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# Struggles to Transform the School

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Week 4 - 9.19.2019

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# Opening Reflection

4:30-4:35



**ORGANIZE.  
ABOLISH.  
RESTORE.**

**“Abolitionist teaching is as much about tearing down old structures and ways of thinking as it is about forming new ideas, new forms of social interactions, new ways to be inclusive, new ways to discuss inequality and distribute wealth and resources, new ways to resist....” Bettina Love (p. 88).**

## **On the whiteboard:**

In the spirit of Love’s call (via Kelley) for “freedom dreaming” as a precursor to the remaking of social worlds, what does a new vision for The School and educational experiences look like?

Contribute words or drawings that signal the practices, relations, resources, structures, etc., that constitute your transformative vision.

# Orientations

4:35-5:30

- What have been some of the dominant ways of theorizing 'The School'?
- How do these theories of schooling relate to configurations of power and the relationships between schools, individual actors, collectivities, the state, and society?
- What have been some of the struggles to transform or provide alternatives to 'The School' as we know it? What were their challenges and limitations? What can we learn from these examples?
- What could/should 'The School', teaching/learning look like given the needs of our societies and world?
- What ways of being/becoming does abolitionism offer us, and how does it inform our praxis?

# Henry Giroux (2001) Theorizing Resistance and Education

“Dominant ideologies are not simply transmitted in schools, nor are they practiced in a void. On the contrary, they are often met with resistance by teachers, students, or parents, and must therefore, to be successful, repress the production of counter-ideologies. Moreover, schools are not simply static institutions that reproduce the dominant ideology, they are active agents in its construction as well” (91)

“The concept of resistance represents more than a new heuristic catchword in the language of radical pedagogy--it represents a mode of discourse that rejects traditional explanations of school failure and oppositional behavior. [...] Resistance in this case redefines the causes and meaning of oppositional behavior by arguing that it has little to do with the logic of deviance, individual pathology, learned helplessness (and, of course, genetic explanation), and a great deal to do [...] with the logic of moral and political indignation” (107).

# Readings

Philadelphia  
Contexts

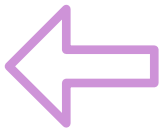
Contemporary  
Struggles

Abolitionism

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# Philadelphia Contexts

- [“Community Control of the Schools” from Up South](#)
- [Black Teachers Matter](#)



## Matthew Countryman (2005) “Community Control of the Schools.”

“In the meeting [between school board officials and student leaders of the 1967 student walkout], the students presented a number of demands, including the addition of black history courses taught by black teachers, the assignment of black principals to black schools, increased black representation on the school board, exemption from the requirement that students salute the flag, and the removal of police and nonteaching assistants from all schools” (225)

“In this sense, entrenched white support for racialized hierarchies within public institutions like the Philadelphia public schools was as much a cause of the urban violence of the late 1960s as black radical activism. The violent talk and acts of black activists in Philadelphia were less the spontaneous explosion of a dream deferred than the cumulative result of the constant interracial tensions and violence that existed in the city’s schools and on the streets of its working class neighborhoods” (255)



## Kristina Rizga. (2016). Black Teachers Matter

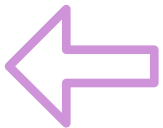
“During the civil rights movement, black educators were leaders in fighting for increased opportunity, including more equitable school funding and a greater voice for communities in running schools and districts. But today, as buildings like Germantown High stand shuttered, these changes are slowly being rolled back. In Philadelphia and across the country, scores of schools have been closed, radically restructured, or replaced by charter schools. And in the process, the face of the teaching workforce has changed. In one of the most far-reaching consequences of the past decade’s wave of education reform, the nation has lost thousands of experienced black teachers and principals.”





## Contemporary Struggles

- [Fees must fall: student revolt, decolonisation and governance in South Africa](#)
- [Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago's South Side](#)
- [A Vision for Black Lives](#)
- [The Problem we all Live with](#)



## Susan Booysen (2016). Fees must fall: student revolt, decolonisation and governance in South Africa

“Driven by Frantz Fanon’s belief that ‘...decolonisation, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder’ (Fanon 1963: 36), #RhodesMustFall changed the nature of transformation discourse to a broader discussion of access and the success of black students in an institution seen as colonial/apartheid artefact disrupting their progress. [...] Fallism should be understood as the reinvigorated process in which the decolonisation project has been renewed in the higher education system and in society at large” (58-59)

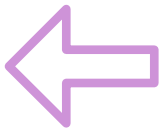
“To understand the Must Fall movement’s spread to Euro-America through the lens of Gramsci, Foucault or Marx is already to misunderstand it. Certainly, ‘traditional’ theory can illuminate certain aspects of the movement, but it cannot capture its anti-hegemonic and unmistakably Southern bent. ‘Fallism’ is a nascent, complicated and emerging viewpoint, combining aspects of decolonial thought, black consciousness, radical feminism, and pan-Africanism” (82)



## Eve L. Ewing. (2018). Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago's South Side

“Institutional mourning is the social and emotional experience undergone by individuals and communities facing the loss of a shared institution they are affiliated with--such as a school, church, residence, neighborhood, or business district--especially when those individuals or communities occupy a socially marginalized status that amplifies their reliance on the institution or its significance in their lives” (127).

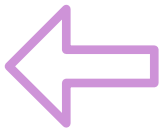
“A school closing is much more than the loss of an interchangeable building. It can be a harbinger of things to come, the culmination of multiple generations of racism and injustice and a blatant disregard of the fundamental reality within which a community understands itself. A school closure can thus be a devastating event, that leaves an indelible emotional aftermath” (127).



## Movement for Black Lives (2016) A Vision for Black Lives

“Inequitable funding at the school district, local and state level leave most public schools--where poor communities of color are the majority--unable to provide adequate and high quality education for all students...”

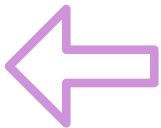
“Under the current U.S. constitution, education is not a constitutional right, which means that states within the U.S. make their own laws and allocate their little-to-no resources for public schools. As a result, education in this country is grossly unequal and underfunded.”



## The Problem We All live With

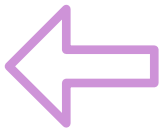
“Your zip code is that anchor that traps you.”

“With *Brown v. Board of Education*, we as a nation decided that segregated schooling violated the constitutional rights of black children. We promised that we would fix this wrong. And when it proved difficult, as we knew it would be, we said integration failed instead of the truth, which is that it was working, but we decided that it wasn't worth the trouble.”



# Abolitionism

- [The University and the Undercommons](#)
- [Abolition University Studies: An Invitation](#)
- [Abolitionist Teaching, Freedom Dreaming, and Black Joy](#)
- [Restorative Justice in School: An Overview](#)



## Harney & Moten. (2013). The University and the Undercommons

“To enter this space [the undercommons] is to inhabit the ruptural and enraptured disclosure of the commons that fugitive enlightenment enacts, the criminal, matricidal, queer, in the cistern, on the stroll of the stolen life, the tlife stolen by enlightenment and stolen back, where the commons give refugee, where the regue gives commons. What the beyond of teaching is really about is not finishing oneself, not passing, not completing’ its it’s about allowing subjectivity to be unlawfully overcome by others, a radical passion and passivity such that one becomes unfit for subjection...” (28)

“It cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, to be in but not of--this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university” (26). KS



## Abigail Boggs et al. (2019). Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation

“One of the defining features of the university in the U.S. context is the accumulation of lands, lives, resources, and relationships. The university’s appearance of necessity is no mere mirage but rather the effect of its centrality within settler colonial and racial capitalist regimes of accumulation. To turn the university into an object of analysis, a site of intervention, and a resource to be exploited, abolitionist university studies needs to account for the shifting regimes of accumulation that constitute the university as such” (3)

“To think through the university through an abolitionist mode entails approaching our study of and relationship to such institutions through a combination of social critique and a willingness to struggle to think and build the impossible. We have chosen this name, a name that positions the university as the object of abolition, in an effort to short-circuit the university’s claims of a priori goodness, as a way of making the university newly available for thinking. For us, an abolitionist approach is one which confronts the foundational epistemological and material violences of the U.S. state, liberalism, and capitalism” (4)



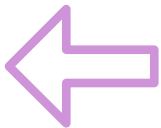


## Bettina Love. (2019) Abolitionist Teaching, Freedom Dreaming, and Black Joy

“Abolitionist teaching starts with freedom dreaming, dreams grounded in a critique of injustice. These dreams are not whimsical, unattainable daydreams, they are critical and imaginative dreams of collective resistance” (101).

“Finding joy in the midst of pain and trauma is the fight to be fully human” (119)

“Art is a vital part of abolitionist teaching because it is a freeing space of creativity, which is essential to abolishing injustice. [...] Art first lets us see what is possible. It is our blueprint for the world we deserve and the world we are working toward. Abolitionist teaching is built on the radical imagination of collective memories of resistance, trauma, survival, love, joy, and cultural modes of expression and practices that push and expand the fundamental ideas of democracy. ....” JMC



# Working Groups

5:30 - 5:50

Teacher Organizing

Student and Youth Organizing

Philadelphia Communities

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# Podcasting Workshop

6:00 - 7:00

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