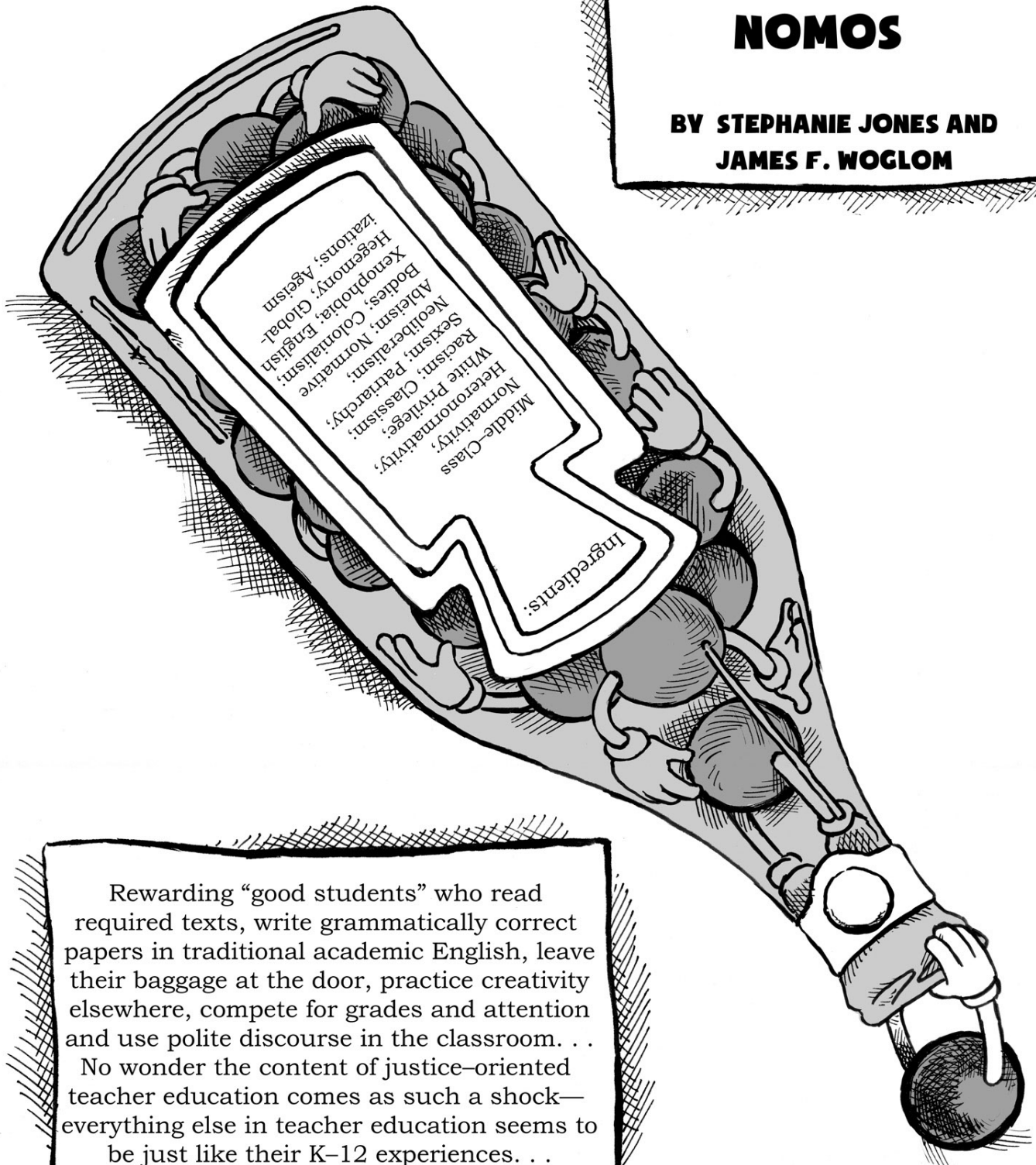


Jones, S. & Woglom, J. (2012). *Overcoming nomos*.
Graphic chapter in Gorski, P., Osei-Kofi,
N., Sapp, J., Zenkov, K. (Eds.) *Cultivating social justice
teachers: How teacher educators have helped students
overcome cognitive bottlenecks and learn critical social
justice concepts* (pp. 27-48). Sterling, VA: Stylus
Publishing.

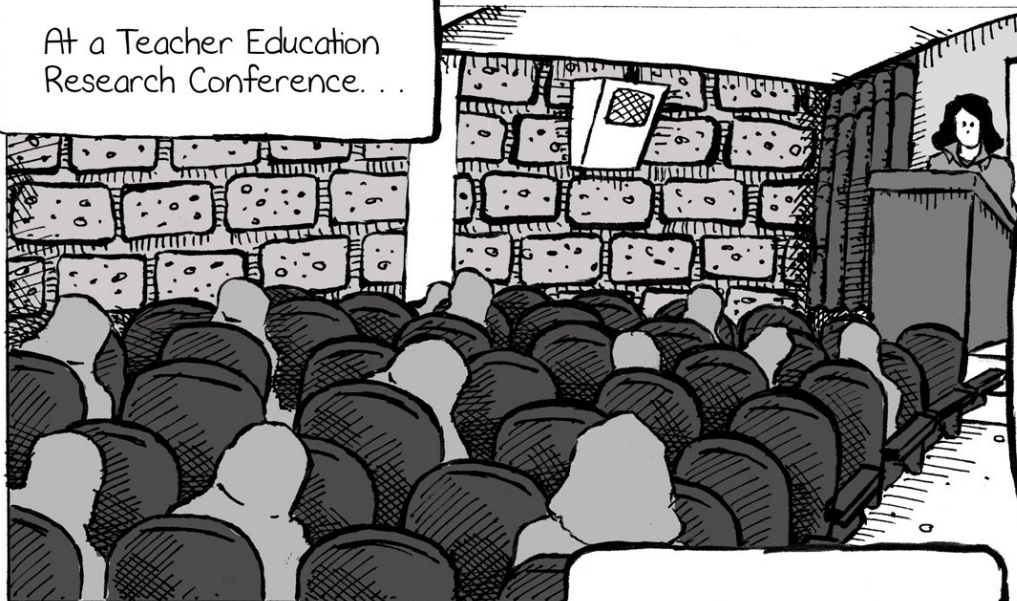
OVERCOMING NOMOS

BY STEPHANIE JONES AND
JAMES F. WOGLOM



Rewarding “good students” who read required texts, write grammatically correct papers in traditional academic English, leave their baggage at the door, practice creativity elsewhere, compete for grades and attention and use polite discourse in the classroom. . .
No wonder the content of justice-oriented teacher education comes as such a shock—everything else in teacher education seems to be just like their K-12 experiences. . .

At a Teacher Education Research Conference. . .



Nomos: The Biggest Bottleneck challenge for Teacher Ed?
A Three-Year Study

Our students are smart. Bourdieu would say they have successfully shaped their *habitus* to align with the structures, practices, and expectations of educational institutions. He calls these unspoken and unrecognized norms *nomos*.

Students who may not "fit" into the *nomos* of universities might work extra hard to "pass" as the students they think we want.



Is the K-12 *Nomos* in Teacher Ed?

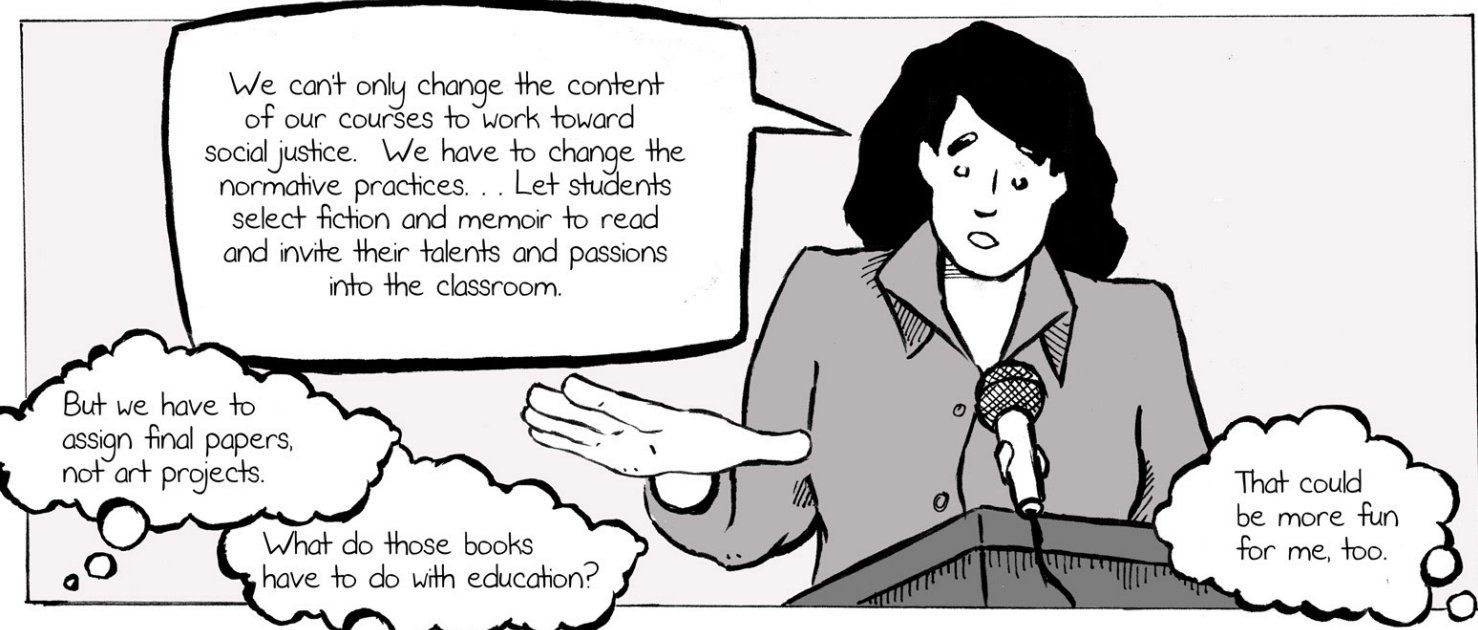
- Do we privilege written assignments?
 - Do we privilege "knowledge" over the arts and experience?
 - Do we promote middle-class "polite" ways of talking about "appropriate" topics in class?
 - Do we focus on learning for the future rather than learning for now?
- ⇒ Unchain ourselves from the K-12 *nomos*

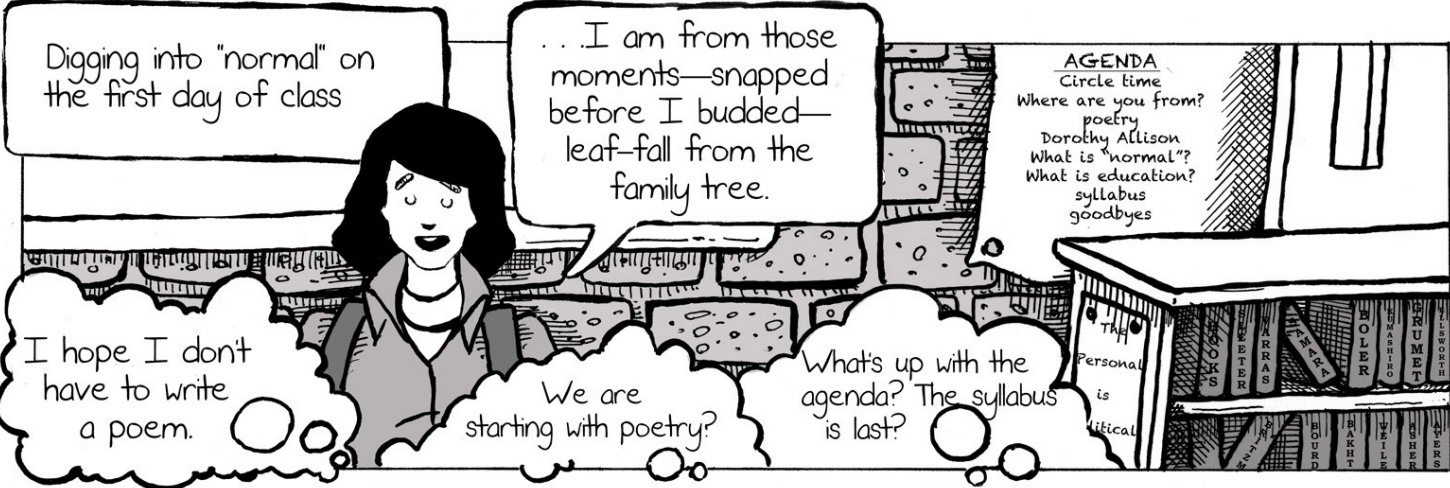
We can't only change the content of our courses to work toward social justice. We have to change the normative practices. . . Let students select fiction and memoir to read and invite their talents and passions into the classroom.

But we have to assign final papers, not art projects.

What do those books have to do with education?

That could be more fun for me, too.





Digging into "normal" on the first day of class

... I am from those moments—snapped before I budded—leaf-fall from the family tree.

AGENDA
Circle time
Where are you from?
poetry
Dorothy Allison
What is "normal"?
What is education?
syllabus
goodbyes

I hope I don't have to write a poem.

We are starting with poetry?

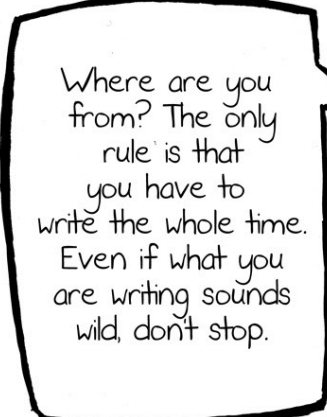
What's up with the agenda? The syllabus is last?



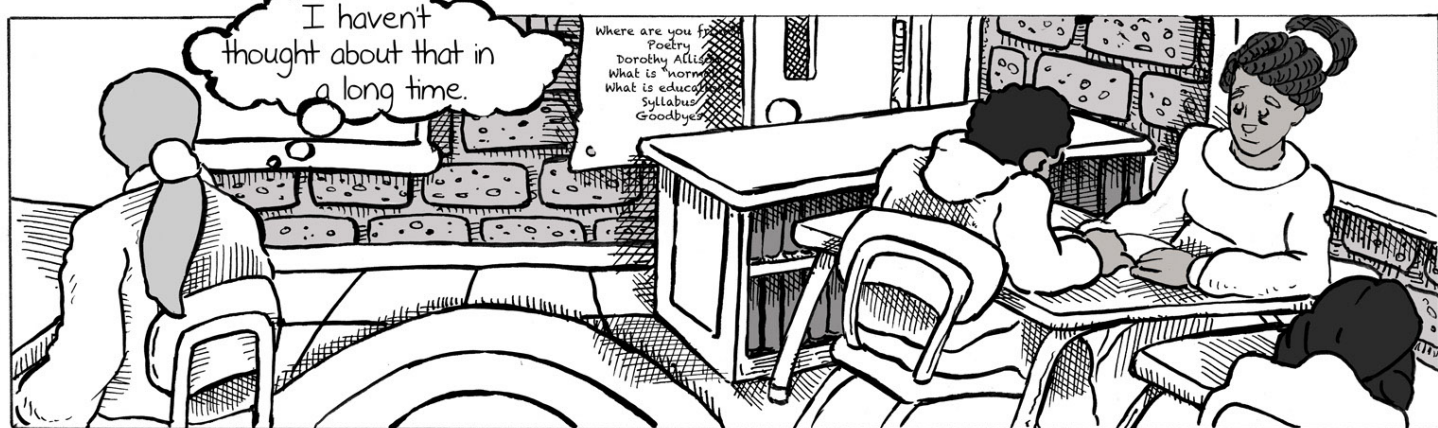
George Ella Lyon's poem explores simple and complex places, objects, and people she is from. Now it's your turn.

I knew it. Here it comes.

Ahh, man.



Where are you from? The only rule is that you have to write the whole time. Even if what you are writing sounds wild, don't stop.



I haven't thought about that in a long time.

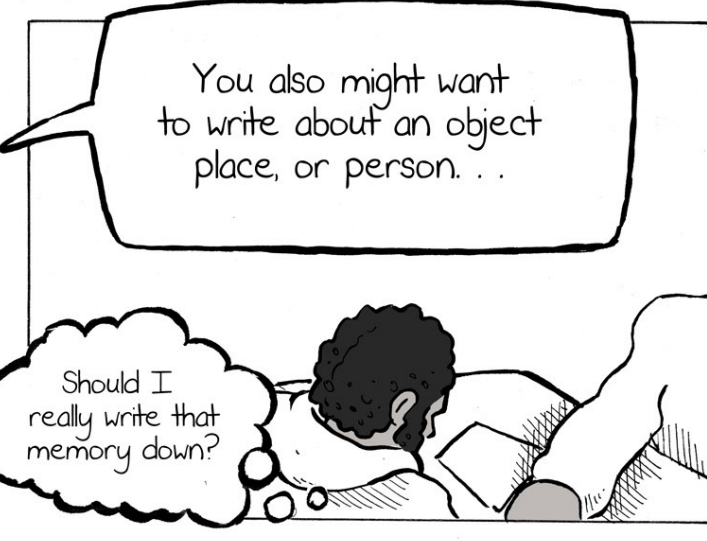
Where are you from?
Poetry
Dorothy Allison
What is "normal"?
What is education?
syllabus
Goodbyes



YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD!

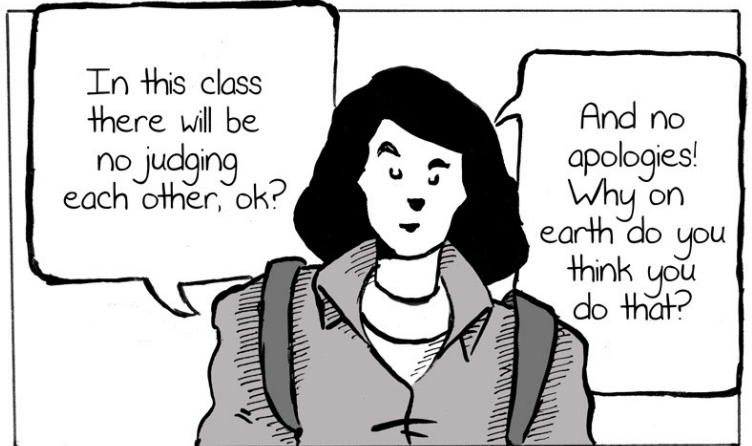
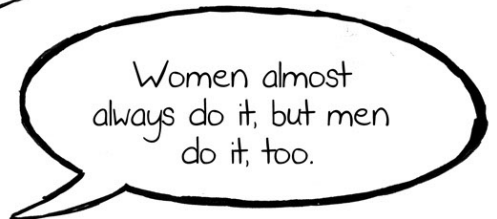
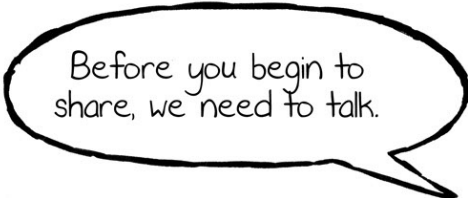
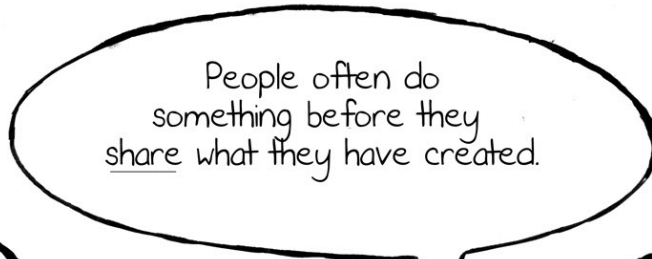
What do you hope to gain from our time together?

If you are slowing down a bit, think about the sounds, words, and smells you are from.



You also might want to write about an object place, or person. . .

Should I really write that memory down?



How have we come to be a society where people—especially women—feel they have to apologize?

Well, just look at the magazines—women are constantly being judged—and against each other.

What do you think this judging thing is really about?

It's like a big competition

It's better to set the bar low and do better.

Listen. Life is not a competition. Education is definitely not a competition. You have probably learned otherwise, but I don't believe that.

No one wants to try and then lose.

That happens to guys, too.

We can't do anything worthwhile in here if we are competing.

Nothing can change if we are pitted against one another.

To learn—to change as a human being—you have to take risks and be bold! We can't do that if we are judging each other.

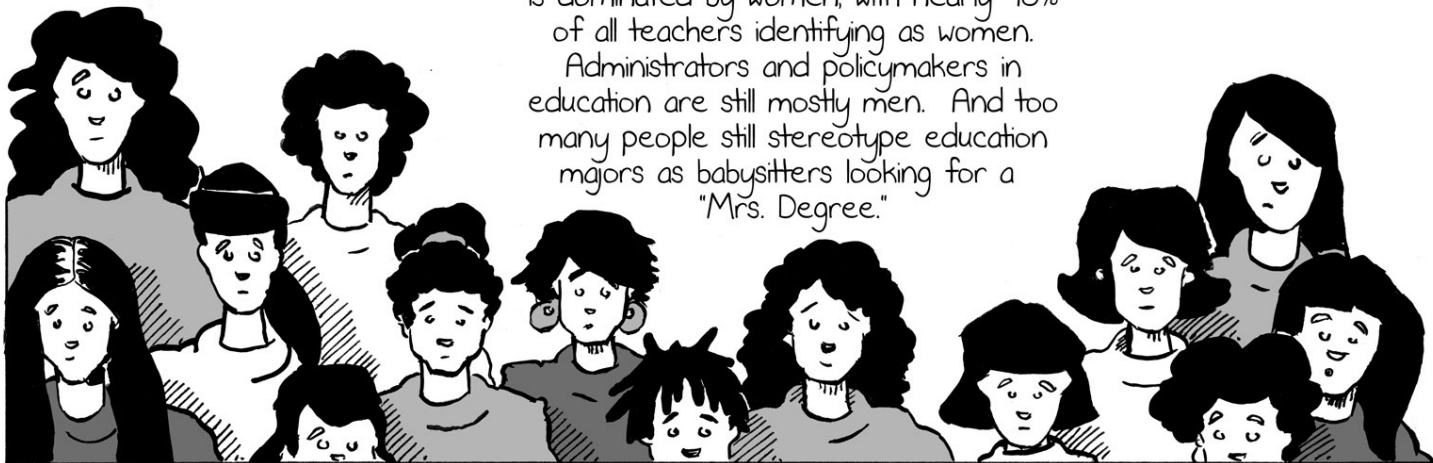


"Our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin."
—bell hooks



Cultivating competition, judgment, and fierce individualism feeds neoliberal capitalism—and I refuse to knowingly be a tool for that cause.

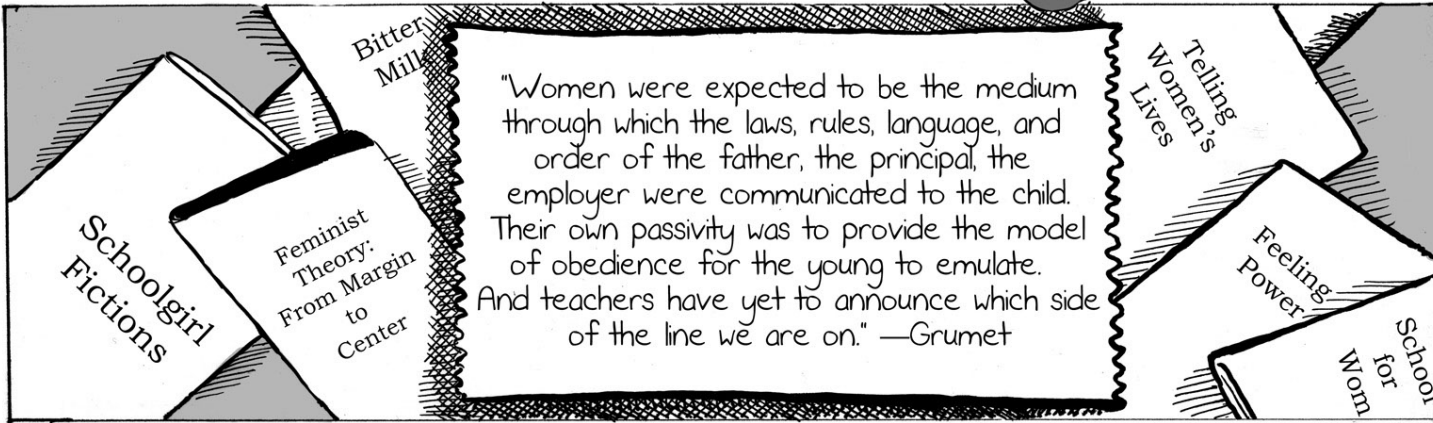
Early Childhood and Elementary Education is dominated by women, with nearly 90% of all teachers identifying as women. Administrators and policymakers in education are still mostly men. And too many people still stereotype education majors as babysitters looking for a "Mrs. Degree."



Women have persistently been infantilized through schooling and the media, and many young women too often believe they are never good enough. Even "privileged" women are not immune to the messages saying they need to be thinner, whiter, prettier, richer.



"Women were expected to be the medium through which the laws, rules, language, and order of the father, the principal, the employer were communicated to the child. Their own passivity was to provide the model of obedience for the young to emulate. And teachers have yet to announce which side of the line we are on." —Grumet



Teacher Education is the ideal space for feminist pedagogies—to encourage strength, courage, social and political critique, activism and solidarity, intellectualism, and nonjudgment of ourselves and others.

I mean, don't we want the most confident, capable, intellectual women and men teaching our young children?



Radical feminism aims to eradicate all forms of domination. It's for women and men.

Back in class. . .

Rules For Sharing

No apologies or disclosures!
Read confidently from your poem.
Smile afterward!
Everyone gives one compliment.
Reader accepts compliments with a simple
"Thank you."



"I am from tall, strong oaks, knots for climbing, limbs for swinging. . ."

Thank you.



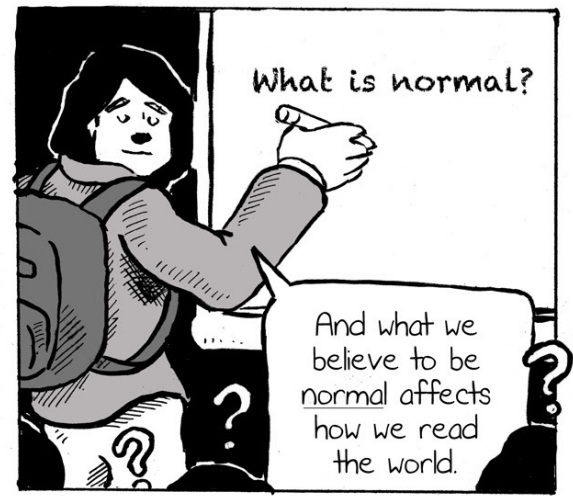
I liked the way you described the trees.

I can really see them in my mind.

You are an amazing writer. I love the rhythm of your writing.



Where we are from affects what we believe to be normal.



What is normal?

And what we believe to be normal affects how we read the world.



And that includes how we read the word.



We're going to do some reading to analyze how that works.

- TRASH**
by Dorothy Allison
- C-Personal Connection
 - D-Personal Disconnection
 - ?-Question
 - !-Epiphany

- TR
- by Dorothy
- C-Per Conn
- D-Per Discon
- ?-Que
- !-Epi



"A full bottle of vodka will kill you when you're nine and the bottle is a quart. It was a third cousin proved that..."

That's a disconnection.

What is this?

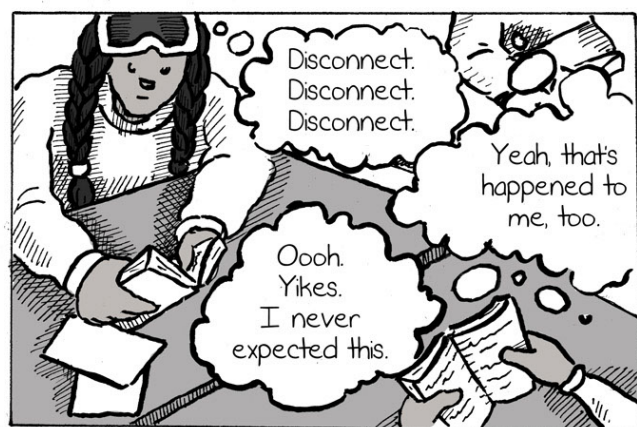
"I had been a child who believed in books, but I had never found me or mine in print."
—Dorothy Allison

I don't get it.

"The need to make my world believable to people who have never experienced it is part of why I write fiction. Despair, for example, must be lived. But if I can write a story that so draws the reader in..."
—Dorothy Allison



I hate this part. The waiting. The not knowing if they will revolt or join me in a difficult journey.



Disconnect. Disconnect. Disconnect.

Yeah, that's happened to me, too.

Oooh. Yikes. I never expected this.

Before you talk about your reading, please consider that some people in here are from poor families, or have experienced violence, or are gay, lesbian, or questioning, or have few connections to this story.

I've never talked about this at school before, but my mom has a mental illness.

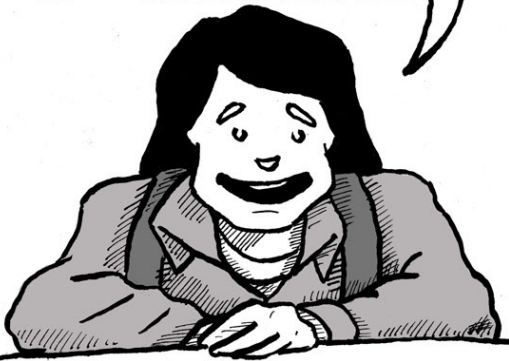
I have never read anything like this in my life, but it made me think about so much.

I didn't connect to this at all.

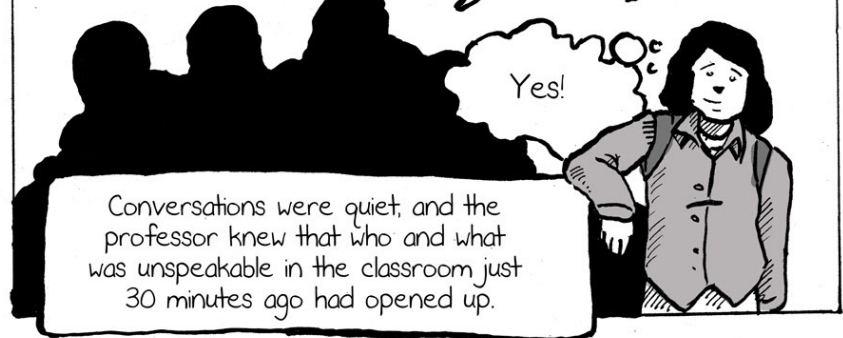
My mom's family is really poor. They always struggle.

I have survivor's guilt too. I'm the only cousin to go to college.

I've had some violence in my family.

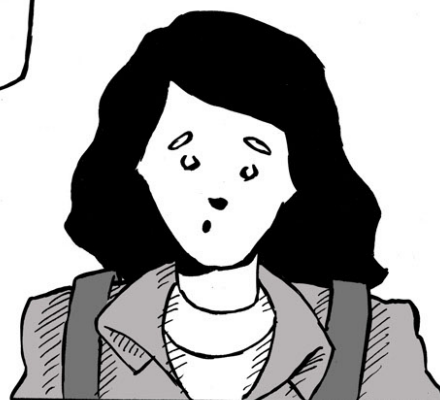
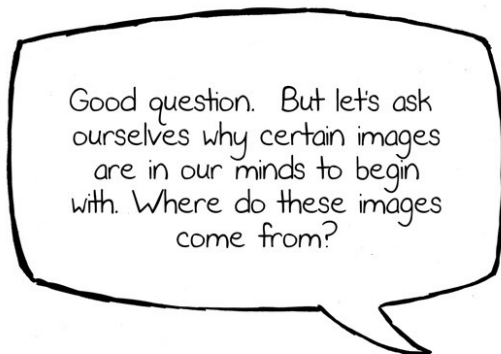


Assuming that some students have worked hard to hide their working-class or poor backgrounds, their less-than-perfect family lives, or their LGBTQ identities she explicitly acknowledges their presence and challenges assumptions about who is in the room.



Yes!

Conversations were quiet, and the professor knew that who and what was unspeakable in the classroom just 30 minutes ago had opened up.

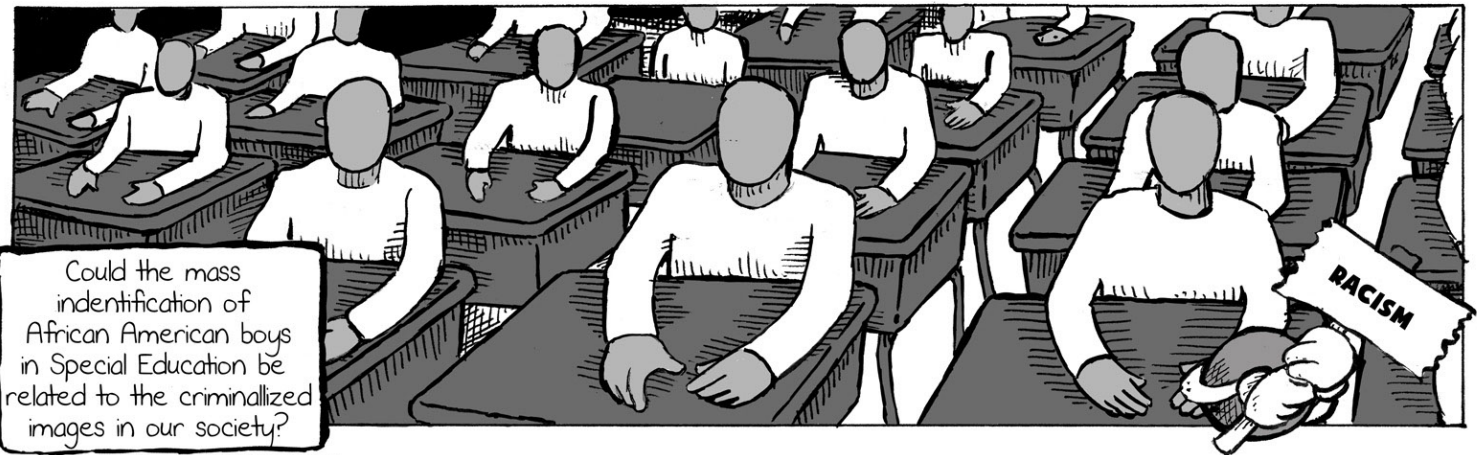


Students pointed out the systemic problem of media and popular culture representations of African Americans as poor, violent, and criminal.



The group questioned why white collar criminals, whose crimes often account for more economic and life loss in a year than street crime, were either invisible or represented as suave.

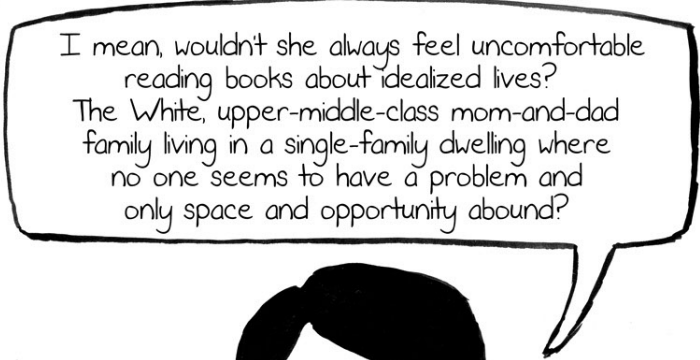
These movies make us all look like gangsters and criminals.



Could the mass identification of African American boys in Special Education be related to the criminalized images in our society?

And could the treatment of African American boys in schools lead to their mass incarceration as adults?

In 2008, 1 in 9 African American men aged 20-34 were behind bars. A shocking number even for the U.S.—the country with the highest percentage of its population behind bars.



In some elementary classroom...

READ TO SUCCEED!

Muffy—120 books
Thurston—89 books
Donald—2 books
Stacy—1 book

Oh, my God, this is boring. Does she seriously think these books have anything to do with life?

Man, my family is seriously fucked up then. I better keep my mouth shut so no one will know my dad's in jail. I'll have to make up some shit.

"All normal lives are perfect and White and Christian and lived in 2,000-square-foot homes..."

The ways in which we think about ourselves and one another and about our society—our images of how we should look, our homes, our lives, even our inner worlds—are given shape distributed by the specialized work of people in universities and schools, in television, radio, and newspapers...forming the "ideological apparatuses of society." —Dorothy Smith

I hate school. My mom keeps telling me to work hard, but she doesn't know what it's like.

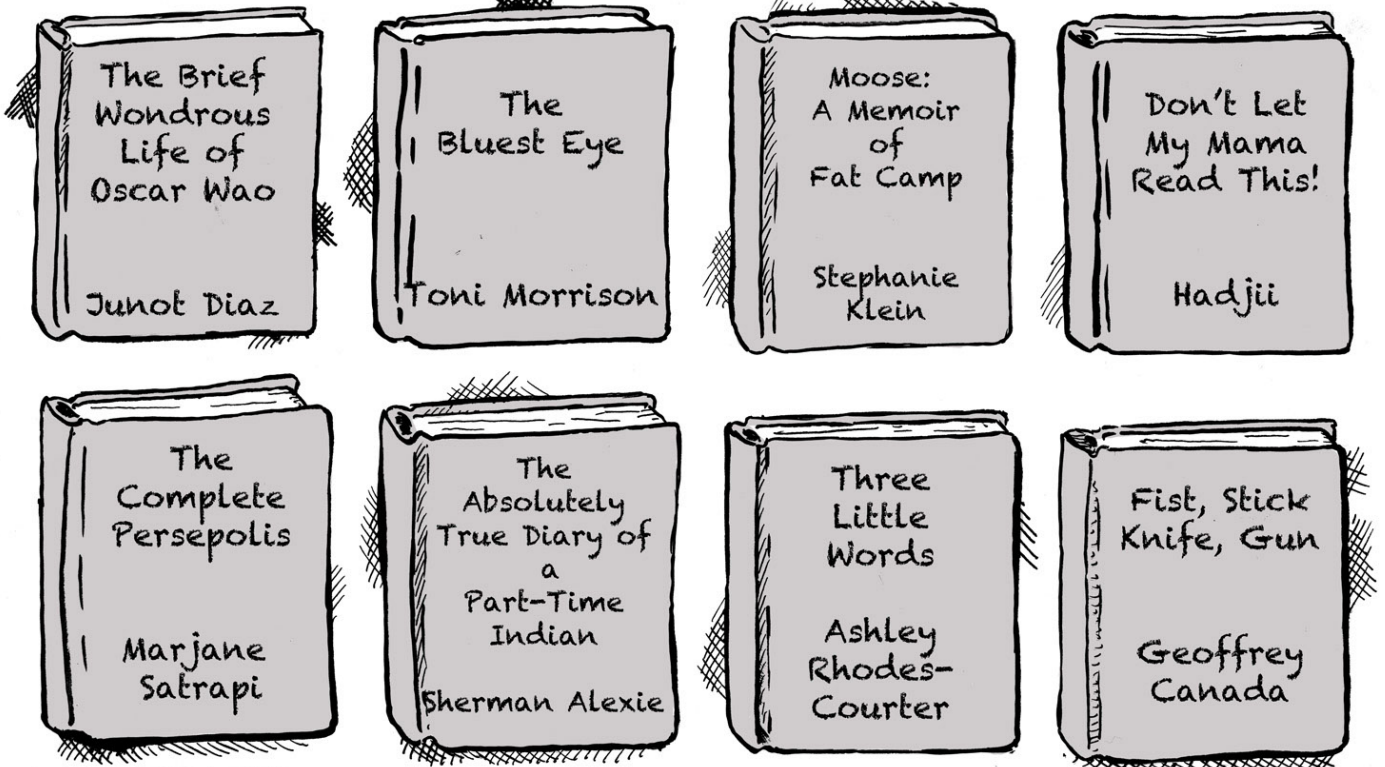
I got Saturday school for being tardy this week--I'm a loser... Can't go this weekend.

What are you doing this weekend? Wanna come to the flea market?

**MIDDLE-CLASS
NORMATIVITY**



Choice Book Sign Up



And more unexpected things were yet to come. . .



The self-selected books engaged the students. They read with a critical perspective and were open to experiencing a crisis of truth.



Readers connected, disconnected, and placed their books in a larger social and political context.

My mom was so focused on being skinny. What did she think that would do to me?
It's like Moose.



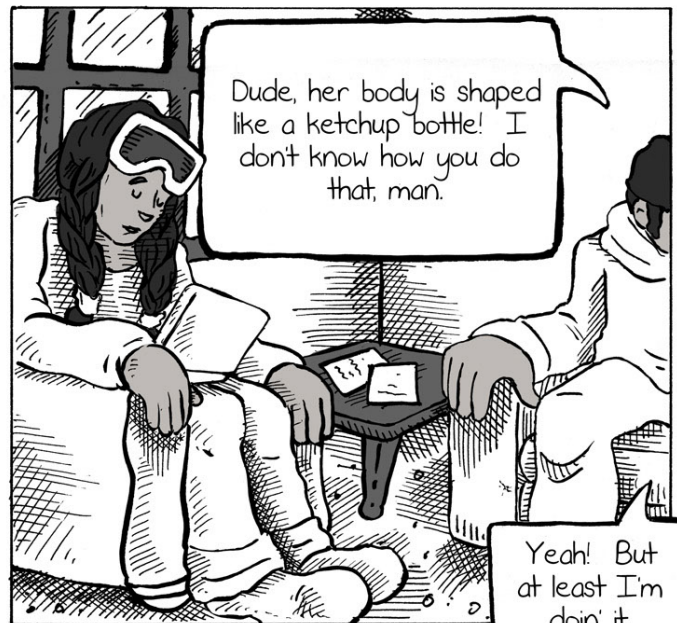
My best friend was bulimic. I hated that she compared herself to me. The media is terrible.



Well, we do it, too. I mean, why don't we stand up when guys say mean things about other girls—like at that party?



Hangin' at a party. . .



Is it okay to just blame the media or "society" when we see these things happen and don't do anything to challenge them?

BLACK STUDENT UNION

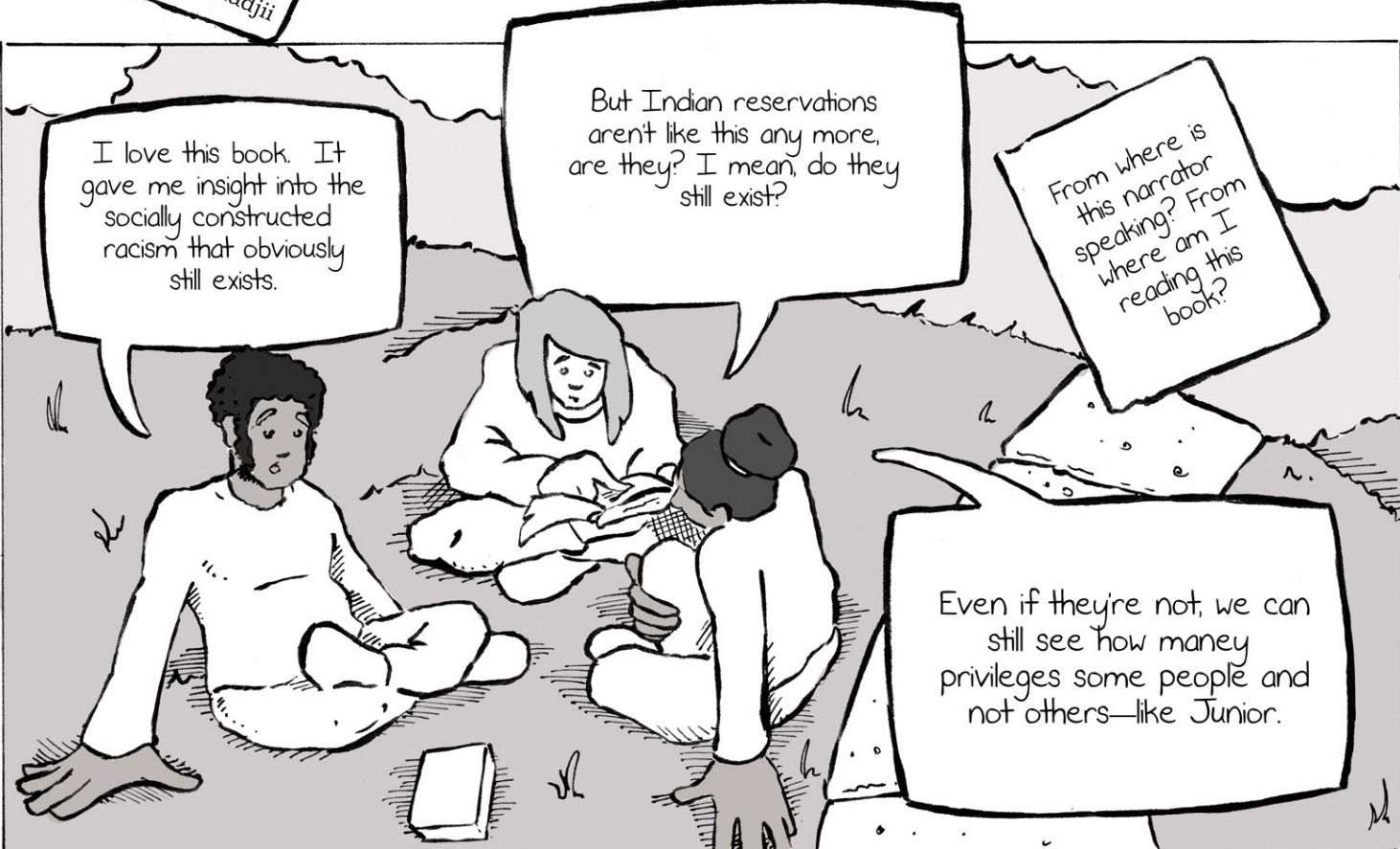
University news:
African American
students now
comprise 6%
of the student body.

This book is a riot!
It's about a Black
guy at a White school.
You would love it!

Well, this is the first
book that I have
ever read that I
identify with!

"...Everybody
thought their
childhood was
so fuckin'
wonderful... It
was enough
to make you
vomit." —Hadjii

"But the
angry young
men aren't the
real enemy..."
—Geoffrey
Canada



I love this book. It
gave me insight into the
socially constructed
racism that obviously
still exists.

But Indian reservations
aren't like this any more,
are they? I mean, do they
still exist?

From where is
this narrator
speaking? From
where am I
reading this
book?

Even if they're not, we can
still see how many
privileges some people and
not others—like Junior.

And they questioned their own limited "education" about the world.



Persepolis was amazing. I never thought I would like a graphic novel—but I was sucked in right away. And I learned so much!



I feel so stupid. Why didn't we learn about these things in school? Is the revolution still happening?



It's like we only get the stereotyped version of the Middle East—if we are taught about it at all. Terror, terror, terror.



Students even started doing their own research—reading books, searching the Internet, and talking to Muslims about politics in the Middle East.



Another English-only mandate hits the schools this week. . .but we're still waiting to see if a bill will pass requiring students' BMI—that's Body Mass Index—to be recorded on report cards.

STATE

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao
Junot Diaz

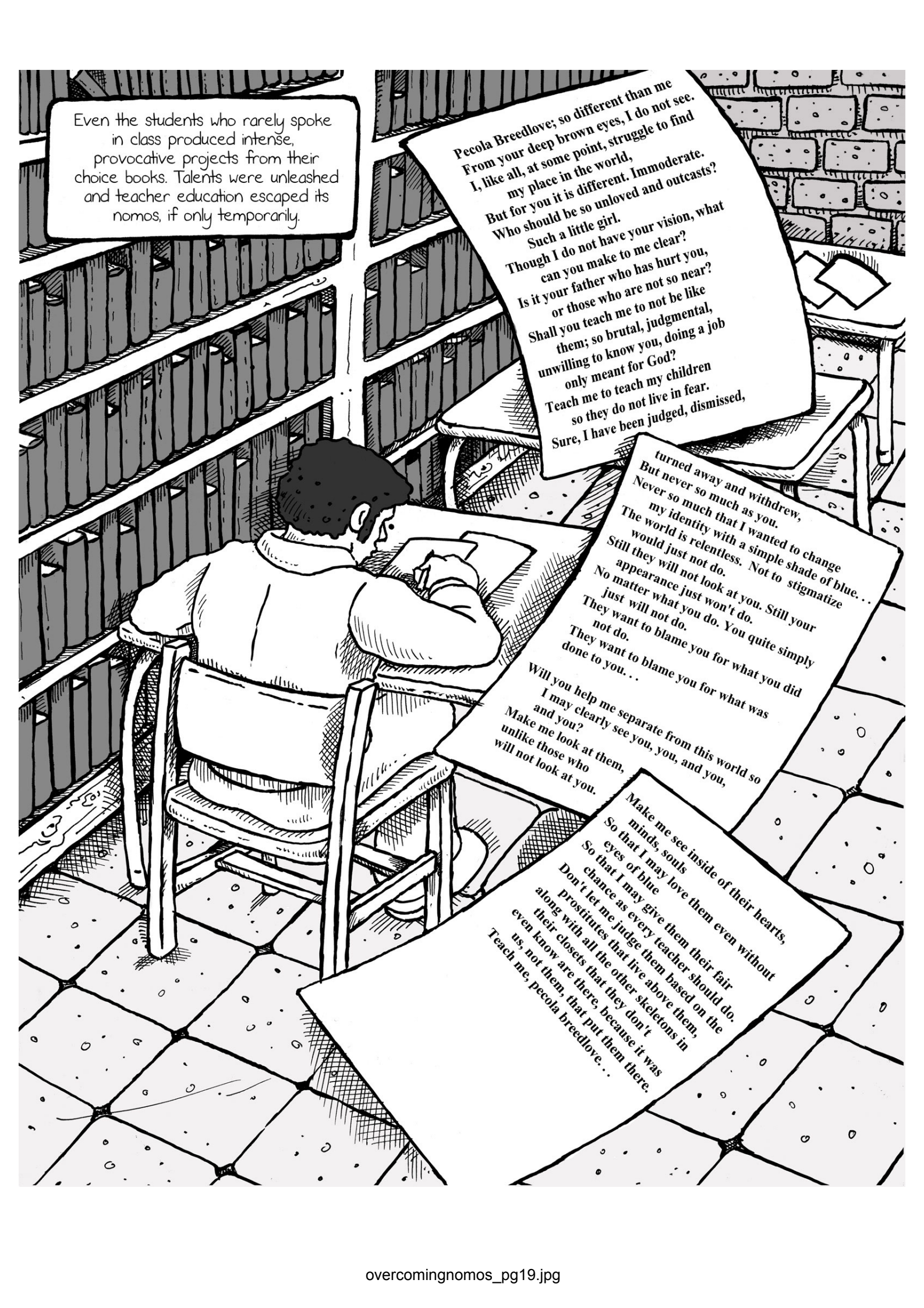
VOGUE
LOSE WEIGHT
EASY DIET
BESKINNY
COSMO
DAT

NORMATIVE BODIES

ENGLISH HEGEMONY

XENOPHOBIA

Bookstore:
-calendar
-bell hooks
-Gloria Anzaldua
-Paulo Friere
-post-its



Even the students who rarely spoke in class produced intense, provocative projects from their choice books. Talents were unleashed and teacher education escaped its nomos, if only temporarily.

Pecola Breedlove; so different than me
From your deep brown eyes, I do not see.
I, like all, at some point, struggle to find
my place in the world,
But for you it is different. Immoderate.
Who should be so unloved and outcasts?
Such a little girl.
Though I do not have your vision, what
can you make to me clear?
Is it your father who has hurt you,
or those who are not so near?
Shall you teach me to not be like
them; so brutal, judgmental,
unwilling to know you, doing a job
only meant for God?
Teach me to teach my children
so they do not live in fear.
Sure, I have been judged, dismissed,

turned away and withdrew,
But never so much as you,
Never so much that I wanted to change
my identity with a simple shade of blue...
The world is relentless. Not to stigmatize
would just not do.
Still they will not do.
No matter what you do. You quite simply
just will not do.
They want to blame you for what you did
not do.
They want to blame you for what was
done to you...
Will you help me separate from this world so
I may clearly see you, you, and you,
and you?
Make me look at them,
unlike those who
will not look at you.

Make me see inside of their hearts,
minds, souls
So that I may love them even without
eyes of blue
So that I may give them their fair
chance as every teacher should do.
Don't let me judge them based on the
prostitutes that live above them,
along with all the other skeletons in
their closets that they don't
even know are there, because it was
us, not them, that put them there.
Teach me, pecola breedlove...

"Testimonial reading pushes us to recognize that a novel or biography reflects not merely a distant other, but analogous social relations in our own environment, in which our economic and social positions are implicated." —Megan Boler



After reading their books and having multiple in-class conversations about them, the students responded to the books in any way they wanted. Most chose the arts to use their out-of-school passions and hobbies to make sense of the individual, social, economic, and political issues raised in the novels and memoirs.

The bottleneck of nomos breaks open, spilling social and political issues important to the students today and important for their teaching in the future. Not perfect, but a good start.



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