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# Identity, Voice, Social Justice, and Blundering in Critical and Cultural Studies Composition: Calling Out Racial Microaggressions at a Hispanic-Serving Institution

In *Writing/Teaching: Essays toward a Rhetoric of Pedagogy*, Paul Kameen states, "We are never who we are when we teach. Nor should we try to be . . . Teaching is in fact the means by which we may become *other* than ourselves . . ." (256). As a woman of color within a majority White male academe, I disagree with Kameen. I am *always* me when I enter the classroom because I am the embodiment of difference, of "Other," within the academy. I have no choice but to be myself, a working-class Chicana compositionist. These positionalities inform my pedagogical approach to composition, through a critical and cultural studies lens.

Critical pedagogy promotes the critiquing and questioning of social systems through democratic dialogic. Largely influenced by Antonio Gramsci's call to question and resist hegemonic power structures and Paulo Freire's *conscientização*, an emancipatory educational approach "by which students, as empowered subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of the social realities that shape their lives and discover their own capacities to re-create them" (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 15), critical pedagogy allows students to critique asymmetrical power systems to expose oppressor/oppressed relations. Building on Gramsci and Freire's concepts of critical pedagogy, Henry Giroux explains, "cultural studies provocatively stresses analyzing public memory [. . .] . . . blasting history open, rupturing its silences, highlighting its detours, acknowledging the events of its transmission, and organizing its limits within an open and honest concern with human suffering, values, and the legacy of the often unrepresentable or misrepresented" (68). In other words, cultural studies pedagogy excavates historical, ideological, and cultural contexts of oppressive systems.

Using critical and cultural studies pedagogies in the composition classroom allows for dialogue regarding cultural, political, and social justice issues relevant to my students, who are mainly working-class and of Mexican descent, and relevant to my life as a working-class Chicana teaching in a South Texas Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). However, I am often at odds as to when and how much to use my identity and voice to contribute to the class' dialogic, especially

when encountered with student racial microaggression, defined as derogatory rhetoric "or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (Sue, et al. 271). If I voice the slight, I risk overpowering the discussion with my positionality as teacher and risk being labeled "overly sensitive" to racial and gender issues as a Chicana. If I remain silent, I allow discrimination and social injustice to occur in my classroom.

In this essay, I describe my handling of a racial microaggressive student presentation in a rhetoric and composition course. I examine how the use of my identity and voice to call out this racial microaggression was simultaneously an act of social justice and a teaching blunder, defined as a "conflict for critical pedagogues between their aims as teachers, aims which they like to think as liberatory, and their practice" (Thelin and Tassoni 5). I argue that teachers must have a voice in their classrooms, especially teachers of color who have historically been marginalized and silenced from such discussions. However, I nuance this argument by questioning how teachers can have a voice in the classroom without becoming authoritarian, without blundering.

### Identity, Voice, and Social Justice

As Maxine Hairston acknowledges, power relations in the classroom between teacher and student will always favor the teacher because the teacher assesses and issues grades; however, she states it is "unprofessional" for teachers to use their power in the classroom to promote their own political agendas (188). According to Hairston, educators should not put "dogma before diversity, politics before craft" (180). To do so risks silencing students who do not agree with the teacher's prescriptive ideology (Giroux 73; Hairston 189). However, Giroux argues that teachers must have a voice in the classroom, but must use it in a way that "teaches students by example the importance of taking a stand . . . while rigorously engaging the full range of ideas about an issue" without becoming authoritarian (73). Lisa M. Toner refers to this balance of teacher-voice and dialogue as discursive ethics, which creates a student-centered classroom where students are empowered to participate in a classroom dialogic that examines polemic issues.

Toner believes that to achieve an open dialogic in the classroom, teachers must "situate their political advocacies and interpretative predilections in relation to alternatives" (3-4). In other words, to use discursive ethics is to openly discuss multiple perspectives, including, but not favoring, the teacher's perspective. However, because the power structure in the classroom inevitably favors the teacher, Toner states that the "responsibility for respecting conflicting interpretive methods and political advocacies lies first with writing teachers, then with students" (4). Ira Shor explains how a teacher should approach this student-centered dialogic:

The teacher, backloading her or his comments, has earned the right to speak by honoring the student-centered, dialogic process. Serious educators have a right and a responsibility to share their academic knowledge and perspectives. They must not impose their values or interpretations on students, but when their turn comes in a participatory process they

can set an example of the love of knowledge, of a well-informed mind, and of a critically thinking intellectual and citizen. . . . The dialogic lecture allows the teacher's knowledge an important place in the study as long as the students' idiom, perceptions, and right to disagree have been established first. (247)

Although I agree with this student-centered approach, Shor's comments here seem to limit the teacher's voice to academic epistemologies. What academic rhetoric do educators use in the classroom to teach social justice, especially in the critical and cultural studies classroom?

To teach social justice, educators must be self-aware of how they are affected by course content so that they may gain insight as to how content may affect students. This self-awareness calls for the examination of teacher-as-person, an inclusive pedagogical approach that resituates the positionality of teacher by taking into consideration the teacher's lived experiences and value systems when analyzing teacher identity and voice in the classroom (Goodson 234; Kelchtermans 198). Viewing teacher-as-person is tied to sociologist Charles Wright Mills' concept of the sociological imagination, which asks researchers to situate themselves within their research, and Ivor Goodson's educational focus of life history research, which calls for the analysis of biographical information and how it influences approaches to teaching.

As educators, how do our identities influence ways we approach our role as teacher in the classroom? When should we speak up, interject in classroom dialogic? When should we remain silent? As a woman of color teaching a critical and cultural studies composition course, the answers don't always come easy to me. I am always myself when I teach, that is I am conscientious of my positionalities as a working-class Chicana academic, but I struggle to situate myself in the classroom because I don't want my identity or voice as teacher nor my personal experiences, beliefs, or ideologies as a woman of color to overpower student identity and voice.

Although there is scholarship discussing faculty of color through a teacher-as-person analytical frame (see Foster; Housee; hooks; Alsup; Douglas; Nganga), there is limited scholarship regarding Chicana/o faculty identity within a critical and cultural studies composition classroom in an HSI (see Anzaldúa; Cantú). Furthermore, as of this writing, there is no scholarship that addresses the role of identity and voice of Chicana/o faculty when encountered with a student's racial microaggression in a critical and cultural studies composition course in an HSI. What follows is a description of a racial microaggressive student presentation and student and teacher responses. First, however, I will describe the rhetoric and composition course in which the presentation occurred to better show how my handling of this racial microaggression diverged from the democratic dialogic already established in the class.

## Rhetoric and Composition I

In my Rhetoric and Composition I course, student writing is geared towards the critical analysis of socio-cultural and socio-political issues found within their communities, cultures, and generation, with each of the four-part essay sequence scaffolding critical inquiry. For example, Essay 1 asks students to reflect on how their multiple communities, cultures, and the generation in which they grew up have influenced who they have chosen to become as young adults. To help students broaden their insights and conceptions of these terms, the class reviews multiple definitions of "community" and "culture" and discusses examples of each. We also read two opposing articles regarding the millennial generation and discuss which aspects of the articles best fit their personal experiences and observations.

For Essay 2, students critically reflect on three socio-political and/or socio-cultural issues within their communities, cultures, or generation. In their discussion, students reflect on the personal significance of each issue, in which they explain how they are directly and/or indirectly affected. To help students develop critical inquiry, we read selected narrative and investigative articles from a program-approved reader, watch socio-cultural documentaries, and discuss the social and personal implications of each. Article and documentary topics include gender stereotyping, body image, working-class culture, child migrant labor, the educational system, and social media.<sup>1</sup> It is during the discussions of these readings and documentaries that I ask students to reflect on the author's/film maker's perspective, target audience, argument, and purpose of the work. These discussions are mainly held in small groups of three or four students for a limited period of time. The class then convenes as one large group for the last 10 minutes to voice what students discussed in their individual groups. In this large group setting, I serve mainly as facilitator (directing discussion) and moderator (correcting misinformation and monitoring for offensive language). I purposely limit my interaction with the groups to ensure that I do not silence student voices with my own. Most students become lively and engaged during these discussions.

Essay 3 is a research-based paper that asks students to choose one issue they wrote about in Essay 2 and then to discuss the causes and a/effects of the issue from multiple perspectives. To better understand and identify perspective, we discuss how rhetorical strategies and authors' biases inform the argument and purpose of a work and influence the target audience. To demonstrate this investigative process, I conduct a rhetorical analysis on an excerpt from an article and a short clip from a documentary we discussed during the inventive and writing processes of Essay 2. We identify rhetorical strategies used, how they fit into the overall purpose of the works, and how they appeal to the target audiences. In addition, I also conduct an online search of the author and director. Students are able to see the author's and director's

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1. Articles read include "Little Girls or Little Women? The Disney Princess Effect" by Stephanie Hanes, "What Ever Happened to Upward Mobility" by Rana Foroohar, and "Affirmative Action for Men" by Scott Jaschik. Documentaries watched include *Waiting for "Superman"* directed by Davis Guggenheim and *The Harvest/La Casecha* directed by U. Roberto Romano.

educational backgrounds, political, religious, and special-interest endorsements, if any, and their overall bodies of work. We then look at how this information can be used to frame a cause and a/effect critical discussion regarding the selected issue. Using these demonstrations as examples, groups of three or four students are assigned an excerpt from a previously read article or a short clip from a previously watched documentary and are asked to conduct their own rhetorical analysis and online search. This exercise shows students how to critically analyze sources and incorporate multiple perspectives when composing Essay 3. Once students have composed a first draft, we conference to discuss their overall approach to the essay and any concerns they or I might have regarding their draft. After revising, students compose a second draft that is then peer reviewed in class. This second draft is revised to compose their final Essay 3.

For Essay 4, students propose at least three realistic and research-based solutions to the issue they have discussed in Essay 3, with each solution stemming from a different perspective, one of which may be their own. Students must then argue for the best solution and persuade an imagined reader to help enact the solution. To prepare for this essay, we look at how claims can be turned into arguments by providing supportive, credible evidence. In addition, by referring back to our discussions of perspective and purpose of a work, we discuss how to use textual rhetorical strategies to persuade readers. Once the first draft is composed, as with the methodological process of Essay 3, we conference to discuss how they are approaching the essay and any concerns they or I might have regarding their work. A second draft is peer reviewed in class and revised for the final draft of Essay 4.

The essay sequence culminates with an end-of-the-semester, 10-minute oral presentation in which students, either as a group or individually, identify the issue they researched, discuss the causes and a/effects of the issue, identify the best solution, and persuade their audience (the class and me) to act on the issue (call-to-action). As a visual component, presenters are asked to show one image, either self-created or published, that encapsulates the many aspects of their issue, and students explain their rationale for displaying the image. After students present, a five-minute question and answer session with the class follows. To ensure all students participate in the discussion of at least one presentation, fellow students are required to ask a total of two questions throughout the presentation sequence, while I ask at least one question to each presenter. During the question and answer session, students become lively. They ask presenters to explain what they uncovered during their research methodologies, and students discuss their own personal experiences regarding the issue, often adding to what others have stated, creating a democratic dialogic in the classroom. This did not occur, however, with one particular presentation. What follows is a description of a racial microaggressive student presentation regarding undocumented immigration in the U.S. and how the presentation affected the class.

## Racial Microaggressive Student Presentation

One week before presentations began, I wrote on the board the issues that had been researched by multiple students, along with the students' names, in case some students would like to present as a group. Students then signed-up for presentation days, which were scheduled for the last two weeks of the semester. During these two weeks, presentations were well received by the class, meaning that the question and answer sessions generated so much dialogue with students that I, as moderator, often had to curtail conversation to give the next presenters equal time. This did not occur, however, with the presentation described below.

Only two students, white males, had researched undocumented immigration in the U.S., so they decided to present as a group and selected the second to the last day of the semester

**“I saw many Mexican American and Mexican-national students stare at the photograph in disbelief, disgust, anger, and some in shame”**

to present. With one day left in the semester, then, these two students (who I will refer to as Presenter 1 and Presenter 2 for the discussion below) took center classroom to present on undocumented immigration in the U.S., but before beginning their oral presentation, they displayed a photograph, titled “How Many Mexican Illegal Immigrants Fit in the Trunk of a Car?” by BlameltOnTheVoices.com, as their visual component. The photograph shows at least five adult-male Mexican undocumented immigrants who have hidden themselves in the

storage area of a car to evade U.S. border patrol, using the vehicle as transportation to enter the country illegally. The image shocked me, and I could see it had a similar effect on many of the students, especially those of Mexican descent. In fact, I saw many Mexican American and Mexican-national students stare at the photograph in disbelief, disgust, anger, and some in shame, choosing to keep their eyes down on their desks rather than on the photograph being displayed. I even heard, “Oh my God,” from a Mexican-national student appalled at the photograph. Although the image made me and many students visibly uncomfortable because of the inhumane and desperate conditions in which these men were found, I chose not to address the provocative photograph because I wanted to give the presenters the opportunity to explain their rationale in choosing it.

As they began their presentation, Presenter 1 identified their issue as “illegal” immigration in the U.S., and explained it was mainly caused by immigrants' desire of the “American Dream,” a better life. However, the presenters did not discuss the reasons why immigrants pursue better lives in a country that is not their own. Instead, they showed a cartoon clip that depicts two white men, dressed in cowboy hats and boots, wearing western-style button-down shirts with handkerchiefs around their necks, atop horses. These cowboys are policing the U.S.-Mexico

border, which is depicted by a barbed-wire fence and is surrounded by rocks and cacti. One white man says to the other, "They're all exaggerating the size of the illegal immigration problem, don't you think?" (Foden). Instead of a reply from the second white man, the viewer reads "Si!" ("Yes!") coming from underneath multiple rocks, seemingly from the many undocumented Mexican immigrants who have crossed into the U.S. undetected (Foden). The presenters did not explain their rationale for this image either.

The presenters then took turns stating the effects of illegal immigration: an increase in job loss for Americans because "illegals" were willing to work for substantially less pay than Americans; an increase in identity theft because "illegals" stole Americans' social security numbers or "aliens" would buy them from willing Americans; and the loss of sales taxes because instead of purchasing high-priced items, many immigrants send their money to their remaining family in their home country.<sup>2</sup> Throughout this discussion, both presenters used the words "illegal" and "alien" interchangeably, sometimes using "illegal alien," when referring to undocumented immigrants.<sup>3</sup> They then showed another cartoon clip, which ironically expresses the paradox between political unfairness and political correctness. This cartoon clip shows four school-aged children (two white males, one white female, and one African American male) hiding in fear from Julio, an undocumented Hispanic immigrant depicted as a physically violent bully and thief who beats his white classmate for his lunch money. The first white male student, who has a black eye and cuts on his face, states to the rest, "I'm hiding from that new kid Julio...He beat me up and took my lunch money!" (Wise). The white female student responds, "Julio is an illegal! You should have him kicked out of school!" (Wise). The African American male student replies, "No! You can't do that! You'll look like a bigot!" (Wise). The second white male student says, "If you tell they'll put you in detention and give Julio your new bicycle" (Wise). The rationale for displaying this image was not explained.

Ending their presentation, Presenter 1 explained that the best solution for "illegal"

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2. I remembered reading these effects in Presenter 1's first draft of Essay 3. During his conference, I explained that although these effects were accurate, they reflected only an American perspective and framed the issue of undocumented immigration in the U.S. as a *problem* for Americans. To better understand perspective, we conducted a brief rhetorical analysis on one of the sources and investigated the author to uncover any potential biases that may contribute to the overall argument or purpose of the work. I encouraged Presenter 1 to critically analyze all of his sources. In his final draft of Essay 3, Presenter 1 kept the three effects from his earlier draft, but added an effect framed from an immigrant's perspective that discussed the substandard living conditions of undocumented immigrants as a result of their inability or reluctance to complain to landlords or afford better housing.

3. I had previously explained in conferences and in essay feedback that these terms were derogatory and asked that "undocumented immigrant" be used instead. Presenter 2 made this change within his essay while Presenter 1 did not.

4. In their Essay 4, both presenters discussed solutions from differing perspectives. While Presenter 2 argued that the best solution for undocumented immigration was for the U.S. to work with the Mexican government to improve their economic conditions so that Mexican nationals would not feel the need to seek advancement in the U.S., Presenter 1 argued that the best solution was to allow volunteer Minutemen to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border alongside Texas border patrol agents, thus significantly increasing manpower without an increase in cost to tax payers.

immigration was to allow volunteer Minutemen, armed U.S. citizens, to help border patrol agents guard the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>4</sup> As their call-to-action, they urged their classmates, many of whom still showed signs of shock at the racial microaggression experienced, to write their congressional representatives in support of this measure. The presenters did not explain their rationale for using the images, nor did they explain why they chose to show three images instead of one, as instructed by the presentation guidelines.

### *Enacting Social Justice through Voice*

Afterwards, the presenters were given time to answer questions from the class. However, the class remained silent. My students' decision to remain silent when presented with an opportunity to use their voices to call out racial microaggression directed at them (those of Mexican descent) confounded me, as they had been vocal during all question-and-answer sessions up until this point. For me to have remained silent would have communicated acceptance of this social injustice, which was unacceptable to me as a woman of color. Therefore, I used my voice and identity as a Chicana and teacher to call out this racial microaggression and enact social justice in the classroom.

I began by asking the presenters to explain their rationale in selecting the images and to explain why they had chosen to show three images instead of one as instructed. With a slight smile, Presenter 1 answered, "Because we were trying to make light of a serious issue," explaining they wanted to make their audience "laugh" at the issue and they believed all three images were humorous. This response confused me, so I asked him to explain how he believed the images were funny. Presenter 1 stated, "Well, you know, because the first one shows illegals crammed like sardines and the last two are cartoon strips." I informed them that I did not find the images funny; rather, I found them offensive and racist against those of Mexican descent.

I explained that although the first image was accurate in how undocumented Mexican and other Hispanic immigrants have entered the U.S. illegally, showcasing the photograph without commentary about the desperation and dehumanizing humility the men in the photograph must have felt as they withstood the inhumane confinement for the opportunity for a better life signified that the presenters did not believe that these humanitarian issues mattered. I also explained that although the two cowboy caricatures are passively monitoring the U.S.-Mexico border, their cowboy attire closely resembles that of Texas Rangers, a Texas law enforcement agency that historically killed many Mexican and Mexican Americans in Texas (Acuña 60). In addition, the voices of the undocumented Mexican immigrants are coming from underneath rocks, where dirt and insects lie, denoting a subhuman subject position. The Mexican immigrants' "hiding place" gives them a subaltern subjectivity in comparison to the Texas Ranger-like Anglos, who are "above" them on their horses. I also explained that the third image stereotypes undocumented Hispanic immigrants as violent individuals who steal money from documented citizens and argues that undocumented immigrants should not be allowed to attend public

schools. The image also implies that to voice such a belief risks being labeled a racist and punished by authority figures.

Presenter 1 was adamant that the images were not racist, while Presenter 2 looked ashamed. Presenter 1 stated that I was being hypersensitive about the issue because of my identity as a Chicana and, therefore, was not reflecting on his presentation objectively. At that point, I addressed the class and asked those of Mexican descent to raise their hands. Eighteen out of 24 students raised their hand. Then I asked how many of them (those of Mexican descent) were offended by the images displayed during the presentation. Sixteen hands remained up, with one student vocally acknowledging to the presenters that she was offended by their chosen images and overall presentation. Defending himself, Presenter 1 explained they were merely presenting already published information; they were not responsible for the content of that information. I then explained that I did not expect them to alter factual or published data on the topic; I did, however, expect them to be aware of whom their audience was—75% of Mexican descent. Furthermore, I reminded them that their issue was undocumented immigration in the U.S., not undocumented Mexican immigration in the U.S. I explained that while I certainly understood why they focused on the U.S.-Mexico border (its proximity to South Texas), their lack of discussion of undocumented immigration in other U.S. border areas, as well as their lack of discussion of other nation-specific undocumented immigrants, showed they did not understand the breadth of their topic, or perhaps showed their prejudices against undocumented Mexican immigrants. Presenter 2 understood; Presenter 1 did not, and remained defiant that his presentation was not a racial microaggression.

## Teaching Blunder

Presenter 1 accused me of being hypersensitive about the presentation issue because of my identity as a Chicana, and he was right. As I watched the presentation, I was not thinking of how the research presented or images could be used to begin a dialogue regarding the works' biases, perspectives, target audiences, arguments, and purposes nor of the oppressor/oppressed power systems portrayed. In other words, I did not critique the presentation using the critical and cultural studies pedagogical approaches we had practiced throughout the semester. Instead, I viewed this presentation as a Chicana and discriminatory towards my Mexican ancestry.

For example, I found the use of the terms "illegal" and "alien" racist and discriminatory because they connoted the representation of undocumented Mexican immigrants as illegal other-worldly, nonhuman beings. In addition, the images were also discriminatory because they portrayed undocumented Mexican immigrants as people of no value whose existence in the U.S. is intolerable and, when caught and deported, serve as entertainment. The presenters did not discuss or show: the poverty conditions in Mexico many undocumented Mexican immigrants choose to leave in hopes of earning enough money in the U.S. to sustain their families, the many life-threatening risks they must overcome to make it across the border, the racism they face when

they finally arrive in the U.S., the substandard labor jobs they must endure to earn an income, the illnesses they suffer without having access to medical assistance, and the constant worry of being found out and deported back to Mexico. In short, the presenters did not consider the perspective of Mexican immigrants nor did they research the economic issues that cause many Mexicans to immigrate to U.S. or critically analyze the role U.S. imperialism has played in these economic hardships. Instead, the issue of undocumented immigration in the U.S. was framed as a *problem* for Americans with only American perspectives.

Furthermore, I did not understand why the class did not verbalize their already declared offense to the presentation. I thought, perhaps, the issue of undocumented immigration was so personal to many of the Mexican descent students in the class that to discuss it openly with unsympathetic individuals would have been too painful. Another possibility was that the presenters were Anglo and the class, which consisted mainly of students of Mexican descent, felt the implications of the historic oppressions suffered by Mexicans and Mexican-Americans at the hands of whites. In "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life," Sue et al. provide another possible explanation for students' silence when confronted with racial microaggressions:

Deciding to do nothing by sitting on one's anger is one response that occurs frequently in people of color. This response occurs because persons of color may be (a) unable to determine whether a microaggression has occurred, (b) at a loss for how to respond, (c) fearful of the consequences, (d) rationalizing that 'it won't do any good anyway,' or (e) engaging in self-deception through denial ('It didn't happen'). (279)

Silence can also be viewed as passive resistance, the refusal of marginalized students "to provide the point of view of the 'other' for the benefit of the White student" (Wagner 265). Regardless of the reason for the class' silence, I felt a need to use my voice to speak for them, and myself. I felt a need to be the teacher-hero, a situation in which the authoritarian teacher "rescues" students from their perceived role as "victims" (Thelin and Tassoni 5). Although the presentation was a racial microaggression, the way in which I handled the situation was a teaching blunder.

Instead of questioning the presenters on the perspective of their research and images, I reprimanded them in front of the class for what I had labeled a racial microaggression. Instead of beginning a dialogue with the presenters regarding the rhetorical strategies used in the works they discussed, any biases uncovered when they researched the authors/artists, and how they believed these issues influenced their presentation, I polled the class, or rather, only those of Mexican descent (as if the presentation affected only those of Mexican descent), to see how many of them also believed the presentation to be a racial microaggression. When I saw that most students agreed with me, I felt justified in my teacher-hero role and believed I was enacting social justice for myself and my students. Upon reflection, however, I realized my students did not need to be rescued; they, along with the presenters, needed to be given an opportunity to

join a democratic dialogue regarding perspective that I had failed to begin.

As stated above, this teaching blunder occurred on the penultimate day of the semester. Although the class met one more time to finish out the presentations, the audience minimally participated in the remaining question-and-answer sessions, and Presenter 1 and Presenter 2 did not to show up for class. Unfortunately, this teaching blunder is how the semester ended, without time to discuss the impact of the presentation and how it was handled.

## Conclusion

I struggle with my decision to have allowed the students' presentation to continue because racism and discrimination should never be tolerated. However, to not give the presenters the opportunity to present their research or explain their choice in visual rhetoric would have impinged on their rights of expressivity in a student-centered dialogic and created a teacher-centered politicized classroom, which, according to Giroux, would have given my perspective and ideology credence over the student- presenters' perspectives, silencing them. Ironically, this is what I did anyway.

I have learned some significant lessons from my teaching blunder. I have learned that not fully being self-aware of how racist and discriminatory material regarding undocumented Mexican immigrants would affect me negatively impacted my response to the presentation. As Nina Asher points out in "Engaging Difference: Towards a Pedagogy of Interbeing," "if I am not aware of how various forces of oppression affect me and how I respond to them, how would I be able to get my students to think about the same?" (245-246). More importantly, however, I have learned that no matter how much I am affected by student dialogue, I cannot place my own political ideologies ahead of pedagogical craft, as Hairston advises (180). To do so silences student voice, which should never occur in a critical and cultural studies classroom. But I don't believe a teacher's voice should be silenced either. Critical and cultural studies teachers should use their voices to progress classroom dialogic by critiquing multiple perspectives, including their own. As Anzaldúa states:

a teacher teaches what she or he needs to learn. Transformation does not happen unless we explore what threatens us as teachers and students; what we sweep under our desks; what we silence; what we're angry about; what causes us anxiety; what brings us into open conflict and disagreement; and what cultural prescriptions and cultural teachings we're rebelling against. (241)

If I could redo my reaction to my students' racial microaggression, I would create a dialogue with the presenters regarding the perspectives, arguments, target audiences, and purposes of their research and images. In retrospect, more exercises in rhetorical and visual analyses on their research and images, as well as conferences before the presentations, would have better prepared students and myself against microaggressive presentations. By not facilitating democratic dialogue

with the presenters, I blundered what could have been significant learning experiences for my students and one hell of a discussion for the class as a whole.

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