Wide Awake and Paying Attention: Professors for Social Justice in Chicago

Susan J. Katz, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Educational Leadership
Roosevelt University
Chicago, IL

Presented at the UCEA Annual Convention
October 30 - November, 2, 2008
Wide Awake and Paying Attention: Developing and Sustaining Activism for Social Justice in our Students and Ourselves

Abstract

This paper reports on a study of university professors in Chicago who are known for their activism for social justice. After conducting classroom research for several years to find out if specific pedagogy could deepen educational leadership candidates’ thinking and insights into issues of social justice in schools, collaborative research colleagues designed a qualitative study to understand how activist scholars in Chicago universities teach and lead for social justice. The paper discusses findings from the study that revealed all six participants have integrated social justice into teaching, researching, and serving in their respective universities. They ground their work in communities: in urban public schools, in prisons, in neighborhood reform associations, and in community organizing. Drawing from the findings, the author suggests that educational leadership professors think about their own contexts where they might develop and increase activism and activist scholarship which can then serve as models for their students.

Introduction

The inspiration for the title of this paper came from a session at the American Educational Research Association 2008 Annual Meeting in New York with Maxine Greene as a keynote speaker (Greene, 2008). Professor Greene talked about awakening people who “are ready to learn to learn.” We must use our imagination to open consciousness but it is not good to just imagine; rather, we must teach “uneasiness, outrage, anything that will awaken.” Professor Greene asked herself as well as her audience: “How can I cultivate appropriate outrage?” I have been trying to cultivate appropriate outrage among my students in educational leadership courses for several years. The process is not easy. During a recent class, I made the choice to depart from the traditional content of the course on instructional leadership to discuss how our worldviews and the lens we look through oftentimes dictates how we treat students and teachers in schools. I presented four major sociological theories and concentrated on the focus, level of analysis, and critique of each of the theories, and how each might deal with the issue of student dropout. After students reflected on and then discussed which theory could possibly fit with their own worldview, we worked through a model that my collaborative research colleague and I have been
using in our courses to stimulate our students’ thinking about issues of social justice. The GRECSO model (Katz & Ryan, 2005; Ryan & Katz, 2007) presents socially constructed categories of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other (ability, age, size and other categories students might think of with guidance). Drawing from the model’s development in class, we discuss related issues such as power and privilege, social construction, the isms associated with each category, and how binary thinking can relegate people to categories that have no “grey areas” as many students say. Since this class occurred during mid-October, 2008, close to the presidential election, we also engaged in a political discussion. Several students asked why we were doing this; it was difficult for many to depart from the agenda for the evening and then to make the connection between how we approach the world and how we treat our students and colleagues. I facilitated discussion regarding paying particular attention to how worldviews are formed and in many cases perpetuated.

For the past several years, I have been “waking up” and trying to “wake up” my students to issues of social justice in schools and communities. My colleague and I have conducted collaborative classroom research to find out if specific pedagogy used in coursework in my educational leadership preparation program and in her courses in a bachelor of general studies program could deepen students’ thinking and insights into issues of social justice in schools and communities. We found that our students are “ready to learn to learn” and with the introduction and use of specific pedagogical tools, students in our courses began to construct their own meanings of how school and community practices can be just or unjust. And then once these meanings were constructed, we asked our students how they might take responsibility for creating more just schools and communities. After conducting this type of classroom research, we began to wonder what other like-minded professors in colleges of education were doing. We
designed a qualitative study to understand how activist scholars in universities in Chicago teach and lead for social justice in their institutions and in the larger community.

Issues that Warrant Attention

Before discussing results from the study, there are compelling issues that professors need to pay attention to when designing coursework for future educational leaders. These issues, although certainly not complete as described in this paper include the segregation of our teaching force, demographics of change and diversity issues in Illinois and the U.S., the issues of poverty among citizens of varying ages, and issues for GLBTQ students in Chicago schools. Several scholars have been calling for attention from the educational leadership community to consider instructing future leaders about these issues. Lyman & Villani (2002) reviewed research on poverty in the United States, the effects of poverty on children and learning, attitudes of Americans toward causes of poverty, and status of social justice in educational leadership programs. Their survey of educational leadership programs found little instructional attention given to the complexity of poverty and they recommended that the subject be included in all leadership programs. In developing a transformative educational framework for preparing social justice leaders, Brown (2006) reported on several authors who show that educational leadership programs have not engaged in substantial programmatic change regarding curriculum and pedagogy. Particularly, Brown cites Jackson’s report (2001) for a national commission on educational leadership preparation programs. Jackson (2001) reported that issues of social justice and equity were not dominant in programs, yet the issues warrant our attention due to changing demographics in schools. Principals in a study conducted by Theoharis (2007) did not feel that their principal preparation programs prepared them to lead for social justice.
A recent report from the Civil Rights Project (Frankenberg, 2006) analyzing a survey of over 1,000 teachers in K-12 public schools across the country show that our teaching force is largely segregated (Tables 1, 2). The report finds that teachers of different races are teaching students of very different racial composition, adding an extra dimension to growing student racial segregation. Not only did White teachers, on average, attend schools when they were elementary school students that were over 90% White, they are currently teaching in schools where almost 90% of their faculty colleagues are White and over 70% of students are White. Findings also reveal that White teachers, who continue to dominate the teaching profession, tend to grow up with little racial and ethnic diversity in their own experiences and school careers. White students, more segregated than any other group in our society that is currently undergoing racial change, are denied the opportunity to learn from teachers who would bring different experiences and perspectives. Currently, in the city of Chicago, White students make up less than 9% of the student population in Chicago Public Schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years as a teacher (average)</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice teachers (&lt;3 yrs)</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New at current school (&lt;3 yrs)</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
<td>83.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Black</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (average)</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors or less was highest degree</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Certification in subject taught  
96.2%  87%

| Table 2: Characteristics of Students in Schools of Teachers in Sample and All Public School Students |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                | Our sample (%)  | National (%)    |
| Race:                          |                 |                 |
| Non-Hispanic White             | 61.8            | 58              |
| Non-Hispanic Black             | 14.3            | 17              |
| Hispanic                       | 16.9            | 19              |
| American Indian/Alaskan native | 1.2             | 1               |
| Asian/Pacific Islander         | 5.7             | 4               |
| Schools receiving Title I funds | 50.7            | 54.5            |
| Schools in National School Lunch Program | 97.0 | 95.7 |
| Students receiving free or reduced price lunch | 37.6 | 41.6 |
| Schools with Limited English Proficient students | 85.9 | 62.9 |
| Students who are Limited English Proficient | 14.6 | 10.8 |

Frankenberg (2006) recommends a comprehensive approach to diversify the teaching force for higher education faculty as well as school leaders. The recommendations include the goal of increasing the number of college graduates of color; recruiting students of color to teacher preparation programs; re-evaluating admissions requirements that may limit the number of teaching candidates of color and/or giving preference to prospective students who will commit to teaching in diverse schools; and restructuring teacher preparation programs to provide supportive environments for teaching candidates of color, hiring faculty of color, and sustaining a commitment to prepare white and nonwhite teachers to teach in racially and economically diverse schools.
A 2008 report on diversity in Illinois (Herring & Henderson, 2008) reveals how the context has changed over the past 15 years (Table 3). Powers & Bagby, 2008 focus on poverty in Illinois and across the country (Powers & Bagby, 2008) in a report on the characteristics of the poor relative to the non-poor in the state and in the U.S. The first rows of Table 4 indicate the age distributions of the poor and non-poor in Illinois and the U.S. children are disproportionately in poverty. The incidence of poverty steadily declines with age; those younger than 25 are over-represented in poverty, while those older than 25 are underrepresented. Part of this age pattern has to do with the typical life cycle of education, training, and work. For instance, college students are transitorily poor because their primary activity (going to school) generates no income, but their earnings rise dramatically when they enter the workforce. While some children’s poverty status is due to residing in households led by younger adults, because childhood is brief and formative, even transitory poverty may have an adverse impact on children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>As % of Total</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>As % of Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>8,556,289 74.9%</td>
<td>8,462,115 66.3%</td>
<td>-94,174</td>
<td>-1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1,707,405 14.9%</td>
<td>1,940,032 15.2%</td>
<td>232,627</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (non-Black)</td>
<td>850,312 7.4%</td>
<td>1,735,818 13.6%</td>
<td>885,506</td>
<td>104.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian &amp; Others</td>
<td>316,596 2.8%</td>
<td>625,406 4.9%</td>
<td>292,143</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11,430,602</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>12,763,371</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Characteristics of the Poor Relative to the Non-Poor in Illinois and the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poor Persons</th>
<th>Ratio of poor to non-poor</th>
<th>Poor Persons</th>
<th>Ratio of poor to non-poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children under 15</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Children</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and older</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Born</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Born</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked full-time</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In an article to principals dealing with diversity, Hodgkinson (2002) makes the case that America’s schools are becoming vastly diverse. Implications for principals are that they must be prepared to deal with several big issues: greater diversity, fewer children from traditional two-parent families attending school, and the need for quality preschool programs. Principals must become knowledgeable of local demographic trends which includes race/ethnicity, religion, income, transiency, and parents' educational levels.

Today's elementary and middle schools are experiencing a growth in diversity that will embrace an entire generation of students. It is a demographic pattern of diversity that has implications for principals in terms of three major elements: transiency, racial and ethnic diversity, and poverty. (Hodgkinson, 2002, p. 14)

Other issues educational leadership professors need to pay attention to is the plight of LGBTQ youth in schools. These youth have been termed the *silent minority* and research has
shown that they are at risk due to the discriminatory practices of teachers and students (Uribe, 1994; Talburt, 2004). Other research has shown that the population of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth is large; schools are unsafe for these students; and negative school climate affect LGBT youths’ well-being and academic success (Meiners & Quinn, 2007).

Waking Up: Research for Social Justice in Higher Education Classrooms

Searching for Pedagogy

Early in our teaching careers, my colleague and I sought to design pedagogy to help students taking our courses in adult general studies programs as well as in graduate teacher and leader preparation programs deepen their thinking and insights into issues of social justice. We found that with the introduction and use of specific pedagogical tools, students in our courses began to construct their own meanings of how school and community practices can be just or unjust. For our classroom research, we built a three-pronged, theoretical framework. The framework of constructivism, critical thinking, and systems theory drew from best practices and theories in our disciplines. Purposefully designing and using pedagogy to teach for social justice, we found that students constructed their own knowledge of social justice, thought critically about the issues, and learned about systems as a basis for developing strategies to create a more just society. Our research (Katz & Ryan, 2005) has supported two activities as successful tools for teaching for social justice, GRECSO and the Roundtable. GRECSO is an interactive model that focuses on socially constructed categories of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and other (ability, age, religion, size – candidates are encouraged to come up with other socially constructed categories to add to the list). The Roundtable is an activity that promotes shared leadership, dialogue, and critical listening. Results from this type of research conducted in our classrooms showed that these two tools contributed to changes in students’
knowledge construction about issues of social justice and their roles as school leaders in the change process.

Wide Awake: Professors Map the Road for Social Justice

We titled our research project *Mapping the Bumpy Road: Social Justice Educators Lead the Way*. The title is a take-off on the title of Cochran-Smith’s book (2004), *Walking the Road: Race, Diversity, and Social Justice in Teacher Education*. Cochran-Smith’s book is a collection of essays that emphasizes her journey as a researcher and practitioner committed to equity and social justice for students. Her title captures the process of exploring and uncovering “what it means to make and walk the road . . . (p. xviii). In the title of our research project, we use the word *mapping* because we describe the paths the participants in our study are blazing as they explore the territory of teaching and leading for social justice in education. Our adjective, *bumpy* confirms that the way to social justice in education is not smooth, but “burdened with political landmines, circuitous routes, and unpredictable and uncertain detours” (Irvine, 2004, pp. xiii-xiv).

As stated earlier, we wanted to know how other professors teaching future teachers and leaders taught and led for social justice. We asked the following main research questions: How are professors who are known to be social justice educators in colleges and universities in the Chicago area supporting and promoting social justice in their teaching practices? How do these practices carryover to their scholarship and service?

To identify participants in our study, we examined the mission statements and course descriptions of colleges of education in Chicago that have a social justice focus. For example, Roosevelt University’s mission statement says:

Deeply rooted in practical scholarship and principles of social justice expressed as ethical awareness, leadership development, economic progress and civic engagement, Roosevelt
University encourages community partnerships and prepares its diverse graduates for responsible citizenship in a global society. (Roosevelt University, 2008)

After looking at university mission statements, we looked at professors’ websites, course syllabi, and other documents we could find online. We identified faculty members who taught courses, and had publications that appeared to be focused on work for social justice. Six individuals from four different universities agreed to participate in the study. We scheduled the first of two interviews with each participant and sent each an abstract of the study proposal and the first set of guiding questions. On the arranged day, we collaborated in conducting the interviews; one fielding the questions and managing the audio-taping and the other taking notes on the setting, details of the person’s mannerisms, and other aspects not captured by the audio-taping. During the first interview, we requested course syllabi, class handouts, and other documented class activities, publications, presentations (internally and externally), and any other documented record of leadership for social justice within each professor’s department, university, and educational community.

We structured the interviews around five key ideas, prefaced with the following: “Marilyn Cochran-Smith writes about what it means to pay serious attention over a long time to race, diversity, and social justice in teacher education and says each person must make their own path. We have identified you as someone who pays serious attention” (Interview protocol, 2007). We then asked the participants to respond to these key ideas: to describe their own path, to talk about what centered or grounded them as they continued their work in their universities and communities, to define social justice, to describe specific pedagogical tools they believed worked well in teaching for social justice, and to add any other points that would be relevant to our discussion and their work.
The interviews were transcribed verbatim, checked by the researchers, and sent to the participants for member checking. We also observed professors’ classes using a structured template as we took field notes. Shortly after the interviews and observations, we met to review our notes and impressions. Our individual records were expanded to become joint reflective memos. At this point we also reviewed other documents from and about the participants, such as their course syllabi and publications. The second interview questions were based on the first interview’s transcript and any additional documents and information we reviewed. We used a qualitative data analysis program, NVivo 7, to help with our data analysis. This program allows the data to be searched for themes, nodes, and relationships. The program extracted relevant data from not only the interview transcripts, but data from our field notes, reflections, detailed notes of our classroom observations, and our participants’ publications, streamlining our identification of themes and relationships.

To further improve our practice in teaching for social justice, we sought to find out how other professors were teaching, conducting scholarship, and serving for social justice. Many of our participants are well known for their activism and all have given us permission to identify them. Participants in this study all have seamlessly integrated social justice into teaching, scholarship, and service in their respective universities. They ground their work in communities: in urban public schools, in prisons, in neighborhood associations, and in community organizing. As educators, we agree with one of our participants when he says: “Teaching can be an insurgent kind of project against the status quo . . . it doesn’t have to be just a nice little corner of something but that it can be an opposition to injustice” (Interview, February 17, 2007).
**Activism In and Out of the Academy**

This section describes how professor participants in the study create high-quality educational opportunities in their university communities and in Chicago as they link their work for social justice to their university classrooms and to the community. For each of our participants, we use themes that were evident from the data: The Democratic Idea (Bill Ayers), Empowering Advocacy (Nona Burney), Experience the Context (Rico Gutstein), Fraught with Tension(s) (Erica Meiners), Connecting the Landscape (Therese Quinn), and Critical Race Theory (David Stovall).

**The Democratic Idea.** William (Bill) Ayers is a school reform activist, Distinguished Professor of Education, and Senior University Scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago where he teaches courses in interpretive research, urban school change, and youth and the modern predicament. He is the founder of the Center for Youth and Society and founder and co-director of the Small Schools Workshop. He has written extensively about social justice, democracy, and education. His interests focus on the political and cultural contexts of schooling as well as the meaning and ethical purposes of teachers, students, and families (Faculty and Staff online directory, University of Illinois-Chicago).

One of several overarching ideas we learned from Bill is that his work for social justice education is intimately linked to his belief in the individual and the democratic idea. Bill links his years as a community organizer to his feelings about students in his university classrooms:

If you are a community organizer and you are knocking on a door on the west side of Cleveland, what do you expect to find there? Well, you expect to find a three dimensional citizen who has every reason to have a comment on a nuclear power plant and product waste, and the environment, and the police. That’s what we assume when we are community organizers. We assume a profoundly democratic idea. I make that assumption in classrooms. Each student who walks in the door is a three dimensional person. . . . So that’s my path to think of these things as very linked (Ayers interview, February 21, 2007).
In his writings as well as in our interviews with him, Bill continually referred to teaching as his project and how for him, teaching is inherently linked to social justice. He discussed the beginning of his teaching career which was born out of protest:

I started teaching in 1965 when I was twenty years old and I heard about a small freedom school affiliated with the civil rights movement. I was a student in Ann Arbor and I had been arrested for a draft board sit in. We were going to get a slap on the wrist until we made a ruckus in the courtroom and we got ten days in county jail. In county jail I met a guy whose wife was a teacher in this freedom school and went literally out of jail into my first teaching job and in an odd way that was both emblematic and foretelling because from that moment to this, teaching has always been linked in my mind as a project for social justice... And so for me this kind of notion of education, social change and so on is kind of hard wired because of my early experiences and how I came to teaching (Ayers interview, February 21, 2007).

Bill explained how his ideas of democracy and of the individual came together as a teacher at a freedom school in Mississippi. “The Freedom School in Mississippi was an example of a deinstitutionalized, alternative institution.” Bill’s friend, Charlie Cobb’s work in Mississippi informed Bill’s entry into teaching and beyond. In 1961, Award-winning journalist Charles E. Cobb Jr. left Howard University to work for SNCC (Students for a National Coordinating Committee) in the Mississippi Delta. He originated the "Freedom School" proposal that became a crucial part of the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project (Iginia, 2008). In this proposal, Mr. Cobb wrote:

The black children in Mississippi have been denied many things: decent schools, fully trained faculty, forward looking curriculum, but the fundamental injury is that they have been denied the right to think for themselves about the world they inhabit and how they might change it.

And then to complete the idea as it applies to his local context of Chicago, Bill said:

That strikes me as such a profound statement about social justice. And frankly, here I am forty five years later and I still think it applies. If I change just one word, the children of the west side of Chicago have been denied many things, you know, kind of complete the sentence… the fundamental injury is that they have been denied the right to think for
themselves about the situation they find themselves in and how they might change it. (Ayers interview, 2007)

Bill has authored several books, edited many, published dozens of articles and currently maintains an extensive blog, billayers.org. When reading his writings, what comes through is his profound love of teaching.

And frankly all the weird years that I lived as a community organizer, which was several years, as an activist which continues to this day, as a professor, as a person on the run, I’ve always thought [that] in some fundamental part of my being - that teaching is my project. (Interview, 2007)

This passion was evident when he was observed teaching a qualitative research class. The class was informal, full of discussion about the course readings, a recent dissertation defense that occurred that day with Bill as chair, IRB issues, and two doctoral students who presented on recent and future defense of their dissertations. Throughout the session, Bill was warm and nurturing; telling those who missed class last week, “I missed you guys” and inviting those sitting too far back to move forward. One student walked in late, Bill shook his hand and said, “Nice to see you.” Bill was aware of his students’ research interests. For example, when a former student who recently defended her dissertation about history of art in a large Mexican American neighborhood in the city presented to the class, Bill encouraged another student whose research interest is with migrant workers to speak up. In a short time, Bill established a sense of community in his classroom.

His compassion for young people speaks to the role of the professor to nurture and encourage students to construct their own vision of the democratic idea.

Young people, all people in some ways have still within them a sense of wanting to be part of a community, a sense of wanting to be a moral person, a sense of wanting to be a part of something larger than themselves. So rather than throwing up our hands and in the towel, it seems to me that a fact like that calls on people like you and me to say then, how do I translate [that and] how do I make a larger appeal? My own experience is you can’t do it in a way that is either punitive or nostalgic or that doesn’t take account of people’s
lived experience. I mean everyone grows up inheriting the funds of knowledge that are before them. And [we] know less than these kids today, so we have to acknowledge who they are; we have to listen to who they are. We are part of their experiences just as we are a part of the experiences of any other human being, and at the same time we have to hold up a vision of a way of life that could be better.

As of this writing and for the last several months, Bill’s name has been derogated by the right wing press, the Republic party’s presidential and vice-presidential nominees, Senator John McCain and Alaskan Governor, Sarah Palin, and others. It pains us to hear and read about Bill in such a disparaging way, as it does approximately 3,000 professors who have signed a petition in support of Bill and his work at the university for the last 20 years. Anyone who knows Bill is inspired by his work toward access and equity for all children in America and his profound belief in the dignity and humanity of every person.

Empowering Advocacy

Nona Burney is Associate Professor of Secondary Education and Director, The Center for Teaching and Learning at Roosevelt University, Chicago. She received a B.S. in Education from Northwestern University, M.S. in Urban Studies, Ph.D. in Urban Education from Cleveland State University, and J.D. from Cleveland Marshall College of Law. Nona’s interests are in public school reform, transformational leadership, and parental involvement in education. Nona created the course, Teaching for Equity and Social Justice: Non-Western Perspectives in the Classroom, which she teaches to pre-service secondary school teachers. She is a board member of the Mansfield Institute for Social Justice at Roosevelt, and a member of the Grand Boulevard Federation Education Committee in Chicago (Faculty online directory, Roosevelt University, Chicago).

The theme Empowering Advocacy was evident in Nona’s work as she is a strong proponent of self-learning not only for students in preK-12 schools, but students in higher
education studying to become future secondary school teachers. She also wants faculty colleagues to challenge the status quo and become more in tune with Roosevelt’s strong mission of social justice. As head planner for the Law and Public Service Magnet High School in Cleveland, she facilitated the development of a program that included rigorous social studies-oriented curriculum and instruction that used the community as a laboratory. Nona described how she empowered students and created community in that setting.

... the students understood upfront that they had to be responsible for their own learning and they were as responsible for the environment in the school. ... And, so again thinking about putting children in powerful positions – to me that’s part of social justice too – the idea of empowering people to be advocates for themselves and advocates for education. (Interview, June 17, 2007)

Nona challenges students in her preservice secondary education courses to become knowledgeable about alternative and non-mainstream ways of thinking about and teaching globalization using materials that might be controversial.

Well, I guess the first thing when I think about my students I am working with—my teachers-to-be—is that if I give them new information, I expect them to translate it into something they put in their classrooms and in their own instruction. So, for example, when I think about the Methods of Social Studies students, because I use Rethinking Globalization which [can be thought of as] leftist and anti-American and a whole lot of other things ... I want them to be able to take the role of plays and stories and narratives that are in there and use them in their classroom and share that perspective in the classroom. ... Of course, I want to enlighten them. ... I mean I don’t expect them to change the world right away. At the very least, look at those places where they do have power and/or influence and begin talking about what they’ve learned or the perspectives that they’ve been enlightened to understand. I mean most of them were surprised about white privilege – it’s like – whoa. Now all right, that’s a place to start. (Interview, June 17, 2007)

I observed Nona’s class, Teaching for Equity and Social Justice: Non-Western Perspectives in the Classroom which met during the summer semester, 2007. This was scheduled as an intensive course meeting for a week, Monday-Friday, from 8-5 pm. The course was taught on the Chicago campus; most of the students came from the suburbs and many had not spent
much time in the city. There were 21 students in the class, 17 students were White (equally split by gender) and three students were women of color. On the wall around the classroom were several posters. One poster had the “ground rules” for the class which listed the rules as: set your own boundaries for sharing, speak from experience and avoid generalizing about a group of people, respect confidentiality and keep personal information shared in the group, share air time, listen respectfully, no blaming or scapegoating, and focus on learning. Other posters had hopes and fears generated by the students. Nona said that when they first began to generate the poster of what students feared, several were fearful of the train ride into the city. She was surprised by this, saying this had never surfaced in previous courses. Nona wrote about her experiences when developing and teaching this type of course in an article, *An African American Woman’s Dilemma: Preparing Ant-Racist Teachers for the 21st Century*.

Nona talked about having her pre-service teachers present work in front of authentic audiences, particularly when thinking about civic education. When we asked her about how that might look in a classroom, she explained.

I’ll tell you one thing I did with the methods of social studies students. We were talking about No Child Left Behind and how social studies is not part of the core. So it took a lot of beatin’ them up a little bit but . . . we drafted a letter [to legislators] talking about the importance of social studies and how it should be in their goal to reauthorize this bill – that social studies should be really considered. Not that we want testing because we don’t think testing is the answer but for sure the content and the intent of civic education is something that needs to be considered and reconsidered and it’s not given short shrift just because it’s not on the test. . . . I want you to be informed, I want you to reflect. I want you to generate your own knowledge. That’s what empowers. (Interview, June 17, 2007)

Not only does Nona strive to empower students, in her position as Academic Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, she wants to support faculty in their teaching, particularly advocating for the social justice mission of the university. She is at a “corner” in her career as she says:
Well, the corner I’m turning has to do with improving teaching and learning, generally at Roosevelt. I mean we’re offering that to the faculty. If we’re a teaching institution, then we need to do more that supports teaching. And so maybe serving as the academic director of the Center for Teaching and Learning is what I’ll be doing [and] is a place to start. I’m interested in the idea of making social justice explicit here at Roosevelt rather than something that we kind of run up the flag when we want people to pay attention to us for . . .

She talked about her interests since she has recently gained tenure and is anticipating a milestone in age.

Service learning is something I’m interested in and have been before I came here because I feel that the more we get students engaged in that the more we can create the dispositions that we want to see come from them to be socially just activists kind of folks. So those are the things I am working towards. Now since I have tenure it’s like I can say no and don’t feel like I can’t say no but I can really focus more on the things that I see myself doing for however long I choose to stay and I am staying here. I’ll be 60 in two years and I think, boy what do you do when you turn 60?

Besides her responsibilities at the university, Nona is also the liaison between the college of education and a Chicago Public High School, Jones College Preparatory School. She sits on the school’s advisory board and facilitates workshops in several areas, most recently on critical thinking skills. Nona also participates as a member of the Grand Boulevard Federation Education Committee. GBF’s Education Committee meets monthly and is comprised of education advocates and stakeholders from community based organizations; social service agencies; community residents, parents, and leaders; alumni of neighborhood high schools; Chicago Public Schools central office and neighborhood school representation; and staff and representatives of local universities. The GBF Education Committee has become a unique, valuable, and rich network of partners to advance school, parent, and community partnerships and resources. In addition to serving as a hub for sharing and exchanging updated information about public schools, the Education Committee developed a framework of 7 Critical Elements of a High
Quality School after surveying and interviewing parents, educators, youth, and community about what is needed to strive towards educating successful students.

*Experience the Context*

Eric (Rico) Gutstein is Associate Professor in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois-Chicago. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1993. His research interests include mathematics education, teaching for social justice and critical literacy in an urban, multicultural context, and Chicago school policy. He recently published, *And that’s just how it starts: Teaching mathematics and developing student agency* in TC Record, 2007 (Faculty and Staff online directory, University of Illinois-Chicago).

We identified the theme of *Experiencing the Context* for Rico since he has grounded his teaching and scholarship in urban communities in Chicago. He has experienced the context of the city and he wants his students in the public schools as well as in his higher education classrooms to do the same. While a professor in math education in two universities in Chicago (DePaul University and University of Illinois at Chicago), he also taught at public schools in Chicago. He taught in Pilsen, a Mexican American neighborhood on the near Southside and currently teaches at Social Justice High School serving the La Villita (Little Village) and Lawndale neighborhoods, located on the Southwest and Westside of the city.

When we interviewed Rico, he was working on restructuring the undergraduate elementary education program at University of Illinois-Chicago. Rico talked about his ideas to have pre-service teachers experience the neighborhoods where many of their future students live.

So, could we not take some of these students, White or Asian or Northsiders or whatever and have them go and live on the Westside [of Chicago]? Find some families who maybe have some room or a small bedroom or something like that and are willing to put them up and you’d have to pay people for the food . . . have students be immersed in the community. Go to church, etc. and get a sense of what peoples’ lives are like on a daily basis. They don’t anthologize, they don’t romanticize, they don’t demonize, and so they
don’t exoticize, all these things that people do when they don’t know (Gutstein interview, April 25, 2007)

A co-written article with colleagues about teaching in Pilsen reveals Rico’s same intent for teachers to become part of the school’s community as they teach in the city:

We suggest that culturally relevant teachers do not romanticize the culture or community (nor do they pathologize it), but rather look at it squarely and see its strengths and limitations. They look at the children eye to eye. They are not do-gooders because they do not proceed from a paternalism rooted in a deficit mentality. With an orientation toward empowerment, teachers see their role as helping children move forward to reshape their world, children with the potential to become leaders both in their communities and in the broader society. (Gutstein, Lipman, Hernandez, & de los Reyes, 1997.)

Not only does Rico want his preservice teachers to understand their future students’ school and community contexts, he wants them to have the tools to critique the political climate of the city. Since he brings 14 years of experience with Chicago Public Schools to his university classrooms, he is able to educate his students about reform issues and how that connects politically and affects neighborhoods with current and ongoing issues of gentrification throughout Chicago.

So that is very important to kind of set the context because these people are going to be . . . teachers, in Chicago Public Schools, so . . . they need to know the political contexts of Chicago Public Schools. And then, of course, I bring my experience as somebody who is working with Chicago Public Schools intimately now and since the fall of ’94 . . . that’s the type of stuff that I do so another specific pedagogical tool is helping people understand and critique the social political context in which they are going to live as Chicago Public School teachers living in the city, linking it to what’s happening in terms of the gentrification, in terms of Chicago, and understanding the current political struggles in Chicago. I sometimes laugh and call it ‘teaching and learning elementary math in social political contexts’ cause that’s really what it is.

We asked participants to define social justice. Although we believe that all worked for the concepts of social justice in schools and communities, many did not choose to define what social justice meant to them because it varied with their work and had personal meanings
depending on their focus. Rico talked about how he views social justice for his higher education students.

So I hear teachers who say well, where’s the action component in this social justice project? . . . I’m an activist but I disagree with that formulation. It’s like action may be for the person at that point in time, writing a paper, writing about and coming to grips with and chewing these ideas over and even putting them on paper and reading them to other people in the classroom or getting in front of the classroom and giving a tiny explanation of what they thought about this particular thing. You know that action, action has to be seen that way.

Rico is a proponent of teaching math for social justice (Gutstein, 1997, 2000-2007) and talks about the challenges involved:

Teaching mathematics for social justice is not easy, nor uncomplicated. It is fraught with places where we can “go wrong,” and make mistakes. But we fundamentally have to take chances and live bravely in times like this, where there is both danger and opportunity in front of us. (Gutstein, 2005)

One of the purposes of this study was to investigate types of pedagogy professors are using in their university classrooms that would prompt students to consider social justice issues that affect their lives and their professions. We found many of our participants, like Rico, taught in public schools besides in university. Rico talked to us about a class he was planning to teach at the Social Justice High School in Little Village.

Well, the activities —I mean this idea of reading and writing the world with mathematics. I am teaching a class at Social Justice High School, 10th graders. . . 98 [students]—they’ll be seniors in ’08-’09. . . That’s rigorous mathematically. The pedagogy accesses and . . . really uses math to study social context, to really study the world. . . I have a year to plan it . . . developing it around the generative themes and people’s lives and, on the other hand, trying to think about the larger stuff that students may not be aware of that are actually . . . implicating their lives. . . I want people to be able to understand their world and to change it and mathematics is just one of the many tools or whatever means by which we make sense out of stuff. (Gutstein interview, 2007)

In a publication, Rico qualified his idea of social justice pedagogy, “An important principle of social justice pedagogy is that students themselves are ultimately
part of the solution to injustice, both as youth and as they grow into adulthood” (Gutstein, 2003, p. 39). This idea echoes Bill Ayers’ discussion regarding teachers giving students the tools to think for themselves in changing their worlds.

*Fraught with Tension(s)*

Erica Meiners is Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Development and Women’s Studies at Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago. She has published articles in *Gender and Education; The International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education; Race, Ethnicity, and Education;* the queer issue of the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies,* and is working with a Chicago-based collective of activists on a book, *Women and Prison: A Site of Resistance.* Her research is in the areas of ethnography and ethics; identity, access, and technology; race and authenticity; and pedagogy, trauma, and the construction of the historical memory (*Women and Prison: A Site for Resistance* website). Erica co-edited with F. Ibanez-Carrasco, *Public acts: Disruptive readings on making curriculum public* and published, *Right to be hostile: Schools, prisons, and the making of public enemies* (2007).

*Fraught with Tension(s)* is a theme that is characteristic of Erica’s feelings about her work at her university as well as her activist work in the city. Her belief is that professors should be activists – activism is an inherent part of the territory:

I’ve always thought that being an academic is the best day job you can get if you are an organizer. . . I like the resources and the privileges that are attached to it and I feel like my work has been to leverage those resources and privileges for community ends and projects. . . I also think it’s funny that when university people call themselves activists, I’m sort of like, ‘You’ve got a paycheck; you’ve got healthcare; you’re an adult now. You should be doing that. You should be accountable.’ (Interview, 2007)
In a publication, (Meiners, 2004), she writes about the tensions involved in having her “day job” as a professor and all the privileges associated with that position and then working in community spaces where things are quite different for community organizers.

I encounter a polite pressure from the university to document and render quantifiable and successful the work I do inside and outside [italics in original] the university for my academic portfolio. I negotiate (the not incorrect) assumptions in community spaces that I am a gatekeeper who controls access to university-based resources . . . I witness and participate in partnerships [italics in original] between community organizations and universities that are fraught with layers of tension: miscommunications, misunderstandings, and assumptions about resources, and more. . . I am tired of repeating and reanimating these dynamics. (Meiners, 2004, p. 162)

When asked to define social justice or what it meant to her, Erica was reluctant to put herself in such a defined space, particularly when working with community organizers who don’t have the same kind of access to resources.

And so I feel, for me, to call myself a social justice activist in relation to [names of community activist and organization], who doesn’t know where he’s going to get his next rent check- it shows up in everything he does-everything. He’s an organizer; he’s connected to youth and doing stuff. . .

Erica explained how she tries to maintain accountability to the community members she works with, particularly with formerly incarcerated men and women.

Thinking about prison evolution - what does it mean to live in a world where mass incarceration is based on color? So what do you do? So I think it is accountability to people in communities that . . . continues the movement. It’s the relationships that stay and you stay connected, but then it’s the relationships and the accountability. (Interview, 2007)

We discussed the realities with all of our participants regarding teaching preservice teachers and young people who might be interested in teaching as careers but are not sure yet. We asked questions about how to prepare students in higher education who in many universities, do not look like the students they will be teaching in Chicago. Erica’s students are from working
class neighborhoods in the city and she talked about helping her students understand the realities of becoming teachers in Chicago, particularly men who are reluctant to enter the field.

Preparing them for what’s going to come through the rest of the pipeline which might be deadening. So we lose a lot of people, a lot of people of color, a lot of men, because their conception of what it means to be a teacher and to go through the pipeline is deadening. They don’t see themselves there; they don’t see their communities there. So, for me, that means hooking up, as much as possible, with the community, bringing guest speakers . . . people I know, social justice people. (Interview, 2007)

There are other tensions that Erica points out – tensions coming from students in classrooms who might judge professors’ expertise on the basis of race and gender.

I have colleagues who are African American, who are women of color, and are much more under surveillance by the students. They are asked to be accountable to and present and perform the duties of a professor much more than I am. . . I have male colleagues who can get away with more. No one’s crying about their hairdo on a weekly basis. So I think that the body in the teacher ed classroom who has the flexibility. . . I think its so context specific because . . . in some ways, to be a black woman in a teacher ed classroom, that carries power, that has a certain kind of weight, value. But I also think that what they are held to vs. what we [as white people] are held to is very different. (Interview, 2007)

Connecting the Landscape

Therese Quinn is Associate Professor, Art Education, Director of BFA with Emphasis in Art Education Program (2002). She received her AA, 1977 from Sacramento City College; BFA, 1988, from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; MED, 1996, and PhD, 2001, from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Exhibition Development: Field Museum of Natural History; Chicago Children’s Museum. She has publications in: Youth & Society: A Quarterly Journal; Democracy and Education; Curriculum Inquiry; Teaching for Social Justice: A Democracy and Education Reader. Awards: Dean’s Scholar Award, University of Illinois at Chicago; Ida B. Wells Critical Action Research Award, Center for Youth and Society, University of Illinois at Chicago. Recent works include the co-edited Handbook of Social Justice in Education (Lawrence Erlbaum Press, 2006) and Teaching the Arts for Social Justice in Therese Quinn,
Her research interests include teacher education as activism. (Faculty online directory, School of the Art Institute, Chicago; Radical Art Caucus online member listing).

Therese connects herself and her students to the landscape in many ways. She connects to serve in different communities with different foci. She is concerned about lifestyle covenants in private, denominational universities in the Chicago area where future teachers must sign stating they are against issues affecting the GLBTQ community. She asks how future teachers can be against lifestyle issues of those students they will be teaching. Therese and Erica Meiners organized a campaign against the removal of the term, social justice from NCATE language and asked for meeting participants at AERA 2007 in Chicago to wear red as a statement of support. Therese is a member of the Local School Council at a Chicago high school, which has a naval academy as part of the school. Through blogs and participation on speaking panels around the city, Therese protests the militarization of Chicago Public Schools in Chicago, currently the city with the most military academies in the country.

Therese worked in Chicago area museums before her position at the School of the Art Institute. She talked about how it is important to understand peoples’ interests to better attract communities of color to museums.

I was fortunate enough to be working at the Field museum on the Africa exhibit which I worked on for five years... and the whole first year was just planning and public outreach. So we did these things that were like community forums in neighborhoods all over the city and I learned a lot through that - about how people saw the museum particularly about how communities of color or particularly African-American communities in Chicago saw the museums in the city. They were very vocal about feeling disconnected from the museums, so that hearing that over and over and over in these community forums really informed about how I thought about what museums needed to do to be more responsible about the communities that visit them and that pay for them to through their city taxes... 

Therese is concerned that many of her students at the School of the Art Institute who are White and privileged and come from cities, towns, and neighborhoods that are not diverse have
preconceived notions about Chicago and its people. Therese incorporates “history trips” into her classroom teaching since she wants to introduce Chicago in all of its forms to students taking her teacher pre-service art education courses.

I’ll ask them to go on a bus trip in little groups, like couples - two people together. . . . We got on a Blue Line and we got off at the end and . . . we went to the Haymarket sites and we had done readings about Haymarket and then we went to the Haymarket statue and we talked about Chicago history and where you can see that on the landscape and how that still shapes the city. And then talking about more recent issues like gentrification and how that affects the schools. . . . for a lot of them it’s actually scary to be in Chicago and they are worrying about what’s coming up a couple semesters away when they go into a school so this is a way for them . . . to get more of a handle on what the city is about and breaking through some of those invisible boundaries people have already warned them about like: Don’t go here. Don’t go there. . . . So this was a big project . . . like kids taking action on social issues and again connecting it back to the landscape of Chicago. . . . (Quinn interview, February 21, 2007)

When we asked Therese about specific pedagogical tools that she uses with her students, she said that she pays attention to issues of social justice when she “weaves in discussions about race, racism, privilege, white privilege, white supremacy, and make that a language that our students hear and at least recognize even if they don’t feel comfortable with it” (Interview, 2007). And then bringing in issues of race and racism after students visit neighborhoods, Therese creates opportunities for conversations.

So, I try to create more opportunities for them to do things . . . where they walk around to different communities and schools that they’ve been placed in after they’ve done research online about those communities in the areas. So they have a little sense of ‘I think I know what’s going to happen’ and then going in there with a guided list of questions like ‘Do you feel comfortable in this neighborhood?’ ‘Is this the first time you’ve been in this neighborhood with this population?’ ‘What were the trigger points for you that seemed to make you uncomfortable?’ Kind of raising these issues like that and then bringing it back in a big way so that they can kind of debrief that. Hopefully some of the conversations of racism emerge there.

Critical Race Theory

David Omtoso Stovall is Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Illinois-Chicago. He received his Ph.D. from the University of
Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Stovall studies the influence of race in urban education, community development, and housing. His work investigates the significance of race in the quality of schools located in communities that are changing both racially and economically. From a practical and theoretical perspective, his research draws from Critical Race Theory, educational policy analysis, sociology, urban planning, political science, community organizing, and youth culture. (Faculty and Staff online directory, University of Illinois-Chicago, 2008).

David relies on Critical Race Theory as an overarching framework that centers his teaching, research, and service. He explained how CRT is “not just about individual bigotry,” but about the validation of knowledge, particularly when teaching preservice teachers and future school leaders.

First this whole notion of racism as endemic to society, you know racism is a structural issue and it’s not just this piece about individual bigotry. You know, somebody calling somebody a name, or what have you. We are actually talking about . . . the validation of experiential knowledge, this whole notion that the knowledge that whoever is in the classroom space frames that validation . . . and challenging this traditional paradigm around deficit thinking. So this whole notion about not looking at what folks don’t have, and can never have, or ever aspire to . . . And then this piece about the commitment to social justice. . . Not just us performing a service as teachers but actually working in solidarity with the students in our classrooms.

In School leader as negotiator: Critical theory praxis and the creation of productive space (Stovall, 2004), David asks school leaders to engage in a “race praxis” and “get their hands dirty” as this means “building relationships with communities that ensure the safety and well-being of the students” and how this engagement works for him. “. . . for the education researcher it [critical theory praxis] means engaging in a scholarship that is reflective of the praxis you engage daily, whether it is with your students or within the schools you work” (p. 12).

David describes himself as a sociologist and he teaches in two different departments at the University: educational policy studies and African American studies. David also co-teaches a
high school social studies class at Social Justice High School. When preparing for his university classes as well as his high school classes, he draws from several disciplines, as well as his work in the community.

I use a lot from philosophy, from urban planning, from sociology, and from gender and women’s studies. How do all these different disciplines inform education? So, when I envision CRT and talk about it in my own pieces - this whole understanding of there are different ways of knowing and doing. How do we excavate that and put that in action? For me the different ways of knowing and doing is teaching high school social studies class. Different ways of knowing and doing is work with community organizations and teasing out this relationship between housing and education. And how large this thing is and how it plays itself out and why Chicago becomes so important in its relationship between housing, schooling, and school reform? (Stovall interview, May, 16, 2007)

David has spent time as a community organizer and links his prior experience with community organizing to his role as an educator. We asked David to talk about how he brought in his community work and experience teaching in Chicago schools to his higher education classes. He spoke passionately about bringing into his university teaching issues of standards, testing, and Chicago Public School reform efforts and how all of that is problematic for Chicago’s youth.

I think both spaces inform . . . so really you look at schools’ notion of cultural capital, the same stuff, how does that actually play out in the high school classroom? And I look at CPS is really crashing down on high schools and state standards much of the language in the writing of the standards is really just kind of . . . these questions around capital in a type of cultural literacy, a lot of process, not a lot of about skill development, really this kind of Western European logic around things. So, I bring that right back to the college classroom and say, what’s problematic about this?

Conclusions

We found that all of the professors in our study are activists within and without their universities and work for more just school practices and policies in Chicago. Many work together for justice in the city. Bill, Erica, and Therese have a recent post on Bill’s blog about the militarization of Chicago Public High Schools. Recently, Therese was part of a panel at Erica’s
university, Northeastern Illinois University that focused on the issues of militarization in Chicago Public Schools – military recruiting, military academies. Therese was elected to the Local School Council at a Chicago Public School. Erica teaches at a school for formerly incarcerated adults who are studying for their GEDs. Rico and David co-teach with public school faculty at Social Justice High School, one of four small schools built after women in the Little Village/Lawndale neighborhoods protested overcrowded schools with a hunger strike. Therese is the liaison for her university at the Multicultural Arts School, another small school in the complex of Little Village High School. Nona, angry about school closings as a result of gentrification in her neighborhood sits on the Grand Boulevard Federation Education Committee. Bill is a nationally and internationally sought-after speaker and presenter on social justice issues and locally has taught youth at a juvenile detention center, among other activities in Chicago. He has written many books on teaching and education and several are used in university classrooms nationally and internationally.

Participants in this study integrate social justice into teaching, scholarship, and service in their respective universities. They ground their work in communities: in urban public schools, in prisons, in neighborhood associations, in community organizing, and on panels discussing justice issues for schools and communities. As educators, we agree with Bill when he says: “... teaching can be an insurgent kind of project against the status quo . . . it doesn’t have to be just a nice little corner of something but that it can be an opposition to injustice” (Ayers interview, February 17, 2007).

Our six participants model activism which provides insights for like-minded professors of education wanting to help their students teach and lead for social justice. Their willingness to share their busy work lives with us is one more example of their generosity and passion to
“spread the word.” A number of people did not accept our invitation to be part of the study; we certainly understand the time constraints involved in this type of work. Our brief time with these six professors has left us with ideas for our own practice but many questions. How can we bring a community connection into our classes? How can those of us as professors with privilege fulfill our obligation to challenge and nurture our students without seeking recognition or accolades for doing what Erica says is our jobs? And ultimately, how can we develop the capacity for activism in ourselves and our students to become more responsible to members of underserved communities? Questions – there are always questions. And as Bill says on his blog: “Since there’s so much worth discussing” (Ayers, 2008).

The paper details activism inside and outside the academy that participants engage in and discusses six themes that we identified after analyzing data from interviews, classroom observations, scholarly work, course syllabi, documents, and researcher reflective journals. Professors in our research took us to interesting places as we observed Erica teaching a class for formerly incarcerated adults; David co-teaching with a public high school teacher in a social studies class where students “docked their block.” We observed Therese participating on a panel to discuss the militarization of Chicago Public High Schools, and Erica participating on a panel to discuss new books on social justice at the Jane Addams Hull House on the University of Illinois-Chicago campus. How our participants developed their active standpoints is fascinating (and out of the range of this paper’s purpose) as they each responded to a question asking that they describe their “pathways.” Examples of how they developed and sustain activism have prompted us to look at our own practices as emerging activist scholars. We want to be part of the necessary movement to participate in the “never-ending effort to build a powerful movement for peace and social justice” (B.A. Blog, 2008).
References


Theoharis, G. Social justice educational leaders and resistance: Toward a theory of social justice leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43*(2), 221-258.