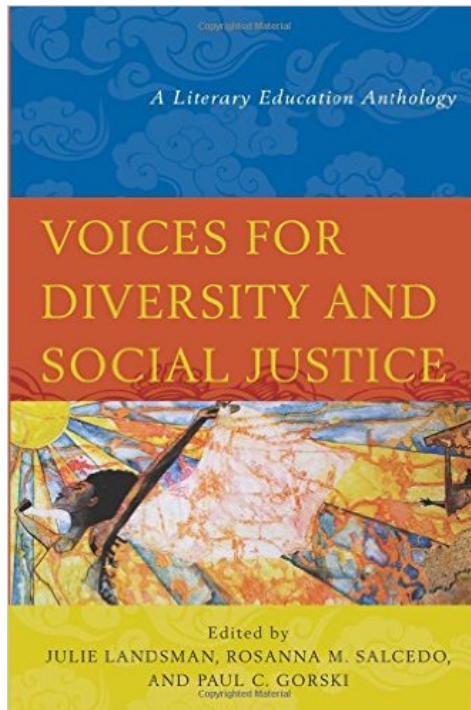


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Review of Voices for Diversity and Social Justice: A Literary Education Anthology

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Landsman, J., Salcedo, R., & Gorski, P. (2015). *Voices for diversity and social justice: A literary education anthology*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

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Voices for Diversity and Social Justice, edited by Julie Landsman, Rosanna M. Salcedo, and Paul Gorski (2015), is an anthology composed entirely of pieces authored by people who live in the margins of American society or work on behalf of those whom society marginalizes. This text features nearly fifty different authors, including a diverse group of K-12 students, college students, K-12 teachers, and college professors. The volume is composed of poetry, short fictional studies, and brief but deeply personal narratives. With each piece, the reader gains a greater and deeper understanding of how people who are oppressed because of race, gender, sexuality, poverty, or linguistic barriers move throughout the world and navigate the complicated spaces we know as schools.

Organized by themes that include “Being the Target” and “Celebrating the Power of Teachers,” each section includes various forms of expression, followed by questions at the end of each section. The poems, narratives, and short stories that comprise this book all bring attention to the experiences and perspectives of students who are not only marginalized but have largely been silenced and rendered invisible. Adaline Carlette Love writes about her experience with homelessness and how the transient nature of being homeless caused her to fall behind in school, leaving her to “feel dumb” (p. 20) and not want to participate in classroom activities. She also notes that this outcome is doubly frustrating, because she has become shy at school, and “[She’s] not like that at all” (p. 20). In a brief narrative, Salvador “Chato” Hernandez writes about an opportunity he had as a young student to attend a leadership conference. His teacher told him to “dress to impress” (p. 31), and that’s exactly what he did, sporting the finest items of clothing he owned to school in preparation for the conference. While he admits that his clothes were not the best fit, they were all his parents could afford to buy, and he left home feeling like he could take on the world. His confidence was immediately crushed, however, when he asked his teacher what she thought of his ensemble, and she responded, “What’s wrong with

you?” (p. 32). In the first piece of the book, student Fred Arcoleo uses the word *HUMAN* in all capital letters on multiple occasions, as if he is trying to remind both himself and the reader of his humanity as he seeks to navigate difficult terrain on his way to school each morning. This sets the tone for the rest of the book, as in a schooling context that focuses on high-stakes testing and qualitative data, the humanity of the students who enter the building each day can sometimes be lost on teachers and administrators who place a premium on standardized test scores.

Although the authors have labeled this text as a literary education anthology it is much more than that. This book is a necessary read for both preservice and in-service teachers, no matter what subject they teach. The vignettes in this book allow the reader to take a glimpse into the experiences of those who are often overlooked not only by society but also by the teachers who teach them each day, many of whom have good intentions. As a former classroom teacher, this text made me question the ways in which I may have silenced or marginalized the students in my classroom, the very students I sought to help. The contributing authors remind the reader that one off-hand comment or one seemingly insignificant gesture can have a profound impact on a student’s schooling experience and self-esteem. Authors also demonstrate for the reader the ways in which centering whiteness and other markers of privilege affect the daily lives of students, including the junior kindergarten student who feels she is ugly because she is not white but is surrounded by white faces, as Sidrah Maysoon writes “i still tried to be beautiful/even though i was taught i was ugly/surrounded by white faces deemed ideal” (p. 71).

While the first section of the book is titled “Speaking through the Silence,” one could argue that this could be the title of the entire book. The contributing authors provide the reader with access to experiences and emotions that frequently go unspoken about in K-12 schooling and the academy, because survival in those spaces does not typically

allow speaking out against the norms of those spaces, especially for those who are already marginalized. These authors allow the reader a glimpse into the humiliation, frustration, and pain they often experience for trying to exist in their school environments as they are, be they native Spanish speakers or black women in academia. The authors clue the reader in on the ways that they are rendered invisible and hypervisible, sometimes simultaneously. A common thread with most of the authors is that they are frequently misunderstood, if not overlooked, because they do not fit particular identity markers that are valued in the United States. In a world that is just as segregated as ever, while pretending not to be, this text provides readers with unadulterated access to knowledge and experiences that they would not likely have otherwise. I should add that this knowledge of the experiences of marginalization that so many students face is absolutely vital to anyone who plans to enter a classroom door as a teacher.

In conclusion, I would recommend that anyone in the field of education read *Voices for Diversity and Social Justice*, but it is imperative that anyone who has direct contact with students read this text. The experiences and emotions that the authors are kind enough to share with the reader will hopefully lead teachers to think about these and other marginalized students as they plan their lessons, but more importantly, they will help teachers notice, acknowledge, and interact with students who are frequently rendered invisible in ways that are affirming and acknowledge their strengths. A note to any preservice or in-service teacher debating whether or not to read this book: Read it. You and your students will be better for it.