


Composing an Anti-Racist First Year Experience: Systems and Structures

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A Note on Method and Plan

Our plan is to acknowledge our work we have completed at Guttman and to discuss the work in relation to three main themes.

We will highlight what we have done, and, more importantly, why.

The Plan For Today

- Brief overview of changes to First Year Experience at Guttman
- Breakout session: idea generation on needs of own campus
- Q & A at the end of this session
- And, an expression of deep gratitude to those who have guided and helped us along the way

Specific Initiatives at Guttman

Each institution has its own needs. These were our needs:

Decolonizing the curriculum: A group of instructors engaged with the task of decolonizing language and decentering deficit ideologies around writing in the First-Year Experience. This work began via a multi-disciplinary reading list (poetry, prose, academic writing), as well as sample assignment prompts and rubrics that interrogate and value linguistic variety.

Course learning outcomes: A team revised the Composition I and II Course Learning Outcomes to be more dynamic and student-centered and, significantly, to be more accessible and assessable.

Assessment: Based on the revision of the Course Learning Outcomes and with an eye toward equity, agency, and accuracy, teams are revamping assessment of First Year courses.

Professional development: Relying on the first-hand experiences of Guttman's Writing Across the Curriculum Fellows, a group of instructors created and implemented a training and certification process for instructors of Writing Intensive courses that emphasizes equitable writing pedagogy and assessment across disciplines.

Revised Composition Learning Outcomes at Guttman

English 103 Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the course, English 103 students will be able to do the following:

- Practice reading and writing in various genres and rhetorical contexts.
- Use reading and writing as a means to discover and revise ideas.
- Use the writing process to develop a writing project in multiple drafts.
- Locate, evaluate, and incorporate research materials into writing.
- Revise drafts based on feedback.
- Reflect upon your own writing practices and how those practices influence your written work.
- **Understand academic practices of reading and writing as an extension of your own cultural identities, experiences, and modes of expression.**

English 203 Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the course, English 203 students will be able to do the following:

- Read and write in various academic genres and rhetorical contexts.
- Utilize reading and writing to critically assess ideas.
- Employ the writing process to develop a research-based writing project in multiple drafts.
- Compose texts that integrate your ideas with those from relevant sources.
- Reflect upon your own writing practices and how those practices influence your identity as a writer.
- **Understand and critique practices of academic reading and writing based on your own cultural identities, experiences, and modes of expression.**



WE WANT TO DO MORE THAN SURVIVE

ABOLITIONIST TEACHING AND THE
PURSUIT OF EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM

BETTINA L. LOVE

Abolitionist Teaching

“Abolitionist teaching is the practice of working in solidarity with communities of color while drawing on the imagination, creativity, refusal, (re)membering, visionary thinking, healing, rebellious spirit, boldness, determination, and subversiveness of abolitionists to eradicate injustice in and outside of schools” (Love 2).

For us, abolitionist teaching is about showing up with your complete selves and inviting students to do the same.

Three Themes: The Why of This Work



Access

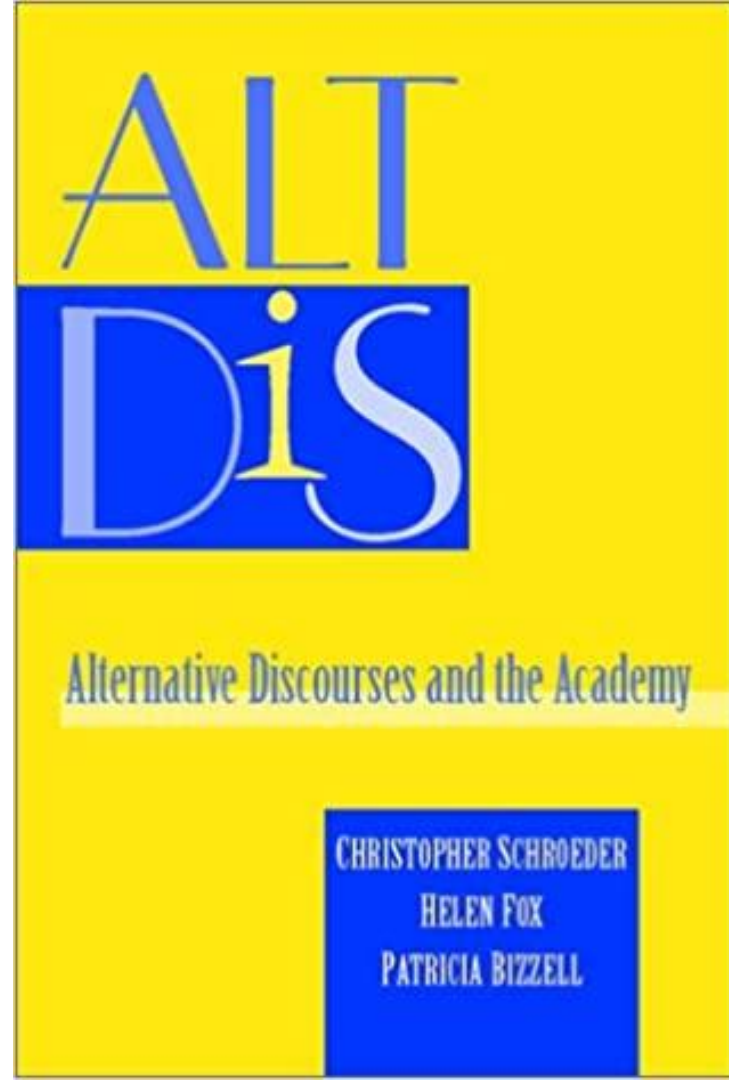
Student Voice

Joy and Love

Access: Celebrating Students in the Classroom

writing is the property we stand at the door of. here's what students gotta do before we let them come in: wipe the bottom of your shoes—dress up real nice—bring a gift from a real nice store—cologne yourself up—stand up straight—don't talk too loud—brush your teeth—feet side by side—polish your shoes—clean your nails—hands at your sides—press your suit and your hair . . . and then you can come in. this ain't about writing, communication, language, literacy. this is about entrance requirements . . . and keepin some folks out. Yeah, we do the 'real work' of the university, don't we?

Carmen Kynard, "New Life in this Dormant Creature: Notes on Social Consciousness, Language, and Learning in a College Classroom," 34).



**THE ANTI-
RACIST
WRITING
WORKSHOP
HOW TO DECOLONIZE
THE CREATIVE
CLASSROOM
FELICIA ROSE CHAVEZ**

Student Voice:

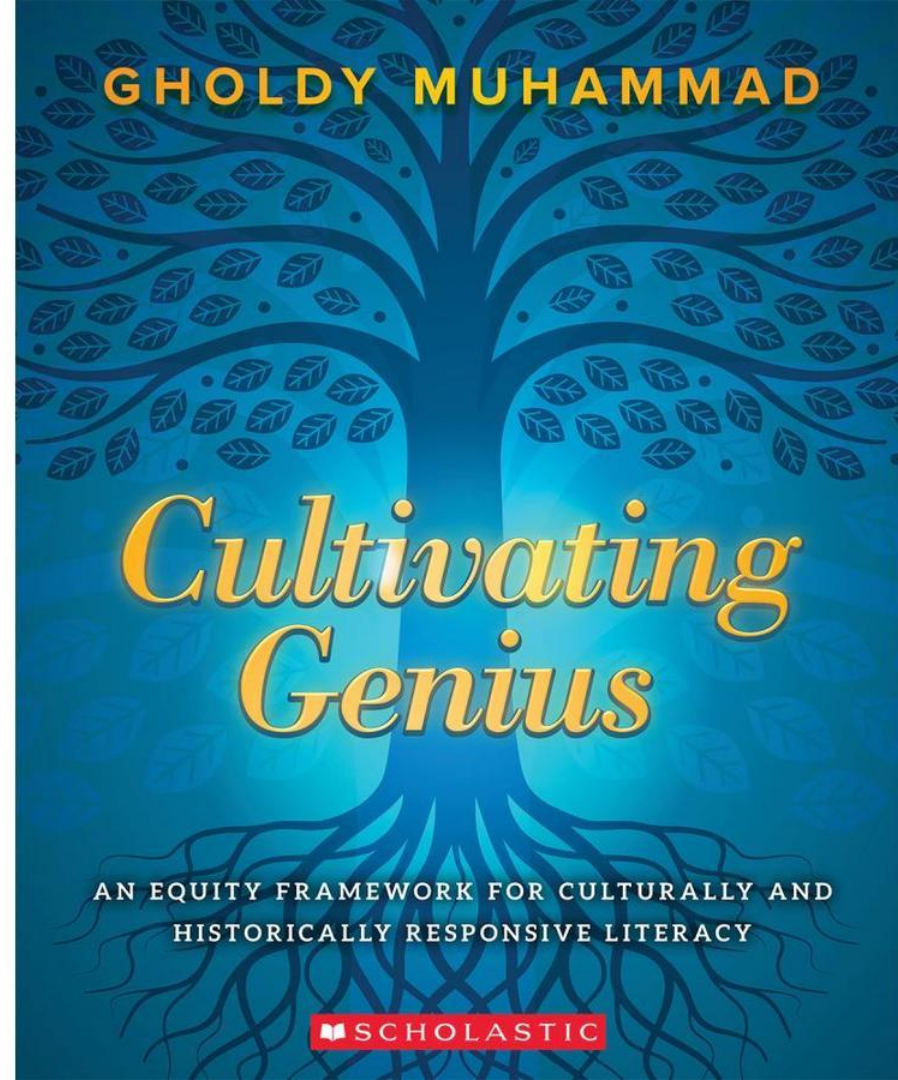
“Just what are your writers capable of, on their own terms and in their own voices?” (Chavez 79).

“As a writing community, we must hold one another accountable to the multiplicity of perspectives grounded in diverse historical and cultural contexts. We do this to become better people, better teachers, and better writers. The point is to radically reorient workshop away from a white supremacist arena of individualism and rivalry into a supportive, multicultural collective of writers with voice” (Chavez 118).

Joy and Love:

Teachers and leaders must love the ways our children talk, learn, smile, look, sound, the ways they are loud, and the ways they are silent. Before we get to the curriculum and standards, our students need to know they are loved. (Mohammad 167)

“To know Gholdy Mohammad is to know love” (Bettina A. Love, “Foreward” 6).



JUST US

AN AMERICAN CONVERSATION

CLAUDIA RANKINE

by the author of *Citizen*

Challenges

In the poem “What If” that opens her 2020 book *Just Us*, Claudia Rankine writes, “What if you are responsible to saving more than to changing?/What if you’re the destruction coursing beneath/your language of savior? Is that, too, not fucked up?” (9).

Kiese Laymon on Trayvon, Black Manhood and Love

Author Kiese Laymon reflects on the killing of Trayvon Martin, black manhood and the prospect of real black love.

KIESE LAYMON | DEC 30, 2013 7:00AM ET

An Answer

“I want to be loved unreasonably by an unreasonable love because we’ve nearly drowned in the poison of reasonable loving, reasonable liking, reasonable living, reasonable essays, reasonable art and reasonable political discourse” (Laymon).

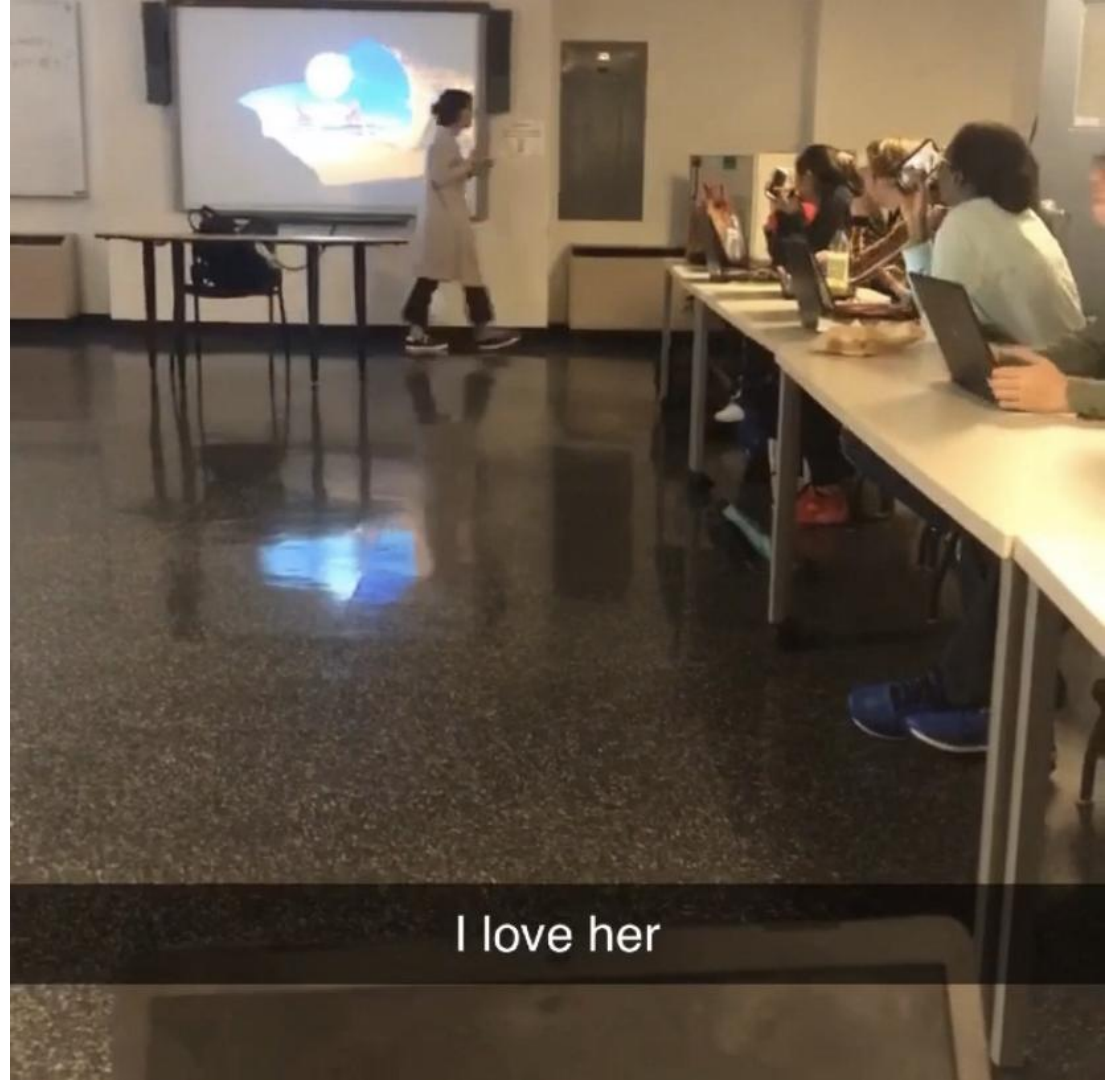


A protester at the Los Angeles Justice for Trayvon rally on July 20, 2013 Photo Credit: Kevork Djansezian/Getty Images

An Even Better Answer: Closer to Home

*“Thanks for believing
in me. Your boy is
Hunter-bound...”*

*I’m going to continue
to strive for
greatness.”*



I love her

And the best Answer: Celebrating Success

“Thank you again for being my support system besides my mother. I was literally gonna quit school and work full time. It was getting nasty in my life and my focus was blurry. Words can’t describe my appreciation.”



Don't Hesitate

If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don't hesitate. Give in to it. There are plenty of lives and whole towns destroyed or about to be. We are not wise, and not very often kind. And much can never be redeemed. Still, life has some possibility left. Perhaps this is its way of fighting back, that sometimes something happens better than all the riches or power in the world. It could be anything, but very likely you notice it in the instant when love begins. Anyway, that's often the case. Anyway, whatever it is, don't be afraid of its plenty. Joy is not made to be a crumb.

—Mary Oliver

Conclusion:

Guiding Questions for Collectives

1. What EDIB work is your institution currently engaged in and how is that work reflected in First Year curriculum and pedagogy?
2. What are the equity-based concerns that you have regarding your program/area?
3. How do we—individually and collectively—continue to promote cultural diversity and expand linguistic knowledge in an explicit push for anti-racism in higher education?
4. What steps can you take before the next semester begins to get your ideas from question 3 started?

We're hoping these institutional conversations can inform our Q&A and discussion.

Thank You and Our Contact Information

Thank you for your participation in this important work.

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Note: We will work to provide you the slides from this presentation.