

INTRODUCTION

Born Under the Rising Sign of Social Justice

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If you are like us, the impulse to dream and work toward justice may feel like it was part of your being since before your birth. The pull toward working for justice can feel transhistorical, like you heard it whispered by ancestors or felt it transmitted back to you from a future-in-waiting. It may feel immensely strong and encompassing, like gravity, both planetary and personal, all at once. It may have shaped your education in and out of schooling, your day jobs and your night shifts, your relationships, your breakups, your sense of home and of movement. This pulse for justice may feel like a rising constellation that presides over your predispositions and the choices which, together, add up to your destiny.

It is to you, to all of us, who were born under the rising sign of social justice, that we dedicate this book.

We are not sure when this sign first broke over the horizon. It rises repeatedly, blazes long, and returns quickly after setting. The sign moves in elliptical cycles over this sky, dwelling longer than a year, disappearing and returning with a hyperbolic quickness. It marks seasons that stretch over years, like the drawn-out winter that threatens to arrive. Social justice is an epoch, and we are living in it. Thus, several generations have been born under this sign. Even at its apogee—its point which is farthest away from us—the sign of social justice has its influence.

Like people born under any rising sign, the place and time of your birth matters. Those differences provide the multiple viewpoints from which various justice projects are imagined and carried out. No two people of the same sign are identical in personality or in politics. Even so, there is often a mutual recognition by people of the same sign. This book acknowledges the diverse dreaming that has happened under this rising sign, and also acknowledges that those dreams are not so far apart, even while they may be incommensurable in their goals. We have written before (Tuck & Yang, 2012) about an ethic of incommensurability

as an alternate mode of holding and imagining solidarity. Rather than the goal of political unity with commonly shared objectives, an ethic of incommensurability acknowledges that we can collaborate for a time together even while anticipating that our pathways toward enacting liberation will diverge. Incommensurability means that we cannot judge each other's justice projects by the same standard, but we can come to understand the gap between our viewpoints, and thus work together in contingent collaboration.

That said, incommensurability does not necessarily mean separations of great distance. Incommensurability can be quite close, as close as two people holding hands under the same sign. An ethic of incommensurability is apprehending the small inner angle made between those two beings and the sign above. A separation as wide as the earth is a small inner angle with respect to the stars above.

The sign of social justice has influenced the dreaming of those born under it; this part of it we feel most sure about. There is truth in Martin Carter's poetry, that we "do not sleep to dream, but dream to change the world."

To be together in this world, working and living under this sign, involves a mutual acknowledgement, even as our terms fall apart in the space between us. In this book, and this introduction, there are vexed terms all over the place (justice itself included). We are sorting between many goals which could have animated this discussion, including goals of complete and total coherence (impossible) and goals of complete clarity and consistency (boring). We use the words we can, even when they disappoint or obscure. Sometimes, it is good just to say, "I feel what you are trying to say with those words and it does not matter that I use those words with a different meaning." Again, it is the inner angle made between us.

Inner Angles Made between Us

Eve's first publications described a way to imagine the relationship between varying approaches to making social change by thinking about inner angles. Inner angles is a spatial way of thinking about how theories of change—even those which are embedded in constructs of justice which are incommensurable with others—are related to other theories of change (Tuck, 2009; Tuck & Fine, 2007). When things are contradistinctive from each other they might be mapped as two poles on a spectrum, two dots with a line between them. Cardinal directions mapped as two perpendicular lines with N, S, E & W also can give the impression of four poles with lines in between them. If we think of theories of change as poles, with lines between them (even if these lines are a spectrum of gradation between those theories of change), we can get a false impression that moving between theories of change requires great effort or journeying. Paying attention only to the polarity of theories of change, the exterior contours of their shape and definition, can be misleading in terms of thinking about how theories of change can be in relation to each other. Instead, we might consider the inner angles created in mapping these

poles, the sharp corners, the wide wedges which meet on the inside. If we consider those inner angles for their feature of the way that an angle does not have a length, then we can be concerned not with the distance between ideas, but the small shifts that can cross them. For readers who have ever held a young one on their laps or on a hip, consider the weight of the baby, how the weight and pressure grows more intense with passing time. Then, consider the physical sensation of moving that young one to the other hip, or off the lap, or to another knee. New vantage points, new movements, new somatic possibilities are made through that small shift. This is the simple idea at the center of the metaphor of an inner angle.

In wayfinding, being a few degrees off and proceeding for a long time in the miscalculated direction can result in being miles and miles away from the intended destination. The small shifts at the outset are the stuff of inner angles. When the angles are close, small shifts might cross what will otherwise become insurmountable divides.

Inner angles—small shifts of weight as in moving a baby from one hip to another, small shifts which can be made and will impact how far apart from another we find ourselves—are a stark contrast to the prominent symbology of state justice that is so pervasive: the scales held by “Lady Justice.” These are symbols of justice which hold influence throughout Western colonial geopolitical spaces. Scales of Justice are usually depicted as two shallow dishes held by chains on a fulcrum, or balance. The scales are usually golden or made of stone, and they are held by a woman draped in something referencing more ancient Greek garb. She is supposed to be Dike, the daughter of Zeus and Themis, and an arbiter of rules. She always wears a blindfold, to convey the ways that justice is “blind” or “objective.” Of course, it would be much more interesting to think of the ways that justice is blindfolded, but instead, blindness is used as a vacated ableist metaphor in this instance, as is often the case.

This, the major symbolic communicator for what constitutes state justice, is hard to take seriously. These scales represent another kind of project: a worldview that state justice is a balance of competing interests, that takes for its strategy an arbitrator with a supremacist power of law, with the motive of maintaining order, combined with practices of appealing to state power. In reality, state justice does not operate this way; it has cages and swords but no scales. State justice is not in balance; it is not in scale. The apparatuses of justice do not correspond to the scales of individuals, of communities, of nations that they operate on. We wish we had a more fitting symbol for justice to offer you. Maybe all we can offer is the notion of justice with a rising sign, creating an inner angle with the horizon, and those people and non-human persons on the earth pointing their faces toward it.

A Warm Ambivalence about the Term “Social Justice”

Perhaps because it is a term not always treated with respect in the academy, “social justice” is used frequently but rarely defined. Social justice is now commonly

associated with many aspects of fields of education, reflected in titles of conferences, book series, journals, and academic departments. At the same time, at least one major educational research association and its journals maintain distance from the term, citing the need to remain objective or neutral in order to remain inclusive of all potential members and readers. We have a lot of admiration, affection, and kinship with people who use social justice to define their work, who were born under the rising sign of justice. In prior writings, we have looked closely at terms, wondering what others mean by them, what we mean by them, and the work those terms can and cannot do. We did this with “resistance” (Tuck & Yang, 2014), with “identity” (Tuck & Yang, 2017), and we have done this elsewhere with the word “justice” (Tuck & Yang, 2016). We are trying very hard to not make this our thing, that we take a word that means a great deal to conversations in the field of education that have otherwise been shut down, and then write into it so heavily that the term dematerializes. While this type of analysis has its uses, we are trying to avoid dematerializing the term “justice,” for now. We do not want to turn justice into a fugitive subject which cannot be known and fully described. It is not mysterious.

“Social justice” is a term used to describe the organizations, schools, programs, departments, and institutes that have employed us, and that we have founded. It is a term that has been associated with a great deal of our professional labor over the years. We understand the irony of the appropriation of this term, and the simultaneous acknowledgement and domestication of our work. Over the past several years that we have been heavily engaged with social justice as a term and as a category of work in the academic field, we have been struck by the reasoning of those who have refused to use that term in their work (Simpson, 2016; Dumas, this volume; Walcott, this volume). These authors discard the term for its lack of specificity, for its deferrals, for its investments in the state, for its distractions. We continue to learn from the abdications of the term by our friends, teachers, and colleagues.

Here, we want to talk about “social justice” as words that work as a signal in the field of education, but also in other fields such as law, and social science fields. In the interdisciplinary field of education, the term “social justice” works to set certain approaches and aims apart from positivist approaches. Thus, for those of us in education who reject positivist and developmental paradigms, social justice has been a way to signal to ourselves and to one another this epistemological and political difference. Social justice is a way to mark a distinction from the origins and habits of almost all disciplines which emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries and are rooted in colonialism and white supremacy. Social justice education is a way to refer to all research and practice within the domains of education which are a departure from behavioral or cognitive or developmental approaches. This is, of course, not to say that individuals who locate their work in these disciplines do not care about improving the lives of everyday people, but that social justice education has been a way for those outside of those disciplines to still find a

home in education and schools of education. Social justice education is a self-conscious exception to the otherwise teleological imperatives of what has, up until now, typified the field(s) of education.

In this way, social justice education has served the role of the “other” box on surveys—think of how race or language might appear on a survey—a catchall term for those who find themselves outside of the sanctioned intellectual traditions of education. Still, the need for a term that serves the function of an “other” box is still abundantly apparent because much of what gets researched and published within the field of education is actually research that pathologizes communities, youth, children, and families. So much of what gets circulated is still squawking about getting communities, youth, children, and families caught up with white and middle-class people, as Leigh Patel critiques in Chapter 6. People who use social justice as a signal for what their work engages with understand that inequities are produced, inequities are structured, and that things have got to change in order to achieve different educational outcomes. Social justice education is a *choice away* from pathology and linearity.

Because it is such an important choice away, because it represents such a pertinent epistemological and methodological departure from other commonplace practices in the field, many groups of students and faculties in universities have attempted to institutionalize social justice education. However, institutionalizing social justice education has its deep contradictions. These reasons are expounded throughout the book, and openly addressed in Chapter 5 by Rinaldo Walcott and in Chapter 3 by Sandy Grande. As a whole, this book is agnostic about the institutionalization of social justice education into departments or programs. Aspects of branding, innovation, and credentialism come into play, as is true with the institutionalization of any field or discipline that has emerged to counter mainstream academic practices and theories. We do not say that all education programs should be called social justice programs. Rather, we say that social justice is the ghost in the machine of the educational apparatus. It is the only part that makes any part of the field of education matter.

With or without formally institutionalizing social justice education, it is not a countercultural movement within the broader field of education. Thus, this book is not about some boutique aspect of the field of education, some little meandering down a curious alley. This is not a conversation at the margins of a field. Social justice education—whether or not we continue to use those words to define it—is the crux of the future of our field. Social justice is not the other of the field of education, it *is* the field. There is no future of the field of education without the contributions of people who are doing their work under the rising sign of social justice. There is no legitimacy to the field of education if it cannot meaningfully attend to social contexts, historical and contemporary structures of settler colonialism, white supremacy, and antiblackness. Social justice is not the catchall; it is the all.

A Book about Justice Projects

Much is presumed about what is meant by social justice in education, but when considered from the perspectives of diverse communities and their concerns, social justice takes on varying and sometimes contradictory meanings. As a catchall term, social justice does a lot to try to contain multiple perspectives and futurities. Social justice for one group may mean greater integration and mobility within the dominant society, whereas that definition for another group may be regarded as futile. The aspirational goal of one project may be regarded as foreclosure of another project. Indeed, notions of justice may actually compete in some circumstances.

This is a book about justice projects and the competing investments that social justice projects can make. This far in, we have to point out again that many of the words in the previous line are imperfect: *competing*, *investments*, *projects*. We say this anyway, knowing that our words are reaching, straining to convey something about how what we believe about how justice and injustice materializes, matters.

“Competing” isn’t exactly the word—indeed, for reasons we described above, we prefer the word “incommensurable” to competing. But just for a moment, we stay with the way in which “competing” reveals how some projects undermine others, quash others, make other projects seem ridiculous or impossible. As many of the authors in this book will detail, liberal and multicultural renderings of the relationships between social justice projects have generated an almost list-based approach. This approach is at work when people are writing a shared statement and listing either all of the communities, all of the experiences of oppression, or all of the social structures that are at the center of their attention or practice. People sometimes refer to this as attending to “the isms,” which we suspect no one likes doing, as it is an odd mixture of being inclusive (liberal) and actually attending to difference (radical). It shows how the foundation of this kind of thinking is inclusion by list making, by making objects appear on a list of what matters. Then, because the lists get long when they are at their best, there are broader terms or acronyms created to refer to the list. The list is a product of liberal multicultural thinking, but there aren’t sufficient alternatives. The list will have to do for now. What we want to raise about the list, however, is the possibility that experiences and projects in a given list may not cohabitate; they may even be antagonistic. Projects attending to Indigenous rematriation of land and life cannot be absorbed into projects which do not interrogate and forgo concepts of property. Projects attending to Black liberation and abolition cannot be absorbed into projects which do not interrogate and forgo concepts of the human. These are just two examples which are discussed at length throughout this book.

“Investments” is also a miserable word, but it, too, does some work in describing what this book is trying to do. All the synonyms of investment carry the scent of capitalism, and we are not exactly trying to escape the connotations of money and wealth that come with it. By investment, we are talking about how using a term or concept makes it somehow more prominent and more likely to be used

by someone else. Like a path in tall grasses, choosing one path instead of others, over time, will make that path more obvious. Paths become deep-set grooves and, over time, can appear to be the only option. Eve's brother teases her for listening to the playlist on her iPod® that has been automatically created out of the top 25 songs she listens to most frequently. Each time she listens to that playlist, she is cementing that those are the top 25 songs, and making it less likely that other songs can ever break into the top 25. This is the way it works with regard to the investments that various social justice projects make. Over time, with repetition of use, other possibilities become less possible. Investments make some paths possible, and others untraceable.

We use the word "projects" instead of other options, such as framework, epistemology or axiology, because "projects" connotes the specificity of work, of praxis. Imagine that we visit one another, in a place, in a community, in the midst of an endeavor, in a historical moment, and we respectfully ask ourselves, "What is the project here?" In asking this question, we are trying to understand: what is at work in all of this work? What does this work care about? What animates and compels this work? What does this work believe about itself and others? For this reason, in this usage of project we do not mean it as a discrete unit of human time and labor, such as a research project, class project, or youth project. We use project as a way to refer to worldview combined with strategy combined with motive combined with practices and habits.

It is exciting that Stuart Hall's work is finding new readers through volumes published in a series by Duke University Press, edited by Catherine Hall and Bill Schwarz. Hall's works are immensely relevant to conversations in social justice education, critical ethnic studies, or any group of people working on ideas at the threshold of institutionalization. Our colleague Rinaldo Walcott has always been a close reader of Hall's work, and when we noticed how Walcott is deploying the term "projects" in Chapter 5 in this volume, we put the question about the legacy of the term to him. Walcott directed us to Hall's classic essay, "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies" (1992). Here, Hall uses the word "project," as in the project of cultural studies, without necessarily defining it—Hall teaches the use of the word in context, by using it. It is clear that a project, for Hall, is referring to an intervention, to a practice as politics. Projects like cultural studies hold "theoretical and political questions in an ever irresolvable but permanent tension" (p. 288). Responding to a prompt to say more about that permanent tension, Hall observes:

I think that just as we have to understand politics as a language we have to understand politics as living with the tension. The notion of a political practice where criticism is postponed until the day after the barricades precisely defines the politics which I always refused. And if you don't go that way you go into politics of contention, of continuous argument, of continuous debate. Because what is at stake really matters.

Finally, then, the question of the manner in which our tensions are worked through matters a great deal. I don't want to prescribe but I want to draw your attention to the problem of courtesy, of living with a tension that matters without eating each other. Because there is a kind of competitive way in which intellectuals live with their tensions in which they can only do so by climbing on the backs of those people whose positions they're trying to contest. We have a great deal to learn about respecting the positions being advanced while contesting them because something important is at stake. I don't think we're very good at that. We have a lot to learn about the manners of a genuinely dialogically critical engagement.

(Hall, 1992, p. 290)

Because of Hall's influence on our teachers, our colleagues, and our past and future works, when we refer to projects here and elsewhere, we mean serious work at the nexus of staunch tensions, carried out with genuine commitment to critical engagement. We mean to do it without eating each other. We mean to do it as a way of life.

Two Compelling Justice Projects: Abolition and Decolonization

There are social justice projects which we find compelling, which move us, which call our names; and there are those that flatten us. We tend to refuse the many projects with theories of change that rely upon the benevolence of the state or of the dominant in society.

We refuse:

- Justice projects which require us to prove humanity or worth
- Justice projects which require us to frontload a lot of learning or consciousness-raising
- Justice projects which require us to appeal to the people who abuse us
- Justice projects which require us to gather an audience of white settlers who are presumed to have agency
- Justice projects that presume compromise as the main avenue for achieving solidarity

Having made this list, we understand that there are social justice projects which may be quite complicit in any or all of the above, and that we may have benefited from them. We are not presenting this list as dogma. We feel the words of Frances S. Lee (2017) that if there is a church of social justice, then "excommunicate me" from it. Rather, we are clarifying the whys and why nots of our own participation. We are tracing the arcs of our inner angles.

The projects that do call our names these days are on abolition and decolonization. Abolition is a movement to end slavery, to abolish institutions of unfreedom, a

movement that has necessarily and repeatedly unsettled the foundations of modern capital (Bassichis, Lee, & Spade, 2011; Davis, 2011; Gilmore, 2007; Meiners, 2011). Abolition shook the plantation economies of the Americas and the Caribbean, and their legal and moral apparatuses that ensured enslavement of Indigenous African and American peoples. Abolition is shaking the antiblack institutions that underwrite whiteness as property (Harris, 1993), that sanction murder, captivity, torture, and disposal: namely, the prison industrial complex.

Decolonization is the rematriation of Indigenous land and life. Decolonization, similar to abolition, unsettles the ways that land has become alienable into property; that animals, plants, water, air and earth have become alienable into “natural resources” to be turned into profit; that occupiers and their governments can come to have sovereignty over Indigenous people and places. Decolonization as an imperative has made and unmade nation-states, unmade and remade rights to land, unmade and remade the individual or corporate entities that are understood to have legal custody over peoples and places.

There are, admittedly, some tensions between how scholars in Black studies and scholars in Indigenous studies have interpreted these projects, and especially how they have interpreted projects criss-crossing these disciplinary boundaries. We are exasperated with some of the practices of using Black people as a foil, or counterpoint, to arguments in Indigenous studies, and of using Indigenous people as the contrast for arguments made in Black studies (see also Latty, Scribe, Peters & Morgan, 2016; Palacios, 2016). We are interested in what Eve’s colleague Miglena Todorova teaches in her courses as the difference between a relational analysis and a comparative analysis, which is the focus of this book (see also Volume 1, Issue 2 of *Critical Ethnic Studies*, on Racial Comparativism Reconsidered, edited by Danika Medak-Saltzman and Antonio T. Tiongson, Jr.). Thus, we are compelled by the ways in which Indigenous and Black scholarship might be engaged together to contest the violence and legitimacy of the nation-state and its apparatuses, and to refuse routes to justice which require us to appeal for our humanity. Consider these words, from Dionne Brand, speaking at Barnard College, Colombia University, in April 2017:

In our case, I believe that we live in a state of tyranny. And to ask a tyranny to dismantle itself, to claim, to ask for, to invoke justice is to present our bodies already consigned in that tyranny to the status of nonbeing, to ask the state to bring us into being. And that is impossible and it won’t. That state is anathema to us, and so I do not write toward anything called justice, but against tyranny, and toward liberation.

(Brand, 2017)

Leanne Simpson makes a similar observation, writing, “I am not particularly interested in holding states accountable because the structure, history and nature of states is exploitative in nature” (2016, p. 31). Both abolition and decolonization object to the configuration of the nation-state in its specificity (the United States,

Canada, Israel, New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, and so on), and its generalizability. Such a social order, and its violences, cannot be made just; cannot be made good.

Though the need for these projects cannot be disputed, the frequent response by sympathetic liberals and even people committed to radical social change is that abolition is unimaginable and that decolonization is philosophical but not practical. This is the observation that Dan Berger, Mariame Kaba, and David Stein make in an article in *Jacobin Magazine* titled “What Abolitionists Do” (2017). Linking abolition to fights against chattel slavery, private property, and the prison industrial complex, the authors note that abolition is always discarded as utopian, not practical, even by those who describe themselves as working for social change. Instead, Berger, Kaba, and Stein observe that abolition is a “lodestar and practical necessity” (2017, n.p.). Describing how abolition is both a naming of a goal and navigating the divide between current state violence and the eradication of state/violence, the authors share the variety of activities which have come to be part of abolition projects. The gains of these activities are their own proof of the need and possibility for abolition. Likewise, there are many practical efforts to rematriate Indigenous land and life, from restoring Indigenous foodways, to turning land out of the property system, to restoring languages.

When people automatically dismiss the possibilities for abolition and decolonization, they rarely acknowledge how this reaction is entrenched in competing projects. Indeed, because abolition and decolonization are lodestars—stars which are used to guide our course—and practical, abolition and decolonization are not projects to be deferred for the next generation. They are happening next; they are happening now. Abolition and decolonization are rupturing into the mainstream with movements for Black life and defenders of Indigenous lands and waters, as much as people wish to contain #BlackLivesMatter to the plan of reducing discrimination in policing or Idle No More or #NoDAPL to the goals of environmentalism. Abolition and decolonization have always been happening, since the advent of a Western imperial worldview equated with modernity that took hold around 1492. Alternative societies, and the dismantling of slavery and its institutions, have been constant projects comprising serious work at the site of staunch tensions.

These projects are happening now.

Neither abolition nor decolonization are philosophies. They are practical routes. Abolition and decolonization are practices. The people engaged in them are among the most pragmatic on earth—they understand that these have to be happening now, because of the consequences of living beyond the capacity of the earth to heal itself without destroying all people. As Christi Belcourt makes plain in Chapter 7, the revolution has already begun.

In our own writing on decolonization and our reading of works on abolition, we emphasize that neither abolition nor decolonization are endpoints. They are imperatives. They are not a promised land or future. They are exactly what drive our work

and attention. Yet, this is where it matters to consider how there is not a one-to-one relationship between injustice and justice. There is not a direct trajectory from the harm to the justice. Said another way, we should not think that slavery is what drives our demands for abolition. We should not think that colonization is what drives our demands for decolonization. Again, we can pursue these imperatives without being locked into a false linearity between cause and effect. Decolonization is not the effect of the cause called colonization. Decolonization defies ongoing colonization.

The title of this volume, *Toward What Justice?* asks several questions. It questions the forms of justice that we think we want. What justice? It questions the compass points of our work, the directions we are taking that we sometimes mistake as endpoints. Toward what? Justice? To think of justice as an imperative, rather than as an end, might help us put our own justice projects in relation to others. Our theorizing is enhanced when we understand how projects are fulfilling an imperative, answering a calling inspired by the rising sign of social justice.

To this end, we have playfully considered how we might create a notation for the “toward” of justice. This playfulness of thought is what generated our opening motif of being born under the rising sign of justice. How might we indicate what is rising in our justice projects? One idea is an arrow, a toward, which marks what the project is aiming toward. The “what toward” of justice. Might the toward become a rising? $\rightarrow$ is a notational device that conveys how we won’t be satisfied with social justice, but always a social justice $\rightarrow$ [what]. The arrow is a reminder of the demands of justice projects. The arrow is an indicator of intention, of futurity.

Abolition $\rightarrow$ Black life

Decolonization $\rightarrow$ Indigenous futures

In this notation, the arrows do not mean that Black life is not already happening or that Indigenous futures are not already happening. In some ways, Black life is what demands abolition. Indigenous futures demand decolonization, rather than abolition births Black life or decolonization births Indigenous futures.

Chapters Waiting for You

We encourage readers to read each chapter for its projects; to use the project as the unit of analysis. Then, you might consider the inner angles formed between projects described and your own projects. To attend to the inner angles, you could shift a step or a seat to the side, and notice what movements, routes, and vantages are made possible. Reading in this way can produce a more intimate reading; one that is less likely to be overshadowed by a project that is claiming much light. This is the work of reading for a relational analysis, rather than a comparative analysis.

Our book opens with prison abolition. Crystal Laura’s “Against Prisons and the Pipeline to Them” is public pedagogy in the form of a written essay. It not only provides a clear argument for abolition, it also does the work of provoking the imagination necessary for the will to fight for abolition and its practices. It is

an essay capable of engaging many different kinds of readers: prison abolitionists looking for an affirming essay to share; people who might already sympathize with but not understand abolition; and people who cannot imagine abolition. Generous with voice and with her experiences, Laura presents the Freedom Square, an encampment and vibrant community space erected opposite the notorious Chicago police's Homan Square, a "black site" where thousands of people disappear into police custody. Chicago Freedom Square is an example of the practice of abolition—the practices, relations, and mutual accountability that Black communities can and do create as alternatives to the violating forms of justice promised by the police. Laura also shares her own family's intimate experiences with prisons in poignant, ironic, and unromanticized tellings. She serves us multiple "straight shot, no chaser" truths. "Prison is considered so 'natural' that it is extremely hard for most people to picture everyday life without it." And as educators, we are "*either engaged in incarceration prevention or incarceration expansion.*" This essay is extremely readable, quotable, and teachable. We hope you will share it widely.

In "Beginning and Ending with Black Suffering: A Meditation on and Against Racial Justice in Education," Michael Dumas directs us to think about how the suffering of Black children and youth is the hidden referent, premise, and reproductive force behind education studies. While "blackness is not analogous to any other racially marked position," Black suffering is often treated as a zero point to calibrate projects of equity and inclusion in education that quickly move away from blackness. Such moves obscure the specificity of blackness in favor of "a universal or more generalizable understanding of racial justice." By examining antiblack incidents in schools that make the news but are actually quite normalized events that happen every day in schools everywhere, Dumas pushes us to ask how our work is informed by or ignores Black suffering, to imagine what counts as the means and ends of justice, to imagine what constitutes "a necessary racial-cultural politics of education." Centering on the question of Black suffering steps to the side of racial justice discourse, which in fact has already stepped to the side of Black suffering. "Racial justice discourse in education proceeds past/around/on the back of Black suffering, rendering Black suffering invisible or beside the point, and, most pointedly, inconsequential." This chapter is an example of that inner angle, of how justice projects are so intimate to antiblackness yet profoundly turned away from addressing it.

In "Refusing the University," Sandy Grande offers principles and principled alternatives to the academic industrial complex. Drawing from Audra Simpson's concepts of *refusing* the colonial knowledge-production processes and mandates of the university, Grande theorizes the university as a branch of the settler state—a branch that many of us are caught by and perhaps serving, reinforcing, and profiting from. Unpacking the ways that the university invests in settler colonialism, this chapter moves quickly toward ways to refuse our own complicity in the logics of colonizing institutions. Grande offers three guiding commitments: (1) To collectivity, which necessarily involves the refusal of individualistic branding and

recognition for knowledge production. (2) To reciprocity, to being answerable to the communities that writers and knowledge producers claim to belong to or claim to serve. This necessarily involves refusing the pressures of accounting for publications that are valued by the neoliberal regime. (3) To mutuality, which includes relations not bound up in capital, “that refuses exploitation at the same time it radically asserts connection, particularly to land.” At the heart of this ethic of refusal and of assertion is a theorizing of justice. Indeed, Grande implies that justice projects are not so far apart, not as incommensurable as we might insist, an insight that we better appreciate when we can make the “distinction between liberal theories of *justice as recognition* and critical Indigenous theories of *justice as refusal*.”

In “Towards Justice as Ontology: Disability and the Question of (In)Difference,” Nirmala Erevelles disrupts ableist imaginaries of justice. Disability is often uncritically adopted as a “dead metaphor” for unacceptable political difference: e.g., a hateful politician is “mentally unstable”; the politically ignorant are “deaf” or “colorblind.” It is also used as a metaphor for injustice, especially for harm caused to communities: e.g., “epidemics” of violence. Justice then becomes conceptualized as the opposite of disability. Erevelles also critiques the way in which disability studies have traditionally centered the figure of a normative disabled citizen who is not Black, female, queer, ill, or otherwise intersectionally Othered. Drawing from intersectional interventions such as cripin’ queer theory and DisCrit, Erevelles then guides us through a consideration of how disability connects three important contemporary events that all take place in a single year, 2014: the police murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri; the state-based international response to the Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone; and the poisoning of the municipal water of Flint, Michigan. In each case, Erevelles reveals how the state approach is to pathologize bodies—invoking discourses of disability and illness—and thus to quarantine and destroy those bodies in order to protect normative (white) abled bodies.

Rinaldo Walcott’s chapter, “Against Social Justice and the Limits of Diversity; or Black People and Freedom” grapples with the ways that frameworks like diversity and people of color obscure the exclusion of Black people from institutions, particularly universities. Writing about the everyday elisions and habitual (and well-rehearsed) erasures of Black people and Black thought in university settings, Walcott traces the institutional disregard involved in there not being “a single institution in this nation that takes as foundational that Black people are a necessary element of that which we might make a more hopeful future.” Walcott observes that little has changed over the course of his career, even as the reports, the committees, the departments, the action plans, and the linguistic sophistication have pivoted toward supposedly valuing diversity. This valuing has had little impact on the experiences of Black scholars in the academy, or the ways in which Black studies is always treated as insufficient. Walcott’s chapter points precisely to the ways in which making university spaces more inclusive to non-white scholars

has been unsuccessful in terms of addressing the antiblack racism that is foundational to nation-states and their universities. The justice project which offers reprieve from this is heavily influenced by the work of Sylvia Wynter (2003), in that it locates culture as the site of possibility and struggle for transformation. It is a project which considers what human can more fully mean, beyond the capitalist, antiblack formulations in which humanness is currently conscribed. This project, which Walcott calls a pure decolonial project (taking its title from Derrida's "pure hospitality"), calls for a complete refashioning of the relationships and conditions which have been produced for us by the violent expansions of European colonialism. It is a call for new imaginaries as well as new languages and relations.

"When Justice is a Lackey" opens with a quotation from the comic book, *Black Panther*, as rebooted by Ta-Nehisi Coates. In this engaging essay, Leigh Patel helps us to "ascertain the ways in which injustice may be populating justice." The indictment of 35 Black teachers in Atlanta for alleged falsification of school test score data; the ironic demonstrations by many Black high school students to reinstate a white school security officer who was dismissed for physically assaulting a Black female student; the media attention to Georgetown University's histories of enslavement, sale, and torture of Black people—Patel re-reads these and other high-profile media events to show how justice is co-opted, "entangled with, servant to, injustice." In doing so, she troubles the progressive theory of change associated with such basic ideas that "it gets better," because justice does not advance without its master, injustice. Patel critiques the linearity that is presupposed within too much of social justice education. Her skillful analysis of the injustices of justice is a meaningful intervention on approaches which are incremental or piecemeal. As an antidote, Patel offers an understanding of justice that disarticulates well-being from property. We anticipate that this will become a touchstone conversation in our field.

Our next-to-final chapter is "The Revolution Has Begun," based on what is perhaps the last keynote lecture that Métis artist, author, mother and advocate Christi Belcourt will ever deliver. Belcourt almost transcendently locates us in our historical moment, the long season, the revolution that we are in. Connecting plant and animal nations with people nations, Belcourt's writing takes us through critique of ecological (and colonial) destruction, and reminds us of the utterly miraculous forms that life has taken. She reminds us that these are our relations, that this is the side we are fighting on. This chapter is incredibly generously written, inviting all to be part of the revolution that is already happening. And Belcourt is critically generous, no dupe to the dissimilitude of inclusion that requires compromises that we cannot and should not make. Indeed, she says that "There has been much talk about reconciliation in last few years... It is astounding to me that we are even willing to sit down and talk about reconciliation. How peaceful, dignified and beautiful Indigenous people are, that we have endured all of this, and yet are still willing to share." Belcourt unties the colonial connections between ecological destruction, resource extraction, and linguicide, and restores

the connections between humans and animals of different nations with the earth, water, air, and future.

Lastly, our book has a feature for educators, learners, and book study groups. “Pedagogical Applications of Toward What Justice” is a series of teaching workshops and assignments carefully composed by Deanna Del Vecchio, Sam Spady, and Nisha Toomey as a companion to the essays in the book. This final chapter offers a wealth of multimedia resources—films, television documentaries, musicals, advertisements, Instagram collections, news and magazine articles, etc.—that cover a broad scope of topics well beyond what we could do in essay form in this volume. Just as a sampling, one activity is a “Zine Project: Representation and Mourability.” Another is a “Social Justice Playlist” activity where participants deconstruct popular music, and construct their own album in order to interrogate definitions of justice and underlying theories of change. Designed for organizing/community settings as well as formal classrooms, there are other helpful approaches suggested such as options to utilize themes or theories depending on the audience. Most importantly, Del Vecchio, Spady, and Toomey design these materials with the understanding that participants are not just consumers of book theory, but active co-theorists of justice.

Inconceivable Futures are Not Inconceivable

In describing the faultlines and tensions between various (compelling, exciting) social justice projects, we emphasize that this book has no pretense of being exhaustive, or representative. It is not a comprehensive reader about the different justice projects in contemporary times. It is not a catalogue, not an almanac, not a taxonomy. Included are essays which move outside of their own terms and arguments to describe the inner angle that is created within relevant justice projects; this is the method of analysis we wish to inspire in the field through this volume.

Writing about the failures of a coalitional mobilization against an anti-Muslim charter in Quebec in addressing its own antiblackness, Délice Mugabo (2016, p. 179) argues that we must refuse coalitions with “dreams and projects which cannot imagine Black life.” Debates against the anti-Muslim charter were antiblack in their inattentiveness to the lived lives of Black Muslims in Quebec, but also in their use of blackness as the bottom of a social hierarchy which this charter would likewise produce, as a contrast or foil. A Black feminist activist, Mugabo powerfully insists that “I cannot work side by side with people who are not able to imagine what joy would look like for me in a new world” (p. 179). Mugabo observes that in antiblack societies, Black people have the most to lose within such coalitions because such coalitions are premised on loss—the premise of loss of status, power, wealth, access, opportunity—so that the aggrieved group would become more like Black people, except, of course, never really Black. Coalitions and social justice battle cries based on these false equivalences will always ultimately result in violence for “those whose future is inconceivable” (p. 179).

We hold these words, “those whose future is inconceivable,” close, rolling them around inside with growing resolve. It is our work, the work of our field, to highlight the ways that seemingly inconceivable futures are not inconceivable, as much as it is our corollary work to demonstrate that white supremacy and fascism have no future on these lands. The arc is always bending. What futures are possible for those whose futures are inconceivable? It is this question that blazes on the horizon, and on every page of this book.

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