

Education is a basic human right and should be accessible to all folx regardless of who they are and where they come from. Education is liberation and a pathway to not only understanding the world but creating lasting change in it. I became a librarian because I am passionate about education and the fundamental role librarianship plays in the education of others. To paraphrase philosopher Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), education is the emancipation of oppressed groups. Librarianship encourages freedom of speech, protects and promotes intellectual freedom, and provides avenues for interacting, remixing, and creating information and resources. I remain a librarian because of the need for librarianship in social justice movements. Information is not neutral and how we interact with and understand the role of information is crucial for creating equitable and inclusive spaces inside and outside academia. Education is social justice.

I practice what I call 'pedagogies of empathy,' which recognize the unique lived experiences of each student in the classroom. Research and the teaching of it begins with conversation and being empathetic of where students are in the moment. When teaching, I take a holistic approach. When students come into the classroom, they are bringing their whole selves, past and present which shapes the way they understand and interact with information. I strive to build a sense of community in the classroom where we not only actively listen to one another but learn from each other. I believe that students are experts of their own lived experiences. When space is made for students to share their expertise, opportunities arise that create for them deeper connections to not only information sources but the entire research process. Stories build community, but more importantly, they also remind us we are not alone. When I create space for this experiential learning, students begin to see themselves in the research and become invested in the research process. One way I achieve community in the classroom is by acknowledging students have knowledge and expertise. Through conversation students

share how they find information, where they search, and how they evaluate what they find. Through think/pair/share activities, students learn from and alongside each other, making space for different ways of learning and knowing. I see the classroom as a shared space where learning happens laterally as opposed to lecture or 'sage on the stage' styles of teaching.

I believe critical creativity is essential to deep learning. It allows students to use creative expression to demonstrate deeper thinking and to make sense of information in new ways (Burvall & Ryder, 2017). When this philosophy is incorporated into open pedagogy, the result is that deep learning. Critical creativity provides unique ways for students to understand complex concepts through the remixing of ideas and information. In sessions where I address evaluating sources, I ask students to create a mock-up post that in theory would be shared across social media platforms. This exercise allows students to research a topic and deliberately create something with misinformation in mind. The outcome of this exercise is the understanding of author intent and the role it plays in creating and disseminating information. In a broader sense, critical creativity moves students away from traditional forms of research (like the research paper) and towards projects that showcase true understanding of the research process by the remixing and reimagining of concepts and theories. When successful, it allows for student research to live beyond the classroom having lasting impact on the community. These types of open pedagogical projects work because they speak directly to privilege in publishing. Academia has a very narrow definition of expertise and students rarely get the chance to embody it. With open pedagogical projects, privilege gets not only investigated but challenged. Who gets published, who gets cited and who is awarded scholarships and grants to conduct research inevitably determines whose work is easily accessible and whose work gets buried. Critical creativity provides the opportunity for students to become producers of information and to think about the real

world impact their research can have on the systems of power around them. Projects such as zines, digital stories, vlogs, and mixed media provide a chance to push against the privilege in publishing and call in voices that are too often silenced.

Education is a life-long process that continues beyond the halls of academia. So much of what I teach students in terms of database searching and locating library resources will become inaccessible to them upon graduation. In contrast, the research skills and evaluation methods I share with students set them up to be successful in not only their careers but in their lives as well. In 2017, I created the ACT UP evaluation method after much reflection on paywalls and institutional access to resources. ACT UP is a useful acronym for critically evaluating resources while also taking privilege in publishing into consideration. I teach this method widely and I have seen the difference it has on the quality of resources students find and cite in their assignments. With this method, I've had the privilege of helping students locate information that is more inclusive and responsive to the communities they are calling in or calling out. I've been humbled at the various institutions that have adopted the ACT UP method into their classrooms and instructional methodologies. From universities to social justice groups, ACT UP is empowering because it centers privilege and intention.

My role as a librarian encompasses all these facets and more. As a librarian, I am often the first point of contact for students. This interaction is crucial for building trust which is why I practice pedagogies of empathy. I want students to feel comfortable asking for help. I believe the role of librarianship is more than just educating students to become better researchers and information seekers. My role as a librarian and educator is about creating lasting change and making spaces for students to explore and interact with a variety of sources and ideas on a more personal level. Successful instruction sessions and research consultations empower students to dig deeper, step outside their

comfort zones, and produce work that best represents who they are. When I say I am a librarian, I am calling in aspects of myself such as artist, educator, and zinester and oftentimes counselor and social worker. These aspects bring different skill sets and ways of knowing that help inform the way I approach students and their research needs. When I say I work in the field of librarianship I call out privilege in publishing, the power of semantics, and the different ways of learning and knowing.

Ultimately, for me, being a librarian is holding space between novice and expert learners so that those who walk into the space can be challenged and encouraged to learn and try something new. It's holding space for change in whatever form it needs to take.