

<<The Stories We Hear: Learning through NECIT>>

Listening/Hearing
for the NECIT Seminararians 2005

Many listen
yet few hear
around the table
each has a story
the stories whisper
waft through discussions
each becomes caught
in remembering

how do i tell them about my sexuality?

teachers in halls, offices
teachers in seminars
teachers in classrooms
struggling

my personal views about the war may have caused some pain

students sitting in rows
or circles
do we reach them all?
at all?

who belongs? am i doing this right? is there a right?

across the academic divide
promises made
without a chance of fulfillment
differences cross borders
borders become blurred

but for her brother's death she would be veiled

course content, curricula
standards—a plural singular
classroom discussion
issues of diversity

how do they see a wasp wanting to create an inclusive community?

physics turns to issues
the nightly news moves conversations
a classroom where
minority is the norm

they would not kiss the ring on a black pope's hand

books read, chapters detailed
discussions develop
what are the outcomes?
charts spreadsheets, evaluations

they tell me it isn't what they expect, and what do i expect?

but for asking, I would not
be here
taking part
listening, hearing
walking away wondering

Joyce Rain Anderson

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and especially since participating in NECIT, that focus has shifted to not only telling stories of the self (through examining the cycle of socialization) to a wider sense of looking outside ourselves and engage in issues of social justice. Thus our stories become part of a whole—and that is what stories are meant to do.

So what have I learned?

As far as NECIT goes, I feel like I have a bit of a head start. Having been a part of UMass Boston, I was fortunate to take part in the CIT workshops there, and I took classes with some of the early participants (founders). I was especially influenced by Vivian Zamel. and Ellie Kutz who still provide me with some of the best advice about teaching/learning/researching/scholarship. IT was also during my graduate work at UMass, that I first presented at CCCC, and there I became part of a larger community of teachers/learners/scholars/researchers. Naturally, I was excited when I heard Massasoit was going to take part in an initiative for curriculum change and inclusive teaching. Here in the institution, it is difficult. Especially at Massasoit, and even though I am an alumni of this community college, I never quite find my place. As the coordinator for the Writing and World Language Center, I dance on the fringes of the English and ESL departments, and, although an instructor in both areas, I never feel part of either. Sometimes I get discouraged with formulas that are supposed to engage students in THE writing process as if it is a static thing. My studies in composition theory have led me to understand composing in a more organic sense. Wolfgang Iser talks about the “wandering I” that works as we write, as we move from idea to draft to another draft and back to idea. And, being an American Indian woman, a mixed-blood, my approach is holistic—that is all is interconnected. My work with American Indian scholars, with indigenous knowledge compels me to listen and hear the voices of students. What I hear cries for change in the institution of schooling.

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When we listen and hear the students we come to a greater understanding of what we might once thought of erroneously. For example, ESL students teach me about how they construct sentences in their languages, and thus I am better able to understand their errors in English. In English Composition I the students write an essay for the classbook, then sort and classify these essays writing prefaces and an introduction. In these activities they pay careful attention to the papers written by their peers; sometimes, they show me how to read a paper. It's fascinating to show ESL students the documentary *In the Whiteman's Image*—about the American Indian boarding schools and forced assimilation, have them read Luther Standing Bear (the first Indian boy to enter Carlisle) and see them connect to their own experiences in school learning English, grapple with the culture of the US. All of these things I have carried to NECIT, have shared and learned more of how to do.

Most importantly, the NECIT seminar has provided a space for cultivating the growth. Each week we are able to listen and hear what happens in our classrooms, how we struggle to reach students, to provide engaging curricula, how we change our notions, and what problems we encounter. I have learned that my colleagues in this seminar worry about some of the same things I do, feel overwhelmed, yet more importantly care about what goes on in the institution.

Hopes for the future of NECIT . . .

Each of us has expressed at various times our thoughts on future NECIT seminars. As Gerry points out, those of us who have gone first have an obligation to be leaders and mentors to ensure NECIT roots itself into the grounds of Massasoit Community College. After working with all the participants, it is clear to me that we would not be able to just walk from our NECIT seminar and forget; thus, we will strive to keep the process going forward. Each of us has, in one way or another, expressed such a commitment. I have

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often walked through the halls when classes are in session, and a mahority of the time have heard teacher voices. I imagine a difference in whose voices permeate the air after a few NECIT seminars have been completed. And I also imagine a place where the voices “heard” are diverse. For me, the *continuation* is crucial to channel a majority of faculty into a space where they can have opportunity to listen and learn, read and reflect, and enact inclusive teaching. It is especially important to recruit faculty across the disciplines, and especially those who are “rigid” in their disciplines. We also need to make NECIT public through faculty forum, brown-bag lunches, or other organized venues. I believe it is also important to keep pulling and tugging at the pursestrings of the administration to support NECIT initiatives. The President has publicly stated on several occassions that he has discretionary funds to support professional development; NECIT needs to keep reminding him that here is the best opportunity.

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And it does not end here. As stories do, this story moves on ; it whispers and beckons. It’s like the itch you scratch, but can’t quite rid yourself of. It remains, holds you close or circles around you. It continues to speak from the heart.

Wuniish.