Introduction

I believe a requirement of an effective urban teacher education program is instilling in students (preservice teachers) the ability and knowledge to critically deconstruct the world that constructs them and their future students. As a teacher committed to social justice I work to make my curriculum such that it forces students to think in new ways. I know the phrase “thinking outside the box” is overused but it provides the perfect conceptual intent I want my students to visualize. The box is that place that confines the mind and body of the students, subverts their drive towards realizing their full humanity. When students think outside of the box their thinking is not at the margins but at the center. They succeed in turning the box inside out.

An often-asked question of teachers concerned with critical thinking is how to “do-it” in their class, in their curriculum, in their pedagogy. I so wish I could provide a fail-safe lesson plan to be used in any and every situation. But of course that’s impossible if we understand and except the changing nature and fluidity of critical thought. Instead, I offer an assignment I have given my students, which provides the space to question and reflect on a specific issue utilizing critical thought/critical cognition as the vehicle to understanding. I ask my students to read a book and then present important themes from the book in a creative format. The only real guidelines I provide are that they cannot use powerpoint unless it is extremely creative. I do give some possible formats to get the creative juices flowing such as:

Musical interpretation of the book (voice, instrument, etc), Short skit or drama, Dramatic reading, Compose a poem, Use of technology clips, Drama: acting out scene from the book as the main character, Activity with the class that highlights the main point of the book, Create a scrapbook or visual aide to represent the storyline, or Anything Else????

On the following pages I provide the works of several of my students from the Urban Teacher Education Program. Their creative works are based on the book 'I Won't Learn from You': And Other Thoughts on Creative Maladjustment (1995) by Herbert Kohl New York: New Press