

15 “Show, Don’t Tell”

Teaching Social Justice at the Source

Marisa Chappell and Linda M. Richards

The history classroom can be a powerful space for learning about the structural and cultural origins, evolution, and manifestations of inequalities. If students are guided to connect the past to the present, then exploring the operation of painful and destructive processes and systems of oppression in the past can disrupt common assumptions about meritocracy and white victimization that shape popular and political culture in the United States. But learning about historical injustice didactically, whether in the form of a lecture or an authoritative scholarly reading, allows students to distance themselves; history class becomes just another exercise in intaking information. As Natalia Fernández explains in this volume, using primary sources and archival research gives students greater agency in their own learning and provides a crucial tool that can make a history class into a Difference, Power, and Discrimination (DPD) class.

Using primary sources and archival collections with undergraduates has been standard practice in history classes for at least a generation, perhaps because it works. It works to turn students on to history by putting history into their hands. It works to break apart old narratives of the past and to create new ones. Archives, often themselves spaces that reflect privilege, create a reflexive space for students to evaluate their own perspectives, passions, and concerns in the context of, and in conversation with, the past. Primary sources, when engaged from a social justice lens, help students to see the multiple dimensions of systemic and pervasive mechanisms of oppression in operation on multiple scales, in the past and present (Adams, 2007; Hardiman, et al., 2007).

In seeking ways to cultivate our students’ curiosity, self-awareness, empathy, and understanding (of the past, of human nature, of the world in which they live), we have both experimented with using primary sources and archival collections in our classrooms. Exploring the past through historical materials allows a process of *encounter* and gives students agency in the learning process. Students can learn to identify and critique the historical narratives that shape understandings of the past and present, uncover the origins of contemporary injustices, trace the evolution of systems of oppression over time, appreciate and weigh multiple perspectives, and find inspiration in courageous and resilient people and communities who have worked – in all historical eras – for justice and peace. This approach is not limited to the history classroom. By

engaging with primary sources, instructors in virtually any discipline, from the humanities and social sciences to natural sciences and engineering, can facilitate students’ development as they uncover the complex pasts that shape the present.

In Part I, Linda Marie Richards describes some of the ways she uses DPD research and archival materials in her “Why War?” course to deepen students’ understanding of the power of historical narrative. In Part II, Marisa Chappell discusses some of the ways she uses primary source documents in her U.S. History Survey class to further the goals of the DPD program. We emphasize how the strategies we discuss illuminate histories of racial inequality, but in these and other exercises we also highlight a broader nexus of oppression and address the complexities of intersectionality. We present these cases not as idealized models but as experiments that can serve as a basis for conversation and invention.

Part I: Narrations of War (Linda Marie Richards)

Research and teaching are inseparable from identity. DPD training brings forward the necessity for placing ourselves as instructors in front of our classrooms with our motives and privilege disclosed, not hidden behind academic distance. As the sociologist Mandy D. Tröger (2012) points out, academia conditions instructors to ignore their own bias “by making the personal peripheral” (p. 175). Academic culture can disguise “the objectives that stand behind the work we do” to “make us self-ignorant of the personal motives that drive our research” (p. 175). It takes privilege to abide by the academic tradition of objectivity.

Dr. David G. Lewis, an expert on Oregon tribal history at OSU, comments that much more discussion is needed about objectivity. Just how are academics and others shaped by implicit levels of bias? We are operating in a discourse “that is male centered, Western civilization centered, dominance centered, privileged centered, nationalist centered, religious centered, single-perspective centered, human centered. We cannot escape from who we are socialized to be even if it is assumed we are unbiased and objective scholars and scientists,” says Lewis (personal communication, January 21, 2020). Academia continues to be deeply embedded in a hierarchy of racism and classism surrounded by a cacophony of isms, from ableism to sexism.

Social justice education demands my honesty. My biases and white privilege, converge with prejudice against me as a bisexual woman, magnified by a Trumpian abrogation of human and bodily rights (Adams, et al., 2007). My students know my feelings against war the first day of class, because I have the privilege to disclose who I really am. I also don’t want to lie; I want to learn. I tell them I have been trying to end war since I was nine. My father was deployed in Vietnam in 1972 when I saw the iconic photo of Kim Phuc, running as her body was being burned by napalm. Her image seared me with an obsession to atone for injustice and violence by creating a better world as a peace activist.

But I could never find a satisfying answer to the question: why is there so much violence? Is it built into structures by how we are taught to think? When my neighbor, the young, lively Jacob Simpson, died in Iraq serving in the military in May 2005, part of me gave up. I had failed miserably at ending war. At the age of 45, I stumbled into higher education by chance, still hoping to find a way out of war. One day, standing in the plaza of the OSU Valley Library, I looked down and read the engraved words of Minoru Yasui: “At least I tried. Too many people go through life without ever having made an intense enough effort to be called a failure” (Kessler, 2005, pp.172–173). Yasui had tried to stop the internment of Japanese Americans in World War II. I realized I would continue to fail, in new ways I could not yet imagine.

History was offering important lessons. As a teaching assistant for Mina Carson’s DPD U.S. history class, I discovered her “people’s history of the United States” model full of inspirational stories of courage and resistance. The DPD structure paired with access to archives creates a beacon for repairing inequality and moving toward peace, in and out of the classroom. Archival collections could be used to repair wrongs, show the subjectivity of historians, shatter preconceived narratives, and widen the view and priorities of education – could it steer us towards survival?

A 2011 visit by Perry H. Charley, faculty of Diné College, sealed for me the power of the OSU archives. He held Linus Pauling’s two Nobel Prizes, transforming the past to honor the present: Charley spent his life working on environmental justice, assessment and pollution cleanup of Tribal lands to bring “Beauty, Balance into Hozho, complimenting and integrating Diné traditional knowledge (Native science) with western science” (Charley, personal communication, July 19, 2020). The OSU archives houses one of the best collections of nuclear history anywhere in the United States. These collections show divergent perspectives, ranging from nuclear engineer Eugene Starr promoting nuclear technology to the Ava Helen and Linus Pauling Papers chronicling the human rights-based struggle to ban nuclear weapons. What might be transformed when documents, artifacts, and ephemera are examined through the lens of DPD?

In HST 317: “Why War?” one of my primary teaching strategies is to expose students to multiple and conflicting perspectives from the archives. Students participate in the process of making history (Hassman & Hassman, 2018). The class focuses on the patterns, causes and consequences of violence and war but it was never just an academic exercise. It was created in the 1980s by Dr. Paul Kopperman as a counter weight to hate crimes against the Jewish community and the global context of constant war.

Academia is haunted enough by standards of neutrality and objectivity; I disrupt students’ notions of objective research and show them that our research is in fact intimate, value-laden, and rich with struggles and questions of self (Hassman & Hassman, 2018). I utilize various strategies in this effort. My lectures include bibliographies; students see my historical interpretations are based on particular research, primary and secondary sources and an

academic’s vantage point. My stories, like any other historical narrative, are not simply “the truth” but a series of arguments to find it.

It matters where the story starts and stops. We continually discuss the key question: how can we best test for reliability and verify accounts? I expose students to multiple voices and standpoints. They may hear from a U.S. military veteran one day, an anti-war protester the next; or a Los Alamos nuclear scientist one day and a Siletz tribal member the next. Through these embodied sources, I cultivate humility as an intellectual virtue in myself and my students. Likewise, exposing students to conflicting sources allows them to compare and contrast, to unpack bias, and to escape detachment. I encourage students to sustain a place of uncertainty and questioning – this practice of critical thinking is a tool for lifelong learning.

Our exploration of the Modoc War is a powerful way to bring these lessons together. I begin this section of the course by telling the students I study this particular war because it speaks to my heart through my connection with Taliesin Myrddin Namkai-Meche. He had been a favorite of many on the Briscoe Elementary playground years before. I worked in his Ashland, Oregon K-5 school as a Special Education and Educational Assistant, using conflicts as opportunities to practice and teach nonviolent communication.

Taliesin, with his bright heart and mind, was my co-conspirator; he loved, and was stunningly adept at, helping to resolve conflicts creatively. My fondest memory of Taliesin was scrambling with him over the rocks and trails of the Stronghold on our annual Briscoe Elementary field trip to the Lava Beds, the place sacred to Modocs where the small group defended themselves against the U.S. military for almost six months, despite being outnumbered at times sixteen to one (National Parks Service, n.d.). The last time I saw Taliesin, he towered over me at our annual Hiroshima and Nagasaki vigil in Ashland, leaning way over to give me a hug.

Taliesin was murdered by an avowed white supremacist on May 26, 2017. He was killed protecting two teenagers he did not know while riding on a public transit MAX train in Portland, Oregon. The white assailant threatened the lives of the two women shouting “Go back to Saudi Arabia ... get out of my country” and other slurs (Park, May 30, 2017). Then he attacked those intervening on behalf of the teens, stabbing three men, killing two of them. Taliesin’s dying words were “Tell everyone on this train I love them” (Bernstein, May 29, 2017). His death reminds me to love everyone on “my train,” all of my students.

The week Taliesin was killed I had been lecturing about the ideas of African American civil rights activists on nuclear war. Some of these leaders, ranging from Malcolm X to Ella Baker to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. argued nuclear weapons were a technological eco-cidal extension of white supremacy. The weapons, they said, sustain colonialism, divert resources that could be used for equality, and torture the psyche in irrevocable ways. The reality of their lives predisposed these leaders to be perceptive of the harms caused by the expansive threat of nuclear annihilation. Nonwhites in the United States at any time could

be randomly lynched for the color of their skin (Williams, 2011; Intondi, 2015). The expansion of this existential threat posed to all of the earth's inhabitants by nuclear weapons is described by the cry today for emotional justice after the terrorizing lack of accountability in the death of Eric Garner: "It is a forever unsafeness for which there can be no real preparation" (Armah, July 19, 2019).

The story of Taliesin's murder explains to my students why I ask the questions I do. My choice of "drishti" (Sanskrit for where to focus one's gaze) is directed by my memory of Taliesin's child self, running amuck on the terrain of the caves at the Lava Beds, and his bearded self, standing for global nuclear weapons abolition, urging me to teach as a radical act of love (Anzaldúa, 2007; hooks, 2003). Can we trace the Modoc Wars to white supremacy, to the war on people of color, to terror, torture and nuclear war?

After explaining my standpoint, I ask, "Who knows about the Modoc Wars?" No hands go up. The war in 1872–1873 was startling, and divisive, with most of the sympathy directed to the Modocs initially. It was one of the first wars covered in the international media with photos. "Okay, who has ever *heard* of this war?" Occasionally, one or two hands out of 50 reluctantly go up. "What did you learn about it?" I ask. Most relate they just know the name. Some laugh and say they are googling it on Wikipedia as we talk. About one in three hundred students say they saw the Oregon Public Broadcasting Modoc War documentary. "Tell me about it," I say, but they are usually too shy.

We then look at the Modoc War from several perspectives. By viewing multiple narratives of the war, students discover the importance of historical narratives, often dangerously subjective, in enforcing oppression, maintaining stereotypes, and re-inscribing prejudice. The most common type of war in the last 500 years has been violence made upon small Indigenous communities, just as in the Modoc War; these add up to irrevocable losses and genocide of Indigenous peoples and cultures all over the world (Hinton, 2002). But that is not the type of war most realists and political scientists have focused on to explain war. In fact, at the war crime trial of Kintpuash (Captain Jack, the leader of the Modoc band involved) the *New York Tribune* editorialized the Modocs were marauders, arguing only nations had status to declare war (Foster, 1999). This contributes to an agnotology, a constructed ignorance, of what causes war (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008).

As a class we start to piece together a story that can be told many ways, focusing on who is doing the telling and why. First, we look at the Oklahoma Modoc Nation's tribal history website, supplemented by recent published authors and academic historians with their arguments and authorship identified on my slides (Modoc Nation, 2020; McNally, 2017; Cothran, 2014; Compton, 2017; James, 2008). In these narratives the war begins with an onslaught of resettlers abusing safe passage through Modoc lands. The fulcrum for the Modoc telling is a massacre of Modoc families in 1852 by the notorious vigilante "Indian Killer," Ben Wright. Wright used the white flag of peace to lure families out of their homes so that he could slaughter them

(Modoc Nation, 2020). In some versions, this is perhaps out of revenge for an earlier massacre of white resettlers in which the Lost River Modocs had no role.

The Lost River murders are followed by numerous conflicts and violence. Resettlers, miners, and land speculators coveted Modoc land while the U.S. government failed to honor their duties in two different 1864 Treaties concerning the Modocs. The Modocs were forced onto the Klamath Reservation where they were treated badly, living with the Klamath, a traditional foe. There was starvation and strife because the U.S. government promised money, food and resources that did not arrive. Why should anyone stay on the Klamath Reservation when the Americans did not honor the Treaty? Some Modocs did stay but Kintpuash’s band fled back to their traditional home at Lost River to feed themselves and live unmolested. Warfare was sparked when the U.S. military, encouraged by propaganda from resettlers despite their peaceful coexistence, forcibly tried to remove the group. Resettlers were killed by some of the Modocs during their escape.

At the time, this war was one of the most expensive and asymmetrical U.S. military actions in U.S. history. Much of the Modoc resistance took place in the Lava Beds, on the eastern side of the Oregon California border, when they fled to their sacred site for protection and refuge. Modocs fired their weapons from behind the lava rock walls, caves and crevices in the Lava Beds, now a National Monument. For six months, 50 to 60 men of Kintpuash’s band fought for their liberty and homeland with their families. They resisted up to 1,000 U.S. troops before their surrender. This narrative interprets Modoc actions during the 1873 war as defensive and largely justifiable (Modoc Nation, 2020; McNally, 2017; Cothran, 2014; Compton, 2017; James, 2008).

Students then explore primary and secondary sources that exclude the longer relationship between the Modocs, Europeans, and the U.S. This version portrays the murder and removal as necessary and justified. Students see this framing in older sources, including *Harper’s Weekly* illustrations and stories published at the time of the war, an 1890 official military record of the war, and a 1937 rendition of the war by the National Park Service in Crater Lake. They see a current online Oregon Encyclopedia entry about the war. The entry begins not with the 1852 massacre, a land grab by Jesse Applegate, failed treaty agreements, forced removal, military miscalculations, sex slavery of Modoc women, or continual encroachment on Modoc land. Instead, it begins with the death of General Canby during peace negotiations. It matters where the story starts and stops, in time and in definition. Students can see how this framing offers a much different interpretation of culpability.

When is a “peace negotiation” used to deceive? From the Modoc perspective, given the 1852 incident in which Modoc peoples were slaughtered by a self-identified “peace” delegation, the arrival of hundreds of soldiers with weapons hardly portended peaceful negotiations; Kintpuash band’s violence was arguably defensive to fall under the rules of engagement of war, not murder. The U.S. government, however, executed four Modoc leaders for this act as murder; a crowd estimated at either 850 to 2,000 people looked on (James 2008,

pp. 164–65; Cothran, 2014, pp. 8–9) evoking spectacles of the lynching of African Americans.

Even after death, abuse and torture of the Modocs continued. We learn from several sources, including the October 25, 1873 issue of *Army and Navy Journal* (p. 169) the heads of the four men were severed from their bodies and sent first to the Army Medical Museum in Washington DC for eugenic studies, then to the Smithsonian (Cothran, 2014, p. 11). David G. Lewis, reflecting on this incident, observes this notion of the Army collecting native remains as objects of scientific study demands closer analysis. “Where else does the U.S. government collect the remains of people for such eugenic ‘science’?” he asks. The problem is, “Natives are not seen as ‘people’ deserving of human rights, including the rights to land, the rights to fair compensation even under treaty, the rights to citizenship, the rights to bury their dead” (personal communication, January 21, 2020). There is no bodily nor land sovereignty accorded to the remaining 155 Modoc peoples of Kintpuash’s band. They were again forcibly removed, but this time, two were taken to Alcatraz prison and the rest to Oklahoma in cattle cars. By 1879, only 99 people survived the harsh conditions on the reservation (Modoc Nation, 2020).

Analyzing and contrasting multiple primary and secondary sources together in class, students experience how some aspects are magnified while others are lost. The values of a particular historical moment profoundly shape the way we narrate history – and how those stories can reinforce systemic oppression in ways that reverberate across the years. The 1873 *Modoc Indian Prisoners* legal opinion was a precedent to justify torture against those deemed “homo sacer” (excluded from legal protections but still subject to a sovereign’s power) as unlawful combatants in the March 14, 2003 “Torture Memo” by John C. Yoo. The 1873 opinion states “All laws and customs of civilized warfare may not be applicable” to tribal people (Byrd, 2011, pp. 226–227).

I share with students the National Archives “Educator Resources: The Homestead Act of 1862.” The website’s “Additional Background Information” narrative (Potter & Schamel, 1997) makes little mention of Native Americans, discussing them in one paragraph out of seventeen, obscuring the genocide and forced displacement that made distribution of land to white resettlers possible. Robert A. McNally, author of *The Modoc War: A Story of Genocide at the Dawn of America’s Gilded Age*, noted that the words of historian Patricia Limerick ring true for the Modoc War: “The history of westward expansion has ended up divided into two, utterly separate stories: the sad and disheartening story of what whites did to Indians, and the colorful and romantic story of what whites did for themselves” (Juillerat, November 14, 2017, para. 9).

Here my students generally start talking; this conversation echoes aspects about nuclear war and technological white supremacy we discussed earlier. Today, the Manhattan Project National Historic Park’s tours, sites and materials excise the atrocity caused by nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Instead, for example, the B Reactor at Hanford Nuclear Reservation celebrates the

construction of those weapons as a testament to American technological ingenuity, like a gift revealed by God in order to grant such supremacy (Chernus, 1986; Richards, 2016).

The lessons are powerful because students understand the gravity while they explore the documents and historical narratives. During their research, they discover conflicting accounts, missing information, and particular ways of framing history. After this exercise and comparison of narratives, most of the students want to imagine ways to rewrite or repair the Oregon Encyclopedia entry or other renditions. My students start to explicitly ask, who gets to tell their story and why? What do we do? Students *feel* history after these examples with a different tenor. They see how much is at stake.

The students also expressed a shared despair, and wondered aloud how much effort it will take to undo racism, when history becomes such a persistent vehicle for stereotyping and harm, as in the case of the Modocs. In one class, a student (a Veteran) wondered if the Modoc War fit the United Nations definition of genocide, prompting me to introduce a “spectrum line” exercise. This exercise asks students to line up according to their opinion about a particular question, then fold in the middle in order to discuss their position with those on the other side. All the students in this first exercise went to the Yes side, in a bunch. We talked a bit about why. Then the student asked “Is there anyway there can be forgiveness or amends made to Native Americans, yes or no?” The students formed a graduated line from yes to no with a middle. I paired up the opposites for the listening exercise. In the activity, one person talks for one minute or so, while the other listens without interrupting, then the listener repeats back exactly what they heard and they can clarify understanding with each other. Then the roles switch.

In the debrief, the middles had a really rich conversation due to their shared viewpoints; others, originally opposed, shared how they were surprised to find common ground. They said it mattered what the definitions are, and when stories start and stop. A Native American student added that he could never forgive. How could that even be a question to ask, how could that be expected? If a Jewish student were in the room, he asked, would you ask them if they forgive Hitler and the Nazis? He illustrated using the analogy of crumpling a piece of paper: imagine this is the Treaty, the relationship, he said. He held up a piece of paper. Then he mashed it in his hands, “Even if you can uncrumple it and straighten it out, the creases are still there, the scar still hurts.” We sat there, grief hanging still and heavy in the room, acknowledging the losses in silence together.

Students feel responsibility for the future. They talk about the OSU Native American Longhouse Eena Haws, their campus activities, the yearly OSU Klatowa Eena Powwow and ways to connect. The lesson ends with noting how Oregon tribal members, after many years, successfully won legislation mandating that K-12 Oregon schools include Oregon history education created by the communities from the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes. How Oregon K-12 teachers may or may not be taught to share this history is another challenge for the future of education. In spring term in 2019, the

Oregon legislature began debating a Memorial to apologize to the Modocs (Withycomb, March 28, 2019). By the end of the multifaceted story of the Modoc War, students see they have a role in unwinding the injustices built into history.

Part II: Voices of the Past (Marisa Chappell)

I came of age in the 1970s and 1980s in an emotionally stable and economically secure family with the privileges of whiteness. I imbibed many lessons about race and class in the world of the U.S. Air Force, where a culture of meritocracy promoted both racial integration and class segregation. Academic study cultivated a nascent feminist and antiracist perspective, which has continued to evolve over the past three decades. Whereas Linda moved from activism to academia, I have been moving tentatively in the other direction. The DPD seminar helped me to refine my understanding of systems of oppression and inspired me to seek new ways to engage students in crucial questions about inequality in the past and the present. I struggle to move beyond my comfort zone in the classroom, a tendency rooted in a resistance to confrontation and a deep-rooted valuation of careful and “objective” academic rigor. DPD inspired me to engage students more explicitly in the historical context of contemporary political debates. Rooting these discussions directly in the past, and in primary sources, has proven a fruitful avenue.

The DPD seminar significantly affected my approach to teaching. As a historian, I was not trained to attend to students’ affective experiences. Despite earning a graduate Certificate in Women’s and Gender Studies, I had consciously distanced my teaching from an imagined caricature of women’s studies – all about feelings and students’ own lives and perspectives. History was about other people, about rigorous intellectual questioning and analysis. In the DPD seminar, I began to understand that learning requires heart as well as head, and that students may learn more, and care more, if they can see themselves in history and if they are able to connect emotionally with the material. This insight has manifested in various ways. For example, I find myself turning more often to biography and case studies of individuals as a means of illuminating larger historical events and trends. Second, I have become more intentional in the primary sources I assign and in considering how students interact with them. Assigning multiple primary sources around a specific theme, event, or time period, for example, provides students with opportunities both to empathize with past historical subjects and to critically assess various perspectives against each other and against historians’ interpretations.

Primary sources are particularly important for teaching HST 203, a survey of U.S. history since World War I, as a DPD class. The class attracts many non-majors; students tend to be mostly male and overwhelmingly white. Many are majoring in science and engineering fields. I suspect that when students with conservative tendencies or politics assess the list of DPD classes they see U.S. history as a fairly “safe” choice, compared to courses in Ethnic Studies

and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, for example. I also suspect that HST 203 is likely to be their only exposure to DPD curriculum. I feel a responsibility to provide opportunities for them to question their assumptions about the past and its relationship to the present and, at the same time, to ensure that students from other social locations see themselves in history. By reading various perspectives on a specific moment, students gain an appreciation for the complexity of these moments and the actors inhabiting them.

One example is my strategy for teaching that difference is socially constructed, a required DPD learning outcome. One of the first moments we tackle in class is the 1924 Immigration Act, which dramatically reduced immigration through the imposition of “national origins” quotas. Students read several documents from the early twentieth century that articulate nativist sentiments – elite and popular opinions that immigrants were dangerous and should not be allowed to enter the country. I assign one document to each of several small groups and ask them (1) to identify language that criticizes particular groups of immigrants and (2) to determine the basis of the criticism (does the document contend that certain immigrants are biologically inferior, culturally problematic, ideologically dangerous, etc.). All of the documents conflate arguments about Southern and Eastern European immigrants’ cultural inferiority, political ideology, religion, behavior, economic role, and biological make-up while contrasting them to “Anglo-Saxon” or “Nordic” people. Students see for themselves how these particular groups were racialized as “not quite white,” deemed biologically inferior and prone to criminality, in ways that justified exclusion. Because these are groups that subsequently became defined as part of a broader “white” United States of America, students are surprised to discover this process of racialization in action. In the last week of the term, I assign Donald Trump’s Fall 2016 Arizona speech on immigration, and students immediately recognize similar processes of racialization and criminalization of Mexican immigrants.

As another example, when I teach the Great Depression, students read political speeches from powerful figures (such as Herbert Hoover, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Huey Long, John Lewis) and letters from ordinary people situated differently in society. I ask students to represent these positions in a town hall meeting. By debating the causes of and proposed solutions to the economic crisis from these various perspectives, students learn a number of things:

- 1 that the economic crisis had a differential impact depending on one’s social location (including race, class, gender, and geography);
- 2 that different ideas about who/what was to blame had more or less validity when assessed in conjunction with secondary reading/lecture material on the crisis; and
- 3 that grassroots interpretations of the crisis affected political and policy responses at the top.

Best of all, students discover these things for themselves (with facilitation and guidance, of course), a much more powerful lesson than if I simply offered a lecture stating these points. Students are often appalled at Henry Ford's suggestion that people become more self-reliant because students have learned about the depth of the crisis and the multiple barriers to economic security facing farmers and workers. We often have vigorous debates in class about the contrasting perspectives of Hoover and Roosevelt that resonate powerfully with current discussions about the meanings of freedom, the operation of a "free market," and the responsibilities of corporations, business, and individuals. Because they are exploring the ideas and words of people in the past, students debate these questions with less at stake than if we were debating current policies.

I have recently experimented with the timing of documents as a way to harness students' sense of surprise and discovery toward deeper understanding. I used to assign a collection of primary sources related to the Black Freedom Movement of the 1960s and noticed that students had difficulty breaking from preconceived understandings to tackle the documents in their historical context. Typically, students would laud Martin Luther King, Jr.'s defense of nonviolent direct action and find other perspectives inscrutable. So, I tried moving the Black Panther Party's Ten-Point Program to the session on the postwar economy. I introduced the class by pairing it with another document, a General Electric advertisement for "A People's Capitalism" – part of a broader, public-private effort to "sell" capitalism to the American people and the rest of the world (General Electric, 1956). The GE document celebrates U.S. American industrial might and ingenuity, capitalistic competition, and consumerism as the fruits of "free enterprise" and offers the supposed "American standard of living" as the inevitable result. In the Ten-Point Program, the Black Panther Party systematically attacks U.S. American institutions for exploiting and oppressing African Americans and offers an expansive vision of freedom rooted in reparations, redistribution, social responsibility, and community control. By juxtaposing these very different analyses of postwar U.S. economy and society, I hope to prompt students' curiosity. They initially find the Panthers' perspective "radical" (by which they mean completely unrealistic and unrelated to real circumstances). Then they learn about the multiple ways in which postwar economic expansion was enabled by vast government expenditures (as opposed to the kind of *laissez-faire* vision of the GE document), offered government-subsidized avenues for social and economic mobility to White Americans, created drastic racial disparities through racialized homeownership policies, and constructed an urban crisis through systematic disinvestment accompanied by various colonial-like practices including racist policing. When we revisit the documents, students are able to understand (and some even to sympathize with) the Panthers' critique.

In response to the state of racial politics in our current moment, I decided in Spring 2019 to introduce an exercise on Confederate monuments during Week 1 of HST 203; my goal was to show students up front that history is about the present moment as much as it is about the past. The exercise

introduced students to the contested nature of historical interpretation through an issue that has been widely discussed in popular media in the past two years. Conflicts over historical symbols of white supremacy erupted nationally and locally in the second decade of the twenty-first century. The most dramatic national incident occurred in August 2017 when a white supremacist murdered antiracist protester Heather Heyer and injured nineteen others during a “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia (Wallace-Wells, 2017). Locally, in response to protests like a “Students of Color Speak-Out” in 2015, OSU President Ed Ray initiated a process that resulted in his decision to change the names of three campus buildings whose nineteenth century namesakes advocated slavery, removal of Indigenous people, and white supremacy (Rimmel, 2015; Ray, 2017). Through the process of discovering for themselves the motivations for and uses of these monuments and the problematic historical narrative they advanced, I hoped that students would appreciate the importance of history in shaping our world.

I began by asking students to come up with arguments offered by those seeking the removal of Confederate monuments and by those seeking to retain them. The groups reported out, and I listed the arguments on the board. I then introduced them to a specific monument, the statue at the entrance to the University of Mississippi. I passed out several documents to small groups of students: three media reports about the statue’s dedication from 1906, including the transcript of the keynote speech given at the ceremony, and a history of Ole Miss from its 1948 yearbook. I asked students to read the documents and make note of aspects they found to be important, interesting, or surprising. The small groups discussed the documents and reported out, and then I facilitated a discussion. The documents colorfully illuminate key elements of the “Lost Cause” narrative and Southern (white) nationalism (Neff et. al., 2016). They reveal that the monument was erected to advance a narrative of the past that would reinforce white supremacy, and that this was occurring not immediately after the Civil War but at a moment in which Southern states were forcefully repudiating any pretense of following constitutional guarantees of equal protection and imposing new forms of racial caste. They also illuminate the centrality of white women, racialized gender ideals, and class identity in shaping white Southern nationalism.

Student responses to the exercise were generally encouraging. Students were able to identify key elements of the narrative. I asked students to spend a few minutes writing about the exercise, specifically commenting on if and how it changed their thinking about the issue. A total of 42 students participated. Six (14%) wrote that the exercise influenced them to support removal of Confederate monuments, while seven (17%) wrote that the exercise reinforced an already existing position in favor of removal. Three students (7%) wrote that they supported maintaining the memorials; one wrote that the exercise had influenced that position. Most responses (26 or 62%) did not clearly identify a before/after position on the issue but offered various comments like the one that said the exercise “gave better context into the issue.”

The exercise was not designed to convince students to support either maintaining or removing the monuments. The goal was for students to see that historical narratives are built on specific assumptions about the world and are often constructed with particular political purposes in mind, as well as to begin to teach students how to analyze primary sources. I also used the exercise to introduce the state of racial politics in the United States in the early twentieth century, a necessary context/starting point for understanding the rest of the course. In general, I think it succeeded. But, as a work in progress, it also revealed some surprises and problems.

One interesting outcome is that the exercise evoked empathy from some students for early twentieth century Southern white nationalists and the statues' contemporary defenders. Three students (7%) expressed a version of this view. One student gained "more understanding/ compassion" for the monuments' defenders who "were fully convinced that what they were doing was because it was their culture." Another reported that the exercise helped them to "better understand the level of pride and value" that Southern whites express in these monuments. These few students were affected by the narrative of victimization in the sources. "I don't want to take away such an emotional and patriotic event that could deeply effect [sic] those connected to it," one student wrote; another reported that the exercise made them see "strong reasoning" for retaining the memorials because "the South is very intensely passionate about their efforts in the war."

Historical study is a crucial means for cultivating empathy, a key goal for DPD instruction. But these comments expressed empathy only for people in a position of power, and they illuminated two key problems with the exercise. First, I assigned only sources from white Southern nationalists, offering no access to the voices of African Americans from the era, which would have provided students with perspectives to challenge the "Lost Cause" narrative and revealed more strikingly its purpose as a political tool of white supremacy. Second, I asked the group brainstorming arguments for *removing* the monuments to report first. Arguments for *maintaining* the monuments came second and remained unchallenged by critical analysis as the students turned to the sources. I was very conscious of those arguments sitting on the white board without having been discussed. Finally, this was an introductory exercise during Week 1, before students had been introduced to the history of Reconstruction and its aftermath; without knowing the promise of Reconstruction and the violence and terror used to impose a brutal new white supremacist regime, many students lacked context for interpreting the documents.

I ran the exercise in my upper-division Civil Rights Movement class the same week with a couple of changes. I did not have time to locate primary sources from African American contemporaries (though I will include some in future sessions), but I reversed the order of brainstorming reports and facilitated some discussion about the two sets of arguments. I concluded with a ten-minute talk in which historian William Sturkey challenges monument defenders by highlighting the brutality that the "Lost Cause" narrative helped to provoke and

justify and by relating his own emotional responses, as a descendant of North Carolina African Americans, to the monument at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (Sturkey, 2017).

It’s not a scientific sample; HST 365 students are more likely to be history majors, and they elected to enroll in a course on the Civil Rights Movement and were thus more likely to begin with some kind of racial justice perspective than were students in HST 203. But the results were encouraging. Of 18 students, one wrote that the exercise changed their view from leaving them up to taking them down, noting “after analyzing these primary documents I began to realize that these monuments are not representations of history but instead political ideas embodied in extravagant figures of art.” Fifteen students (83%) wrote that they already favored removal but that the exercise reinforced that position or offered tools for justifying it. One wrote, “I have some actual history that gives my argument some support” while another appreciated getting “better perspective” and an understanding that “this is white history from one sole perspective.”

The Confederate Monument exercise seems to be an effective mechanism for teaching about the complexities, subjectivity, and power of historical narrative as well as about the ideological and cultural mechanisms that helped reinforce and maintain white supremacy in the twentieth century United States. This and similar exercises would be useful in courses across a wide range of disciplines in the social sciences and humanities.

Conclusion

Our experiences with these and other exercises utilizing primary sources and archival research with students have convinced us that teaching from the sources can promote critical and analytical thinking about the past and present, cultivate empathy, provoke constructive discomfort, and mobilize historical narrative understanding in service of a more just, equitable, and peaceful future. The philosopher Shai Tubali, redeploying ideas from Hannah Arendt, defined active learning as “a highly engaged form of thinking that prepares one to act in the real world.” At this moment in our history, we might feel liberated by crisis to teach (Tubali, 2018, p. 16).

As this chapter went to press, the years of intellectual and organizing work by BLM activists enabled mass, multiracial mobilizations in response to the most recently publicized police murders of Black Americans. Confederate flags and statues were being removed, even in Alabama and Mississippi. Taliesin’s murderer was unrepentant but convicted. Portland leader Jo Ann Hardesty said the case was more about how our justice system “tackles hate and racism, or doesn’t” (KATU Staff, 2020). Noting a prison sentence cannot repair the tragedy caused by enacting neo-Nazi ideas, the justice system “is currently the only system we have to address these acts of violence” (KATU Staff, 2020). Hardesty invokes us to find new ways to intervene daily to prevent hate with the courage of those who stood up in the past

for equality and justice. We know the battle to disentangle higher education from white supremacy is just beginning.

We believe students must learn not only the history that led us to now but the skills – empathy, appreciation of complexity, and critical analysis – that can move us all forward. History classes can play a role in promoting this knowledge and these skills if we are intentional about what we do and are willing to experiment. This is risky. It means we will make mistakes, but this also gives a chance to model recovery from failure and learn to heal with students and each other. As educators, we are obliged to get off the train of thought of U.S. white supremacy; from the debate over the Confederate monuments and nuclear weapons to the blood spilled in the Modoc Wars and on the Portland MAX. In this process we uncover the links of shared humanity that bind us together.

Additional Resources

Readings

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Websites

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- Library of Congress. Primary Source Sets: www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/
- National Archives and Records Administration. DocsTeach: www.docsteach.org

Texts and Studies

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