

Lived Experience Statement

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This assignment was composed by template. While its personal details are true, the sentence structures and certain turns of phrase are not my own. I initially felt resistant to this assignment due to its template requirement, but then found it to be a surprisingly moving and provocative exercise. To speak (or write) words that you did not originate yourself, yet still feel them ring true, resonates in form and function with an oath or vow. It can serve as a powerful reminder that language is a commons.

My lived experience as an artist informs my approach to DEI-informed Dialogic Pedagogy—and that matters. My lived experience as a white and (usually) straight-passing cis man, who dropped out of high school and eventually taught at universities and worked on a PhD, has taught me that privilege, class, and identity impact my perspective of what diversity, equity, and inclusion means in the classroom. My lived experiences as someone who has worked in disparate environments — from painting houses and washing dishes to writing code in an office in Manhattan, as well as teaching in universities in the US and abroad — has taught me that privilege is all too real. For me, DEI is a commitment to respecting all people and honoring their experiences despite the many layers of oppressive, dismissive ideology that saturate our world. My choice of engaging with communities beyond the one I grew up in has taught me that any sort of supremacist ideology is foolish and destructive because we all have things to learn from one another. All of my lived experiences have taught me living through DEI initiatives and dialogic practices is, like democracy, an active and unending process—one that involves instability, imperfection, and uneven progress.

For me, DEI-Informed Dialogic Pedagogy means that respect, courage, and facilitation of difficult subjects matters as I work towards developing a classroom environment that is radically genuine, productive, and considerate. My perspective of the classroom as being a place of learning on multiple levels at once, including about and in language itself, is informed by my experience of treating my students as active collaborators in a process of enacting (or collectively performing) a course. My perspective of the classroom being a site to wrestle with conceptual and emotional difficulty, to try and fail, to attempt to articulate things that are hard to say, to push beyond one's priors, reveals how patience, presence, and good faith are crucial elements of a class. Dialogic Pedagogy is one way I am able to frame learning as fundamentally generative, rather than prescriptive, when it comes to providing opportunities for growth for students and for all those who enter the room.

In essence, as a student, teacher, and artist, my lived experience has taught me that academia is a place where ideals often fall short due to resource scarcity and interpersonal conflicts, but, as with our troubled larger culture, these shortcomings can be transcended through pedagogic experiences that lead to genuine growth and exchange and understanding. In order to continue to expand the vastness of academia, I am speaking about my positionality as a site of learning

for myself and others. It is important to recognize how every part of my identity that I have named, and many that I have not, impact my approach and implementation of DEI-Informed Dialogic Pedagogy. My personal experience of existing in the world of academia and beyond impacts my engagement with dialogue in the classroom in order to create healthy and encouraging connections with students and challenge class-bound and calcified structures within academia. As a queer artist who believes that hope and work ultimately lead to better cultural systems, I will continue to learn myself in order to support my students towards expansion of possibilities for their own practices and the world around them.