



NEW YEAR'S EXERCISES FOR RADICAL IMAGINATION

CHOOSE ONE OR BOTH!

Exercise A: Building a Personal Philosophy & Mapping Out
Community Action

Exercise B: Casting a Spell (a practice from author and activist
adrienne maree brown)

Introduction:

I designed this assignment for my students at Portland State University. Each exercise is a different kind of culminating exercise, an opportunity to both reflect back and vision forward at the end of the term.

I am sharing these exercises out with Read for Justice this winter because of a few important reasons. 1. My students love this exercise and end up with the most beautiful philosophies and spells that set the tone for their movement forward. 2. I have had very positive experiences with these exercises both personally and with my family.

So, I thought...why not share these out a little bit more widely? As is the case with most of my work as an educator, I see my work as curating the materials and sharing them out in a way that is easy to dive into. I did not create all of these materials and have given direct links and always give gratitude and recognition/citation to those who have created original work that can inspire us forward in our own learning.

The learning objective of these exercises is to take next steps in visioning a more just society, understanding our own potential impact, and planning ways to take action, especially around liberation, equity, and anti-racist practice. This might be connected to your reading practice or set in much bigger picture.

In Dr. Tania Mitchell's 2014 article "[How Service Learning Enacts Social Justice Sense Making](#)," in *The Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis*, she writes about the importance of aligning our intentions and our actions as a process in critical community-based learning. This is the heart behind this final reflection -- aligning intention and action and thinking beyond where we are now.

EXERCISE A:

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT & ACTION PLAN

There are two parts to Exercise A:

1. A teaching, parenting, reading, or other personal philosophy statement (approximately 1 page; links to multi media are encouraged)
2. A plan for aligning your intentions and actions; a plan for continued engagement in your community (length will vary)

Research shows that if we set very specific goals and write them down for reference, we become even more likely to accomplish our goals.

This reflective exercise gives you some time to articulate your values and what a more equitable community would look like. It is also a prompt to create a plan for your future community engagement and/or alignment of your intentions with your actions in the next 3 months, 6 months, or 12 months (you choose the size of your goal).

Part 1. Teaching, Parenting, Reading, or Personal Philosophy

Write a brief teaching or personal philosophy that articulates your core values and the ways you want to act on your intentions in the classroom or out in the world.

- Please take time to address anti-racist/anti-bias practice as part of your philosophy.
- Talk about the kind of personal and community work you want to do, the ways this personal/community work connects to bigger values or social justice issues. How have you constructed your independent meaning and interpretations? What perspectives have you considered?
- Reference any connections to the racial justice/anti-bias books/themes/issues you've read about, participated in, discussed etc. in the past year and how these have contributed to your vision of staying actively engaged.

Resources

Please feel free to include images and other types of media. This can be formal or creative. For a little scaffolding, read these resources:

- Here is a [resource on writing a teaching philosophy](#).

- Here is a [resource on writing a personal philosophy](#).

Part 2. Action Plan: What Does It Look Like to Act on Your Values, to Align Intentions and Actions?

Now that you've articulated your values in a statement of your philosophy, think about what kind of work in community is most important to you and how it relates to those bigger values.

You may be interested in continuing work to support your own kids, your classroom kids and schools OR you might be more interested in working in the areas of juvenile justice, libraries, etc. Focus in.

FIRST

Decide on a timeline. Being specific about your goals within a specific time frame makes you more likely to achieve them. You can choose 3 months, 6 months, or 12 months for the purposes of this assignment.

SECOND

Go outside of your comfort zone and establish some action steps. You can choose as many steps as make sense to the kind of plan you're developing.

Some of these steps are planning steps (research and join an organization with similar goals/objectives to yours, for example) and some are action steps (for example, write a blurb for your resume based on your community work this term).

Feel free to also incorporate additional steps that make sense with your individual plan for community work. Note that these steps are written as education-specific but can easily be incorporated into any other community focus.

Make sure books are part of your plan. How will reading be part of your resistance?

THIRD

Write. Write 1-3 pages dedicated to laying out your timeline and specific goals. The more detailed and specific you are about how you will meet each goal or theme, the better.

FOURTH

Keep writing. Construct a conclusion that discusses your own system of accountability, barriers to success, and resources that will keep you on track. Discuss the following:

- How will you stay on track with your goals?

- How do you feel after making this plan?
- How does this reflect your overall learning from the year and your learning visioned forward?

FINALLY, CONSIDER SHARING YOUR WORK.

Share with a close circle of family and friends and/or consider emailing us at readingisresistanceportland@gmail.com with what you've created. I will be compiling any philosophy/action plans and spells to share out with the group from anyone who would like to share.

EXERCISE B: CAST A SPELL

Unlike Exercise A, Exercise B for reflection is a little less linear and a little more grounded in mindfulness practice. Author and activist adrienne maree brown (of *Emergent Strategy*) uses a practice of what she calls "spell casting" in her workshops and in her own practice.

She has captured this process of reflection in a [New Year's podcast episode for Healing Justice](#). If you're interested in a creative reflection process that centers on liberation, this is the option for you.

The [podcast](#) from adrienne maree brown will lead you through a thinking, imagining, dreaming, and writing process. It is essentially a guided reflection process that she lays out step by step.

Before you start, you should have a pen/pencil, something to write on, and a cozy workspace. Listen to brown's voice as she guides you through the prompts. I have also written out the prompts here for you to refer back to section by section.

Free Write Prompts

- Were there things in this year that felt too heavy for me to carry?
- Were there things in this year that I learned about myself, about movements for justice, about how I want to be? Lessons that I want to carry forward? ///

Reflecting on the Present

- How do I feel like I am in my power and in my dignity in this present moment?
- Where do I feel like I want to grow my power or dignity in this moment? ///

Looking Forward

- What does liberation mean to me?
- What can I practice in this next year to increase my liberation and the liberation of my people? ///

Writing Your Spell:

- 1st stanza: What you're letting go of and what lessons you're carrying forward
- 2nd stanza: The power you're standing in and what you want to lean into more
- 3rd stanza: With your eyes on liberation, what are you going to practice?

Optional Sharing Out

Share with a close circle of family and friends and/or consider emailing us at readingisresistanceportland@gmail.com with what you've created. I will be compiling any philosophy/action plans and spells to share out with the group from anyone who would like to share.