
Safe Is A Place On Coming Closer In A Classroom

Esma Moukhtar

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One's own lived experience, respectfully related to that of others, remains for me the best foundation for social vision, of which art is a significant part. Personal associations, education, political and environmental contexts, class and ethnic backgrounds, value systems and market values, all exert their pressures on the interaction between eye, mind and image.

LUCY LIPPARD (1990)

NO PARADISE

What does it mean to be a student; one should ask oneself, especially when teaching. After about fifteen years of doing so, at this academy and elsewhere, I am still learning and at time puzzled about what happens in classrooms. That the people in my class are willing to explore their talents and ambitions, and that they sometimes think they can learn something from me, is one thing. Every year I become more aware of another thing: that there is a very intimate aspect of coming together in a room; that it is not only about sharing information, standardized knowledge and skills, but also, maybe mostly, about how we relate to one another, how we care, or not. And I ask myself often whether I care too much or too little.

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SAFE IS A PLACE

ON COMING CLOSER IN A CLASSROOM

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We share a place and time, and it happens that we don't know each other that well or at all. But a class of students to whom I talk is not a general 'public'. They have been selected in all sorts of ways before they enter and we will be around each other for a while. Neither are they a circle of friends that automatically share their private matters, to whom I am a temporal guest or intruder, nor will we become real friends, or at least not as long as we are related as student and teacher.

In between the physical public and private sphere outside the academy, there is 'the personal' or 'the intimate', that can easily be overlooked or denied within the classroom. We might hardly know each other but the way we think, talk and work, comes for a huge part from within, so without knowing we exchange personal things and touch each other on several levels of our personality. Shouldn't we know better with whom we are doing this?

Picture a classroom, filled with mainly white students and here and there a couple of 'other faces'. In fact, all of them could have come from anywhere, born here or just arrived in this country to study. Behind each face lives a story, and although the majority is familiar with each other's (western) background and the system that has always supported them, some stories are more different than others and some students more equal than the rest.

'So what?' a voice in the back of my mind said when I first began, 'we all have four, five or even more senses. We have our hands, brains and heart, so why does it matter, for what we do here in this classroom, to which background you belong? I thought it was a way of treating everybody equally if I more or less ignored particular origins or possible issues. Yet, with every assignment, these backgrounds and alleged identities kept popping up as if it needed to come out this way, if not otherwise. And I admit, this would annoy at times. Forget about it, I thought, now that we are here, try to concentrate on something else; something that has nothing to do with any identity you might hold on to. You can think and study whatever you choose but I wanted to believe and wished to think that personal, artistic and intellectual growth are totally exclusive to one's sex, gender, colour, class, health and whatever else we have. And in thinking so, I guess I confused wishing with knowing, and what should be with what is.

Being a student, when I was one, I had the impression that going to college meant 'to step as far as I could out of who I am and what I (think I) know already in order to be really open to new ideas and concepts.' Aren't we equal in following the same course? It wasn't relevant what life I had, and I didn't think of identity. I couldn't care less; if at all. It was private stuff, nothing more.

Once though, a professor came to me after class, to compliment me on my Dutch: it was so well developed for a Moroccan girl. He was interested and trying to be nice, so I laughed, but what if I was that girl he projected onto me? Would I have appreciated the compliment? And now that I wasn't, why hadn't he first asked me a thing or two? It wasn't maybe relevant that I'm technically half Egyptian, born in Rotterdam, raised by my Dutch mother and her parents in a small village in the country, since my father died when I was nearly five, and that I never learned to speak Arabic, unfortunately, but I told

him anyway, we moved on to something else and that was about it.

Besides the reoccurring question 'where are you actually from' I never felt bothered by not being as Dutch and as white as the rest, nor was I proud of that Dutch part or of the other half for that matter. I didn't feel as exotic as I looked but I had more important things on my mind and on my list. But I now realize that it has been a luxury, not really having to care about this particular or another aspect of my identity, because I have always had the feeling that it was never used or working against me. It seems that (an aspect of) identity becomes more important as it comes under pressure. I think I felt 'included' enough to not bother. Good for me, then, I would say, but I cannot project this privilege onto everyone in my class today.

When you feel included where you want to be, you can say: "Do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to remain the same" like Foucault did in his introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), or: "I have to change to stay the same" as Willem de Kooning had put it more than ten years earlier and repeats it every day when one enters the academy at Blaak, where his words adorn the facade.

But, in order to change, you must have had, somehow, the opportunity to get a sense of 'self' and an identity that is not ignored, marginalized or problematized by others. It seems more of a privilege to be able to change and not having to deal with the question or wanting to answer who you are and where you are from.

When you are confronted with circumstances of rejection, oppression or exclusion, you might say:

'Ask me who I am and let me be that way. I don't need to change to become who I am.'

Some might think we live in a paradise where we can choose who we are, think and say what we want and that identity is no longer an issue. Still, straight white male normativity inhabits that liberal paradise and seldom do we realize what the privileges are of those who fit into the prefabricated structures of western society.

Is being a woman, being gay, or being a person of colour non-conforming to gender binaries or rather, is it a combination of all these and other variations that are walking around or sitting in our classrooms *really* unproblematic for everyone? You might say: are we, after about three feminist waves, a few so-called postcolonial decades and their identity politics, the many coloured movements, gay pride parades and gender-fuck parties, not done with all that? Can't we speak now of a post-identity era, in which we have to move onwards, focus on common crises, projects and goals and forget about our personal attachments to or searches for identities, or not?

It is about time we add an extra 'post' behind 'post-identity' like we put another post to 'postmodernism', 'postcolonial', 'post-feminism', 'post-blackness', 'post gender' and 'post-critical'. Maybe we are 'post free' and back to these issues, since we are obviously not done yet – the Trump era started long before this curious candidate was president-elect. We still live in a climate that whether consciously or not, still continues to deny a certain past, which prevents us from coming to terms with the inevitable and abject consequences of our history: blunt racism, sexism, misogyny, homophobia and xenophobia in (popular) politics, (social) media and academia.

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WE STILL LIVE IN A CLIMATE THAT, CONSCIOUSLY OR NOT, STILL CONTINUES TO DENY A CERTAIN PAST

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Certainly there are very real differences between us, of race, age, and sex. But it is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions that result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behavior and expectation.

AUDRE LORDE (1980)

EVERYDAY

In June 2016, in a packed Maagdenhuis in Amsterdam, proudly introduced by Gloria Wekker, I heard Philomena Essed speak about exclusion and everyday racism. I hadn't started reading Wekker's *White Innocence* (2016) yet, neither had I heard of Essed herself. Maybe because after she published her book *Alledaags racisme* (1984)/*Everyday Racism* (1990), about Dutch racism, she literally had to flee from a wave of hatred her studies evoked within academia and media in Holland. She touched upon the blind spots of our nation; spots that have made everyday racism invisible for us, and as an effect this also made Essed more and more invisible for us too. Now that Wekker raises these questions again, whether we can go on with the denial and disavowal of our violent colonial past and our current racist present, it still turns out to be a job that makes critical thinkers like

her having to leave this nice, innocent and tolerant little country, because of all that is happening to Wekker now, after the 'reception' of *her* book. But that doesn't prevent her from continuing her job, here or elsewhere, and that day she gave the Maagdenhuis stage of the University of Amsterdam back to Essed. In a very calm and clear way Essed formulated her questions about today's neoliberal market, how this white male model rules our educational and cultural institutes and how 'profit' doesn't take into account who we are, the lives that we carry around when we come together in a room, and why we should be more aware of the many ways in which we tend to see, name and exclude one another.

It reminded me of what I had read in *Citizen, an American Lyric*. In this painful and powerful book, poet, essayist and playwright Claudia Rankine tells us brief stories, reports and thoughts on daily 'casual' forms of racism, written from the perspective of a black American, of herself and other people, things that we think we know but don't, or things we don't want to know but should. The relationship with identity is a troubled one: on the one hand, it seems a burden, on the other, it needs to be acknowledged before you can forget or be fluid about it. Rankine tells me, teaches me in a way, page by page of her poetic prose via compacted experiences, what it is to be continuously reminded of the colour of your skin and how difficult it is to speak out, to say "I"

Sometimes "I" is supposed to hold what is not there until it is. Then what is comes apart the closer you are to it.

This makes the first person a symbol for something.

The pronoun barely holding the person together.

Someone claimed we should use our skin as wallpaper knowing we couldn't win.

You said "I" has so much power; it's insane.

very use of these words, whether they can be related to a certain essence or not. Butler tends to suggest that such essences leading to essentialism do not exist, but we keep the idea of essence alive by the words we speak and which in turn, define and identify others and ourselves. This also contributes to explaining the persistence of binary oppositions.

It is not about sharpening these oppositions even further, nor is it to find grey consensus – it is about consciousness and understanding of what it is to be (not) white. Whether we are amongst those who we identify or feel solidary with, or feel confronted with others who act in a strange way, we have to speak out about what touches, frightens, and oppresses us, with vulnerable faith that the other will actually listen.

The 'I' needs to speak when it dares to. When it is able to step out of its shame, but "it never speaks fully alone by itself", Essed said towards the end of her talk. There are so many experiences of

She and other people in her stories cannot believe what they hear, how white people talk to them, how they act, and how it is something they do not grow accustomed to, never; each time it hits them in a new way, often without being able to speak out.

"And there is no relief" I heard Essed say, because if it hasn't happened today, it can still, every next moment. And a single humiliation is not just one, but also a whole prior series, and the next, and so on. At each moment the knockout can and will come anyway. Intended or not, the unintended insults are equally painful, maybe even more so.

Lately, Claudia Rankine invested half a million dollars (from recent literary awards) into the study of 'Whiteness' since without seeing white as a colour and understanding what it means to be White, we will never get (to) the point.

On reflection, my art teacher at high school taught me the physics of colour and that black and white aren't colours at all: they are both ends of the colour spectrum consisting of 'spectral colours' created by wavelength, where black and white have no wavelength; black is the absence of light and therefore the absence of colour and white is the sum of all possible colours.

No person is black and no one is white physically. The colours and shades in between for the two are contingently (in relation to place and climate) distributed and as it happens to be, those who are of the darker shades are more often than not enslaved, colonized or oppressed by those who are lighter and deemed superior. Furthermore, those who think of themselves as white are of colour too, only lighter, where 'light' has not just an intrinsic value, but also a history of violence, directed towards oppressing a majority called black or other, as opposed to them who are white, which makes no sense, technically.

But I think this does not help us much further, since speaking of colour related to people has become an everyday practice that we cannot easily overlook. Since Blackness is now regarded as a concept, it is time now to see and analyze Whiteness too. The performativity of the language we use, as Judith Butler emphasizes in her book **Gender Trouble** (1990), illustrates the ways in which we perform identity through language, and she further explains how we experience 'blackness' and 'whiteness' through the

THE 'I' NEEDS TO SPEAK WHEN IT DARES TO

injustice and exclusion, and yet, nobody is really alone, she emphasized; nobody ever did anything completely by him-or herself.

"Who in this room did everything alone?" She was addressing the question to us. One woman raised her hand. "No, really?" She replied with an incredulous look. And the hand pulled back, doubtfully.

That we are always in one way or another connected, we cannot repeat too often, Essed seemed to stress.

After her lecture, four young academics took a seat next to Essed. Each of them with their name badges sketched their own complex background and story in a couple of sentences, followed by a comment from their individual perspective as to what was touched upon, plus a question for Essed. They were all very moved for obvious reasons, and when the last and perhaps the youngest woman emphasized how overwhelming it was for her to finally hear all these things being made explicit, she became so emotional that halfway into one of her bright and smart articulations she got stuck and froze in the heat of what went on.

Sitting third row I could see her face and the intensity of her inward gaze, I felt the electricity in the air and held my breath. The words weren't able to come out, it seemed as if there was too much in the way that wanted to get out first. She was fighting back tears, flicked with her hands as if to scare away what had always pursued her, and now overtook her as it discharged.

Towards the second minute of this, Philomena walked up to the girl, said something to her, inaudible for the rest of the audience, and laid a hand on her shoulder till she calmed down and was able to continue her speech, preliminary to her question. It was about how

her parents and theirs and now she, how friends and others, what it was like, still is, to be poor, subordinated, excluded and humiliated and how maybe one day, ever, things could be different and that *WE*, in schools and in academia, in politics and in art *CAN* and *SHOULD DO* something, that we *ALL* have a part in this.

From these moments after the lecture, from what these women were experiencing and sharing I think I learned so much because I could hear someone talk and was able to see her face and relate to what was told, via the embodiment of this knowledge and emotions. In the laborious process of dealing with each other, we need this too. At the same time, it can be too much asked to talk about these painful experiences again and again. What can we do?

You cannot leave it to the oppressed to teach the oppressor about their mistakes, to paraphrase the poet, activist and feminist writer, Audre Lorde, in her paper **Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference**, 1980 (reproduced in 1984 for *Sister Outsider*, a collection of her essays). We cannot simply ask others to tell us time and again what we did wrong. It is already painful and vulnerable enough.

"There is a constant drain of energy, which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future" Lorde argues. It is (also) up to white people and teachers to educate themselves about the system that they are supporting, which is the exclusive system that has always supported them.

Professors must genuinely value everyone's presence. There must be ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic. These contributions are resources. Used constructively they enhance the capacity of any class to create an open learning community.

BELL HOOKS (1994)

THE PERSONAL

Besides self-education and teaching about problematic past traditions and current systems, we have to deal with diversity when we are working together in a group of people with all sorts of histories. How exactly do we deal? We, at least I tend to, project easily 'same' and 'other' to the faces we talk to. When you are searching for 'the same other' from the perspective of being 'othered' yourself, these alliances can help you to survive in an unsafe place. You identify easier with those you feel most familiar with. From the perspective of someone who never needs to think about his or her own safety and feels represented automatically, maybe unintended, without knowing you can treat these 'other faces' differently in a distorted way. Why don't we, to learn about the stories behind those faces and to make the personal aspect of being in a room more explicit, ask each other who we are and where we come from, what we are interested in, to make a start?

Not to label ourselves, but to learn about each other's backgrounds, experiences, differences and similarities, to hear and tell something about you, me and 'the rest'. What looks familiar might be a complex story and what seems exotic could surprise me as ordinary – it makes sense to share a bit more than you think you need to know and to give everyone a voice. It is the only way to find out that we are not all coming from the same place and that there are different possible directions of where we can be going. We need to know with whom we are talking and working in the classroom.

So that is what we maybe should start with, when we meet a new group of students, to create an atmosphere together in which things can be shared and supported. And then gradually, they might feel safe enough to bring in more personal examples and views during discussions about whatever the subject is, in which 'the world' and 'identity', are often very close by. There is a lot going on beneath the surface of their presence and I think we should dare to let the personal (to a certain extent) in, to handle difficult moments, to face tension and see it as a chance to come closer. We need to let things happen that might 'not fit in class' and do some 'emotional labour'. We are not just rational beings with equal needs and chances, with common goals and skills, some just 'more qualified' than others.

Whether you teach or learn how to make things or to think and reflect further, no student in any academy is just there as a student. And especially between walls where art and creative making and thinking are supposed to take place and to be developed, personality or the personal is never far away from the process.

It speaks for itself that each student is a person. So is the one who teaches. The latter might be older, a bit wiser, more experienced maybe, but besides being students and teachers, we are people with personal, cultural, and intellectual baggage.

To be a student means first and foremost and in contrast to what I used to believe, that you bring to the foreground: who you are and what you know by experience. You, as an "educator", bring your life to class: your body, your incorporated systems, understandings and misunderstandings. You have a history of experiences – an archive of all kinds of knowledge and affects. It might be a somewhat messy archive, but still, to be a whole person requires to be taken seriously as such.

In order to temporally step aside from who you think you are, and what you think or know, you need to be acknowledged first, for who you are: a person with a certain cultural background, particular experiences, problems, traumas maybe,

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WHAT LOOKS FAMILIAR MIGHT BE A COMPLEX STORY AND WHAT SEEMS EXOTIC COULD SURPRISE ME AS ORDINARY

besides all of the qualities and ambitions that you are here for.

When I, as a teacher, accept that students bring their life to the classroom, I will also find out that there are many issues with identity, next to false projections of identity, based on assumptions, prejudices and privileges that none of us is ever fully aware of, and which often prevent us from fully trusting each other and really working together. Even at an art academy, where people are supposed to work in more autonomous or less authoritarian ways, it happens that some students are not given a voice and that their teacher is not noticing that s/he speaks too much or leaves too little room for active participation and so on. Also, teachers are carrying the archives that they are 'fixed in', and the theories, histories and patterns that we teach or implicitly pass on are maybe not all that open to other stories.

In his article 'Realizing a More Inclusive Pedagogy' (the afterword of a collection of essays published in 2003 under the title **Race and Higher Education**, of which he was the editor together with Annie Howell) Frank Tuitt responds to conventional teaching and the effects of exclusion of students from marginalized groups and in general of students that are dominated by others. Whether they are treated with lesser attention or too much stereotypical assumption, traditional academic models often cause an environment that does not welcome everyone and is unable to give every student a chance to have a voice, to participate and to excel.

The article was recommended to me when I was about to finish this essay, and I spoke about it to a colleague who is more informed about these matters than I am; 'you should read this', she said and sent it to me. If I had joined earlier Brown Bag Lunches at the Academy, I would have known by now what it was about, but anyway, I was happy to read that what I tried to think about was already done by others so well, and thought of Essed's point: you are never doing things all by yourself. So, Tuitt summarizes and proposes a set of tools that together could form an inclusive pedagogy. It is based on the connected ideas of a range of critical thinkers such as the above quoted bell hooks (born Gloria Jean Watkins, renamed herself after her maternal great grandmother, without capitals because "the message was more important than the messenger") with her book **Teaching to Transgress: Education as the practice of freedom** (1994), to which Tuitt refers a lot.

Elements of the inclusive model to address all students as whole beings, are (and it comes with no surprise): sharing power, instead of an authoritarian professor in control of power and knowledge; a dialogical relation between students and teacher, in which personal stories can be exchanged and connected to the subject matter; giving each of them a voice and the acknowledgement that they can speak in multiple ways; to personalize subject matter with examples from their own history; a learning based environment in which both students and teachers are responsible for constructing knowledge and where beliefs and value systems can be discussed, re-examined, especially the dominant systems; transparency of the method and goals, as to create trust and safety in the diverse classroom.

“WE WANT TO BE NEUTRAL”. NEUTRAL? BETWEEN? WHAT? AND TO WHOM WOULD ‘WE’ WANT TO EXPRESS THIS?

All these elements can help students to create meaning and to find power as a person, connected to other students and teachers who are vulnerable people too.

Diversity or inclusivity does not just mean, as it might be clear in the mean time, to have a few students or teachers of colour and a few gay and perhaps one transperson in class. It also means to explore what that means, and to empathize before you can start to combine what you, teacher or student, know and who you are, with what is new. To connect what you feel with what you meet, hear, see and discover in your encounters with others, through works, thoughts and texts that challenge our binary and oppressing systems responsible for the division between ‘self’ and ‘other’.

To step aside for a while and not, in defence, hold on to who you are and what you know, to change your mind or to bridge a gap, cannot be forced, it can only happen. And it can only happen when one feels safe. Since we can’t ask from everyone to bring a ‘safe feeling’ to the academy, the academy has to offer it, not as a vague feeling or assumption, but as a place to go and stay in.

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The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom.

BELL HOOKS (1994)

FREEDOM, DIFFERENCE AND SOLIDARITY

Lately, some students and teachers were upset and angry with their school not willing to hang out the rainbow flag on ‘coming out day’. It was explained as: ‘we want to be neutral’. Neutral? Between? What? And to whom would ‘we’ want to express this?

Being neutral suggests: between two oppositions. Is there a reasonable opposite to being ‘pro freedom and civil rights’? You cannot be publicly against the laws of our constitution, I guess. Hanging out the rainbow at an academy on ‘coming out day’ symbolizes sympathy with those who still feel not safe to come out. Nothing else. So in order to be safe, we don’t want to make this gesture for those people in our community to feel safe enough to come out as something within the LGBTQ spectrum (if they hadn’t already) and to welcome them as much as others?

The rainbow is of many colours unless of course if you are colour-blind, and this flag refers to all people who identify as gay or queer. It is a flag that celebrates the non-nation of united people that have in common that they are not (as) straight as everyone else and it does not exclude anyone. In every culture, this way of loving and living is existent, whether accepted or not. Expressing sympathy with queer people worldwide does not exclude nations, religions, communities or whatsoever; it only excludes intoler-

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ance, oppression and violence. So, does hanging out a flag like this implicate another, implicit flag, which expresses antipathy with those who cannot sympathize with the rainbow; that hanging out the rainbow is a provocation of a certain kind?

Sure, LGBTQ rights have been appropriated too often to defend ‘our freedom’ as a way to tell the rest, and a very specific part of ‘the rest’, the *other* others, that if they cannot live with it, then they should ‘just leave’. But does this disqualify every single gesture? If there is an occasion for another flag, for a different case to embrace, we should hang that flag too. Or hang out all the flags we need, permanently.

When we are afraid that some people in or outside of the academy might feel uncomfortable by the rainbow, which does not by itself, provoke or elicit anyone, and withdraw the gesture because it could be interpreted wrongly – then ‘neutral’ would mean something that looks more like we stand for nothing. I feel that this makes ‘neutral’ chanceless for making any sense. Thus what we need for future situations is further discussion about why no flag, then, and on a longer term, if needed, attempts to see whether people can still defend their belief system *and* tolerate convictions and actions that seem to resonate with that system in a conflicting way. Maybe there is no real conflict after all. It takes time to solve or overcome contradictions that might turn out being paradoxes. Apparently, we are not there yet, but what keeps us from moving along? As long as we don’t feel safe, we stay antagonists and suspicious, we let the distances grow and keep shouting to the other side or simply give up talking.

Instead of being neutral or colour-blind an academy or university should take a leading role in addressing questions about whiteness, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and to make a difference in a culture that still tends to deny differences and privileges. When we invite students and teachers with all sorts of cultural backgrounds, it can happen sometimes that we surprise each other with mutual friction or even a total lack of understanding. To express sympathy with a specific group of students and teachers does not equal disrespect to the rest. So shouldn’t we make any form of solidarity explicit, because the one solidarity might contradict the other? Or can solidarity also mean to understand and not reject those who cannot share the very same values at this point right now? Can it be specific and inclusive at the same time?

A pragmatist concept of solidarity, as Richard Rorty describes it in **Contingency, irony and solidarity** (1989), suggests “that our sense of solidarity is strongest when those with whom solidarity is expressed are thought of as ‘one of us’, where ‘us’ means something smaller and more local than the human race.” And “this tendency to feel closer to those with whom imaginative identification is easier is deplorable, a temptation to be avoided.” From the perspective of ethical universalism, we should not differentiate.

Yet, Rorty’s position “entails that feelings of solidarity are necessarily a matter of which similarities and dissimilarities strike us as salient (...)” but this position “is not incompatible with urging that we try to extend our sense of ‘we’ to people whom we have previously thought of as ‘they’”.

of what our projects should be about and how to approach the themes that we are working with, together. How we conceptualize and visualize them, in reference to Lippard's "interaction between eye, mind and image".

Finally, to end with some words by Frantz Fanon, from **Black Skin, White Masks** (1952): "Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other?"

What our eyes see, whether we can tell what we see and why we think and feel this way, are what we should care about the most now, to share and to broaden our views and visions in order to connect and to come closer. When we think of the classroom, the working floor, the station or atelier, not only as a space for knowledge and skills but also as a place to feel safe enough for both teachers and students of all kinds, to express and discuss, to become aware of our privileges, to redeem innocence

for consciousness and care, to offer and accept room for voice. Only then we can learn together and produce knowledge and meaning beyond the long outdated systems of power. And only then academic diversity can be more than just a diverse bunch of people in a neutral building. Otherwise, we fail ourselves as educators and students, and even more important our future generations. ●

It is not about forgetting differences but to see them as less important than "the similarities with respect to pain and humiliation – the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of 'us'".

The opposite then of being neutral is not partiality but saying: this is also 'we'. And to defend those who cannot defend some of our values is to include them still as one of us, because we happen to live in communities in which contradictions and paradoxes happen to exist. When we teach students that an important part of their future lies in how they deal with others and our planet, we must deal with all of them and learn from all of them, why they feel the way they feel.

We need more talks and dialogues in small groups, personal stories connected to points of discussions in which we stimulate each other to more critical, queer and creative thinking about our choices, traditions, roles and capacities. Art and life, work and living are inseparable, which also means: open to mutual development and change, but not for everyone equally open. Since chances are not always distributed well, the awareness and emotional understanding of race, class, gender and other axes of inequality that we have to face form a condition for access to this development.

We can imagine and amplify a 'we' that actively works on inclusive binding instead of assuming that everyone is 'in' already, via continuous conversation and attention where needed. Instead of telling us things outside class, students (and teachers) should be encouraged to tell us more *in* class. To share power and experiences is, according to Tuitt, hooks and others, a proven way to become a group, in which discussion can take place with mutual trust, rather than to simply work together on one project after another without understanding each other or the relevance of the project.

We need to find out about our personal and cultural backgrounds and archives, to acknowledge certain differences and to realize the various benefits and obstacles that we carry with us. This requires research. It demands introspection. And it challenges us to talk more with experts within the field of cultural difference and inclusive teaching and curating: what do we teach, to whom, in which way and how should we open this up in a both critical and constructive manner? And the more we know, the better we may get a sense

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