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English 1200 (Multi-Ethnic American Literature) Exercise for the Large Lecture Classroom

Omar Agustin Moran
entelechy2000@aol.com

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English 1200 (Multi-Ethnic American Literature) Exercise for the Large Lecture Classroom:

Course Objectives/SLO/GLO:

To develop a keen understanding of the different experiences of ethnic and marginalized communities through the study of American Literature.

To empathize with others' experiences and viewpoints.

To consider what leads to marginalization and exploitation, such as racism, ability, prejudice, abuses of power, income inequality, colonialism, ignorance, and panoptic ideologies.

To consider how inequity and abuses of power are not isolated events and can form different kinds of marginalization, which can affect *any* group.

To make *visible* what might have been *invisible* before the study.

Assignment:

Read: Audre Lorde's: "A Litany for Survival" (This was assigned before the class session).

Activity: In groups, address the following questions:

Groups assigned by numbers 1-10: Each student is given a number.

Group 1: How does the present and the future converge in the poem? What could this mean?

Group 2: Who do you envision is the "us" in the poem? How so? Who is this poem directed to?

Group 3: What does it mean to live "on the constant edges of decision," and how would you characterize the desires expressed in the poem?

Group 4: What does the line "so the heavy footed hoped to silence us" mean to you? Why?

Group 5: How can fear compel a person to action or deter them to action? Draw upon different lines from the poem and their meaning in your response.

Group 6: What does it mean to "survive", as depicted in the poem, and beyond it?

Group 7: What kind of power does language or speech have in the poem? How does language or speech shape power beyond the poem?

Group 8: What kinds of experiences do you think the narrator has had? What informs your idea?

Group 9: How does the narrator handle frustration and possible defeat in the line "so their dreams will not reflect the death of ours"? How *should* people handle frustration and hardships? (You can also compare this to our previous reading of "Harlem" by Langston Hughes).

Group 10: Does the speaker seem hopeful to you by the end of the poem? If so, what makes her hopeful? If not, why not?

Instructions: Each student responds to the question individually on a large note card I provide (roughly a few sentences, 10 minutes). Then the group forms. One person reads the poem out loud. The group then considers responses to the question, by sharing their individual responses to

each other. A member of each group shares the group's responses to the class (roughly 20 minutes). Then each person in the group answers the following questions on the same note card:

How did your group's discussion enhance or challenge your understanding of the poem? How did other groups' answers to *their* questions enhance or challenge your understanding of the poem? (A few sentences for each question, roughly 10 minutes).

Equity game (15 minutes): While still in groups, change the numbers to letters:

- Group 1: A (Asian American*)
- Group 2: F (African American*)
- Group 3: L (Latino*)
- Group 4: N (Native American*)
- Group 5: C (Caucasian*)
- Group 6: W (Woman*)
- Group 7: D (Disabled*)
- Group 8: Q (Queer*)
- Group 9: M (Middle Eastern or Jewish*)
- Group 10: V (Veteran*)

*The actual meaning of the letters will not be revealed until *after* the game.

Contest: The objective is to pass a ball (let's say, a basketball) from one person to the next, and from one group to another group as quickly as possible. The goal is to beat the previous class that did this (let's assume it took them 4 minutes and 23 seconds to do so). We do this for a couple of runs, while I encourage them to go faster and possibly beat the last score or best score. On the third run, where I say that this is our last opportunity to score the class's personal best, I take the ball away at midpoint in the game. I essentially prevent them from achieving their goal.

I now reveal the meaning of each letter on the board or projector.

Post-Game Reflection:

Questions: I ask students to answer the following questions on the back of the note card: How did it feel to work within your group to achieve your goal? How did it feel to work with other groups to achieve your *and* their goal? How did it feel to be denied the achievement of your goal? In what ways do you think your responses are similar or different to other people's or groups' responses? What does this say? How can this exercise help us think about our relation to others' experiences and desires, *and* the experiences or desires expressed in Lorde's poem? (Paragraph response, roughly 15 minutes).

I collect the note cards at the end. We discuss our responses during the following class session.