmly planted in the composition pedagogies that we are told are best practice, we are allowing such problems to grow.

The more I accept and embrace my identity as a nontraditional teacher (traditional as in white, male, and heterosexual), the more my assignments reflect what I envision literacy should look like in FYC. Initially, I was left to tiptoe my way through politics. Therefore, I took it upon myself to see my responsibility, as an instructor, to carefully approach these sensitive issues with a set of ideas that promote critical thinking instead of sounding dogmatic. My identity, in a way, delivered a message to my students that of course I would be far Left. My pedagogical approach had to reflect the intricacies and the power of circulating certain knowledges that could have profound sociopolitical magnitudes. First-year writing, in this sense, has the daunting responsibility to address the misuse of knowledge and learning on a larger societal scale. I have come to realize that I cannot engage students in a significant dialogue if they wish to be silent for fear of offending other students. Nevertheless, in case it is an issue of apathy, I remodeled my assignments to inspire students to widen their circles of interest beyond their immediate necessities. I would argue that it is due time for instructors to envision novel ways for expanding what is considered important writing and arguing techniques, i.e. neutral rhetoric. Failure to do so might entrench the center of power that deems some sorts of knowledge as inefficient or less important than others, than the arguments and topics that are expected in writing classrooms.

How can literacy be taught in a resisting classroom? The nature of instruction in a writing classroom is inseparable from that classroom's location, state-wise and urban-wise, the other students present in the class, the instructor, and the prevailing political climate at any given time. For

example, it was no surprise to me when a student blamed Afghans for misfortunes that befell their country, starting with the Soviet Union and including the US invasion; that because of tribalism, they cannot run their state by themselves. This simple anecdote of misinformation is one of many examples where students resist evaluating the sources of their information. I am using “resisting” here not in its positive meaning as circulated in social media. Rather, I am using it in the sense of students who challenge literacy, or misuse it, for their own pre-constructed ideologies. The matter is definitely not made easier when the instructor of literacy and writing is the unfamiliar Other. In an era of fake news (i.e., fallacious arguments and logical fallacies), biased sources, and informational chaos, it is becoming more difficult for students to discern subjective from objective viewpoints (see more on fake news by Genevieve García de Müller and Randall W. Monty). It is also easy and possible to be entrenched in ideological belief systems and to find “credible” sources that seem to prove to the students that they are correct.

However, discussing sensitive issues with my students has not always been fruitful. For instance, one of my students made the argument that the United States is a free country where people are free to do whatever they want. Upon further nudging him to elaborate on his point, he gave an example of how people from “terrorist religions” are allowed to practice their faith in the United States although they pose a national threat. As a nontraditional instructor, or any kind of instructor, I was not prepared for this response. My position as a learning facilitator was intersected with larger political and religious issues wherein more discussion on the topic would have created a greater clash between the student’s ideologies and those I held as an “objective” teacher. What worried me the most was that none of the other students seemed willing to reject the student’s comment. The potential tension in this discussion was averted when, finally, another student timidly made a point to dispute the free country fallacy. This student noted that the US is not a free country and that one cannot do whatever they believe in, then referred to the kneeling incident during the NFL national anthem controversy. While I much appreciated this student’s attempt to propose a counterargument, the effect was that the allegation against the “terrorist religion” was bypassed. Was I practicing self-efficacy at that moment? Was there a hierarchical power in the room where I, the teacher, had to be silenced in favor of “dialogue” or for fear of having situations develop out of control? Would my position have been different if I were white? I grapple with these questions, hoping to find satisfying answers.

Irrevocably, the strange body and identity of the instructor is a physical reminder that may be used to increase students’ awareness to use writing as a medium for self-expression and exploration of the culture of the Other. However, teaching writing can be re-channeled into making classrooms an environment of different identities, diverse cultural beliefs, and contesting political views. One way to approach this transformation is to religiously endorse critical literacy in order to shape critically literate students who are aware of their positions in the world and cognizant of how language can construct and deconstruct ideologies. The best result of introducing critical literacy is when we see “students probe who benefits and who suffers, how did it come to be this way, what are the alternatives, and how can we make things more just?” (Christensen 17). Only then can students perceive prejudice and misleading information in texts, social media, commercials, and pop culture.

Composition theories have slightly acknowledged the fact that students sometimes lack interest in arguing about issues if they are not affecting their immediate lifestyles and needs.

As I show later on in this chapter, transnational and embodiment pedagogies have the ability to highlight these necessary critical skills. The instructor's responsibility, now more than ever, is to address misinformation in a creative way, targeting students' vulnerability without being accusatory.

Embodiment Pedagogy for Nontraditional Teachers

Recent transnational approaches in writing classrooms certainly can combat rising socio-political prejudices and help students explore more novel ways to look at literacy and knowledge. Suresh Canagarajah, Bruce Horner, and Min-Zhan Lu, among others, have endorsed issues of translanguaging and transnational approaches in writing classrooms. Transnational theories correlate with embodiment pedagogies, especially for nontraditional identities. Narratives of embodiment have gained attention in composition studies, acknowledging the fact that different bodies have different ways of disseminating knowledge about writing. Denis Carlson, Cheryl L. Johnson, Shirley Wilson Logan, Katherine Mayberry and many others have studied the impact of teachers' identities in classrooms. Minority teachers often are drawn to theories against whiteness, normative heterosexuality, and sometimes against English (or leaning towards theories of a globalized English in a multicultural and multilingual world), to build a professional teaching persona in class that does not collide with their various identities. Edward Hahn's article on "Embodied Censorship," for example, accurately articulates the dilemma in FYC revolving around the discourse of whiteness. Mary Louise Pratt's idea of the contact zone has been adopted in composition theories where two sides meet, and clash, for the sake of reaching the higher truth of difference and knowledge variety.

Inevitably, the triangular relationship among the teacher, the students, and the pedagogy or knowledge circulated in the class intertwines, however agreeably or contrarily. Thinking about this unavoidable triangle, I find examples of instructors who celebrate their identity and emphasize the importance of presenting it as a way of expanding literacy to the students, encouraging but also challenging. For instance, Johanna Atwood cites examples where instructors use their embodiment to disseminate literacy: "I reveal my personality, my way of thinking about things, my way of explaining things, my way of loving literature and the people in it, my sense of values, my sense of humor . . . I am increasingly convinced that revealing myself is the most important thing I do as a teacher" (Beidler, quoted in Atwood 128).

This kind of emphasis is often difficult to assume for nontraditional teachers who are presumed by students to uphold normative standards of knowledge and "truth." These teachers might draw on active listening as yet another embodied practice to aid them in introducing an unfamiliar stance on sensitive issues, especially if their students have resisting ideologies concerning the matter. In this case, teachers are encouraged to practice rhetorical listening as it "signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to . . . cross-cultural exchange" (Ratcliffe 1). My own students' openness is predicated on my readiness and willingness to listen attentively to their points. Only with active listening am I able to formulate a counterargument that engages intellectually and

reasonably, not emotionally, with their argument.

Perhaps the most important theory of embodiment, one that helps expand a more cohesive transnational pedagogy, is Karen Kopelson's idea of "performative pedagogy" as a strategy to resolve the conflicting ideologies in classrooms where students expect a teacher to be neutral on certain issues, not realizing that knowledge and the "truth" are at danger of being neutralized as well. While the premise of her argument at the beginning might at the surface seem not to be aligned with transnational pedagogy, Kopelson addresses the challenges and the limitations of her own theory towards the end, aptly pointing out how performing neutrality "can become a rhetorically savvy, politically responsive and responsible pedagogical tactic that actually enhances students' engagement with difference and that minimizes their resistance to difference in the process" (118). Possessing an identity like mine, I became instantly aware that I cannot perform neutrality nor is it expected of me to do so. When I try to refrain from voicing my opinion on certain issues, my students usually pose questions to me like this: "as a non-white, female, and foreigner, what do you think of [x]?" I am expected to have a different opinion because I am different, perhaps.

Kopelson is also well aware of how retreating to performative neutrality "deprives students of opportunities for encounters with the 'other' and for the understanding and transformation that these encounters might yield" (139). Nontraditional types of literacy instruction, in which students do not expect to be introduced to such issues as diversity, the danger of centralizing power in a Euro-American context, and the absent yet very present issues of racism in the twenty first century, would be sacrificed in the name of neutrality that encourages students to leave such matters at the door before entering the classroom. With the hope of finding answers, Kopelson concludes her article with seminal questions that reverberate more loudly in an age where reliable facts are at stake: "How might we speak, as whom might we speak, so that students listen?" (142) Undoubtedly these questions resonate with every writing instructor, but they have a deeper effect for nontraditional teachers whose identity might affect how students approach literacy in general.

The racial difference for these instructors is a clear marker of their identity, often politicized in classrooms. More widely, I would argue that the teacher's identity vis à vis political issues has become an uneasy topic to engage with. The racial identity of the writing instructor has been a discussed topic since early composition theories. In her study of scholarly rhetoric on race since 1990, Jennifer Clary-Lemon explores how the instructor's racial identity has been approached and negotiated regarding teaching composition and argumentative writing. To begin with, racial rhetorics have loosely defined race so that it often refers only to African Americans, although more recently we see inclusion of Latinx people. The terminologies used in composition studies have also undergone a major shift where instead of using race theories, terms like "minority," "marginalized groups," "high-risk," "colonized," "underprivileged," have been favored (374). These terminologies obscure more than reveal identities, and they in no way include these "groups" in wider circles of inclusion. Is the nontraditional teacher, an inefficient term I have been using so far, difficult to represent? By identifying a group—in this case teachers—as marginalized or minority, are we risking the fact that we are emphasizing the superiority of the white majority as being the traditional and normal representative of literacy? Is it a stretch to quote Slavoj Žižek when he asserts that "We feel free

because we lack the very language to articulate our unfreedom?” (2). Inventing new terminologies to showcase an example of inclusion and diversification has led more composition theorists to use terms like “culture,” “multiculturalism,” “difference,” and “diversity” (Clary-Lemon 374). Most certainly, these terminologies have erupted to acknowledge the differences in our classrooms when the racial makeup of our students has become more diverse.

Being a nontraditional writing instructor, and in order to understand how my students approach the space of unfamiliarity I occupy in classrooms, I find myself naturally gravitating towards scholars who have grappled with similar issues, such as Nirmal Puwar in his “Space Invaders,” where the idea of maintaining or passing as the “universal human” is an unrealistic idea since it suggests that only certain bodies can assume this universality, as male and white (56). More recently, Sara Ahmed has also criticized the inclusion of diversity for the sake of diversity in academic institutions where it has been used as a “description” for faculty (12). Nontraditional instructors do feel like space invaders, especially in writing classrooms where ideologies and opinions are tossed around and when resisting students feel more mistrustful of what their teacher stands for as being too foreign, too liberal perhaps, and—as it has been put to me personally—more critical of certain aspects of the United States.

A teacher’s racial identity collides with every socio-political aspect that they encounter before entering the classroom. Separating the outside world from the class environment has been proven inefficient, if not harmful. As mentioned earlier, instructors are likely, as are their students, to walk into the classroom with preconceived ideas. Although avoiding this type of thinking might be difficult to achieve, it is also not enough to claim that the facilitator of learning, the teacher, should assume objectivity on certain matters. More than ever, in our highly politicized age, objectivity turns into acquiescing to certain silencing discourses. Consequently, a teacher’s identity should not be compromised for the greater good. Nontraditional identity markers should be endorsed as sites of positive disruption of banal neutrality. What follows in the next section is an elaboration on ways in which these markers push the transnational and embodiment discourses forward.

Existing Pedagogical Approaches and Ways to Deviate from Them

One way to critically combat misinformation that students read and adopt from networked sources is to address the plight of fake news, a concept we hear a lot about but rarely address with our students. My approach is similar to what Christopher Minnix writes about in “Globalist Scumbags,” where there has been an urgency for globalizing university curricula, knowledge, and ways of interaction. Whereas Minnix examines the global turn in higher education, I expand the argument to include FYC classes. Similarly, Jacob Craig explains how outdated models of teaching students how to evaluate credible sources are insufficient. For example, whether an article is peer reviewed or not does not adequately show the credibility of the circulated information. Too often, teachers focus on discerning and evaluating information in printed forms, leaving students to figure things out by themselves when it comes to networked sources (24-25). Furthermore, David Riche explains how

rhetorical vulnerability affects how we use language and how language affects us (85). Riche redefines vulnerability not necessarily as a “position of precarious exposure, but also as a basic condition for social connection, political existence, ethical engagement, and even rhetorical responsiveness” (85). In endorsing my own pedagogical vulnerability as a nontraditional teacher, I extend this practice to my students, who might also consider themselves vulnerable in our classrooms. As a nontraditional teacher, I have become fully aware of how my teaching pedagogy can affect my students and how, for this case, I am capable of showing my students how language is never benign in an age where fake news and trolls have become the main source of communication.

Most importantly, it is essential to combat prejudices and numerous silencing discourses in classrooms in order to empower nontraditional instructors to reflect on students who feel silenced or underrepresented. Patrick M. Jenlink proposes a pedagogy of identity that he defines as “not about engaging only the positionality of our students or teaching[:]; it is also about understanding the nature of teacher educators’ own identities as they have and are emerging within and between different social, cultural, political, and spatial discourses and practices” (257). He further suggests inclusion of a pedagogy of recognition that entails the teacher to acknowledge his or her identity as visible and worthy of recognition for those who see it as invisible and less important. Including real change in our teaching pedagogy inherently entails appreciation of the self, a characteristic often lacking, or difficult to maintain, within a hostile environment, such as that which seems to be prevailing in the United States. Thus, nontraditional teachers, rather than being perpetrators of the status quo, can become transformative agents in laying bare how knowledge can be misused and how the nontraditional identities of teachers and students should be acknowledged and voiced.

How can one achieve this level of teacher identity empowerment without risking the silencing of students’ ideologies, even if they are resistant ones? The clear and fast answer for this question would be through practicing dialogic pedagogy, hailed by Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in which he proposes “problem-posing education,” in which teachers do not perceive themselves as the sole owners of truth and knowledge, as a frame of work that is oppositional to banking education:

Problem-posing education sets itself the task of demythologizing. Banking education resists dialogue; problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality. Banking education treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers. (83)

Problem-posing instructional technique has its own merits in classrooms. For example, when asked if I am on a student visa or a citizen, I engage students in a Socratic manner with other questions pertaining to their knowledge of immigration policies in the United States. I find this exercise helpful as they try to see the different kinds of visas and status for immigrants and nonimmigrants. I ask them to do a little bit of research on why a status like TPS exists in the first place and what countries, such as those under environmental or political duress, are eligible for it. More recently, our discussions extend to the exploration of why some people, like Haitians, might be at risk of losing TPS and how their case can be similar or different to that of DACA immigrants. I believe that engaging in these issues informs students of the wider political conditions that we often hear of but know little about. Looking back, these experiences were challenging, yet they started

conversations about issues that a lot of my students would not have imagined to be vital. Through following “problem-posing” methods, I helped my students to realize, maybe uncomfortably, that they might need to think critically and more knowledgeably about certain topics before making hasty and misinformed generalizations.

Readapting Transnational Pedagogy

In order to dismantle privileged knowledge, I rely on a transnational pedagogy without overtly labeling it as such for the students. Tailoring some assignments that require students to broaden their definition of some concept should not be strictly categorized as a globally-oriented practice. A transnational approach has multiple advantages and usages. Rebecca Lorimer Leonard, Kate Vieira, and Morris Young assert that writing in itself is a technique to achieve a transnational influence: “Writing, in other words, shapes and is shaped by transnational lived experiences and the infrastructures that govern transnational mobility” (VI). Lorimer Leonard, Vieira, and Young suggest that there is an urgency to show students that when teachers have a transnational pedagogy this does not mean that the spheres of knowledge or the geographical spaces are to stay far, distant, and remote from western knowledge. They affirm that “movement” also occurs in writing essays, not just movement across borders (VII). It is pertinent to approach students with transnational pedagogy not as an end in itself, but as a way to affect change on the local level and on the way students approach writing about any subject: “analysis of movement and of traces of that movement that animate even local sites of everyday literate practice” (VIII).

I always teach my students that we are not studying different parts of the world as a way to “know” them; instead we are crossing the borders of knowledge in hope to benefit from different literacies that other cultures have. To help students understand this perspective, I designed a writing assignment that pushes students to familiarize themselves with different types of knowledge and traditions around the world, anywhere except for the United States (beyond the western center of knowledge). The contact zones that I am hoping will emerge from assigning this paper are in the research and in the writing that the students do. Here, for instance, is part of the assignment that I designed for the expository writing course I taught at my institution:

In this assignment, you will choose a cultural habit or a ritual from any country in the world. You will search for certain activities or habits that some societies follow. Tell us if you found the ritual/habit in a movie, a documentary, a book, or during a visit you made to that country. Your tone mustn't be condescending. You have to start with explaining the habit, the people who practice it, the history it comes with it, and why do you think it is interesting—remain objective. Explain how it enriches the society. The traditions or rituals don't need to be recent; it can be an old tradition. At some point in the paper, you should make comparisons between your traditions and the one you are researching. How is it different or similar to some of the practices we have in the US culture?

One of the requirements of this assignment is to watch how we use language when we talk about other cultures and how it can be derogatory even if the student's intention is benign.

This assignment comes at the end of the semester. Students also prepare a PowerPoint presentation on the same topic as part of their demonstration oral and rhetorical capacity and fluency. At this point of the semester, we would have read “Shooting an Elephant” by George Orwell and “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema” by Horace Miner. In reading both of these essays, students are exposed to the power of language, especially when it comes to describing unfamiliar contexts or cultural habits. Students are able to comprehend why Orwell’s narrator describes the Burmese as “evil-spirited little beasts” and how that reflects the narrator’s complex attitudes towards imperialism. Similarly, Miner’s anthropological essay educates students on how prejudicial language can be, even when the speaker does not share the sentiments expressed in their statements. Having prepared for the cultural habit writing assignment by reading these texts, students usually enjoy writing this paper. I have had a mix of both good and not-so-good papers in response to this assignment. For example, some students can comprehend how cultures differ from their own without passing judgments or considering the Other weird or nonsensical. For them, the key outcome from this assignment is that research means expanding one’s horizon of knowledge and the ability to write about issues without having a ready-made set of ideologies.

In a different course, Argumentative and Research Writing, I continue with the same transnational approach adopted in Expository Writing. Since students are expected to do more research-oriented assignments, the course is dedicated to analyzing the process of forming a discourse about certain truths, or what has been passed down as the truth. Students are always amazed how “fake news” and “fake truths” are just new terminologies for old concepts. Maintaining a certain truth implies certain power structures. Here is the assignment sheet on how to deconstruct certain “truths”:

Discourse is a form of narrative that constructs certain kinds of knowledge. We have, for example, political, religious, academic, economic discourses. Cross-cultural discourse can entail narratives shaped to define a certain culture. Since this has been the theme of our class, try to understand the situation of your country’s history. Was it a colony or an empire? Discourse can be a rhetorical tool to justify certain actions and events. What kinds of rhetorical discourses have your country endured? Was it the one generating the discourse? Or was it subjugated under negative narratives? These discourses can pass as an actual reality, where in fact it is purely imaginative. The biased narrative of a country can include gender, class, politics, or religion. These kinds of narratives have been employed in literature, in political tracts, news, memoirs, and paintings. Nowadays, adding to the list, pop culture is a main place where discourse is woven about certain countries.

Choose one example of constructed discourse, either a story, a painting, a film, cartoons, letters, memoirs, novels, poems, plays...etc., and explain the implications of the narrative and what ends does it serve. Who is in charge of the narrative and what do they hope to accomplish through it? The constructed discourse does not have to be negative.

This is usually the first assignment in the semester that students work on. To prepare them for this assignment, I give examples of discourse that have a story or have for so long been perceived as a “truth.” For example, I show students a painting by the French Orientalist painter Eugène Delacroix,

Women of Algiers in their Apartment, which depicts the stereotypical image of Arab women as being dismissive or lustful. Another example is a cartoon from the 1850s entitled the “Know-Nothings” accusing Irish and German immigrants of negatively affecting the elections, as they are portrayed being drunk and reckless all the time. Usually these kinds of examples instigate a fruitful discussion on the nature of representation in its myriad forms, whether in pictures, art, or through language. Sometimes, students point out how they can now perceive certain discourses in our modern times through trying to trace back why certain stereotypes exist in the first place. The process and the habit of mind that I am trying to instill in my students is to question some of the issues that have been maintained as sacred and unquestionable truths.

The two assignments that I have shared here are just examples of what proved to be beneficial and thought-provoking work in my classrooms. The point that I would like to emphasize is that these strategies worked for me, they reflected my identity, and they introduced a new way of engaging with the Other through reading and writing. Luckily, the writing I get back from my students for these assignments often gives me hope that expanding the circle of knowledge is a worthy endeavor. Some of my students make a note to me that the minority authors and writers I assign in my class outnumber white authors, to which I reply that the world is vast and full of non-white people, and it would be unnatural not to strike a balance in showing different kinds of knowledge and literacy. It is not enough to throw in one nontraditional voice in one’s syllabus as doing our part of having a “transnational approach.” I have found ways to reconcile my identity in the classroom, where my difference as a nontraditional teacher is understood in wider contexts. It has been a constant effort, but a very rewarding one, to have my course documents reflect my identity in a way that can also introduce new types of literacies that benefit the new millennium. In the abovementioned examples, I emphasize diversity with a purpose. The transnational scope of my assignments situates students in multifaceted aspects of producing and sustaining knowledge. The purpose for adopting a transnational approach that emphasizes an embodied identity is to strategically awaken our students’ habits of mind, to critically examine the validity and the credibility of information they are bombarded with, and to carefully situate and maintain their own unique perspectives against the engulfing circulation of misinformation.

It is our duty in writing classrooms to exert change through language and objectively driven arguments. It is our mission to turn our “safe space” classrooms into spaces of empowering justice and preventing biased narratives from taking over spaces of knowledge. Our syllabi and assignments should reflect our students’ lives and their concerns in order to show them how language can be their tool in dismantling privilege in its multiple manifestations. If we fail to create these spaces and deploy this liberating pedagogy, then we will manufacture mere upholders of the status quo who fail to question their world not only because they do not know how, but also because they do not see why they should. If progress and equality are true goals of education and society writ large, then we cannot afford for that to happen.

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