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# Personal Freedom - Business Freedom

By Rhett Kniep

It seems appropriate to honor military veterans on this day here in America, because Veteran's Day is about giving tribute to veterans of foreign wars. The military has long been the most admired political institution in American life, and for good reason: it's the military we can thank for our freedom as Americans, for without the veterans who have fought to protect that freedom, it wouldn't be there to enjoy. And why did they have to fight?

*Wherever freedom exists, in any form, there is an ideology lurking nearby, seeking to destroy it.*

Freedom is gained by suffering, and

just as a society finds freedom by struggle and sacrifice and sometime death, an individual finds freedom through similar trials. No one is truly born free. People are made free. And they are made free by defeating slavery, as slavery is as natural to the human experience as the desire to live.

Wherever you go in the world, whatever society you study, whatever people you investigate, you will find one overall common thread: if they are what most would consider a "free" society, they have necessarily had to fight to gain and keep that freedom.

Military veterans have given us freedom by sacrifice. Sometimes that sacrifice was a leg, sometimes an arm, maybe an

eye. Other times that sacrifice has been a deep emotional scar. And often that sacrifice has been a life. There is no greater evidence of love and commitment than sacrificing one's life and well being for others.

As Thomas Jefferson once said: "**The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.**"

A society is first made free by the sacrifice of the ones who fight to protect it. But a society *remains free* by the sacrifice of individuals on an ongoing basis. It is the daily sacrifice of denying oneself that brings about the greatest freedom of all, for no

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greater slavemaster ever bore the scourge than our very own selves. We are the slave of the master of our own choosing. Just as a society must engage in constant battles to keep its collective freedom, as individuals we must engage in ongoing warfare to keep our own persons free... from ourselves. Thomas Paine wisely said, **”Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must, like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it.”**

I believe business has a striking resemblance to all other areas of life. Business naturally follows the principles and precepts that govern life in general: investment and returns, sowing and reaping, giving and receiving, honesty and trust... As business professionals, we can see the emanations of our personal choices played out in our business endeavors, and we can see the life that we personally lead is reflected in the

companies we run. As such, the personal pursuit of freedom is reflected in our business pursuit of freedom as well.

Decisions made on a day to day basis for the running of business dictate what our business will look like today and down the road. Decisions of how to communicate, how to rectify wrongs, how to work with competitors, and many others are key ingredients of our business’s life and future. The keen similarities between personal life and business can be seen in the Bible, wherein Christ uses examples of trade in agriculture and investment to illustrate Scriptural truths. King Solomon, in his well known Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, likewise uses concepts of business to strengthen his teachings on wisdom of life.

America’s second president, John Adams, a prolific author and highly educated statesman and key player in the war for the independence of the

colonies, said this concerning business:

**“All the perplexities, distress, and confusion in America arise, not from defects in their Constitution or Confederation, not from want of honor or virtue, so much as from the downright ignorance of the nature of coin, credit, and circulation.”**

John Adams understood the vital connection between the nature of business operations and life in general. He grasped the truth that to understand business is to understand the functioning of a society. They are inseparably linked.

As we remember those veterans who sacrificed so much for the liberty of us all, let us remember our own personal and business liberty come from the sacrifices WE MAKE on a daily basis. In this way we will become not only “veterans” of business, but veterans of life.

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# *Dos and Don'ts of Working With Team Members*

*By Tracey Osborne*

Working as a virtual assistant for the past seven years, I've worked with a wide variety of clients. Different industries, personalities and managing skills can either make for a good relationship or a bad one.

Having a team of my own, also allows me the opportunity to see things through the eyes of a client. I've made mistakes when working with team members, just like any entrepreneur.

Being on both sides of the coin

affords me the ability to know what clients want, and also what team members want.

Here are my top dos and don'ts when working with team members.

1. Don't micromanage. This is probably my biggest issue. When I get a client who is a micromanager, I feel suffocated. It's like constantly having to look over my shoulder and I can guarantee this type of client will cause me to make more mistakes than anything else.

Do allow team members space to get their work done. Remember they are not employees, they are business owners like you with other clients. They aren't always at your beck and call and you need to respect their boundaries.

2. Don't be vague. There's nothing like opening up a project management system to see a task that says something like, write an article. And nothing else. Well, ummm what would you like me to write about? How long?

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What's the deadline?

Do be very clear with instructions. We're good, but we're not mind readers. Be as clear as you can on what your expected outcome is for the task you are assigning. Give your team member the who, what, when, where, why and how. If you aren't sure of what exactly you need, talk to them. Have them help you get clear. In doing so, they will be clear as well.

3. Don't give unrealistic deadlines. Most VA's for example can get things done in the same day. But don't drop a last minute product launch in their lap and expect it to be done in 24 hours.

Do be mindful of your team member's time and other obligations. We all like to feel as if we are their only client, but reality is we aren't. And we aren't

their only obligation. Family and outside appointments are also a factor. It's best to expect a 24 hour turn around on most minor tasks. If you have something last minute, check with them first and make sure they can get it done.

4. Don't forget gratitude. I've worked with clients who never acknowledged what I did for them. No thanks, I appreciate you, nothing. When you don't let your team members know you appreciate them, you'll soon find yourself with sloppy work, chasing deadlines and replacing team members.

Do let them know often how much you appreciate them. Nothing motivates a team member more than when they have a client who truly appreciates what they do and what they bring to the table. It can be very simple as an email, a hand written note card or a

shout out on

social media.

5. Don't pay late. Most of us are very small business owners. We don't have the budget to wait to be paid and that's why most of us work on retainer. We have families to take care of and we rely on your prompt payment to care for them. Don't make them chase you down for payments. It will sour your relationship.

Do pay on time. If for some reason your payment is going to be late, let your team member know. Find out when you first start working with them when they expect to be paid, and what kind of grace period they have.

The key to having a long-term relationship with your team members is to be the kind of client they want to work with for years to come.

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# Leadership For An Uncertain Future

By Terry McKenna

Thanks to the Coronavirus Pandemic, we have never needed leadership more than we do now. The question ownership must ask itself is, Do our current leaders have the capacity to lead my organization into an unknown future? Leaders today must be: forward-thinking, strategically flexible, and adaptable, with a willingness to challenge the status quo and conventional wisdom. Leaders must have a healthy disregard for the impossible, and the skillset to think strategically and plan systematically. Does this sound like the leaders in your organization? If not, then the more important

question is, What are you going to do about it? What you do next is what matters the most!

Leaders, historically, and this will never change, are responsible for three things: 1) produce results, 2) lead, and 3) develop future leaders. Now that the Coronavirus Pandemic has ushered in a new normal, which has drastically changed the rules of engagement, we can add a fourth responsibility for today's leaders: reenergize their people and their organizations.

For most organizations, the Coronavirus Pandemic and its aftermath have upended

life as we know it. The resulting pain, grief, and economic dislocation will be felt long into the future. The first priority for leaders, therefore, is to lead with empathy and compassion as they revitalize and reenergize their exhausted teams and organizations. Organizations are fatigued. They need to catch their breaths in order to regroup and prepare for the second act - the post-pandemic future. Organizations need to become future-ready.

The pandemic has blown all the traditional limitations out the window. Everything is on the table. Anything is

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possible. The pandemic offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity for change. The case for reimagining your organization and taking bold actions has never been clearer. But to do this, you need leaders; real leaders, not people merely filling a leadership position. So how do you know if you have real leaders? Here are five key questions that can help you assess the leaders in your organization:

1. Your leaders consistently produce results. The operative word is consistently.
2. Your leaders develop future leaders. How many leaders have your current leaders developed in the past five years?
3. Your leaders have followers who are energized, focused on the mission, possess a can-do attitude, and willingly follow their leader.

4. Your leaders are forward-leaning, think strategically as well as tactically, and plan and prepare for the future. Or do they react to the future once it arrives at their doorstep? BTW - the problem with the future is that it always arrives before we're ready for it. Should the future arrive at your doorstep before you're

ready for it - guess what? It's too late!

5. Your leaders challenge your organization's status quo and dogmas. Do they

push your organization to get better, faster, and more efficient, or do they quietly

play the hand your organization deals them?

As difficult as this time is for many, it's

also the opportunity of a lifetime. This is a time of extraordinary change. The whole world is upside down, but that spells opportunity for business leaders whose eyes are wide open. Your eyes have to be wide open because opportunities and silver linings don't fall from the sky squarely into your lap. Opportunities and silver linings only reveal themselves to those who go looking for them. If you look past the hardship and struggle, this can be a very exciting time. Opportunities are around every corner and people are desperate for solutions. You will only benefit from this crisis if you see it as an opportunity. If you look for hardship, you'll find it everywhere; if you look for opportunities, you'll find those everywhere as well.

Every opportunity has an expiration date. The only remaining question to ask yourself is, Will you and your leaders seize this opportunity?

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# What to Do When Corporate Speak Doesn't Match Corporate Culture

By Dr. Bruce A. Johnson

We've all heard top business leaders proclaim: "This is the best place to work as our leaders are visionary, and will help propel our company into the future", or, "We strive to promote inclusivity and diversity in our workplace, making us a top employer, while creating value for all", or, "Our innovative leaders are some of the best you'll find in the industry, demonstrating empathy and compassion for all employees, while embracing passion for our values and mission".

Yet what is your reaction when you read these types of statements for

your organization or institution? Do you immediately feel inspired, because you recognize these qualities within your firm? Or do you view the words as corporate speak, designed to flatter and impress, without holding much weight?

From my time in higher education over the past 16 years, I have found very few academic institutions that have a corporate culture which matches the corporate speak, or words written and published by its leaders. This is especially true for the for-profit (and non-profit) online schools. When it comes to enrollment and retention numbers, there is often one primary

concern, and it isn't the culture of the firm. Why else would an institution decide to value profit over employees, and layoff high-performing employees, especially those who are willing to work hard?

I understand this is the "world we live in now", and there are "no guarantees in life", and more importantly, "employment is at-will". Yet I find it amazing when leaders tout how valuable their organization or institution is, and then allow the actual culture of the firm to deteriorate into a place no one actually enjoys working at, and only remains at due to financial

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need. This leads to a question then of what does a person do when they find themselves in a position of working for a firm where the culture is a mismatch to the corporate speak? Or should you do anything if this is detected?

### **Leadership Puffery Online**

Where most of the leadership statements can be found, regarding the working environment of an organization or institution, are online. For the most part, this type of wording is used in public relations statements, and social media posts. When posted by the organizational or institutional leaders themselves, it is a form of puffery designed to help elevate their feeling of status, self-worth, and sense of position within the industry. It is also a reminder to you, as someone under their position, of what

they have accomplished, and how valuable they are, should you ever forget.

Now if you are starting out in your career, you may find this level of puffery inspiring, as a means of thinking about what it is you could accomplish in your career. You may not recognize the disconnect between the words and the actual culture, and perhaps there isn't any at this time. If the words match your organization and how it operates, believe me, this is a firm you want to build a career with over time. I'm fortunate now to work part-time for an academic institution that is a certified B-Corporation, which further exemplifies their commitment to the values they promote. But finding an institution that has a culture which matches the words spoken by its leaders is rare. Most leadership puffery will be personal in nature and unrelated to what the needs of the employees are now.

### **Caring (and Not Caring) About Employees**

At the very heart of the issue about corporate speak matching (or not matching) the culture of an organization or institution is the issue of how much the firm cares (or not cares) about its employees. If you really want to know how much your firm cares or doesn't care about its employees, find your firm's leaders on social media. First, if you cannot find them on social media, that may be your first interesting clue. Next, once you've located your leaders, take a week or two and really pay attention to what it is they post. Are they invested in their employees, or are their posts simply puffery, proclaiming their virtues, and the virtues of their leaders?

Here's are some examples: Do your leaders honestly address downturns? Will your leaders address laying off

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employees at the holiday season? Do your leaders address poor working conditions, when there are known issues that have gone on for years, and the firm has gotten a bad reputation? In other words, what your leaders post about is going to tell you very clearly what they are concerned about most, and it won't take long to determine. All the diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in the world are never going to make up for: #1) a workplace culture that allows managers to gaslight their employees, #2) employees being forced to work 80-hour work weeks as salaried employees, #3) employees living in fear of their managers, and #4) employees being let go in retaliation for reporting poor management.

### What You Can Do When You Are in a Poor Working Culture

Let's be clear: An employer is always going to believe they have the upper hand in an employment situation, and for the most part, they are going to. Employment is at-will in most states. If you report a manager, even with evidence, the manager is always going to be believed over an employee. This means you must go beyond learned helplessness and take control of your career. I understand the economy is challenging and for many careers, jobs are few and far between. But what you can do is to be proactive immediately. If you are working within a culture that is anything but positive, now is the time to start developing another pathway forward. You must think beyond the present, as you never know when you will be the next casualty. This is always going to be a possibility when working in a negative environment.

If your leaders are promoting values that align with the work culture you are in now, and you are supported by your manager, then you should feel fairly secure about your job and your tomorrow. But if there is any mismatch between the corporate speak and the corporate culture, you should have your eyes open and beware. I've learned the hard way about trusting an employer, especially one I began a journey with many years ago, and then waited nine years to work for. I should have seen the signs ahead of time, and all I can do now is what I do best, help teach others. The organization or institution may be the place you want, but if the leadership is not focused on the needs of its employees, you may find yourself distressed, discouraged, disappointed, and eventually displaced. Don't let this happen to you. Pay attention to the culture and environment you're in, and be certain you're in control of your career.

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# How to Get the Courage to Pursue Your Dream Career

By Raymond Gerson

Congratulations. After much thought and research, you have discovered which career is right for you. The thought of it fills you with passion, enthusiasm, and inspiration. This career will give you the opportunity to use your favorite and best talents to make a great contribution. This is the type of work that Joseph Campbell referred to when he said, "Follow your bliss."

## Ahead of the Pack

You're ahead of many others who

have not discovered their "bliss." You feel grateful that you discovered your right livelihood, but now you face a dilemma. There are risks. Do you quit your present job or business and plunge ahead into your dream job or business? Will you be able to pay your bills? What will your family and friends think? Is this career practical?

## Heart and Mind Conflict

Your heart says, "go for it." Another part of you is scared and urges caution. Fears you didn't know you had start appearing. You wonder,

"What if I fail?" When you listen to your heart or that part of the mind that says, "go for your dreams," fears often come up. The self-preservation part of your mind raises concerns. Both parts of yourself are attempting to support you. Both parts need to be heard and considered. Before making your final decision, you may experience intense inner conflict between these parts of your mind.

You may feel like a war or boxing match is going on inside of you. I once experienced this inner turmoil before I resigned from a secure job to begin full-time self-employment. I had a

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## We Support The Hiring And Advancement Of All Minorities



## Cranford Public School District

*Making a Difference*

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## We Are Committed To Career Opportunities For All



## Niagara Falls City School District

*Learning For All... Whatever It Takes*

630 66th Street  
Niagara Falls, NY 14304  
[www.nfschools.net](http://www.nfschools.net)

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steady salary, excellent benefits, and was less than three years from receiving a retirement pension.

Some of my friends and family cautioned me against leaving my job to follow my dreams. I decided that leaving was best for me.

### The Choice Is Yours to Make

I am sharing my experience to let you know that I have experienced this dilemma, not to influence you to do it the way I did. The ideal is to start a part-time business and build it before leaving your job, or to go from a job to a job. However, what is right for one may be wrong for another. Only you can decide when to leave your job and whether to do it slowly or quickly. It depends upon your personal makeup, circumstances, and finances.

### Questions to Consider

How can you decide whether to pursue your passion? Here are some questions that can help.

1. What will be the costs for you and your loved ones if you don't pursue your dreams? What are the costs of leaving your current job or business?
2. What are the benefits of pursuing your passion? What benefits will you lose if you quit your present employment?
3. What if you fail? When you come to the end of your life, would you rather have tried and failed than to have never tried?
4. What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?
5. How will you feel about yourself if you pursue this inner calling? What will your feelings of self-worth be if you don't try?

### Steps to Overcome Fear

Also consider the following:

1. Begin moving toward your goal, no matter how slowly. Start it as a hobby, or as volunteer work, or part-time employment. Take the first step even if it's a small one. Emerson told us, "Do the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain." Action is powerful! According to Goethe,

“Whatever you think you can do, or believe you can do, begin it. Action has magic, grace, and power in it.”

2. Read the biographies of others who took risks, overcame failures, and succeeded.
3. Place inspiring quotations and pictures in your home and office.
4. Listen to CDS that lift your spirit and motivate you.
5. Reflect deeply on how you want to live the rest of your life.

You were born for a purpose that you are worthy of fulfilling. The world needs your talents and contribution.

I leave you with a powerful quote by Helen Keller that had a positive impact on me when I was battling the fear of following my passion. I hope it will inspire you to pursue your dreams.

“The marvelous richness of human experience would lose something of rewarding joy if there were no limitations to overcome. The hilltop hour would not be half so wonderful if there were no dark valleys to traverse.”

## We Are Committed To Career Opportunities For All



730 South Main Street  
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**WARWICK**  
**PUBLIC SCHOOL**  
Home of the Warriors

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**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF**  
**HAMILTON COUNTY**

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## **JOHNSON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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# Why a Truly Liberating Education Is Imperative

By Megan Wilson

This entire journal is dedicated to the theme of democracy. Exhibited are many teachers' and students' answers to "what is democracy"? I ask further questions: Why has democracy disappeared in our country? And can democracy exist in our schools? This nation is ours to shape, to create, to criticize, and to democratically raise our voices. As I stand in front of my class, the definition of democracy that was taught to me in my youth rings through my ears: a nation of, by, and for the people. This was a main principle upon which this nation was built. Unfortunately, those same

forefathers were slave owning, misogynist, white men. Their idea of democracy was never to include all of the people. But they were onto something remarkable. I think the true potential of democracy, one where the people have an informed, legitimate, and constant say in the shaping of this nation, is something we should strive for. To that end, I have chosen to struggle to make my school more democratic. Indeed, my struggle begins within my very own classroom where I try to make my curriculum and my class environment democratic. I can't say this is an easy task. Our schools are over-

crowded and under-funded. Add to that, a conservative need for artificial and superficial "accountability" causing congress people, district big wigs, and administrators to scramble for higher test scores, and my workplace often seems the antithesis of democratic. Nevertheless, when I close my classroom door, what goes on is up to my students and me. As a teacher committed to enacting a socially just curriculum, I believe that having a democratic classroom, or one that strives to be democratic, is imperative. Returning to my sophomoric definition (of, by, and for

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the people), there are many ways I can see enacting democracy in the classroom: through environment and control issues and through curriculum and methodology. My classroom's desks are never consistently arranged. Their patterns differ depending upon the activities. For instance, a circle is used for whole class readings and community circles, pods are used for group work, and semi-circles are used for performances and presentations. But never are the dreaded straight rows seen. This inconsistency in desk arrangements should not imply that I am an inconsistent teacher. Rather, I view myself as a facilitator who consistently helps to focus a democratic education on the students themselves. We as a class must become a community that shares, learns, and grows together. Staring at the back of a community member does not allow for an interchange of

knowledge. In a democracy, every member counts. In order to begin to understand how to listen and value every member in the big world, we practice listening to and valuing one another in our classroom.

What do I mean that a class must become a community? Community, among other things, means a place where students feel welcome, comfortable, and a sense of belonging. These feelings enable them to be willing and able to share and take risks with one another. If you think back to your own high school angst, you will know how difficult this concept is. Nevertheless, I struggle daily to create community in the class. First and most important, every Friday we have community circle. This is a place where for a half an hour or more we discuss what is going right and wrong in the class and we get to know each other

better. These community circles have brought forth tears, laughter, anger, and countless other emotions. As students learn to trust each other more, they are more willing to share and to learn with each other. Also, as they learn to trust each other, they keep each other "in check," which effectively eliminates any discipline problem I might have. Creating community in the classroom is not the end in itself. Rather, it is the means to creating a space where the study and practice of democracy and democratic principles can take place. I believe that corporations and the myth of the individual (i.e. "Pull yourself up by your boot straps," "America, the land of opportunity," the myth of the poor immigrant who becomes a millionaire) have overtaken democracy. This acquisition has been systematic and its origins can be traced through the history of racism, sexism, and

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classism. And that is precisely what we study in my class. Now, I am by no means an expert in any of these subjects. But my lack of expertise is precisely what allows me to be open enough to learn from my students who experience racism, sexism, and classism every day. What do racism, sexism, and classism have to do with democracy? Well, their existence and institutionalization have contributed to denying us our democratic rights both historically and presently. In order to regain these rights, we must understand that they have been taken from us, and then understand how, when, where, and why they were taken. To that end, I design lessons where we investigate these “-isms” in our world today. We investigate these modern day realities while at the same time tracing their history. A lot of the history I teach debunks myths and half-truths. Investigating textbooks is

one of the methods that I use. Textbooks play a part in perpetuating our misperceptions by presenting an unrealistic, almost mythical version of history and the American dream. Textbook investigation leads to a more critical understanding of target audiences and the “purpose” of writing any particular material. This is one of the most effective ways to raise consciousness of my students. Consciousness raising is an important step in the struggle to return democracy to our lives. Once we know what is really going on, it is easier to resist and to struggle for change.

The focus of education must be the possibilities of tomorrow. Students must be given the ability to read the world while simultaneously learning to empathize with the individuals in the world. Role-plays, debates, skits, and many alternative methods along this

vein are the best way to elicit empathy. I believe in my students. I believe that with the proper foundations, they will create a better world. I do not teach these historic injustices to be cynical and bitter. Rather, I feel it is vital that students know the truth. In addition to our historic and modern investigations, we also learn about different forms of resistance. By the end of the year, I hope that my students have a beginning understanding of the power and necessity of groups for positive change. Once armed with the truth and the knowledge of the power of resistance, students will be more capable of combating and resisting our oppressive society. Yet knowledge is only one part of the equation. Another part is action. Keeping true to the maxim that we learn best when actually doing something, I strive to incorporate action into my curriculum.

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That is to say, in our class community, we actually practice acts of resistance. These acts can be anything from listening to historic and contemporary songs of resistance, to teaching other students the “true” history of the United States, to actually organizing against injustices both in and out of school. One of the most successful projects that we completed this year was making class presentations to other classes and other schools about the subjects we were studying in our class. The actual organizing process is a bit risky due to legal issues, but suffice it to say that the opportunity for students to join in a youth organization on their own time to combat school injustices is presented. After just one semester in our class, my students have gained a much greater understanding of what resistance is and how it feels to be a part of it. This curriculum is designed to raise my students’ consciousness, to give them the tools necessary to read the world, and to show them models of change. At the same time, I am trying to develop my students’ belief in themselves and in each other. I often times expect my students to take large risks, be it in their presentations, in community circle, or in asking them to look at the world in a different way. I believe that in a democratic classroom or in a democratic world, it is vital that members be equipped with the power to think for themselves, the ability to critically analyze a situation, and the understanding that they have an important responsibility to a larger group. These are the things that I practice in my classroom and that I hope my students practice in their lives. As any good teacher, my methods, curriculum, and thoughts on the above matters are constantly evolving. I do not present this as any sort of final thoughts on the subject. Yet, as my experience and understanding of the injustices that we face increases, I become more and more convinced that a truly liberating education is imperative. No matter what great things we achieve in our classroom community, we must reopen our classroom door at the end of the day. There we face the labyrinth that is our school and all the problems and possibilities that exist there. Unfortunately, my struggle to bring democracy to the larger school environment is not one I can detail here. But rest assured there is a struggle, one that I fight with the help of my students and my colleagues. We are at a very exciting time in this nation’s history. As demographics change so rapidly, and our African American students actually become a majority in this nation, tomorrow’s possibilities are endless. I expect my students to want to be a part of it. The possibilities are there, the time is ripe, we must work together with our students to bring democracy to our everyday existence. This is what democracy looks like!

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