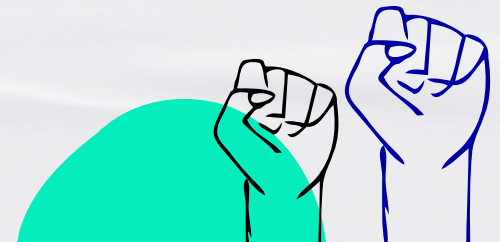




Queer Activism in Writing and Rhetoric Studies

Erin Green, University of Maryland
Elise Dixon, University of North Carolina at Pembroke



Agenda

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About Us & Our
Projects

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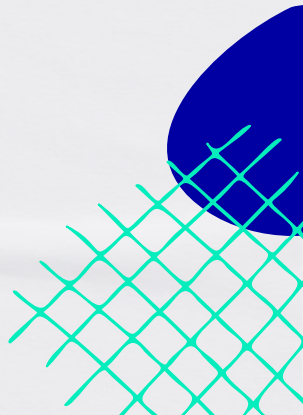
Definitions and
Background

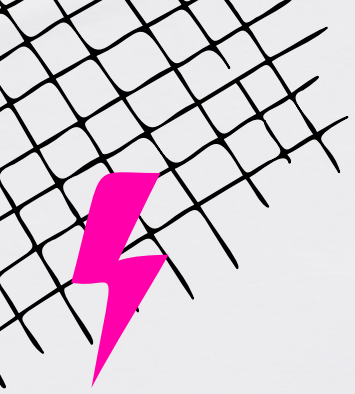
03

What Can Activists
Teach Us?

04

Resources





01 About Us & Our Projects





Erin

- ❑ Black queer literacies, critical race theory, composition theory, abolition
- ❑ Doctoral candidate in Language, Writing, and Rhetoric
- ❑ Graduate instructor & graduate WPA at the University of Maryland
- ❑ Currently conducting dissertation research on abolitionist teaching of writing and literacy

Erin's Research

- Black queer literacies in activism, culture, music, social media, politics, and education
- Critical race theory as a theoretical framework for understanding systemic oppression in laws, policies, and education (e.g., white supremacy, transmisogyny, or racial capitalism)
- Counterstory and autoethnography for describing lived experiences of marginalized communities (i.e., Black queer folks)
- Abolition in social movements, politics, teaching, and interpersonal affairs
 - Black queer activism, political education, community organizing, transformative justice
 - Linguistic justice, ungrading, cop-free schools, critical pedagogy, labor rights, and joy
- Dissertation
 - Abolitionist arguments and counterarguments (i.e., the discourse)
 - Carceral violence in education, specifically writing and literacy education
 - Abolitionist praxes in composition pedagogy and writing program administration

Elise

- ❑ Queer rhetorics, cultural rhetorics, writing center studies
- ❑ Research on what activists can teach our discipline, social justice in writing centers, queer writing center praxis, trauma-informed pedagogical praxis
- ❑ Assistant Professor and Writing Center Director at University of North Carolina at Pembroke
- ❑ Conducted research with members of the Lesbian Avengers between 2018-2020



Elise's Research

- Queer and cultural rhetorics methods/methodologies to better understand academic communities, like writing centers, fyc classrooms, and the rhet/comp discipline
- Cultural rhetorics as a framework for understanding how people and their communities shape–through (inter)actions and storying–their ways of meaning-making.
- Queer theory as a means for understanding queer and non-normative forms of composing and making.
- Current research questions my publications seek to answer:
 - What can queer activists (like the Lesbian Avengers– an activist group prominent in the 1990s) teach the rhetoric and composition discipline about how to build and sustain community?
 - How do queer students, scholars, teachers and administrators engage queer praxis in their daily work?
 - What specific trauma-informed practices can be engaged in the first-year classroom?





02

Background and Definitions



Working with Abolitionists (Erin)

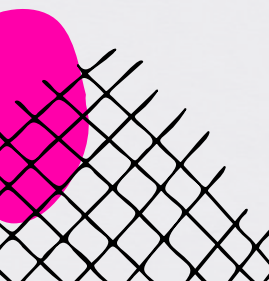
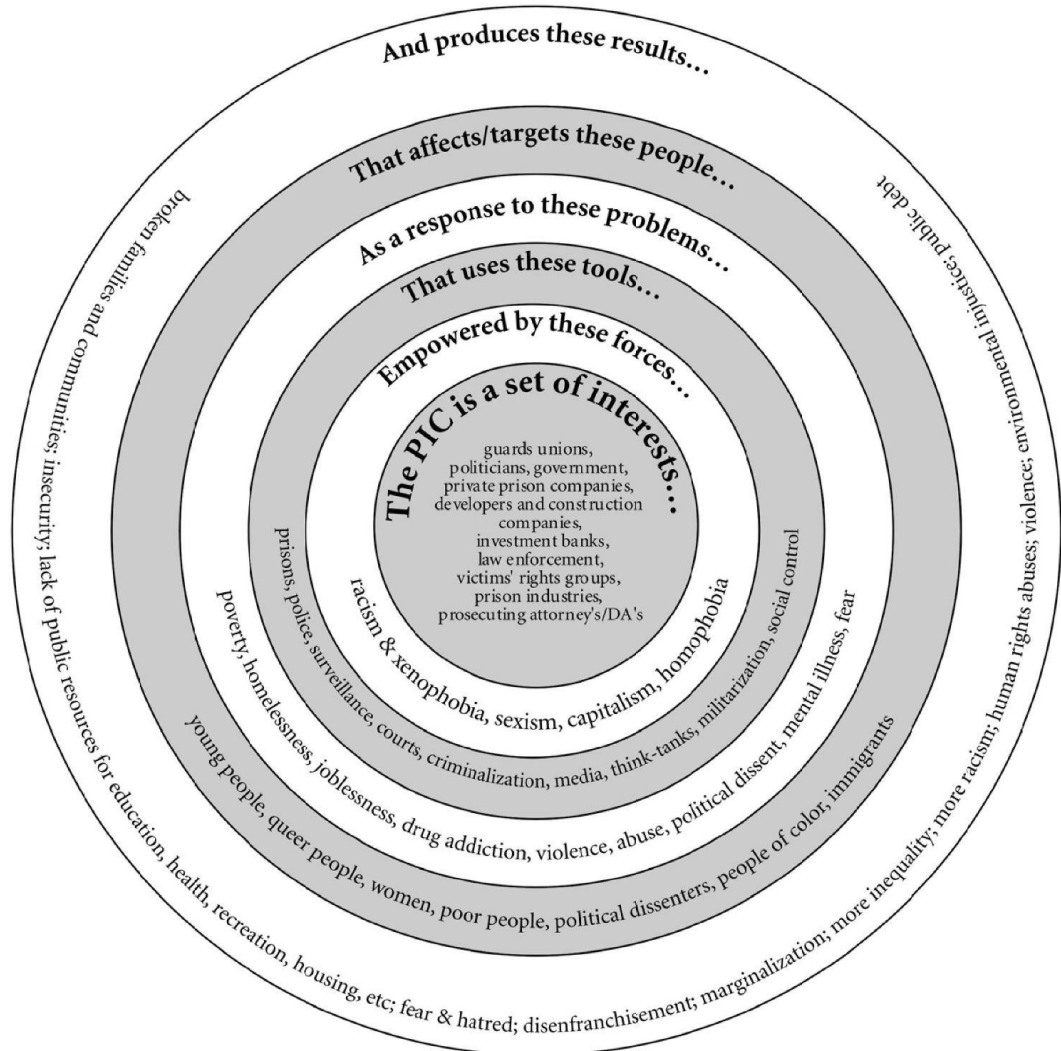
Prison-industrial complex (PIC)

“The overlapping interests between government and industry that uses surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social, and political problems” –*Critical Resistance*

Abolition

“The formal elimination of police, policing, and systems of surveillance and punishment [and incarceration]. Abolition calls for investing in systems focused on the public good, including community-based accountability, mutual aid, health care for all, and equitable access to education and housing”
–*Abolition for the People*





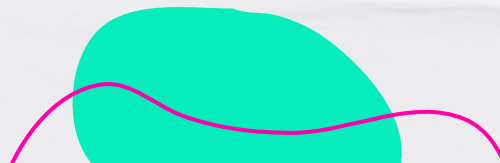
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Learning from the Lesbian Avengers (Elise)

Making as World-Making

When communities make *things* together, they engage in relationship and community building, and change their realities, and the world around them, as they do so. These recursive acts of making –albeit subtle, everyday, layered, and sometimes nearly invisible– are inherently rhetorical, and can teach us much about the rhetorical and cultural work of discipline-building.

Direct Action

The Avengers had been modeled closely after ACT UP, which focused on direct action (protests, demonstrations, etc) as opposed to ideological or theoretical consciousness-raising. According to Sarah Schulman,

The *worst* thing that can happen is an organization of consensus. Consensus is a nightmare. But simultaneity of action where people just do the things they're comfortable with and don't do the things they don't want to do is the healthiest way for an organization or a movement to grow.





03

What Can Activists Teach Us?



**How has activism
impacted how you
see and make
meaning in the
world?**



**How has activism
impacted your WPA
work and teaching?**



**How are queer people
being persecuted by
right-wing policy
makers?**



**How are activists
responding? How are
activists also
sustaining each other
and their
organizations?**



**What can
scholar-activists do
to make change
amidst an
increasingly racist,
anti-LGBT climate?**





Resources

Scholarship

- Prichard, Erin Darnell. *Fashioning Lives: Black Queers and the Politics of Literacy*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2016.
- Johnson, Lamar. L. "Where Do We Go from Here? Toward a Critical Race English Education." *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2018, pp. 102-124.
- Martinez, Aja. *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory*, NCTE Press, 2020.
- Richardson, Elaine and Alice Ragland. "#StayWoke: The Language and Literacies of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement." *Community Literacy Journal*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2018, pp. 27-56.
- Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab. "Our Story Begins Here: Constellating Cultural Rhetorics." *Enculturation: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture* vol. 18, 2014.
- Rhodes, Jacqueline. *Once a Fury*, 2021.
- Driskill, Qwo-Li. *Asegi Stories: Cherokee Queer and Two-Spirit Method*. University of Arizona Press, 2016.
- Haas, Angela. "Wampum as Hypertext: An American Indian Intellectual Tradition of Multimedia Theory and Practice." *Studies in Native American Literatures*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2007.

Other Resources

- <http://www.lesbianavengers.com/>
- <https://abolitionistteachingnetwork.org/>



THANKS!



Questions?

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