

Teaching Philosophy

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To interrogate the complex and multilayered understandings of a multicultural democracy begins with complicated conversation between the “we” and the “I.” As an African American male teacher educator and study abroad reentry educator, I am keenly interested in helping undergraduate and graduate students tackle tough questions about race, gender, identity, education, and democracy. I am firmly grounded in critical pedagogical practices in the classroom that ask students to trust, believe, and interrogate.

Trust. Any education worth knowing and growing into, ask students to trust the methodology and skills of the teacher, the curriculum, and classroom community. My critical praxis in the classroom deals from a place of asking students to interrogate their assumptions about democracy, race, gender, identity, and other critical issues. In order to do this style of teaching I pull from canons that are often feminist, often multicultural, often non Eurocentric and non Western. Trust grounds the work in my classrooms, and begs students to enter the complicated dialogues about how we shape and shift the world for more democracy.

Believe. I ask my students in education to believe in the value of the Black child on the first day of class because we know from historical and current data that Black children are often the most marginalized students in public schools. By asking students to believe in the children that are often not centered in the curriculum, I believe that we can recraft and reimagine the value of Black, Native American, Latino/a, Asian, and white children through culturally positive and resistance methodologies. This belief can and often does lead to my students grounding their future aspirations in social justice work.

Interrogate. I do ask any students in my courses to do work that is philosophical, ideological, or political that I often model for them. As I learned from being raised by my grandparents, in order grow plants, the farmer must interrogate the soil. But, she also must interrogate herself and how she fits into the growing process. I ask my students to interrogate the soil, or foundation of their education. Then, I ask students to interrogate the larger growing process in the sociocultural context of their education. These types of interrogations, I believe, lead students to a holistic, and even more well rounded understanding of their multiple identities inside and outside of the classroom and democracy.

Asking my students in teacher education and international education to trust, believe, and interrogate is an act of collective social justice work. I believe as an African American educator who has taught in teacher education colleges in South Korea and in the United States, education for liberation collectively begs educators, students, communities, and educational leaders to struggle towards trusting, believing, and interrogating the democracy we have and the democracy we want.

Lastly, education towards liberation in the college classroom excites the minds that want the process of more equity, justice, and love to be centered in public.