

Teaching Philosophy

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(they/them & he/him)

Teaching is a performative act. And it is that aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements in each classroom. To embrace the performative aspect of teaching we are compelled to engage "audiences," to consider issues of reciprocity. Teachers are not performers in the traditional sense of the word in that our work is not meant to be a spectacle. Yet it is meant to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning.

-bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*

bell hooks certainly is speaking to the very soul of who I am as a theatre maker and educator in the introduction of her *Teaching to Transgress*. Forever intertwined for me are the work of both teaching and theatre making; not only because they both live in this body but because they are, at the core, one in the same. Great theatre is doing the same work of that of a great teacher: asking provocative questions, facilitating space for everyone (especially those most marginalized) in a community, tugging on boundaries that have kept us comfortable for too long. If we are to create life-long learners and thinkers, may it be done by the performative act of teaching through our values.

In theatrical performance, the spirit and energy of the space is most precious: how every human is interacting with each other at any given time; the same is true of learning spaces. My training in theatre and acting, more specifically, has taught me the complexities of this juggling act, as well as my training as an educator and facilitator. This energy can be shifted, arrested, harnessed in many different ways and it is up to those in power to facilitate this energy exchange so that we are always moving towards a place of empathy and investigation. If we as educators lead spaces in curiosity, rather than a need for "control," our classrooms immediately shift to a place where safety is inherent and transformation is inevitable.

I believe that youth are smart and autonomous, whole beings. In many educational spaces in the United States, this idea is under attack daily. The tyrannical urge to indoctrinate and propagandize young folks into oppressive ideas about race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, religion, and nationalism is rampant across this colonial state. Our young people deserve access to education that challenges these ideas as well as access to stories that span the full spectrum of human life. Drama-based activity lends itself to this kind of education in a plethora of incredible ways. My hope and aspiration when I enter spaces with young folks as a facilitator is to open wide the possibilities of learning by the mere radical presentation of truth.

The "issues of reciprocity" bell hooks speaks of reminds me in my teaching that my students are fellow participants in learning. We all have learning to do - may it continue alongside each other: informative of each other and in care of each other.