

NUYORGANICS:

Understanding Organic Intellectualism through Nuyorican
Poetry

by

Regina Andrea Bernard

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban
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Joe Kincheloe

Date

Chair of Examining Committee

Philip Anderson

Date

Executive Officer

Linda R. Perkins

Hector Cordero-Guzman

Shirley R. Steinberg

Supervision Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

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Adviser: Joe Kincheloe

This dissertation uses a historical approach to the study of Nuyorican identity and its contribution to new forms of intellectualism. Nuyorican identity is constructed by culture, race, gender, socioeconomics, linguistics, ideology, social access, and other factors. These social dynamics shape Nuyorican organic intellectualism as a powerful form of knowledge production and conceptual insight that has been widely misrepresented in institutions of higher education. Chapters One and Two discuss organic intellectualism as a compelling scholarly discourse in the process comparing it to more traditional intellectual forms. Chapter Three discusses critical multiculturalism as a theoretical/pedagogical tool that can be used to teach concepts pertaining to organic intellectualism while pursuing a socially just and

challenging curriculum. Throughout the dissertation historiographical interpretive methods are employed, aiding in the development of new pedagogical practices that can be used to help students understand the work and ideological insights of the Nuyorican organic intellectuals. Identifying Nuyorican organic intellectuals as important contributors the canon of higher education helps both traditional and organic intellectuals become more aware of pedagogical and ideological alternatives while expanding scholarly consciousness.

Chapter Four, the methodological chapter, describes the use of socially theoretically informed historical research methods to analyze Nuyorican poetry and literature. In Chapter Five I build upon these historiographical interpretations of Nuyorican organicism in an exploration of my own personal experiences as a college professor with knowledge production vis-a-vis issues of organic intellectualism. Chapters Six and Seven extend my analysis of Nuyorican and Puerto Rican identity/intellectualism, focusing on the analysis of government documents on Puerto Rican immigration, cultural manifestos, poetry, literature, music, films and biographies. Chapter Eight uses the analysis of the first seven chapters to develop a new multicultural pedagogy that

draws upon the dissertation's multiple theoretical concepts, and organic knowledges. This chapter also devises new ways to employ these tools in the struggle to understand and facilitate the academic success of oppressed students. Chapter Nine summarizes the central points of the dissertation, reinforces the call for the use of Nuyorican poetry and organic intellectualism in higher education, and concludes with a delineation of research needed on these topics in the future.

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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

The Us vs Them Factor:

College life to the attracted student is a host to grandiose ideas about what it means to be a college student, and what that experience may hold. It may hold the key to a person's personal and intellectual self-development, and it may hold an array of discouragements. It may hold a space for cultural isolation or the tools to assimilate into the mainstream. The reality of college once absorbed by the conscious student depicts grim administrative ordeals, and boundless amounts of intellectual depoliticization. The key to one's self-development is left up to one's own realization and/or self-awakening process. College life, oftentimes, rather than being the key to critical consciousness, helps to provide more blinders in the process. If we depended on hyper-reality or hyper-multimedia to depict "college life," racism and other social dynamics would help to further divide a true learning experience. Criticality of the college-life experience is anesthetized by the subjugation of knowledge and social dynamics that play a role in subjugation.

If understanding and knowing difference was dependent solely on multimedia or hyper-reality, then it would serve as a final truth that white college kids enjoy keg parties,

fraternity parties, and the privileges of being legacy children at ivy-league institutions. Black college students are all militant black nationalists who are constant subjects of racism and virulent racial attacks. Notice, Latino/as were not included in the above statement. Their self-awakening does not take place through education but through racism and the struggles endured throughout. Asian and Southeast Asian students still suffer and/or benefit at the hands of the "model minority" myth, and West Indian/Caribbean students are too busy "hogging" jobs to go to school. Where are the Latino/as and Afro-Latino/as in this mass of (mis)representation? Where are the organic intellectuals of color? This exclusion is a replica of their long-time exclusion from the college scene. Hyper-reality, hyper-multimedia, and academia have not yet included them as part of the college scene experience. This organic intellectual that I speak of is not the white and female, film cast member who, from the "ghetto" of homelessness, receives a scholarship to attend Harvard (Merrell, 2004). The organic intellectual I speak of is someone who flourishes in a university because of critically constructed selfhood.

With regard to Latino/as, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans make up the largest groups of Latinos living in the United

States, in particular New York City. However, although they rank so high in population, multimedia has never depicted them as college students. Why? If not represented by way of popular knowledge, or popular culture what would attract a group of people to pursuing academic "excellence?" So how does this group construct their selfhood within these traditional forms of intellectualism? How do they compete for knowledge-based representation? Or, perhaps one could ask, why should they? Why does schooling not hold the responsibility of representing this group as well? Are traditional institutions of learning such as college not ready for the Latino/a experience or organic intellectualism?

It is within the construction of selfhood that the organic intellectual finds his/her place within college academics. Those who have constructed most of their knowledge base within their life experiences outside of school find traditional spaces of learning to be daunting. It is in these traditional spaces that traditional intellectuals remind one that organic intellectualism is subjugated, is indigenous and is not mainstream knowledge. Thus their previous learning (pre-college acceptance) is not considered as part of the process. Rather, it is what these students learn once in college that makes them

"competitive" in the "real world." These forms of subjugated knowledge are not to be taught as part of any core curriculum but rather as additives, such as the depoliticized version of multicultural education.

Subjugated knowledges have been tacked on to mainstream education as opposed to being integrated into traditional forms of curriculum. Is it that only when this group becomes part of pop culture or mainstream media does it gain canon-like representation? That is, they receive public recognition for their intellectual capabilities. Through the windings of college administrative offices, their rules, mandated learning styles and methods of evaluation, organic intellectualism is lost.

Whose Subjugated Knowledge Exactly?

Nuyorican poets serve as cultural representatives of organic intellectualism. While homogenous in that they are non-traditionally educated their representations in academia varies. Artists from diverse domains especially from marginalized backgrounds have been historically mis- and underrepresented. The Nuyorican poet as organic intellectual is misrepresented in traditional or hegemonic intellectual settings because of their culture, language, knowledge base (or lack thereof). Their ways of being in the world (ontology), their ways of interpreting the world

(hermeneutics), and other varying social dynamics, have greatly differed from mainstream and hegemonic societies.

Critical consciousness and critical thinking as well as construction of selfhood are used to situate the Nuyorican poet in a macro perspective of organic intellectualism. Their intellectual background as students of society (as students by way of social experiences) as opposed to university-housed students, lends itself to the development of organic intellectualism. Their societal and academic disenfranchisement undermines their relationship to traditional education. Many see organic intellectualism as a deficit, yet in this dissertation it is revered as a unique skill that is cultivated through that very disenfranchisement.

During the 1940s, Puerto Ricans came to cities like New York with high expectations. Viewed with respect in Puerto Rico, many of them, upon arrival to New York City expected the same response. As their culture became more marginalized by racism, intra-racism, sexism and other stereotypical social classifications, Puerto Ricans took on a new role. Organically, they began to construct their identities as a dual one. They became both Puerto Rican, and New Yorkers, thus the term *Nuyorican* was coined.

Recognizing their marginalized positions, Nuyoricans began to use their rejection in the "mainland" to produce and consume knowledge, Nuyorican-style. These forms of Nuyorganic¹ intellectualism by the late 1960s developed into what is now called Nuyorican Poetry. In several of these poetic printings, Puerto Rican authors who experienced the harshness of cultural duality, cultural exclusivity, and intellectual rejection created a voice for those in similar cultural positions.

While not integrated into traditional settings of college education, Nuyorican poetry has taken its shape as a commodified form of organic intellectualism. Whereas it is not taught in schools as a core curriculum requirement, attracted learners can catch glimpses of it on television. What television has done for organic intellectualism is make it trendy. What school has done for the Nuyorganic intellectual experience is box it up and label it as "other." It is not considered intellectual, and neither are its participants. The subjugation of this knowledge has two effects:

1. It forces the organic intellectual to become a stronger organic intellectual, thereby rejecting

¹ The term Nuyorganic was created specifically for this dissertation to define Nuyorican organic intellectuals and in some cases Nuyorican organic intellectualism. In addition, the term Nuyorganic is used interchangeably with Nuyorican organic intellectual throughout the dissertation.

traditional and hegemonic forms of intellectualism by way of producing new knowledges.

2. Organic intellectualism suffers at the hands of essentialism and de-politicization because of schools that do not integrate it as part of traditional learning.

Historically, Latino/as have been subjected to all types of stereotypes, the most unmistakable or cryptic is that of Latino/as and education. Within academia, literature, film, television, and music, it is not clear that Latino/as have been children of traditional knowledge. In fact, Latino/as have been missing from the education scene but have been clearly depicted as killers, rapists, drug dealers, addicts, junkies, and sexually promiscuous. It is in these forms that integration within traditional intellectual settings become skewed and further misrepresented. Academically, literature involving the Puerto Rican/Nuyorican experience has also been problematic. "Problematics refer not only to what is included in a worldview, but also, to what is left out and silenced." (Giroux, 1988, p.4)

Who's Ideology is it Anyway?

Traditional and/or hegemonic pedagogies have involved what Brazilian educator Paulo Freire has identified as the

banking concept of education (Freire, 1993). The banking concept is an approach for teachers to teach and students to learn. Some traditional and hegemonic intellectuals in this tradition believe students are in classes solely to learn from teachers and professors. It serves the interest of the educator and silences the experiences of the students who sit before them. The banking method or concept involves rote memorization training by way of depositing information or final truths. In this method regurgitation is encouraged and critical thinking is completely eliminated. It is in this practice that banking method intellectuals help to create future traditional intellectuals who become knowledge bankers. Without the process of critical thinking, that which the organic intellectual inevitably engages in via marginalized existence, a learner forgets to connect his/her selfhood to the learning process.

For example, the Nuyorican student who sits before a traditional intellectual/knowledge banker begins to retain information about his/her culture that becomes fact by tradition. That is, because it has already been printed, and it will be require by mandated testing, it is proven as fact and therefore must not be questioned. In turn, the Nuyorican develops a sense of marginalization by silenced

critical thinking or becomes an agreeable native informant (hooks, 1994). Another example turns again towards the depoliticized forms of multiculturalism that treat the history of Blacks from slavery to the present. Black history lessons always begin with slavery, as though Blacks have no history prior to enslavement. Depoliticization of the people's history becomes a way to constrict critical forms of knowledge production and consumption. This process of depoliticizing one's experiences easily constricts knowledge to traditional intellectual forms only. If never taught about the perspective of the slave as opposed to the slave owner, how does one use critical thinking skills to decodify? Traditional intellectual ideologies differ from organic ideologies in that the populations they serve are quite different. Traditional intellectuals treat their apprentices as future intellectual elites, as opposed to the organic intellectual who begins teaching and learning about forms of knowledge resistance.

As a pedagogical tool, ideology becomes useful for understanding not only how schools sustain and produce meanings, but also how individuals and groups produce, negotiate, modify, or resist them (Giroux, 1988, p.5).

Construction of the organic selfhood will not make it consistent with the canons of traditional intellectualism. Organic selfhoods are aggressive, resistant, bilingual, and oftentimes in complete contrast to what is learned in traditionally intellectual settings. One may ask why organic selfhood holds all of these attributes. It is because of the marginalization outward from society, and the subjugation of knowledge within schools and traditional institutions of learning.

Traditional intellectuals have in their pedagogical toolshed very specific cultural practices and values. These practices involve hegemonic and homogenous cultures and ways of being owned by the dominant elite. Specific languages are considered "romantic," "standard," and "official." Other languages that are less familiar or that represent the marginalized perspective are subjugated. They are considered, "broken," "sub-dialects," or "patois." It is for this reason that many traditional-intellectual documentaries often use subtitles when illustrating varying forms of English speaking. In the traditional intellectual toolshed, specific works of literature and specific authors are considered "classic," and are worthy of being indicated as so on college syllabi. To follow the traditional intellectual ways of consuming knowledge, these same

"classic" authors are chosen for canon reference. It is in the traditional intellectual forms of standardized testing that these same "classic" authors, find excerpts of their writings in *Great American Essays*. Traditional intellectuals have created such a divide between knowledge production and consumption that even a newspaper can denote which form of intellectualism is being used. By way of subjugating knowledges of the organic intellectual, the traditional intellectual can label their society the first world, and all those "underdeveloped" or "uncivilized" are the third world. I thought there was only one world with several different types of people who live in it.

It is the purpose of this dissertation to analyze two Nuyorican poets as prototypes of Nuyorganics. While they have been subjugated and marginalized as a people, so have their literary works become subjugated as well, thereby, subjugating their knowledge production and consumption. Representation of the self is much different than how individuals may represent one another. For example, in 1966, Oscar Lewis, the American son of a rabbi, wrote *La Vida*, where he classified Puerto Ricans as the crumbling cracks within earth's social structure. Seven years later in 1973, Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans themselves were founding the *Nuyorican Poet's Café* in a Lower East Side

Manhattan living room. In this living room Nuyorican poets created a space for people to hear them orate their narratives. In reading their poetic narratives, they not only represented the Nuyorican experience, but were cultural native informants of that perspective. This is how the Nuyorican constructed their selfhood, through cultural notions of the organic intellectual.

One must only consider what gets labeled as high status knowledge in the schools and universities and, thus, provide legitimacy to certain forms of knowledge and social practices (Giroux, 1988, p.5).

The ideologies hosted by the traditional intellectual are based in positivistic frameworks. If it cannot be tested and proven, it therefore is not knowledge. Within this framework, race, class, gender, culture socioeconomics, and other social dynamics are null and void when attempting to prove fact. There are no critical theories in traditional intellectualism for the practice is to memorize and regurgitate hordes of information. Traditional intellectualism does not even consider organic forms of knowledge a subset of intellectualism. Since you cannot test the complex dynamics of race and culture in a scientific measurement but rather in more hermeneutic assessments, such forces do lend themselves to positivistic

validation. For example, because the traditional intellectual cannot include Nuyoricans and poetry in a scientific manner it is a liberal art as noted by many universities. It is not part of any core curriculum such as math, science or psychology. Due to its cultural base, interpretive sociology has even been noted by positivism as not "real" science but a subset of science known as social science.

In this case, knowledge is removed from the self-formative process of generating one's own set of meanings, a process that involves an interpretive relationship between knower and known (Giroux, 1988, p.14).

The ideologies of organic intellectualism are in opposition to the regenerative process of seeking "fact" as with traditional intellectualism. Involved in organic intellectualism is the work of critical constructions of the self, personal connections to the way one learns, makes meaning of, and interpretations of any given set of information.

For the Nuyorican poet, organic intellectualism helps to understand and then negotiate cultural spaces. These cultural spaces are often forms of cultural identity dualities that many bi-national groups of people own. For the Nuyorican, the cultural duality is living on the

"mainland" but reconnecting with their cultural heritage of the island, thus, producing a new culture, Nuyorican culture. Knowledge produced in organic intellectualism is not in the tradition of academic sweatshop work. Nuyorganics asks that those who study them and their experience understand the cultural duality that makes up their identity. Understanding the culture of each and the duality at the same time creates an understanding of why their poetry is written as it is. To understand this cultural duality in poetry as non-political or ahistorical is to begin to understand their subjugation.

Nuyorganics and other types of organic intellectualism are not accepted into traditional intellectual settings because of the desire to constantly ask questions. The constant seeking and conceptualizing of information new and old to create new theories to incorporate into learning and selfhood is labeled as "dangerous." With this dangerous characteristic and the posing of a serious academic threat, organic intellectualism therefore is subjugated.

Whose Values Anyway?

What kinds of cultural investments have college institutions made in traditional and organic intellectualism? The traditional intellectual, or those who benefit from dominant elite status have much of their

culture invested and ingrained in traditional learning institutions.

Schools are not merely instructional sites but also sites where the culture of the dominant society is learned and where students experience the difference between those status and class distinctions that exist in the larger society (Giroux, 1988, pp. 5-6).

In this decision process powered by traditional intellectualism, the depoliticization of the organic intellectual experience takes full swing. Knowledge that is "safe," trumps organic knowledge and/or narrative forms of knowledge production. In these decisions that are hegemonically powered, the Nuyorican finds marginalization as a breeding ground for organic knowledge production. The traditional intellectual helps to isolate the Nuyorganic experience by providing a highly de-politicized perspective of them. The de-politicized forms of multiculturalism or curriculum that seek to include the Nuyorican organic intellectual experiences are deployed in the most "necrophilic" (Freire, 1993) of ways. By necrophilic, I mean that traditional intellectuals love to study the dead, dead white males in particular. In the traditional intellectual focus, it is through the lenses of these dead white and male perspectives that other groups are studied.

This form of de-politicized multiculturalism seeks to promote tolerance and acceptance rather than study (in)equality and (dis)integration. Within this non-critical form of multiculturalism the traditional intellectual student learns the writing of Jennifer Lopez and Ricky Martin (also known as the Puerto Rican Elvis Presley) faster than the writings of Luis Muñoz Marín (Puerto Rico's first governor) or Dr. Antonia Pantoja founder of Boricua College and ASPIRA. Needless to say Jennifer Lopez and Ricky Martin can be absorbed more quickly than the Nuyorican poetry of Miguel Piñero or Pedro Pietri. Why is this the case? Historically, people of color have always served to entertain, from boxing to singing to dancing. To be an entertainer of color serves a specific interest and purpose, and through studying such individuals, the traditional intellectual can subvert exposure of conceptual racial politics and subjugation. Whereas, great political and literary authors provide readers and students with the tools to construct selfhood, traditional intellectuals subvert such empowerment. Organic intellectuals using their many tools provide equipment for the construction of selfhood, critical thinking and engagements to seek an education that is socially just and challenging. The narrative of the organic

intellectual, who is socially aware and is critical, resists intellectualism that subjugates the experience of marginalized individuals. This act of subjugation by way of traditional intellectualism serves as a form of oppression on the body and mind.

Organic Intellectualism: Socially Just and Challenging:

Organic intellectualism has been seeking its place within curricula for centuries. However, it has only been through its subjugation that it has been recognized. Only through new theories of education that are part of a socially just and challenging curriculum, can organic intellectualism be exposed. The first step in seeking a curriculum that is socially just and challenging must be to place culture at the forefront of interpretation and understanding. Since culture is the centralizing point of this type of curriculum, critical multiculturalism provides the tools necessary for this theory to work in practice. However, before the theory of critical multiculturalism can be discussed, the population of organic intellectual students must be considered as well. The challenging and socially just institution must serve to promote the practice of reconstructing selfhood. As the organic intellectuals constantly work through self-reflection and reconstructing their selfhood to make sense of their world,

it is imperative that social-justice minded teachers practice the same.

Critical knowledge would instruct students and teachers alike about their status as a group situated within a society with specific relations of domination and subordination. Critical knowledge would help illuminate how such groups could develop a language and a discourse released from their own partially distorted cultural inheritance (Giroux, 1988, p.8).

Critical Multiculturalism: A Replacement Theory:

How does a curriculum become socially just as well as challenging? Who is involved in the production of dangerous knowledge? There are so many possibilities for critical constructions of education that include the perspectives of the organic intellectual.

1. One possibility is for each group of intellectuals to have their own academic institution. One that teaches traditional forms of knowledge production and consumption, and another that teaches the organic version through the use of traditional intellectualism as an erroneous base.
2. Another possibility, similar to Giroux's theory of the transformative intellectual, is to find like-minded teachers of both intellectualisms who are willing to re-do an entire curriculum with teacher as intellectual at the center. The problem here is that for some it is not the dominant elite who can work towards revolutionary social reconstruction, it

is the working class. It is the organic intellectual. They must work from within their group first, before they can actually consider the assistance of the traditional intellectual. For example, the two main Nuyorican poets mentioned in the dissertation worked with other Nuyorican poets and various other working class organic intellectuals to found the Nuyorican Poet's café. Through the eyes of their shared culture and shared desire for the reconstruction of selfhood it became possible to create the café. During the course of these Nuyorican friendships, a main figure in the movement, Miguel Algarín became a professor at an Ivy League institution.

3. The last possibility for a critical construction of education is to use the critical multicultural theory which asks that traditional institutions of learning begin to understand the practice of inclusivity. This theory asks that in various curricula institutions begin to include the perspective of the marginalized as a knowledge worthy of questioning. In addition, this theory asks that subjugated knowledges be used as well as traditional forms of knowledge in gaining an understanding of any given topic.

This dissertation will seek to analyze all three of the above critical constructions of knowledge. However, with these new applications of critically constructing knowledge, critical multiculturalism is used. Using these

forms of critical knowledge is to also employ the work of critical multiculturalism. Critical constructions of knowledge, and critical multiculturalism give way to possibilities for a curriculum that is socially just and challenging. Within the seven chapters I have laid out the following four themes as they relate to the Nuyorican and politicized spaces of learning:

1. An understanding of the importance of subjugated knowledge especially that of the Nuyorican organic intellectual/poet, who only through poetry is visible to the mainstream.
2. Inclusivity within literary canons, as they are represented in traditional institutions of higher learning. It is these canons which often seek to exclude subjugated knowledge.
3. The importance of critical multiculturalism, the construction of social and emerging theories of critical pedagogy. Within the frames of critical pedagogy practices and curricular inclusivity is a socially just and challenging curriculum.
4. The importance of this curriculum's promotion of a critical construction of selfhood that employs notions of critical investigation.

Through critical multiculturalism, Nuyorican poets become a vehicle to illustrate the just, challenging and inclusive curriculum that we seek. A critical analysis of

Nuyorican subjugated knowledge includes the multilogicality discourse of using social dynamics and hermeneutics to express one's selfhood. With a pedagogy that is critical and at the same time seeking social justice, it is viable to ask what Nuyorican organic intellectualism can teach traditional intellectuals? Through a macro level of understanding, Nuyorican organic intellectualism finds its acceptance into mainstream education by way of critical multiculturalism. At the micro level of understanding, Nuyorican organic intellectuals present an illustration of their natural state, their construction of selfhood. For students of this organic knowledge, their own construction of selfhood is a positive developmental experience. In this framework students begin to understand the cultural and political production of who they are, thus developing a critical consciousness.

Laying out the Dissertation

Chapter Two: Theories of Intellectualism

In Chapter Two, theoretical dimensions of the organic intellectual and organic intellectualism are analyzed. While several of the varying forms of intellectualism are discussed in this chapter, they are all based in theories of power and the dominant academic elite.

Treated as an instance of negation, power took on the characteristic of a contaminating force that left the imprint of either domination or powerlessness on whatever it touched (Giroux, 1988, p.181).

Theories of intellectualism based in critical pedagogy are used in this chapter to analyze and critique variations of the intellectual. Critiquing these theories begins to problem-pose the current state of inclusivity within hegemonic institutions. Through this analysis and critique of educational theories, the de-politicization of the organic intellectual is given the opportunity to become highlighted. In this chapter, variations of intellectualism and multilogicality are analyzed and used to situate subjugated knowledge within mainstream curricula. The theories of intellectualism are all juxtaposed to the central question of how to create a socially just and challenging curricula that helps to promote organic intellectualism? In addition, these theories are juxtaposed and again centralized around the experience of the Nuyorican organic intellectual.

Chapter Three: Critical Multiculturalism & Chapter Four: Historiography

By using a critical historical analysis of intellectualism, one may begin to understand the complexity of organic intellectual positionality in traditional

settings. Positivism or scientific measurements cannot discuss the cultural complexities of Nuyorican poets and their relationship to the social standing of dominant intellectualism. Through a critical historical analysis of the Nuyorican experience and intellectualism, students begin to understand how power becomes central to a discourse on knowledge production.

It [historical contextualization) helps teachers and students understand that history has inscribed the consciousness they bring with them to the schoolhouse (Kincheloe, 2003, p.202).

Adjacent to the impact of critical multiculturalism, critical historiography allows for the Nuyorican organic intellectual experience to receive intellectual recognition. While such recognition has generally been among other organic intellectuals, critical historiography as a research methodology allows the Nuyorican poet exposure in traditional environments. Unlike monoculturalists (Kincheloe, 1997) who tend to the goal of assimilation, critical historiography employs an analytical approach to understanding subjugated knowledges.

Producing knowledge in the critical historiography framework allows students to not only recognize subjugated knowledge, but to build new forms of knowledge. Critical historiography asks that students begin to question how

traditional intellectuals collect and distribute knowledge. In turn, students are able to distinguish between hegemonic knowledge and subjugated knowledges of the marginalized. In this form of producing knowledge, "students examine the complexities of what is involved in the acquisition and use of knowledge in contemporary education" (Kincheloe, 2003, p.230).

Chapter Five: Organic Intellectual Autobiography

One of the central elements of constructing selfhood and through that, recognizing subjugated knowledges, is to situate the self in narrative form. In chapter five, I have given way to my own construction of selfhood by way of recounting my experiences in both traditional and organic perspectives.

To create a curriculum that is socially just and challenging, the teacher as one who seeks the same must be willing to encourage students in personal narrative reflection. Through this narrative reflection the student who is an organic intellectual begins to connect traditional academic material to their experiences in the world. For the Nuyorican poet, narrative forms of dialogue are essential to their identities as organic intellectuals. It is through their poetry that construction of selfhood is evident. Through their autobiographical reflection in their

poetry they have worked to construct a bicultural/bi-nationalistic identity.

For my own autobiographical chapter, while constructing my own selfhood on paper, I do so in a bicultural framework that also speaks to the reader as teacher and student. Describing my own history growing up in Hell's Kitchen, my life experiences are deeply rooted in organic intellectualism and juxtaposed with traditional experiences of "becoming" an intellectual. It is in this same tradition of juxtaposing the intellectual experience, that one finds the Nuyorican poet in search of social justice.

**Chapter Six: Puerto Rican History & Chapter Seven:
Nuyorican History**

The history of Puerto Ricans, their culture, identity and the formation of Nuyorican cultural identity is a fundamental component of their characteristic as organic intellectual. The hegemonic and organic intellectuals have always been at odds in subjugated histories. Questions like whose history represents the people's perspective, and whose perspective reflects truth are considered in these two chapters. Similar to the previous chapter, autobiographical pieces of Nuyorican poets are analyzed in search of sociocultural historical insight. Sociocultural

histories have always been at the center of the organic intellectual's experience, which seeks inclusivity and social justice. Hermeneutical approaches to understanding the historical subjugation of knowledge is in fact key to understanding the exclusivity that has been part of Nuyorican identity.

Many of the social dynamics such as race, class, gender, and socioeconomics are evaluated in connection to the Nuyorican poet's identity formation and exposure to mainstream society. Avenues such as literature, film, television, music, and academia are all included in this analysis. Critiquing these historical avenues of (mis)representation helps develop an understanding of why there is a need for an inclusive curricula.

Chapter Eight: Teaching the Self: A New Pedagogy

After much experience teaching and being a student, being organically and traditionally exposed to intellectualism, I reflect on the critical pedagogy of my own college classrooms. I have found that many students have not been exposed to socially just and/or challenging curricula by way of studying their own and others' organic intellectualism. It is clear that inclusivity is not a priority for traditional intellectual institutions. For example, many of my Puerto Rican students have never heard

of Miguel Piñero or Pedro Pietri. Other representations of "Latino" in the classroom have not seen literary representations of their culture(s) either. This means, Dominican, Cuban and Chicano/a students have been absent from the curriculum and intellectual discourse. Thus, I have included a description of my students' academic work in two different departments in two different universities that help to reinforce the need for them to reflect on critical constructions of self. This urgency to have students engage in critical constructions of selfhood help to develop in them the need to be represented in all of their courses.

In this chapter, I have reflected on journals that I have kept over the last four years as an adjunct and full time substitute lecturer at two City University schools. I have also included many of my syllabi assignments to give a description of critical pedagogy, critical multiculturalism, and critical constructions of selfhood efforts. Through the assignments and writing samples that were collected over the years, critical construction of selfhood is examined. Questioning how my students see themselves, whether as organic or traditional intellectuals is also examined in connection with their personal social dynamics and outlook on intellectualism.

While neither of the departments I have taught in, focus solely on Nuyorican literature it is in this framework that I evoke my students' and my own critically pedagogical tools. Through my own study of Nuyorican poetry and the research done for this dissertation, Nuyorganics has helped me develop a pedagogical skill and ability that holds students at the center of learning. Through our work as students of critical pedagogy, I offer samples of their reflexive assignments as proof that critical multiculturalism can:

- (1) Be part of any curriculum
- (2) Be infused into any lesson
- (3) Aid in the construction of a critical selfhood
- (4) Promote a socially just and challenging curriculum
- (5) Become easier once students begin to critically think of themselves juxtaposed against who they believe is the "other"
- (6) Aid in the dispelling of stereotypes regarding organic intellectuals, and in particular Nuyoricans, and other people of color
- (7) Help to reconstruct a curriculum that tends to the needs of the organic intellectual that

seeks his/her higher education in a traditional setting for learning.

- (8) Be respectful of all perspectives and treat students as experts in their own right.
- (9) Help to create and promote the idea of generating a new set of knowledges for perhaps the traditional intellectual to begin to understand.
- (10) Help teachers begin to socially connect to organic intellectuals as opposed to treating them as solely groups of people to potentially study and/or (mis)represent.

CHAPTER TWO

Theories of Organic Intellectualism

Foundations of Theories:

The theoretical foundation on which this dissertation rests involves bringing together and integrating critical theory, critical pedagogy, and cultural production theory in connection with the Nuyorican organic intellectual. These same theories are used to reject a Gramsci/DuBoisian-influenced notion of the organic intellectual. Although Gramsci coined the phrase "organic intellectual" and DuBois promoted it in his analytical work, neither of the two included Latino/as in their discourse on intellectualism. However, Gramsci uses the phrase to organize people into racial groups to explain one sole experience. While both Blacks and Africans were categorized by Gramsci, Latino/as were nowhere to be found in his theoretical framework. Gramsci's perspective of the person of color is only directed at those who can be classified as solely "Negro."

Gramsci believed that Blacks in the United States were absorbers of American culture as opposed to specific contributors to the overall cultural development of the United States. Due to their intellectual capacity, Gramsci believed that these "Negro intellectuals" should return to Africa and in turn, teach Africans. With this theory, Gramsci assumes that Blacks born in America are culturally capable of teaching Africans in Africa. What he does not

realize is that the cultural differences outweigh any intellectual approach to teaching and learning.

The problem with this idea is that not all "Black" people are solely "Black." Perhaps the Latino/a experience has become part of a recent racially categorized conversation, but there has always been an issue of duality for Latinos and blackness. For example, where would Gramsci place the Afro-Cubano/Afro Boricua (Flores, 2003) What would "Black" people from the Caribbean, West Indies or Latin America do in this instance? Could they return to Africa (a land not their own) as well as help their fellow members of the "backward masses?" (Gramsci, 1971). In addition, could the same "Negroes" who were born in the United States return to Africa and help in the development of African people simply because of a shared skin color or racial categorization? Could Afro-Latinos (Flores, 2003) have led part of the African struggle? Later in this chapter, I will go into further detail about the Gramsci/DuBois theoretical rejection, however, it is necessary to consider that people of color are bi-cultural, and cannot be boxed solely into one category of description.

This chapter will also show how the notion of the organic intellectual has evolved within the context of

Puerto Rican, Boricua and Nuyorican poetic works and culture. In this project, I will re-introduce the existing theories of organic intellectualism and notions of what it means to operate within that framework today. I will also compile new ways of thinking about organic intellectualism within the realm of Nuyorican literature and poetry. Within this framework it is also important to understand the struggle that many Puerto Ricans who have used their vocal writing (or writing that speaks to people) as a way of introducing themselves as Nuyorganics. This use of vocal writing embalms the notion and theories of street culture as necessary for the art to survive. At the borders of these theoretical frames are specific sociocultural and sociohistorical ways of thinking about Nuyorican poets of the 1970s. An important note here is at the time I write this particular chapter of my dissertation it has been less than a week since the author of *Puerto Rican Obituary*, Nuyorganic Reverendo Pedro Pietri passed away. Along with a focus on Pietri's writings, there will also be a focus on the works of Nuyorganic Miguel Piñero who died during the 1980s.

The foundation of the theoretical framework of this dissertation rests on a notion of criticality that mutates from constructs of critical theory, critical pedagogy,

epistemology and especially lived experience. The attempt here is to address these particular notions of criticality with a central focus on social dynamics that include race, class, gender and political ideologies that position culture and cultural resistance as a central concern. Criticality spawns notions of social justice and social change developed by way of classroom practices that involve knowing about individual circumstances and life chances. Criticality, which consists of analyzing various knowledges such as organic intellectualism, hegemonic or traditional intellectualism, subjugated knowledges and indigenous knowledge, seeks to discover new places of and for education, with a focus on those who are traditionally marginalized and oppressed. What is being sought here is a critical curriculum that is socially just, inclusive and at the same time academically challenging.

Critical enlightenment as a characteristic of criticality is based on the connection between universal history and how our own personal histories shape what we have and will become. It provides a continuing examination of the division in power between those who are privileged, and those who suffer the effects of dominant power. In an examination of privilege, power and access, it is important to include social dynamics such as issues of race, class,

gender and positionality. As a goal of critical enlightenment, the democratic teacher now seeks exposure of ideological myths about reality. In this way a new level of cognition develops, one that finds itself, moving far beyond traditional and positivistic thinking towards a critical consciousness. By taking this phenomenological approach we can see that organic intellectualism as a practice of freedom becomes central to the goal of criticality that seeks emancipation and empowerment. Individuals who are seeking a critical emancipation use their own histories to free themselves from oppressive control and do this in a community that seeks the same justice. This characteristic of emancipation that is critical is more self-directed, and self-focused in that it is focused on the student's personal sense of self. This practice requires actions, which are dialogic in their intent. This practice is closely connected to the practice of ontologically understanding the world within our positions in the web of reality (Kincheloe, Slattery & Steinberg, 1999).

In these notions and visions of criticality, it is important to critique depersonalized and technocratic rationales for thinking about forms of intellectualism within Nuyorican poetry. Depersonalized and technocratic

ways of knowing have traditionally restricted their questions to "how to" instead of combining it with "why should." In addition, this restrictive division forces readers and poetic audiences to become involved in concentrating on one right way of interpreting experience, and the procedures involved in how to do it in that one particular way. What the process forgets is the relationship of the task to the humanistic purpose. Not only does this harm the student, but it undermines the intellectual growth of the teacher. Post-practice of positivistic depersonalization, depoliticization, appropriation, and ideologies of technocratic interpretation, the Nuyorican poet has been deskilled, becomes passive about his/her expression and experiences, and accepts his/her subjugated experience. Nuyorican poets begin to unconsciously construct their positionality in a society that accepts governance for domination not critical consciousness about the self and the world that surrounds us (Kincheloe, 2002).

The plight of the marginalized intellectual is clear in the practice of using canonical texts instead of lived experiences and oral histories as points of entry. Many so-called revolutionary leaders "deny pedagogical action in the liberation process, but they use propaganda to

convince" (Freire, 1993, p.68). Desire and power are knitted together and investigated as such in these various characteristics of criticality. It is the critically conscious organic intellectual who is aware of both components. In order for oppression to continue, the oppressors must allow for the oppressed to see that the oppressor, while holding the key to dominant discourse, can also be part of the oppressed dialogue. This is not only racist, but it is also part of Freire's false charity concept, where the oppressor interacts with the oppressed only to further oppress him/her. In this mode of false charity, criticality seeks to expose covert racism. Critical organic intellectuals must begin to address the perspective of those oppressed. When critical scholars address the perspective of the oppressed, they include how they understand the world and how they make sense of it both cognitively and emotionally.

FORMS OF INTELLECTUALISM-ORGANIC, TRADITIONAL & SPECIAL

Antonio Gramsci dissects the role of the intellectual as divided between those who have earned their scholarship in traditional institutions of learning, and those who have gained knowledge through their cultural experiences, someone

actively involved in society, that is, they constantly struggle to change minds and expand markets; unlike teachers and priests, who seem more or less to remain in place, doing the same kind of work year in and year out, organic intellectuals are always on the move, on the make (Said, 1994, p.4).

The first issue of many with Gramsci's description and analysis of the two types of intellectuals, is the exclusion of a discourse of the intellectual of color. As we will see, Gramsci sees the intellectual of color as a great "phenomenon" not as a reality.

Before a discussion on the intellectual of color, particularly the Puerto Rican/Nuyorican for the purpose of this dissertation, there first needs to be an analysis of the teacher as an organic intellectual within Gramsci's frame. Here again is another divisive component of the two types of intellectuals. Not all teachers are involved in rote memory theories that are eventually put into classroom practice. In fact, there are those "teachers" who are actually organic in their intellectualism because they in fact do not "teach" the mainstream population of students, and are not educated and trained in institutions of schooling, but in fact, are trained by, and then in return teach from their ontological experiences that are cultural and ecological. Teachers as agents of social change who embrace cultures of others while fully immersed in their

cultural spaces, are in fact, always on the move and always on the make in order to aid in the development of new agents of social change.

We then look to the organic intellectual's background. Studying the lived experience of such intellectuals provides a vision for the production of intellectualism in those who would normally be relegated to an intellectual death.

When one distinguishes between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, one is referring in reality only to the immediate social function of the professional category of the intellectuals, that is, one has in mind the direction in which their specific professional activity is weighted, whether towards intellectual elaboration or towards muscular-nervous effort (Gramsci, 1970).

The traditional intellectual has more often than not been produced as a thinker who has been manufactured by and within an academic sweatshop. The consistency of colonized verbiage, rote memory practices, redundancy in uniformed thinking, and similar textual and oral vocabulary uses are clear indicators of the oppressive traditional intellectual. The traditional intellectual and his cohort members use their stature to manipulate the minds of those who believe in the work of urban education. By creating myths about groups and dislocating knowledge from lived experience, the traditional intellectual confuses the

picture. S/he uses what s/he believes as elements of urban education to gain followers of their theories. However, the organic intellectual cannot apply these theories, as they are unrelated to their organic experiences.

Within the discussion of the issue of intellectual distinction, that is, whose intellectualism is more valid, there is vying process for dominance or dominant ways of thinking. Traditional intellectuals have been published, become part of the "classics" genre and are studied in high school and college classrooms. The organic intellectual, and/or the Nuyorican poet are victims of subjugated knowledge and for their thoughts to become part of the dominant structure there is always the availability of mainstream assimilation. In their attempt to gain academic representation, many organic intellectuals have overlooked their own organic experiences. It is in their interest to hold onto their organic roots as they struggle for representation in traditional, hegemonic settings.

Complexities of Color

While organic intellectuals such as Miguel Piñero and Pedro Pietri are Nuyoricans, their poetry and other writings are similar to the writings of the Black Arts Movement, and the black poetry aesthetic. Historically, such poetry was a depiction of the Black and Latino/a

struggle. More recently, we see that those struggles have not disappeared but have instead morphed into a culmination of struggles -- and so has the poetry.

Since Pietri and Piñero would associate themselves with Black people and Afro Latinos (Flores, 2003) in the arts aesthetic movements and socioeconomic status, it is they who would also feel the brunt of Gramsci's blueprint for people of color returning to Africa. Afro Latinos in the 1960s and 1970s had no definite way of proving their Latinidad, other than verbally, "Soy Boricua" or "Soy Dominicano/a!"² While skin color allows for complexion for particular connections, or complexion for disconnections, it is all people of color that are forced to engage in prescribed practices laid forth by the dominant power, hegemonic intellectual and the vision within. This shared sense of political ideology is best illustrated in the formation of the Black Panther Party (BPP), which lent numerous ideas to the Young Lord's Party (YLP) New York City chapter. These two movements shared more than an "afro" ideology and political rhetoric. Here again, a shared sense of disenfranchisement helped shape some of the greatest intellectuals of the 1960s and 1970s. Black

² I am Boricua! I am Dominican!

Panther reporter Carletta Fields, wrote the following for the *Black Panther Party*:

We ask the people to witness the Young Lords as they attempt to improve their community and place its control in the hands of the Latin-American people, to witness the pig persecution of those who believe the power should be vested in the people and not in the minority enterprises. We call on the people to judge whether the struggle for justice now being waged by the Young Lords is invalid; whether the murder of one and the intended murder of the other is right. We call on the people to judge whether the Young Lords deserve such persecution. Regarding you, the Young Lords, as our true revolutionary brothers, as our comrades, and as our allies, the Black Panther Party is working jointly with you to see that aggression is thwarted and suppression is ended (Fields, 1969, p.14).

The questions that arise by way of Gramsci's prescriptions of the "Negro race" are based upon shared and colored experiences in American society and (dis)civility. Gramsci provides Gramscians with two social developments and two fundamental questions that come out of his concern for "Negroes." One, American Negroes should be the "agents in the conquest of the African market and the extension of American civilization" (Gramsci, 1970). Two, since Americans are in the need of serious unification, Africans should also unite. They should collectively understand that their unification means for them to return to Africa. In this "Negro exodus" (Gramsci, 1970, online) attempt, the

intellectual Africans should go back to Africa and unite the "uncivilized" (Gramsci, 1970).

Gramsci extracts two questions from his development proposals. The first asks, whether or not English could become the educated language of Africa? Using English, according to Gramsci, would perhaps bring unity in a place swarming with various dialects. The second asks, whether or not American-intellectualized Blacks could return to Africa and gain ownership of all Blacks as members of the "fatherland." The basic idea here is to have Blacks from America return to Africa and aid in the assimilation process of all "uncivilized" Negroes (Gramsci, 1970).

With Gramsci's first question we then must think of actual intellectual action as opposed to what Paulo Freire would name as an invasion of culture (Freire, 1970). The idea of action and language for the intellectual is important here.

Knowing how to use language well and knowing when to intervene in language are two essential features of intellectual action (Said, 1994, p.20).

While Gramsci was ready to send "Negroes" back to Africa to "help" them out, Blacks in the United States were seeking their own social justice in a land they essentially built from the soil up. During the 1940's the National

Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) organized and won cases involving the right to vote, the right to education, and the right to be recognized. It was also the same decade that racial discrimination in defense industries was called into question by A. Philip Randolph's mass movement (Carson, Kovach and Polsgrove, 2003).

It is thus clear that the role of Gramsci's "Organic Intellectual" has taken on a new meaning and shape for PuertoPoetas (Puerto Rican Poets) and many other people of color involved in the poetic movements of the 1970s in many New York City community "backyards."

It is by reviewing of Gramsci's notions of "Negroes" and my ontology, my relationship to being in this world, that leads to what Cornell West notes as the demystification (West, 1993) of cultural representation. The demystification process or new method of theoretical inquiry promotes the sense that there is variance in culture. Whereas Gramsci believed that all "Negroes" were the same, West believes that the struggle of all people of color varies. By demystifying, West believes that power and hegemonic ideologies can be tracked. In this tracking of varying struggles, Nuyoricans find solidarity with Blacks. This bond between them provides more solid forms

of methods for people of color to seek liberation. Together their responses become a larger self-reflection process. (West, 1993) By using Gramsci's model, Puerto Ricans, and Blacks in the United States would not be able to work together because of their separate cultures and experiences.

In terms of Africans in America, the way we *be* has become a form of negative culture-what the Euro-American sociological process likes to refer to as a subculture (King and Anthony, 1972).

DuBois & the Talented Tenth - The "Special" Intellectual

Perhaps we can no longer look to place the organic intellectual of color anywhere in academic mainstreams because of DuBois' isolation of the common-folk from the "talented tenth" (Dubois, 1903). Sure the "talented tenth" included some of the greatest thinkers of color in his and our time. This is without doubt. However, what about those who do not receive the same "famous" idolatries, or titles? We again have to look at the standard measurement that was used and should be used. Those who did not receive idolatries or worthy titles, were perhaps working at the grassroots level to begin breaking down most of what has been publicized by mainstream dominant cultures as "talented." DuBois writes in his essay on the *Talented Tenth*,

Education and work are the levers to uplift a people. Work alone will not do it unless inspired by the right ideals and guided by intelligence. Education must not simply teach work - it must teach Life. The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people. No others can do this work and Negro colleges must train men for it. The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men (DuBois, 1903).

Most would agree that education is the hydraulic lift that many people of color need in order to wage the war against various forms of oppression. Indeed education must not only teach work, but education today must allow spaces and opportunities for life to inform education. No longer should one await institutional education to teach one the skills they need to survive on the "outside." If one were to embrace the education one receives, whether traditionally or organically, then it is not the exceptional men that one depends on for his liberation, but rather he, himself, having acquired the tools to battle for his own recognition and self worth.

Forty-five years after DuBois' illustration of the "talented tenth" and their contributions to the greater of society, he expanded his definition of the elite group of members to include the masses. He believed that the masses represented the "real people of the world" (Lewis, 2001,

p.538). He realized that it not only was doctors, lawyers, college-educated people, and businessmen who could provide examples of societal change. It was members of the masses who could and would be able to effect social change through their real life experiences. DuBois realized his error in simply using a white theorist's (Karl Marx) ideology to address the politicized struggle of those who did not fit into Marxist criteria.

The obvious rationale would be to simplify the issue and claim that organic intellectuals like Piñero and Pietri are not part of mainstream intellectual thought, and therefore, are not rendered as such. If they are not part of the mainstream intellectual thought, they do not have to be accounted for, and can be forgotten as contributors to the pleasures we enjoy from reading books written by notable "thinkers." However, the more critically complex rationale would include discussions of social dynamics such as race, class, gender, cultural, historical and, political forces and the struggle for Nuyorganic poetry to be recognized as not dependent on the Black Aesthetic for justification, but rather as a brother and sister to the Black Arts Movement. In this way it is similar to the relationship between the BPP and YLP.

Edward Said would call Piñero and Pietri's confrontational poetry examples of the work that confrontationally-representative intellectuals are known to produce. This category allows for a combination of both organic and traditional intellectuals who write to resist injustices. Said writes,

The intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public. And this role has an edge to it, and cannot be played without a sense of being someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d'être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug (Said, 1994, p.11).

In the perspective of the confrontationally representative intellectual, Puerto Rican oppression via Nuyorganic literature and poetry is more easily understood as a social injustice. In his poem, *Puerto Rican Obituary*, Pedro Pietri (1973) aims his literary missiles at all those who contributed to the colonization of Puerto Ricans, both on the mainland and in New York (Nuyoricans). Pietri's poems are known for identifications, the uncovering of false consciousness and acts of false generosity by

governmental oppressors. These false attempts at consciousness include believing in the "American Dream." That same dream that Pietri believed to have led many Puerto Ricans to segregation, unemployment, exploitation, slum-life, drug addiction and criminality. In *Puerto Rican Obituary*, Pietri uses poetically descriptive and confrontational language to awaken Puerto Ricans to the social realities around them. (Malave, 1998)

The idea that the organic intellectual who is confrontational towards oppression both outer and inner-oppression, holds steadfast in *Puerto Rican Obituary*. In this piece, we see a clear depiction of the Nuyorganic intellectual in action. Pietri writes:

They worked
 They were always on time
 They were never late
 They never spoke back
 when they were insulted
 They worked
 They never took days off
 that were not on the calendar
 They never went on strike
 without permission
 They worked
 ten days a week
 and were only paid for five
 They worked
 They worked
 They worked
 and they died
 They died broke
 They died owing
 They died never knowing
 what the front entrance

of the first national city bank looks like

Juan

Miguel

Milagros

Olga

Manuel

All died yesterday today
and will die again tomorrow
passing their bill collectors
on to the next of kin

All died
waiting for the garden of eden
to open up again
under a new management

All died
dreaming about america
waking them up in the middle of the night
screaming: Mira Mira
your name is on the winning lottery ticket
for one hundred thousand dollars

All died
hating the grocery stores
that sold them make-believe steak
and bullet-proof rice and beans
All died waiting dreaming and hating
Dead Puerto Ricans
Who never knew they were Puerto Ricans
Who never took a coffee break
from the ten commandments
to KILL KILL KILL
the landlords of their cracked skulls
and communicate with their latino souls

Juan

Miguel

Milagros

Olga

Manuel

From the nervous breakdown streets
where the mice live like millionaires
and the people do not live at all
are dead and were never alive

Juan

died waiting for his number to hit
Miguel

died waiting for the welfare check
 to come and go and come again
 Milagros
 died waiting for her ten children
 to grow up and work
 so she could quit working
 Olga
 died waiting for a five dollar raise
 Manuel
 died waiting for his supervisor to drop dead
 so he could get a promotion

Is a long ride
 from Spanish Harlem
 to long island cemetery
 where they were buried
 First the train
 and then the bus
 and the cold cuts for lunch
 and the flowers
 that will be stolen
 when visiting hours are over
 Is very expensive
 Is very expensive
 But they understand
 Their parents understood
 Is a long non-profit ride
 from Spanish Harlem
 to long island cemetery
 Juan
 Miguel
 Milagros
 Olga
 Manuel
 All died yesterday today
 and will die again tomorrow
 Dreaming
 Dreaming about queens
 Clean-cut lily-white neighborhood
 Puerto Ricanness scene
 Thirty-thousand-dollar home
 The first spics on the block
 Proud to belong to a community
 of gringos who want them lynched
 Proud to be a long distance away
 from the sacred phrase: Que Pasa

These dreams
These empty dreams
from the make-believe bedrooms
their parents left them
are the after-effects
of television programs
about the ideal
white american family
with black maids
and latino janitors
who are well train
to make everyone
and their bill collectors
laugh at them
and the people they represent

Juan
died dreaming about a new car
Miguel
died dreaming about new anti-poverty programs
Milagros
died dreaming about a trip to Puerto Rico
Olga
died dreaming about real jewelry
Manuel
died dreaming about the irish sweepstakes
They all died
like a hero sandwich dies
in the garment district
at twelve o'clock in the afternoon
social security number to ashes
union dues to dust

They knew
they were born to weep
and keep the morticians employed
as long as they pledge allegiance
to the flag that wants them destroyed
They saw their names listed
in the telephone directory of destruction
They were train to turn
the other cheek by newspapers
that misspelled mispronounced
and misunderstood their names
and celebrated when death came
and stole their final laundry ticket

They were born dead
and they died dead

Is time
to visit sister lopez again
the number one healer
and fortune card dealer
in Spanish Harlem
She can communicate
with your late relatives
for a reasonable fee
Good news is guaranteed

Rise Table Rise Table
death is not dumb and disable
Those who love you want to know
the correct number to play
Let them know this right away
Rise Table Rise Table
death is not dumb and disable
Now that your problems are over
and the world is off your shoulders
help those who you left behind
find financial peace of mind

Rise Table Rise Table
death is not dumb and disable
If the right number we hit
all our problems will split
and we will visit your grave
on every legal holiday
Those who love you want to know
the correct number to play
Let them know this right away
We know your spirit is able
Death is not dumb and disable
RISE TABLE RISE TABLE

Juan
Miguel
Milagros
Olga
Manuel
All died yesterday today
and will die again tomorrow
Hating fighting and stealing
broken windows from each other

Practicing a religion without a roof
 The old testament
 The new testament
 according to the gospel
 of the internal revenue
 the judge and jury and executioner
 protector and eternal bill collector

Secondhand shit for sale
 Learn how to say Como Esta Usted
 and you will make a fortune
 They are dead
 They are dead
 and will not return from the dead
 until they stop neglecting
 the art of their dialogue
 for broken english lessons
 to impress the mister goldsteins
 who keep them employed
 as lavaplatos porters messenger boys
 factory workers maids stock clerks
 shipping clerks assistant mailroom
 assistant, assistant assistant
 to the assistant's assistant
 assistant lavaplatos and automatic
 artificial smiling doormen
 for the lowest wages of the ages
 and rages when you demand a raise
 because is against the company policy
 to promote SPICS SPICS SPICS

Juan died hating Miguel because Miguel's
 used car was in better running condition
 than his used car
 Miguel
 died hating Milagros because Milagros
 had a color television set
 and he could not afford one yet
 Milagros
 died hating Olga because Olga
 made five dollars more on the same job
 Olga
 died hating Manuel because Manuel
 had hit the numbers more times
 than she had hit the numbers
 Manuel
 died hating all of them

Juan
 Miguel
 Milagros
 and Olga
 because they all spoke broken english
 more fluently than he did

And now they are together
 in the main lobby of the void
 Addicted to silence
 Off limits to the wind
 Confine to worm supremacy
 in long island cemetery
 This is the groovy hereafter
 the protestant collection box
 was talking so loud and proud about

Here lies Juan
 Here lies Miguel
 Here lies Milagros
 Here lies Olga
 Here lies Manuel
 who died yesterday today
 and will die again tomorrow
 Always broke
 Always owing
 Never knowing
 that they are beautiful people
 Never knowing
 the geography of their complexion

PUERTO RICO IS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE
 PUERTORRIQUENOS ARE A BEAUTIFUL RACE

If only they
 had turned off the television
 and tune into their own imaginations
 If only they
 had used the white supremacy bibles
 for toilet paper purpose
 and make their latino souls
 the only religion of their race
 If only they
 had return to the definition of the sun
 after the first mental snowstorm
 on the summer of their senses
 If only they

had kept their eyes open
 at the funeral of their fellow employees
 who came to this country to make a fortune
 and were buried without underwears

Juan
 Miguel
 Milagros
 Olga
 Manuel

will right now be doing their own thing
 where beautiful people sing
 and dance and work together
 where the wind is a stranger
 to miserable weather conditions
 where you do not need a dictionary
 to communicate with your people
 Aqui Se Habla Espanol all the time
 Aqui you salute your flag first
 Aqui there are no dial soap commercials
 Aqui everybody smells good
 Aqui tv dinners do not have a future
 Aqui the men and women admire desire
 and never get tired of each other
 Aqui Que Paso Power is what's happening
 Aqui to be called negrito
 means to be called LOVE

To allow for easier navigation of the various
 intellectual types and their representatives, I offer the
 following table:

Table No.1: INTELLECTUAL TYPES

INTELLECTUAL TYPE	REPRESENTATIVE
Organic Intellectual	Antonio Gramsci (Theorist)
	Miguel Piñero
	Pedro Pietri
Confrontational Intellectual	Miguel Piñero
	Pedro Pietri
	Young Lord's Party
	Black Panther Party
Native Intellectual	Franz Fanon (Theorist)

	Miguel Piñero
	Pedro Pietri
Special Intellectual	WEB DuBois (Theorist)
	Businessmen, Lawyers, Doctors
Traditional/Hegemonic Intellectual	College-Educated Only, Non-Self Reflective, Voyeuristic Scholars and members of the American literary canon

Nuyorican Organic Intellectualism

Each set of intellectuals, whether organic, traditional (hegemonic), confrontational and/or native, must pay special attention to their histocultural settings. That is, we must engage in dialogue based on their history and their culture. For Nuyoricans the historical and cultural backdrop is New York City, as they were either born and raised in the city or settled here from Puerto Rico.

NATIVE INTELLECTUAL (FANON) AND NATIVE INFORMANT

Recounting and recognizing the histories of the organic intellectuals, we must now ask what their role is and what their responsibility is to the people they represent? The role of the native informant or "native intellectual" in post-colonial theory, would be defined by Franz Fanon:

While at the beginning the native intellectual used to produce his work to be read exclusively by the oppressor, whether with the intention of charming him or of denouncing him through ethnical or subjectivist means, now the native writer

progressively takes on the habit of addressing his own people (Fanon, 1959).

Through this definition, we see that Fanon has foreshadowed what Piñero and Pietri have done in their poetry. While their works are collected by those who may or may not be oppressive in the sense of continuing the legacy of literary segregation, it is their "own people" that these poets address. Through the use of native informing and being native intellectuals, Piñero and Pietri help the oppressed group express their histories and understand their plight. If organic intellectuals continue to accept their role as native intellectuals, they must continue to also accept the obligation of relating their perspectives to those to whom they speak. Said agrees:

To this terribly important task of representing the collective suffering of your own people, testifying to the travails, reasserting its enduring presence, reinforcing in memory, there must be added something else, which only an intellectual, I believe has the obligation to fulfill. [...] For the intellectual the task, I believe, is explicitly to universalize the crisis, to give greater human scope to what a particular race or nation suffered, to associate that experience with the sufferings of others (Said, 1994, p.44).

As we will see later in this project, the return to the global sufferings of Pietri and Piñero's people, relates to Puerto Ricans in various places within Puerto Rico and the

plight of the Nuyorican and/or Boricua who struggles for peace after migration.

What happens to the native informant who serves as an organic intellectual is described by Said in his descriptions of expatriates and marginals:

In premodern times banishment was a particularly dreadful punishment since it not only meant years of aimless wandering away from family and familiar places, but also meant being a sort of permanent outcast, someone who never felt at home, and was always at odds with the environment, inconsolable about the past, bitter about the present and the future (Said, 1994, p.47).

We see this as an acute description of the lives of both Piñero and Pietri, in that Piñero's environment offered visual acceptance and lived experiences of "outlaw culture" (hooks, 1994). While Piñero suffered the effects of drug addiction, restless sexual encounters, and the claustrophobia of the world as a Nuyorican poet, Pietri also suffered from an environment suffering from the effects of Agent Orange, and the life of being Puerto Rican in New York, where the people took over the streets. We are able to see how in most places confrontational poetry, or writing as native informant becomes "counter revolutionary" (*Before Night Falls*, 2001). As a result of his work, the Cuban writer, Reinaldo Arenas, was imprisoned

in Cuban penitentiaries because of the power and authority about which he wrote from his perspective. The sentiments behind these experiences were best stated in the film *Dog Day Afternoon*, when Sonny (lead character played by Al Pacino) screamed at his mother who tried to convince him of his alternative to outlaw culture as, "I'm a fuck up and an outcast!" (*Dog Day Afternoon*, 1975) Again we see this in the biopic *Piñero*, Piñero (played by Benjamin Bratt) is asked by Joseph Papp why he has chosen to live his life so destructively, and he responds, "It just bees that way sometimes man" (Bratt, 2001)

Nuyoricans & Nuyorican Poetry Based in Theories of Criticality

Through "foreign" (outside of the United States) shock at racial and socioeconomic discrimination in the United States, critical theorists, Max Horkheimer (German), Theodor Adorno (German) and Herbert Marcuse (German), believed that critical theory could be used as a method to replace the practice of positivism and capitalism. However, their notions of critical theory consider the effects of social dynamics such as race, class, gender and socioeconomics. They do not consider that these social dynamics are interconnected as opposed to isolated variables. By their omission of social dynamic

interconnection they indirectly contribute to positivistic ways of producing and consuming knowledge.

In countries where a capitalist regime isolates the general populace from scientific and technical attainments, the intellectual fights to retain his false freedom and questions himself in vain about the future of a decadent economic social structure. He is helpless. He somehow constructs a cultural policy in an attempt to strengthen a society whose upheavals are the undeniable symptoms of degeneration, and instead of using the faded light of his poor autocratic reason to seek a new cultural conscience, he sinks into skepticism or, rather into the terror of a future overshadowed by capitalism (Toure, 1972).

Newer versions of critical theory includes evidence of, and are based in, issues of social and cultural dynamics that help to construct one's consciousness critically (Kincheloe, 2001).

power and justice, socioeconomics, race, gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct the social systems that construct our consciousness (Kincheloe, 2001, p.123).

These newer additions to critical theory are the bases for a dialogue about criticality in theoretical and pedagogical frameworks, which is found in *Getting Beyond the Facts: Teaching Social Studies in the Twenty-First Century* (2001). The text provides numerous characteristics and goals for producing knowledge through criticality, which alerts

potential cultural workers to the dangers of positivistic practices in education. Use of these characteristics and goals allow for strategic ways in which to identify notions of effective criticality that are being put into practice. Below are the defined characteristics of effective criticality and their uses.

Critical Emancipation/Empowerment:

As Nuyorican poets seek to be in control of their own lives by way of their organic intellectualism, their efforts must be supported by a socially-just community that seeks the same goals. An example of critical emancipation/empowerment being enacted involved the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* exemplifies some of the greatest methods that organic intellectual method claims as its own. Freire maintains that intellectuals must include the work of emancipation/empowerment within pedagogical skills of all those involved in the process of seeking their liberation. Pedagogies of the oppressed involve "people engaged in the fight for their own liberation" (Freire, 1993, p.53). Freire's vision of education for liberation is centered around the concepts of critical emancipation and empowerment. The main focus of Freire's ideas regarding emancipatory and empowering education is the student-

centered milieu. Thus the organic intellectual arena is populated by those within the struggle, as the student-centered milieu in this context would offer a vision of learning as cyclical and thus all involved are constantly in the process of learning. The oppressed in Freire's perspective must seek his or her own liberation and must not be led by attempts of "false generosity" (Freire, 1993, p.45) by those who believe they have the sole prescription for emancipation. From this search for liberation emerges Freire's method of "problem-posing education" -- as opposed to the "banking method" of education. The "problem-posing" method of education like the "project method" holds the organic intellectual at the core of its practice.

Problem-posing education [...] epitomizes the special characteristic of consciousness: being *conscious of*, not only as intent on subjects but as turned in upon itself in a Jasperian 'split'-consciousness as consciousness of consciousness (Freire, 1993, p.79).

Here, issues of power and authority are embedded within the quest for social representation and inclusion rather than marginalization. In this context I have created a table of power and authority based on the works of both Piñero and Pietri. In the tables, the reader can see how their works and life experiences have created both

power and authority. In this context revolutionary action is formulated.

Table No. 2: Power & Authority

Representative	Power	Authority
Miguel Piñero	Organic Wordsmith/Poet	Language: English, Spanish and Spanglish
		Founder of Nuyorican Poet's Café
		Bio-opic Film <i>Piñero</i> , 2001
Pedro Pietri	Organic Wordsmith/Poet/Activist	Language: English, Spanish and Spanglish
		Founder of Nuyorican Poet's Café
		Social Activism, Various Memberships and Committee Board Member

In these two models of looking at Nuyorganics in theories of criticality, I again offer the example of the YLP (Young Lord's Party) whose members were constantly and most notably involved in these processes by way of their "13 Point Program and Platform" (Sixties Project, 1993). This platform included the following needs and wants of the YLP at the height of their social movement:

Que Viva Puerto Rico Libre!

1. We want self-determination for Puerto Ricans--Liberation of the Island and inside the United States.

For 500 years, first [s]pain and then united states have colonized our country. Billions of dollars in profits leave our country for the [u]nited [s]tates every year. In every way we are slaves of the gringo. We want

liberation and the Power in the hands of the People, not Puerto Rican exploiters.

Que Viva La Raza!

2. We want self-determination for all Latinos.

Our Latin Brothers and Sisters, inside and outside the [u]nited [s]tates, are oppressed by amerikkkan business. The Chicano people built the Southwest, and we support their right to control their lives and their land. The people of Santo Domingo continue to fight against gringo domination and its puppet generals. The armed liberation struggles in Latin America are part of the war of Latinos against imperialism.

No Puerto Rican Is Free Until All People Are Free!

3. We want liberation of all third world people.

Just as Latins first slaved under Spain and the yanquis, Black people, Indians, and Asians slaved to build the wealth of this country. For 400 years they have fought for freedom and dignity against racist Babylon (decadent empire). Third World people have led the fight for freedom. All the colored and oppressed peoples of the world are one nation under oppression.

Power To All Oppressed People!

4. We are revolutionary nationalists and oppose racism.

The Latin, Black, Indian and Asian people inside the [u.s.] are Colonies fighting for liberation. We know that Washington, Wall Street and City Hall will try to make our nationalism into racism; but Puerto Ricans are of all colors and we resist racism. Millions of poor white people are rising up to demand freedom and we support them. These are the ones in the [u.s.] that are stepped on by the rules and the government. We each organize our people, but our fights are against the same oppression and we will defeat it together.

Land Belongs To All The People!

5. We want community control of our institutions and land.

We want control of our communities by our people and programs to guarantee that all institutions serve the needs of our people. People's control of police, health services, churches, schools, housing, transportation and welfare are needed. We want an end to attacks on our land by urban removal, highway destruction, universities and corporations

6. We want a true education of our Creole culture and Spanish language.

We must learn our history of fighting against cultural, as well as economic genocide by the yanqui. Revolutionary culture, culture of our people, is the only true teaching.

Venceremos!

7. We oppose capitalists and alliances with traitors.

Puerto Rican rulers, or puppets of the oppressor, do not help our people. They are paid by the system to lead our people down blind alleys, just like the thousands of poverty pimps who keep our communities peaceful for business, or the street workers who keep gangs divided and blowing each other away. We want a society where the people socialistically control their labor.

U.S. Out Of Vietnam, Free Puerto Rico!

8. We oppose the Amerikkkan military.

We demand immediate withdrawal of u.s. military forces and bases from Puerto Rico, Vietnam and all oppressed communities inside and outside the u.s. No Puerto Rican should serve in the u.s. army against his Brothers and Sisters, for the only true army of oppressed people is the people's army to fight all rulers.

Free All Political Prisoners!

9. We want freedom for all political prisoners.

We want all Puerto Ricans freed because they have been tried by the racist courts of the Colonizers, and not by their own people and peers. We want all freedom fighters released from jail.

Forward, Sisters, In The Struggle!

10. We want equality for women. Machismo must be revolutionary... not oppressive.

Under capitalism, our women have been oppressed by both the society and our own men. The doctrine of machismo has been used by our men to take out their frustrations against their wives, sisters, mothers, and children. Our men must support their women in their fight for economic and social equality, and must recognize that our women are equals in every way within the revolutionary ranks.

Viva Che!

11. We fight anti-communism with international unity.

Anyone who resists injustice is called a communist by "the man" and condemned. Our people are brainwashed by television, radio, newspapers, schools, and books to oppose people in other countries fighting for their freedom. No longer will our people believe attacks and slanders, because they have learned who the real enemy is and who their real friends are. We will defend our Brothers and Sisters around the world who fight for justice against the rich rulers of this country.

Boricua Is Awake! All Pigs Beware!

12. We believe armed self-defense and armed struggle are the only means to liberation.

We are opposed to violence--the violence of hungry children, illiterate adults, diseased old people, and the violence of poverty and profit. We have asked, petitioned, gone to courts, demonstrated peacefully, and voted for politicians full of empty promises. But we still ain't free. The time has come to defend the lives of our people against repression and for revolutionary war against the businessman, politician, and police. When a government oppresses our people, we have the right to abolish it and create a new one.

Hasta La Victoria Siempre!

13. We want a socialist society.

We want liberation, clothing, free food, education, health care, transportation, utilities, and employment for all. We want a society where the needs of our people come first, and where we give solidarity and aid to the peoples of the world, not oppression and racism.

During a racial struggle, and the attempt to find place for liberation, the Young Lord's Party enacted their habitus. Being a Nuyorican, or a displaced Puerto Rican, in New York City during the 1970s and 1980s the effects of reconstructing the self were and are still important. The work of habitus, which allows for one to consider their beliefs and dispositions prior to their actions that are caused by these very beliefs worked for the YLP. Through their habitus and self-reflection process, they began to realize their oppression as global. Recognizing their situation on the mainland, the YLP members began to

use habitus to emancipate themselves from racial and socioeconomic oppression.

"Habitus" and the Construction of Nuyorican Consciousness:

Habitus is important because it helps us make personal sense of the world. If we are not sure of our position in the web of reality, how can we begin to teach others about positioning themselves? Emancipatory action involves understanding one's location in the web of reality. Most important in constructing consciousness is how organic intellectuals construct consciousness that is representative of their targeted group. Again, the critically conscious organic intellectual must not partake in any action that seeks to identify himself/herself as liberator, but rather as part of the larger mission. Traditionally, what takes place in classrooms is an idea based on removing habitus within the practice of Western ways of knowing and acting.

Trained in the philosophical context of Western metaphysical dualism, many of us have accepted the notion that there is a split between the body and the mind. Believing this, individuals enter the classroom to teach as though only the mind is present, and not the body (hooks, 1994, p.191).

Perhaps this is why the organic intellectual despises "traditional" forms of coming to know things, and rather

develops his critical consciousness through his lived experience. In the case of Miguel Piñero, we see the lived experience and Nuyorican cultural representations as evident in his poem, *This is Not the Place Where I was Born* (1979). In this call for recognizing his culture juxtaposed to his país de nacimiento, Piñero tells his readers not to judge him by birthplace, but rather by his landing. This experience, he recalls is one in which the reader fully understands his experience with biculturalism. Biculturalism in this poem, gives Piñero a political sense of being Puerto Rican and Nuyorganic simultaneously.

puerto rico 1974

this is not the place where I was born
 remember-as a child the fantasizing images my mother
 planted
 within my head-
 the shadows of her childhood recounted to me many times
 over welfare loan credito food from el bodeguero
 I tasted mango many years before the skin of my fruit
 Ever reached my teeth
 I was born on an island about 35 miles wide 100 miles long
 a small island with a rainforest somewhere in the central
 regions of itself
 where spanish was a dominant word
 & signs read by themselves
 I was born in a village of that island where the police
 Who frequented your place of business-hangout or home came
 as
 servant or friend & not as a terror in slogan clothing
 I was born in a barrio of the village on the island
 where people left their doors open at night
 where respect for elders was exhibited with pride
 where courting for loved ones was not treated over
 confidentially
 where children's laughter did not sound empty & savagely
 alive

with self destruction...

I was born on an island where to be puerto rican meant to be
part of the land & sold & puertorriqueños were not the
minority

Organic intellectuals and/or native informants who work in a critical theoretical framework are able to develop their imagination about social and political occurrences in the world that surrounds them. This practice of developing and extending critical knowledge becomes risky for those who are part of any movement that seeks final truths without discourse or interpretation. Thinking and doing "outside of the box", lends itself to making use of voices and perspectives that have been traditionally excluded. The outcome resulting from marginalized voices finding opportunities for being heard and being taken seriously becomes difficult to understand for those who believe that dominant ideologies should remain homogenous in their construction. Through the use of Spanglish in dialogue and on paper, marginalized voices such as the voice of the Nuyorican poet finds the construction of a critical selfhood that is powerful.

Nuyorican Poetic Code-Switching Trilingually: (Poder Verbal)

Said's questions regarding truth are connected to the subjugated knowledges of the Nuyorican organic intellectual

and in keeping with the theme of representation are asked here as well:

1. How does one speak the truth?
2. What truth?
3. For whom and where?

The truth of power and authority for the Nuyorican poet, and/or organic intellectual who is seen as "other," comes from the use of Spanglish in his/her daily life, and then transformed for use in his poetry.

Spanglish, a language that seeks to undermine the two colonial tongues (that of the Spanish conquistador and the American imperialist) by slipping back and forth between them without warning, thereby taking control of both (Mendez-Berry, 1999).

Similar to the oral tradition of the Black Arts Movement and its political use of Black English, Nuyorican poets took Spanish and English, (and oftentimes Black English) and made it their trilingual language. The use of Spanglish for the Nuyorganic poet crosses over three cultural identities that are essentially three parts of one rich cultural tradition. The Black Arts Movement helped to empower the use of Black English, Black music and Black performance (Salaam, 1995). These elements in turn helped to shape Black literature into its own competitive genre. Through the use of code-switching or trilingual poetry, the

boundary of oration "transcends [and] is authenticated as representing the everyday linguistic choice of a group of people" (Lombardo and Cintron, 1995, p.565).

For the Nuyorican poet, life is not separate from art, nor is art separate from life. The fact that Spanglish is used in many works by Nuyorican poets, and the language continues to be used by many Nuyorganic and other Latino/a organic intellectuals, (non poets) demonstrates its power and authority and gives much more weight to the solidified life form that becomes art that is Nuyorican poetry.

By using Spanglish, a language used everyday, colloquial to some, formal to others depending on the form of intellectualism chosen to view the language use, the Nuyorican poet gains his or her creatively demonstrated cultural space. It is used to "engage the reader/audience in a culturally significant or culturally intimate way" (Lombardo and Cintron, 1995, p.567). Using this space for the reader and/or the audience, the poet engages in a powerful and authoritative relationship with special variations in culture. The variations in culture are the call and response method that has been used since the inception of jazz and even earlier in slave chanting and Negro spirituals. Nuyorican Poets, connect again with their Spanglish-speaking audience as they would with their non-

Spanglish-speaking audience, depending on the switch in population. Terms in Spanglish, are used to express emphatically Hispanic concepts and to evoke emotional and cultural associations that the English correlate would fail to convey (Lombardo and Cintron, 1995, p.567).

The Menudo of a Cuchifrito Love Affair

la ruca
 juanita rosita esposita
 they called her mexicana rose
 con piel de canela
 pelo darker than bustelo café
 eyes big like rellenos
 color of a ripe avocado
 her lips tasted like seasoned mangoes
 and her body was sweet as coconut milk
 this menudo of beauty
 made my taco nights
 burn like jalapenos
 si senor ...
 my heart was a tortilla
 then one riceless beanless night
 after a heated chilly pepper tequila fight
 she left
 left me like a burnt pork chop
 for a chitlin hamhock buckwheat eatin' man
 whore wore a watermelon wallet &
 a collard green conversation
 disturbing my macho machete pride
 so that la macha de platano
 reminded me that I was a weak mondongo
 my love...my life...my pride was a burnt chicarron
 a cold mofongo
 I turned into a hot tamale
 state of rage
 an alcapurria gone insane
 when I saw these two enchiladas
 in a pastelillo embrace
 so in my pastels envy
 my toston jealousy
 that my salchicha eyes spied
 the chorizo the mad morcilla drive

asi fue que fueron
 traspasados los dos bacalaos
 and now with my burrito strike
 displaying my quenepa pride
 in my tramarindo smile
 I remember the pegao and the uncooked taste
 of the frigid menudo of my cuchifrito
 love affair...(Piñero, 1979)

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF SOLIDARITY:

Organic intellectuals who are critically conscious are able to "push the envelope of their social and political imagination." (Kincheloe, 2001) This practice of "pushing the envelope" becomes dangerous to those who work to defend the status quo. With the use of subjugated knowledges and perspectives, critical teachers and cultural workers give voice to the marginalized and help to validate and question their experiences (Kincheloe, 2001).

The outcome that results from marginalized voices finding opportunities to be heard and taken into account becomes dangerous to those who uncritically accept dominant ideologies and base their educational practices on them.

Involved in the process of effective criticality, while resisting the positivistic notions that criticality should not exist, one is empowered by the five basic aspects of the epistemology of complexity. The epistemology of complexity holds knowledge, consciousness and social-emotional experiences as central to the

enactment of criticality. In Kincheloe's model of criticality, both knowledge and consciousness are socially constructed. This opportunity for knowledge and consciousness to be seen as socially constructed gives another voice to those who are marginalized, oppressed, and continue to be demeaned by positivistic ways of knowing, teaching and learning. The epistemology of complexity provides a new perspective of the social dynamics of criticality mentioned earlier. For example, socioeconomics to the traditional/hegemonic intellectual oftentimes is a defining factor in one's intelligence (Kincheloe, 2001). The habitus that is formed by lower socio-economic class experiences are viewed as by nature antithetical to intelligent behavior by the positivist intellectual.

Understanding that consciousness is a social construction allows critical teachers to use their ontological position in the web of their reality in order to promote critical thinking skills in their students. For teachers, the way that they have either resisted or accepted their societal roles plays a part in how they instruct students who do the same.

In continuing criticality's resistance to positivism, phenomenology can be used effectively.

Phenomenology teaches us that we cannot understand an educational act without understanding the framework, the context within which teachers, students, and administrators make sense of their thoughts, feelings, and actions (Kincheloe, 2001, p.222).

The use of phenomenology positioned within a critical framework, allows for a specific focus on culture, race, class and gender as independent micro-experiences. Although independent in a critical framework, these factors can be analyzed interactively and interconnectedly. For example, Nuyorican poets should be analyzed by way of their biculturalism, which is connected to issues around class, and gender. Critical hermeneutics is also an epistemological orientation that focuses on appreciating and rejuvenating the social dynamics of criticality. For Nuyorican poets and other organic intellectuals these social dynamics are factors that have led to oppression and the subjugation of knowledge. In hegemonic classrooms, Nuyorican social dynamics have either not been discussed at all or have been used to further subjugate their experiences as participants in the world. Critical hermeneutics to the Nuyorican poet aids in the understanding of organic intellectual complexities, such as the Nuyorican form of selfhood, interpretation, and narration.

With a strong basis in critical hermeneutics, critical educators can begin to decontextualize who is making meaning and interpretations (dominant positivists), and why these interpretations and meanings exist in this way, and what critical thinking does with meanings.

By constantly investigating and re-investigating the way meaning is being made through various interpretations, critical analysts no longer accept what is written or spoken as the final truth.

Critical hermeneutics is more comfortable with interpretive approaches that assume that the meaning of human experience can never be fully disclosed—neither to the researcher nor even to the human who experience it (Kincheloe, 2001, p.305).

Critical hermeneutics removes what G.B. Madison discusses as “realist hermeneutics” (a critique of E.D. Hirsch’s positivistic *Validity in Interpretation*) which sets out a science of interpretation, excluding, intuition, imagination, and subjectivity to put forth a “valid” interpretation.

Hirsch wants to make of interpretation a science and a respectable business. [...] Hirsch uncritically takes over the doctrinaire positivistic position which dogmatically equates genuine knowledge with scientific knowledge, in the physicalistic sense. It is not surprising, therefore, that when it comes to the long-standing question of the relation between the

humanities and the natural sciences. Hirsch takes the direct, but simplistic, approach of denying that there is or should be any significant difference between the two at all (Madison, 1988, p.4).

By making interpretation a "respectable business" there is a continuing of the racist cycle that seeks to disenfranchise the marginalized, and those who lack educational access by several means. Interpretation as a "respectable business" is racist because Nuyorican poets and other organic intellectuals are not members of the dominant elite. In addition, the forms of knowledge that they produce and consume are not considered knowledge by the dominant elite, but rather assaulted as "mere ideological pronouncements" (Madison, 1988, p.4).

The "respectable business" approach follows in the tradition of positivism in that there is one specific way to interpret the world. If Nuyorican poets use Spanglish to interpret the world, is that an acceptable interpretation for Spaniards as well? How? How can Spanglish be an acceptable interpretation when the dominant elite or those in position of power see Spanglish as a deficit language? This "respectable" method of interpreting asks that an organic intellectual assimilate in order to gather the tools to effectively interpret experience. In this process of assimilation, the organic intellectual will also be

required to lose much of his or her organic intellectual qualities. In addition, learning to respectably interpret will no doubt depoliticize the experience of those who are marginalized and subjugated.

Hirsch's practice of validating one interpretation over another or getting rid of the practice of interpretation all together, is an act of positivism. The reasoning behind searching for validity and doing away with interpretation is that it is simply another way of constricting and restricting intellectuals of all types to a one-track, one dimensional view of a text, ideas and experiences. If we were to get rid of interpretation (as Hirsch would suggest), then we are encouraging both traditional and organic intellectuals to take everything they read at face value. In return, this method would disregard the importance of social dynamics such as race, class, culture, habitus, and all other factors pertaining to the construction and contextualization of how experiences are described and conceptualized.

In the end, this approach helps to create meaningless representations of organic intellectual work. For example, Nuyorican poetry would be read without the connection to race, class, and/or socioeconomic concerns. Reading Nuyorican poetry without this historical backdrop lends to

further subjugation of organic intellectualism. These social dynamics and critical constructions of selfhood that organize the interpretation of Nuyorican life experiences are central to reading Nuyorican poetry. Without these backdrops, Nuyorican cultural identity is not understood as a political experience.

Organic Intellectuals and Social Justice

A central dimension of understanding the criticality that seeks to promote a socially just intellectual community involves dynamics of culture, race, class and gender. Understanding the characteristics of criticality in its theoretical and pedagogical basis, intellectual practice for social justice requires organics and their students to make vocal spaces for responses to oppression.

In this form of criticality, the marginalized begin instituting their own visions that fight against traditional power-wielding and positivistic ways of thinking and constructing ideas. If race, class and gender are central to discussing criticality, then the production of knowledge that is socially just must consider these factors as well. Nuyorican poets must be examined by way of their lived experience interconnected to these social dynamics. Teaching that seeks to promote social justice

must include methods that use criticality as the primary tool of knowledge instruction and consumption.

By disrupting dominant positivistic ways of teaching and knowing, critical intellectuals can begin to engage their students in a critical learning experience. This experience in frameworks of criticality would then result in students' positionalities being shaped around commitments to social change and/or justice. Positivism sees the plight of the Nuyorican organic intellectual as a topic unworthy of analysis. Due to the critical frameworks in which Nuyorican organic intellectuals are to be analyzed, positivism discounts their writings as valid forms of knowledge. Positivistic classrooms do not engage in critical conversations about the Nuyorican organic intellectual because narrative forms of lived experience cannot be proven scientifically.

If we are to work for social justice through education, that is, if we are to pursue critical intellectualism, we should look at Freire's methods for producing social change. In Freire's pedagogical method, which focuses on the liberation of the oppressed, there must first be an identification of those oppressed. However, it cannot be the "teacher" alone who makes the identification; rather it must be the oppressed who first

identify their oppression. Here is where we begin to identify what Freire means when he states that education is a practice of freedom (Freire, 1993). Freire writes, education that practices modes of domination

denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people (Freire, 1993, p.81).

Speaking directly to ideologies of intellectualism as a form of domination, notions of criticality are politically skeptical as they call attention to false charity. Realizing covert or cryptoracist teachings that are embedded in positivism can allow for a reversal of knowledge production to take place.

The convert who approaches the people but feels alarm at each step they take, each doubt they express, and each suggestion they offer, and attempts to impose his 'status,' remains nostalgic towards his origins (Freire, 1993, p.61).

By applying goals and characteristics of criticality and notions of critical pedagogy, it is possible to reject the banking method of education and engage students and teachers in a problem-posing method of education. In the problem-posing method, it is the teacher who gains most by learning from his/her students as they take on the role of "expert" in their fields of subjugated knowledges.

Critical pedagogy that involves problem-posing actions, aids in the joint [teachers and students] development of liberation through education (Freire, 1993).

Criticality considers how our epistemologies are developed and evaluated through resistance against positivism. Most institutions in their recycled theories and in their practices are positivistic, whether that positivism is expressed covertly or overtly. Oftentimes it is through a critical paradigm that teachers and researchers begin facing the burdens of educating politically. Positivistic educators believe that there is only one correct way to teach, and to support this belief, they cite scientific studies that to them, reveal that these methods of teaching are empirically validated (Kincheloe, 2001).

Rationales for critical teaching, thinking and learning include the rejection of several traits of positivistic teaching. Such rationales reject the proposition that:

1. All knowledge is scientific.
2. Any scientific form of knowledge can be easily verified.
3. There is one method used to study both the physical and social/educational world.

4. Knowledge is definite and supported numerically.
5. Factors such as social context can be controlled numerically or scientifically.
6. Understanding there is one true reality that can be discovered only by using positivist science.
7. Being objective is always possible because variables are controllable.
8. The purpose of education is to convey this one validated reality to students.
9. Teacher's primary role involves the delivery of this reality to students who are empty receptacles.
10. Education is not intrinsically political.

Critical theory's rejection of the preceding propositions is important in the struggle against racism and oppression. While providing an understanding of criticality, rejecting these propositions helps to provide an understanding of how positivistic practices contribute to racism and oppression. Teachers who treat students in a positivistic manner believe that their students have no valuable prior knowledge or experiences to offer. In any discussion that is positivistic, a student's experience with racism is not relevant to learning about the objective reality. For example, in the positivistic tradition, there would be one true interpretation of a poem. Poets who fit

into the American literary canon fulfill the requirement of the positivistic reality regarding American poetry. If a student brings into the conversation the work of Nuyorican poets, the teacher devalues the Nuyorican poetry and the discussion of the organic work does not occur. Nuyorican poets do not fit into the American literary canon and thus are not considered part of American poetry canon. In this rejection, Nuyorican poetry has been dismissed to make room for "great" poetry, and thus has isolated the student who wishes to learn more about the genre. In this process, neither the interested student nor Nuyorican poetry are validated - indeed, they are further subjugated. Extending this example, the subjugated student cannot raise the issue of the cultural exclusion in a positivistic classroom because his or her experience is irrelevant and the curriculum is fixed and standardized.

As critical educators, we know this rejection of issues of race and class when it comes to a topic like poetry actually promotes racism and oppression. If a student understands a "classic" poem by way of their Nuyorican identity or experience, they have begun to contextualize the work in a social framework. Any rejection of this student's experience and identity become oppressive to the student and the culture they represent.

Continuing the analysis of this example, I look to author Laurie Olsen's ethnographic work in *Made In America: Immigrant Students in our Public Schools* (1998). During her fieldwork, Olsen observes a high school dance where the dominant elite student group is celebrating Valentine's Day. Although there are several immigrants, including in particular Hindu and Muslim students, the dance has a specific cultural form. The dance has no intention of being inclusive or accommodating students with different cultures or identities.

Olsen's particular example has to do with a very depressed Hindu student, who has a desire to participate in the function, but culturally cannot do so. The Hindu student is already engaged to someone back home. Having been promised to someone, although she is "crushing" on a fellow classmate -- denies her the ability to participate at the social function. Although it is just a school dance, the cultural intentions have been clearly defined at this function. High school students attend and leave the dance with their boyfriends or girlfriends, and no one should dare attend or leave the dance without someone. While such a simple function should be to encourage socializing among students, positivistic practices have already defined the nature of the dance. Since the Hindu

student came to dance with her friends, and that was not culturally acceptable among her peers, she left the dance feeling rejected and isolated. At the same time as the student endures oppression by her own culture, she is again oppressed at school. Those underrepresented are constantly in situations where they encounter racism. It is difficult for marginalized students to watch students from the dominant culture obtain special favors, treatments, and "rights" denied to the victims of racism.

This rejection of culture and identity denies those in oppressive situations and those who struggle with access and voice. Students in a positivistic classroom will not speak out, because they are not aware of who is listening. Students are aware of positivistic rules and regulations, and thus are forced to keep their ideas to themselves.

Involved in the process of criticality, the organic intellectual is empowered by an epistemology that involves an awareness of various complexities of lived experience. Complexities of the lived experience involve a critical understanding of how social dynamics play a role in identity development. In this model, both knowledge and consciousness are again socially constructed (Kincheloe, 2001). This opportunity to view knowledge and consciousness as a socially constructed phenomena, gives

another voice to the organic intellectual who has been marginalized and misrepresented.

Investigating various complexities about the way we learn gives a new perspective to the social dynamics of criticality mentioned earlier. Understanding that consciousness is a social construction allows a critical teacher to use his/her ontological position in the web of reality in order to promote critical thinking skills with their students. Criticality in the notion of critical ontology involves the way people begin to construct their own forms of consciousness. Once these critical forms of consciousness are constructed, they can then be juxtaposed and embedded in the ways that people find themselves represented and the ways they represent themselves.

In the next section I use Nuyorican poetry and dialogicity to help develop a foundation for how representation of culture and identity can be either oppressive or emancipatory.

Organic Intellectual Dialogics:

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993), Paulo Freire lays out the foundation for actions taken both on the fronts of antidialogics and dialogics when seeking to oppress or seeking the terms of one's liberation through cultural action. There are four characteristics and processes for

each form of action, whether antidialogical or dialogical. Using the processes of antidialogical action (oppression) and dialogical action (liberation), I have used the characteristics of the organic intellectual, more specifically Nuyorganics Miguel Piñero and Pedro Pietri, and what outlaw poetry is in its current stage.

ANTIDIALOGICAL ACTION: "An instrument of oppression"
(Freire, 1993)

Conquest:

To this end the oppressors attempt to destroy in the oppressed their quality as 'considerers' of the world. Since the oppressors cannot totally achieve this destruction, they must *mythicize* the world. In order to present for the consideration of the oppressed and subjugated a world of deceit designed to increase their alienation and passivity, the oppressors develop a series of methods precluding any presentation of the world as a problem and showing it rather as a fixed entity, as something given something to which people, as mere spectators, must adapt (Freire, 1993, p.139).

The mythicization of the organic intellectuals' world is part of this antidialogic characteristic of conquest when one traces the history of the Puerto Rican/Nuyorican experience in New York City. The hardships are two-sided. During the Great Puerto Rican Migration, after having been promised jobs and opportunities to pursue the "American Dream," Puerto Ricans were given blue-collar assignments

and posts as *their* form of employment. As any proud, male or female worker or "breadwinner" who gains a wage to help support his or her family, Puerto Ricans became quickly aware of the characteristics of the real "American Dream." The surface-level American Dream gives everyone, immigrant, and people of color, or populations that are misrepresented the idea that it is easy to achieve if each individual just pulls themselves up by their own bootstraps. This perspective excludes qualities and traditions of familialism (Tatum, 1999), and community membership.

The real "American dream" ideology has proven to not only represent monetary earnings, but also the advantages of race, class and gender positionality. These social dynamics heavily contribute to one's success in obtaining parts of or the entire "dream." By this model, Nuyoricans find themselves conquered, in that their world has become mythicized by media representations. Their experiences have been decontextualized and based on television lives.

Divide and Rule:

This characteristic of antidialogic seems almost too easy to interpret because of its insidious qualities. Puerto Ricans, because of their misrepresentation whether by the media, textually, or socially, in turn, misrepresent those they have been politically pitted against for years.

This is the classic example of Freire's ideology of the oppressed becoming the oppressor.

During the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or 'sub-oppressors.' The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity. This phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed, at a certain moment of their existential experience, adopt an attitude of 'adhesion' to the oppressor. [...] But their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression (Freire, 1993, p.45).

The divide between the organic intellectual and the traditional forms of intellectualism versus the native informant, who at any time may appear to be both, are then divided again by race, and further by gender and socioeconomic status. For example, the divide between Puerto Ricans and Dominicans is heavily intertwined with race and global positionality. The divide is then internally reconstructed between Puerto Ricans *de la isla*, and Nuyoricans. The divide continues between the *blanquitos de la isla y los Afro Boricuas* (Flores, 2003) and again between the *jibaro* and someone from the city who has more social access.

Domination is much easier to achieve when groups are so divided that they cease thinking about who rules over all of them in the collective. In classrooms of higher education, whether student-centered classroom or instructor-centered, the dominant elite can easily take place with instruction being mythicized as the resolve. For example, when discussing Nuyorican poetry it can be easily interpreted as not being poetry, thus subjugating the work and the experience. By excluding a conversation about race and class and how it is connected to Nuyorican identity, the work of Nuyorican poets becomes depoliticized. Engaging in a discourse about organic intellectualism without a historical backdrop depoliticizes their experience. In this process of depoliticizing a group their representation becomes mythicized by producing information that is sugar-coated.

Constructions and organizations that ask for solidarity among the people and/or the masses serve as kryptonite for the oppressor who engages in divide and rule. Membership in groups such as The Young Lord's Party, ASPIRA, Latin Kings, or organizations that centralize around a sense of community membership are seen as threatening or dangerous. For example, the Muslim brothers from the Nation of Islam during Malcolm X's leadership and

later in Minister Farrakhan's early leadership, were seen as collectives of racists, who not only hated white people, but would seek to overthrow them "by any means necessary" (Malcolm X, 1963).

The minority cannot permit itself the luxury of tolerating the unification of the people, which would undoubtedly signify a serious threat to their own hegemony. Accordingly, the oppressors halt by any method (including violence) any action which even incipient fashion could awaken the oppressed to the need for unity. Concepts such as unity, organization, and struggle are immediately labeled as dangerous. In fact, of course these concepts are dangerous-to-the-oppressors-for their realization is necessary to actions of liberation (Freire, 1993, p.141).

Manipulation:

Once people have been conquered, divided and ruled they become easier to manipulate. In the case of Nuyorican poetry, once it is rejected as being a form of intellectualism, and has been eliminated from traditional settings, it is easier to manipulate the information. Nuyorican poetry has been manipulated so much that it has become subjugated. It has not been seen as its own form of knowledge production but rather has been compared to the American literary canon. In this comparison it is deemed to be of inferior quality to "real" American poetry. The manipulation of the experiences of Nuyorganics has adorned

them with the label of "other." This attribution of "otherness" silences them and allows for individuals outside the Nuyorican community to become representatives of their work.

The people are manipulated by the series of myths described earlier in this chapter, and by yet another myth: the model of itself, which the bourgeoisie presents to the people as the possibility for their own ascent. In order for these myths to function, however, the people must accept the word of the bourgeoisie within certain historical conditions, manipulation is accomplished by means of pacts between dominant and the dominated classes-pack which if considered superficially, might give the impression of a dialogue between the classes. In reality, however, these pacts are not dialogue, because their true objectives are determined by the unequivocal interest of the dominant elites (Freire, 1993, p.147).

Manipulation can be found in the production of televised poetry. Should poetry be televised? Does the end goal of being on television help to aid in the divisive characteristics of the oppressor? If Nuyorican poets cannot access the stations on which their tradition is presented, should it continue to be televised? For example, one has to "audition" for a spot on "Def Poetry." Tara Betts writes:

Poets are scrambling to get the commercial attention for their work, as an outlet for other opportunities. Despite the rush of some artists to get on the show, some poets feel that the popularization of poetry via

Def Poetry Jam might destroy the integrity of poetry by people of color, and poets in general. Editor and poet [Tony Medina](#) makes this point clearly in the [Bum Rush the Page](#) introduction: A good number of folks running around calling themselves poets care less about poetry than about blowing up. When I first hit the New York scene running (some 12-odd years ago), we used the term blow up with regard to saying something political or profound, not about seeking some sort of fame or fortune. Poets I ran with talked about dropping bombs or blowing up the spot like rappers talked about dropping science it was about saying something deep and powerful--and leaving a hole in the stage! It is that same stage that haunts us today (Betts, 2004).

"Performance Poetry" or Outlaw Poetry has been manipulated by capitalism. It has become more than a skill that is learned as opposed to a talent people were born with. It has become more than just a form of self-expression, with imbedded calls and responses. It has become a monopoly. It has become another route towards what capitalists call "stardom" or what capitalism denotes as "freedom of speech." It has become another battle to be on top. It has been stated that *Def Poetry* was created to "lend a voice to the voiceless" (Cohen, 2003). If this is actually the case, then why do the "voiceless" have to audition to be on *Def Poetry*? Are there specific characteristics of being part of a voiceless population? And what are the qualifications of judges who judge the voiceless, are they

voiceless too? Why then are there unreturned phone calls from the "voiceless" who want a shot at being heard and seen?

My undergraduate students are required to perform for the entire class, a "freestyle" poem if they are late to our sessions. My undergraduate students, while many take the challenge, others accept their lateness and resist the request to perform. Having been "banked" for most of their academic education, they respond to the poetry request, "Oh Profo! I didn't write anything up." "Oh I can't freestyle on anything without having written it down and corrected it." "Yo! Later for all that, I'll just take my lateness." "Charge it to the game Profo, charge it to the game!" The model they have been given, they reveal when speaking in private, is based on feelings of inferiority because of what they have seen as "poetry." They feel they can't rhyme like the girls of *Def Poetry*, or they have no experience based on the (rehearsed) emotion they see on *Def Poetry*, and even sometimes, preface their freestyle with, "I can't write poetry at all!" This causes me to go into a mini lesson on what is poetry? I have to take class surveys on what they believe *is* poetry, and what they believe *is not* poetry. Not that these mini lessons are not valuable, but having to do this ensures that we will never

hear the poem in that unrehearsed and fresh moment when it is asked for.

Cultural Invasion:

Some would say these ideologies and perspectives are that of a cultural elitist. However, it is in an assertion that those who operate out of their culture and into another, need to take responsibility for recognizing that they have done so, understanding the need to pay homage to some form of the tradition of the culture, and asking both how their version resembles that of the original and whether it is possible to reproduce it. It is not about elitism, but responsibility. In this process of invading one's culture, the invaders engage in a contemptuous belief that the group could not possibly represent itself in its own way. Through depoliticization and appropriation of another group's culture a silencing occurs which ultimately leads to its subjugation and marginalization.

An example of cultural invasion would be that of the *Botanica* (Puerto Rican Folk Pharmacy). While Hell's Kitchen is now populated with residents who see private doctors, in private offices, the home clinic approach struggles to survive in its original spaces of medical aid to the community. What the oppressor has been known to call "savage," or "cultic," or "uncivilized," has been the

staple of good health for many Latinos and Caribbean folk in Hell's Kitchen since the 1970s.

Barely noticeable in Hell's Kitchen nowadays, Botanicas are identified by multiple religious icons that adorn their store windows. For some, the appearance of a Jesus statue next to La Rosita is sacrilegious, for others it represents faith-based options. Along the shelves of the Botanica, one can find an assortment of religious candles, beads, shells, holy waters, books on dream interpretations, foreign proverbs, incense and herbs. (Borello and Mathias, 1977)

As Puerto Ricans, Nuyoricans, Dominicans, other Latinos and folk from the Caribbean patronize the likes of Botanicas, and are engaged in some form of *espiritismo*, or spiritism, the oppressor studies the "phenomenon" textually and in a positivistically detached manner not engaging with the people involved. While the hegemonic or traditional intellectual deem Botanicas as a third world religious culture, there is a failure to recognize Botanicas as a representation of Latino organic intellectualism. Botanicas, as previously mentioned are folk pharmacies. While traditional intellectuals have "medical prescriptions" that they can pay for full price or through insurance co-pay, Latinos, West Indians and other

Carribeans utilize the Botanicas for the same reasons. In order to operate a Botanica one must be a skilled botanist. Botany is important to this business as customers facilitate the Botanica in search of *plantas medicinales* or medicinal plants. Each month there are new plants that are discovered and used for medicinal purposes. Because folk pharmaceutical practices are similar to slave narratives in that they too progressed through history only orally, Botanicas become disvalued and subjugated.

Connecting this example of Botanicas, espiritismo, and outlaw poetry, it is within the confines of Botanicas that practitioners of espiritismo or Santeria are able to cite life. By citing life, they use their life experiences to rationalize the world around them. Practitioners are able to hermeneutically approach their lives. Through espiritismo, they are able to find answers to why good and bad events happen in their lives. Espiritismo and products of the Botanica also provide options for life experiences and changes within those experiences. (Borrello and Mathias, 1977)

In addition, Nuyorganic, salsero, and poet, Héctor Lavoe can also be used to illustrate the dimensions of folk culture that he embedded in his music. Having trouble with his drug use, Lavoe, during a performance in Africa, became

heavily influenced by and involved with Santeria (Stefano, 1993). Lavoe then decided to quit using drugs cold turkey with the help of various *babalaos* (Santeria-Priests). After returning from his trip to Africa, he was so connected to Santeria, that several of his songs referenced various *santero/as*, *babalaos* and other dimensions of the religion.

Imagine that in this same space for practitioners in the operations of the folk pharmacy, comes the poetry, and the motivation for writing passionate lyrics and words that hold deep cultural connections to who they are, or have become. The elimination of *bontanicas* in Hell's Kitchen has been rapidly taking place. Within a fifteen block radius there is only one remaining, where there were more than ten at one time. For poets outside of the outlaw tradition which is deeply rooted in culture, emulation is not yet invasion, however, emulation within recognition surely invades the oppressed and leaves them unable to name their world.

ORGANIC INTELLECTUALS WORKING WITHIN DIALOGIC ACTIONS:

It is not enough for the oppressed to work together to recognize that they are continuously searching for ways to become fully human. It is not enough that the oppressed continue to create new terms to define themselves and work

within a construct of ideas that brings them closer to one another by discontinuing their recognition of the oppressor(s). In this context the oppressed must work alongside the oppressor(s) to allow them a space to realize that they too are not fully human. The oppressors far too long have engaged in dehumanizing practices against the oppressed. Oppressors and their oppressive practices must be confronted by an intellectualism that is organic and intellectually revolutionary. Again in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire, allows his readers to find four suggestions to combat the work of the antidialogics. They are as follows: cooperation, unity for liberation, organization, and cultural synthesis. (Freire, 1993)

Cooperation

As simplistic as this may sound, cooperation is the first step in working together (both the oppressed and their oppressors) in actively seeking liberation -- whether their own, or each other's as well in conjunction to their own.

Since the unity of the oppressed involves solidarity among them, regardless of their exact status, the unity unquestionably requires class consciousness. The methods used to achieve the unity of the oppressed will depend on the latter's historical and existential experience within the social structure (Freire, 1993, pp.174-175).

With class consciousness being at the forefront and the method of tracing the historical roots of social structures of the Nuyorican poets, one can look to the previous outlaw poets who formed the Nuyorican Poet's Café, and the "outlaw poets" who perform on Broadway, but tend to "reinvent" the classic traditions of the original outlaw poets. For example, Miguel Piñero's class status was lower than that of the working middle class. After being abandoned by his father, Piñero and his three siblings became street-kids. He and his three siblings lived on Manhattan streets while waiting for their mother to find work, or some other type of income to support her family (Rossini, 2002).

As oppression would have it, Piñero would not come into wealth until the performance of *Short Eyes* (1975), which he wrote in Sing Sing while incarcerated for burglary (Rossini, 2002). When *Short Eyes: The Killing of a Sex Offender by the Inmates of the House of Detention Awaiting Trial*, hit the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater in 1974, Piñero reported, "Here I was with \$60 one day and all of a sudden somebody was giving me \$15,000" (Piñero, 1977).

One of the foundations for Nuyorican poetry is class consciousness. While cultural practices and even socially

dynamic behavior can be emulated it is questionable. The origin of Nuyorganic expression that consists of a history of power[lessness] is not perfectly emulated unless someone has once experienced the same. In *Puerto Rican Obituary*, Pietri goes into detail about the "American Dream" and how capitalistic it was in the 1970s and how it remains so today. He discusses playing the New York State Lottery as a way out for Puerto Ricans who cannot obtain the capital in other ways. How does a non-Pietri poet emulate his style without having experienced his connection to class consciousness? The excerpt of *Puerto Rican Obituary* on page 47 of this dissertation gives an example of Nuyorganic class consciousness during the 1970s. At the end of the poem, Pietri organizes the characters around a construct of self-hate. The characters hate each other (all Puerto Rican) because of the vicious dichotomy that oppression has created for them to live under. In the poem, you read about the tiring battles between the haves and the have-nots. The irony, at the end of the poem, is that the reader realizes they are all have-nots.

Unity for Liberation

In the dialogical theory the leaders must dedicate themselves to an untiring effort for unity among the oppressed-and unity of the leaders with the oppressed-in order to achieve liberation (Freire, 2000, p.172).

This characteristic of dialogical action specifically pertains to the several characteristics of the Nuyorican poets. One, the central players involved here are the Nuyorican poets of the 1970s, poets who are in simple emulation of outlaw poetry and Nuyorican or Black Arts Movement poets, and students who are intellectual among lost hegemonic professors and students. Second, the term "leaders" that Freire uses in the above quotation, will be used here to represent those who have access and determination to lead others with little access to social and cultural capital. Thus, "unity of the leaders" will also mean those who have such access, as well as those who lead others without access, who have themselves, have no access.

What is unity for liberation to the Nuyorican poet of the 1970s? What is the intent or motivation for uniting? Were the poets uniting for each other, other Nuyoricans, Puerto Ricans too, or just those in the struggle? In addition, what was the nature of their liberation? Was there a central theme around liberation that one could expect to rise out from the poems of Nuyorican outlaws during the 1970s, and have Nuyorican poets kept true to the game since?

Struggle within communities of color seem to be simplistic, in that people of color or those under oppression are attempting to liberate themselves from various oppressive practices, and are seeking that liberation through the struggle. It is almost as though Nuyorican outlaw poets are in need of the struggle in order for their work to survive.

Outlaw poets are not Walt Whitman replicas and are not Shakespearian in tone. The English teacher as hegemonic intellectual expects students to become liberated through their experience with canonized poets. Marginalized poetry is left up to "ethnic" studies departments and is not seen as important to discuss in a hegemonic classroom.

This type of discourse not only wages symbolic violence against students in that it devalues the cultural capital they possess as a significant basis for school knowledge and inquiry, it also tends to position teachers within pedagogical models that legitimate their roles as 'clerks' of the empire (Giroux, 1988, p.91).

The struggle is intense and offers a visually appealing perspective to members of that same struggle who are deemed powerless because of their class status or class *unconsciousness*. Histoculture becomes important here as well as all of the various facets I have listed in this section. The history of the Puerto Rican experience by way

of the island and the "mainland" plays a central role in most of the oppression/liberation outlaw poetry that I have analyzed through Freire's application of unity for liberation.

As noted earlier, Pedro Pietri was the founder of many organizations. Before his death, he helped to found and served as the Co-Director of the *El Puerto Rican Embassy*, which was founded in 1995-1996. However, in keeping with the tradition of the Nuyorican experience during the 1970s, *El Embassy* took its structure from *El Spirit Republic de Puerto Rico*, founded by Ambassador Eduardo Figueroa in 1979 (Bercht, 1996). *El Puerto Rican Embassy*, is a manifesto of why Puerto Rico is in need of independence.

[...] why shouldn't we be Independent? We know how to sing and dance And paint And write poetry And educate each other. In the history of our memory of thousands of years ago We all remember being Taino Indians before Columbus Invaded our eternal beaches of everlasting, magnificent Resources the Earth provided the indigenous population of our Island. The power of memory eliminates the threat of extinction. We have no intention of forgetting who we were and who we are And will continue to be for now & forever & beyond! (Pietri, 1994).

Pietri, in his *El Puerto Rican Embassy Manifesto* illustrates to readers and members that the organization's work is not simply to isolate Puerto Ricans from other groups, but it is also a call for unity among Puerto Ricans

who are still mentally imprisoned by the doings of and at the hands of colonialists. He writes,

Because war has never been on our agenda of survival. Our only mission is to live and let live in peace & harmony with all the citizens of the remarkable Planet Earth. We hold no animosity against anyone, even after 400 years of endeavoring to be fluent in Spanish against our will To then be instructed to learn English on short notice for the next one hundred years by other total strangers who are so impressed with our island that they decided to stay and told us to leave and find a better way of life (Pietri, 1994).

On the Embassy's site one is directed to a page entitled, "Los Blueprints" in which artwork of potential government documents such as the passport, a new flag, and religious iconography have been created. In response to a question that asks, "why a Puerto Rican Embassy?," the website states,

The creation of a conceptual territory in response to the US government's refusal to acknowledge the political, social and cultural needs of Puerto Ricans as we enter the 21st Century (Malданado, 1996).

Along with the government-related documents, such as "El Puerto Rican Passport," "El Postage Stamp," and "El Currency" Adal Malданado (the founding artist of *El Puerto Rican Embassy*), and Pietri collaborated to give the political crisis of Puerto Ricans/Nuyoricans an artistic spin. Their work on *Out of Focus Nuyoricans*, (Malданado,

1996) is described by Fatima Bercht (1996), a curator of *The Museo Del Barrio*, as being an expression of the political and psychological conditions of the Puerto Rican and Nuyorican identity (Bercht, 1996). Pietri and Adal believe that Puerto Ricans have long since lost their focus on what it means to be bicultural and oppressed. The project used non-conventional passport-sized photographs that were intentionally shot out of focus. The out of focus snapshot represents the political and psychological uncertainty that afflicts many Puerto Ricans. The photographs are also out of focus to dissuade government officials from obtaining control over Puerto Ricans. This control comes from physical identity factors such as age, race, and gender.

The fact that many of the sitters look unsettling, reflects the threat that their perceived "otherness" poses for the dominant culture and the systems of identification and classification it uses to maintain its dominance. It also playfully undermines the negative stereotypes of Puerto Ricans prevalent in the mass media (the scanning lines visible in many of the photographs evoke television in particular), which have practically rendered their social contributions to North American culture unrecognizable (Bercht, 1996).

From the construction and mission of *El Puerto Rican Embassy*, and Fatima Bercht's analysis of the "Out of Focus" series and project to the Pietri Manifesto of the *Embassy*,

comes the goal of unity for liberation of Puerto Rico from its (in)dependence of the United States. It is clear that the unity for liberation in this project attempts to help raise awareness among Nuyoricans and Puerto Ricans living in New York. To drive this unity-for-liberation theme home, Pietri writes a series of poems based on Adal's photographs of Puerto Ricans who are "out of focus." The first, *Nuyoricans Out of Focus I*, (1996) is based on Adal's first Nuyoricans "Out of Focus" photograph:



(www.elpuertoricanembassy.com)

Nuyoricans Out of Focus I (1996)

Congratulations! You've been out of focus for one hundred years!

Doesn't that make you feel good about your out of focus self

To not be figured out and left alone to concentrate on how
To keep yourself off the endangered species list on the menu

Of American history from the out of focus view of your living room

Window where the overcast is always present to remind you that

You forgot to pack the sun into your suitcase when you migrated

To the other side of the glass mirror of your inception to
 stare
 At yourself with your eyes closed to the outside world
 inside
 Of your personal opinion on how long ago the universe
 became
 Undecided about the law of gravity only violated as of
 lately
 By experimental Latin Manhattan accents of night school
 renegades
 Who educate themselves in their own authentic spiritual
 history
 Of being on different islands while having a cup of non-
 American
 Coffee early in the morning in Cuban restaurants in Hell's
 Kitchen
 Of manic Nuyorican mental dishwashers who want to be free
 after
 Working hours only! Because the rent has to be paid and the
 car
 Needs a new transmission & the children need high tech
 sneakers
 On the latest cyber layaway conspiracy plan of Miss Uncle
 Sam!
 Who has no tolerance for out of focus immigrants who do not
 Want to be figured out anytime soon in the near & distant
 future
 Of our indestructible verbal forest of lost revelations
 recovered
 Recalling the magic of a darkness so great that equality
 prevails!
 And though we were paid minimum wages and some wages
 Were higher than other minimum wages It was still minimum
 wages
 Anyway your minimum wages looked at it from all distorted
 angles:
 We became astronauts who conversed with coconuts about
 legendary
 Progressive mermaids who served rice n beans to heads of
 state
 For them to be original with their musical instruments

Miguel Piñero's poem *This is Not the Place Where I was
 Born* (1979) gives readers a similar perspective of
 government-related, capitalistic ownership of homelands.

Piñero asks readers to clearly understand his juxtaposition of living and being born on the mainland with his colorful memories of his island. For Puerto Rico to be "free" would necessitate the unity of Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans. Thus, liberation would be gained through unity.

Organization:

The organizational factor is very similar to the traits of unity for liberation. Organization involves all of the players described in unity for liberation. However, organization takes on different struggles.

Accordingly, the leaders' pursuit of unity is necessarily also an attempt to organize the people, requiring witness to the fact that the struggle for liberation is a common task. [...] Organizing the people is the process in which the revolutionary leaders, who are also prevented from saying their own word, initiate the experience of learning how to *name* the world (Freire, 2000, p.176).

Organizations for the Nuyorganic outlaw poets are taken from the founding work of Miguel Piñero and Pedro Pietri. For other artists mentioned in this project such as Héctor Lavoe and Willie Colón who served in the role of Puerto/Nuyorican organic intellectual, their service as organizers was similar to that of Piñero and Pietri. First, Pietri, not only founded *El Puerto Rican Embassy* in the 90s, but previously he was noted as one of the founders of the Nuyorican Poet's Café. He also served in a

leadership role as the Poet Laureate for the Young Lords Party. Miguel Piñero also served as a key founder of the Nuyorican Poet's Café along with retired Professor Miguel Algarín. Here they used their efforts in organizing not only to establish the café, but also produced *Nuyorican Poetry: An Anthology of Puerto Rican Words and Feelings* (1975).

Willie Colón, also known as William Anthony Colón Román, a Nuyorican from the Bronx, was born in 1950 among Blacks, other Puerto Ricans, Cubans and Whites. A high school dropout, Colón released his first album *El Malo* in 1967 at the age of 16. His music always reinforced clear visual images about street life and street culture of his time.

When one has spent much of life on the streets, one knows much more. Colón's street smarts and musical talent made *El Malo*, released in 1967, an enduring favorite among salsa fans, and Colón became one of the music genre's rising stars (Tardiff and Mabunda, 1996).

Colón used much of his popularity to develop a voice for the masses and in particular his people. In efforts to organize his people, and those who continue to wage social struggles, his political activism and social enlightenment became as popular as his music.

Colón, first emerged as a leader and organizer at age 16; he has since been a civil rights, community and political activist as well as Chair of the Association of Hispanic Arts, a member of the Latino Commission on AIDS, a member of the board of the United Nations Immigrant Foundation, President of the Arthur Schomburg Coalition for a Better New York, a current member of the Board of Directors of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, a founding member of the New Rochelle (NY) Hispanic Advisory Board, founding member of the New Rochelle Judicial System Committee and various other projects and organizations too numerous to mention (Colón, 2004)

Colón was awarded political recognition by receiving the Yale University's CHUBB Fellowship (Willie Colón Official Website), created to support students interested in the workings of government, culture and public service. In order to certify that the struggle of Latinos is not supported only within the Puerto Rican/Nuyorican enclaves, Colón along with Ruben Blades (salsero and actor) produced a concert for Amnesty International in 1998 for which 140,000 tickets were sold. A year later, Colón worked with United Nation's Women's Organization (UNIFEM), and the Mexican sister organization SEMILLAS to host a successful concert and fundraiser for the International Women's Day Fund. (Colón, 2004). In keeping within the framework of organic intellectualism, in November of 1999 he became Dr. William A. Colón when Hartford CT's Trinity College

conferred the degree of Doctor Of Music for 'The Art of Courage', a recognition given to artists who have used their art to make political change (Colón, 2004). Five years later in 2003, Colón would again receive a traditional intellectual award by way of Lehman College's (City University of New York) Doctor of Humane Letters, which was conferred upon him "in recognition of his compositions, poems and essays and the effect his work has had on millions of Latinos throughout the world." (Willie Colón Official Website) His recent achievements do not fail to be consistent. Between 2002 and 2004, Colón gathered many accolades in both New York and overseas. In New York City alone, Colón went on to be noted as New York City's Department of Convention and Visitor's Bureau Senior Advisor and Consultant, and Mayor Bloomberg's representative to El Museo Del Barrio. In 2004, he became Bloomberg's liaison and advisor to the Latin Media Entertainment Commission and later that year won a public service award from New York's Better Business Bureau. In the Dominican Republic under President Hipólito Mejía Colón was given the Order of The Hawk by Lieutenant General and Secretary of the Armed Forces, José Miguel Soto Jiménez. In the summer of 2004 Colón was inducted into the Bronx Walk of Fame (Colón, 2004)

Héctor Lavoe, also known as, Héctor Juan Perez Martinez, who was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico in 1946 and died mysteriously in New York City in 1993. He dropped out of school and began earning his money singing with a ten-piece band. Three years later, he decided to leave Puerto Rico and come to New York. (Sanabria, 2000) Similar to Lavoe's father's fear of his sons coming to New York City and ending up dead, in the film *Piñero* during a dialogue with his friend, Piñero remembers his grandmother's fear of him and his family leaving Puerto Rico to come to New York. "It was like she knew something bad was gonna happen." (Bratt, 2001) As previously mentioned in this chapter, the "American Dream" that so many Puerto Ricans envisioned during their Great Migration period, was also deferred in Lavoe's case.

Lavoe's dream quickly turned into a harsh nightmare as he visited his first New York City site of choice, El Barrio. There Lavoe came to terms with the actual condition of Puerto Ricans in New York - a reality that did not match the one in his imagination. As he drove past garbage instead of tree-lined streets and tenement apartment buildings instead of skyscrapers, Lavoe quickly experienced the "Dream" deferred (Sanabria, 2000).

During his first week in New York Lavoe met with several musician acquaintances who had been his childhood friends in Puerto Rico. From his rehearsals with these friends, he launched his career as "El Cantante" (the singer) along with Willie Colón. Izzy Sanabria, writes,

The unexpected success of that first album radically changed the lives of both Colón and Lavoe. Héctor received instant recognition, steady work and enough money to provide a comfortable life style. But according to Lavoe, it all happened so fast that he didn't know how to handle or cope with all the sudden success. Consequently, he developed a serious drug problem and began showing up late for gigs. Eventually he didn't even show at all and Willie was forced to fire him. "When Willie learned of my drug problem, he went out of his way to help me overcome it. I love Willie like a brother. He took a lot of crap from me but he never gave up on me. No one had ever taken an interest in me the way Willie did. My friendship with Willie is one that I could never break (Sanabria, 2000).

While Colón organized the Puerto Rican community through his political activism, Lavoe organized them by way of his music. While many people from various islands and in the Caribbean do not like being referred to as a "hick," Lavoe embraced it. He was noted as a "jibaro," the Spanish term for a hick, and was proud of being one. Through his music and his lyrics, Lavoe forced his fans to recognize their own solidarities with the Puerto Rican community in New

York (the Nuyoricans) and jibaros (Puerto Ricans from Puerto Rico) alike.

Unlike many Puerto Ricans, he does not resent being called a "Hick" and in fact he embraces the term proudly proclaiming, "Soy un Jibaro." His songs reflect that Jibaro pride and love of his birthplace. A perfect example is the tune he wrote Paraiso de la Dulzura from his first solo album. "Que de adónde vengo/ que pa' dónde/ vengo de la tierra de gran Dulzura/ la sabrosura y sandunguera/ que Puerto Rico puede dar lo-le-lo-lei-lo-le-lo-lei/ esa tierra es mi locura/ Puerto Rico te adoro/ tierra Santa, tierra pura." His beautiful lyrics are testimony of his love for the land of his birth and everything connected with it (Sanabria, 2000).

However, unlike Colón but very similar to Piñero, drugs and tragedy dominated Lavoe's life. Through his production of knowledge, (his music), and his tragic experiences, he is remembered as a salsero and Nuyorican organic intellectual. As stated earlier, Piñero felt that as a Nuyorican writer he had to "keep doing bad to do good" (Bratt, 2001). It would appear that Lavoe had the same philosophy. Lavoe's escalation of tragedies began with the loss of his mother, his brother's death from a drug overdose on the streets of New York City, his being brutally beaten and robbed for his jewelry, a fire that burnt down his Queens, New York home and nearly killed his entire family, his mother-in-law being brutally murdered, and finally the death of his

seventeen year old son, who was accidentally shot by a friend (Sanabria, 2000). Overwhelmed by these life-altering events, Lavoe attempted suicide by jumping from a hotel window in Puerto Rico (Sanabria, 2000). Lavoe ended up dying from health complications caused by AIDS, and at the time he was penniless.

Cultural Synthesis:

In this method, a dialogic confrontation of culture must be enacted. Here the hegemonic and organic intellectual come together to work on understanding how knowledge becomes subjugated and why it needs to be included in the curriculum.

In cultural synthesis there are no spectators; the object of the actors' action is the reality to be transformed for the liberation of men. Cultural synthesis is thus a mode of action for confronting culture itself, as the preserver of the very structures by which it was formed. Cultural action, as historical action, is an instrument for superseding the dominant alienated and alienating culture. In this sense, every authentic revolution is a cultural revolution (Freire, 2000, p.180).

Cultural synthesis in this document will also be strongly connected to whether or not Nuyorican poetry is depoliticized through appropriation. A few episodes of *Def Poets* on HBO, has at times brought me to tears. These poets of color who made me teary-eyed allowed me to find a

personal connection to their poetry because of a shared culture. When poets who have not had these shared experiences, but pick up this "revolutionary" dialogue in appropriation, it helps to depoliticize the experience of the Nuyorganic and others who have had shared experiences. It is through thematic investigation that politicization and/or social justice is validation of reenacting or representing a culture or its social movements.

Social justice and/or criticality are important factors in cultural synthesis or any cultural revolution. Otherwise, how could Che Guevara from Argentina organize, unite and lead a revolution in Cuba for the good of Cuban people? Obviously, there is a form of cultural synthesis connecting the work of Miguel Piñero, Pedro Pietri, Héctor Lavoe, Willie Colón, and other notable Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans. It is clear that they have all established a shared framework of culture, or cultural synthesis, thus engaging in an authentic revolution.

Investigation-the first moment of action as cultural synthesis-establishes a climate of creativity which will tend to develop in the subsequent stages of action. In cultural invaders there are no invaders; hence, there are no imposed models. In their stead, there are actors who critically analyze reality (never separating this analysis from action) and intervene as Subjects in the historical process) (Freire, 2000, p.181).

With new day poets who attempt to follow in the tradition of Nuyorican outlaw poetry, the appropriation is carefully analyzed in their television performance. This appropriation and/or depoliticization is also evident in their publishing of diatribe poems that are reminiscent of cultures not their own. Fully aware of my own non-native informant relationship to Puerto Rican/Nuyorican culture, I consider the possibilities of how this dissertation could easily depoliticize the Nuyorican experience. However, as someone born in Hell's Kitchen, New York City during the 1970s, and having written outlaw-style poetry for the last twenty years about the experiences growing up in the "Kitchen" and being of color and constantly under watchful eyes of the oppressors, I validate my own cultural synthesis in these spaces of the organic intellectual tradition. The cultural politicization of sharing color and struggle within oppressive social structures is evident in the connection and solidarity efforts between the Black Panther Party and the movement of the Young Lord's Party adopting the Black Panther Party's model of unity for organization. Without invading each other's innate cultural spaces, each member of the cultural revolution or cultural synthesis process lends their support towards the struggle. Cultural synthesis "does deny the *invasion* of

one *by* the other, but affirms the undeniable *support* each gives to the other" (Freire, 2000, p.181).

New poets have come onto the scene giving more credit to Hip Hop the culture, than to the outlaw poets who laid the style out for the fresh new faces that confront us with their lyrics on television. Hip Hop the culture has even been credited as the beginning point for spoken word, or outlaw poetry. "Def Poetry Jam will raise the Hip Hop Nation to a higher level of consciousness. Spoken word is one of the most powerful forces of social change" (Bruce, 2004).

Def Poetry Jam was created to lend a voice to the voiceless. In comparison to other expressions, such as rap, spoken word was invisible, despite the fact that poets have always been the cajolers of history. It's imperative that these spoken word artists be catapulted to the mainstream and be recognized. Finally the marriage between (Hip Hop/Rap) and spoken word, can begin the arduous task of reconciliation (Cohen, 2003).

It is an interesting concept that *Def Poetry* feels the need to have their poets submerge and be recognized by mainstream, when it is that same "mainstream" that has forced them to respond in their poetry the way that they do. In addition, as maintained throughout this document, "spoken word" as an art, has not been invisible, unless one believes that it is the mainstream that creates cultural

visibility. If the mainstream have created cultural visibility and a step towards cultural synthesis, the art form has taken on new heights or lows depending on who analyzes it and from which perspective. The art form is nowhere near the process of retracing its roots or going back to Pietri's memory of the "First Draft Movement."

CHAPTER THREE
Critical Multiculturalism

Seeking a curriculum that is socially just and challenging seems simple. It seems that if one just considered the marginalized, or subjugated knowledge, one would know what to include in a curriculum that is inclusive. In a time where ethnic studies departments in New York City are under-funded and dismissed, this task is anything but simple. Ethnic studies departments are also bearing the burden of having to teach everything about marginalized populations. Without proper funding, ethnic studies departments also appear to marginalize. Marginalization is easily assumed when there are not enough courses available in ethnic studies or other academic departments. Hegemonic intellectual practices that are exclusive by tradition place a great responsibility on ethnic studies departments.

Hegemonic intellectual or traditional intellectual practices of teaching literature rely on the usage of the American literary canon. Historically, the American literary canon has excluded women and people of color and thus has subjugated several forms of knowledge. In college, I was only required to read literatures of color if I had registered for an "ethnic studies" course. This practice not only segregated knowledge, but also it also segregated the students. During my years as a college student, ethnic

studies courses were where the largest population of students of color could be found in an elective course - all at once. In required literature courses the domain of discourse was populated by "western" literature, or the great dead white male authors.

Before ethnic-studies departments, and still today, multiculturalism has taken on very depoliticized versions of inclusivity and recognition. Multiculturalism has become the celebration of holidays and "heritage months." The depoliticized version also includes icons of color that remain "safe" in use. For example, Martin Luther King, Jr., is taught instead of Malcolm X. Gandhi is taught instead of Phoolan Devi's political activism. Trinidadian V.S. Naipaul instead of Guyanese Walter Rodney is read. "Spanish" literature is read rather than or in juxtaposition to other groups who also represent the Latino/a experience. When I say that "Spanish" literature is read, I mean literature from Spain or written by Spanish authors are promoted as the host of Spanish canons. Puerto Rican, Dominican and other Latino/a authors are not encouraged as part of the Spanish language/literature concept.

Nuyorican poetry has been excluded from the discourse of multiculturalism. Because Puerto Rico is a United

States territory, there has not been a need to include the nation's cultural identity in American education. However, if it has been done, Nuyorican identity has only been part of an "add-on" approach to inclusivity. Since organic intellectual pieces are rarely studied as focal points of required literature courses, the Nuyorganic suffers twice. This process of adding-on the experience of the marginalized further subjugates their knowledge production and consumption.

HISTORY OF MULTICULTURALISM:

Historically, multiculturalism was barely an "add-on" to the hegemonic and/or traditional intellectual experience. The rationale for such a style of inclusion was as racist as was/is the exclusionary practice all together. Cameron McCarthy restates what early twentieth-century educator Ellwood P. Cubberley delivered as part of his rationale and hope for including multiculturalism in education programs. Cubberley states,

Our task it to assimilate these people (racial minorities and immigrants) as part of the American race, and to implant in their children so far as can be done the Anglo-Saxon conceptions of righteousness, law, order, and popular government, and to awaken in them reverence for our democratic institutions and for those things which we as people hold to be of abiding worth (McCarthy, 1996, p.153).

This guide towards Americanization has always been the ultimate goal of multiculturalism. "Americanization in the past has always implied Angloization" (Nieto, 2000, p.335). This traditional form of multiculturalism has also been a disguise for further perpetuating racism. Racism is a continuum that is enabled to exist through guises of inclusivity.

Multiculturalism and Puerto Ricans:

Similar to the plight of African American or Black representation in American classrooms, Nuyoricans have also been represented through tunnels of entertainment. Known for salsa, Marc Anthony, Jennifer Lopez, or *West Side Story*, Nuyoricans have not had a valuable relationship to academic success in American classrooms. Nuyorican and Puerto Rican literature, if to be read in college classrooms, are up against competitors like Thoreau, Chaucer, Dickinson and Shakespeare. By reading such "classics" traditional and hegemonic intellectuals force students to reject Nuyorican literature as "classics." In these frameworks of exclusion, how does the Nuyorican organic intellectual find a place within curricula? Nuyorican organic intellectuals who wish to be fairly represented in academia must look towards a curriculum that is socially just and at the same time challenging. There

must be a rejection of hegemonic and traditional practices that segregate, depoliticize, appropriate and subjugate. Critical multiculturalism is an effective tool that seeks the goal of promoting a socially just education.

In the pages that follow, I will describe the work of critical multiculturalism in relationship to Nuyorican identity. However, before critical multiculturalism is identified as the panacea to misrepresentation, several other forms of multiculturalism must be discussed as well.

Hegemonic Multicultural Practices:

Hegemonic multiculturalism practices are the work of Americanization and/or assimilation. These three variations of multiculturalism help to subdue overt racism, and aid in the subjugation of Nuyorican organic intellectualism. *Changing Multiculturalism: New Times, New Curriculum* (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997) offers a theoretical outline of hegemonic multiculturalism and critical multiculturalism. The three hegemonic multiculturalism theories will be used here as applied to the work of the Nuyorganic.

Conservative/Monocultural Multiculturalism:

The efforts of conservative multiculturalism allow for Western standards of patriarchy and male dominance to be the forefront of multicultural dialogue. In this

framework, Nuyoricans as a people, and Nuyorganics are seen as unworthy factors in American society. They are treated as inferior, and are always marginalized because of their debased "other" characteristics. Also in this context, the Nuyorican is disregarded because of conservative concepts on what constitutes family values. The stereotype involved is that because Nuyoricans have no family values, their academic success is minimal (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997).

The main goal of monocultural/conservative multiculturalism approaches, is to encourage assimilation. This framework requires the dropping off of one's culture and an immersion into White middle-class standards of what it means to be an American. For Nuyoricans, this structure proves to be multidimensionally problematic. The fact that Nuyoricans are bi-cultural and bi-national, they are thus forced to reject their heritage and their American citizenship simultaneously.

This ideology of the melting pot never operated smoothly even for non-white people who wanted to melt - no matter how much they tried to assimilate, they were still marginalized on the basis of their colour (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997, p.4).

Into what are Nuyoricans supposed to assimilate? Is their culture not also American culture? Does American

governmental occupancy in Puerto Rico dissuade assimilation or encourage it? These are questions that Puerto Ricans both on the island and on the "mainland" struggle to answer. The practice of patriarchy and assimilation for Puerto Ricans was clearly demonstrated in the film *West Side Story* (1961). In the film, when Maria (Puerto Rican from the island,) falls in love with Tony (White), Maria wishes to break free from her patriarchal family grips by seeking intimate freedom with a white boy from America. Tony, who is white and from America represents freedom to Maria. Interestingly enough, Maria is played by Natalie Wood who was of Russian heritage, and Bernardo her Puerto Rican brother who serves as the family's patriarch and local gang-banger in the film is played by George Chakiris who is "often remembered as a 'Latin Lover' type in Hollywood, but is actually the son of Greek immigrants" (Wiebe, 1995).

As part of the deviant stereotype of Latinas, Natalie Wood portrays a refined Puerto Rican female who is virginal in her delicacy, demeanor and most importantly, her sexuality. However, she still needs a man by her side to feel validated. Obviously this is a character who would be the Juliet for the White Romeo. By breaking away from the patriarchal grips of her brother, and dating outside of her

race, Natalie Wood's character learns true American values when both her brother and her White boyfriend are killed. Rita Moreno's role portrays Puerto Ricans as those who are not worthy of representation by way of monocultural multiculturalism. Moreno plays a fire-brazed Puerto Rican, who indeed decides very early on to assimilate into American culture.

Liberal Multiculturalism:

Liberal multiculturalists defend their position as anti-racist by promoting sameness. The theory here moves a step further than monoculturalism in that liberal multiculturalism de-emphasizes difference. This "color blind" society that is sought helps to further perpetuate racism, subjugation and appropriation of knowledge. Although skin colors, identities and cultures make up several individuals as well as ethnic groups, liberal multiculturalism seeks to erase these variations and merge all people into one common race - the human race. These practices of working towards sameness have also proven problematic and detrimental to the Nuyorganic experience.

Exclusive concern with similarity will undermine the democratic and justice-centered attempt to understand the ways that race, class and gender mediate and structure experiences for both the privileged and the oppressed (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997, p.11).

Belief in the one-race theory (human race) removes the social dimensions of one's cultural makeup. This approach discounts cultural experiences and depoliticizes those very experiences, causing them to be subjugated. Yes indeed, each individual is a human being causing them to make up the human race, but several questions and problems arise from this. According to Freire (1993) there are the haves and the have-nots. Those in position of social control or power are clearly different from those who are oppressed and marginalized. The oppressed are not fairly represented in either education or in society. Issues such as racism, socioeconomic disparities, and silencing are not equally shared by all participants within the human race. As laid out in chapter two of the dissertation, Nuyoricanics have been culturally divided from Puerto Ricans because of the dominant elite. In addition, Nuyorican organic intellectuals have not had their production of knowledge fairly represented in academia.

For example, knowing how to speak French as a second language, as opposed to knowing English as a second language does not guarantee the same rights, privileges and respect. In this theory, language has also been used to subjugate the experience of the Nuyorican organic intellectual. Essentially, then, in how one consumes

knowledge dictates their particular forms of power. It means that having to learn English to survive as opposed to learning Spanish for enrichment. Learning French because one wishes to travel to France holds a different meaning than one who needs to learn English to excel academically. Depending on what is being learned and who is learning it defines the nature of power experiences one has.

Pluralist Multiculturalism:

The pluralistic approach to multiculturalism is voyeuristic. Differing from liberal multiculturalism, the pluralistic approach values differences in a way that difference becomes "exoticized and fetishized" (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997, p.15). What this approach helps to promote is the building of pride in one's culture. Through this pride, pluralist multiculturalism teaches its students that if everyone used their own bootstraps, they can achieve (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997). What this framework helps to promote is the idea that regardless of oppressive histories of people of color, they have still been successfully achieving.

Take for example, the "Latin Lover" stereotype. This stereotype similar to the "Black Mandingo" has made its way into Hollywood and into the civilian population it serves. Latino males are not depicted as academically successful

and/or economically powerful. Instead they are depicted as the gorgeous but dumb lover from the tropics who speak Spanish, and who have "exotic" names; a classic depiction of the "Don Juan" syndrome (Chapa, 1998). "Although the portrayal has a tang of racism, it reveals the colonial attitude of the European meeting the indigenous" (Thomas as quoted by Chapa, 1998).

This stereotype created by pluralist multiculturalists also works to categorize Nuyoricans as bandidos (bandits). The depiction of bandidos can also be seen in *West Side Story* (1961) where Puerto Ricans living in a White neighborhood were not hard-working Latinos, but rather members of a vicious gang (The Sharks).

The bandido stereotype not only oversimplifies Latinos – the very definition of stereotype – but also reinforces the cleanliness, sobriety, sanity, overall decency, and moral rectitude of the WASP in the white hat (Ramírez-Berg as quoted in Chapa, 1998).

What pluralists want to see in an individual representative of a cultural group is what they themselves have created as notions of culture.

What's Wrong with Multiculturalism?

If multiculturalism continues to be practiced in the above three theoretical frameworks, the work of the Nuyoric organic intellectual will be forever subjugated.

There is a common element in each of these frameworks, and it is the assimilation factor. Each of these multicultural frameworks promote assimilation without accommodation (Gibson, 1988). As stated earlier, assimilation for Nuyorican organic intellectuals becomes difficult because of their American citizenship and their cultural connections to the island. This is not to say that some Puerto Ricans/Nuyoricans have not completely assimilated by way of rejecting their Latinidad, but rather it is a difficult task for most. Nuyorican identity is a split between Puerto Rico and the cultural experience of being Puerto Rican in New York City. Still searching for a curriculum that promotes social justice and academic challenges, I now turn to the theory of critical multiculturalism. The effective use of a critical multiculturalism helps to recognize acts of depoliticization, appropriation and subjugation of knowledge. The critical approach to multiculturalism identifies the weight that power and eurocentrism have in shaping both hegemonized and a more independent, self-directed consciousness. Through this identification, there is also an illustration of how people produce, restore and reproduce significant meanings in a context that identifies power as central to the reformation (Kincheloe and

Steinberg, 1997). The whole purpose of multicultural education, and critical multiculturalism is to view the "other" perspectives within the structure of effective pedagogy. The important result of critical multiculturalism is for people to be visually, orally, and textually represented in traditional Western epistemology.

In addition, critical multiculturalism lays out the tools necessary for producing a critical construction of selfhood. This critical construction of selfhood is imperative in the knowledge production of the Nuyorican organic intellectual. The Nuyorican organic intellectual who has begun, or who has already critically constructed his selfhood:

understands how and why his or her political opinions, socio-economic class, role, religious beliefs, gender role and racial self-image are shaped by dominant perspectives (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997, 23).

What Critical Multiculturalism Covers in its Discourse:

1. *Critical pedagogical tools and how to effectively use them in diverse classrooms.*

Recognizing the difference between Puerto Rican and Nuyorican culture is a central component to understanding Nuyorganics. The experience of the Nuyorican organic intellectual has been subjugated by the likes of hegemonic

Puerto Rican intellectuals as well as so called American standards of academic excellence. For example, Nuyoricans that return to Puerto Rico are considered "Gringas" and in New York, Puerto Ricans do not feel welcomed as "Americans" (Nieto, 2000). In classrooms of higher education, it is not enough to read literature or poetry by Puerto Rican/Nuyoricans authors without a political preface. One cannot identify dimensions of culture and identity that is imbedded in Nuyoricans literature if not grounded in social dynamics. Students alone cannot identify the cultural politics of Nuyoricans and connect those politics to Nuyoricans writing. The teacher must also begin to transform his/her knowledge base into seeking a political, historical and social approach to knowledge production as well.

Critical multicultural teachers and other cultural workers must understand where they are located in the web of reality - in relation to the various axes of race, class and gender power (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997, p.29).

2. Promotion of social change through awareness of what social justice means in the classroom.

What is social justice in a college classroom? Social justice consists of classrooms that promote the learning of each class member. As opposed to fitting people into neat

categories such as by race, class, and gender, classrooms should focus on how to integrate such social dynamics into society. Nuyorican poetry in the classroom should be analyzed not only as a subjugated knowledge, but the ways in which it is relevant to everyday experience should be explored (Kincheloe, 2001). The Nuyorican experience in college classrooms should not be studied by simply watching the Puerto Rican Day parade in New York City, but by asking in a larger historical context why the parade exists in the first place. Another question to ask under this framework would be why the parade is so widely popular in New York City (Puerto Rico's "mainland.") The parade should be examined in connection to the historical plight of Puerto Ricans on the island occupied by the United States.

3. How social dynamics work together to help critically construction selfhoods and individualize/group experiences.

Nuyorican organic intellectuals cannot be analyzed through Puerto Ricans living in New York City alone. Issues of race, class, gender, socioeconomics and positionality must be integrated into this discourse. Positivistic traditions and methods of teaching and learning exclude race, class and culture. These social dynamics are segregated from the effort to engage in a critical construction of selfhood. Social dynamics cannot

be isolated and studied independently in efforts to understand individual events. Numerous unanticipated factors can influence what happens in any classroom (McCarthy, 1993). Segregating so-called variables and treating them independently would in turn mean that socioeconomic status does not affect the construction of racial identities or the attainment of power. "Nonsynchrony" (McCarthy, 1988, p.275) is the term used to illustrate non-interconnectedness of social dynamics that make up important rationales for critical multiculturalism curricula. This term identifies the:

attempt to understand the dynamic, complex, and often contradicting interrelations that begins to explain the interaction of race, gender, and class within the economic, political and social environments as they differentially function within the daily practices of schooling (McCarthy, 1996, p.149).

For example, the color-complex within Nuyorican communities positively and negatively influences Nuyorican identity. In addition, socioeconomic status is affected by these racial classifications as well. Analyzing social dynamics is central to how Nuyoricans construct their selfhood. When Pietri created *Nuyoricans Out of Focus* (1995-1996), he included in his analysis the malfunction in Nuyorican construction of selfhood. The pictures taken for

Out of Focus depicted Puerto Ricans who have been assimilated into American culture without remembering what it means to be Boricua. These pictures that were purposely shot out of focus "give(s) visual form to political and psychological ambiguity" (Bercht, 1996) of Nuyoricans.

4. *How critical construction of self helps to promote a positive depiction of difference.*

Including the lived experience of students in one's pedagogy, helps to promote a critical construction of selfhood not only for students but for the teachers who work with them as well. In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, (1994) hooks thinks it is difficult for hegemonic intellectuals to include life experience in any academic discourse. She writes of White university faculty and administrators being afraid of diversity because they were not witnessing a:

melting pot idea of cultural diversity, the rainbow coalition where we could all be grouped together in our difference, but everyone wearing the same have-a-nice-day smile (hooks, 1994, p.30).

For Nuyorican organic intellectuals who are allowed to use a native informant role and share a lived reality, this experience becomes validated as an actual intellectual example. Concerned with the native informant role, hooks believes that these roles subject students to a burden of

representation. The concern should not be whether or not the student has been burdened by representational responsibility. The concern should be more about whether or not the student is being used as the sole example for any cultural experience. If the student is being used as the only example for a cultural practice or experience, then the concern turns to whether or not the student is comfortable in that role.

5. What students can learn from the "other" – what hegemonic intellectuals in traditional institutions of learning can learn from Nuyorican experiences.

Hegemonic intellectuals and the American literary canon have so long been exclusive in their approach to teach literature. Their positivistic approaches to teaching have marginalized those who learn by lived experience. In this structure, hegemonic intellectuals refuse to believe that they can learn from the organic intellectual. How can the lived experience by way of a critical construction of selfhood teach hegemonic intellectuals about knowledge production? Learning about Nuyorican organic intellectuals takes them away from the marginal exposure they receive in traditional intellectual settings.

Including the study of Nuyorican organic intellectuals in the curriculum provides the hegemonic center of learning

with important insights into how social dynamics work in our society. Arguing that hegemonic intellectualism such as the American literary canon should include voices not just of one particular race but the politicization of different groups of people is socially just pedagogy.

For all students, early knowledge of various cultures and identities might alert them of future difficulties with race relations. Literature can be set up so as to create a dialectic between differing worldviews, between the national-cultural and the critical (Villanueva, 1993, p.99).

This difficulty of understanding race relations comes in all facets. That it penetrates its way into classrooms of higher education is not surprising when the media influences much of what some come to know. For example, during the last season of *Seinfeld* the *Puerto Rican Flag* episode was seen as anything but positive because of the way Puerto Ricans were depicted. In the episode Kramer "accidentally" sets a Puerto Rican flag on fire while he and Jerry are stuck in New York City traffic. While draped in the Puerto Rican flag, Kramer screams out to Jerry, "Hola, Jerry! I'm into this Puerto Rican day! The sights! The sounds! The hot, spicy flavor of it all! It's caliente, Jerry!" (Seinfeld Scripts, 1998) Kramer goes on to describe the New York City Puerto Rican Day Parade as a depiction of everyday life in Puerto Rico. As Kramer

attempts to get Jerry in a festive mood, he throws a sparkler in the backseat of Jerry's car burning a Puerto Rican flag. To put out the fire, Kramer throws it out of the car and begins to stomp on the flag. (Seinfeld Scripts, 1998)

In response to the *Seinfeld* episode many in the Latino community, particularly Puerto Ricans were outraged by the disrespect to their flag and their culture on national television.

When the writers and producers of the NBC television series *Seinfeld*, including Jerry Seinfeld himself, decided to burn the Puerto Rican flag on national television, they performed a great service for the Puerto Rican people. Albeit unwittingly, this singular event reminded Puerto Ricans of how poorly we are regarded in the American psyche. Puerto Ricans everywhere were forced to ask themselves, would the people of *Seinfeld* and NBC dare burn any flag other than the Puerto Rican flag? That act, committed presumably in the interest of humor, only poured salt on a hundred-year-old wound (Dobles and Segarra, 1998, Introduction).

What the producers of the show failed to recognize what the importance of the Puerto Rican flag to Puerto Ricans living in the United States. No cultural responsibility was taken to make a decision as to what is humorous and what is offensive. Juxtaposed with this response to the episode is what I have actually seen at

many of the parades. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993) the theory behind the oppressed becoming the oppressor as they seek liberation has been displayed during the parade. I have witnessed young girls sexily clad or drape themselves in the flag. I have seen the flag being worn as bikini tops, short shorts, tube tops, and men who wear the flag as muscle-shirts and shorts. This scene juxtaposed to the response to the *Seinfeld* episode is interesting to note. This juxtaposition is relative to chapter two of this dissertation where I discuss Freire's theories on oppression and who is justified in acting within another culture? Why are Latinos angry at the *Seinfeld* episode, but engage in similar behavior to the their own flag? Is the idea here that only Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans can treat their flag in any fashion and all other groups are excluded from this practice? Or is it that Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans have been so subjugated that they now in turn understand the complexity of their experience as marginalized?

6. *Exposes its students to multilogicality and multiple truths, so that organic intellectualism is valued and seen as valid intellectualism*
7. *Constructs tools necessary to identify subjugation of knowledge production and/or consumption.*

Puerto Rican and Nuyorican forms of subjugation are clearly demonstrated in the lack of exposure to Nuyorican scholars. In a Google search for "Nuyorican Scholars" or "Nuyorican Academicians" not one single hit resulted. Hegemonic intellectualism does not allow for Nuyorican scholarship to be part of the traditional intellectual setting. Critical multiculturalism provides identification tools necessary to recognize this subjugation in practice. A question that arises is should Nuyorican organic intellectualism be treated as a separate form of knowledge, or should it be open to interpretation? (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997). Critical multiculturalism teaches us that Nuyorican organic intellectualism can be analyzed in both frameworks. Looking at Nuyorican organic intellectualism as its own form of knowledge production can help knowledge consumers appreciate difference. Nuyorican organic intellectuals in this framework understand their selfhoods within structures of power and hegemony.

8. Uses subjugated knowledge in a discourse of difference, to produce the power to conquer racism and disenfranchisement.

Changing Multiculturalism (1997) lays out five steps to using subjugated knowledge to empower the marginalized and the oppressed. The following connects these points to

Nuyorican organic intellectualism and its pedagogical practices.

A. Multilogicality and reshaping the operation of curriculum.

In relation to the earlier section on how important social dynamics play a role in producing and consuming knowledge, this first point helps to strengthen that claim. It is important for the Nuyorican organic intellectual to critically identify and examine issues of power. If identified critically, organic intellectuals will be able to see the difference between producing and consuming knowledge. In addition, organic intellectuals will be able to identify hegemonic practices that continue to marginalize their experiences. As Nuyorican organic intellectuals begin to search for their own form of intellectualism they will come to realize why their production of knowledge has been subjugated.

B. Subjugated knowledge as knowledge variation serves as a contributor to knowledge production and consumption:

By treating students as critical thinkers and constructors of their own knowledge development, both students and teachers come to understand how organic intellectualism is legitimated. This process of becoming a critical learner and/or teacher voids the banking method

(Freire, 1993) of education. Banking information into students as though they are empty vessels helps to depoliticize and subjugate their experience in the world. In this context hegemonic intellectuals reject Nuyorican organic intellectualism as valid knowledge. As they begin to investigate critical multicultural knowledges, students and teachers begin to give the Nuyorican organic intellectual an academic representation. This socially just academic representation understands the social dynamics of the Nuyorganic lived experience (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997).

C. Sociopolitical academic justification and promotes challenging academics:

Appropriation and depoliticization of knowledges of the Nuyorican organic intellectual has a long history. Critical multiculturalism challenges the notion of positivism and the idea of one "true" form of knowledge. Academic justification comes from organic intellectuals, cultural workers and likeminded teachers and students whose hermeneutical experiences need academic validation. Critical multiculturalism not only investigates hegemonic intellectual practices that seek to exclude but through organic intellectualism seek rationales for exclusivity. For the Nuyorican organic intellectual and the hegemonic

intellectual who may academically "train" them, two roles of knowledge production and/consumption must be addressed. The first role, the organic scholar as critical hermeneut is comprised of scholars, teachers and cultural workers whose pedagogical tools offer Nuyorican organic intellectuals a chance to interpret their world through their lived experience (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997). The second role, the critical epistemologist is also comprised of scholars, teachers and cultural workers who help Nuyorican organic intellectuals investigate subjugated and excluded knowledge (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997).

D. Critical Multiculturalism's use of critical subjugated knowledge also invites the use of indigenous knowledge as another variation in knowledge:

The use of indigenous knowledge promotes the inclusivity of the Puerto Rican experience as part of the Nuyorganic experience, which is clearly part of the American experience. Using indigenous experiences as justification or validation for knowledge production helps to understand and appreciate culture. The use of indigenous experience(s) when producing or consuming knowledge helps to steer teachers, students, cultural workers and hegemonic intellectuals away from depoliticizing experiences. In addition, this method of learning always helps to dissuade

hegemonic intellectuals from appropriating other people's ways of knowing that may appear "trendy" or fad-like.

Any effort to understand or use such knowledges cannot be separated from the world views and epistemologies embraced by their producers (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997, p.56).

E. Using the lived experience as acceptable research in producing, consuming and understanding the knowledge produced by organic intellectuals.

Too many times students cultivate research skills as requirements for a specific class. Students are not encouraged to think about the ways that they normally go about finding out information and applying those experiences of researching outside of school in the classroom. For the Nuyorican organic intellectual in a hegemonic classroom, he/she is not allowed to include the experience of patronizing a Botanica for medicine or advice. Instead, the Nuyorican organic intellectual must use the experience of shopping at mainstream pharmacies if they want to be included in the dialogue. The hegemonic intellectual believes that research is conducted only through academically-recognized or regulated training. Hegemonic intellectuals do not see the challenge behind interpreting lived experiences into a traditional form of research. Neither do hegemonic intellectuals promote the

use of lived experience in order to create a socially just learning experience. Critical multiculturalism allows for Nuyorican organic intellectuals to compete in knowledge production by using lived experiences to perform research. This collection of subjugated knowledge provides a challenge not only for the production of knowledge, but the consumption of knowledge.

Elementary and high school teachers often complain about their limited time to inculcate critical multicultural practices. However, teachers and cultural workers within higher education institutions are more at leisure to do so in their classrooms of college and graduate students. Critical multiculturalism does not require external funding at all times, nor does it require pre-acquired knowledge of the student. In fact, as mentioned throughout this chapter, it can often be an environment where students construct learning around lived experiences. In addition, this critical multiculturalism provides a challenging approach to pedagogy once students enter ethnic-studies department courses. Lastly, for the Nuyorganic, while subjugated, the production and consumption of knowledge can be critically investigated in a nurturing environment. This nurturing environment dispels the work of hegemony, appropriation and

depolicitization of the Nuyorican experience and its construction of the lived world. This same nurturing environment allows all learners the opportunity to critically (re)construct their selfhood.

CHAPTER FOUR
Historiography: Methods

Historiography is based within concepts of critical analyses. Involved in this work are the principles, theories and methodologies used in historical research and representation (American Heritage, 2000). When researching history, it is helpful to situate one's self in the past. Depending on how far back one wishes to go with their research it is also important to situate oneself among various historical methodologies. Understanding both the historical timeframe being studied and the various ways to study it leads to several questions about such historical events. However, in researching history one may ask the particular question of how the events of any given historical period helped to shape our contemporary society. After understanding how the past has aided us in grasping our present society, applications for future insights of that same society is possible.

Historiography can be used to not only understand our present social world but to also make important contributions in effecting social change. It allows for the importation of old knowledge in contrast and comparison to the exportation of new knowledges as informed by our own personal histories. Through the use of historiography and its various methods, traditional and organic intellectuals alike can begin to think critically and analytically about

our own personal lives as they repeat the past or attempt to change for anew.

While history cannot change, the way we begin to interpret the past can evolve depending on when we study it and what is currently being undergone in our society. For example, this dissertation attempts to historically understand organic intellectualism through Nuyorican poetry. While there are certain events that took place during the evolution of Nuyorican poetry, how we begin to interpret those events and apply them today has changed. Historically, organic intellectualism was only discussed in a Gramscian perspective. Today, and in particular, this dissertation applies organic intellectualism to the history of Nuyoricans - thus, a new theory of representing organic intellectualism has evolved.

Nuyorganics as a newly developed theory brings about questions and arguments on how to use historical organic intellectualism effectively. To bring about questions, arguments and various interpretations is to use history through a critical lens. This lens then leads to my use of critical historiography as the method to which I begin to understand Nuyorganics and its contemporary application.

Hegel's theories on history are taken into account here. Someone who has either witnessed or experienced the

historical time period in which they write about represents his theory of original history. Critical historiography allows for a new spin on the traditional academic use of historical research. Critical historiography in part understands Hegel's theory of reflective history, which deals with the writing of a past historical period. According to the German political and social philosopher, Hegel believed that part of reflective history embodied critical history. This element in reflective history took the writing of a time that has since passed and used various elements of interpretation to which new accounts can be made in understanding that time period (Hegel, 2004).

In this dissertation I have used critical historiography as my research method to interpret (1) Nuyorican lived history and (2) organic intellectualism. In combining the two, Nuyorganics has emerged as a new account of the Nuyorican lived experience and thus gives a new understanding to our production and consumption of knowledge.

The pursuit of historiography, defined in this manner forces one to compare perspectives taken by different historians. In this way, the material being studied is reconceptualized since the teacher and the student must view it as one of the many

interpretations, not merely as 'the way things were' (Kincheloe, 2001, p.593).

Historiography and critical multiculturalism are central to constructing one's selfhood. Application of personal narratives and life experiences are also central to validating marginalized knowledge. With the use of critical multiculturalism, historiography is strengthened in its quest to validate subjugated knowledge.

For the Nuyorican organic intellectual, historiography is vital in the quest for academic representation. Nuyorican organic intellectuals must be able to tell their stories and/or their narratives, as they know them. It cannot be a muddled by hegemonic intellectual pedagogical practices, but rather should be a natural part of learning. In order to de-subjugate their life experiences and begin to understand their current social status, Nuyoricans must be able to expose the history of their condition. (Kincheloe, 2003) It is not enough for the hegemonic intellectual to represent the Nuyorican organic intellectual by way of original history (Hegel, 2004). It is not enough for hegemonic intellectual students to simple-mindedly historicize the lives of Nuyorican organic intellectuals. Nuyorican organic intellectuals must be able to represent themselves whether verbally, textually,

or visually. Their stories must be told in a learning environment that promotes social justice and challenging academics. Through the combination of critical multiculturalism and historiography, this is possible.

In this chapter, I discuss why the histories of Nuyorican organic intellectuals are important contributions to any learning environment. Through oral history, Nuyorican organic intellectuals have created a social movement, literary genre, and an empowering sense of self. Reviewing the works of Miguel Piñero, Pedro Pietri and the musical life of Héctor Lavoe, gives the history of the Nuyorican organic intellectual experience a social interpretation. It is through their historical work and social struggles, that Nuyorican poetry became a genre of its own. Thus, it has created validation for the multilogicality of knowledge.

Involved in using historiography and critical multiculturalism as a pedagogical tool that teaches social justice, and inclusivity that continues to challenge students are several factors. The effective use of historiography and critical multiculturalism promotes the following results considering these factors: First, critical construction of consciousness and selfhood. Critical consciousness and construction of selfhood is

important in developing ontological skills. The more we realize our history, the more we can begin to understand how we shape our current and future selfhood. A reflexive practice with one's self is continuous and personal growth is thus inevitable.

Historiography, its characteristics and results are important when considering the lives of students who are not part of traditional histories of educational training. By this it is meant that college-level students who come from organic backgrounds³ are able to academically compete with students who have been formally trained. In this framework students begin to understand the cultural and political production of who they are, thus developing a critical consciousness. This critical consciousness leads to the development of curriculum that is socially just and challenging, while at the same time encouraging academic excellence.

For years college students have taken English Literature courses that have had no relevance to their lives. Students have not been able to make personal connections to the material they study and thus have failed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the "classics." This dissertation has employed the work of critical

³ low-income, working-class, Black, Latino and/or West Indian/Caribbean

historiography and critical pedagogy to produce a critical understanding of one's selfhood. This selfhood is important to every student but organic intellectual students in particular. These are students who come to our classrooms with previous experiences, knowledges and expertise that can be used to generate new pedagogies. To eliminate these previous knowledges is to also eliminate the organically intellectual student from the classroom.

Professors must begin to use organic intellectual works in their classrooms so that organic intellectual students can become aware of representation. For example, by making use of works by Nuyorican organic intellectuals such as Miguel Piñero and Pedro Pietri, organic intellectual students find comfort in reading about similar experiences. They are no longer isolated in a literature class where everyone is familiar with Shakespeare and works from the traditional American literary canon. Since Nuyorican literature and poetry is usually left up to the ethnic studies departments at various colleges, using them in required literature courses widens the competition.

There are several ways of studying and teaching the development of a critical construction of selfhood to organic intellectuals and hegemonic intellectuals alike. Critical pedagogy provides a wide variety of tools and

methods that can be applied to the understanding of every day lives. Critical multiculturalism and critical historiography are two of these tools and methods that can be used to understand how everyday lives are valuable to a socially just curriculum of any kind.

Critically reviewing the lives that students read about in their literature courses juxtaposed to the histories formed by their own lives enables social justice and power among students who traditionally would be without it. This process of curriculum inclusivity that is socially just and multicultural creates a demand for new theories of pedagogy to develop and be used in the classroom.

While existing pedagogical theories are obviously useful and have been used in some of the most important ways in our education history, they are not reflective. Many of our existing theories and methods of teaching are not reflective of the population we teach. Most of our instructional methodologies come from regurgitation of old material. This old material is expected to be applicable to all that we teach, and all who we teach. This is socially unjust and isolative. This practice helps to keep marginalized students outside of academic margins and retards their competitive will for academic achievement.

What I have done throughout this dissertation is try to convey the importance of critical historiography and critical multiculturalism as pedagogical practices important to having a socially just and challenging curriculum. The first step in seeking a curriculum that is socially just and challenging must be one that holds culture at the forefront of interpretation and understanding. Since culture is the centralizing point of this type of curriculum, critical multiculturalism provides the tools necessary for this theory to work in practice. Critical historiography allows the students to develop research skills applicable to all college courses but in particular they are able to learn about themselves in the process.

Understanding the different types of organic intellectuals, I have included theoretical frameworks and cultural histories to begin questioning interpretive facts. In this process, students are able to question facts about their histories as well as produce new ones according to their life experiences. Through this method teachers and students alike are "synthesizing historical information into a historical narrative through the process of interpretation" (Kincheloe, 2001, p.593).

In chapter 2 and 3 of this dissertation I have laid out the theories of organic intellectuals and those of traditional or hegemonic intellectualism. Later, in chapter 8 I have used those same theories to apply to the college classrooms that I have taught and continue to teach. These theoretical applications of how to understand one's self allows for students to uncover errors in their histories. In no way is my prescription for cultural responsibility the ultimate and most effective way to accomplish socially just teaching: however it is a valuable option. I believe that critical historiography and critical multiculturalism that employs historiography is an effective practice that many scholars and educators can begin to use in their classrooms.

The work that is mentioned in chapter 8 *Teaching the Self* comes directly from syllabi that I have created in the past. Students under my direction have begun to understand what it means to be other (Black, Latino, working class, female and male). They have also begun to understand that in most of their classes they represent this "other" category to many of their teachers and their fellow classmates. While historically they have been taught that "other" also meant their exclusion, they now have begun to understand how "other" also fuels the need for cultural

representation. Students in my classroom are not taught to resist instruction as it is delivered but rather they have come to understand that they are powerful in making contributions regarding social change. Important to remember when using the work of critical historiography is that all history is questionable. Thus, critical historiography and critical multiculturalism encourages students to question original history and develop skills in practicing reflective history. Understanding the basics of critical historiography makes it a much less fearsome method of teaching in a challenging yet socially just classroom. Critical historiography is a method that can be used to organize information (relevant or irrelevant to students' lives), understand attitudinal approaches to understanding the self, and valuing or questioning the opinions of students and/or the material they are asked to learn. (Kincheloe, 2001)

Throughout this dissertation I attempted to reinforce the need for studying Nuyorican organic intellectuals in literature-based courses as well as social science courses. Studying Nuyorican organic intellectuals is vital to any classroom that seeks equality. Using the work of Nuyorican organic intellectuals in my classrooms has allowed the students to connect to their coursework as well as gain a

better understanding of their social positions in the world. Nuyorican organic intellectuals such as Miguel Piñero and Pedro Pietri and their work from the 1970s, also brings forth recent evidence of organic intellectualism. There is recent historical proof that organic intellectualism works in literature and thus works in the classroom. Students are not only exposed to 18th century literature which they are forced to recognize as "classic," but they are encouraged to read works from as early as the 1970s to apply to their contemporary lives.

While I have encountered few problems while encouraging other faculty members to use organic intellectual methods in their courses, results from my own classrooms have been great. Students have left my courses with a sense of power and representation. They are no longer left to feel ashamed of their heritage but in fact feel as though they have a better understanding of who they are when applying that information to understanding who other people are.

The use of critical historiography in mainstream courses allows for ethnic studies departments to engage in a continuous practice of educating students in a socially just way. Critical historiography asks of educators that we begin using our students as the focal point of our

instruction as opposed to the marginal points. If critical historiography and critical multiculturalism were used in all courses, Nuyorican organic intellectualism would be as valid as traditional and hegemonic works that constitute a "good education."

By including examples of course assignments in my dissertation I attempt to prove how students remain the focus of the course. I also attempt to prove how critical historiography teaches students to help reshape our skills and methods as educators. Through this process educators and scholars alike begin to understand our roles as promoters of social justice. Whether we are traditionally hegemonic or organic intellectual educators we no longer bear the responsibility of being the sole repositories of expertise.

The historian would be a scholar, steeped in historical methodology and other knowledge production strategies in the bricolage, who possessed the research skills needed by teachers to explore the history of their disciplines. The historian-in-residence could help teachers develop historical programs in biology, math, or computer science. With ever increasing technological concerns in schools, such a person would provide an unusual

and interesting role, as well as much needed academic one (Kincheloe, 2001, p.598)

By using a critical historical analysis of intellectualism, one may begin to understand the complexity of organic intellectual positionality in traditional settings. Positivism or scientific measurements cannot discuss cultural complexities of organic intellectuals or organic intellectual students and their relationship to the social standing of dominant intellectualism. Through a critical historical analysis of the organic intellectual experience, students begin to understand how power becomes central to discourse on knowledge production and consumption.

Chapter Five
Organic Intellectual Autobiography

“Real education consists in drawing the best out of yourself. What better book can there be than the book of humanity?”

-Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Gandhi on Education*, 1998

What Makes Them Organically Intellectual?

The term, “organic intellectualism,” can be and has been applied to many individuals possessing its attributes by varying definitions. Coined by Antonio Gramsci, while he was incarcerated in Mussolini’s prisons in the 1920s the Italian social theorist’s definition was based on organic intellectuals being the rulers of their own organized thought. For Gramsci, organic intellectualism worked to refute the hegemony that shaped most of the societal and political thought of his time. While Gramsci’s definition is a net that is widely cast, many other theorists have gone on to further define the concept and the experience behind it, namely Edward Said, WEB DuBois, Franz Fanon, among others.

One could use many human examples to refine the definition of the organic intellectual. Malcolm X who gained specific insights through his imprisonment and then as a Black Muslim Minister is seen as an organic intellectual because of his production and consumption of knowledge around his life’s experiences. His intellectual

counterpart, Dr. Martin Luther King had a different experience through his formal education. While Brother Malcolm constructed his conception of the world through his own ontology and through constant reflection of hermeneutical approaches to life, Dr. King received his education traditionally through institutions that "produce" knowledge rather than attempt to consume it.

This critical hermeneutics grounds our notion of critical thinking as it understands the complexity of human existence and connects everyday life to public issues of power, justice, and democracy (Kincheloe, 2003).

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi earned his education traditionally at the University College of London. There he learned French and Latin and mastered English. His political "non-violent" movement towards liberation, was born through his readings of Henry David Thoreau and John Ruskin (McLanahan, 2001). An Indian female counterpart who worked for the liberation of women subjected to violence, crimes against humanity, and child-bride arranged marriages, Phoolan Devi, was born and died illiterate. Although illiterate she helped to save many young female children from being forced into arranged marriages and near her death was inducted into the Indian Parliament (Sen and Devi, 1993). While all of these people have contributed to

the world and developed tools necessary for human liberation and a somewhat balanced humanity, it is rare to find a reference to an organic intellectual who served the world through the arts, whether poetry, music, art, writing, or some other medium.

An Organic Kitchen

In 2004, the "organic intellectual," as the concept has come to re-shape itself, can be found drinking a half-caff, venti, caramel latte with extra foam in a Starbuck's Coffee cup, having a draft beer or a *Sex in the City* drink (the famous cosmopolitan), purchasing her groceries at organic foods shops or farmer's markets, smoking clove cigarette after cigarette in front of a "poetry club", with head-attached microphones beneath stage lights on Broadway, signing copies of his book at Barnes and Noble bookstores, barefoot and afro, or shoed and dreadlocked into her own rehearsed oblivion. That which is trendy, the world will call it "poetry." Whether it is in motion or it is in still frames, the world will call it poetry.

Looking back towards the 70s and into the mid 80s, organic intellectuals could be found on the fire escapes of tenements or apartment buildings where they lived, gathering air conditioning from natural breezes unable to afford an air conditioner or fan that worked. They would

be found sitting in chairs lined up side by side in front of apartment buildings without stoops, or they would be found collectively appropriating stoops all throughout one block in Hell's Kitchen⁴, El Barrio⁵ (Spanish or East Harlem as it is also known to be referred to as), Loisaida⁶ and similar neighborhoods. They could be found drinking Pílon (Cuban espresso style coffee) or Bustelo (also Cuban espresso-like coffee) or Greek-decorated cups of coffee on those same stoops, where it appeared more "ghetto" (an act or behavioral pattern of one who lives in the ghetto) than coffee drinkers who sip their espresso in an outdoor café. They could be found sitting on the steps of entrances to New York City's subways, writing, reading, and maybe overdoing it on alcohol consumption while being "mistaken"⁷ for homeless.

⁴ "What is left of Hell's Kitchen is bounded by West 42nd Street on the north, West 34th Street on the south, the Hudson River on the west and Ninth Avenue on the east." <http://www.citidex.com/6078.htm#hkitchen> accessed January 3, 2005

⁵ "El Barrio is the name given to the area lying between Fifth Avenue on the west, the East River on the east and 96th Street on the south." <http://www.citidex.com/6078.htm#barrio> accessed January 3, 2005

⁶ "The East Village runs south from East 14th Street to East Houston Street. Avenue D forms the eastern boundary and Fourth Avenue forms the western boundary. The section of the East Village between Avenue A and Avenue D is known as "Alphabet City". It is also referred to as "Loisaida" by the Puerto Rican community that resides there." <http://www.citidex.com/6078.htm#evillage> accessed January 3, 2005

⁷ The reason for "mistaken" being used in quotes is because many homeless men and women are in fact organic intellectuals as well. The fact that they are homeless does not disqualify them from intellectual capabilities. Thus, "homeless" is not used as a social label.

While the habitus of the organic intellectual is revered as “ghetto”⁸ many of their trends have been picked up and mainstreamed as part of several new and “fashionable” styles of living. From the wave of sneakers without laces, and sagging/oversized pants without belts (modeled after prison attire) to the continuous reappearance of bell-bottom and flared pants that now cost \$95-\$118.00 (Bebe and Diesel), organic intellectuals who could not read patterns but made their own clothing, helped to push trends into mainstream fashion without receiving reparations for their creations made from circumstances of poverty.

Traditional dishes, of curry and rice, rice and beans, *plátanos dulce* (sweet plantains) or *maduros* (fried sweet plantains) are now considered “gourmet.” While being the staple of many Caribbean families, these dishes now cost any where from fifteen to twenty-five dollars a plate.⁹ While these trends have picked up the pace towards mainstreaming and appropriation, the impoverished organic intellectual is still surprised that their cultural “naturals”¹⁰ are being unsuccessfully, but expensively

⁸ The term “ghetto” in this section refers to the colloquial or the “street slang” definition of those who live “uncivilized” and in “uncivilized places.” For example not having enough money to eat a single meal, but abusing gathered funds to purchase rims for a hatchback automobile.

⁹ Prices from restaurants were taken from the www.citysearch.com website. Accessed August 23, 2204.

¹⁰ The term “Naturals” is used here to denote everyday life experiences.

mimicked. Starbucks drinks offer the option of various milks and condiments to adorn various coffees. The organic intellectual boils their canned coffees in a *greca*¹¹ and is sometimes consumed black or countered with the cheaper condensed milk (sweet milk) or half-half which is half milk and half cream and a whole of saturated fat. Farmer's markets and gourmet or organic food stores are replaced by bodegas, which sell forty ounces of various malt liquor, hosiery, and sandwiches all in the same shop. They can also be identified as small grocery stores that sell neighborhood-specific products all of which are highly saturated in fat or are just unhealthy because of their contents and because of their expiration dates. Eating unhealthy foods is not due to a lack of knowledge but a lack of access. If healthy foods are not stocked in low-income neighborhoods, it takes a good amount of effort to achieve a well-balanced diet.

For example, on the strip between 114th Street down to 95th Street and Northern Boulevard in Corona, New York (the North side of Queens) there are three supermarkets and several bodegas. At any given time, the products in any of these supermarkets are stale. Meats are re-dated and

¹¹Spanish term for coffee pot which boils the coffee grinds on a stove, as opposed to traditional coffee pots that work in a machine.

repackaged to get them off the shelves, breads are moldy, but the alcohol aisle is always overstocked, and whatever is missing on the shelves, a helpful stock clerk will retrieve your request from the backroom. At any of these supermarkets, elderly Latino/as await your change with their plastic containers as they over-pack your shopping bags. On the same strip between 114th and 95th streets there are multiple gas stations adjacent to people's homes, apartment buildings, day care centers and schools. The smell of toxins is unbearable during the summer months. There are also multiple car dealerships all of which house vicious guard dogs that often run loose through the neighborhood because of faulty gates.

Where I grew up in Hell's Kitchen and lived for over twenty years, restaurant row existed then and it was somewhat affordable, and now over twenty years later it is geared for tourists who can afford to eat the exchange of their "foreign" currency. Botanicas also termed as "folk pharmacies" (Borrello and Mathias, 1977) and candy stores have been replaced with quaint boutique-like restaurants and coffee shops. The Laundromats that once housed a full audience of people of color and many children, have now been replaced by white yuppies who "drop off" their wash rather than wash their clothing themselves. A French

restaurant offering non-pronounceable dishes to its original community of bilingual residents (Spanish speakers) replaced "greasy spoon" Chinese restaurants that were my favorite because of their price, and their neighborhood friendliness. Handball courts have turned into dog runs. "Hooker Hang-Outs" are now wineries and lofts for wine-tasting and cigar smoking sessions. Everything healthy, and in the summer, everything outdoors.

As a child and a teenager during the summers in Hell's Kitchen, my childhood friends and I knew to keep away from the ladies who practiced Santería. Now I wonder where they are? Recently, I took a drive past their apartment building in the Kitchen, and saw markings of the *rosita* still on their walls outside of their buildings. I recently got wind that they had moved several years before my return. Even Red Apple supermarket has been changed to an upscale Gristedes that is home to what seems like hundreds of young white couples and singles who shop for gourmet products. Growing up, we knew we were in our supermarket since from the entrance we became embalmed by the scent of sour milk and the dirty mop that cleaned up.

During one of my returns to the Kitchen, all the organic intellectuals seemed to have been replaced. Without dismissing the notion that many of them perhaps

have passed away (they were the elders of the block when I was a child), it was clear that a wave of traditional intellectualism had replaced them. There were no longer domino tables set up with four old Latino men with their hats and cabana shirts slamming pieces down yelling "cohelo alli! (take it there!)" Kids were not running up and down the streets in sweat-filled clothing with sun-matted hair. No one was on my stoop. There were no hungry tons of children of color flooding Saccos Pizzeria for Italian ices and slices. Instead, I was able to immerse myself into a 360-degree view of young white men and women eating in the outdoor option of Mangia y Bevi.¹² There were no children anywhere. No teenagers anywhere, unless they were working in the supermarkets. No candy stores, no loose-ies¹³ for sale. The areas within Hell's Kitchen that were "off limits" to my adolescent and teenage cohort were now flooded with people walking alone or jogging their "Atkins"¹⁴ off.

The parking lot where my father parked his car on a monthly basis was jammed in every corner with BMWs, Porsches, Lexuses, Cadillacs, and Jaguars. I looked for the old maroon Grand Marqui that my parents owned, and

¹² Italian restaurant on the corner of 53rd Street and 9th avenue.

¹³ The term "loosey" is used to denote a single cigarette sold for \$.25 rather than the obligation of purchasing a whole pack of cigarettes.

¹⁴ "Atkins" refers to the Atkins diet which consists of low carbohydrates and soaring cholesterol.

realized even they too replaced their Hell's Kitchen-mobile with the two of the latest Toyota Camrys.

Driving with a friend who is not from the Kitchen, I stopped the car several times and gave him an overview of what I "used to do there" and "what I did here." I asked him if he could imagine about twenty adolescent girls of color signing "slow jams" on the top of a particular stoop on a hot August night. While people fight for the "old Harlem" to come back, I ache for Hell's Kitchen, the new gentrified Clinton. These memories are connected directly to the organic intellectualism about which I write.

The group of twenty adolescent girls of which I was a main figure all possessed characteristics of organic intellectualism. None of the girls were good in Math. I considered myself mathematically illiterate at the time. In fact, it was the class we all struggled with the most. There was no sense of us memorizing the numbers and where they fit in a problem, but we knew each word in every song, and when to use our child-like vibratos, and when to pitch it high or low. We knew how to lace our sneakers straight across instead of criss-crossed, we knew how to read *Right On!* Magazine. We knew how much the magazine would cost the group, and how much each person would need to chip in to buy it, but we could not add math problems given to us as

homework. We would shift the problems from one group member to another, and still we would not be able to complete the problem. Fractions and decimal problems were my kryptonite.

These small spaces and corners within a well-known city, made up most of my childhood, adolescent and teenage years of creating subcultures. My friends' and neighbors' traditions were replete with strict rules so as to maintain their following. It is similar to the way authors, Ann Borrello and Elizabeth Mathias describe the Botanica (folk pharmacy) culture of New York City. They write,

In New York, as in Puerto Rico, when crowds line up outside *bontanicas* on Saturday mornings, they demonstrate that a minority subculture has managed to maintain a substantial level of ethnic and spiritual unity. Spiritism enriches the Puerto Rican's life by offering reasons for events that would otherwise go unexplained; within the spiritist community the disorders of daily life are ordered and made manageable. And the positive effects of this religion-it emphasis on loving concern among community members, shared problem solving, individual and group emotional security-are undeniable (Borello and Mathias, 1977, p.69).

CHILDHOOD ORGANIC INTELLECTUALISM:

As mentioned in the previous section, all of us had academic nightmares that we could not beat during the day or at night when it was time to attack homework. I for one had the toughest time learning how to tell time. My mother

bought me a cardboard clock with two giant red hands, and she worked with me everyday and in every free moment she had. I still could not get it right. Yet, I was never late. My handwriting or "penmanship" as my teacher referred to it was atrocious all throughout elementary school. I never crossed my T's or dotted my I's. I did well in science, but no one ever knew, because I never raised my hand to answer a question. I was deathly afraid of my science teacher, and my math teacher. They seemed more like drill instructors or correction officers than they did teachers. My elementary school science teacher serves as an example. During a parent-teacher conference, my science teacher complained to my father that I "never" spoke in class. I was always "very quiet and inactive in class." My father, rather than become immediately upset with me asked my teacher whether she had ever called on me to know whether I was "dumb or deaf!" My teacher was shocked and admitted that she never asked me a single question in class for me to audibly answer. From that evening on, my science teacher called on me non-stop, and whether I knew the answer or not, I attempted to respond.

Every kid loves gym because of its cryptic exercise encoded by big playgrounds and shiny-floored gymnasiums. I, on the other hand detested each and every moment I was at

"gym." My purpose in laying the school's academic framework here is to accentuate the intellectualism that took place on my block. Such intellectualism many times was more profound and influential than what took place within the walls of public school where my teachers adored my "little body" and my "little face" and my "beautiful dresses" but did not expect much of me academically. I always wondered whether the low expectation of my teachers was because I was an honor student or because I was "cute?"

As a member of the National Dance Institute for seven years, I learned a great deal about dance and dancing. I would learn a piece during rehearsals and then bring those same steps back to my block. After a few minutes, my girlfriends and I had re-choreographed the same sequence, but this time it was in a combination of "traditional" dance (ballet, tap, jazz) infused with urban and current steps. I choreographed complete dances and performances, which I produced for my and other parents that lived in my Hell's Kitchen building. Our shows were held in my building's community room. My ear was now professionally trained to count the beats in each song in connection to each move I made with my body. The traditional ballet summer camps I attended were nothing like my teenage years spent learning West African dance.

However, I still could not do my Math assignments, yet I mastered the art of grocery shopping for my mother - always the right amounts to every purchase, followed by the return of exact change.

We all (my childhood friends and I) struggled with math and other various academic quests, but we read letters for illiterate elderly neighbors, we served as accurate language translators at various city/state agencies for the parents of friends who did not speak English. We learned how to negotiate adult spaces in our childhoods.

Although our organic intellectualism got us through life in the Kitchen and helped to create a rich childhood--one that could not be compared or replaced by anyone else's suburban or wealthy experiences - organic intellectualism caught a bad rap. With the likes of early teenage pregnancies, juvenile detention halls for some of the boys, drug and alcohol use and abuse, prostitution, and the era of disappearing from the neighborhood our organic intellectualism was seen as crippling to our development. Teachers and professors did not see these experiences as any form of intellectualism, but instead offered us false charities and harsh judgments. Just as organic intellectualism caught a bad rap because of the end results of not being traditional, organic intellectuals ourselves

and/or themselves also received the negative effects of a double consciousness. My consciousness as a Hell's Kitchen lifer helped to enable the production of scholarly work. My consciousness as a Hell's Kitchen lifer also helped people to judge me in a way that was and sometimes still remains less than flattering. Academic voyeurs have taken a lifestyle of circumstance, and have created a space where organic intellectuals are now and have been for a long time viewed as perhaps trendy to emulate but never a people with rich cultural histories and traditions.

Most of what I have recalled here on paper, in connection with the topic at hand in this project is more than just "times changing." This dissertation discusses in more depth the times still remaining.

PUERTO RICAN ORGANIC INTELLECTUALS:

Although my own family is comprised of multicultural and multiontological schemas consisting of Indo and Portuguese Guyanese, I chose to write my dissertation on the Puerto Rican/Boriqua/Nuyorican organic intellectual because of my shared childhood spaces with Latinos in the Kitchen and my later awareness that they are not represented in academia. In my Dominican babysitter's

(referred to throughout this document as my abuela¹⁵) home I remember dancing with her at the age of five to Tito Puente's *Salsa Caliente* and *Ran Kan Kan*. At five, while I spoke English only at home, and knew Guyanese terms, I also knew how to Salsa and Merengue myself all around my abuela's house, especially to *Ran Kan Kan*. She spoke only Spanish, and thus, I only spoke Spanish at her house, and around my Dominican "family." I knew the distinctions between Boricuas and Dominicanos, from their language differences, their dishes, the symbolism of their colored flags and their native struggles.

Reading

In elementary school, the only story that was read to us written by a Latino/a author was *Perez y Martina* (1966) by Pura Belpre. Belpre, the first Latina librarian of the New York Public Library, wrote in *Perez y Martina* about the love life between Perez the cockroach and Martina the mouse. It is my only childhood memory of a Latino tale or folklore being read to me as an elementary school student. In junior high school there were none. In high school I suffered through Shakespeare, and in my undergraduate days, nothing in the curriculum spoke of the Latino experience that I became aware of in connection with my shared

¹⁵ Spanish translation for the term grandmother.

ontology in the Kitchen. I have not mentioned anything regarding my immediate family's culture of Guyanese Literature because throughout my years in elementary, junior high, high school and early years in college, my understanding of Guyanese or West Indian writers came through my parents educating me. It is as though the school had completely disregarded an entire people.

In elementary, junior high, high school, and even more scarily, colleges are used to determining what students should read and even write about without considering their opinion. This banking approach to teaching, or elitism, sometimes constricts what students are allowed to think about. Professors and teachers in traditional intellectual settings are often the sole determiners of what one learns, but organic intellectuals help to decide what is retained. While structure is important, it is oftentimes used as a way to constrict the minds of students in that they are gaining one perspective of a particular topic or subject, and therefore not finding a personal connection to the material. So focused on "class aims" and a "do now" enveloped in time management guided by the infamous Delaney Cards, students are conditioned to pack their bags even before the change of class bell rings, as teachers remind students of their "assigned" readings for the next class.

By the time some students have reached their next class, their minds and concentrations, have shifted from one context to the next. How many times does that context place the student at the center and in relation to what they have learned or read? Are these lessons that they can share among the girls and boys on their neighborhood block?

As a child I remember seeing a beat up 1960s copy of Piri Thomas' *Down these Mean Streets*, also known as *Por Esta Calles Bravas* (the Spanish version) sitting on my bookshelf at home. The book either belonged to my sister or brother who were attending high school at the time. As an adolescent and a teenager I tried to get into the book several times. It was not until my sophomore year in high school that I read the entire book and had to take a deep breath after reading it. Now, it is one of the books that I have been teaching to my students for the past three years, both in the education department at Hunter College (City University of New York) and the Black and Hispanic Studies department at Baruch College, also of the City University of New York.

Down these Mean Streets gave me images of people I had known throughout the Kitchen's roster. In the text, I envisioned people who looked like my neighbors and places that resembled my neighborhood. Although I possessed a

fond affection for Euripides' *Medea* (431 BCE) she never captured any physical similarities to anyone I had ever known or was bound to come into contact with. Texts like *Medea* were more of an abstract affection that I developed.

During my early years of educational training I was lucky enough to already have a love of reading prior to the intensity of reading assignments that school demanded of me. I spent a lot of leisure time reading for non-school assignment purposes. I read everything, but I had a particular affection for Stephen King, R.L. Stine, Judy Blume, Cynthia Voigt, *Archie*, and *Betty & Veronica* comic books, and other readings that did not represent me in any way. Although they did not represent me, these readings were accessible both in the school library and in "young adult" sections of various bookstores. Even if my imagination attempted to place me in the main character's role or setting, it was not possible because of the pictures on the cover of the book. Each of these books at the time and still now are beautifully illustrated with white teenage girls and boys. During my post-school hours I oftentimes shopped around bookstores for texts that related more to my life or represented me more closely. Perhaps someone in some novel looked like me, or lived in a neighborhood like I did, or did the things that I and my

friends from my neighborhood did. By junior high school I had developed into a relationship with Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman, Piri Thomas, Nicholasa Mohr, and Nuyorican poetry. The authors reflected something that previous books had not. They reflected images and experiences I saw in myself, and better still, they also reflected people I saw on a regular basis in my neighborhood.

Being born and raised in Hell's Kitchen between the 70s-00s reading became my partner because of the low-excitement levels of activities that were available to young people growing up on my block. From my window in Hell's Kitchen I watched as almost all of my girlfriends became mothers before they were old enough to vote. I watched as populations of adults developed some type of drug or alcohol problem. While I was not on my stoop with my friends playing all types of games, or boy-watching, or smack-talking, I was reading, professionally dancing, learning dispute resolution in after-school programs, and by the time I was fourteen working at the New York Public Library.

By the time I reached High School, I had read everything that Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes had ever written. Rarely would their texts be taught in

school(s), but somehow it always felt as part of a departmental requirement that professors and teachers would assign their texts. This inclusivity was similar to "World Literature" courses assigning the *Bible* and sections of the *Bhagavad-Gita* as part of its global perspective. There was no prefix to these texts, they were just "dumped" into the curriculum, and we as students were to come to our own conclusion. I was utterly disgusted by the likes of *Gulliver's Travels* and ended up with an "F" in a college "Western Literature" class because of failing a final exam that was based on Swift's text. While I failed the class, I was determined to find out why I hated the text so much. The fact that my interpretation of the text was a "hostile" analysis of Swift was not a clear indicator at the time as to why I hated the text. In my undergraduate exam, I wrote, "Swift was not anything more than a voyeur who enjoyed and indulged himself in watching the other." This response to a professor's favorite book warranted me an "F."

There are several voices and perspectives missing from the world of literature courses as part of various college requirements. In representing my own cultural ontology, I could simply ask of the literature required courses: where are the voices of the Guyanese, Nuyorican, Dominican, and

other peoples of color? There is no doubt that questions like these oftentimes incite political responses and reactions. However, to leave them unasked and unanswered is to continue the silencing of people of color. Organic intellectuals all over the world will continue to populate the voiceless population that is also known as the underrepresented. During my first year of doctoral study, I turned in a final paper in which the professor responded "it seems that you are yelling at people from your paper!" I was shocked. Not at the response, but at the element of surprise in the response. People of color, in particular women of color authors have been yelling from their pages for decades, why is it that my yelps were not acceptable? Although I kept my original draft as a trophy of "rage on the page" I was asked to re-write my paper and authorized to resubmit it for a better grade. One of the conditions regarding a better grade was for me to insert the writings of three white women education specialists. These women represented the white traditional intellectual, and their perspectives on people like me. I had lost a sense of self-representation in my own composition of producing consumed knowledge.

Later on that semester in another course, another professor told me that my work was "questionable." I was

also told to understand that first semesters in graduate school was considered to be a weeding out process. While friends told me to respond to this comment smugly since I "graduated from Columbia with a Masters degree before going back to CUNY" I felt the opposite. I became immediately conscious of myself as a woman of color in a classroom full of white women and men. I was again the youngest in the classroom and although there was another student of color he was a male. I evaluated myself infinitely, wondering if pursuing a Ph.D. had been a mistake. I wondered if I had been the "affirmative action student" and not chosen because of my credentials and hard work. Finally, I found a place that asked of me again to prove that as a young woman of color I was going to be a positive representation of what organic intellectuals can do at the Ph.D. level. I was the only student not to ask the professor for an incomplete. I had worked day and night to complete and perfect the last assignment. I still do not understand what was wrong with the initial paper I submitted.

FALSE PEDAGOGY:

Through my teaching experience at the college level at two City University of New York colleges, and one private institution in Washington Heights, I have used the example of "rage on the page," to formulate a writing style which

includes self-representation and expression in order to help my students to feel comfortable critically reconstructing their selfhoods. This method will be introduced and discussed in chapter 8 of this dissertation called, "Teaching the Self." I have developed this method by using my own organic intellectualism, personal life experiences and Nuyorganics to help guide my work. The mission is to be blatant in whatever form I choose to compose.

Why does school not reflect the personal and learned experiences of youth of color? Thus, why does the traditional form of intellectualism refuse to engage the organic intellectualism that students may bring with them? The traditional intellectual model of teaching and learning asks that students regardless of their backgrounds and their social situations learn to read, write, and work through mathematical problems. While it may seem a fair request of students who do attend school, one has to also think about how students should be able or encouraged to use their organic methods of reading, writing and working on math problems in connection to what is required of them. Some may say that after-school programs supply the remedy for this connection of organic intellectualism and traditional intellectualism. However, students have to see

the potential in what after-school programs provide them and essentially have to *want* to be there. Many teens, have jobs that require them to begin working directly after school, thus those students cannot participate in after-school functions. A few hours on the weekend becomes used as spare time for working youths to engage in their organic and social spaces. Within those few hours on the weekend outside of academia and their part time (or full time) jobs, young people are forced to categorize their time. For example, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. is for school and school work. 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. is either for part time jobs or homework depending on grade and age. 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. involves hanging out, eating dinner, using the telephone or computer, showering, and somewhere in there it becomes time for bed. None of these activities are related to each other. Each place hosts its own activity, and rarely do they intermingle. For example, homework becomes directly related to school, and school becomes directly related to going to work once school is over. In this framework youths tend to outgrow their organic intellectualism and social spaces when they are not at school or at work. If school and employment opportunities are not places where youths can offer their organic skills, experience and ideas, what is left for the

young organic intellectual? Young organic intellectuals begin to shed their homemade intellectualism and opt for something a bit more traditional in style. For example, s/he may become embarrassed by an illiterate grandparent, rather than explore the depths of illiteracy.

Schools have incorporated dialogues about "multiculturalism" and "diversity" as a bridge that connects young students of color to curricula that represent them. However, no one asks the students who represent this population the simplest set of questions: "Who are you? What makes you you? What do you know? What did you know before you came to school and what do you know now?" Academics for many New York City youths are built on intimate relationships and friendships within the school, but when it comes to personal connections to what they are learning, oftentimes they must wait until college to experience this.

I remember when I attended Norman Thomas High School my love of reading began to grow outside of the school hours because of the impact my English teacher had on me. We read literature fit for Puritans and anyone else who was not of color. I longed to hear or tell my own story. I wanted so desperately to write essays on what my friends and I did on our apartment building stoop, on what we knew

about Hell's Kitchen as opposed to the people who now live there. Those who live there now are the same people who feared us when we lived there. I wanted to tell of the Laundromats, the fire escapes, the break-dancing we worked to master on our block or in the basement of our building. I wanted to tell him that the drinking scenes in his assigned readings were viewed as normal social behavior for the characters in the text, however, the reality of my neighborhood would have academicians view those same drinking scenes among people of color as "alcoholism."

I once asked my English teacher, "why can't we maybe do something different but still within the requirements of the reading?" His response, "If you don't like it, you can go play in heavy traffic." I was crushed. Despite my love for reading, I became resentful of ideas that did not represent any of my experiences. Out of this resentment I began to develop researching skills by seeking texts that spoke directly to my experiences. At one point, my researching resulted in finding nothing, so I began to write my own narrative and organic experiences in poetic forms. I refused to do his assignments after that, and I pretty much refused to attend his class altogether even though by the last marking period I had passed his class. Honestly, I do not think my teacher even knew my name. I

ended up with the same teacher the following year for English II and experienced what Freire called necrophilia.

One of the characteristics of the oppressor consciousness and its necrophilic view of the world is thus sadism. As the oppressor consciousness, in order to dominate, tries to deter the drive to search, the restlessness, and the creative power which characterize life, it kills life. More and more, the oppressors are using science and technology as unquestionably powerful instruments for their purpose: the maintenance of the oppressive order through manipulation and representation. The oppressed, as objects, as "things," have no purposes except those their oppressors prescribe for them (Freire, 2004).

Young organic intellectualism, developed in New York City, seems to be so feared by the general public, both visitors to New York and natives. The fear seems derived from the lack of the general public being exposed to this type of knowledge expression. Academics, and traditional students are used to reading of these particular places, and may find shame in speaking out if their own neighborhood ends up on a syllabus or reading list. Many do not take the time to understand how it is that young people organize themselves and express what they know and how they have come to know it. Another example from Norman Thomas High School was the issue of "captive lunch." The high school, which is located on Park Avenue in Manhattan, is home to many corporate businesses and corporate

Americans. The school was populated with over ninety percent students of color. During lunch, for two years we were allowed to eat our lunch outside of the building if we did not wish to eat at the school cafeteria. As New York City police officers watched our every move on the outside of the school during lunch, we still managed to digest whatever we could in our forty-five minute sprint to the nearest deli or pizzeria. When residents and businesses of the Park Avenue community began to get "nervous" about our presence, which to them appeared in droves, we were forced to eat lunch in the cafeteria from the time of their complaint until we graduated. Imagine thousands of students in one cafeteria before the same time. The absence of our activist and political voices juxtaposed with every other social dynamic (race, age, gender and our socioeconomic status) lent itself to another birthing of the organic intellectual. Many of the "captive" lunch-eaters worked on rap songs and competed in the cafeteria to a wide audience of listeners, and cafeteria employees. Other students learned how to braid each other's hair in various African styles, some wrote poetry and read it to others, and some shared tips on how to beat the system — the parental system through the development of youth-language, also known as "gibberish," which some students

spoke more fluently than their requirements of Spanish or French. Mostly, all of us were engaging in the steady development of our organic intellectual spaces. The things we could not learn from the classes before or after lunch were being constructed, taught, and memorized in the cafeteria. Those were the lessons we took back to our block for all the rest of the kids to learn.

I look back at my most memorable experiences having to do with learning something. They include my brother teaching me how to ride a bike, teaching myself how to roller skate and wanting to become a "roller derby girl," my sister teaching me how to memorize lyrics to songs she would sing to me, everyone trying to teach me how to color-coordinate my 1970s dress code, my mother teaching me how to multiply numbers like eight and nine and tell time on a clock, my father teaching me to cross every "t" and dot every "i" and the boldness in how to ask teachers questions about lessons without fear, my grandmother teaching me the art of caring for the elderly and the constant process of self-reflection one must engage in order to see one's center, my abuela teaching me Spanish while never having learned English herself, and my family for being multicultural and engaging me in the exploration that makes me multicultural as well so that by the time academia got

hip to "multiculturalism" it was already deeply sewn into my the fabric of my life. It was not until graduate school that I again felt the same way about learning things the way I had learned them organically and from my environment and those who shared spaces in that environment as well. Graduate school has taught me the traditionally intellectual terminology for concepts and definitions of experiences that I have always had but never knew that organically acquiring them was an applicable concept in school.

Schools and other traditional institutions have failed youths in their attempt to create a bridge between the two forms of intellectual development. Instead of teaching from tools (experiences) that youth already own, traditional institutions' intellectualism has used what they *think* they know about what knowledges youths possess. Take spoken word for example. Spoken word in the Nuyorican and the Black Arts Movement tradition has always been about writing and reciting from what you feel and have experienced. Spoken word has now taken on the tradition of mass marketing popularity, such that it is available on HBO, beneath Broadway lights and it is also being "taught" to many New York City youths by way of after-school organizations. How does one teach not from experience, but

about experience? Is that even a concept that one can package and sell?

I was being asked to lecture at Princeton, Rutgers, at Pratt Institute. Here I have no education whatsoever and I am working as a mentor to the top students at Pratt Institute. What the hell am I doin' here (Piñero, 1977).

SEARCHING FOR BORICUAS

Though I have laid out my personal experiences regarding ontological connections and perspectives to organic intellectualism, in the larger social framework of organic intellectual through art, I look to the Nuyorganic Poetry movement. In this section, I will offer examples of the some Puerto Rican/Nuyorican organic intellectuals who have served their public through their artistically magnetic forms of liberation.

When Google searching under the terms "Famous Puerto Ricans" about 1,200 hits appear. After endless searching through the 1,200 sites of which many are inoperable and which many connect to travel agencies so that one may become enticed by taking a trip to Puerto Rico for the likes of JLO (Jennifer Lopez), Ricky Martin or Marc Anthony, the websites are missing key figures in their listings of "famous Puerto Ricans." While author and poet, Piri Thomas' work *Down these Mean Streets* pops up under

this search as a "hit" and is one of critical importance to the documentation of the Puerto Rican version of life in the ghetto and/or street culture (and is a text that I teach in all of my Black and Latino students' courses) there are two very important contributors to Puerto Rican writing who have been absent from almost all of these sites.

Although I will discuss the following two poets in more detail later in this dissertation, it is important to mention them here as well as sort of a preliminary introduction in connection to navigating their popularity via the internet.

The late Miguel Piñero, and the late Pedro Pietri led interesting lives, and have many similarities in the way their lives and works helped to reaffirm the power of the organic intellectual. As outlaw poets,¹⁶ these two poets have paved the way for contemporary versions of trilingual-style poetry. Yet, with all the new poets that have created a space for their readings (Def Poet's Jam, Nuyorican Poet's Café, Bowery Poetry Club), no poet has come close to the exhibition of organic intellectualism that these two poets produced, if only for a short time.

¹⁶ I use the term "outlaw poets" here to distinguish these poets, and their confrontational style of poetry, as opposed to the mainstream poetry that which solely consists of Eurocentric ideologies of poetry, and good poets.

It is also interesting to note how organic intellectuals, in particular, Nuyorican artists, construct their intellectualisms as a response to their ontology and their love for their nationality and kingdom of the organics.

Morir Soñado¹⁷

What happens to the organic intellectuals of color who die early? Is it their access to the world or lack thereof? Is it what consumes them during their lives? Is it we, their audience that forces them out of their self-sponsorship? What about their production of knowledge, and our responsibility to help consume what they have produced? While others pick and choose for us as to what we read, write, listen and dance to, and internalize as entertainment, what makes the organic intellectual's production of knowledge something that is deemed to be so misguided in mainstream and traditional intellectualism and later is grossly misappropriated?

In 1988, Miguel Piñero (41 years old at the time) died from liver disease. In 2004, Pedro Pietri (59 years old at the time) died from stomach cancer caused by chemical exposures during his United States military experience.¹⁸ In 1998, salsero Frankie Ruiz, (40 years old at the time)

¹⁷ This term here is used to define the name of a Latino drink made from blended wheat (trigo) with milk and sugar (leche y azucar) served cold.

¹⁸ Stomach tumors is a known side effect of the Agent Orange used during the Vietnam War.

died from liver failure caused by a long-term battle with drugs and alcohol. In 1993, salsero Héctor Lavoe, (47 years old at the time) died from AIDS. All male, all Puerto Rican, all organic intellectuals, these men died in their 40s and 50s. What remains? We readers of their lightning-bolt style of poetry and listeners to their irreplaceable music recite lyrics to songs and poetry, yet we remain numb. One commonality among these men is their adoration of Puerto Rico. Adopting Nuyorican¹⁹ nostalgia, all of these artists still reference Puerto Rico as a home for them whether in their poems or their salsa songs. From poems such as Pietri's *Puerto Rican Obituary* (1971), to Piñero's *This is Not the Place that I was Born* (1979), to Héctor Lavoe, *Yo Nacio En Puerto Rico*, to Frankie Ruiz's *Puerto Rico*, these artists have claimed their duality or double consciousness in their work. While they have constructed their knowledges into various forms of artistic work, it is the replication that becomes troublesome, and oftentimes leads to a general misappropriation of the cultural of Nuyorganics.

The creations that these men have brought us have touched many lives in personal ways and in ways that have

¹⁹ The term Nuyorican is used here to define being born in Puerto Rico (Island) or in the United States ("Mainland") and residing in New York City, thus applying the duality of their experience as "Puerto Rican" to their lives in both places.

not ever been documented. Most of what is available to us as a public awaiting entertainment are the accounts of other "fans" who give us their opinions on being entertained by the abovementioned. When is it okay for creations to not only become entertaining but to become appropriated and/or mis-celebrated? Is there a process of misappropriation? Can anyone celebrate various cultures? Was it okay for pop icon Madonna to become Hindu for the 1999 MTV Music Video Awards, complete with *Mehendi* and picturesque deities? Is she not an artist? Should we not appreciate her cultural crossover if even for a moment? Is it okay for Smokey Robinson to engage in spoken word because his poeticism provided fans with *Tears of a Clown* back in 1967? Is it okay for Eminem to rap but consciously refrain from using "nigger" as a noun? What about when these popular ideas and practices become boring, or tiresome, or are no longer in "fashion" and the adopters opt out of continuing the practice? For example, when nose piercing is out of fashion and perhaps someone in the pierced community trades in their piercing for a job in corporate America, one asks what was the actual intention of the initial piercing? Does the Hindu woman who wears a

*bindi*²⁰ or nose piercing have the same choice of removal if it represents religion, culture, or domination?

On the opposite side of this perspective one could begin to ask about those born and bred in the tradition of specific cultural practices that make it into mainstream America: What does this individual or group of people do? What if there is no option for them to "opt out" of wearing *Tilaka*²¹ or dreadlocks because the trend is gone and it has become a fleeting historical fad?

Having experienced many occasions being criticized as a "purist", I do believe that there is some truth to the criticism. I feel there is a strong correlation between a people and their culture. Cultural practices oftentimes end up as fashion trends in the mainstream. *Bindis*, music, religion, sexuality and hairstyles are all cultural practices for some, but for many these cultural practices become passing fads. Blindly, people subscribe to things they have no idea about. For instance, on any given day in the summer time in New York City's Greenwich Village one can find tons of Che Guevara t-shirts, tank tops, hats, messenger bags, wristbands, and other Che paraphernalia. Having most of these iconic things in my own possession on

²⁰ Bindis vary in fabric and design and is worn to protect Hindu women and their husbands. The bindi on one's forehead between the eyes signifies the third eye which is the eye to the inner depths of their soul.

²¹ Tilakas are markings of God. These markings can be found on the head or anywhere on the body. They differ in symbol, size and color.

any given day, I asked one of my students if he knew what he had on his shirt (it was a picture of Che's face with a cigar). He replied, "some art shit, but everyone's got them now, you didn't know?" Sadly, I looked for an engaging, non-confrontational way of explaining to him that he is numb, and as Paulo Freire would state, he is practicing necrophilia. My "teachable moment" on the history of education for African Americans turned into a seminar on Guevara and Cuba and my student's Freirean "necrophilia" (love of death). I wanted to engage him and others in an exploration of Che's life. Now that he became aware of what he was representing so publicly on his t-shirt, I wondered would he wear that shirt again, and if so, would he support Che's ideologies, and if so, would he then wear it in public, allowing all who stare at his chest to read into his politics? The semester was over by then, I was not prepared for the answer to these questions.

Regarding Black music or in particular hip-hop, which has a lot of its foundations in the Black Arts Movement and the Nuyorican Poet's tradition of lyricism, hip-hop icon Wendy Williams, has also tried to question essentialism, appropriation, or cultural alliance:

I wonder where hip-hop would be without Eminem. And I question whether he has made the game better for everyone. I know

Benzino [rapper] is clear about it, but again, I have mixed feelings. I see the color lines being blurred every day around the music of hip-hop and I smile. I see young people from opposite sides of the track-both racially and economically-finding a common bond around hip-hop, and I smile. I think racism is real, and in many ways hip-hop and rap have gone a long way toward exposing how silly racism really is. But I also understand the need and the necessity of keeping it authentic. Hip-hop, in many ways, is a movement, and the catalyst behind the movement must not be distorted (Williams, 2004, p.76).

This is the case with spoken word or what I like to call *Outlaw Poetry*. The shouting, the tones in reading and "spitting"²², the passion involved in reading your own writing(s), the audience's energy, their physical support for your words that mean something to you initially, but stay with your audience by the end of your performance, is only a portion of what makes up spoken word or outlaw poetry that is performed. However, the mainstream masses have become hip to the jive (Walker, 2001) by Russell Simmons' efforts of placing these performances and artistic abilities on HBO (Home Box Office). From HBO they have moved onto Broadway, where patrons can pay seventy-five dollars to hear someone "spit." Poets like Miguel Piñero and Pedro Pietri were leaders in the outlaw poetry

²² The term "spitting" is used here to define poets who recite their poetry, whether on a microphone, on stage, in public, or just to friends.

movement, and it is unbeknownst to most if they died with anything more than what they were buried in. The only reader on *Def Poetry* who either read Piñero's work or referred to him was actor Benjamin Bratt who played *Piñero* in the 2001 biopic. Whether Bratt, who did an amazing job in his role as Piñero, is really a Piñero fan, all we as the audience know is that he previously memorized that poem *Lower East Side* as part of his script. In an interview all Bratt stated was,

I was honored to participate in the first episode reading 'A Lower East Side Poem' which is the eulogy poem written by Miguel Piñero himself (Washington Post Live Online, 2002)

PERHAPS THE REVOLUTION WILL BE TELEVISED:

Carefully watching all of the poets on shows like *Def Poetry*, I begin to wonder how many, if any, of these poets are only putting on a show? How much have they become affected? Even comedian Cedric the Entertainer, while performing his piece on *Def Poets* mimicked the way the way the other poets spoke and their vocal inflections as "trendy" not as real, when "performing" their pieces.

Conscious sisters with required mini-afros and cut-off t-shirts flaunting their impressive abs did drama-saturated monologues of slave women being raped by their masters. Social commentary on Big Apple capitalism and American hypocrisy spewed from the mouths of honest white boys

aware of race relations in the world. There was even a staged surprise visit from unknown poet/famous comedian, Cedric the Entertainer. In typical Cedric fashion, The Entertainer focused an intense stare into one of the many cameras and recited a hilarious satirical piece poking fun at the pretentiousness running rampant on the spoken-word scene. Special note: In case you are ignorant to this scene, performance poets take themselves and their words very, very seriously. Some of them hope "to change the world" with just one haiku (Kendrick, 2001)

At Cedric's poem, the audience responded with a hearty laugh. Did they agree with Cedric? Were they "caught out there?" Were they just laughing at the comedian's joke regardless of its point? The cyclical dynamics of this performance poetry has become confusing to those who have been avid writers and orators of poetry. The outlaw poet begins to wonder why poetry has landed itself on the mainstream stage of Broadway, where there is a "cast" of poets, and a curtain call after the performance. Is this the way it was supposed to be? Who made the decision to make it a capitalistic form of entertainment?

To fill the seats of the HBO series taping, mass emails are distributed to "regular" folk. The emails ask you for your attendance at a taping, and give you several dates for which you can request up to four tickets. The dates are usually very near to the date the email is

distributed²³, but nonetheless those who receive it are excited and jump at the chance of attending the taping. After sending in your request, you receive a response that either gives you the green light of attendance on the days you requested or not. In addition, you also receive a message that warns you that if you do not show up on the dates you requested, "you will never be invited to attend another Def Poetry taping." This is not a community of outlaw poets that organizes the details and invitations. This is a capitalistic movement to mainstream underground art forms. You would never receive a free-of-fee based invitation to witness the poet's performance on Broadway—not at the expensive price of seventy-five dollars a ticket. If the camera during the HBO series taping scans the audience, the idea is to show physical reactions to the poet's performance not a bundle of empty chairs. Perhaps this is the mainstream response to the organic intellectual craft anyway, a bundle of empty chairs.

²³ I received an email the morning of that evening's performance. After declining due to short notice, I have never received another email inviting me to attend another taping.

Chapter Six
Puerto Rican History

PUERTO RICANS IN NEW YORK CITY: DE LA ISLA A LA CONTINENTE

In 1946, 400,000 Puerto Ricans migrated from the Caribbean to New York City. This was known as the first major wave of Puerto Ricans to come to New York City. By 1960, the United States was home to one million Puerto Ricans (Gonzales, 2000, p.81).

During the 1940s, Puerto Ricans who migrated to New York in droves did so towards El Barrio (New York City's Spanish Harlem). Here they became pioneer Puerto Ricans who would make up New York City's Puerto Rican diaspora. While push and pull factors of immigration were in existence for many immigrants who experience one or the other, Puerto Ricans who came to New York and other parts of the "mainland" experienced both push and pull factors simultaneously. An example of the pull factor of Puerto Rican im(migration) began with direct "mainland" recruitment of Puerto Rican workers. The contract farm worker program that began in 1940 resulted in 20,000 Puerto Ricans coming to the "mainland" to harvest crops. According to Sonia Nieto, these programs continued well into the 1970s but in a more formal fashion and continue today informally (Nieto, 2000).

Due to colonial unrest caused by United States occupation on the island, Puerto Ricans were being offered

promises of sharing in the "American Dream" by migrating to the mainland. "Mainland" labor recruitment efforts in the poorest *barrios*²⁴ of Puerto Rico exemplified the "Dream." These recruitment efforts included loudspeakers that traveled through the barrios advertising mainland jobs and travel fare there (Nieto, 2000). Puerto Ricans who were sold the "dream" found themselves cleaning hospital bedpans and hired as *lavaplatos*.²⁵ Puerto Ricans also found themselves working in factories, driving gypsy cabs or operating bodegas (Nieto, 2000).

It is clear here as it is with most immigrants of color who travel to New York City or the United States, that the "American Dream" is one that solely consists of working as the means. This "dream" for many immigrants does not include making new histories from newfound cultures. In conversation with many Latino/a, Caribbean, and West Indian immigrants living in New York City, it was once mentioned that there is no time for anything else but working.

New York is a business town, a plantation; the Puerto Ricans came to work-but not to live. New York killed them; it took their health and hopes; it locked them up in dark rooms; it gave them to the landlords for a gift, a sacrifice. Even worse, it told them

²⁴ The term Barrio is translated in English to mean "neighborhoods."

²⁵ The term Lavaplato is translated in English to mean "dishwasher."

who they were and made it impossible for them not to accept that external definition (Shorris, 1992, p.79).

Puerto Ricans who came from the "mainland" experienced many of the assimilation and anti-im(migrant) effects of colonialism. The jobs promised to Puerto Ricans during the Great Migration, confronted them with their own educational and knowledge backgrounds. At the time, the "mainland" was in need of skilled workers whereas Puerto Ricans were not seen as skilled or competitive (Nieto, 2000). The jobs Puerto Ricans obtained often resulted in their recognition that the "American Dream" was less positive than anything they could have imagined. Without government representation, many Puerto Ricans found themselves socially disabled and awaiting antidotes and social panaceas from their employers. Earl Shorris describes the Puerto Rican experience as represented in a novel by Edward Rivera. Shorris writes,

Puerto Ricans work in marginal businesses; they have no unions, no benefits, nothing but the weekly paycheck, from which social security may or may not have been deducted and paid; the employers milk the business, transferring every cent out of the little corporation into their private accounts; when the marginal business goes broke after a few or even many years or when the owners decide to liquidate the business and retire, the loyal Puerto Rican employee, is left with nothing, literally and figuratively out in the cold. Lacking money, medical

insurance, and hope, the Puerto Rican man settles into patriarchy and machismo; he plays dominoes and sings song, and sometimes he drinks (Shorris, 1992, p.87).

Education seemed to be the basis for socioeconomic attainment and success in the "mainland" and this was particularly true for immigrants of color who had little or no education. Even schools on the island were deemed ill-equipped for learning without the influence of America's ownership and social control. According to Ogbu's theory of involuntary minorities:

A group's political situation in the host society and its perceptions of opportunities available in that society's influence its educational achievement to a far greater degree than simple cultural differences. Hence, the major academic problem for U.S. Puerto Ricans is not that they possess a different language, culture, or cognitive, or communication style, but rather the nature of the history, subjugation and exploitation they have experienced together with their own responses to their treatment (Ogbu, 1987 as cited in Nieto, 2000, p.7).

While Puerto Ricans were working all sorts of blue-collar jobs, their literary and media representation had become consistently and stereotypically negative. Supposed representation based in culture and literature turned into nothing short of media misrepresentation and distorted coverage of an entire people.

The characters of *West Side Story* were based on Romeo and Juliet, but Sondheim and

Bernstein had taken them down the social scale from minor nobility to street killers (Shorris, 1992, p.78).

In addition to the male Puerto Rican's "street-killing" disposition, several female Puerto Ricans were disgusted by Puerto Rico (the homeland) because they had now been active participants in "America" (the mainland) and its culture. An excerpt from *America* (Sondheim, 1956, 1957) (a *West Side Story* track) are cited below.

ROSALIA

Puerto Rico,
 You lovely island . . .
 Island of tropical breezes.
 Always the pineapples growing,
 Always the coffee blossoms blowing . . .

ANITA

Puerto Rico . . .
 You ugly island . . .
 Island of tropic diseases.
 Always the hurricanes blowing,
 Always the population growing . . .
 And the money owing,
 And the babies crying,
 And the bullets flying.
 I like the island Manhattan.
 Smoke on your pipe and put that in!

OTHERS

I like to be in America!
 O.K. by me in America!
 Ev'rything free in America
 For a small fee in America!

In *America*, the audience gets a perspective of female Puerto Ricans who engage in the practice of self hate by way of verbalizing their desire for Puerto Rico to "sink

back in the ocean." The males musically retort to the females who sing about America as the place to be, that America is racially divided and practices everything but freedom when it comes to people of color. Characters Bernardo, Rosalia and Anita exchange the following call and response about their own versions of America:

Here you are free
 And you have pride
 As long as you stay on your own side

Free to be anything you choose
 Free to wipe tables and shine shoes

Everywhere grime in America
 Organized crime in America
 Terrible time in America
 You forget I'm in America
 I think I'd go back to San Juan
 I know a boat you can get on (bye bye)

Everyone there will give big cheer
 Everyone there will have more tear²⁶

It is important to note that what the audience received during the production of *West Side Story* is a depiction of the murderous, scum of the earth Puerto Rican. Once *these* Puerto Ricans arrive on the "mainland," they assimilate into American culture, leave their Puerto Rican girlfriends, and begin chasing "Blancas."²⁷ However, the analysis of the "Jets" seems unbelievable to many – White gang members from Hell's Kitchen? At best it is laughable

²⁶ The correct lyrics are, "everyone here will have moved there."

²⁷ The term Blancas is translated in English to mean White women.

to most. The following line from the *Jet Song*, "every Puerto Rican is a lousy chicken" have not been thoroughly analyzed in all of their dimensions. The line questions race, social positionality and of course machismo or masculinity, which is so prevalent in Latino culture. White gang membership is not an issue on which the audience focuses. Is it the dancing that takes away the violent notions of gang membership such as the "Jets?" Is it the singing aspects of the production that take away from the fact that this is a gang war set to music? Is it the costumes or the fact that even the Puerto Rican females hate Puerto Rico that takes away from the analysis of how the white gang is as "bad" as the Puerto Rican "sharks?" The lyrics of the *Jet Song* (Sondheim, 1957), proves Klan-like membership from a group other than Puerto Ricans.

Jet Song

When you're a Jet you're the top cat in town
 The Gold medal kid with the heavyweight crown
 When you're a Jet you're the swingin'est thing
 Little boy, you're a man, Little man you're a king!
 The Jets are in gear
 Our cylinders are clickin'
 The sharks'll steer clear
 'Cause every Puerto Rican's
 A lousy chicken!
 Here come the Jets like a bat outta hell
 Someone gets in our way, someone don't feel so well!
 Here come the Jets!
 Little world, step aside!
 Better go underground!
 Better run, Better hide!

We're drawing the line,
So keep your nose's hidden
We're hangin' a sign
Says visitors forbidden
And we ain't kiddin'
Here come the Jets!
Yeah!
And we're gonna beat every last buggin' gang on the whole
buggin' street.
on the whole ever mother lovin' street!
Yeah!

In literature, Puerto Ricans were depicted as low-lives and at the bottom rung of the Nation's capital. As Piri Thomas wrote about his struggle to understand Afro-Latino (Flores, 2003) identity, he also included grim details of life in El Barrio. The scenes in his book have proven difficult and sensitive to read by some who have never had to experience life this way. None of these experiences are new to someone who has either grown up in this part of New York City or was raised in similar neighborhoods. In fact, many who have had similar experiences to Piri have found their way into the mainstream and have since become ashamed by those experiences with life's gritty struggles. However, these scenes in the text seem memorable to many others who have had adult responsibilities during their adolescence and can attest to these experiences as positive. Piri's Puerto-Ricanness brought him success and enough of an insider perspective to have his book banned by the New York City Board of Education during the 1960s.

The book was pulled from the district's (District 25), junior high school library shelves in 1971 after a complaint from a parent. The board then voted to ban the title because of the author's use of obscene words and descriptions of heterosexual and homosexual acts (SLJ, 1976, p.10).

What is central is again, the fact that Thomas is Puerto Rican and speaks of accounts directly related to his experience. Thomas is not speaking from a notebook of participant observation notes. While obscene language and sex have always been "taboo," it is important to ask whether or not this is the case for all people in American society. Or, does it just apply to the narrative of color or to the organic intellectual's interpretation of life? For some, cultural interpretations are depoliticized and appropriated, other times cultural experiences are interpreted as "obscene." Yet, it seems to depend on who tells the story. Thomas's account of his life, and his homosexual, drug-related and other acts of experience seem to be read as "obscene." On the other hand, Oscar Lewis wrote *La Vida* (1966), a gruesome account of Puerto Ricans and Puerto Rican life. Lewis, a white male himself not having a native informant perspective includes throughout his book a one-dimensional and racist depiction of Puerto Ricans. However his book has been used as a "classic" in ethnography courses.

His Puerto Rican men were lazy, stupid louts who lived off women or welfare, beat their wives and girlfriends, and then left them penniless and pregnant. His Puerto Rican women were whores, without exception. There was no sense of a human soul in the characters as presented by the omnipotent editor. Lewis called his work anthropology, science. The intellectual world adored the book, for it confirmed everything they thought they saw on the Upper West Side of New York: The women were hot, and the men were bums. No matter what Lewis had set out to do, he had ended up with a racist's dream (Shorris, 1992, p.78).

Puerto Rican Women:

It is important to discuss the plight of the Puerto Rican woman who is both organic intellectual and minority subjected to racism as an individual segment to the people she represents. As Oscar Lewis indicates that Puerto Rican women "were whores, without exception" (Lewis, 1966) he also refers to them on a general scale as having no sense of selfhood or feminism. It is important to note here that ten years prior to the release of *La Vida*, Puerto Rican women were the first group of women used to test the birth control pill by G.D. Searle pharmaceutical company. "The women were neither told about what they were taking nor warned about the possible side effects, which the company knew to be potentially severe" (Lederer, 1987). What he fails to analyze in his "ethnography" or work of "science" are the classifications of racial and gender based

oppression of the Puerto Rican woman as she is confined to one race, skimmed down from skin color (Blackness). Texts like *La Vida* made it difficult in the past to uphold an argument that Puerto Rican women are also misrepresented feminists. If one knows how racism works, we also know that no woman of color could have been seen as a feminist because of texts like these.

When one thinks of feminism, one tends to get images of bra-burning white women who are very male-like in their disposition, and who resent the process of shaving their underarm hair for its oppressive intentions towards beauty. However, this feminism, is very different for the Black woman, be she African American, West Indian, Caribbean (Puerto Rican) or some mix of the three.

The fact of being considered three minorities in one-black, Puerto Rican, and woman - is, in and of itself, a tremendous psychological burden that must be understood (Jorge, 1976, p.181).

The Puerto Rican females in *West Side Story* have been "lightened up." They have engaged in the practice of what Angela Jorge calls "adelantar la raza" (to go through the whitening process by marrying someone light-skinned, if not white" (Jorge, 1976, p.187). Even in contemporary popular culture, Puerto Ricans on television are light skinned. It has been a struggle to find Jennifer Lopez in the role of a

Latina, a Boricua, or someone of color besides her role as Selena, who was actually Mexican-American. Although she does represent the Puerto Rican/Nuyorican community, Lopez has been used to promote the oversexualized stereotype of the Latina, in particular, the hypersexualized Puerto Rican. In addition, it is easier for American mainstream to use her as a sexual icon because of her appearance of what Jorge calls a "jabá, someone who is light-skinned but has features or hair texture that indicates African ancestry" (Jorge, 1976, p.187). Due to the constant pressure of being forced into categories or being subjected to mainstream oppression and racism here the Puerto Rican female becomes part of oppressed population. As she accepts her position as oppressed, she then becomes an oppressor in that she views the hatred of herself that was taught to her as applicable for her sisters within the same category. That is the Puerto Rican woman dark or light-skinned begins to oppress Black Puerto Rican females because of what she has been taught to think of them.

[...] During the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or 'sub-oppressors.' The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors.

This is their model of humanity. This phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed, at a certain moment of their existential experience, adopt an attitude of 'adhesion' to the oppressor. Under these circumstances they cannot 'consider' him sufficiently clearly to objectivize him-to discover him 'outside' themselves. This does not necessarily mean that the oppressed are unaware that they are downtrodden. But their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression. At this level, their perception of themselves as opposites of the oppressor does not yet signify engagement in a struggle to overcome the contradiction, the one pole aspires not to liberation, but to identification with its opposite pole (Freire, 1993, p.45).

Like African American and other women of color, the Afro Boricua female has been subjugated because of her color which takes precedence over her culture or her individuality.

Since the outer society, the white-dominant American society, perceives the black Puerto Rican woman in terms of black versus white, she is under constant pressure to make choices within these limits only. Admittedly, she has the option of avoiding this conflict by staying exclusively within the confines of her barrio. Never venturing out of the barrio, however, does not help her to integrate the parts of herself-black, Puerto Rican, and woman-into a meaningful whole any more than does the larger racist American society, or even her assimilation into black American society (Jorge, 1976, p.186).

If for the purposes of this dissertation, we combine the three elements of the Afro Boricua's oppression, (1) her

blackness, (2) her gender, and (3) being Puerto Rican we can now view the Afro Boricua female in Patricia Hill Collins' (1991) perspective of Black feminism, and how the Black female body is treated by racist literature, television and film, and other areas of popular culture, and/or media.

Patricia Hill-Collins writes in *Black Feminist Thought* (1991) that there are three levels of how Black women are oppressed: (1) Prostitution, (2) Rape and (3) Pornography. It is not without consideration that these three oppressive categories are applicable to the Black Puerto Rican female that Lewis leaves out in *La Vida*, that Thomas omits from *Down these Mean Streets*, and that Jorge considers forgotten in most of the literature that references or regards Puerto Rican women. However, the representation of even the light-skinned Puerto Rican woman as hypersexual has increased and is now considered applicable to all Latinas. In the three categories the female Afro Boricua that serves as an organic intellectual is confronted with sexual politics within mainstream societies more than in and on her island.

The fact that Jennifer Lopez's body in particular her buttocks has been used to demonstrate her fame rather than her entertaining qualities is the strongest element of the

sexual politics that poses her simultaneously as a "victim and a pet" (Collins, 1991, p.174).

[...] power as domination involves reducing humans to animate nature in order to exploit them economically or to treat them condescendingly as pets. Domination may be either cruel and exploitative with no affection or may be exploitative yet coexist with affection. The former produces the victim-in this case, the Black woman as "mule" whose labor has been exploited. In contrast, the combination of dominance and affection produces the pet, the individual who is subordinate but whose survival depends on the whims of the more powerful (Collins, 1991, p.174).

Works like *La Vida* (1966) and *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (1996) serve to further oppress Puerto Rican and Afro Boricua women. Subjugation of the Latina (Puerto Rican in this case) has asked them to endure a history of sexual and racial politics. In the past, envisioning the Latina or Puerto Rican woman as a feminist was minimal. Organic intellectualism did not seem to apply to them in the view of many authors and academicians. This erroneous omission of Latina strength continues to further perpetuate *La Vida's* stereotype of Latinas being hypersexual damsels in distress.

The historical legacy of Black women's treatment in pornography, prostitution, and rape forms the institutional backdrop for a range of interpersonal relationships that Black women currently have with Black men,

whites, and one another. Without principled coalitions with other groups, African-American women may not be able to effect lasting change on the social structural level of social institutions. But the first step to forming such coalitions is examining exactly how these institutions harness power as energy for their own use by invading both relationships among individuals and individual consciousness itself. Thus understanding the contemporary dynamics of the sexual politics of Black womanhood in order to empower African-American women requires investigating how social structural factors infuse the private domain of Black women's relationships (Collins, 1991, p.179).

Going back to literary representation of the treatment of Puerto Ricans, in Nicholasa Mohr's novel, *Nilda* (1973) the main character Nilda recounts her experience in El Barrio during a summer heatwave in the 1940s and running with her childhood friends and adults through New York City's fire hydrant and the "jaras"²⁸ response to their "savage" practices:

The two policemen shook their heads and began to close the hydrant. [...] 'God damn you people,' yelled one policeman. 'You got no sense of responsibility. What if there's a fire?' [...] 'Shit. God damn you bastards, coming here making trouble. Bunch of animals. Listen, don't pull that shit again. You're acting against the law. If this happens again, one more time, I'm going to arrest all your asses! The whole God damned bunch of you spicks.' 'Animals!' the other policeman added (Mohr, 1973, pp.5-6).

²⁸ The term "Jara" is the Spanish translation for police or cops.

Puerto Ricans in film have not seen much better days than the likes of *West Side Story* or the literary work of *La Vida*. In Brian DePalma's film *Carlito's Way* (1993), the audience watches Puerto Rican Carlito Brigante (Al Pacino), a member of the Puerto Rican mafia in New York City in 1970, attempt to desperately cut his ties with his "bad" life. Through his attempt at "turning good" the audience watches as he surrounds himself with the likes of a Gail (Penelope Ann Miller), a white stripper and his Jewish cocaine-addicted lawyer Kleinfield (Sean Penn). As Hollywood would have it, Gail tries to protect Carlito from the life he has known prior to and after-prison. Gail serves as the classic example of the "white female savior" who must save the day by saving people of color from their terrible surroundings. This identity is taken on by many Hollywood writers and directors, as well as in academia amongst many of those who produce ethnographic work. Hollywood would also set the tone that Carlito's downfall would be his "friends," also Puerto Rican. As viewers witness in the beginning of the film, Carlito is shot while boarding an "escape" train, and thus we already recognize Carlito's end.

Puerto Ricans, Nuyoricans and Afro Latinos Engage in Racism:

Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans alike have both been historical and contemporary victims of racism in the United States. This is particularly true for the Afro Boricua who is represented as "Black" to others and as "Puerto Rican" to him/herself. The racial identity struggle is one that is not unfamiliar to Black people historically and in the present. The issue of on-sight/site racism that I teach my graduate students in our courses named *Diversity and the American School* is a theory that racism is developed on-sight and on-site.

The on-site/sight theory that I have developed through my teaching of diversity and Black studies has to do with observing and stereotyping. Where the observer is and what knowledge they hold prior to their observation contributes to how much they use their previous knowledge to stereotype or judge based on-site (where they are) and on-sight (what they see and what they previously know about what they currently see). This theoretical framework helps graduate students analyze and discuss their prejudices and ways of knowing about people who are different from themselves.

Since my graduate students tend to be predominantly white, and a lot of times, middle to upper middle class,

their prejudices are oftentimes based on solely their perception of who they deem as "Black" and/or "Hispanic."²⁹ Asians are not always classified by my students as "people of color" thus Asians are not seen by my students as having any negative stereotypes. Even though these students are "New Yorkers" (because they have moved here, not because they have been born and raised here), they are not completely aware that their behavior is a process of racism that psychologist William E. Cross discusses as part of White identity development processes (Tatum, 1999). In addition, some of these students feel confident in making on-site/on-sight judgments about people of color because of their cultural-race passports. These passports include the following stamps: "my boyfriend is Black," "my girlfriend is Puerto Rican," "my really friendly neighbor is African," "my best friend is Black," and my "Cuban wife said to me." These cultural passports have been a long-time access to particular groups of people having their culture and lives penetrated for the sake of research, many to be left with their stories untold but sold.

The theory of racism being on-site and on-sight I developed from hearing the narratives of my white students

²⁹ The term "Hispanic" is a term my students have previously learned throughout their studies and their cognitive development processes and have now become comfortable in using. In using the term in courses that I teach, I encourage my students to think of the Colonial and racist impacts of the terminology and also encourage them to think about the term "Latino" as a replacement for the "Hispanic" classification.

call everyone who is darker-skinned than they are "Black" and everyone who speaks Spanish as "Spanish" and sometimes if we are mid-way through our *Diversity in the American School* course, Spanish-speakers are often referred to as being "Hispanic" when they are overheard by my students. However, the term "Latino" is almost never used by any of my students during the beginning of our semester. While Latino is almost never used, "Nuyorican" is never used, neither is Boricua and certainly not ever is "Afro Latino/a" used. When asked to produce an ethnographic paper, in particular the description of a setting, my students make racist claims and generalizations in their work. This is not surprising to me (because of my history doing this with my students and friends), but the judgments being made were definitely racist and cryptoracist (Kincheloe, Slattery & Steinberg, 2000), being based solely on what they saw (on sight) and where they were (on site).

Another example of racism against Latinos, in particular Puerto Ricans, comes from my experience traveling through Aruba in the summer of 2004. During an evening out at a trendy restaurant and bar, the owners of the establishment decided to involve their patrons in a "Dancing Salsa" contest. Six women were chosen to go up on stage and dance to the beat of Tito Puente's *Ran Kan Kan*

for the first forty seconds of the song. Of the six women, two were Puerto Rican from the island, and four were white from parts of the United States. The music played, and one by one each white girl was asked to sit down in defeat. The battle was between the two Puertorriqueñas. Interestingly enough, neither of the two Puerto Rican girls were Afro Boricua but were White Puerto Ricans. After all the white women and one of the two Puerto Rican girls had been seated, one of the white girls was making her way back to her table while passing mine. She said to her friend (who had also been asked to leave the stage) "of course a spic would win, only they can move their fat asses like that." What could I do? I was not shocked. I decided not to confront the young woman in unfamiliar spaces but use the experience as a private journal entry for the purposes of this dissertation.

Puerto Ricans have been victims of racism based on im(migration), historical representations, skin color, culture and ethnicity, and they have been misrepresented through literature, media (both television and radio) and through academic text. However, for some White-Latinos, the race question of identity and racial formation becomes the acceptance of whiteness and the rejection of blackness. Responding to racialization, some Latinos' response has

been to rid themselves of their blackness. Allowing themselves to pass, Nella Larsen style would be more acceptable to the dominant elite. Importantly enough however, Alcoff believes that the category Latino/a is one that racializes an entire group of people as opposed to recognizing difference (Alcoff, 2000).

In studying the historical and contemporary experience of the US Afro-Latino (Flores, 2003),

one ever feels his three-ness, - a Latino, a Negro, an American; three souls, three thoughts, three unreconciled strivings; three warring ideals in one dark body, whose strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (Flores, 2003, Lecture).

Flores' assertion makes the construction of the Afro-Latino experience dialogically political in its presence. We have been able to look at the Afro Latino (who is central to this overall concept) as three parts that make up a whole. The three parts as described by Flores, (Latino, Negro and American). Identity politics is clearly a dichotomizing experience within one's self. It treats you to experiences you never knew you would engage in if it were not for the ontological events the self must go through in its evolution. Location shift (immigration) also serves as part of the dichotomizing realities of racial identity and solidarity.

I have often heard immigrants of color in the United States (in particular New York City) completely drop off their cultural heritage at the airport because "in America, if you aren't white, then you are surely black." (Black here having a negative connotation.) This means aligning one's self with one side or the other, and often times, and for many people, ridding one's self of cultural heritage is historically intertwined with identity and social politics. This is a process of social assimilation without cultural accommodation.

For two, one white and one black, young Cuban men, Achmed Valdes and Joel Ruiz, in Mirta Ojito's article *Best of Friends, Worlds Apart*, (2000) their separation based on race happened after leaving Cuba. Once they arrived in the hyper-racialized United States, they began to realize that they would need to choose sides. Although the reader may disagree with their declaration of being unaware of race and racial issues in Cuba, their identity politics quickly took shape and formed once they moved into the neighborhoods within Miami, Florida. It almost seemed as if they were also saying "in the United States, if you are not white, then you are Black!" The Afro Cubano moves into the African American neighborhood, associates with them, dates African American women, works with them, and

socializes mostly with them. The White Cubano holds contempt for African Americans, and blames Fidel Castro for his urgency in leaving Cuba, and feels a sense of fear of the African Americans who seem to be so vastly different from his experiences with Afro Cubanos in Cuba. The dichotomy that develops their sense of racialized identity forces their friendship into a segregated and limited one, and also allows them to develop identities through the perceptions of others.

The native informant or organic intellectual-other serves an important role in the development of the Afro Latino and Latino outlaw as well as a racially absorbent cultural politics. The native informant and/or organic intellectual other places weight on personal experiences that help shape the way we think about the transmigration of people of color into hyper-racialized settings. Only the native informant can clearly explain an experience of transculturation and transmigration. Participant observers can use academic terminologies to describe these experiences, but ultimately it is the organic intellectual who relays the experience much clearer. For Latinos it is important to understand:

that how they are seen by others can be quite different from the way they label themselves - and that may be more important

in the kind of social treatment they face (Navarro, 2000, 1).

How does one choose being Puerto Rican or Black, if he or she is both? Such a choice seems to depend on which language they speak first, where they are from (within their native places of birth), their cognizance of racial politics in their homes on the island, and here in the United States, and most importantly what the native informant or organic intellectual-other sees themselves as being. If a member of the NYPD receives a "1050" or a call of a perpetrator "fitting the description" - will the police officer know whether or not to pick up or walk past the Afro Latino or the Black man because his reading calls for "a Black male." No. It is common to stop both men, based on my theory of onsite and on-sight racial profiling. The Afro Latino/a and African American must be well equipped in their socialization with race and identity in this country in order to reassert their own self-identifications. For the Latino, calling yourself "trigeño" or "Boricua" to people who do not recognize or care to recognize the sociopolitical meaning of the either term is no longer a description of the self. For this reason one decides with whom and with what to identify rather than carelessly constructing her solidarity based on

skin color alone. Solidarity is based on the struggle of a group rather than an individualistic approach to liberation. One has to ask the question: are the masses or solidified groups seeking the same goal? This country has forced everyone of specific colors to choose his or her life's paths in a hurried chess-move approach.

For members of the Afro Boricua community, one could look to Arturo Schomburg. When my students and I, both undergraduate and graduate, talk about Schomburg and the research library in Harlem, most are shocked to learn that he was Puerto Rican and born in Puerto Rico. Is this because of Schomburg's own identity classification or has society placed him in a singular racial box? Arturo Schomburg was born in Santurce, Puerto Rico in 1874, to a Crucian mother and a Mestizo of German and Puerto Rican Heritage. Schomburg's classification as a traditional intellectual comes from his training in commercial printing at the Instituto Popular in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Later, Schomburg studied "Negro Literature" at the St. Thomas College in the Virgin Islands (James, 1998).

Schomburg seemed clearly disconnected from his roots in Puerto Rico and issues regarding Afro Latinos or Latinos. He readily accepted the upwardly-mobile community of African Americans and their struggle in New York

City/Harlem, yet he did not conjoin his forces and intellectual strength with the black masses and their experience of being in the United States. Here we see racial identity being more centralized around class than color. What did it mean to Schomburg to be an Afro Boricua born to Caribbean parents, as opposed to an ally to the Black community in New York City? Historian Winston James contradictingly believes Schomburg because of his one-sided struggle could not have been an Afro Boricua. According to Winston, how could a bi-racial/bi-cultural man who chooses to represent one of his cultures/races be considered Afro Boricua? "Schomburg, apparently could not have been black and Puerto Rican at the same time" (James, 1998, p.200). Is this the divide or dichotomized experience that leads to people being clearly identifiable by a reader of their culture? Hegemonic/traditional intellectuals can easily associate Schomburg with being only Black because they do not take into account various social dynamics. For example, many of the programs Schomburg either founded or supported had funding from a particular group of people, who had representation elsewhere.

In 1911 Schomburg co-founded the Negro Society for Historical Research, an archival institute which published several important papers on black history. In 1914 he was inducted into, and later presided over, the

American Negro Academy which championed black history and combated "scientific racism" of the day. He went on to direct acquisitions for Fisk University's Negro Collection, which he eventually curated. Throughout these years, Schomburg was a leading light of the legendary Harlem Renaissance. But the keystone of Schomburg's legacy was the world-renowned collection he had built over the years. Comprising thousands of slave narratives, manuscripts, rare books, journals, artwork and other remnants of African history, his collection was presented to the New York Public Library's Division of Negro History in 1926 through a \$10,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundation. Schomburg eventually curated his own collection, now renamed the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Today the collection comprises nearly six million items, including photographs, films, audio recordings and institutional archives. The Center's extensive bibliographic records have recently been cataloged on CD-ROM for those using modern technology to research ancient history (Knight, 1995).

Born in 1901, Jesus Colón was known to be an organic intellectual -- self-educated -- because of his lack of formal schooling. It was not until his adult life in the United States that Colón decided to complete his secondary level of education. (Afro Boricuas such as Jesus Colón associated himself with the struggle of Puerto Ricans in New York City, as opposed to the struggle of only Afro Boricuas. For this, James lashes heavy criticism upon him and is thus being hypocritical. James concurrently states that Schomburg could not be but one, Puerto Rican or Black

at any one given time. James argued that Colón should have been part of the Black struggle, as much as he was involved in the Puerto Rican struggle. This criticism stems from James's idea that Puerto Ricans who are Black and dark enough to carry the burden of African Americans, should automatically do so. He expected Colón to deal with issues and struggles that were not of his immediate concern. Paqueteros³⁰ for Colón were Puerto Ricans searching for representation in employment. In that moment of searching, Colón was creating a Puerto Rican socialist party where he would read and write in Spanish for Puerto Ricans who were illiterate. Colón's scholarly and academic achievements were not traditional but the work he chose to do with what he did know from life experience is honorable. Using his knowledge to read and write for illiterate compadres was much more difficult than using traditional knowledge for traditional causes. Schomburg's achievements should have been a highlight for Puerto Rican education and social achievement for Puerto Ricans who later became products of public schooling in New York City. However, in the next section, it will become clear how Schomburg's efforts towards intellectualism were not articulated or reshaped

³⁰ The term paqueteros is the Spanish translation for a factory worker that works to pack cigars with tobacco.

into a model that can be used as beneficial to Puerto Ricans in the struggle. In closing of this analysis of race, racism and the Latino, particularly Puerto Ricans, it is useful to understand Flores' belief that race is not a notion but rather a process. However constructed by society this process of how one perceives themselves racially is personal (Flores, 2003).

PUERTO RICANS & NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLING 1960s-1970s

I came to New York as a young boy in 1941 on a boat called the *Marine Tiger*. [...] I started school not knowing how to speak English, and my teacher didn't speak Spanish. [After learning English], I discovered the school newspaper and began doing interviews with people. Eventually one of the kids on the newspaper said to me, 'Are you going to this school?' I said, 'Of course.' He said, 'We don't see you in any of our classes.' 'I'm in airplane mechanics.' 'What are you doing that for?' 'I'm Puerto Rican' (Badillo, 2001, p.11).

As El Barrio became more and more Puerto Rican, the social climate connected to political voice, authority and access began to take its shape. By 1940, 85 percent of the Puerto Ricans who came to the "mainland" were residing in New York City. Eight years later, there was an estimate of 200,000 Puerto Ricans dispersed throughout New York City neighborhoods (Sánchez Korrol, 1983). With such stereotypes of Puerto Ricans already having been created in the minds of non-Puerto Ricans in New York City, even

elementary school-aged Puerto Ricans were faced with adversity and confusion about their heritage. The children of blue-collar workers were immersed into "English Only" classes and thus destined to fail, as administrators worked to eliminate native tongue speaking in the presence of white teachers. For immigrants, defiance of authority or government is not an option. Therefore, children of Puerto Rican immigrants, or Puerto Rican child-immigrants were forced to undergo several cultural assimilations (including an erasure of memory of their homeland). This was all for the sake of being able to survive in public schools throughout the United States (Gonzales, 2000). While assimilation practices took place at school, young Puerto Ricans were learning how passing for white might be beneficial in New York City's public education system.

Although by 1960 Puerto Ricans were large in number schooling was still an issue of sociopolitical concern.

By 1960, only 13% of Puerto Ricans 25 years and older had completed high school and more than half had less than an 8th grade education (Nieto, 2000, p.15).

In 1963, of 21,000 academic diplomas distributed to New York City high school students, only 331 were granted to Puerto Rican students (Nieto, 2000). The situation was even more devastating in places such as Boston where

between 1966 and 1969, only four Puerto Rican students graduated from high school (Nieto, 2000).

In 1965, Eugene Bucchioni conducted an ethnographic study in New York City public school classrooms that revealed extreme assimilation practices involving the pedagogy of a particular teacher named, "Miss Dwight."

These negative messages included admonitions about not speaking Spanish, choosing the best student to be 'Mr. and Mrs. America' for the morning pledge to the flag, and a discussion about what constitutes a nutritious diet (in which no Puerto Rican foods were included), among other lessons (Nieto, 2000, p.17).

CONSTRUCTING POWERFUL REPRESENTATIONS OF LA RAZA

As teachers attempted to further oppression by way of assimilation or "false charity" (Freire, 1970), Puerto Ricans began to organize socially and politically. Puerto Ricans were tired of "dreaming about the Irish sweepstakes" (Pietri, 1971). In 1961, ASPIRA, which comes from the Spanish verb *aspirar*, which means to aspire, took a position on the education and pedagogical infractions on Puerto Ricans in the "mainland." Founded by Dr. Antonia Pantoja and the Puerto Rican Forum, ASPIRA was dedicated to empowering young Puerto Ricans in particular. Continuing its promise, ASPIRA prides itself on offering a continuum

of resources for Puerto Ricans and other Latinos to enable social empowerment.

The Puerto Rican civil rights movement -- or so it should have been called -- began to develop into two phases described by Sonia Nieto as

the struggle for equal education opportunity through decentralization, and the prominence of bilingual education in the Puerto Rican community's struggle for civil rights (Nieto, 2000, p.18).

Due to parent outcries of wanting and needing bilingual programs for Puerto Rican children, the government set up three experimental schools in New York City: (1) I.S. 201, (2) Two Bridges, and (3) Ocean-Hill Brownsville. As Puerto Ricans demanded integrated schools in the 1950s, school boards were fearful of white flight. Thus school boards created these experimental schools in order to quell further Puerto Rican and Black fury in the neighborhood. For *Two Bridges* the involvement of parents and activists created a space for several educational and social changes in the community. First, the parents and activists hired Luis Fuentes who was principal of Ocean-Hill Brownsville. As a result of his efforts in creating bilingual programs in the community, Two Bridges hired him as community superintendent. Second, Two Bridges hired more people of color, with an emphasis on African Americans, Latinos and

Chinese Americans as part of their school's personnel. Lastly, Two Bridges established programs such as bilingual education and systematized reading (Nieto, 2000).

Although this seemed promising for Puerto Ricans and other people of color within New York City's public school system during the 1973-1974 school board election, the board returned to being comprised of a majority of white members. Although 73 percent of the district's students were Puerto Rican and only six percent were white, there was only one Black and seventeen White members of the board. P.S. 25 in the Bronx, established in 1968, was the first bilingual school in the northeast (Nieto, 2000). Current statistics and demographics show that the school reports 1% White, 11% Black, 89% Hispanic and 1% Asian (Hemphill, 2004). As of October 2005, P.S. 25 hosts a weekly attendance average of 93%. However, on a five star rating scale the school receives only two stars for reading, and three stars for math.

During the 1970s, Puerto Rican activism in relation to social and educational issues reached an apex. In 1972, the Puerto Rican Legal Defense (PRLDEF) and ASPIRA sued the New York City Board of Education on behalf of fifteen students and parents. Historically, this case included the largest amount of plaintiffs (over 80,000) who sued the

Board of Education for denying Puerto Rican students equal opportunities in education (Nieto, 2000)

In 1974 the ASPIRA Consent Decree was issued, and mandated bilingual education within the New York City school system (Nieto, 2000, p.21). Interestingly enough but not surprising, both Nieto and Santiago-Santiago (1986) agree that the mandate was possible because of the colonial responsibility of the United States to protect its "special citizens" socio-politically. By the 1970s, Puerto Rican students began to see teachers in the classroom who looked like them. Puerto Ricans filled the halls not only as students but as teachers and as administrators as well. In addition, Nuyoricans were graduating from colleges at a slow pace but nonetheless were replacing the "drop out" model of schooling (Nieto, 2000).

**CHAPTER SEVEN:
Nuyorican History**

NUYORICAN HISTORY

Due to social irregularities, distrust and a highly politicized placation of Puerto Ricans in New York, a new response to social injustice emerged. This new response emerged directly from the irresponsibility of the United States government and its unexplainable occupation of Puerto Rico. The false charity that the "mainland" offered Puerto Ricans based in academic isolation and economic oppression resulted in a powerful struggle to be noticed. This emergence now made room for Puerto Rican culture and organic intellectualism to take a place within American mainstream society - a culture that continued to reject Puerto Rican presence. This rejection and the sociocultural marginalization that accompanied it sparked an anti-colonial movement among many Puerto Ricans. Cultural anti-colonial movements ask that their participants recognize power blocs and the way they dominate marginalized groups. The resistance methods employed in the movement did not only include discussing the social dynamics of Puerto Rican life; they also focused their attention and political awakening on agents of colonialism and colonial attempts to construct selfhood (Kincheloe, 2004).

Fueled by that political awakening, a cultural renaissance emerged among Puerto Rican artists. Writers Piri Thomas, Nicholasa Mohr, poets Pedro Pietri and Jose Angel Figueroa, playwrights Miguel Piñero, and Miguel Algarin caught the public's attention as vibrant voices of the Puerto Rican immigrant experience. Even Latin music experienced a resurgence as Eddie and Charlie Palmieri, Ray Barretto, and Willie Colón began producing politically charged lyrics that celebrated the new sense of emerging Puerto Rican power (Mohr, 1982).

NUYORICAN WRITERS: THE OLD SCHOOL DAYS

Reports on Puerto Ricans issued by the United States government have been filtered through a racist lense. Reports such as the *Puerto Rican Study* (1958), which referred to the "Puerto Rican Problem," and the United States Commission on Civil Rights' *Puerto Ricans in the Continental United States: An Uncertain Future* (1976) all refused to accept responsibility for the effects of colonialism. Lewis's *La Vida* as previously mentioned depicted wife-abusing, drunken and unemployed stereotypes of Puerto Rican males who suffered from machismo because their "spouses" were whores. Nuyorican biographies, novels and poetry, spoke directly to these misrepresentations of a people and their anti-colonial struggle. An important factor in Puerto Rican immigrant writing and the Nuyorican experience is the articulation of difference and of anger. As opposed to the gratitude and Americanization that many

immigrants may feel, Puerto Rican writing exposes anger towards Americanization and assimilation (Mohr, 1982).

One of the earliest books of this genre and time was Jesus Colón's *A Puerto Rican in New York and Other Sketches* (1961). Colón wrote several essays based on the struggle of Puerto Ricans in New York both from the sociopolitical and socioeconomic perspectives of the struggle. Colón's work provided the Puerto Rican community with vignettes of reality that offered a juxtaposition to the "American Dream." Colón also vividly illustrated the reality of slum-life, drugs and violence that overcame his people (Mohr, 1982).

Published in 1977, *Memorias de Bernardo Vega*, captures another cigar-maker in New York City who took on the plight of the suffering of Puerto Rican people as a result of the effects of colonialism and governmental false charity. Vega was very proud of Puerto Rican working class political activism and union membership. In a New York City cigar-rolling factory Vega allowed for illiterate Puerto Rican workers to become intellectuals. Puerto Rican assembly-line factory workers worked as Vega read to them the happenings in the newspaper. Cigarmakers considered Vega's reading and the workers' intellectual development a fringe benefit of factory life. (Mohr, 1982)

More controversial than Vega and Colón was Piri Thomas who wrote *Down these Mean Streets* in 1967. Thomas describes the grit and grime and joy of living in New York City's El Barrio from the 1930s to the 1960s. His story captivates readers not only because the struggle of Puerto Ricans is evident throughout the text, but so are the racial injustices served by everyone towards the "other." In this case, the "others" are Blacks and Puerto Ricans living in, on and about the "mean streets." Thomas devotes pages upon pages to describing the effects of Piri's (the main character, isolated from the actual author) growing up as an Afro-Boricua (Flores, 2003). Piri's struggle involves the effort to racially place himself as Puerto Rican or Black or both as those around him do, including his own family of both dark and light-skinned Puerto Ricans. Thomas, in the spirit of Piñero and Pietri, Colón and Vega, depicts a Latino reality. This time the reality is more focused around the Nuyorican experience as opposed to the sole experience of the Puerto Rican immigrant. The Nuyorican experience that Thomas, Piñero and Pietri describe is one that is inclusive of bilingual, bicultural and biracial existence (Rossini, 2002). This multilogical existence always asks that the Nuyorican organic

intellectuals juggle their critical construction of selfhood in relation to socio-cultural interpretation.

NUYORICAN POETS

In literature the Puerto Rican as New Yorker organic intellectual experience came to replace the Puerto Rican immigrant writings with a different construction of selfhood. It is exciting to juxtapose literary depictions of reality as you listen to Eddie Palmieri's *Puerto Rico* (1973) while driving through El Barrio. Nuyorican writing became a genre that included the dynamics of language (bilingualism), bicultural identity (the island vs the mainland), and the sociopolitics contained therein (Mele, 2000). While all of these dynamics inform Nuyorican writing, language is perhaps one of the critical constructors of the Nuyorican experience and identity. Nuyorican writing such as *Nuyorican Poetry: An Anthology of Puerto Rican Works and Feelings* reflects the social dynamics of Nuyorican identity (Mele, 2000).

It is important to remember that the difference between Nuyorican poets and Puerto Rican poets is biculturalism and language that makes up one's identity and experience. Nuyorican poets live and breathe Puerto Rico through their memories and oral history traditions of their "homeland." Puerto Rican poets have experienced Puerto

Rico by being born and oftentimes raised in Puerto Rico. Nuyorican poets who long for a common solidarity with Puerto Ricans from and on the island have long undergone the battle of colonization. Nuyoricans, like Puerto Ricans recognized the disenfranchisement of Puerto Ricans on the island as a result of colonial capitalism. Nuyoricans and Puerto Ricans shared their disgust with the capitalism that displaced the tradition of old San Juan and the rest of Puerto Rico (Mele, 2000). The cultural divide that created a rift between Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans was caused in part by the displacement of Nuyoricans within the American mainstream and the traditions of Puerto Rico.

As Nuyorican poetry mirrored various images of the Black Arts Movement and the Beat Generation's poetry scene it added a transnational dialect. This new form of tongueaesthetics, which will be discussed in later chapters arranged Nuyorican poetry and writing into its own genre. Nuyorican poetry and writing responded to the disenfranchisement in the United States, and the dislocation of culture by not being accepted in Puerto Rico as Puerto Rican. Nuyorican identity became its own culture composed of bicultural and bilingual people.

As mentioned, the writings about Puerto Ricans have typically been immigrant outcries, xenophobic caricatures,

degrading dehumanizing, and oppressive. In *Divided Borders: Essays on Puerto Rican Identity* (1993), Juan Flores explains that Nuyoricans created a voice for the Puerto Rican community in the United States. Where duality was once considered a "defect," Nuyorganics gave voice through expressive literature that promoted and celebrated biculturalism and bilingualism.

Through this sociopolitical resistance comes the newer tradition of Nuyorican poetry that gave rise to Nuyorican organic intellectualism. A new style of poetry had emerged. Poets like Miguel Algarín, Miguel Piñero and Pedro Pietri, all wrote in what Pietri called the "First Draft Movement" (Beltran, 2004) style. Before and after their poetry became academic, mainstreamed, televised and competitive, poets used it to read or perform their work unrehearsed and unscripted. Prior to his death Pietri maintained that Nuyorican poetry avoided university and academic styles of writing. Pietri believed in the art of making a mistake when writing poetry. He believed that it gave the poem an interesting element of excitement (Beltran, 2004). Today, poets have clearly put aside this movement of "first drafting" their work. Some poets are dedicated to the process of refining their art, art good enough for cable television and a mainstream audience. In

this process, poetry no longer appeals to the first drafters, but now has become competitive for its flawlessness.

Today we see poets, working on endless drafts of their pieces before performing them, and oftentimes creating poetry from within spaces that they have just observed and perhaps participated in but have never fully experienced. What is important here is the drive that creates outlaw-like wordsmiths. The drive here is cultural and sometimes inscribed by the battle with oppression in search of liberation. Nuyorican poetry helps to critically construct a Nuyorican selfhood and identity.

To problematize this analysis in a critical way, it is both necessary and valid to examine some of the concepts behind Mohr's criticism as a non-native informant. He refers to the need for being on the inside of an experience to be faithful to its portrayal; such a claim is delegitimized by his search for a "critical intellect [...] preferably from other poets" (Mohr, 1982). I would ask here, who exactly can comment on the subject of Nuyorican experience or the experience of being Puerto Rican in New York? Nuyorican poetry has still remained the original form of outlaw poetry. According to Pedro Pietri in an interview prior to his death: "We're still not trying to

impress anybody" (Beltran, 2004). These criticisms of experiences are sometimes unfamiliar to those who are criticizing. It is this unfamiliarity with a culture that leads to works such as *La Vida* (1966) and government documents like *Puerto Ricans in the Continental United States: An Uncertain Future*, (1976). If not dependent on the native informant for his and/or her reflection of experience, how are we the outsider [reader] to fully understanding the cultural revolution of any group? How can we interpret their experiences without essentializing them? How do we discontinue the practice of marginalizing the marginalized?

Secondly, Mohr's account of Nuyorican's and their poetry as "depressing circumstances that clothe them" (Mohr, 1982) reminds me of an episode of the 1970s sitcom *What's Happening!!*, "The Incomplete Shakespeare" where the main character, Roger Thomas, is hired as an "ethnic consultant" for a television show called "Central Avenue" produced by a white man. When Roger decided to use his status as "ethnic consultant" to talk about what really happens in the daily lives of young blacks in Watts, he is told by his producer/boss: "No one wants to know that the children in the ghetto are poor. So change it up a bit" (Einstein and Mintz, 1976). After Roger decides that he

has to "tell it like it is," he convinces his producer to go along with his reality version and in return "Central Avenue" is cancelled and both the producer and Roger lose their jobs.

For Nuyoricans to write poetry that is directly related to their colonial memories and lived experience, they are as Malcolm X would say "making it plain." How could they write poetry that resembled that of the white, patriotic, WASP tradition of poetry? These were not their experiences. If they did write in this form, they would have been faulted for wanting to be something they were not, or they would have been criticized by their fellow Nuyoricans as "sellouts."

Miguel Algarín (1981) writes of the native informant experience as something more than a representation of a particular culture. The native informant method was and is a process of liberation for not only the Nuyorican organic intellectual, but also for those who aspire to write in the tradition. Algarín believed that any experience when written can oftentimes be created out of experiencing nothingness. The empty feeling that many marginalized people harbor within themselves can create beautiful pieces of literature. This "nothingness" that so many Nuyoricans and other organic intellectuals are exposed to helps to

nurture failures, narratives and actual conditions of life. He also believed that this construction of one's selfhood, no matter the experience, is something that white writers and poets have not come to terms with as yet.

Another way to overcome Mohr's critique of the depressing Nuyorican cloak worn in their poetry would be to use Algarín's prescription for Nuyorican poetry. Algarín's prescription has three elements (Algarín, 1981). In the first element, the oral, and tongue aesthetic skills of bilingual code-switching used by Nuyorican poets was best achieved in the works of Piñero and Pietri. This mastery of both languages aids in development of power when it comes to critically constructing one's selfhood. For the Nuyorican organic intellectual, Spanglish is used as a tool of empowerment, which helps to exemplify their bi-cultural experience. The second element involves using poetry to support one's critical construction of the sociopolitical self. The last element is the creation of a critical expression of self in a comfortable space. What Algarín describes as the comfortable space for self-expression is the Café he helped to found, The Nuyorican Poet's Café. If applied to the Nuyorican organic intellectual, the Nuyorican poet's Café would exemplify a space which hosts this critical construction of self. It is in this space

that the Nuyorganic who performs his/her poetry sometimes has to come to terms with a hegemonic intellectual audience. The point here is not to highlight the fact that the audience of mainstream poetry may consist of hegemonic and traditional intellectuals, but rather that the organic intellectual notices the constitution of the audience. However, in this recognition of the hegemonic intellectual the organic intellectual as Nuyorican poet feels ever so comfortable in sharing and reconstructing his/her selfhood.

LOISAIDA: Breeding Ground for Nuyorganic Art

Alphabet City or the Lower East Side, appropriately re-named Loisaída by its Puerto Rican community, flourished during the late 60s and early 70s with Puerto Rican culture, sociopolitical activism, and an undeniable street culture. Street culture as written about by many sociologists and anthropologists serves to educate the unfamiliar with an "underground" community that hosts prostitution, drugs, heinous crimes, and vicious cycles of poverty that result in high rates of crime. For example, anthropologist Philippe Bourgois (1996), author of *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* writes of street culture as a site where drugs, violence, infant mortality rates are high and gang rapes occur among young women. Bourgois also believes that street culture is fraught with

illiteracy, aggressiveness, violence and substance abuse. However, there is an underlying foundation of what street culture has meant to many who have in the past and still consider their flourishing years of community leadership and liberation. To Nuyoricans and many Puerto Ricans from Loisaida, street culture was the home of a new art form that bred rich artistic forms. Yes, it included drugs and overindulgences in alcohol but is that considered "street culture" or rather a social ill that plagues specific neighborhoods?

What is street culture? What does it look like? Where does it come from? Who has it? Who owns it? And why is it important in this dissertation? First we need to think about cultural spaces and try to place their residents within them. Culture is everywhere. The culture of the street is not something that can be boxed up and sold. It cannot be shined, auctioned and hung in any of the "finest" New York City galleries or museums, not even in a Museo Del Barrio.³¹

Culture of the street looks like boys on a street corner who are watching girls who are in turn watching the boys who watch them. It looks like young girls playing

³¹ A cultural museum in New York City's El Barrio, the phrase "Museo Del Barrio" is the Spanish translation for museum of the neighborhood.

double-dutch and older young girls taking puffs of cigarettes desperately trying to be part of something older. Culture of the street involves parents in apartment buildings making dinner and hollering out of their windows or front doors for their kids to come upstairs because it is too late to be outside. It consists of memories of a Hell's Kitchen fire escape that looks like nothing more than a fire escape to the naked eye but represents the open world of cultural fortune to its renter. Culture of the street is in its developmental stage when oppressed communities begin to place themselves within the larger social context of their own powers. By this I mean that individuals who possess the street knowledge of "hustling" and "wheeling and dealing" to make simple ends meet have empowered a culture within their lives that their "better" class counterparts have not yet begun to understand.

Culture of the street never meant the raping of one's ontological experiences within their environments. It never meant ending up on *MTV Cribs* because enough money was made to compete in a spectatorship of car rims. It never meant, drive-by shootings, car-jackings, or displaced students shooting their classmates in high schools. It never meant getting robbed for the "Triple Fat Goose" coat or the new Michael Jordan sneakers.

In the 1970s and 1980s, culture of the street meant going to the grocery store alone and feeling grown up. It meant beginning to uncover "cryptoracist" (Kincheloe, Slattery & Steinberg, 2000) behavior in school and on your block. Fighting small incidents of "crypto-racism" meant blasting Hip Hop and R&B from your radio with bass to assert your of-coloredness. It meant playing your Salsa for the entire block to listen to - even if no one else wanted to hear it. It meant running through a six story apartment building and smelling laundry products on the basement level, pastelles on the first floor, fried fish and Santeria candles on the second floor, mondongo on the third floor, sick and elderly people on the fourth floor, crack/cocaine burning on the fifth floor, and nothing on the sixth floor - nothing on six because you were not allowed to experience the dangers of going on a Hell's Kitchen or Lower East Side apartment building's rooftop.

Salseros Héctor Lavoe and Willie Colón both worked endlessly to bring to the salsa community a picture of the 1970s street culture that so many sociologists and anthropologists use as their basis to denigrate communities of color. In 1973, Colón and Lavoe worked together to compose *Calle Luna Calle Sol* (Colón and Lavoe, 1973), which

told the tale in Spanish of a dangerous neighborhood-Latino-style. The chorus of this song is as follows:

Mete la mano en el bolsillo
 (Put your hand in your pocket)
 Sacar y abre tu cuchillo y ten cuidado.
 (Take out and open your knife and be careful)
 Pónganme oído en este barrio
 (In this neighborhood, you all need to listen to me)
 Muchos guapos lo han matao.
 (A lot of bad asses have gotten killed)
 Calle Luna, Calle Sol.
 (Moonlight Street, Sunlight Street)

In the 1980s, the Hell's Kitchen apartment buildings began to house little red crack vials. Dirty, rusty, overly used syringes were lined up alongside children's small feet in order to count them. Rats, alley cat sized had eaten away at crack vials and were pronounced dead upon children's playful investigations in the backyards of apartment buildings. These rats who claimed these apartment buildings as "home," would begin to smell before anyone would catch sight of them eating crack vials or licking used syringes. By the 1990s, the same girls who were earlier watching boys watching them, were by then on their second pregnancy with their male counterparts in prison or juvenile hall. No one was going to college, and if they attempted to do so it oftentimes resulted in them dropping out because of sudden adult responsibilities.

Cultural vignettes such as the ones just described and others were based in the social oppression of Blacks, Latino/as and other people of color. Black, Latino/as and other people of color who lived in these types of housing situations watched as white-flight became "no white in sight." These images and experiences provided a mirror image to the experience of disenfranchised families during the 1970s. With the absence of white families in these apartment buildings, even the oppressed super took on the role of oppressor and cleaned the building by way of monetary payoffs. He too recognized that his tenants were powerless and voiceless; thus, they would not know how to complain about his administrative neglect. What the super and so many like him did not realize was the power of the organic intellectual. The people in these deteriorating apartments who were written off as "ignorant" were the same ones who organized to challenge these conditions.

Drugs, poverty, and a 1970s depression were not all that communities of color endured during this era. The 1970s-1980s also offered multiple cultural influences, written legacies, music, and a Foucauldian-type of "popular knowledge" based in street culture, that has yet to be repeated.

In *The Cultural Expression of Puerto Ricans in New York: A Theoretical Perspective and Critical Review* (1976), authors, Felix Cortes, Angel Falcon and Juan Flores, described the cultural evolutions and revolutions as being grounded on the people's sense of selfhood - their sociopolitical ontology.

The fundamental variables which underlie all the particularities, self-definitions, and mysteries of a people's culture are the indices of a national and class analysis. Culture conveys the world in which a people live as it represented in their minds, fantasies, and habits. Whatever its intentions, culture is located against the backdrop of the reality, which it represents. The study of cultural representation is a work of reference, a relentless back and forth between the world as culture would have it and the world as it really is, as a totality of human experience (Cortes, Falcon & Flores, 1976, p.118).

The cultural forces of low socioeconomic status, poverty, multiculturalism, street culture, and popular knowledge, have been represented in films, music, and writings during the 1970s. It is through these media that one gets a sense of the lived experience of the 1970s. It is also through these media that we get a clear depiction of the evolution of organic intellectuals.

In process of fighting to maintain their homes and retain some semblance of community, they renewed the Lower East Side's reputation for active political and cultural resistance to increasing crime,

tenant evictions, and the destruction of buildings. The Puerto Rican community, which was most affected by abandonment, waged a vociferous campaign against residential displacement and social decline, coupling music, poetry, painting, and even gardening with traditional tactics, such as rent strikes and demonstrations. Puerto Rican artists painted large murals on building walls, including those exposed by the demolition of adjacent buildings, as visual public protests against community decay. The earliest murals were visual narratives of the Puerto Rican island-to-mainland migration experience, but the mid-1970s had begun to depict the ravages of abandonment for the Loisaida community. (Mele, 2000, pp.200-202)

NUYORICAN POET'S CAFÉ AT ITS FOUNDING YEARS

The rebellious attitude developed by Nuyoricans in relation to their positioning in United States politics, and their representation in academic literature created a space for them to respond. In 1973, Nuyorican poet, professor and writer, Miguel Algarín hosted several other Nuyorican poets to recite in his Loisaida's apartment living room. By 1975, the crowd became so large and energized that Algarín rented the space of an Irish Bar (The Sunshine Café) on East 6th Street not far from where he lived. Thus, he had helped to found the first actual house, other than his own, for Nuyorican poets and their poetry. Although writing more of the 1960s, Rashidah

Ismaili-Abu-Bakr (1993) writes in *Slightly Autobiographical: The 1960s on the Lower East Side*:

The Nuyorican Poets Café brought together a geographic strain of African experience as spoken through Spanish. Miguel Algarin, Piñero, and others had very definite ideas of how language should bend to express the experience of Puerto Rico, of colonialism, and of other Spanish-speaking brown and black people of the Caribbean and South America (Ismaili-Abu-Bakr, 1993, p.589).

Nuyorganics: Formally Training is Informal

Miguel Piñero and Pedro Pietri, two Nuyoricans most famous in the 1970s for their outspoken and confrontational writings of outlaw poetry, have been laid to rest by dominant cultural influences that pervade all spaces of indigenous ways of being. Simply, they were both celebrated and frowned upon for being the "other." These dominant spaces are also charged and found guilty of promoting literary segregation and culturally-convenient appropriation of spaces of "otherness." During the late 1960s and well into the 1970s, the plight of people of color was reshaping itself into the opposite of any post-civil rights movement efforts. Their oppressed situation expressed itself explosively and confrontationally in literature. Puerto Ricans, Nuyoricans, Afro Latinos and Black folk living in Loisaida found new ways of numbing and feeling the reality of "slum life," economic segregation

and blatant racial disparities, minimal yet still oppressive education-based institutions (public school), and the influx of injection-drugs spreading almost as quickly as the fatal diseases that use of these drugs brought.

However, through this adversity the poetry endured. Nuyorican poetic flowed in a way similar to the bags of heroin in that it was liquefied and injected into so many organic intellectuals that it gave constant reminders of actual experiences that reflected society. Somewhere the experiences of the Nuyorican organic intellectual poet have been lost in translation. While today, many emulate the likes of Nuyorican organic intellectual poets, the original style has been lost among variations of replication. One reason could be because:

Puerto Rican poets are chroniclers. We write about the same things everybody writes about...the difference is that the people who populate our poems suffer from the system that we live under rather than benefit from it; therefore our work is considered political (Navarro, 2002, p.1).

This appropriation and depoliticization of a culture and of a people is an oppressive tactic used by hegemonic intellectuals and those who subscribe to that culture. The misrepresentation of the Nuyorganic as poet is accomplished by depoliticizing their cultural experience which is

connected to their identity and selfhood. Hegemonic intellectuals tend to clarify this depoliticization as inclusive with special monthly heritage celebrations, or performing poetry of the "other" on television. Yet these heritage celebrations or taped and televised performances are mutations of the original culture into another culture all together. Kobena Mercer applied a call for a "reflectionist" practice in trying to reassert the positive aspects of black culture. For the purpose of this dissertation's focus, the same "reflectionist" practice can be applied here to the plight of the PuertoPoeta (Puerto Rican Poet).

The reflectionist argument holds that the fight for black representation and recognition-against white racist stereotypes-must reflect or mirror the real black community, not simply the negative and depressing representations of it (West, 1993, p.18).

So many times the organic intellectual of color has been seen as "anti-intellectual." Too often his or her contribution to the greatness of educating from knowledges that were not popular has been erased from popular memory. Oftentimes, for example, it is forgotten that Phoolan Devi, India's "Bandit Queen" led a bloody, yet partially successful revolution in India to change the way that young girls and women were treated by male dominated spaces and

religious practices. Devi is known more for her violent approach to revolution rather than her illiterate yet effective leadership. When asking about Devi, many will tell you that she was a "murderer." Many others will be disgusted if you revere her as a leader. However, the truth, no matter how gruesome, remains as it is.

How often is Miguel Piñero mentioned when discussing the "classics" of poetry? It is rare to hear his name associated with the poetic canon. Yet, his work illuminated the history of Nuyorican poetry and the Lower East Side of New York City. Piñero is more often known for being a "junkie." A heroin-addict who, even though he received world-wide acclaim for his play *Short Eyes* (1975), was continuously reduced to the category, "junkie." Even when *Short Eyes* (the play which later became a film) is discussed in both intellectual and colloquial circles, it is often referenced to as, the play that Miguel Piñero wrote while he was in Sing Sing. He is oftentimes referred to in the context of his abuses, injection drugs, "natural" drugs, women, men, men who believed that they were women, armed robbery, and petty theft, but never was he noticed for his rehabilitating personality that engaged people in his being a Poeta Boricua and Nuyorganic.

Miguel Piñero, born Miguel Antonio Gomez Piñero in Gurabo, Puerto Rico on December 19, 1946, died at the age of 46 from cirrhosis of his liver. While Piñero left the poetic world prematurely and though most of his books are out of print, it is clear that his legacy lived long and hard enough for filmmaker Leon Ichaso to create the biopic *Piñero*, in 2001. Furthermore, the Nuyorican Poet's Café which he co-founded still works to bring forward new poets who speak now of what he spoke of back in the 1970s. What makes him an organic intellectual "other" is not only that he obtained a G.E.D. (thus making him informally educated), but that his work spoke to the visions that so many Puerto Ricans and especially Nuyoricans held.

With no source of income she [Piñero's mother] and her children spent some time living on the streets, and Miguel began stealing food for his family. Talking about his difficult and abbreviated childhood to Mel Gussow in 1974, Piñero described the presence of 'rats, roaches, bedbugs, flies winos and dope fiends.' He attended four different schools, three public and one parochial, but most of his education occurred as a result of his own reading, his time in correctional schools and facilities, and life on the street (Rossini, 2002).

Countless hours of researching and oral histories have revealed Piñero as a poet forgotten or unknown in the world of academics who teach poetry – who did you say again? Piñero? Alternatively, he is classified as a junkie who

was constantly incarcerated. Through mountains of documents containing Piñero's name and the film reference itself, his criminal background is referenced as being central to his career. What is the implication here about the "urban poet?" For instance, during an online search for some biographical data on Piñero, the *Contemporary Authors Online* website, states the following:

Writer and actor. Served prison term in Riker's Island Prison for burglary, 1964, and another for drug possession; served sentence for burglary, Ossining Correctional Facility (Sing Sing prison), Ossining, NY, 1971-73; founder of Nuyorican Poets' Theatre, New York City, 1974. Actor, appeared in the film adaptation of his play "Short Eyes, " as well as in *Fort Apache, the Bronx, Times Square,* and *Alphabet City,* and the television series *Baretta, Kojak,* and *Miami Vice* (Contemporary Authors Online, 2002, Gale 2002).

The danger for the Nuyorican organic intellectual and in particular someone like Piñero – involves his choosing of celebrated culture. Piñero, like many in his circle possessed the intellectualism of the street and of the page, the synergy of which allowed him to win national awards. It was not the critical acclaim, however, that kept him alive for his short time, – it was his work. A quote from the film states, "I have to keep doing bad to do good," (Ichaso, 2001) in reference to his poetry and his playwriting. Richard Wright once nastily commented on Zora

Neale Hurston always writing about happy African Americans in the South. Wright expected Hurston to tell of the racism, grit and grime of being African American in North and South America. For her positive approach to Black life, Wright constantly discredited her work. Some would later go on to discredit Wright's work based on his marriage to a white woman, as was also the case with Franz Fanon.

Expressing the controversy over depiction of negative or positive experiences in literature, Eugene Mohr claims, Nuyorican poetry is often times "depressing" -- it is the experience of those who write it that is clearly expressed. Hurston saw the positive perspective in African American life and made that clear in her literature. Piñero was exposed to the after effects of colonialism, poverty, sex, drugs, and uncontrollable urges to "make it plain" (Malcolm X, 1964). While Piñero felt himself succumbing to negativity in order to produce a positive piece of work, he remained true to his experiences as they were. Hurston, while suffering from racism and gender bias, wrote of happy African Americans, and stayed true to her own experiences.

Tracing his career, Piñero captures a cultural landscape unlike that of today, when successful writers are more likely to emerge from M.F.A. programs than from the street and even voices from marginal cultures are snapped up, admired to death

and absorbed into corporate blandness with blinding speed (Shewey, 2001, p.11).

While several of his plays won national attention, the focus on Piñero for purposes of this dissertation is different. The purpose here is to place him:

1. Into the context of his being a Nuyorican organic intellectual from the Lower East Side.
2. As a Nuyorican organic intellectual who deployed his poetry to signify the rituals of success regarding the Nuyorican organic intellectual who is subjugated sociopolitically and academically.
3. As a Nuyorican organic intellectual who continues to validate the native informant approach to interpretation.
4. As a Nuyorican organic intellectual who continues to give validation to using that approach of interpretation in order to construct a critical selfhood.

In his poem, *Seeking a Cause* (1979), Piñero identifies the dismay that Nuyorican or Black organic intellectuals may find themselves in when beginning to search for their purpose and critical construction of their selfhood among those who critique them. He writes,

Seekin' The Cause
he was Dead
he never Lived

died
died
he died seekin' a Cause
seekin' the Cause
because
he said
he never saw the cause
but he heard
the cause
heard the cryin' of hungry ghetto children
heard the warnin' from Malcolm
heard the tractors pave new routes to new
prisons
died seekin' the Cause
seekin' a Cause
he was dead on arrival
he never really Lived
uptown...downtown...crosstown
body was round all over town
seekin' the Cause
thinkin' the Cause was 75 dollars & gator
shoes
thinkin' the Cause was sellin' the white
lady to black children
thinkin' the cause is to be found in gypsy
rose or j.b. or dealin' wacky weed
and singin' du-wops in the park after some
chi-chiba
he died seekin' the Cause
died seekin' a Cause
and the Cause was dyin' seekin' him
and the Cause was dyin' seekin' him
and the Cause was dyin' seekin' him
he wanted a color t.v.
wanted a silk on silk suit
he wanted the Cause to come up like the mets
& take the world series
he wanted...he wanted...he wanted...he wanted
to want more wants
but he never gave
he never gave
he never gave his love to children
he never gave his heart to old people
& never did he ever give his soul to his
people
because he was busy seekin' a cause
busy

busy perfectin' his voice to harmonize the
 national anthem
 with spiro t agnew
 busy perfectin' his jive talk so that his
 flunkiness wouldn't show
 busy perfectin' his viva-la-policia speech
 downtown...uptown...midtown...crosstown
 his body was found all over town
 seekin' a Cause
 seekin' the Cause
 found
 in the potter fields of an o.d.
 found
 in the bowery with the d.d.t.'s
 his legs were left in viet-nam
 his arms were found in sing-sing
 his scalp was on Nixon's belt
 his blood painted the streets of the ghetto
 his eyes were still lookin' for jesus to
 come down on some cloud & make everything ok
 when jesus died in attica
 his brains plastered all around the frames
 of the pentagon
 his voice still yellin' stars & stripes 4
 ever
 riddled with the police bullets his taxes
 bought
 he died seekin' a Cause
 seekin' the Cause
 while the Cause was dyin' seekin' him
 he died yesterday
 he's dyin' today
 he's dead tomorrow
 died seekin' a Cause
 died seekin' the Cause
 & the Cause was in front of him
 & the Cause was in his skin
 & the Cause was in his speech
 & the cause was in his blood
 but
 he died seekin' the Cause
 he died seekin' a Cause
 he died
 deaf
 dumb
 & blind
 he died

& never found his Cause
 because
 you see he never never
 knew that he was the
 Cause. (Piñero, 1979)

The case of Pedro Pietri is also very similar to the native informant and/or organic intellectual like Piñero. Born in Ponce, Puerto Rico in 1944, Pietri's family moved to New York City in 1948. Pietri is another organic intellectual because of his awarded high school diploma. However, soon after his graduation, he was drafted to fight in Vietnam. Upon his return, Pietri soon realized that he needed to write his experience of fighting on the "wrong side" and fighting for colonialism, something he and his family both experienced in Puerto Rico. Yet, what makes him an organic intellectual "other" is his being Puerto Rican, and his acceptance by the Young Lords, which later led to his being named Poet Laureate of the Young Lords Party in 1969. For Pietri, becoming a poet, it seemed, was not by choice. It almost seemed inevitable for him.

Now, when we came to New York City, they sent us to public schools, introducing us to the Nuyorican culture. I graduated with a general diploma, thinking I was going to become a General in the army, ended up as a private. I failed the post office exam thirteen times after high school, and after failing all these examinations, the last thing I was going to do was make a career out of earning minimum wages. 'Come to the land of milk and honey,' they say, but they

didn't mention the endless dog sh- you keep steppin' on, going to the welfare department, going to look for a job. You step into reality; you step in dog sh-. You step into church; you step in dog sh-, especially (Pietri, 2004 as cited by Beltran, 2004).

Puerto Rican Obituary (1971), one of the most important and central poems of the Nuyorican experience written by a Nuyorican poet, was Pietri's beginning call for a response from other Nuyoricans to voice their disgust at colonialism in the 70s, and life for Nuyoricans who were trying to fight against Oscar Lewis's "Culture of Poverty" (1976). He also became the Spanglish metaphor consultant of the Latin Insomniacs Motorcycle Club Without Motorcycles, an Honorary Member of the Royal Chicano Air Force on the west coast, co-inspirator and member of El Puerto Rican Embassy: Sovereign State of Cultural Harmless Mind Conspiracy of Rican Renaissance, with Adal and Ambassadors Eddie Figueroa and Che Melendez, a member of the New Dramatists in 1982, and a member of The Governing Board of The Poetry Society Of America, 1985-1989. Although his lifestyle and addictions did not exactly mirror that of Piñero's, their words and experiences of being Nuyorican were similar.

In the spirit of poets like Langston Hughes and Allen Ginsberg, Pietri used language to claim cultural space for his people, at a

time when the only people being heard were "educated" white males (Mendez-Berry, 1999, p.1).

An example of his claim for Nuyorican space and voice through language and poetry is shown in the following excerpt from *Puerto Rican Obituary* (1971):

Miguel/ died hating Milagros because
 Milagros/ had a color television set/ and he
 could not afford one yet/ Milagros died
 hating Olga because Olga/ made five dollars
 more on the same job/ Olga/ died hating
 Manuel because Manuel had hit the numbers
 more times/ than she had hit the numbers/
 Manuel/ died hating all of them/ Juan/
 Miguel/ Milagros/ and Olga/ because they all
 spoke broken english/ more fluently than he
 did.

This passage clearly demonstrates that Pietri is validated when pointing the finger at both the colonization of Puerto Rico, and the "intraracism" that occurs among people who are suffering from the same capitalistic procurements that their "neighbors" have been undergoing.

Nuyorican poetry has tried to remain consistent within the themes of outlaw poetry evident in the works of Miguel Piñero and Pedro Pietri, yet somehow the tradition became lost in the waves of competition and in New York City's Broadway theaters. With two of the most influential leaders and poetic liberators lost to ongoing oppressions of life, new poets oftentimes simply emulate them rather than use Algarín's elements of Nuyorican poetry. For

example, *Def Poetry* on HBO has hosted many rappers and Hip Hop artists. Many are not sure if their artists' experiences are "true to the game" or are similar to their made up lyrics on their parental-guidance advisory albums.

Recently, Smokey Robinson, Cedric the Entertainer (who poked fun at poetic-styles), and other entertainers performed on the show. *Def Poetry*, a Russell Simmons and Danny Simmons et al., affair is shown on HBO and to many of their artists the show represents a crossover for poets into the mainstream of American entertainment. This is not what poetic justice is about. It is not about crossing over to the mainstream, it is about having the mainstream cross over to the poets if anything. It is about being published in all kinds of literary anthologies. It is about not only being represented in ethnic-specific departments and classrooms at universities who believe they are "diverse" or teaching "cultural studies" by teaching one poem by a poet of color.

Founder of the Black Arts Movement, Amiri Baraka, also known as LeRoi Jones, states about *Def Poetry*,

Depending on the depth of what we are projecting, it will stick as long as it doesn't take a game show approach (Baraka, 2000).

However, the game show approach seems to have been adopted by some of the mediums chosen to present poetry to the world. Poetry slams, national competitions, awards, trophies, performances on Broadway and on television are game-show factors. There are after-school programs around the country that are teaching adolescents and teenagers how to "do spoken word." My senses tell me and direct me to think if you have the words, then for someone's sake SPEAK IT! You are not in need of direction and coaching. How can someone teach you about your life experiences and your critical construction of your selfhood? I recently received an email from the above mentioned type of after-school organization that was seeking "Hip Hop Spoken Word Performers." The email calmed all nerves of potential poets by stating at the end of the email that "don't worry if you don't have experience, we'll train you." What is there to train?

Getting published perhaps is another case altogether, but writing poetry should come from a native informant experience. It cannot be forced or contrived, and at best cannot be taught. Although Piñero and Pietri both took on the Black Arts Movement as a model for their outlaw poetry, many poets subsequently have become soldiers of depoliticization. These anti-first draft movement poets

have gone on to appropriate the Black Arts Movement and Nuyorican culture. In no way do I mean that people who do not share exact or even similar experiences cannot perform outlaw poetry. Rather, outlaw poetry should come with one's own creative flair. Watching performance poets should not be an experience of watching a made-for-television reading of a poem. Poets should use their experience to present their poetry their way, and leave competition to sports. No one will ever have the same exact experience as Piñero or Pietri, therefore their styles of performance should be theirs. Poets who have since come onto the poetry scene with similar experiences should use those experiences to present their pieces. Every poet I have watched on Def Poets with the exception of a few have been competing against each other. Who can out-shout the last poet? Who can rhyme better and quicker? Who can talk about the grimeiest experience? Who can bring the audience to the most tears? Who is left inspired? Emulation of an experience not your own, does not memorialize those you emulate. Martha K. Cobb (1974) in *Harlem, Haiti, and Havana: A Comparative Study of Langston Hughes, Jacques Roumain, and Nicolas Guillen* proposed a remedy to the plight of depoliticization and appropriation of the organic intellectual experience. She constructs four

thematic schemes in checking for identification of who is "authentic" in the struggle, and/or who can speak on behalf of the Black experience or in this project's case the Nuyorican experience. Her four thematic schemes are helpful in understanding most of the issues raised in bearing witness to recent poetic work of "slam poets" and "slam champions." Cobb asks the reader to identify the following thematic schemes:

- 1.confrontation
- 2.Dualism
- 3.Identity
- 4.Liberation

as key indicators of authenticity. These characteristics centralize a focus around hegemonic intellectuals who continue to appropriate and depoliticize the Nuyorican organic intellectual experience. Due to the hegemonic intellectual's marginalization from oppression, s/he seeks to depoliticize the organic intellectual's experience. In depoliticizing Nuyorican poetry, the hegemonic intellectual gets on an HBO stage, recites a revised poem, and begins attempting to:

1. Confront his own culture in recognition that his culture may be oppressive to those he tries to embody and "sympathize" with.

2. Speaks of his duality as someone who represents the hegemonic intellectual, but really has spent time working out a desire to become an organic intellectual, or at least in the same space.
3. Identifying with the experience of the organic intellectual although his only real connection to the population or the work of Nuyorican poetry is through reading and verbal emulation.
4. Believing that through his emulation, depoliticization and appropriation but "celebration" of someone else's cultural struggle he has liberated himself of the hegemonic intellectual/oppressor category.

If Nuyorican poetry were written and read solely for a white audience, then would it really be a Nuyorican experience being read? If the hegemonic intellectual, or non-Black/Nuyorican appropriating audience wanted to actually hear the ranting and the raving would it really be a display of the Nuyorican experience? Would any of the questions be asked if Nuyorican poetry and the Black Arts Movement had not gone into a different realm of appreciation, such as becoming a cable television program? Similar to the issue of Eminem, "the White rapper" can a white girl from the warm suburbs of the West Coast put together a piece about cultural struggle and oppression? How does one attempt to represent another's oppression and

not depoliticize? How does one culturally admire and become a true ally while not appropriating and essentializing through emulation? All of the questions become extremely difficult when images of the characteristics described above are applauded on mainstream programming. They become even more difficult when after-school organizations use this mainstream model to teach children who are also lost somewhere in a cultural oppression. Can you teach someone about their oppression and how to make it flow, if your experience is the complete opposite on sight? Understanding an individual or group's experience enough to join in an alliance for their liberation is a great concept. However, this alliance is depoliticized when the allies themselves want to become those who they work alongside. For example, as Che Guevara traveled through Latin America and came across a community of lepers he realized their social and community isolation. He realized that this isolation was so great that the lepers were made to live in their own hidden and dark community far away from everyone else. Realizing their plight, Che began to work with the lepers, doing what he could to bring a sense of peace and acceptance into their lives. He did not believe that he could actually *become* a

leper, but he understood what he could do as someone who was not a leper.

The ontological perspective of these anti-first draft poets leads me to think of how Nuyoricans have rejected "writing-white" but white poets have never seemed shy to emulate "writing black."

Organic intellectuals speaking for oppressed people must be bonded to them. This is an organic bond based upon personal knowledge of human behavior shaped by membership and residence in a community of oppressed people (Bowling and Washington, 1999).

Furthermore, when *Def Poetry* traveled to Broadway, the logic of capital took over once again, and colonialism of Brown and Black people began to take another shape. What the Black Arts Movement and the Nuyorican Poetry movement began to dismember, these productions began to reinstate. For example, the tickets for *Def Poetry on Broadway* ranged from \$25.00-\$65.00, with a \$1.25 facilities fee added to the price of each ticket. What real poet could afford a \$65 ticket to hear other poets read? In addition, one reviewer stated that the performance was organized into themes.

The first set of poems is about identity, the second series finds each of the cast members paying tribute to a specific person or influence, and the third tackles love (Murray, 2002, p.1).

Unless this was a performance based on the works of a literary anthology, why would such a performance of poetry be based on themes? Another reviewer, this time, Russell Simmons himself reviewed the show as "I'm happy for the rave reviews the play is getting," Simmons told hip hop journalist Nolan Strong. "What I'm really proud of is the way real n[i]ggas is losing they minds!" (Strong, 2002). Who and what then is a "real nigga?" And is it a play or poetry?

The truth is that in this game, white sells. We saw it with Elvis back in the day and we see it with Eminem today. If a white person can emulate a black person and white people get to enjoy the music without looking at the black face associated with it, then they can be a huge success—even more successful than the black they emulate. The Beatles—biggest group of the millennium—admittedly borrowed from the sounds of people like Little Richard. Most of Elvis's hits were written by black men, and his sound was definitely 'soulful.' In music today you have Justin Timberlake, who is the most soulful white boy alive. They even had him hosting the 45th Anniversary of Motown (Williams, 2004, p.68).

The ideas are complex, and even more they are critical. What Piñero and Pietri have perhaps paved the way for has been eliminated by capitalistic notions of power and authority, thus leaving organic intellectuals marginalized by their own roots. Poets from the outlaw genre have not been missing out on any social actions by

the mainstream, nor have poets been marginalized, it is the mainstream that seeks them and places them on a Broadway stage to engage in performing what cannot be performed for it is life itself. To this, many can say that there has been an evolution of a new genre. However, with a new genre that is so steeped in sociopolitical ideology, questions of power, hegemony, depoliticization and appropriation arise again.

CHAPTER EIGHT
Teaching the Self: A New Pedagogy

"Speaking a true word is to transform the world."

-Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1993

In this chapter of the dissertation I have chosen to discuss the method of teaching the self that I have created for socially just and challenging pedagogical results. I have used the theoretical frameworks discussed in chapter two and critical multiculturalism in chapter 3 to aid in the development of the Teaching the Self method. In addition, I have also used critical historiography as it relates to Nuyorganics to prove how challenging yet effective and culturally rich critical pedagogy can be.

In January 2002 I began teaching Childhood Education graduate students at Hunter College, City University of New York. In January of 2004 I also began teaching undergraduate courses in Black Studies at Baruch College. It is important here to note the social dynamics of each group of my students.

Hunter College:

My graduate students at Hunter College are ninety-five percent white, female, and upper-middle class. Most are either engaged, or already married to business professionals, and live on the upper east side of Manhattan. They range from ages 23-40. Many are from the five boroughs of New York, upstate New York, the Midwest

and/or the South. Many are either Jewish or Italian. Throughout my three years at Hunter, I have had in my day-time cohort courses (collectively) four Black American females, one Black West Indian female, two Latinas, one Chicana, one Black male (who dropped out during his first semester), and one Puerto Rican male (who dropped out after his first semester). These are the total number of Black and Latino/a students within a total number of 105 students total.³²

Baruch College:

My undergraduate students at Baruch College are predominantly Black and Latino/a. Of over 100 students, I have had two white students in my Black Studies classes at Baruch. The Black and Latino/a students are predominantly, Black American, Black West Indian, Puerto Rican, Dominican, and some from South and Central America. They range in age from eighteen years to thirty years old. The socioeconomic backgrounds of these students range from working class to middle class. Most receive financial aid, and few receive scholarships.

Every semester my course syllabus changes. From the readings, assignments and field trips, the course requirements vary from semester to semester. However, what

³² This information was collected through personal journals that I have kept throughout my teaching.

does not vary, but tends to become more involved, is how the students represent themselves through these assignments. While writing skills are undeniably important, it is also important how students see themselves in relationship to what they are learning. Although my students, both undergraduate and graduate receive a grading rubric from me it is only used for some assignments.

In this chapter I will illustrate the importance of academic projects that ask students to begin thinking of themselves in relationship to what they learn in my course. It is in this practice that the organic intellectual is allowed as much academic "fame" as the hegemonic or traditional intellectual. For those students who represent the organic intellectual in a hegemonic or traditional setting, they begin to realize their value as an intellectual. Oftentimes my students do not see themselves as coming into the classroom already holding the title of "intellectual." Many of them do not know that there are several types of intellectuals. They see only me, their professor, as the intellectual. This is particularly true on the first day of class when they are asked to introduce themselves to me and the rest of the group. The responses are basic and rehearsed semester after semester. Comically and nervously, each student awaits the previous students'

introduction so that they may follow that lead. For example, a typical response to my request for students to "introduce yourself to the class" would traditionally be:

(Diverting Eyes:) My name is X. I am a Y
(status at school). I am taking this class
because it is a requirement. (Head
lowered:)

Sometimes if I meet with a student's eyes, I will welcome them to the class, however, I get no response, just an embarrassed smile. I will always ask follow up questions and sometimes I ask them if those three sentences make up who they are in totality. Surprisingly to me, that question leaves them almost stunted. They smile or become very uncomfortable, and because it is the first day of class, I move on. I move on making a mental note of who needs to start thinking more about themselves and their relationship to the world that has them sitting in my classroom.

Very early on in the semester when my students do begin feeling comfortable enough to ask and answer questions or offer ideas and opinions, they do. I have never had to force a student to speak in class. However, what I have begun to realize is this idea of speaking in class means speaking about others. My students refer to other people or groups of people when providing examples or

trying to establish their point. They almost never find themselves using the self as a technical example. This is a bit different from personal example. A personal example would tend to be more opinionated. This opinion is such that because it is personal it cannot be judged or measured. When using the self as an example, students are asked to think of their relationship to the world. The first word of the semester that they are to become familiar with is *ontology* "the branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of being" (WordNet 2003 Princeton University). When they begin thinking their own nature of being coupled with these personal examples of their life experiences, the discussion becomes rich.

Students oftentimes fail to realize how important this self-reflective practice can be when centering themselves in their academic careers. They also fail to realize how powerful they are in terms of directing their learning and how they learn certain things. Every semester I find myself having my ears filled with complaints by my students about their other professors. Through tears or sometimes clenched teeth, I listen to my students complain about "the teacher wants it this way," or "the professor said this is wrong the way I did it." Knowing that professors should not get involved with complaints about other professors my

concern is solely my student. I listen very carefully to my students, the complaints, the questionable task they are being asked to complete and I question them. I ask them about their power. "What power do you have over this assignment, the class you are so frustrated about, and the professor?" The responses are blank. "I have no power. What do you mean power?" Generally power to my students is classified as White or Black, male, old, tenured, and mean. To my students, these are the people who hold power over them. What my students fail to realize is that they have the power to completely reconstruct the course of their learning. While not being able to change the professor's style of teaching, students are undeniably in charge of how they internalize and regurgitate material. This unknown power for my students requires them to not ask questions of the professor or the content they learn about. They do not hesitate to fulfill any requirement asked of them. They do not bring their previous knowledge into the classroom for fear that it is unrelated to the discussion. Indeed the responsibility of self-reflection or ontological exposure is not solely dependent on the student but on the teacher as well. We must begin to realize that while we hold an extensive amount of knowledge in particular fields, so do the students we teach. We cannot discredit their examples

because those examples are personal experiences and not textbook references. We must begin to use those ontological approaches in conjunction with the textbook example.

At the beginning of every semester, my students are made aware of the way our class is constructed. They are told in detail that the class is not a room with a teacher and her students, but rather it is an academic family. They are told the following:

We are a family here that learns together and from each other. You learn from me, and I learn from you as well. As you would be dependent on a parent at home, learn to become aware of that dependency as a construct of power in the classroom among your fellow students. As you would take care of younger siblings take care of each other academically. Militaristically, if you see someone falling into the cracks, and or becoming a weakened link, help to strengthen their skills, and in turn you strengthen your own.

I recite this every semester on the first day of class! While some students are stunned at the welcoming into the class, they are more interested in why my course is constructed this way. Having the class read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) during the first week of school, my introduction begins to play itself out. Students become more aware of what it means to work with each other and for a common goal. It is no longer an individual "A" that

students strive for, but rather they strive to get everyone an "A" which is dependent on their own success.

Through our model of teaching the self, students have learned to negotiate their learning spaces with me. They are comfortable enough to ask "Profo³³ instead of a final paper, can we have a final exam?" Or, "Profo, is it possible to do something else rather than do it this particular way as you've laid out in the syllabus?" I cannot understand what professor would not be interested in trying something from a student's perspective, rather than their own. It is the student's tuition that has them seated in the chair, and it is the student's mind that has them following our directions or not. We are there simply to lay out various tools, and display various methods. It is up to them (the students) how that knowledge is used in a personal reconstruction of the self. Interestingly however, there is always a handful of students who reject this idea of them being leaders of the course. Having been banked since the beginning of their academic careers, students have told me "I don't like having so much power. It creates havoc." When I first heard this remark, I was astonished. I could not believe students did not want this

³³ A nickname given to me by a Childhood Education graduate student at Hunter College, CUNY. This name has become quite popular throughout the halls and among the students at Baruch College.

power. However, I later understood that they had been members of the banking model of education for so long that this newly gained power posed a threat to their own selfhoods. Having this type of power, to a student coming from the banking tradition means they can no longer blame professors for their failures.

Perhaps professors are afraid of disrupting their own lives when it comes to engaging in discussion about changing assignments as per a student request. The idea here is not to completely do away with the syllabus. The idea here is to use what you have on the syllabus and reconstruct it according to student concerns and/or interests. I personally do not find it difficult to read twenty-five term papers or grade twenty-five final essay-style exams. Either way if the student is fulfilling the requirement in his or her own way success can still be measured. Every course, not just sociology or liberal arts courses, but even the "core requirement" is in need of the student's history. If we, as professors, are unaware of the student's personal history with the subject or related information, how can we move forward with our plan as educators? If we were to continue just simply sticking to scripted lesson plans, and required readings, then we too need to begin learning to dissect ourselves. We also

will need to think about our own relationship to the world, and why we choose to shape people's future as our livelihood.

In the pages to follow, I will go through each assignment that I have asked my students to complete as part of their course requirements. These assignments will demonstrate how my Teaching of the Self approach, may be possible. Many of the students' quotations have come from personal journals that I have kept over the last three years while adjuncting for Hunter College, Baruch College, and Boricua College. Assignment descriptions are taken directly from syllabi that I have constructed over the course of three years.

First Assignment: The Personal Narrative³⁴

This assignment asks students to begin thinking ontologically. It asks them to describe in detail who they are, what they are about, and why they are taking the course. If they are taking the course as a requirement, then they are asked to tell me what they already know about the topic, and something that they look forward to learning about during the semester.

The assignment asks of the student the following:

³⁴ Both undergraduates at Baruch College and graduate students at Hunter college are asked to complete this assignment.

You are to write a one-page narrative that introduces you to me. You may include life experiences or academic experiences (if not a life experience) that have been meaningful to you in a way that you can share with me. These will be kept confidential so as to allow you a full page of space to exhibit anything personal that you wish. Your narrative can be in any format, (poetry, rap, rhyme, letter, or anything else you feel comfortable in using to introduce yourself to me). You may also consider including a sentence or two about any special skills/talents that you have, and that you feel you can share with your classmates.

Narratives that I have received since creating this assignment have been poetic, straightforward, and oftentimes very detailed about one's life. One undergraduate student confessed to me in his narrative that he was a bundle of contradictions and looking forward to uncovering them. Throughout the semester, I kept this in mind. Whenever he expressed contradicting ideas, I would ask him to explain. I would ask him to dig deeper into the roots of why he felt differently one day to the next about the same topic. He began to remove "contradicting" as an adjective to describe his character. He began to use his former characteristic of contradiction to question everything. He questioned our readings, the authors we discussed, theories, television programs, film, songs, himself, my lectures and his classmates. This experience

for this student turned out to be positive for his academic and social development. He was using his "self" to question the world that made up who he was. He was using his own life experiences to try and figure out why he had experienced the things he had. Later he and I uncovered that he was in fact a Nuyorganic working through traditionally intellectual windows of learning.

Second Assignment: Stereotype Observations³⁵

The second assignment is called "Stereotype Observation/Observing." In this assignment students are asked to ethnographically describe a stereotype that they witnessed somewhere. In particular they were to include five important social dynamics that we use in class when discussing diversity issues. They are to use:

1. Race
2. Class
3. Socioeconomic Status
4. Gender
5. Social Position in their worlds. It is important to note here that there are several positions in the world for many students. One position is as a student and the other is as a single person in a populated world. Here in social position the student is asked to think about his or her privilege and/or disenfranchisement in this world we share.

These dynamics can be connected in their observations. They can be connected because oftentimes race informs

³⁵ Both undergraduates at Baruch College and graduate students at Hunter College are asked to complete this assignment.

social position, and vice versa. The mission of the assignment is for the student to catch themselves stereotyping others based on practices and characteristics they see. It is the classic "us versus them" approach to seeing one's self. They are to observe themselves observing others. After completion of the assignment, students are then asked to share their observations with the class, two per class session.

Many students have told me that prior to their sharing with the class, the observations that they have written have proven that perhaps they hold racist ideas about groups. After reading their observations to the class, they have stated that they realized how much they have oppressed people by stereotyping them. In addition, many students email me the night before their observations are due, and ask that I do not ask them to share it with the class. While respecting their request, I do ask them to submit their observations only to me. When reading the unshared observations I realize that my students are battling themselves. This internal battle is a good thing. This process of battling themselves shows that students are self-reflecting, but are also afraid of being judged the way they judge others. They are trying to find a way to not be critical of others and that way no one will be

critical of them. However, it is not something that can be avoided.

For example, when a student identifies someone by race in their observation, I always ask "how do you know that person is Black?" The student who has read their observation is stumped. Oftentimes they feel backed into a corner for making a judgment, but realize that this is part of the process. This "stumped" feeling is part of the reckoning with one's self. This concept is related to the previous claim of Oscar Lewis not making reference to the multiculturalism/multiracial community of the Nuyorganic woman. Students, like many people, are not culturally responsible before entering a class like diversity or race and ethnicity. Judgments are what they are used to. They are used to labeling people based on what they see and what they have been told, and what they are used to. While ashamed that they are "stumped" they begin to understand the complexity of being Nuyorganic.

Taken directly from my teaching journal, included here are some sample stereotype observations that students have written about.³⁶

Sample Stereotype Observations:

Last weekend, I was at a party, enjoying

³⁶ Authorship of the observer is identified by letters of the alphabet as opposed to name.

myself when a guy friend asked for my opinion on his new shoes. After I gave him a less than flattering review, he fired back, ridiculing my 'Puerto Rican earrings.' I gasped-as did others around us who were listening to the conversation. I was completely insulted. By comparing me to a Puerto Rican, he had conjured up the negative stereotype of how they dress: trashy, skanky, slutty, etc.,

When I think of how Puerto Rican girls dress, several images come to mind: extremely tight jeans with exposed thongs, short jean shorts, midriff tops with belly rolls hanging over, long acrylic nails, lots of flashy gold jewelry, etc., I recall the Puerto Rican Day parades in NYC where throngs of young Puerto Ricans flaunt their overweight bodies in too small clothes. However, it's not only Puerto Ricans who dress like this; it's also Whites, Blacks, other Latinos, and even Asians. It's *many* of today's young girls of *all* colors who want to look like Britney Spears -whether or not they have the body.

I wonder if lower classes are more apt to dress like this, but when I think of expensive clubs and bars in Manhattan that are populated by young wom[e]n in trashy outfits. There are many wealthy, upper-class celebrities whose ensembles could be described as slutty [i.e. Paris Hilton, Jennifer Lopez, Lindsay Lohan). But I bet that if my guy friend had compared my earrings to those of Paris Hilton, I wouldn't have been quite as offended" (Graduate Student A - Female, White, Mid 20s, Fall 2004).

Unfortunately, this student did not read her observation to the class. It was not until I was home that I read it and realized that it was very early on in the

semester so we would have more opportunities to dissect her thinking. In addition, we could not completely dispel the stereotype of the Boricua female, because she did not express her stereotypical image to the class. Sadly, in this class, there were no Latinas, so I am not sure that there would have been assistance to help diffuse this image of Latinas. We seek to hear each other's stereotype observations aloud so that the class and I can begin to dissect the root of the stereotype.

Stereotypes occur all the time and by various people. The danger with this particular stereotype is that it came from a pre-service New York City public school teacher. My question to her would have been what conception would you have if that were the parent of one of your students? This is also a difficult task for me. As their professor, and as a young woman of color, I oftentimes think that perhaps the same stereotypes would apply to me. It is even more difficult a task for me not to take certain stereotypes personally. As the years have gone by, the stereotypes seem to get worse in description. Reflection of my own experiences, and my own ontology has allowed me to separate my role as instructor, and my role in this world as a woman of color. It is clear that after her stereotype observation, Student A, decided to engage in her own self

reflection. She claimed at the end of her observation that there are young girls of "all colors who want to look like Britney Spears-whether or not they have her body." In addition, it would be another dissertation all together to begin discussing how Latinas really feel about their bodies. In Latino cultures it is a plus to be curvaceous and many do not desire to look like Britney Spears at all.

Interestingly, enough the second stereotype is also from another White, female, mid-20s student. The stereotype is also written on Puerto Rican females. She writes,

Ever since I start[ed] working all the way on the west side, I started taking the cross-town bus. Most of the time, I sit alone on the bus and read the newspaper or a book. One morning, I took the bus across 34th Street to 10th Avenue. I was sitting alone when a very nice Puerto Rican woman came over to me with clipboard in her hand and she asked me if I wanted to register to vote or do a change of address. Usually I brush off any kind of solicitor, but that day I was in a good mood. I said 'OK.' The woman sat down next to me and, I could tell by how the woman looked and the way she spoke that she was Latino. She was also a little overweight and wore a very tight-fitting outfit. I think I can usually tell if someone is Latino. But I didn't know that she was Puerto Rican. Maybe I would have guessed right.

I assumed the woman must be a volunteer or working for minimum wage - I know that getting people to register to vote is important, but the actual job of walking

around with a clipboard doesn't seem like such a skilled job. When I think about it, if it had been a similarly dressed white woman, I probably would have thought she worked for one of the campaigns. Because she was Latino, I immediately thought that she worked for the city. As we were talking, this woman told me that she was retiring soon and [s]he was about to receive a check for \$7,000.00 I don't know why, but my first response to her was 'Wow, that's great. Are you going to spend it or save it?' Her response to me was 'I'm Puerto Rican, I'm going to go to Puerto Rico and spend it all!' Of course, in my head I was thinking the same thing, but it was so funny to hear *her* say [it] in such a matter-of-fact way. This woman completely affirmed my stereotypes of a Puerto Rican woman (Graduate Student B, White, Female, Mid-20s, Fall 2004).

Graduate Student C, also White, Female and Mid-20s writes the following on Latino men:

On a Saturday night I went to a birthday party for a friend of a friend. The guest of honor was a thirty-three year old Latino investment banker. There were several other Latino men at the party, all of whom work in white collar industries. I thought back to our class discussion last week, during which several of my classmates spoke of their stereotyping of working class Latin men as sexist. After interacting with the men at the party, I noticed that they too displayed sexist behaviors. They ogled at the women at the party, making comments such as [to another guy at the party in reference to his date and within her earshot] 'You've got a real looker there, man.' And 'I cant help the fact that I stare at women's breasts when I'm speaking to them. It's just because I'm too nervous to look in their eyes.'

I found myself stereotyping the men as machismo Latinos. For the most part they didn't seem to care or realize that their comments may have been offensive to the women at the party. When asked why his wife wasn't at the party, one man responded, 'She's the wife. She's home with the baby.' He laughed at the end of the sentence, as if to imply that he was *sort of* joking. I'm assuming his laugh showed that he had an inkling that his comment may not have been completely socially acceptable. I wonder if he would have qualified his statement with a chuckle had he been in a group where all the women were Latina. I also wonder if it hadn't been for our class discussion of the Latino's culture's acceptance of the machismo attitude, if I would have stereotyped the men as sexist Latin men, or rather simply as stereotypically sexist men, regardless of cultural background. Furthermore, I'm not sure which is worse, the overt sexism exhibited by the Latino men Saturday night, or the covert sexism typical in American culture. At least with the men at the party I knew where they stood" (Graduate Student C, White, Female, Mid-20s, Fall 2004).

Both graduate student B and C were in direct interaction with Puerto Ricans who held jobs. One student believed her stereotype to be affirmed by a simple sentence made by the Latina who was headed back to Puerto Rico to spend her \$7,000.00. There was no further questioning as to why her money would be spent in Puerto Rico, or why she needed to return back to Puerto Rico. In addition, the student did not ask the woman why she would say that it is because she is Puerto Rican that she would return to Puerto

Rico and spend her earnings. In the second observation, Student C, did not put that one Latino male in a category by himself. Instead she walked away with the idea that all Latino males are sexist, and in part of American culture, that is just the way that it is. Did she think that maybe his position as a corporate American helped to create his idea about women? Did she gather that maybe social positionality, or power helped to shape his ideas about women of all races in particular Latinas?

Undergraduate Assignment on *Down These Mean Streets*:

Any semester when teaching *Down these Mean Streets*, I ask my undergraduate students to compose reflective observations based on the book. Here is where the discourse on Nuyorganics begins to widen. Using the book as a guide, they are to include what they think about Puerto Ricans in reality as compared to the text. Interestingly the roles are switched whenever this book is used with my undergraduates of color. Piri Thomas becomes the Nuyorganic, and my students become the hegemonic and/or traditional intellectual. Students become traditional intellectuals when studying someone who has not been traditionally educated. They seem themselves as college students "experts" and "expert learners," as opposed to someone who rose from oppression organically. While some

students can identify with Piri's experiences in the streets of El Barrio, plenty of students set themselves apart from his experiences because of their academic training. They feel they no longer fit into the culture of the street experiences because they are now being college educated. Although many still live in neighborhoods like El Barrio, the Heights, or the South Bronx, some within that group refuse residency there as an intellectual experience. Those who are ashamed of living in these neighborhoods reject the community, the residents, the culture that manifests itself there. Thus, they see no connection any longer between themselves as college students, and El Barrio residents. To them, there is no social history that consists of their biculturalism.

The structure of this particular semester was built upon critically thinking about ontology, oppression and liberation. Thus the stereotypes had much of this focus as well. While some observations developed into a paper about oppression and liberation, other papers simply helped to perpetuate the stereotype the student was observing.

In written reflection, my undergraduates were asked to answer the following four questions:

1. What was your perception of Puerto Ricans before reading this text, and now what do you perceive?

2. What did you learn about Puerto Ricans?
3. How can one begin to understand the biculturalism and binationalism of being a Puerto Rican and a Nuyorican?
4. Was Piri a victim of circumstance or child of poverty, or did he make a cognizant decision to self-oppress?

The following observation was given by undergraduate student A who wrote of the experiences of Black and Latinos as one and the same:

Being that Black/Latino children don't have tight family ties, they often don't know their origin. This means that they don't know which culture [more than] rap and hip-hop they are to relate to, which adds to their feelings of being lost and not belonging to a specific group. Much of this is blamed on the slave-period during which women in slavery were raped, and this means that your background simply cannot be traced. But, it is also due to the fact that the children's parents simply don't care to inform them of their family history, not that they are really around to start with (Undergraduate Student, Black West Indian, Female, early-20s, Fall 2004).

In this observation there are several stereotypes that she lists as her own, as well as stereotypes she continues to personally perpetuate. By the end of the observation she was so immersed in trying to connect history to present day she did not self-reflect. She did not go into her own

reflection being a woman of color from the West Indies and whether or not this stereotype of being "lost" applies to her as well.

The Stereotype Observation assignment proved to be helpful in having many of the students develop their critical construction of selfhood. They have been able to consider Nuyorganics juxtaposed to their traditional consumption of knowledge as college students. Many of the students have told me months or years later that the assignment helped them to become more aware. They became aware of themselves first. They became more alert to identifying why they felt or saw something in a particular way as opposed to what they were actually seeing.

Graduate Midterm Examination:

Before being departmentally required to give a traditional "midterm exam" to graduate students, my students were given options as to what they would like to do for a midterm. Assignments ranged from critiquing a film in the context of oppression and racism to reviewing an entire CD of their choice for political content. Students were asked to meet three requirements

1. Use *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to determine their position of power as the author of the assignment.

2. Ontologically self-reflect throughout the entire assignment and give proof of that process.
3. Use personal life experiences as examples juxtaposing those examples with examples from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and the music or film.

The list of films, music and books that were generated from this assignment was phenomenal. Some students chose materials that were related to them in a personal way, and other students chose completely new material. At the end of the assignment, students had gained a new perspective on what New York City Public school students may or may not listen to on their CD players. Without knowing it students were working in a Nuyorganic tradition of understanding their selfhood in relationship to the world around them.

Due to a departmental mandate, childhood education graduate students are now required to have a traditional midterm exam in their diversity class. This was determined by faculty who felt that diversity is just as important as any other topic, and should be measured as such. "Students need to be aware of theory, and should be tested on it." As much as I felt powerless being a simple adjunct, I knew that there was a way to make the exam challenging, yet empower the students.

While the exam changes from semester to semester, the goals are comparable. Students are asked to complete a diversity case example at home. They are to use the lectures, class discussions, comments from other students, readings, and films to construct an example of how diversity if not effectively practiced, could become problematic. They are then asked to submit that case example to me for review. Once they are all reviewed, the case examples are distributed to each student as a study guide. One week later, students are seated before a computer for two and half hours and given one out of the twenty-five case studies. They are then asked to use that case study to answer several essay questions, all based on theories of diversity. For the exam, I generally use *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and Beverly Daniel Tatum's *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (1999) as main texts.

During the exam, there are a number of students who have become sidelined by their own frustrated tears, and test anxiety. While some professors ask them to continue, I take them outside, do my best as a motivational speaker, and friend, and ask that they return and "try again." This usually works. The majority of students when having completed the exam feel a sense of power and ownership,

that they were met with an incredible challenge. To my observation, some leave perplexed after the exam, and others walk away proud of what they have turned in to me.

Undergraduate Midterm Assignment:

Even the title of this assignment has been reworded in my syllabi. This process of rewording a midterm assignment can work one of two ways. By using "midterm," students can either become nervous and reluctant to complete it because it is clear that this assignment is an exam. Secondly, the student can take it very seriously, individually study hard, or work in study groups because of the word "midterm." The term itself holds such a power over the students that they tend to shift between emotions and self-reflections. To eliminate both types of responses, I have reworded the entire assignment into a process. For example, I explain the semester in three parts. There is:

- 1.Early Term
- 2.Mid Term
- 3.End Term

Students become used to these divisions during the semester. At the beginning of the semester, the student is asked to mark down the three parts on their copy of the "Calendar of Sessions." It is on this page, where students find out what is due and when the due date is. For the

midterm, there are several assignments as opposed to one assignment that counts towards a "midterm examination." It is oppressive to have students memorize "facts" that I have distributed during the semester. It is much more worthwhile to have them use these "facts" that we have both created together when applying them to larger projects. By using the traditional definition of "midterm" students spend half the semester memorizing material that is not applicable to them. They begin to neglect the essence of the book, or readings, films and discussions. In turn, they completely miss an opportunity to look at the material ontologically. To eradicate that mental absence of looking at the self, I simply change the phrase and construct a variety of assignments.

After having read numerous readings, including short stories on Black children and/or adolescents, I have my students prepare a similar assignment. An example of a midterm assignment for a class on the Black Child has been:

Assignment No. 3: Short Story

35 Points

For your third assignment, you will be required to compose a short story between 7-10 typewritten double-spaced pages. Your focus/topic will be up to you, but you must choose a Black child (male or female) as the central character. In

connection to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Chapter 4, your character must use one method of liberation to achieve success from a hardship described in your story. *Details to be covered in class and you will be given a guideline for structure.*

After reading twenty of these short stories, it occurred to me, that my students had composed some of the best short stories that I have ever read. Many of the students if not all, used themselves as the main character, or used someone they knew very well. The creativity that seemed to stream out of them was overwhelming. While many students struggled with *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, when writing their short stories, it seemed to all make sense. They understood dialogical action as a method of liberation, and easily applied these "scientific" methods to their lives and the lives of their characters.

One of the important attributes for critical multiculturalism is that it recognizes difference, differences among the students and the curriculum they learn by. By having the students work on their own short stories it gave them the opportunity to not only use their own lives as the main reference but to develop expertise. The beauty in each short story I read was not shocking, but rather enlightening. I was able to see critical

multiculturalism work effectively in a classroom that included African, African Americans, West Indians, Latino/as and one White student. Their organic intellectual experiences were undisputable. I could not judge their stories on the bases of content or context, but rather could only read while beaming at their hard work and drive for academic success. The students had taken the time to read *145th Street*, a children's book by Walter Dean Meyers (2001) and use it as a guide to navigate their own personal stories.

Assignment No. 4: Black Child Survival Kit 45 Points

Your final assignment asks that you take all that you have learned about the Black child/adolescent and use this information to put together a "survival" guide. With a focus on NYC, your guide should include a list of community and after-school organizations, extracurricular and event centers, libraries, films, bibliographies pertaining to the age group, and any other information that you think would be of help to the Black child. The mission of this assignment is to put together a guide or packet of information useful to the positive development of Black children and adolescents in New York City. ***Further details will be discussed in class, and a guideline will be given to you to structure your assignment.***

This was a final project assignment that undergrads were given during the summer. Although the point value of the assignment appeared threatening to many of the students they later understood why it was valued so much.

Having understood the plight of the Black³⁷ child students were then asked to individually choose a social struggle that Black children are known to face. Many of the students chose sexuality, safe sex, housing, academic issues, drugs, teenage pregnancy and poverty. One student in particular chose to inquire about a topic that he thought was good but perhaps veered off the request of the assignment. Instead of working on a "problem" he asked whether he could interest me in a presentation that was proposing a solution. After hearing his brief plea, I was completely sold on his idea. He proposed to create a kit on how to encourage young Black and Latino youths to learn money management. He wanted to show students how to turn an allowance into a savings appropriate enough to call a "bank account."

What the student turned in was a nicely packaged bundle of information about banking and how to save money. In his packet and as a point of every one of his references

³⁷ The term "Black" in my Black Child course also includes bi-racial people such as Black Latinos. The purpose of including these groups under the term Black was for a global understanding of social struggles that people of color face.

in class he mentioned how growing up he and his family always seem to barely make ends meet. He mentioned that the "American Dream" can come true but money for him was a big factor in making the dream a reality. The student used his critical development of selfhood and the curriculum in our class to produce a packet of information. This packet of information not only met the criteria of the class but was also directly related to his life experiences. It was through his survival kit that I again realized how important critical multiculturalism is. As an undergraduate studying business economics he did not allow a corporate model of learning and studying to take over who he was and is to become.

These undergraduate assignments were all part of the summer school session that I taught at Baruch college. While there have been an abundance of assignments, projects and events that took place during my time at Baruch College, those mentioned helped to make clear the construction of a critical selfhood.

Pedagogy does not always have to demand or require that teachers and professors expertise. If we are to use critical pedagogy and critical multiculturalism as I have discussed in this chapter we can execute our goals effectively. When attempting to organize a student panel

presentation on the plight of Latinas and our society's social responsibility, I asked around the university for help. Many of the departments turned me down, while others offered small but "in theory" funds. My chair at Baruch College allotted the biggest set of funds, as he awarded our event most of his budget. Other players offered lists of expert guest speakers that could speak from the panel. I indicated that my students were already expert guest speakers and that was why the university's assistance was being asked for. Both undergraduate and graduate student life can become so much more meaningful if curriculum becomes relevant and related to personal life experiences. If organic intellectualism were competitive perhaps we would have a different outcome when it comes to student academic achievement.

**CHAPTER NINE:
Conclusion &
Suggestions for Future Research**

SUMMARY :

How much has changed for the Nuyorican poet? Some would say nothing at all, some would say a whole lot. As chapter one introduces the Nuyorican as oppressed, marginalized and misrepresented, this outlook is still complicated. While many of the social ills from the 1940s still affect Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans today, much has been changed and continues to change through education. Although there are still unfair educational opportunities for many people of color, professors can still be useful in bringing about social change while engaging students in an academically challenging environment.

In this dissertation I have attempted to explain the plight of the bi-culturalism, bi-nationalism, and academic isolation of Nuyorican organic intellectualism. In discussing the social issues of the Nuyorganic using critical theory I have also attempted to outline and explain effective ways of introducing organic intellectualism in college classrooms. Methods that I both used and created for the purposes of this dissertation were done to promote a socially just and challenging college curriculum where all students can become equal players. In chapter 2, I discuss several theories on the varying types of intellectualism. Nuyorican poets have come from the

tradition of organic intellectualism, which this dissertation is based. This type of intellectualism infuses personal life experiences, knowledge of one's culture, one's people, and one's social experiences as they interact and interconnect with the world. Chapter 3 as I list and discuss several of the ineffective multicultural theories used as college "diversity" initiatives, I also use the theory of critical multiculturalism to remedy false approaches at inclusivity.

To illustrate a critical understanding of organic intellectualism, I have included a personal life experience of growing up in Hell's Kitchen, New York City in chapter 5. This autobiography that I have included is one that I am able to share with students as well. It is personal enough to connect with theories of organic intellectualism, and personal enough to share with students so that they may understand their own experience with intellectualism. This method of using personal life experiences has been discussed in chapter 8. Out of my own personal life experiences with academics and intellectualism, I have developed what I call the Teaching the Self-method of pedagogy. This method of teaching is in its early stages. Courses using this teaching the self-method, as I have carefully laid out in chapter 8, have only been used within

the last four years and thus this is considered a new model of critical pedagogy. However, if modified to fit each professor's class and student population, success can be attained at any level and for every topic using this teaching the self model.

While Puerto Ricans, and Nuyoricans have been, throughout history, marginalized, oppressed and misrepresented, the work of Nuyorganics can help to re-establish academic credibility. Many students enter college classrooms with a vast variety of previous knowledge. These knowledges come from all different social dynamics and are infused with many personal life experiences. Professors must begin to take the time to understand each of their students as individuals with expertise in life if we are to begin understanding our roles as educators and agents of social change. For example, in literature classes that focus primarily on the "classics" professors need to begin broadening their own knowledge base and discontinue the sole use of the American literary canon. For example, including the literary works of Nuyorganics can begin to include a larger population of students who appreciate "classic American literature."

WHERE ARE THE NUYORGANICS NOW:

From the 1970s, the poets described in this dissertation have all passed away. All that is left are their traditions, their own methods of teaching Nuyorganics by way of their poetry. Many of their texts are out of print, and have been lost and forgotten. It is my hope that the more I continue to teach and use their works and Nuyorganic methods that I can bring them back into our academic community that strives towards social justice.

Some would say that shows like *Def Poets*, after-school organizations, and poetry clubs have kept their names and works alive, but this is simply not enough. As critical thinkers and cultural workers we must begin to think about how these Nuyorganics are being represented in our present day. It is great to walk past the Nuyorican Poet's Café on East 6th Street in New York City and see a spray-painted mural of the late Pedro Pietri. It is even more wonderful to know that Miguel Piñero was able to have his life story told via Hollywood. However, what are the young being turned on to, when they are introduced to Nuyorican poetry? Are they being turned on to "varying styles of poetry?" Are they being trained to read their poetry in a "National Slam Competition" where the judges are selected by one category only: that is, if you are interested, you can become a judge. This is unfair. It is unfair to the young

people we encourage to become interested in poetry, and unfair to the legacy of Nuyorganics like Pietri, Piñero and Lavoe who struggled so hard leave us with this legacy. We have to begin thinking about who is representing the Nuyorganic tradition in the current day? Are they allies of this politically and culturally based poetry style? Or are they essentialists who believe in personal incentives and good Samaritan rewards?

Many of the Nuyorganics that I have chosen to focus on in my dissertation died penniless. How are their followers repaying them today? Are we paying effective homage by having poets compete to present their work on cable programs or for monetary prizes, sometimes in the thousands? Petri has been painted on a New York City sidewalk, Piñero had his life portrayed via Hollywood, and sometime in 2006, the story of Hector Lavoe's life will be made into a movie by Hollywood, casting Jennifer López and Marc Anthony as leading stars. Has there been progress? We can never forgo further research on this topic as we would enable Nuyorganic isolation to continue.

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