[The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop by Professor Felicia Rose Chavez](#) is a specific model of workshop she developed to decolonize MFA programs.

Before beginning, a few words from Professor Chavez's introduction (pages 14-18) about the future of creative writing:

> Let's not get it twisted: the anti-racist writing pedagogy is aggressive-activism. It's immediate, tangible action that disrupts the legacy of white supremacy by changing organizational structures, political practices, and attitudes so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.

> Folks whom you respect and trust might say this model sounds excessive. That it disservices writers of color by coddling them. That it's soft, feminine, or naïve. That it unfairly advantages "inferior writers of color over their white peers." That it's a symptom of affirmative action, a bunch of ethnic studies propaganda, typical of our spoiled, spineless, politically correct generation. That it's reverse racism, or—astonishingly!—that it's redundant, because "racism no longer exists."

> The bewilderment, the resistance, the hostility may be all too familiar. Just nod and carry on: you hear them; but our young writers of color take priority.

> My own students occasionally express opposition to the anti-racist workshop model. They'll request a one-on-one conference, only to complain that their peers are "too nice." They want instead for their classmates to "be real," to "be harsh," to "tear the work apart," because they can "take it."

> These students, in my experience, are always privileged white males. Every single time.

> And while my sampling pool might be skewed (I teach at a prestigious private college in Colorado), I believe there's something to learn from the pushback of white male students. They want to compete in workshop. Or, more accurately, they want to win workshop. Without acknowledging, of course, that the game is rigged, that they won at the get-go, regardless of their writing ability. This colosseum mentality of brutality and bloodshed is a farce, one that blinds them to the advantage of collaborative creation.

> In conference, I suggest that the students focus less on the workshop critique they receive and more on the prompts they provide. Did they ask pointed questions to elicit specific, insightful feedback, or were they passive, vague, sacrificial storytellers awaiting the knife? "Is it any good?" these white male students tend to ask, well accustomed to instantaneous response (their lawyer grandfather, their novelist father, their editor mother, their uncle's golfing buddy, admissions director to dream school). Confident in their place in the world, their effortless access to attentive ears, they balk at politeness as though it were backward: "I don't want to be spoken to that way. I want callousness, the 'Truth.'"

Unlike their marginalized peers, their lives do not depend on civility and cooperation. "Can't we all just speak our minds?" is the unknowable privilege of white people. It's a clever invitation, a sly smile, a loaded gun. Because say the "wrong" thing—and I have, when enforcing my course policies regarding attendance, participation, or deadlines—and BOOM, their fathers fire patronizing e-mails about what their sons deserve. Not what they've earned, but what they deserve. And just like that, the game of being "real," or "taking it," is over.

With time, these white male students acquiesce to the anti-racist model—the transformation is truly rewarding—but as is the trend with apple barrels, there's usually one who remains disgruntled. Just this past fall, I remember a writer of color who cried during check-in (a daily ritual to begin workshop, referenced in chapter 2). She said that she had a "rough night," to which a white male student responded with a theatrical sigh. After class, in my office, he complained that it's "annoying" to sit through check-in because what could have possibly happened between yesterday and today?

What, indeed?

As an undergraduate English major at DePaul University, I crisscrossed the city of Chicago, tutoring wealthy white children in their pristine homes. It was a well-paying, massive exercise in self-effacement, one I've rarely spoken about out of shame, for the reality of "private writing tutor" so drastically contrasted the line on my resume. White fathers sometimes fingered my hair or grazed my breast before handing me my paycheck; white mothers often expressed exasperation when I refused to cook or clean. "I'll pay extra!" they'd relent, misreading my rejection as barter. I was the brown nonperson, hired help, deferring my own college coursework in order to write their children's five-paragraph essays.

All this to afford my tuition, rent, utilities, toiletries, groceries, clothes, bus fare, plane fare, and also stamps, to mail whatever money was left over to my parents, both of whom collected disability. It wasn't always so—my parents kicked off careers in the service industry while they were in middle school—but during the course of my undergraduate study, my dad suffered physical pain, my mom emotional.

I strategically time that daily phone call home to Albuquerque until after my homework was done.

A conversation with my mom, especially, could derail me for hours, the late-night agony of should I stay in school, or go back home where I'm needed?

A good Chicana should be by her mother's side. I didn't need some fancy school to teach me that.

On the phone, my parents and I never spoke of my own pain: the impossible divide between my classmates and I, that racial and socioeconomic gulf I internalized each time I arrived on campus. Friendless, I'd trail behind groups of orange-skinned girls in North Face fleece. They'd turn left, toward the dorms (warm meals served up on trays, care packages from mom, late-night roommate confessionals), and I'd turn right, toward the train and then the bus, back to my too-cold studio apartment. I was so goddamn lonely, frozen in my thrift-store jacket, exhausted from teaching other people's children, guilty at my own greedy desire for education, and spitfire angry that nothing ever came easy.

So yeah, a lot can happen between one day and the next. If a professor had just once taken time out of class to ask me how I was doing, I, too, might have cried. I, too, might have said, "I had a rough night."

If we're aiming for Truth, young men, then here it is: I'm at peace with the occasional white workshop participant's discomfort, because it's evidence that the anti-racist model is working. For the first time in their artistic careers, white writers must listen—to multi-dimensional storytelling, to marginalized narratives, to the anxieties and aspirations of their peers—without a single appeal for their opinion. Listening is the first and most important step for maintaining a storytelling tradition, and as such, we must practice it daily. Writers of color are accustomed to this practice, burdened with ears so elastic we're capable of hearing multiple, simultaneous subtexts in every exchange.

At heart, The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop imparts a pedagogy of deep listening. We invest in one another as complex individuals. We confront the voices in our heads that tell us our stories are unimportant. We honor the sidelined narratives of people of color, women, queer, differently abled, and gender-nonconforming artists. We listen to one another's writing, read aloud in workshop, ever conscious of our body language. We ask questions with the intent to understand instead of retort. We read for craft over content, regardless of our subjectivity. And we adhere to the author's agenda during feedback sessions. It requires self-discipline to be sure, but cultivating listening in the creative classroom makes us better writers. We're more present in our lives, better able to articulate what it is to be human. The resulting work rings with vitality.

I'm offering a new approach for a new millennium; it's okay if a few students and colleagues are slow to catch up. Because that young woman who cried during check-in is evidence that the model is working, evidence of her vulnerability and trust, her internal mutiny against the cultural imperatives of safety in self-effacement. As Audre Lorde reminds us, "We cannot fight old power in old power terms only. The way we can do it is by creating another whole structure that touches every aspect of our existence, at the same time as we are resisting."

The anti-racist model is working. I've witnessed it, again and again. Workshop participants thank me for making writing relevant and personal; for allowing for freedom

of thought; for establishing mutual respect, trust, and agency; for curating a safe, welcoming environment; for hosting a creative community; for tailoring the workshop to who they are as people; for doing their stories justice; for reframing the objective from a product to a state of mind; for inspiring them to look at everything differently now.

"Felicia feels like the future of education," wrote a young woman in my most recent round of course evaluations. How profoundly I want to honor that sentiment. If only I could time travel, first backward to that young woman in the black hoody, black boots, black coat, slumped down at the classroom desk–I'd hold her hand, reassure her that she matters, I matter–and then we'd bold, full-force forward to where we belong, to the future of creative writing, where multicultural consciousness holds weight and substance, where our brown bodies are emboldened to "speak, poet."

What will it look like, sound like? The choice is ours.

If these words inspire defensiveness or discomfort, you may not be ready to engage with this workshop, especially if the leader of your group will be participating in workshop and there is no impartial party to settle disputes.

If what Professor Chavez said above is something you can sit with, this workshop is for you.

Though the workshop model was not designed for writing workshops that only meet once or twice a month, we will be adapting some of her pedagogy to make sure that marginalized writers are not traumatized by workshop and are able to use their workshop time effectively to pursue revisions.

<u>Here is my proposed adaptation of her model for our workshop:</u>
- The author, wishing to present a piece for workshop, will craft a one-page artist statement letter. The artist statement letter serves as the first page of the author's draft, and includes responses to the following:
    - Summarize your project in one to two sentences (you can go longer)
    - What surprised you while you were crafting the project?
    - What aspect(s) of the project posed the greatest challenge for you?
    - What successes resulted from the project?
    - What is your vision for future drafts?
    - Enumerate three craft-based questions about your project to guide workshop discussion. What do you need help sorting out?
- Once participants receive the author's statement letter and draft, they will read the letter, then the draft, and leave feedback via track changes, comments, and an editorial letter at the bottom of the draft. This written feedback will be returned to the author the Sunday evening before Wednesday workshop. This gives the author time to read the feedback, process any feelings they have, and draft follow-up questions to discuss in workshop.
    - Editorial letter:
        - Anything the author did super well

- ■ Anything that in the way for you as a reader:
    - Confusing
    - Took you out of the story
    - Offended you (as part of lived experience)
    - Any overall notes
- The author will moderate their own workshop time. This process is based off of [Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process](#).
    - Workshop consists of **30 minutes** to be spent however the author chooses.
    - The author will begin with the questions posed in their artist statement and move through them until satisfied.
    - Once the author is ready to move on from answers to their artist statement questions, the floor is open for participants to ask neutral questions.
        - ■ Neutral questions are questions that inquire about the artist's primary intention. Ex. "What were you going for with the flower imagery in this scene?", "Why did you choose this character's perspective for the story?", "How did you choose when to start your story?"
    - The author will respond to neutral questions. Participants will listen, and the author's answers will help participants determine if their feedback is useful to the author.
    - Once neutral questions are done, participants may offer further feedback about the story.
        - ■ To offer feedback, a participant will raise their hand, be called upon by the author, and then say what they'd like to offer feedback on. Ex. "I have feedback concerning the flower imagery. Would you like to hear it?"
        - ■ The author then responds with a "yes," "no," or "maybe later" type response. This allows the author to focus on topics they're still seeking help with in order to allow them to make the best use of their workshop time.
- Once an author's workshop time has ended, the author concludes by thanking participants and then identifying one or more task points for revision.
    - This satisfies in two ways: as a participant, to hear that your investment of time and energy has contributed to a writer's next move; as an author, it sets the solid goal of "next steps" to move towards.

Does this workshop model sound inviting?

Wonderful!

Here are the steps Professor Chavez recommends we go through so we can make the most out of this model.

1. Build confidence and community through daily snack, check-in, and freewriting opportunities.
2. Participate in daily informal workshops and self-assessment opportunities.

3. Check one's positionality and body language when engaging with another's ideas.
4. Explore a living archive of scanned print material, sourced PDFs, and multimedia art that features marginalized artists.
5. Read for craft and then collectively define craft elements.
6. Study how to frame effective questions and then interview contemporary writers.
7. Read Liz Lerman and then collectively negotiate writing workshop rituals.
8. Practice how to workshop in favor of the writer's agenda as opposed to one's personal aesthetic preferences.

These suggestions were created for an MFA workshop that meets daily. Since our group is working in a digital space and meets less frequently, here are my proposed adaptations:

1. Build recognition and community through check-in at the top of meetings.
2. Work through a series of freewriting prompts sourced from The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop that were designed by Professor Chavez to build confidence.
3. Create a living archive of our inspirations to share with each other through Google Drive and our Discord Server (Here is an example Google Drive space)
4. Collectively define craft terms and elements so writing terminology is decolonized and collectively agreed upon.

The list above are the four steps I believe will augment our skills as writers to get everything we can out of workshop.

Let's go through them.

Building Recognition and Community Through Check-ins:

Chavez discusses the importance of check-ins in her book (p55-56), saying:

> We commence check-in, a daily ritual in which I address workshop participants one at a time, but name, asking "How are you doing?" This, my method of roll call, elicits a lot of embarrassed shrugs on day one. It kills participants to be so visible; they're "cool," they're "fine," they've got nothing else to add. Steadily, over time, they elaborate, and we hear about a break-in, a breakup, an illness, a friend who's in town, a new job. Sometimes participants use check-in to troubleshoot with the group about their writing. Sometimes they use it to communicate with me that they're in a bad place that day, period. That's my official spiel on check-in: it helps me to gauge where each student is that day so that I may tailor my teaching to best respond to them.
>
> Unofficially, check-in is about community.
>
> We learn each other's names, without even meaning to.

We embrace vulnerability by sharing our individual experiences.

We listen to one another, recognize one another, root for one another.

We evolve into a collective, an arts community to which we feel responsible. It matters if we're not present.

Anyone can throw feedback around as a reader who doesn't know you.

We're aiming to create a collective that can support each other as writers long-term.

By engaging in check-in every time we meet up, we'll become that collective.

Working Through a Series of Freewriting Prompts:

Chavez defines freewriting as ten minute sprints where the writer continues to write for the whole time, hand never stopping to question the accuracy or worth of what is being written.

Chavez explains the importance of freewriting exercises several places in her book. She first touches on it on page 56-58:

> We must make writing relevant. This means building on accountability and vulnerability to engender trust.
>
> I top load my workshops with highly personal writing exercises, beginning with a first day of freewrite: Declare why you are good at writing. Participants must own the language, meaning the can't parrot another's words (my third-grade teacher once said…). After they've generated a short list, I ask that they choose one, stand up, and say it aloud. (My name is…, and I'm good at writing because…). At this point, we cheer annoyingly loud so as to disrupt every other class in the building. My students' voices shake when they share, because it's scary to stake a claim: I am worthy of words on the page. …
>
> The more direct and ambitious those initial freewriting exercises, the better. This means prompting participants to write about themselves–why they write–their motivation, their unspoken desires–and then push them to share that writing out loud, daily, with the workshop. These early, intimate confessionals command trust. They also set high stakes for what's to come: when participants later attempt a poem, or a play, or an essay, it's imbued with significance beyond the task itself. That poem, that play, that essay is a triumph over all the reasons not to write. How trivial showmanship and competition become when you make writing personal to the author.

It was around this place in the book that I scribbled "die, vampire, die," into the margin of my copy of The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop, which is a lyric from the song of the same title from the play [Title of Show] that's about overcoming the creative process.

The song details all the things that suck our creative energy out of us and keep us from creating anything at all.

By engaging in creative freewrites during meetings and reading them aloud to each other, not only will we further foster our group's community, but we will kill off the vampires in each of our minds, sucking our voices dry and trying to silence us.

Chavez speaks about fears later, on page 64:

> To rally a generation of multicultural writers, you must start at the heart: participants' emotional relationship to writing. The anti-racist writing workshop trains participants in how to release fear's stranglehold over their work and exercise authentic voice.
>
> At the top of the class, I address participants' fear of risk-taking, for if there are not words, there's no workshop. The blank page cannot win, and so I ask: What are your excuses for staying immobilized?" Sometimes it's fear of imperfection. Sometimes it's fear of sounding stupid or doing it wrong, or airing out stories better kept private. "Write a list of your writing fears," I instruct my students. "Don't hold anything back." After they freewrite for ten minutes or so, I draw on an exercise from _Writing Past Dark_. "Review your list," I instruct, "and organize your fears into two categories." The first is internal (I'm afraid of betraying my dad if I share this), and the second is external (I'm afraid the class won't understand my writing). It's a rare workshop participant with balanced columns; usually the consensus is one of shock: "I'm the one keeping me from writing!" or "I never realized I cared so much what other people think!"
>
> After some discussion, participants once more return to their list. Next to each fear, they add, "But I will write anyway." We stand and share these fears aloud, as many rounds as workshop participants are willing, followed by the mantra, "But I will write anyway." Not only does this exercise prompt participants to deconstruct patterns of writer's block, procrastination, and playing it safe (patterns previously normalized as par for the creative course), it also confirms that they are not alone in their fear.

Professor Chavez includes her own list of fears in regards to writing The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop at the end of the chapter (page 67) as an example of this exercise, titled Mothering Myself:

> I'm afraid that no one will read this book.
> I'm afraid that I'll lose friends over this book.
> I'm afraid white readers will threaten or verbally assault me for writing this book.

I'm afraid that POC readers won't take my ideas seriously because I'm not Chicana enough.
I'm afraid that educators won't take my ideas seriously because I'm too young, or at least I look too young.
I'm afraid that white selection committees won't hire me as a result of writing this book.
I'm afraid that people from my past will accuse me of lying.
I'm afraid that people from my past will hurt because of what I've written.
I'm afraid that I won't be able to afford a book tour.
I'm afraid that this book will not be good enough.
I'm afraid that no one will care and nothing will change.

But I will write anyway.

She goes into how freewriting and immediately reading it aloud to your workshop group helps combat the paralyzing need for perfection, allowing us as writers to help defend our creative voices from our editorial pens, on page 72-74:

> I'd much rather read raw energy than a writer's practiced attempt to sound like a modern-day Hemingway. "Don't write right," I tell my students, by which I mean, don't torture your words to satisfy the workshop, the workshop leader, or your writing heroes. I say, "Let go of all that. Lose control."
>
> How do we train our workshop participants–many of them young, many of them yet to "find" themselves–to write from an authentic voice?
>
> Peter Elbow talks about the "awkward and sometimes paralyzing translating process in writing." When faced with a blank page, Elbow observes that we all too often stop and ask, "How shall I say this?" It's there–in the moment of self-conscious negotiation that we translate our words into what we think other people want to hear. Maybe we tend to trip over writing's rules and so we aim for simplicity. Maybe we worry that our attempt will embarrass us and so we aim for safety in ambiguity. Maybe we obsess over the exact right word, sentence by sentence, and so we aim for thesaurus-inspired perfection. The point is, if we're hung up on the reader's experience before we've even written anything, we sacrifice our voice to satisfy someone else.
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> The habit of trying to control the writing while we write kills the vitality inherent to our authentic voice. Elbow elaborates:
>
>> To write is to overcome a certain resistance: you are trying to wrestle a steer to the ground, to wrestle a snake into a bottle, to overcome a demon that sits in your head. To succeed in writing is to overpower that steer, that snake, that demon. But if, in your struggles to write, you actually break its back, you are in trouble. Yes, now you have power over it, you can say what you need to say, but in transforming that resistant force into a limp noodle, somehow you turn your

words into limp noodles too. Somehow the force that is fighting you is also the force that gives life to your words. … This myth explains why some people who write fluently and perhaps even clearly–they say just what they mean in adequate, errorless words–are really hopelessly boring to read. There is no resistance to their words … no surprises. The language is too abjectly obedient. When writing is really good, on the other hand, the words themselves lend some of their own energy to the writer.

In order to harness this resistance–that rich, feral creative energy–workshop participants must train in how to write without thinking about writing: how to turn off their internal translator, disobey writing's rules, and channel life back into their words. The goal is mess, aliveness, and a sense of discovery in real time–evidence that participants are thinking and typing in tandem as opposed to stopping and translating word by word. It is writing of the self, for the self.

To that point, Chavez goes on to explain how tactile and physical writing can be, and how important it is for you to find the tools that work for you. She requires each of her students to write by hand while doing freewriting. I've found in my own life that if I'm being too critical of my writing (and being *way* too fast with the delete key), the best way to keep from destroying good work is to go to my writer's notebook and write on the paper with ink. If I don't like something, I can strike it through with a line, but it's still legible if I want to come back for it later.

Consider buying or crafting a writer's notebook and finding a writing implement that brings you joy. Give thought to your space, your posture, your mindset. Allow coming to writing and the act itself to be a ritual of self-love.

If that's just a chromebook with stickers all over it, awesome. Everybody's writing tools are different and personal. Choose the ones that speak to you.

One final note from Chavez about freewriting and reading our work aloud (page 78):

To be clear, this is not an exercise in critique. Instead, participants respond to a writer's concerns, pointing to compelling insights, images, or energy. In doing so, they help one another get over it and get on with it. It's a real pleasure to witness. Eventually, participants grow more comfortable with their own messy words and more confident in their delivery.

Here is a list of proposed freewriting topics (we can always add more):

1. Declare why you are good at writing?
2. Why do you write?
3. When, where, and how do you write? How do your tools serve you?
4. What aspects of the writing process do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?
5. What are your excuses for not writing? What are your fears? Why will you write anyway?

6. What do I need right now, on an emotional level?
7. What media makes you feel seen? What/who makes you feel understood? Why?
8. When did you know you were a writer?
9. What do you want your authentic voice to sound like? What's standing in your way? Which parts are you bringing to your writing already?
10. Are there patterns that help you do your best writing?
11. Who were you when you first began writing?
12. What is the background you bring to your writing? What is the cultural heritage/baggage you carry? How does it serve you, or if it doesn't, how do you escape it?
13. Who mentored you along your journey?
14. What do you hate? What gives you hope?
15. Write about a time you knew you were right when someone in power insisted you were wrong.
16. Who failed you, criticized you, belittled the art as a waste of time? Who/what inspired you to write regardless?
17. Why is it important for you to tell the truth about your life? Why is your writing powerful?
18. What do you give yourself permission to do? What is it helping you grow into?
19. What do you want out of your writing? Where do you want it to take you? How will you defend this even as other obligations try to take your time and energy?
20. Who's your biggest fan? Who are you writing for, besides yourself?

Building a Living Archive of Inspiration:

All of us had a moment (probably while reading, since we want to be writers) where we decided "I want to do what this author's doing."

What was that author doing, though?

The answer is, they made you feel seen.

In this section, we gather materials that make us feel seen, the media that speaks to our hearts and picks us up when we're down. Then we squirrel it away in an organized way so we can show it to our workshop partners.

In doing this, we help our partners see us for who we are, and where we came from. No artist exists in a vacuum. By showing off the art we as creatives pull elements from to inspire our own art, we show our partners what we are trying to achieve, thereby better informing them how to help us as critique partners.

Chavez discusses how creating this list legitimizes our own voices and journeys on page 80-81:

> I ask my workshop participants to make a list of reasons why it is important for them to tell the truth about their lives. I ask them to make a list of reasons why their writing is

powerful. I ask them to complete the phrase, "I give myself permission to _____," so as to offer release. I ask them to enumerate ten things that currently inspire them and then pick one as their homework assignment. I ask them to freewrite about what they're exploring, and then later freewrite about what they've found. I ask them to complete the phrase "I am growing into _____" as a reminder that they're growing, we all are, every day.

Chavez first started by trying to create her own archive of **living marginalized authors**, in order to expose students to more than the straight, white, cis, male literary canon. Eventually, she asked her students to add to it.

The works her students add give them a real artist like themselves to aspire towards. The work of these marginalized authors gives her students' own work legitimacy.

It also allows her to invite the artists that create those works to the classroom, to further humanize the works in the archive. A person made this. A person worthy of respect and compassion. When workshopping, we should offer that same respect and compassion to the author's we are giving feedback to.

It's a necessary step for her anti-racist writing workshop model to work.

As a digital writing group instead of a university sanctioned MFA program, I don't think we'll be able to get guests the same way she can, but it's possible to get close to artists that inspire us via interviews and their personal websites (which she recommends if a student can't contact the artist they choose to try and contact).

She details the choice to let her students build the archive here, page 103:

> My living archive transformed into an inclusive learning tool. Workshop participants saw themselves reflected in the selection of young writers, empowering them to claim the identity of author. They left class equipped with a database of potential publishing venues that valued their voices (and many of them went on to publish). And they gleaned inspiration from writers of color, the new norm.

> In response, participants began to open up, seeking me out after class with, "This reminds me of…" or "Have you ever heard of…". Of course, I hadn't heard, so I started a running list of their artistic mentors. That's when it hit me. Here I was, so emphatic about completing the canon, and yet in being the only decision-maker I was replicating the same system of power that valued domination over inclusion. It was me who appointed the Literary Geniuses, me who guarded the gate. Where were my students' voices? I started to seek them out. "Who inspires you?" I asked workshop participants, and then added works by those writers to the living archive too.

Today, I devote an entire course–The Inspiration Lab–to studying my student's artistic mentors. The living archive doesn't exist until they make it. In this radical take on the anthology, every workshop participant contributes to our course of study, selecting one art object to share: audio, image, text, or something in between. **What I find remarkable is that the majority of participants instinctively select works by contemporary [marginalized authors].** We discuss their selections in terms of craft and then create art objects in response, the goal being to broaden our imaginations to access inspiration from everything, everywhere, regardless of the confines of personal aesthetic. In the process, we achieve a truly democratic classroom–a Marxist, Freirian, liberatory classroom.

This step is something that we will build out of workshop individually (accessible via Google Docs for the group to engage with), and then present to each other, each of us selecting one thing from our lists to present to the group during workshop.

Our group Discord server will give us a space to continue to share inspiring works with each other even when we're outside of class.

If we like it a lot, we can add a "show and tell" aspect to our meeting schedule.

You'll notice I've bolded two segments above, "living marginalized authors," and "What I find remarkable is that the majority of participants instinctively select works by contemporary marginalized authors."

These are hints as to the types of works that will most benefit the group.

With that in mind, it may be worthwhile to set the limitations on the type of media allowed into living archives. With that in mind, here are some proposed limitations:
- No dead white men that were assigned in school
- No living white men who are best-sellers
- No white men who are lauded as masters of literary canon

Everyone may be allowed one or two exceptions to these rules (Oscar Wilde and Neil Gaiman come to mind–though not everyone was lucky enough to be assigned Wilde in school, and Gaiman is Jewish, not white), but as a rule, it would behoove the group to make the majority of artists included in their archives living, marginalized creators.

Collectively Define Craft Terms:

Perhaps you've had this experience. You're sitting in workshop, listening to someone giving you feedback on your work, and suddenly they whip out a term you don't know. Or maybe the term's vague. I hated hearing "cliché" from my college writing workshop partners, because none of them actually knew what it meant–they just used it to describe things they didn't like.

(Btw, "cliché" actually means (in writing) "a phrase so familiar or overused that it has lost meaning without contextualization". Remember this for later, it's gonna be relevant in a second)

Professor Chavez has her students collectively define the craft terms they'll use in workshop so that authors and participants won't have this experience during discussion (page 120-121):

> Using the assembled living archive, I organize my assigned texts into four craft categories: voice, imagery, characterization, and arrangement (what students call "flow"). I chose these particular categories after reflecting on my students' organic learning trajectory in workshop. First we tackle the common conflation of the individual voice and authorial voice (I was depressed when I wrote this, so the voice is totally emo). By distancing the writer from the writing, students learn to craft a compelling narrative persona tailored to each project. We then go on to make concrete the creative writing **cliché**, "show, don't tell," breaking down figurative language into a balanced portrait of abstract comparison and sensory detail. Next, we aim to animate our text via characterization, layering in scene, setting, and dialogue. And finally, there's arrangement, an attempt to break free from a chronological story straightjacket. Rather than a strict allegiance to plot, we explore what our work is really about, structuring our narratives to best showcase our themes. …
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> Students choose one or more texts from an assigned category (often I encourage them to self-select their nightly reading, other times I guide them toward readings I think speak to their individual aesthetic). The prompt is simple: Study the text(s), and then answer the question, "What is voice?" in your writer's notebook. When we reconvene for class discussion, we all know exactly what we're going to talk about (and yes, everyone is required to talk). There's no one person dominating the discussion, there's no scrambling to sound smart, there's no proving a point; all students are equally vulnerable in positing a definition. True, students reference different source material, and this makes some educators uncomfortable, but I find that it allows opportunity for students to exercise summation, a skill they'll later apply to their own work come workshop.
>
> "So, what is voice?" I'll lead, standing in front of the white board, marker in hand. Students take exactly as long as they need to brainstorm definitions–sometimes a swift fifteen minutes, sometimes the entire class period. Occasionally I'll volunteer my own ideas if I feel that the group has overlooked something, but never with the expectation that my interpretation is the only right interpretation. After much discussion, students agree on a succinct definition of the craft element that they will then uphold in their own work. In effect, they're co-creating a lexicon for workshop critique.
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> Depending on the experience level of the group, I might assign students follow-up "milestone" exercises in which they demonstrate the craft element in action. They begin with a short scene that exhibits voice, then move on to write a scene that exhibits both voice and imagery, and so on and so forth until they juggle all four craft elements

simultaneously. "I never knew writing involved so much choice!" students often tell me, and I smile, pleased that they are reading their own work as writers.

When it's time for formal workshop, participants are practiced at speaking in craft and prepared to assess their own writing in those same terms.

Once the team has agreed on definitions for voice, imagery, characterization, and arrangement/flow, this particular step will be complete.

And we'll be ready for workshop!