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My teaching and research are mutually informing; I cannot imagine one without the other. All writing ultimately obtains meaning and value when read by others. Therefore, the classroom becomes a significant testing ground, a laboratory, for the theoretical and interpretive explorations of the most salient disciplinary knowledge inquiries.

My teaching brings students directly into issues of social justice and multiculturalism through undergraduate research, service—learning and community-based research—no matter the level or subject. In my work as a teacher-scholar in both writing and literary studies, I address with students issues of race, class, gender and other social categories of difference. I lead them to find the commonalities among them while also remaining cautious not to deny or erase difference. The most challenging of these issues focuses on crossing racial, ethnic and class boundaries within the context of the nation's history. To help all students navigate these often-treacherous waters, I am open about how I attempt to do so. As a white woman specializing in multicultural education and literature by writers of color, my "right to speak" and to cross cultures are always at issue. In almost every class I teach and in a majority of my research, I confront and deal with white privilege, racism, resistance, hatred, injustice and hurt—and in my worst moments, I have thought about giving it up to teach and research "safer" subjects. Then I remember that these thoughts are my white privilege. I can leave the despair and the anxiety that come with "dealing" with race and racism behind me; but my students, colleagues and friends who are people of color cannot. I hope that by modeling commitment to genuinely vital issues of equality and fairness, I am able to inspire my students to do the same.

I have learned during the years that undergraduate research is perhaps the most effective means to bring students into vital scholarly debates. As the teacher/mentor, my role is to help them carve out a niche for original, creative thinking. I have encouraged and supported numerous students—in my own classes and internationally—to conduct undergraduate research beyond the classroom at conferences and for journals.

I began public scholarship work almost a decade ago by integrating service learning in literature classes. In the past six years, I have facilitated community-based undergraduate research projects to (re)write local histories of marginalized ethnic, racial and cultural communities in Berks County and the city of Reading, Pennsylvania. We work closely with the African-American community, Hispanic/Latino community(ies) and Jewish communities in Berks County. Currently, I am spearheading a community-based research project with the Olivet Boys and Girls Club, Reading, Pennsylvania, founded in 1898. About 80 students in six to seven classes (three to four of my own) are participating in this project that will document the organization's history and, subsequently, reshape the public narrative of Reading's Victorian history, which has ignored the struggles and challenges faced by immigrants and the poor in many neighborhoods beyond the center square.

Through public scholarship, I have learned to be more creative and innovative to connect literature, rhetoric, narratives, stories and histories in new and multiple ways. In partnership with my many students, we cross and recross racial boundaries and barriers in literary and real-world communities. To do so is complex, yet vital.