

Chapter Three

Embracing the Criminal

Queer and Trans Relational Liberatory Pedagogies

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Schooling practices continuously constitute prison regimes, adopting discursive constructions of civility and criminality to distinguish “good” from “bad” student-citizens (Rodriguez, 2010). For instance, Rudick and Golsan (2017) critically explore the ways whiteness is understood *as* civility in higher education contexts, finding that “whiteness-informed civility” (WIC) functions to (1) create a “good White” identity, (2) “erase racial identity,” and (3) “assert control over space” (p. 5). As a result, WIC racializes *incivility* and thus criminality as always already *not* White. Racialized criminality is equally prolific in K–12 education, evidenced by the material reality that one in six Black students, one in 13 Native American students, and one in 14 Latinx students experience at least one suspension from school, while one in 20 White students experience at least one suspension from school (Advancement Project, 2015; see also Advancement Project and Center for American Progress, 2016; GSA Network, 2014; Lambda Legal, 2013). Concurrently, 70% of school-related arrests are of Latinx and Black students (Advancement Project, 2015). The arbitrary rules that constitute and justify the school-to-prison pipeline¹ further criminalize gender and sexual nonnormativity leading to the significant statistical reality that 85% of incarcerated LGBT youth are youth of color (Advancement Project and Center for American Progress, 2016). Incivility as criminality constitutes the erasure of queer and trans students of color by framing normative gender and sexual formations steeped in whiteness as “civil”(ized) and thus as exemplar body and identity formations.

It is important to reflexively note that as university educators, we may not see many of these criminalized youth in our classrooms. The data suggest

that a single out-of-school suspension during one's freshman year of high school doubles the chances that the student will drop out of school prior to graduation, not to mention chronic abysmal university acceptance rates for low-income students of color (Advancement, 2015). In turn, the means of survival for individuals caught in the school-to-prison pipeline are scant, often leading young folks to turn to criminalized economies, including sex work and the drug trade, for survival (Lydon, Carrington, Low, Miller, & Yazdy, 2015). Evidenced here is a queer intercultural communicative onus. Specifically, we are interested in the discursive constitution of "civility" as a normative apparatus that produces and sustains the materiality of racialized criminality in pedagogical contexts through the privileging of White discourses of normative gender and sexuality. In particular, we seek to *explicate*, *elucidate*, and *elaborate* (Chávez, 2013, p. 84) on ties that bind intercultural communication research with queer and trans studies in order to theorize and perform what PCARE² (2007) terms "liberatory pedagogy" (p. 412).

We maintain that liberatory pedagogies facilitate interventions into the discursive sedimentation of "criminal" and the concomitant performative reification of the prison industrial complex (PIC) as a compulsory site for managing "bad guys" (Fassett & Warren, 2007). Developing the critical calls for prison abolition made by PCARE (2007, 2017), we performatively illustrate our respective and collaborative liberatory pedagogies, which we understand as critical performative pedagogies committed to prison abolition. Additionally, the long tradition of prison abolition evident in radical queer and trans politics informs our praxis (Stanley & Smith, 2015). Whereas compulsory liberalism promotes a respectable "rights" framework that advocates prison reform and increased hate crimes legislation, an abolition framework rejects reform and hate crimes legislation as politicized technologies used to grow the PIC. In turn, an abolition framework centers the liberation of those most materially disadvantaged by the *coloniality of gender*—a coercive force that dehumanizes and destroys sexual and gender formations that are unintelligible to the colonizer's gaze, which is always and already informed by xenophobia and White supremacy (Lugones, 2011). In a 21st-century U.S. American context, the carceral state emerges as the latest iteration in a perpetual line of neocolonial mechanisms designed to control and destroy racial, sexual, gender, bodily, and cognitive differences. As a result, an abolition framework centers the liberation of trans and gender nonconforming (TGNC) folks of color—Black and Brown as well as indigenous trans women, trans feminine, and nonbinary folks in particular—through the complete destruction of the PIC. Given these commitments, it is important we pause to reflexively locate ourselves.

I (Benny) work primarily with free world³ students to unlearn stigma surrounding the symbol of the "criminal" through establishing and fostering writing relationships with incarcerated queer and trans folks and centering

abolition in my curriculum. I identify as a mixed-race Asian/White queer and trans nonbinary educator married to a straight White transsexual woman. Passing as White and cisgender across most contexts secures many of my material privileges as a free world subject even as my family is surveilled and policed as a result of cisheterosexism (e.g., having police called on our “suspicious” genders *and* not incurring police violence as a result of White privilege that renders us as being “out of place” as opposed to “threatening”). I (Meggie) work with students who are currently incarcerated through a program made possible by President Obama’s Second Chance Pell Grant program. I have also begun working in prisons to facilitate affective-based education through batterer intervention programming. Finally, I work with free world students and graduate instructors as an introductory course director. I identify as a White queer feminist who is married to a cis-White man. Despite my queer identification, my “wifeness” grants me institutional access to heteronormative privilege and, coupled with my whiteness, the carceral state regularly renders me innocent. In many ways, my body constitutes an ideal citizen-subject where White femininities play integral roles in criminalizing non-White bodies. We locate ourselves in relation to the PIC so as to affirm material difference—the PIC impacts each of us differently just as the PIC impacts others different from us. At the same time, we do so in order to reflexively name the ways in which our bodies and pedagogies serve as rhetorical grounds against which the discursive construction of the “criminal” becomes (un)intelligible.

We call on communication pedagogues-scholars to envision a world without prisons, a world where we might begin embracing the “criminal,” a world in which pedagogies that envision “liberation” center those who are denied the same so that *we* might think of ourselves as “free.” PCARE (2007) highlights the immediate goal: “[B]reak down the walls dividing free and imprisoned populations, hence opening up a space for dialogue and shared political action” (p. 412). From this vantage, liberatory pedagogies can be understood as relationally animated intercultural enactments. Eguchi and Asante (2016) reread Muñozian disidentifications as queer of color transnational migrant subjects. In so doing, they both adroitly narrate their embodied navigation of White gay normativity and exhibit the epistemological nuance that a queer intercultural communicative perspective can render. As a result of their labor, they characterize the “intercultural” as “a site of becoming and being saturated with complex, contingent, and contradictory renegotiations of identities, belongings, and power within a hierarchy of difference” (p. 176). With this framing, we conceptualize the “civil”/“criminal” dialectic that emerges in pedagogical contexts as an intercultural site of becoming and being that materially impacts queer and trans students of color in ways different from White queer, trans, *and* cisheterosexual students. In this regard, the “criminal” is known less through individualizing renderings and more

through cultural technologies that animate “criminal” signification at the intersections of race, gender/sex, sexuality, and class. These technologies include pedagogical articulations that presume a “good”/“bad” onto-epistemology, effectively materializing “criminals” through value-based interpretations of difference. The “criminal,” thus understood, is an enigmatic sign deployed in strategic ways to control and violate those whose bodies fail to meet normative bodily and identificatory criteria dubbed “civil”(ized). Thus, when we embrace the “criminal” there is little left to fear in the *criminalized* subject who was before us all along.

The remainder of this chapter is comprised of three sections. First, we explicate what we term *queer and trans relational liberatory pedagogy* (QTRLP). Specifically, we position QTRLP within the queer intercultural communication (QIC) tradition. Thereafter, we engage key approaches in performative pedagogy that are informed in and through liberatory logics. Second, we perform QTRLP. In particular, we script performative reflections that draw on and amalgamate our respective and collaborative pedagogical practices based on experiences working with free world and incarcerated students through our respective institutions between 2015 and 2018. Our intent is to illustrate shifts toward queer and trans relational articulations that explicate, elucidate, and elaborate the material and discursive constraints of the PIC. In this regard, our performance amalgamates autoethnographic insight and performative writing (Adams & Jones, 2011; Eguchi & Long, 2018). Third and finally, we reflect on liberatory pedagogies as a mode of queer worldmaking for QIC pedagogues and scholars. Our hope is less to determine what QTRLP is and more to suggest points of departure for greater, nuanced engagements between abolition politics and QIC research and pedagogy. To be certain, we argue liberatory pedagogies are imperative for QIC praxis as racialized nonnormative gender and sexual differences are increasingly and differentially criminalized, resulting in the disproportionate surveillance, policing, and incarceration of queer and trans folks of color. Thus, liberatory pedagogies are not tangential but foundational for transformation of self, other, and culture and are thus an integral component of QIC praxis.

QUEER AND TRANS RELATIONAL LIBERATORY PEDAGOGIES

In this section we outline QTRLP as the ground on which our performative approaches to abolition in the classroom emerge. We first locate queer and trans relationality within the QIC tradition and then turn to pedagogical investments.

Queer Intercultural Communication and the Emergence of Queer and Trans Relationality

In 2013, Karma Chávez edited a special issue of *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* titled “Out of Bounds?” in which scholars explored the links between queer studies and intercultural communication research. The most explicit link between queer studies and intercultural communication can be summed up thusly: “The normative is violent” (p. 86). Chávez clarifies when she writes, “The logics of race, class, gender, sexuality, coloniality, and culture, among others including language, ability, education, and nation, congeal to produce certain identities, modes of relating, ways of living and manners of social organization not only as normal, but as normative” (p. 85–86). Yep (2003) describes the violence of normativity as “a symbolically, discursively, psychically, psychologically, and materially violent form of social regulation and control” (p. 18). Intersectionality—an epistemic point of focus for QIC—disrupts normativity by affirming the concurrent embodiment and navigation of privilege and disadvantage while refusing to acquiesce to reductive articulations of identity and embodiment (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Power so conceived is a relational phenomenon that is at once fluid as it is material. As such, QIC reveals the performative and material constitution of cultural power at the intersections of difference.

QIC scholarship has since developed into a number of areas, including identity in discourse (Bie & Tang, 2016; Cheah & Singaravelu 2017; Goltz, Zingsheim, Mastin, & Murphy, 2016), performative cultural interventions (Gutierrez-Perez, 2015; Pérez & Brouwer, 2010), desire (Eguchi, 2015; Eguchi & Long, 2018), transnational and diasporic queerness (Asante, 2015; Eguchi, 2014), queer of color criticism (Abdi & Calafell, 2017; Eguchi, Calafell, & Files-Thompson, 2014; Eguchi, Files-Thompson, & Calafell, 2018; Howard, 2014), and mentoring and pedagogy (Calafell & Gutierrez-Perez, 2018; LeMaster, 2018; Pattisapu & Calafell, 2012), for instance. Notably, transness is undertheorized in QIC research; specifically, racialized transmisogyny marks an area of focus that requires attention (Griffin, 2014). binaohan (2014) argues that racialized nonnormative genders and sexualities are unintelligible under White supremacy, leading to the discursive and material erasure of trans women, trans feminine, and nonbinary folks of color. This erasure discursively dehumanizes and in turn justifies the criminalization of trans feminine and nonbinary subjectivities of color. Indeed, it is the inability to affirm non-White gender expressions and identities on their own terms that leads to the rhetorical constitution of queer and trans subjects of color as “uncivil”(ized). Yep, Russo, and Allen (2015) offer a model for mapping and affirming transness across intercultural contexts. This work has lent itself to developments at the intersections of QIC, transness, and critical communication pedagogy (e.g., LeMaster & Johnson, 2018).

Relationality emerges as an important element animating QIC scholarship. For instance, Eguchi and Asante (2016) conceptualize of identity and belonging not as innate qualities nor as the result of socialization but, rather, as “ongoing complex and paradoxical dialectics of life struggle in historical and ideological spaces” (p. 183). Identity is thus processual as well as animated and constrained by power. Muñoz (2009) theorizes queerness in similar terms—not as an individual accomplishment but as “collectivity” (p. 11). Perceiving and affirming the “encrypted sociality” that enables queer and trans relationality requires reorienting perceptual registers so as to account for nonnormativity on its own terms (p. 6). In a recent forum, Yep (2017) mapped queer relationality or nonnormative modalities that “circulate outside . . . but frequently in relation to” normativity (p. 120). He theorized queer relationality emerging in and through spheres of intimacy and of desire. *Spheres of intimacy* involve “closeness” and “sensuality” that can “range from fleeting to enduring,” while *spheres of desire* involve “longings,” “affinities,” and “yearnings” that can “range from internally held to externally articulated” (p. 120). In this regard, we conceptualize of these spheres in spatial-temporal terms, with *spheres of intimacy* signaling temporal dimensions, while *spheres of desire* highlight spatial dimensions of queer relationality.

LeMaster (2017a) theorizes “trans relationality,” which they posit as “a relational form that works through difference, desiring to meet and affirm the individual on their subjective terms of engagement recognizing the imposition of cultural power on their/our bodies that can make that affirmation difficult” (p. 90). For LeMaster, focusing relationality toward the structural forces that seek to thwart agency “mark[s] the materialization of queer worldmaking” as a result of highlighting the structural impositions seeking to limit what one can be and/or do but is nonetheless (p. 87). In this way, one is never simply “free” but always set in a power-based relation to intersectionally derived normative anchors seeking to delimit subjectivity. Taken together, queer and trans relationality affirms the spatial and temporal dimensions that constitute nonnormative relating set in tension with structural forces seeking to individualize collective/relational potentiality.

Liberatory Pedagogy

We theorize pedagogies as performative enactments that hold the potential for transformation through relating. Like Warren (1999), we maintain that institutionalized education constitutes reality through “enfleshment” (p. 258), or the point where learning, knowledge, and teaching emerge in and through the body politic. As performatives, pedagogy opens space for narrative interrogation of context—what we might view as the mundane—while remaining simultaneously attentive to structural power differentials (Fassett & Warren,

2007; Giroux & Shannon, 1998). We agree with Pineau (1998), who notes that performative pedagogy “is more than a philosophical orientation or a set of classroom practices. It is a location, a way of situating one’s self in relation to students, to colleagues, and to the institutional policies and traditions under which we all labor” (p. 130). Thus, through LeMaster (2017b), we understand performative pedagogy as trans relational in its capacity to articulate self in relation to other, including structural, forces. With Yep (2017), we understand these pedagogical bonds as queer in that they occur across time and space: pedagogical contexts that are ephemeral and/or sustained over time as well as pedagogical contexts that occur in and out of formal learning environments. Taken together, performative pedagogy provides the necessary relational grounds for liberatory pedagogy that occurs across time and space with a sustained focus on structural forces. Here, we borrow from the members of PCARE (2007) who note that the immediate goal is to “break down the walls” (p. 412), where we operationalize “walls” beyond the physical bounds of the prison—though not excluding those material barriers—to encompass mundane spaces that sustain carceral logics, including pedagogical contexts.

To be clear, liberatory pedagogy is not “happy” work, and we resist the affective urge to position ourselves as pedagogical optimists. Rather, embodying queer worldmaking through liberatory pedagogy means exploring “how the act of teaching can effectively and radically displace the normalized misery, everyday suffering, and mundane state violence that are reproduced and/or passively condoned by both hegemonic and critical/counterhegemonic pedagogies” (Rodriguez, 2010, p. 8). Or, as PCARE (2017) asks, “To what extent do our critical, pedagogical, and rhetorical choices invest in the same logics that justify mass incarceration and police violence?” (p. 297). For us, then, liberatory pedagogy is committed to eliminating the PIC by critically interrogating communicative practices in pedagogical contexts emerging in both fleeting moments as well as over and across sustained pedagogical terms. Borrowing from Yep (2017), this practice includes developing and highlighting discourses, representations, and knowledges “of the nonnormative body”—the criminalized body—and mapping our relationship to and against those instantiations. As we note above, trans relationality requires a focus on structural forces that uphold normative materialities, thwarting queer worldmaking. For us, then, a queer (spatial-temporal pedagogical contexts) and trans (individual-structural) relational approach operationalizes performative pedagogy as liberatory. In the next section, we performatively reflect and narrate individual and collaborative performances of QTRLP in and out of the classroom.

PERFORMING QUEER AND TRANS RELATIONAL LIBERATORY PEDAGOGY

Atop my (Benny) desk sits a clear plastic container. It is filled with color pencils, markers, crayons, and blank sheets of drawing paper; community donations fund this extracurricular activity. Students who enter my office or who participate in the queer and trans groups and student organizations I facilitate and advise are invited to create art that will be sent to incarcerated queer and trans folks. This labor is reserved for those ready, willing, and able to discuss prison abolition as we create art for our incarcerated siblings. This reflexive labor presses free world students to grapple with the ways in which their capacity to presume freedom as queer and trans students is predicated on the criminalization of their incarcerated peers at the intersections of difference. Students contribute creative and intellectual labor to this ongoing mundane venture.

Creatively, we craft art that serves as relational points of connection affectively reconfiguring and resisting the compulsory dehumanization that incarceration insists on. The art practice marks a slow communicative process imbued with intent. The colors, lines, shapes, and words the students use to communicatively craft connection with a stranger implore one to consider the humans on the receiving end, complete with their own aesthetic desires yet constrained by the PIC. Students come to understand abolition as a large and long-term commitment exceeding the individual artistic act: Prisoners are regularly moved between institutions, rendering communication inconsistent; the mail system is slow largely due to the institutionalized censoring and surveilling of communication; and the resulting means to strategically communicate with incarcerated folks requires time and resources.

Intellectually, we theorize abolition. This labor requires that we lead with “intersectional reflexivity” such that we mark our privilege as free world subjects while we reflexively process our relative and material (dis)connections to the PIC (Jones, 2010). This labor presses us to inquire, What justifies the criminalization of racialized gender and sexual formations? We come to explore the gender binary as a question of race. That the binary was intended as a colonial means of legitimizing and distinguishing White manhood from White womanhood and as heteronormative constructs implored to reproduce the (White) *human* race (binaohan, 2014). We come to understand race as the predominant factor driving the dehumanization and resulting criminalization of gender and sexual difference. We come to further resist the liberal impulse to frame queer and trans prisoners as “innocent victims,” recognizing that so doing justifies the incarceration of others, including cisgender and heterosexual people of color.

I (Meggie) am surveying public speaking textbooks, and I open a generically named book to the table of contents. Chapter 2: “Public Speaking and

Civility.” I clench my teeth; classroom reverberations emerge as I remember: I am teaching free world students, and a student suddenly raises a hand and asks, “Do you think it’s good for an instructor to call out students that aren’t paying attention?” The question seems to transgress the illusory relational norms of class conduct. It is, in other words, a question *out of the blue*.

“Well, what behavior is that threat trying to prohibit? Do you think those threats are useful or work?” I probe.

“It makes us pay attention.”

“Just don’t do bad stuff. Be civil. It’s in our book! So yes; you should get called out if you’re acting bad in class,” a second student chimes in, with eyes rolling as if to signal an obviousness to the aforementioned exchange. As students nod in agreement, the whiteness of communicative civility systemized through our discipline’s texts, textbooks, and writing materially emerges in this seemingly mundane encounter. I survey the class of honors students through and within my whiteness. Here, the prison regime’s epistemic roots of (il)legibility emerge. Here, the violence of the PIC becomes animated through a mundane acceptance of civil “Truth.”

I sit down knowing that we have to take the moment. We spend the remainder of class talking and writing. . . .

I am back at my desk reviewing a prospective book’s table of contents. I unclench my teeth and close the book, pushing its contents into piles of fellow “nos.”

I (Benny) am teaching a course titled “Feminist Debates.” Responding to increasing student interest in transfeminism, I separate the course into two parts: (1) Transfeminism and (2) Criminalized Gender and Sexuality. In the first part, we explore transfeminism. More than that, we find it important to trace and deconstruct contemporary cissexism in the academy so as to understand rhetorical means used to dehumanize transness. For this, we agree to read Jeffreys’s (2014) trans-exclusionary monograph *Gender Hurts*. Due to the nature of epistemic violence this sort of text elicits, students agree to work in small coalitions of interpersonal support. Through our commitment to intersectionality, we affirm that the monograph will impact each of us differently; as a result, students agree to share the burden of work when/if peers—specifically trans peers—are triggered by the content and need time and space for healing. In turn, the coalitions coconstruct transfeminist critiques of the monograph. With a transfeminist foundation in place, we shift to the second part of the course: Criminalized Gender and Sexuality.

Stanley and Smith’s (2015) anthology *Captive Genders* serves as the primary text informing this part of the course. Like Jeffreys’s trans-exclusionary monograph, race is undertheorized in much transfeminist discourse. Our shift to criminalization marks a concerted focus on race as a primary means of surveilling gender and sexuality. Dehumanization justifies criminalization, and thus our task includes humanizing those materially impacted

by the PIC. Nair (2015) argues that the means by which to dissolve the prison is to paradoxically narrate and materialize the violences on which the PIC relies for its maintenance. For this, we turn to performance. In coalitions, students locate narratives written by queer and trans folks of color who are or were incarcerated. Students then adapt, collage, and construct performance scripts that stage mundane means of navigating criminalized economies, racist profiling practices including stop-and-frisk policies, xenophobic immigration policies, everyday movement through the PIC as an incarcerated person, life after the PIC, and stories of surviving solitary confinement as an institutionalized response to the transmisogynistic violences trans women are forced to maneuver in men's facilities. This activity elicits reflexive empathy as it invites students to confront the materiality of the PIC as it impacts queer and trans bodies of color; and in ways different from our free world bodies. That is, through the performance of these narratives, students grapple with the ways whiteness, for instance, buffers and legitimizes gender and sexual identities and expressions even if they are nonnormative.

I (Meggie) read the opening lines of a student reflection essay: "Does being a white man in prison now make me a minority?" His question emerges as privilege and power enter the curricular trajectory during a unit on gender in a communication theory class.

I look down at my White hands waiting anxiously on the keyboard to type into the small comment box allocated for instructor feedback. All relational encounters are encapsulated within a surveyed messaging system where each student is known by name only—an institutionalized erasure of difference for students caught in the PIC.

I read the question again, struggling to respond *now*—his question did, after all, suggest an examination of the spatial and temporal dimensions of the prison experience. "Am I *now* a minority?"—a question yearning for the simplicity of yes or no. Instead, those few words expose the racialized history of the PIC and the materiality of systemic incarceration of non-White bodies.

How, I wondered, can I work with this student toward a trans relationality that can explore the dialectic tension between the individual and the institutional? For two weeks, we message in/as dialogue.

"How does race become hyper-visible for you? How was race invisible for you before being incarcerated?" I ask.

"It's all there is between us, really. Not before this. Not for me, anyway," he responds.

"What about gender?"

"Irrelevant here."

For two weeks, we explore this exchange; we contemplate the PIC's illusion of gender as predetermined—reliant on cursory scripts embedded in cissexism and transmisogyny. In dialogue, we consider race as a key criminal

signifier whereby the presence of imprisoned bodies of color justifies the mechanism of White supremacy that undergirds the PIC.

After two weeks, the messages stop. I look at old messages; I hold tightly to these mediated strains of collectivity—mediated moments of abolitionist exchange.

ABOLITION AS QUEER WORLDMAKING

Yep (2003) characterizes queer worldmaking as “the opening and creation of spaces without a map” (p. 35). QTRLP desires queer worldmaking through its uncertain focus—uncertain in that QTRLP is interested less in particular goals (e.g., prison reform legislation) and more focused on nonnormative relational impulses that can be described as “hopefulness tempered by confusion” (PCARE, 2017, p. 301). Abolition is not legislated; abolition is embodied in and through relationality and articulated in active and persistent resistance to the hegemony of compulsory carceral logics as we work to topple the PIC (Davis, 2016).

Muñoz’s (2009) anti-antirelational theorizing provides guidance here. For Muñoz, cultural “goals” that acquiesce to normativity can be understood as providing “abstract utopias” in that they delimit the potentiality of/fur futurity (p. 37). We understand prison reform legislation as abstract utopias in that prison reform merely instantiates and expands the existing PIC, thereby foreclosing on abolitionism and the liberation of nonnormative embodiment and identity. Conversely, prison abolition can be understood as a “concrete utopia” in that the goal is indiscernible though clearly understood through the radical decentering of whiteness and the concomitant affirmation of racialized gender and sexual nonnormativity. Thus the goal is relationally informed prison abolition while the collective though varied and often contradictory particularities of abolition, including the implausibility of a singular route toward abolition, are key to ensuring the potentiality of futurity—prison abolition demands a force that is as disparate and pervasive as the PIC itself while the anchor is located in the bodies and identities of those most materially impacted by the PIC.

Similarly, PCARE (2017) advocates liberatory pedagogies that “resist certainty and self-congratulation” and envision a “nuanced sense of what such a goal truly entails” (p. 302). Concrete utopias provide the foundation for queer worldmaking in Muñoz’s (2009) estimation. For Muñoz, queer worldmaking comes into play when we enact the uncertain focus of concrete utopias—of prison abolition—understood as a “utopia in the present” in which we work to affirm racial, gender, and sexual nonnormativity on their own terms of engagement (p. 37). That is, liberatory pedagogies are relational accomplishments that understand queer worldmaking as a utopia in the

present as enacted in and through relationalities that reenvision the various and disparate forces that animate carceral logics and the PIC as grounds for material transformation. In short, abolition is queer worldmaking is QIC praxis.

We invite you, the reader, to join in our collective and individual efforts to abolish the PIC in the way that best fits your pedagogical ability and capacity even as you press and transform those limits to account for greater impact.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways have you encountered pedagogies that perpetuate carceral logics—even if unintentionally? How have you perpetuated those logics in your role as a teacher/student? How are those logics racialized? Gendered? Sexualized?
2. What does it mean to think of abolition in relational terms? In what ways are you and your peers impacted by the PIC in your everyday lives as a result of your embodied differences?
3. Can you recount the first time you encountered the rhetorical figure of the “criminal”?
4. What would have to change on your campus to ensure your broader learning environment was committed to liberatory pedagogy?
5. In what ways can you conceive of interpersonal interactions as sites for enacting liberatory pedagogy? What would have to change about your interpersonal interactions to ensure you are embodying QTRLP in the everyday?

KEY WORDS

- Queer Relationality
- Trans Relationality
- Liberatory Pedagogy
- Abolition
- Queer of Color

NOTES

1. GSA Network (2014) in collaboration with Crossroads Collaborative defines the school-to-prison pipeline as “a set of school policies and practices that push students away from education and onto a pathway toward the juvenile detention and the prison industrial complex” (p. 3). Data suggest youth of color and low-income youth are disproportionately implicated by the school-to-prison pipeline and that youth embodying and identifying in gender and sexual nonnormative ways are especially vulnerable to this system of racialized criminalization.

2. Prison Communication, Activism, Research, and Education (PCARE) describes a collective of NCA scholars and activists committed to prison abolition.

3. “Free world” references those who are not, and have yet to be, incarcerated. Concurrently, we recognize that “free” is a term fraught with tension in a White supremacist, patriarchal, and settler context such as the ones in which we work. Still, free world locates one’s material relationship to the PIC.

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