

Transcript for Season One, Episode Four: History is Always the Present

Nana Osei-Kofi 00:007

Welcome to Transforming the College Classroom. This is a podcast for anyone who is interested in taking up teaching and learning in higher education from a social justice informed perspective in ways that are centered on a deep commitment to teaching all students. My name is Nana Osei-Kofi. I'm Director of the Difference, Power, and Discrimination program at Oregon State University. And I'm also Associate Professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality studies.

Kali Furman 00:34

I'm Kali Furman, I'm a postdoctoral scholar with the Difference, Power, and Discrimination program.

Bradley Boovy 00:39

And I'm Bradley Boovy, associate professor in the School of Language, Culture, and Society at Oregon State. And co-facilitator with Nana of the DPD Summer Academy, where we work with faculty who are developing and teaching DPD courses.

We're recording this at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon, located within the traditional homelands of the Mary's River or Amphinefu Band of Kalapuya. Following the Willamette Valley Treaty of 1855 Kalapuya people were forcibly removed to reservations in Western Oregon. Today living descendants of these people are a part of the Confederated tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated tribes of the Siletz Indians.

Kali Furman 01:16

Welcome, today Bradley and I are here with our guest Dr. Natchee Barnd. Natchee, welcome! We're really excited to have you on the podcast today and to get us started could you just tell us a little bit about yourself?

Natchee Barnd 01:30

[laughter] Yeah. Hi.

Bradley Boovy 01:33

[laughter] Hi, Natchee

Natchee Barnd 01:34

Happy to be here with you all, in particular. So I'm an Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies and Native American Studies at Oregon State University. I'm currently the equivalent of our chair of the department, and I guess, I'm the editor of the *Ethnic Studies Review Journal*, which is a big relatively new position I'm holding and excited about.

Kali Furman 02:03

Awesome.

Bradley Boovy 02:02

So glad you're here with us today.

Natchee Barnd 02:03

Happy to be here.

Bradley Boovy 02:05

So tell us a little bit about your chapter. It's in the first section of the book, *Transformative Approaches to Social Justice Education*. So yeah, just tell us a little bit about what's the content, but then also your pedagogical, kind of social justice pedagogies that underlie the chapter.

Natchee Barnd 02:23

Yeah. So the chapter's called "Scripting Change," so I thought maybe I'll start there, start with the title. And the title is intentional in some ways, it's about using script literally, we're creating, writing stories in order to make change, but we're also trying to change the script. Which is the dominant scripts about this place and our experiences here and all the variety of stories and experiences people have had across time in this location.

So, I thought, you know, having something like that has these two meanings is really important because it's this back and forth process, which is what we were trying to engage in. So the chapter is really an explanation of this particular course that leads to this project called the Social Justice Tour of Corvallis. And it comes from this class, it's a research methods course that I've been doing now for many years.

And so the chapter is a story of what that project is and what that class looks like, but also a template for how you might do something similar to this, or how do you engage with archives and how do you engage with history in the past and story. And I think in some ways, it's hard to talk about this chapter. I always have a really hard time explaining it, this chapter and the project, because it involves, as you mentioned, pedagogy, research, community engagement,

it's got retention and student development, it's got a social justice angle to it, which is really critical. And it does all those things simultaneously. And it's rooted in things like space and geography, which are some of the areas that I'm really interested in. So that's a quick shot on what the chapter is and what I try to do with it.

Bradley Boovy 04:16

Yeah. I just want to, because I love hearing you reflect on the title of the course and scripting change. And I think also just for our listeners, to maybe give them a sense of what these social justice tours wind up looking like. One of the things, so I've been on a few of them now and how many have you done in total? So, you teach the class, but then you actually have the tours as part of the class. How many are you at now?

Natchee Barnd 04:38

So we've done a total of six distinct courses/tours. And we've done in terms of delivering actual tours, I don't know, there's probably been 30 of them or something.

Bradley Boovy 04:49

Yeah. And they're really great. And so I think, for folks who haven't been on the tour or one of the tours, I mean, I think what always strikes me is the fact that you've got students in these spaces that they're talking about, reading out the history of these spaces. And also these re-scripted histories to come back to the title of the chapter. And I think it's just such a powerful way of having students engage with space.

So, can you say a little bit, maybe just briefly a little bit about what role that presentation in space, kind of being in the spaces where these histories were made or often erased as the students reveal in their research. What role does that presentation, the bringing the second half of the course to life in the spaces where these histories happen?

Natchee Barnd 05:39

Yeah. To me, it's the central role that is required for this to go, to make it make sense. I think being in a place, being physically there, being connected to that spot at the moment that you hear the stories, but also telling the stories of these spaces that people are normally just going around that are just your everyday spaces before you know these stories. I think this is crucial both to be there – I think there's a way in which the embodiment, the affect that we try to draw upon requires you to kind of be there, but also being there together really is important as a group, especially in spaces that aren't normally thought of as maybe your space. And then suddenly you're like, there is something here that reflects an identity or an experience that maybe I had in a place that normally I might not see or think about.

And it's definitely not talked about usually. So I think being there, being able to see those, and I've talked about this in the chapter, and I think other people have mentioned this is, some of these places you go to and I go to now and I can't not think about the stories.

Every time I go by the post office a very particular story emerges. And then that leads to another story and another story, and that's the hope and the intent, right? That as you move through space and your relation to space with these stories, it changes. And so both your relation changes and then that space changes. And that's the geography and spatial approach that I am bringing and trying to get the students to understand. And sometimes they don't even get it until we do it, because we're thinking about it and we're writing about it and then we have to create this thing. And it's only those last couple weeks where we're really out there and we start to realize, it's different when you stand here and say it. And it's different when you stand here and say it and there's people listening and they're with you and they're supporting you. And they're absorbing that. And I really do feel like it changes how you learn and how you think about those things. Just being physically and experientially present.

Bradley Boovy 07:49

Yeah, thank you. And the passers by too, right, that's always interesting to see.

Natchee Barnd 07:54

[laughs] Yeah. Occasionally somebody will tail along with our group or I've had somebody offer to buy the booklets right from us as we were going. And I always find those really interesting and hard conversations as we're trying to deliver an actual tour. [all three laugh]

Kali Furman 08:10

Absolutely. So I have the privilege of being one of Natchee's students and one of the creations of the tour. And I know for me, it has had such a profound impact on my relationship to campus and the broader Corvallis community and how I move through space here. And so I think it's just such a powerful experience to be a student in the class that helps to create the tour. I've helped give lots of the tours over the years and then also to be a participant and see that impact. So, it's really really powerful. And I'm wondering, can you tell us a little bit about the origin story of how this class came to be and where the idea behind doing a social justice tour of Corvallis came from and how the class came into being?

Natchee Barnd 08:50

Yeah. Well, first I should say it was a privilege to have you in the class

Kali Furman 8:54

[laughs]

Natchee Barnd 08:55

And to have you help with so many of the subsequent touring. I don't think I could have done all those dozens that we've done without you. So appreciate that, which is funny as a segue, so the origin really was a conversation I had with Bradley. So we're full circle here in terms of the interconnections. I had to teach this methods course, and I was really trying to think about it technically, it's the Ethnohistory Methodology course, and that wasn't my area of expertise and not something I was particularly interested in doing in that way, in the traditional way that kind of discipline or that field or subfield or inter field operates.

But I had really been thinking, I'd been talking with Bradley about tours and city tours and counter tours. And I wanted to do a counter tour. I wanted to upend the tours here in Corvallis that we have, which are very normative as you might expect, but also very architecturally focused, which many walking tours are. And I thought, how do I do that? And then I thought, how do I teach this class? And it was really Bradley who said, "Why don't you do those things together?" And it was one of those moments where literally there was a light bulb above my head and I thought, that was genius. Thank you, Bradley. [laughter]

Bradley Boovy 10:17

I'm glad you have a much better memory than I do. Because I remember those early conversations when we first started being really great and generative for me too. And so, yeah. So, I'm glad I was able to turn on the light bulb.

Natchee Barnd 10:26

It was amazing. And honestly, I couldn't have predicted, and obviously just threw it out there in a discussion almost, but in that back and forth that we were having, but became this thing that now has had six distinct tours and done dozens of individualized and personalized and customized tours. And everyone from students, to faculty colleagues, to the presidents and provosts have all been on these, and all the deans. They've been on these tours and that's really fact fascinating to think that it has had some kind of impact, but that was the origin.

Just trying to figure out how do I do these two things that I thought were separate and realized that they could be the same and it could be actually a really great experiential learning opportunity for the students. It could be really fun for me as someone who likes doing tours, but doesn't like standard normative tours for all the reasons that I might have critiques of them. And that was it, once I thought that through and put it together, honestly, I have changed very little about the course design. And so it's just run on the idea and the way that the students are able to grasp it and run with it.

Bradley Boovy 11:39

Yeah. I'm thinking back now to just how, yeah, I'm a little emotional right now, to be honest with you. It's just thinking back on our friendship and our relationship as colleagues and everything, and some of those conversations that have also for me been really super generative. And so thank you for that.

So, thinking about how you created the social justice tours and working with the students, you've also, of course worked a lot with the archives, right? Not only here at OSU at the Special Collections and Archives Research Center – and a shout out to Natalia Fernández, the fabulous archivist, or one of our fabulous archivists who curates the Oregon Multicultural Archives, as well as the Oregon Queer Archives. And so you've worked a lot with Natalia, but you've also worked with some of the municipal and county archives I know.

Challenges and opportunities. So working with students and archives, I think we've all done that with our students. Taking them to the archives and teaching them to work with archival materials, to conduct archival research, what challenges and opportunities does archival research present in thinking about social justice, education and pedagogies? Yeah. Just I'll leave it there.

Natchee Barnd 11:49

Yeah, that's a huge question and there's possibly a hundred different ways to answer this, but I'm thinking the biggest challenge always is for the types of stories that we're trying to tell, the type of archival materials we're looking for is that we just don't find them right. The archives are, I like to say, the archives are not cooperative. There's a lot of gaps. There's a lot of blank spaces and so it's great to be able to go into archives and find amazing things and craft these narratives out of them, but oftentimes there's very little. And then the question, and this is where a lot of the course pivots and the main turning point is realizing, well, you don't always need that much. Sometimes those gaps and those absences or those hints are just enough.

And several of our stories emerge out of very very small amounts of information that are available, that are archived, but ideally we'd have so much more. And it would be lovely to have stumbled upon this rich archive that nobody knows about. And we can really craft this lovely narrative and just reveal all these hidden stories. But the reality is that most of the time we're dealing with little scraps and things that were excluded or that were just not valued enough to be placed in the archives in the first place. I should say one of the things it's neither challenge, or I guess it's an opportunity, is that then the materials that we use, the things that we create, they themselves become archival.

And that's a conscious thing that we do. The things that we create, the tour itself, the product as a collection itself, becomes a new archival set of documents that then goes back in and that's pretty exciting. So yeah, we do that with the archive here at OSU, because there's so much

overlap between the local town and the university, but also in the Benton County Historical Society.

And then depending on the subject, you may end up cooperating with other archives where materials are housed somewhere that you wouldn't expect. So I know early on we had an early gay rights activist, for example, who had materials here. He was a professor here, but he moved to LA and a lot of his work happened in LA and a really important influential person, but a lot of the archives were down in Los Angeles. And so, our students had to follow those trails. So, those are the opportunities for them to think about, well, what are the relations between different kinds of archives and how do you actually follow that?

For me, the challenge is I've done a couple stories in the years, the challenge for me is opening literally any box or any folder that we have in any archive and not finding a story immediately. So that's the frustrating part is just seeing how many possibilities now that I've seen how much can emerge from so little, every time I open a document, I go, "This would be interesting." And sometimes they immediately lead to a story. Sometimes they begin a trail that leads somewhere much further down the road. But yeah, I think it's an exciting opportunity for students to really go in and see what is here and how do you read this stuff and where does it go from here?

Bradley Boovy 16:07

Yeah. That's great. I think it also really underscores, kind of some of our conversations with Nana, Kali, where we were thinking about how to divide the chapters up in the volume, right?

Kali Furman 16:15

Yeah.

Bradley Boovy 16:16

That really your chapter, Natchee's chapter, and Natalia's chapter, one of the reasons we decided to put them first is really is to think of archives and history as a starting point. But also not to see them as limited to that, but also just to underscore what I think you were saying Natchee, is that archives are also about the future. So when we're thinking about using archives with our students, with a focus on justice or transformative education, that archives aren't just about learning about the past, but they are also about transforming the future.

Natchee Barnd 16:47

Yeah. And that's one of the main principles I convey to the classes and we read a piece from Michel-Rolph Trouillot, who is an anthropologist historian, and really the point is that I say that the, that all the things in the past are about the present. That's all they are. The history is about

the present. Nothing more, nothing less – which is why you can take a small piece of something and then move forward with it.

Especially when we're talking about these issues of social justice, because whatever we represent as history is a reflection of what we think is valuable, of what matters, of what's worth noting, what's worth archiving, what's worth telling a story about. And so every moment we're making statements and we're exposing our value systems and structures. And so we can do that with these things in mind and say, this is why this matters. Even if it's something small, it matters for this reason. Or this is why we need more materials on this because this is something we have ignored for so long. So yeah.

Bradley Boovy 17:49

Yeah, thank you.

Kali Furman 17:50

I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about the role of relationship and community building in this course? We form a relationship with the archives and with the subjects of the stories that we are crafting in the class, also with each other as students, with you, with the broader community. Can you just a little bit about how you view that role of relationships and community in this course and in the process of creating and giving the tours?

Natchee Barnd 18:15

Yeah. I think relationships, and I always pair relationships with responsibilities as a core ethical positioning that happens with the class. I mean, as you mentioned, I think the course itself, the students are developing a relationship with each other, through their stories, through their co-editing and their revision work and their suggestions. It really is a collaborative work space that we create and we let it unfold in the way that it needs to unfold. And observe what people are doing and make as many suggestions as possible. So, it's not a competitive space, it's a cooperative space, which is all about relationships.

And then with the materials themselves, right, we often get into discussions or what are our relationships, what our responsibilities to various stories that we might want to tell. So, oftentimes, like okay, there's a White student who wants to tell a story about someone in the 1800 who's Black in Corvallis, how do they do that in a way that's respectful, responsible? And it allows them to be able to dig into that and tell the story, but also navigate those questions about representation and power dynamics. And that happens in many cases where people sometimes don't want to tell a particular story because they don't feel like they can figure out the access point for them to tell it in a way that makes sense and that feels right.

And those are legit conversations that we have. So we have to have good set of relationships going in to be able to have those very difficult conversations, to figure out people's points of

comfort and discomfort and to sometimes interrogate like, is this really, or is it the way you do it, maybe need to shift. And so those are all predicated on the kind of relationships that we're going to build and that we're going to expect and we're going to hold each other accountable and not in a punishing way, but in a, we want to help us figure this out together. And that I think we also think about the relationship and the responsibility to the space, where we are, how do we move forward in a way that makes sense for everyone? And that does work that needs to be done.

Bradley Boovy 20:30

Yeah. Fantastic. So, thinking about your chapter, what do you hope people take away from it? What do you hope readers will take away from it in terms of their own context? So, obviously the chapter deals a lot with space and pedagogical approaches to space and rethinking space and history. So it's not something that just has to be limited to Corvallis, Oregon or OSU. So, what are some of the things that you would suggest readers take away?

Natchee Barnd 20:53

Yeah, I think, all the context of previous tours and things that I had been on were in really diverse and large urban spaces, and so I don't think I realized when we came in that this was even possible in a place like this. And now I'm on the other side of it where I feel like if we can do this here, we can do this anywhere. Someone else could do this anywhere. This is a fairly non-diverse space. And it has been for a long time, in a lot of categories. And yet now at this point we've developed 60 stories or whatever it is. And there are many many more that are just waiting that I have in pocket and that other people will come up with and other people just have not picked up for whatever reason that I know of.

And so I think the takeaway is that if this is something people think might be useful, it can be done for sure. It's way easier than I thought. Once you open up to the possibility of allowing those gaps and those silences to sometimes speak in different ways. If you try to be true for just documenting archived and approved materials then yeah, you might not have much. But if you allow yourself to tell a story around that isn't just the "facts" that are documented somewhere, but thinking about the broader implications and the stories and the possibilities and what we call speculative nonfiction. It opens up a lot of possible ways to retell things.

Bradley Boovy 22:22

Yeah. Thank you. That's great.

Kali Furman 22:24

Is there anything that we haven't asked you about that you really want to talk about while we have you here today and thinking about your chapter and the work of social justice education and pedagogies in this moment and the role of the social justice tour?

Natchee Barnd 22:39

I think just keeping in mind the experiential learning element is just really important. I think that it makes for a very different educational learning experience and I encourage people to push the envelope on those possibilities. Think about how do you take this out? And then in line with that, thinking about how those real-world interfaces or interventions can be a part of that. I think one of the things I try to do in as many classes as I can, is have a product, an outcome, that isn't just confined to the class and me, but is out and is available to other people to see. Students respond to that. I think they respond in knowing that other people are going to see this, in a case like this that this is going to be archived. That they're going to become part of the archive. Their names will be attached to this, that they are connected to communities that are going to be interested in these things. And so they feel the weight and the responsibility, but also the excitement and the energizing force of trying to do that work well. And I think it's tapping into those internal motivations that people have to do good things to make a difference, to have something concrete that they can look at and be proud of, and that potentially can last. So I think just looking at the bigger picture of the outcome of it, I think that's what I would leave with.

Kali Furman 24:01

Awesome. Thank you so much Natchee.

Bradley Boovy 24:03

Yeah. Thanks so much Natchee.

Natchee Barnd 24:04

Thank you.

Bradley Boovy 24:05

And thank you everyone for joining us for this episode of Transforming the College Classroom. Next episode will be speaking with Dr. Amy Koehlinger and Kryn Freehling-Burton about their chapter on religious bias, Christian privilege and anti-Muslimism stay tuned.

We'd like to thank Orange Media Network and their podcast director Jen Dirstine.

Kali Furman 24:22

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Nana Osei-Kofi 24:36

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