California Conference on Library Instruction

Power and Empowerment

Labor, Agency, and Dynamic Relationships in Academic Libraries

#ccli2023

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Finding Power in the Margins

Community & Positionality as Epistemic Tools in Library Instruction

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Finding Power in the Margins: Community & Positionality as Epistemic Tools in Library Instruction

Keynote keywords

Margins and community: We'll both be exploring this as a space and feeling.

Positionality: Where are we in relation to "power?" Is it a space? A feeling?

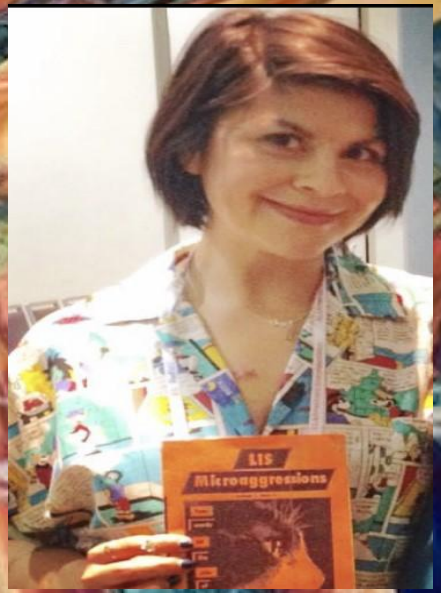
Epistemic tools: knowledge tools, tools of knowing, a tool to reveal systems of power or entrenched dominant narratives. This is also a tool of feeling, or rather a feeling of knowing.

Bringing a little East Los Angeles with us!

SUBmergent Librarianship

as Epistemic Tool

Re-imagined and actual pics from SUBmergent leader era ALA



SUBmergent Librarian

To be underwater, hidden, flooded, concealed, sunk, a haunted space, as Adrienne Rich says in her poem “Diving into the Wreck,” “the drowned face always staring toward the sun.” In other words, *a librarian working her ass off in obscurity at a community college.*

Listened to *The Greatest* by Cat Power in endless loop

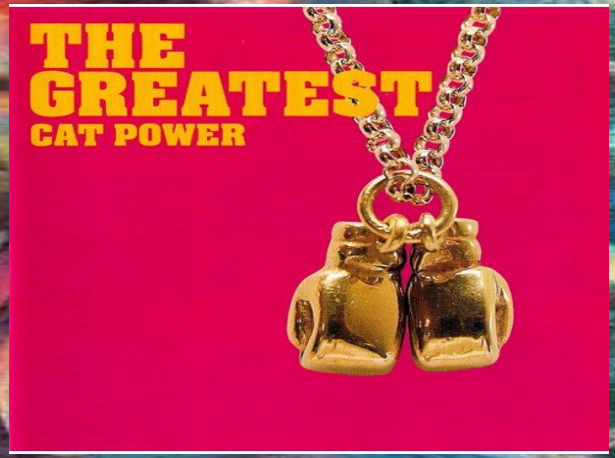
Once I wanted to be the greatest

No wind or waterfall could stall me

And then came the rush of the flood

Stars at night turned deep to dust

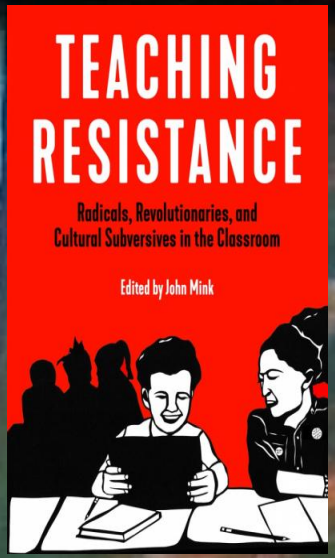
Cat Power (Chan Marshall) *The Greatest*



Being in on and out of the joke

“Community College is Totally Punk” by Michelle Cruz Gonzalez

“Perhaps one of the reasons elitist Americans believe that community college is inferior is the very fact that community colleges allow anyone to enroll, resulting in a student body that looks very different from a student body at a four-year college.”



Margins as invisible labor space

At the margins of scholarly discourse, we often engage in invisible and extra labor (literally “off the clock”) to gain entrance to privileged spaces. This invisible labor is often what “magically” bridges the equity gap that colleges like to refer to.

Cloaking our insecurities …

- With humor?
- By developing a cool chip on our shoulder?
- In our teaching?
- In our students?
- By using the Framework, even though historically community college librarians called it a “luxury” they don’t have time for?
- In the fancy language of academia?

See “ACRL and Community College Libraries: We’ve Been Framed” by Heather Craven.

Low stakes teaching!

- Not groundbreaking!
- Teach a lot!
- Experiment!
- Focus on simple stuff like creating a welcoming instruction space!
- Focus on you, the librarian, being the main library resource to highlight!
- Talk less; circulate more!
- Make dorky jokes!

“Framework as Disruptor: Teaching Students to Fit In But Also F*** S*** Up”
www.cclibinstruction.org/2022-conference/

Communities and alternative authority vocabulary

“Los Doyers” Fans
Lowriders
Customized Bike Clubs
Gamers
Queer Punk Communities
Indigenous Religions
Online Gamers
Wellness Communities
Religious Groups
Comic Books Fans
Latinx Communities
Athletes
Protest Groups
Cultural Heritage
EDM
Neurodivergent
Ace/Aro
ETSY Craft Moms
Undocumented YA
“I’m from EAST LA! Boyle Heights!”

Authority was too “gate keepy, oppressive, colonizing, repressive, and aggressive.” Alternative labels students used, especially when speaking of authorities within their communities, were knowledge keepers, memory holders, sites of knowledge, and acknowledged voices.

This bridge called collaborating with friends

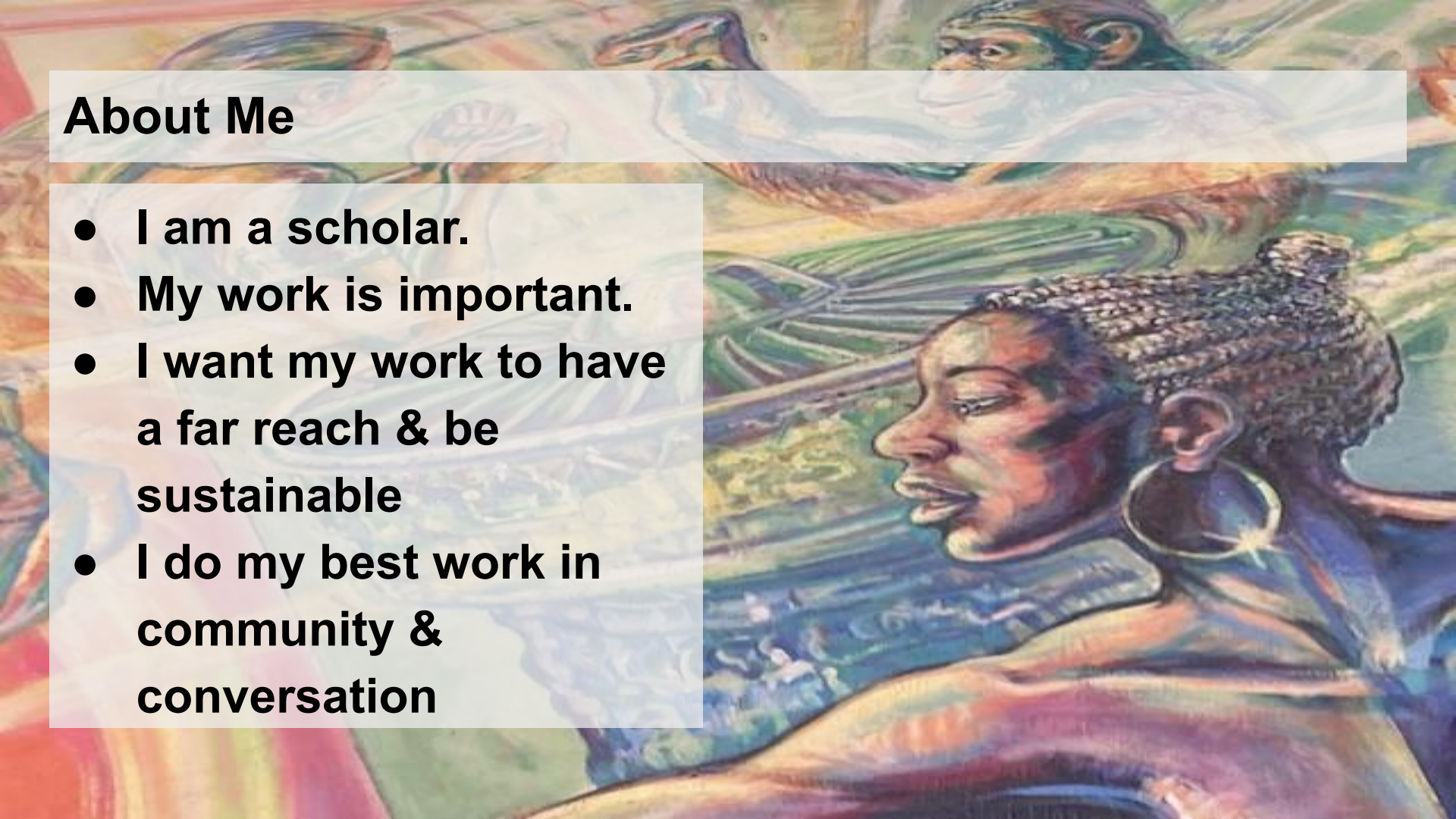
Thank you for diving into
the wreck with me today.

Realness, Vulnerability, & IDGAF

as Epistemic Tool

About Me

- I am a scholar.
- My work is important.
- I want my work to have a far reach & be sustainable
- I do my best work in community & conversation



Critical homies 🖤

Be the Person You Needed When You Were Younger

- UC undergrad: floundering → survival mode
- Embracing realness & my academic radicalization @ the CSU → purpose in my professional life
- Library school taught me how to be a basic library user but also question why libraries operate as they do

Shift into Community College Librarianship

- Students predominantly from the communities in which we're located
- Subcultures & shared experiences
- Generative conversations about information and knowledge production
  - Analyzing how data is interpreted about oneself
  - Methods & datasets, ex: "Most Miserable US Cities"
  - Power in citations

Teaching Citations Doesn’t Have to Be Boring

- Why not share with my students the ways I attempt to disrupt power in my citational practice?
  - Citational generosity
  - Citing oneself, citing your homies
  - What determines journal prestige and DIGAF?
  - Scholars as knowledge production influencers
    - Are influencers with the most followers or engagement the most authoritative in their field?
    - How can influencers conflate their authority?
    - How can new social media users attempt to gain influencer status?
- Students generally like fucking shit up

PhD Adventures & Being Real With Myself

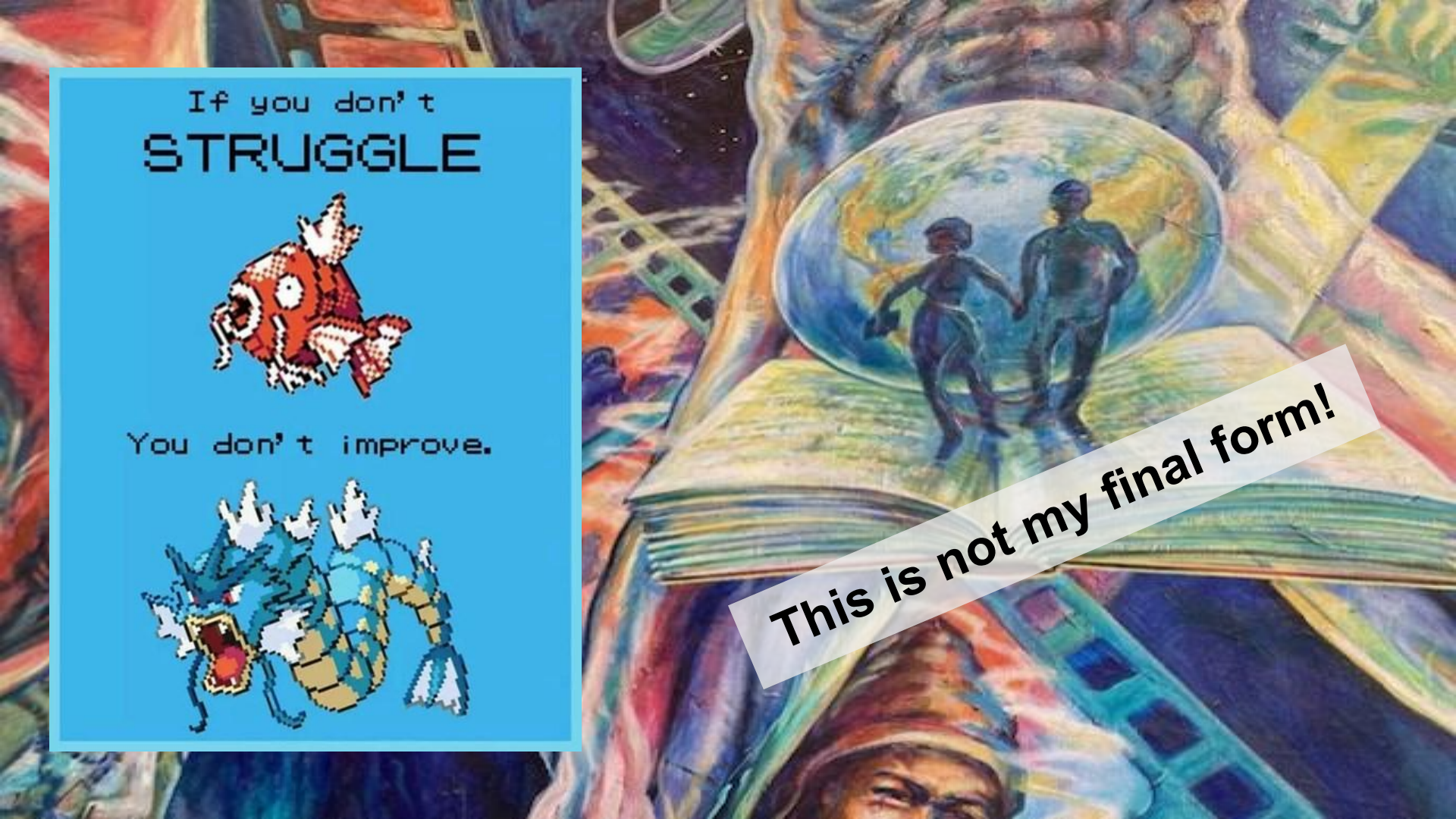
- Feeling understimulated, great idea to get a PhD. Also tired of being the data, being analyzed, reading community college scholarship that fails to understand the lived experience and nuance that we experience everyday
- Immediate sense of discomfort and feeling less than. Can kinda talk the talk but not trying to lose myself in the process because I (finally) know who I am has value
- Qualifying exams - one theory & one methods paper written as if submitting to a journal of your choosing. My feedback:

  > “The chosen target journal is not of the highest quality: a different choice should be made.”

The Hidden Curriculum Never Stops

Re: the culture of libraries, information literacy, knowledge production:

- **What values are we teaching our students?**
- **What options are we teaching students as to make informed choices?**


If you don't
STRUGGLE
You don't improve.
This is not my final form!

Questions? Discussion.

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