



Democracy (in)Action: Promoting Critical Youth Consciousness and Participation

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Rationale

"Why should I learn this?", "This shit doesn't matter.", "Things will never change, anyway." These are the sentiments of many of my students - black, Latino, Chinese, Filipino, Samoan, white, Cambodian, among many others; poor and working-class; male and female; cynical and at times angry. The purpose of this unit will be to engage my students to hold established power accountable (as well as themselves) to helping actualize the vision of the founders of America as reality for my students - to unite democratic *theory* on the one hand with conscious youth and student *action* on the other.

Urban youth - particularly poor, working-class, immigrant and youth of color - will be the target population of this series of lessons. According to the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE), youth of color are very active in their communities and they are involved in a way that transcends mere electoral politics. Building off of the rich history of democratic youth participation, as well as the already existing efforts of many of my youth in their respective communities, I want to help sharpen their analytical tools to deepen and enhance their participation.

Given the rate of incarceration, violence and other social ills afflicting working-class, poor, youth of color, this high level of participation in the democratic process (traditional or otherwise) needs to be furthered exponentially and in a way that more effectively reforms, alters, challenges and even counters the existing prescription for change. That prescription being: follow the rules, go to school, work hard, get a good job and live "the Dream". In my process of coming into consciousness, I realized that the recipe for improving one's life is actually more complex than that. Indeed, our students need to do these things, but they must do more. The commonly held belief that the existing system is fine and the cause of failure is intrinsic to the students themselves, denies the institutional nature of the problem (Duncan-Andrade 2005).

In light of their current respective conditions and relative lack of opportunities, poor, working-class, immigrant and youth of color, often express the most frustration with the current system, yet have the most to gain from a critical questioning and participation in our society. As a teacher, I believe we need to encourage our students to understand our experience in the United States with a critical lense. Cornel West states, "To engage in this Socratic questioning of America is not to trash our country, but rather to tease out those traditions in our history that enable us to wrestle with difficult realities we often deny."

Rather than "opting-out" of such participation, our youth need to become both conscious of the historical and systemic roots of the various problems facing them, as well as be equipped to do something about such problems. West continues by saying that we need to develop a "democratic paideia - the cultivation of an active, informed citizenry - in order to preserve and deepen our democratic experiment (West 2005)." Many positive lessons can be drawn from the legacy of our students' community's fight for political, economic and social rights. These lessons can be used as an impetus to stir our students into action and awaken our youth.

The spectrum of youth disinterest and lack of engagement ranges from a general apathy and/or cynicism, on the one end, to what Daniel Solorzano and Dolores Delgado-Bernal identify as "self-destructive resistance" behavior (Solorzano and Delgado-Bernal 2002) on the other end. This self-destructive resistance behavior takes the form of ditching class, truancy and general defiance that gets our youth into trouble, locked up or even killed.

Developing a strong historical awareness about the rich and positive acts of resistance of our students' communities can effectively motivate our young people toward transformational and community uplifting action. This distinction needs to be made, both to our students as well as to our teachers. In addition to this awareness, our students need to be equipped with what they need to comprehend both the stated rules of the existing system, as well as the unspoken and less visible power relations existing within it.

A challenge that I have faced in my teaching is that once students have become aware of an issue, I have failed to adequately and systematically support them in finding a place to apply their newly acquired information. The systemic awareness of our economic, political and social institutions is key, but how they may both navigate and transform these institutions by applying what they have learned, is just as important and will be incorporated into this unit.

The success of this series of lessons will ultimately be judged by the degree to which my students who are poor, working class, immigrant and historically disenfranchised, 1. become conscious of the importance of democratic participation, 2. are equipped to do something about the problems facing them and their communities and 3. actually take steps to bring about change through their critical and collective participation.

If the rates of incarceration, high school drop-out, teen-age pregnancy, alcohol/drug abuse and the like, are to be reduced, our students must actively and consciously participate in the needed change. As Rudy Corpuz, Director of an urban youth organization called United Playaz says, "It takes the hood, to save the hood." Our students need support to become conscious and critical agents to liberate themselves and change the system by holding both themselves and the institutions responsible, accountable to their interests.

This unit, *Democracy (in)Action: Promoting Critical Youth Consciousness and Participation*, will be implemented in my 12th grade, American Democracy class, at Balboa High School. Couched in the Southeast section of San Francisco - an historically working-class and immigrant community of the City - my students will have a broad range of issues and problems from which to apply their newly learned tools. I have had this emerging group of intellectuals for a year now as their 11th grade US History teacher. We will build off of last year's emphasis on uncovering and critically contrasting multiple and varying narratives to that of the institution - the so-called "master's narrative."

As they enter broader society, I wish for this lesson to provide concrete, relevant and convincing responses to their queries - that they may answer definitively, "I need to learn this, because this can change my life and the lives of my people."

Objectives

This unit will accomplish the following critical tasks. First, it will highlight the history of struggle for recognition, inclusion, enfranchisement and equal rights - both defeat and victory - of historically disenfranchised communities, particularly, 1st Nations (American Indians or Native Americans), Africans (Negros/Colored/blacks or African-Americans), women, Latinos (Hispanics), and Asians (Orientals/Asiatics/Chinese/Japanese/ or Asian Americans). We will examine examples of non-European, democratic practice within the Iroquois, the Civil Rights Movement, and the New Left. Second, it will build foundational knowledge of the basic principles of democracy according to Western - ancient to modern - discourse. Lastly, we will develop a democratic plan of action to address local, immediate, relevant change in the communities of my students.

Part 1 -Beyond Words on a Page: The (mal)Practice of Democracy and Freedom in America

In *The Story of American Freedom*, Eric Foner examines the long standing relationship between liberty and slavery, between the exploited and the privileged, between democracy for a few and tyranny for the many. Foner states, "For some, freedom has been a birthright taken for granted." Citing philosopher Samuel Dubois Cook, he adds, "For others, it is 'not a gift but an achievement....Historically speaking, [freedom] is the fruit of struggles, tragic failures, tears, sacrifices, and sorrow'(Foner 1998)."

All too often, the study of these "tears, sacrifices, and sorrow", has either been suppressed or has been taught piecemeal and out of context. On the one end, the telling of history has led to an un-spoken conclusion, a "meta-narrative" of non-white inferiority. On the other end, I have witnessed these fragmented and incomplete pictures of our past lead people in my community to a disempowering anger, targeted at an abstract, distant and all-powerful racial group - the *white*, "them". These two sides of the same coin create divisions within our communities and between communities. This unit will seek to bridge these gaps by helping our students see their own humanity - to see each others value and contributions to society.

In his "West Indian Emancipation" speech, escaped slave turned abolitionist, Frederick Douglas, embodies the spirit of this section. His words recognize the agency of the oppressed to transform, through a determined effort, their reality.

The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, agitating, all-absorbing, and for the time being, putting all other tumults to silence. It must do this or it does nothing. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters....This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will (Douglas 2008).

This collective awareness of the need for change and the commitment to fight for it in the face of economically powerful and racist interests, is an inspirational lesson for *all* my students, regardless of racial background. It is this "thunder and lightning" that I seek to help unleash, fuel and drive my students to action.

This land was made for you and me?

The intention of this lesson is to teach my students about the development of democratic theory and practice, via their respective communities struggles, as they asserted their rights to freedom and participation in a just and democratic society, or in the case of the Iroquois, in their actual contributions to the practical and theoretical development of the US Constitution.

In Bruce Johansen's book *Debating Democracy*, he presents what has been commonly identified as the "influence theory." Johansen quotes Seneca elder Oren Lyons observation of the bicentennial of the US Constitution. "If Americans are going to celebrate the anniversary of their Constitution, we figure that we had better tell them where the idea came from," Lyon states. Furthermore, "What made colonists American as opposed to English was their experiences with the Indians (Johansen 1998)."

This interaction is key to understanding history beyond the institutional narrative that represents a belief that all good things American as being either products of Western European thought and practice, or homegrown by the European settlers and their descendents. This view unjustly and incorrectly limits the historical discourse to a handful of brilliant white men. To accept this is to assert the notion that the American Indian, the African slaves, women and non-landed whites, had no significant contribution to democratic theory and practice - extending this belief to the present relegates too many of my students to the sidelines of history.

The text, *Indian Givers*, by Jack Weatherford, as well as those of Foner and Johansen will be woven together to provide my students with a positive point of entry into a critical discussion of American Democracy - A discussion that all too often has left them out, or has marginalized their respective communities to the fringes. The contribution of the "America" in the broadest sense, towards a democracy reflective of all people, is where our journey begins.

Part 2 - Democracy According to "the Man"

With the inclusion of the fight for democracy and freedom by non-Western people established, the unit will then provide foundational knowledge of the basic theoretical principles of democracy, according to Western - ancient to modern - discourse. Again, rather than starting with the likes of Plato, Rousseau, Jefferson, Hamilton, and other great western thinkers as our classroom textbook suggests, I will bring them in only after hooking my students with the above mentioned information.

With a positive understanding of their own community's role and contribution to our democratic society, students will be encouraged, guided and supported to learn about the contributions of Plato, Rousseau, Jefferson, Hamilton and Mill to the foundation of American democratic theory and practice - a *practice* that would ultimately lead to numerous reforms that have become more inclusive to people regardless of class, race, gender and national origin.

Today, democracy is almost indisputably seen as the "one-size-fits-all" political system best suited for every society. Using excerpts from Plato's *Republic*, my students will be guided through a discussion of his understanding of the principles of "justice" and "the good" for the individual and society and explore his scathing critique of democracy as a lower grade of government. Following Plato, a discussion of Tocqueville's observations and concern's about the viability of American democracy and its challenges. Together, they will be used to highlight some of the long-standing criticisms of democracy as a political system.

Building off of these views, we will then explore the attempt to actualize democracy in America by exploring

Rousseau's *Social Contract* and the *Federalist Papers*. We will use these texts to contrast the tension between the republican and direct democracy frameworks as a jumping off point to an analysis of our country's founding documents. We will investigate the form and content of the following documents: Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution.

Lastly, a discussion of John Stuart Mill's, *On Liberty*, will wrap up this portion of the unit to highlight the significant contribution of Mill to the distinct and ever evolving American democratic thought and practice. His notion of the "market-place of ideas" as the means to preventing tyranny, will be analyzed and critiqued to deepen student understanding.

Part 3 - "We, the People"

Next, the unit will engage students in a comparison of the basic principles of democracy, in relation to their actual application/non-application, focusing on contemporary analyses and criticisms.

In a collection of alternative and supplementary "Declaration's" published by Philip Foner in his text *We the Other People*, highlights the long-standing awareness of the poor, working-class and disenfranchised, as well as their organized efforts to make the statements embodied in the document, a reality. Several of these alternative/supplementary documents will be studied to understand the particular struggles of workers, tenant farmers, women and African-Americans have fought and how things have changed over time.

Other texts to be discussed will be the series of organizational "point" programs that emerged during the period of the *New Left*. Students will analyze and compare the platforms of the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords Organization, the I Wor Kuen, the American Indian Movement and the Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

Part 4 - Critical Framework: A tool for Liberation

"The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor, is the mind of the oppressed." -Steve Biko

"Who Wants Change?", "Who would Benefit from Change?", "How does change happen?" are often questions that go unasked in our understanding of current issues. Building a critical lens from which our students can uncover the social, political and economic interests underlying various issues is an essential tool to guide their participation. Identifying and then defining these systems will help students differentiate the various issues as well as see the many and complex overlapping and contending interests. A key point will be that students understand that issues cannot be categorized in so general a way as "good" vs. "evil", or "right" vs. "wrong".

Students will learn that these positions are relative to each individual and that underlying one's position on any issue, are the interests they have in relation to the issue, based on the predominating system they are viewing the issue from, ie. politically, socially, economically. Students will be guided to see things from their own interests and be conscious about what they believe and why.

Paolo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, discusses the process by which the oppressed internalize the worldview of the oppressor. Many of our students have a deep self-hate that has been developed long before they were born and have this false consciousness deeply embedded in their psyche. Sharing this framework for critical self-reflection for liberation runs in the Platonic tradition. Using Freire to further develop their

understanding of hegemony as a system of ruling class control that actively trains people to be complicit in their own domination, will be used.

Building Critical Youth and Student Participation

Closing this unit will be a component I have had little success in actualizing up to this point in my 10 years of teaching. I believe that education should be useful and relevant to my students. Information for information's sake is not the reason why I am in the classroom. This course allows me the opportunity to develop an organized system by which my students can apply what they have learned and focus their participation in a meaningful way.

Students will engage in local politics (both in the school and immediate community) through the outreach and organization of a townhall meeting for this November's local San Francisco election. Following the townhall, students will organize and implement a version of James Fishkin's *deliberative poll*, on campus, to maximize the school community's awareness of the issues for the upcoming election and beyond.

Strategies

"All great undertakings are risky, and, as they say, what is worth while is always difficult." Plato, *The Republic*

The Unit is designed to cover an intensive 6-week period as the introduction to my senior American Democracy Course. I will utilize guided activities that are anchored to and geared toward illuminating the significant and diverse political/philosophical views studied. The reading of both primary and secondary sources, compiled into a student resource - *Democratic Theory and Practice Reading List*, will be the main text used for the unit.

Due to the difficult level of the vocabulary, as well as the abstract nature of many of the concepts discussed, success of this unit will depend upon a dynamic employment of a multiplicity of activities and tools ranging from the use of various forms of media (music, art, film), organized student interactions, Socratic seminar and strategic teacher lectures (all formatted using *Keynote* - Apple's equivalent presentation software to *Powerpoint* - to be visually appealing).

The principle of reciprocity will be emphasized. They are expected to be diligent in their work so as to understand the concepts. My effort, organization and implementation of a system to support them in their process, will match their collective energy.

I will set the table, so to speak, by informing the students of what is at stake when it comes to their education. Each year I tell my students that they need to value their education in the manner in which they value their most prized possessions. I give my secular "fire and brimstone" sermon in an effort to convince my students that they must treat school as if their lives depend upon it - that they must use their education as a means for their liberation.

The following educational principles will run throughout the class: 1. "take the best and leave the rest", 2.

"honor the histories of our ancestors," 3. "liberative synergy," 4. "Education for Liberation". The following teaching tools will be implemented to facilitate student success: 1. Critical Summa-flection, 2. Socratic Seminar, 3. Team-up/Break-it-down, 4. Student/Teacher/Student

Educational Principles

"Take the best and leave the rest" is the principle of finding something valuable in any and all lessons (SOUL 2000). Given the conditions that my students survive on a daily basis, it often shapes their outlook, thus inhibiting them from seeing anything positive - whether in school, in interactions with adults or exposure to new ideas. I always tell my students that very few things, if any, are 100% good or bad. That they must be able to find a positive lesson in any interaction, lesson, experience, etc.

"*Honor the histories of our ancestors*," roots our study beyond the present. It holds us accountable to furthering our journey for progress. It gives us the long view to the immediacy of our struggles - individual as well as collective (SOUL 2000).

"*Liberative synergy*" - takes into account and encourages the use of my students' cultural capital of collectivity. I want to take what often is characterized/demonized as a regressive quality toward "self-improvement" and utilize it for just that, and more. The community in the classroom will emphasize mutual benefit, individual integrity, group work and collective strength.

"*Education for Liberation*" - emphasizes the goals of using education to serve our respective communities. This principle encourages our students to see progress as measurable not merely by the advancement of the individual, but the progress and well-being of our communities - Less incarceration, more education; less violence and more peace; less exploitation and more justice.

Teachers Toolbox

"Critical Summa-flection" - is a tool for active note-taking. Similar to the process of meta-cognition, it encourages the reader to "think about her/his thinking". Students take an aggressive approach (as opposed to a passive) to reading by 1. reading as if their lives depended upon it, 2. being okay with not knowing all the words, 3. concisely taking notes and 4. actively reflecting, questioning, connecting, opining/postulating alternatives.

"*Socratic Seminar*" - "The Socratic method of teaching is based on Socrates' theory that it is more important to enable students to think for themselves than to merely fill their heads with "right" answers. Therefore, he regularly engaged his pupils in dialogues by responding to their questions with questions, instead of answers. This process encourages divergent thinking rather than convergent thinking (Greece Central School District 2008)."

"*Team-up/Break-it-down*" - teams students in groups of 3-5 (sometimes self-selecting/sometimes identified mixed-ability groups). Students *critically summa-flect* upon the text and share questions, connections, insights with each other. Teams then share an insight with the class until all information is exhausted. The team with the most positive contributions to the discussion are rewarded (to be identified).

"*Student/Teacher/Student*" - is the process of 1. beginning with where the *students* are, 2. *teacher* incorporating their knowledge of their students and adjusting/tailoring the lesson to build bridges, 3. deliver an effective lesson to the *student*. The teacher recognizes the classroom as a potential space for destruction or

creation, and utilizes his/her understanding of the power relations existing within the space, for the purpose of maximizing learning (from student to teacher *and* from teacher back to student).

Week 1

Students will be introduced to the practice of Socratic seminar as the method by which class discussion will be held. Students will be given a copy of the *Democratic Theory and Practice Reading List* and will be responsible for completing the assignments before the next class session. Using critical summa-flection, students will bring their notes and questions to class to guide their participation.

The historical narratives of American Indians and African-Americans will be used to set the context for our discussion of democracy in America. Students will explore excerpts from: Bruce Johansen's, *Debating Democracy*, Jack Weatherford's, *Indian Givers*, Peter Nabakov's, *Native American Testimony*.

Students will be tasked to scan school textbook to search for the contributions of non-European peoples to American democracy. In doing so we will collectively uncover the meta-narrative from the text. We will answer the question, "What is the story behind the story?" Through this exercise, students will identify and critically discuss the unspoken class, race, gender messages from the "master's" narrative.

Week 2 &3

Using the class *Reading List* we will continue with the process of critical summa-flection - Socratic seminar - teacher instruction. Team-up/Breakdown and classroom activities will be incorporated to illuminate the topics and illustrate as many tangible examples as possible.

Excerpts from: Plato's *Republic*, Rousseau's *Social Contract*, *The Federalist Papers No. 1, 9,10, 14,2, 39, 45,47 and 51*, *Declaration of Independence*, *The Articles of Confederation* and *The Constitution*, Mill's *On Liberty*, will be used to highlight the debate leading to the formation of the United States of America.

In this section, we will do an activity called, "The Enlightenment and You: What do these ideals look like?" Students will be facilitated to move from the abstract to the actual. Students will create concrete a visual representation of examples of the application/non-application of these ideals/concepts/principles/values and focus on their lived experience of these principles.

Week 4

A critical analysis of alternative "Declaration's" will be used to highlight the awareness and conscious effort to lay out a set of grievances and corresponding demands to the government. Excerpts from: Philip Foner's *We, The Other People*, will be the primary source documents used to highlight the discrepancies in the application of the democratic principles, as well as the consciousness and agency of communities left out and their attempt to actualize these principles.

Following their reading, we will engage in the class activity entitled "Counter-narrating the Constitutional Convention". In this activity, we will discuss the property, racial, gender and national restrictions limiting participation. We will have students identify any and all aspects of the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution that they would have a problem with. We will identify alternatives and or changes we would have liked to see in the original document.

Lastly, we will explore the radicalization of the African, Asian, American Indian, Latino and white youth, through comparing and contrasting the organizational platforms of the Black Panther Party, the I Wor Kuen, the American Indian Movement, the Young Lords Organization and the Students for a Democratic Society.

Week 5 & 6

"Critical systems framework analysis" development and preparation for democratic action will be the emphasis of the closing two weeks.

The first step in building critical student framework will utilize the film, *The Matrix*, to highlight Plato's, "Simile of the Cave". The notion that we are prisoners in the service of the ruling order, will be flushed out using both the text as well as well as the film, to encourage students to understand the concept of "hegemony", "oppression", and "exploitation".

The second step in building critical student framework will be done by identifying and defining the economic, political and social systems under which the United States was founded and operates. Each student will be given a tool he/she can use to analyze his/her interests based on his/her relationship to the existing economic/political/social order. The following are the definitions and guiding questions that will be used to facilitate student understanding:

Defining the *economicsystem* as "the organized way that goods and services are produced and distributed" leads students to answer the following questions: *How are goods produced? How are goods distributed? How is this determined?* Their answers are guided to incorporate the following key points: 1. Under capitalism, goods/services are produced by the workers in factories/service sector owned by the businessman, aka, capitalist. 2. Goods are distributed according to how much money you have. 3. How much money you have is determined by a number of factors like education, training, gender, race, etc., but for the most part, how much money you have is determined by how much capital you own.

Defining the *political system*, as "the system by which decisions are made." And clarifying that "Politics is the

exercise of power to get what you want or need, done" leads students to answer the following questions: *Who has power? How is this distributed and maintained?* Their answers are guided to incorporate the following points: 1. In society, decisions that impact many people, are made by those who have power. 2. We live in a type of democracy that allows for people to vote for representatives in government, to vote for new legislation, to petition our public officials and have our grievances addressed, to protest in the streets, freedom of speech, among others, 3. However, power is distributed in relation to how much wealth one owns. Elections are funded by big special interests that seek to maintain its influence over our elected officials, 4. The system overall is maintained in part by the participation of the people during elections, but for the most part, it is maintained by a huge bureaucracy that deals with the everyday operations of the government.

Defining *social values* as "guidelines for an individual's behavior" lead students to answer the following questions: *From where do these values come? How do they shape people's everyday lives?* Their answers are guided to incorporate the following points: 1. These values come from one's culture, religion, neighborhood, etc. 2. they act as a set of instructions for people to conduct themselves both in public, as well as within the private aspects/places of life, ie. home, family gatherings, etc.

Economics, politics and social values all shape a person's behavior. However, depending upon the circumstance, they shape them in varying degrees. In some instances, social values may move people to action. For example, as a Catholic, I am supposed to be opposed to abortion. In other instances, political views may be the dominant aspect. As a registered democrat, I would be expected to support strong unions. I would share that in my experience, economics has been the main force that has shaped my values. In other words, how much I have been struggling as a teacher (to pay the bills, to buy food, pay for healthcare, paying for rent, etc) has highly influenced, if not determined how open I have been to change.

The class activity that will be conducted is entitled, "Where do you stand?" In this activity, students will be asked a list of questions highlighting existing beliefs/positions around various economic, social and political issues. The exercise will emphasize class, gender, race, religion, culture and social questions where students will identify their own positions.

To further highlight the issue of power in relation to interests, students will then

engage in an activity called "If you were me, and I were you." In this exercise, we will compare and contrast the varying experiences of students based on race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, immigrant status. Here, students will read/act out scenarios. Following will be a discussion where we explore our previously held positions in comparison to insights from the activity.

Lastly, the application component of this unit will embody the social justice oriented and oft-cited Quaker concept of, "speaking truth to power." This culminating part of the unit follows their study of the history of the struggle for democracy as well as the foundational principles of democratic theory and practice. With their critical systems framework analysis, our students, individually and collectively will organize and engage in three activities that will allow them to air their concerns about issues affecting them and their communities, to various economic and political seats of power. The following will be three activities they will engage in.

"The Economy and Our Communities" - addressing corporate power and its impact upon our people. A letter writing campaign will allow students to identify a company that has had or is having an impact, either positive or negative, and address them with their concerns about that companies practice.

"Balboa HS/OMI neighborhood Townhall" - speaking truth to the state. Students will organize a public meeting

and invite candidates for local office as well as community leaders to discuss current issues facing District 11. Students will have the opportunity to question, confront and/or support these individuals and further their understanding. Following the townhall experience, students will then conduct a "deliberative poll" as a means of informing the larger student body of the issues. In an effort to disrupting the phenomenon of "segmented democracy" students will lead the conduct of balanced education to deepen our understanding of various issues.

"We the people" - speaking truth to the people; speaking truth to ourselves. Students will utilize their new knowledge of American democratic practice to help create a popular media piece that their communities can access. In groups, students will create the "Facebook of Change" and "Myspace for Democracy". Using technology and popular culture and media in the classroom, each group will be accountable to having their families participate in their project.

Resources

Pedagogy

Duncan-Andrade, Jeffrey. 2005. An Examination of the Sociopolitical History of

Chicanos and its Relationship to School Performance. *Sage Publications*, <http://uex.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/40/6/576> (accessed July 3, 2008)

The portrayal, explicitly and implicitly of Chicana/o people, in the institutional narrative, has a destructive effect upon the self-image of Chicana/o students. This negative self-image results in the divestment of Chicana/o students from the mainstream educational system.

Bowles, Samuel and Herbert Gintis. 1976. *Schooling in Capitalist America: educational*

reform and the contradictions of economic life. New York : Basic Books

The industrial production of capitalism is replicated in the educational system that is designed to produce workers for the capitalist system. Rather than producing critical thinkers, the system is designed to socialize individuals to fit into the existing order, rather than questioning the flaws of that order.

Freire, Paulo. 1993. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos.

New York : Continuum

Freire extensively discusses the approach of critical pedagogy and the ultimate goal of eliminating oppression in all of society. This radical approach brings both critical theory and transformative practice together, as a model for education. Key to his pedagogy is his critique of the "banking method" that relegates students to a passive and objectified position in the process of learning - a process that is key to becoming more human.

School of Unity and Liberation (SOUL). Oakland, CA.

Is a community organizing training center I worked with for several years that incorporates some aspects of "popular education" and

liberatory educational frameworks in their education program.

Content

Dahl, Robert, Shapiro Ian and Jose Antonio Cheibub. 2003. *The Democracy Sourcebook*.

Cambridge: MIT Press

This is a broad compilation of short essays and analyses of democratic theory and practice. There are both primary and secondary sources that may be useful for both teacher and student.

Foner, Eric. 1998. *The Story of American Freedom*. New York: Norton & Company, Inc.

This text gives a critical analysis of freedom in America as a paradoxical system of freedom based on slavery and oppression. He views this paradox not as contradictory, but as symbiotic - as necessary for the development of the democratic vision of our founding fathers. This symbiotic relationship develops into heightening the need of oppressed people in the United States to lead the way for genuine freedom and democracy.

Foner, Philip. 1976. *We, the Other People*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press

A compilation of alternate "Declarations of Independence." This is a rich source of primary documents that can be used to highlight the consciousness of oppressed people about their condition and the actions needed to address them. Women, Labor, African Americans and Renters are represented in these declarations.

Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison and John Jay. 2003. *The Federalist Papers*. Ed.

Clinton Rossiter. New York: Penguin Books

Johansen, Bruce. 1998. *Debating Democracy: Native American Legacy of Freedom*.

Sante Fe: Clear Light Publishers

Critiques the Euro-centric narrative of the development of democratic theory and practice. Highlights the evolution of democratic practice by the Iroquois, the influence of this practice upon the "Founding Fathers."

Mill, John Stuart. 1978. *On Liberty*. Ed. Elizabeth Rappaport. Indianapolis: Hackett

Publishing Company

Nabakov, Peter. 1999. *Native American Testimony*. New York: Penguin Books

This is a powerful collection of Native American speeches, statements, sentiments and voices, expressing their hopes, dreams, frustrations, heartache and determination to survive in the midst of a foreign onslaught upon their land, their values and their person.

Plato. 2003. *The Republic*. Trans. Desmond Lee. London: Penguin Books

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 2007. *The Social Contract and Discourses*. Trans. GDH Cole.

USA: BNP Publishing

Weatherford, Jack. 1988. *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed*

the World. New York: Fawcett Books

Critiques the Euro-centric narrative of the development of democratic theory and practice. Highlights the evolution of democratic practice by the Iroquois, the influence of this practice upon the "Founding Fathers. Discusses the multiple ways American Indians have contributed to the world economically, politically, socially and culturally.

West, Cornel. 2004. *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*. New

York: Penguin Press

This text provides a radical analysis of the existing economic, social and political regime. His criticism includes a discussion of historical examples in America of democratic and egalitarian principles across racial and ethnic communities. This is useful in flushing out differences between conservative, liberal, reformist and radical prescriptions for change.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. 2000. *Democracy in America*. Ed. J.P. Mayer. New York:

Perennial Classics

The Democratic Theory and Practice Reading List

Annotated resources for student use:

PART1 - Beyond words on a page: The (mal)practice of democracy and freedom in America.

Week 1

Day 1

"Refugee in America." from Langston Hughes' *Selected Works*. This is a powerful poem about being an outsider in one's own country.

"The Iroquois Confederacy. Our Forgotten National Heritage." An interview of leading "influence theory" proponent, Dr. Donald Grinde, by Carol Hiltner.

Day 2

"What the hell is this?" from Bruce Johansen's, *Debating Democracy*. This is a reflection upon the reaction mainstream historians had to the work of historians who proposed that the Iroquois Confederacy had an impact upon the development of the US Constitution.

"Liberty, Anarchism and the Noble Savage." From Jack Weatherford's, *Indian Givers*. A historical overview of the social and political practice of the 1st Nations of the present day American Northeast

Day 3

"The Treaty Trail" from Peter Nabakov's, *Native American Testimony*. Is a series of powerful accounts by Cherokee, Seminole, Nez Perce, Otoe and Crow leaders of American duplicity in relation to the signing of treaties.

Day 4

"The meaning of the 4th of July to the American Negro." By Frederick Douglass is a reflection upon the tragic irony of being a slave on the occasion of American Independence.

"West India Emancipation." Also by Frederick Douglass is an important clarification to those who claim to be for abolition, but fear confrontation with those in favor of slavery, about how change happens.

Part II - Democracy According to "the Man"

Week 2

Day 1

"Part IX. Imperfect Societies." By Plato, is his scathing criticism of the weaknesses of democracy.

Day 2

"Book 1. Chapters 1-8." Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "Social Contract." This text defines the necessity of coming together as free individuals from a state of nature and organizing with others into a civil state with civil liberties that set parameters for collective existence.

Day 3

"Part 1, Chapter 2 & 3. Concerning Their Point of Departure and Its Importance for the Future of the Anglo-Americans; Social State of the Anglo Americans", from Alexander Tocqueville's seminal work, *Democracy in America*, highlights the advantages and promise of establishing democracy in the United States.

Day 4

"Part 2, Chapter 10. Some Considerations Concerning the Present State and probable Future of the Three Races That Inhabit the Territory of the United States," also from *Democracy in America*, foretells the destruction of the Indian tribes; here, he also clearly states his belief that slavery and democracy are completely untenable.

Week 3

Day 1

Declaration of Independence

Day 2

Articles of Confederation

Day 3

Selected Essays from *The Federalist Papers*. No. 1, 9,10, 14

Day 4

Selected Essays from *The Federalist Papers*. No. 23, 39, 45, 47, 48

Week 4

Day 1

Selected Essays from *The Federalist Papers*. No. 51, 62, 70, 78

Day 2-4

The Constitution

Part 3- "We (are) the People!"

Week5

Day 1-2

Selected "alternate" Declarations of Independence from Philip Foner's, *We the Other People*, a collection of historical documents representing the demands of disenfranchised people upon the government for full inclusion into American Society. Students will read the "Working Men's Declaration of Independence, December 1829", "Anti-Renters Declaration of Ind., July 4 1839", "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, July 4 1848", "Negro Declaration of Independence, February 1876", "Working Class Declaration of Independence July 4, 1902"

Day 3-4

"10 Point Program of the Black Panther Party", "20 Point Program of the American Indian Movement," "13 Point Program of the I Wor Kuen", the "12 Point Program of the Young Lords Organization" and the Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society."

Part 4 - Critical Framework: A tool for Liberation

Week 6

Day 1

"Simile of the Cave", in *The Republic*, by Plato, introduces the idea of being trapped in an oppressive state that one is not conscious of; the process of freeing oneself; the responsibility of those who are free, to those who are enslaved.

Day 2

"The Deep Democratic Tradition in America", by Cornel West from his text, *Democracy Matters*. Is a passionate account of the potential for the American people to make true the principles of democracy, freedom and justice, if we can collectively be critical of the past, so that we may have hope for a future.

"By the People: Citizenship in 21st Century America", by James Fishkin. Is a summary of his work around deepening citizen's understanding of political participation through his process of "Deliberative Polling".

Implementing District Standards

The *Democracy (in)Action: Promoting Critical Youth Consciousness and Participation* Unit is an attempt at a comprehensive tackling of the core principles of American Democratic theory. The standards addressed in this unit revolve around the areas of critical examination of American Democracy, civic mindedness and participation. The following are standards I feel this unit addresses.

Standard 12.1 reads "Students explain the fundamental principles and moral values of American democracy as expressed in the U.S. Constitution and other essential documents of American democracy." We will be studying the philosophical, political and economic basis of the *Declaration of Independence, The Articles of Confederation and the Constitution*. Several essays from *The Federalist Papers* will be studied. Furthermore, we will explore Plato's critique of democracy and Tocqueville's observations of the promise and potential pitfalls of our government.

Standard 12.2 reads "Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured." Sub-section #4 reads "Understand the obligations of civic-mindedness, including voting, being informed on civic issues, volunteering and performing public service, and serving in the military or alternative service." And Sub-section #5 reads, "Describe the reciprocity between rights and obligations; that is, why enjoyment of one's rights entails respect for the rights of others." This standard will be met in the last part of my curriculum unit where students apply what they have learned to organize a townhall meeting and other campaigns relating to their communities.

Standard 12.5 reads "Students summarize landmark U.S. Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution and its amendments." Sub-section #4 "Explain the controversies that have resulted over changing interpretations of civil rights, including those in *Plessy v. Ferguson, Brown v. Board of Education, Miranda v. Arizona, Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Pena, and United States v. Virginia (VMI)*", will be addressed in the part of the unit that discusses the flaws in the application of democratic principles to historically disenfranchised people.

Standard 12.7 reads, "Students analyze and compare the powers and procedures of the national, state, tribal, and local governments." Our class will organize a townhall of local officials and candidates running for office in this November's Election.

Standard 12.8 reads, "Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the influence of the media on American political life." Sub-section #2 reads "Describe the roles of broadcast, print, and electronic media, including the Internet, as means of communication in American politics. Our class will create blogs on the internet as a public forum to discuss their process of learning and doing democracy.

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