◆ Introduction

Confronting the Perversion of Language and Information in Our Era of Inflationary Media

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In a recent science fiction story by the Cuban-Canadian author Francisco García González, a Quebec fishing trawler harvesting "endangered plastic" off the Atlantic coast and removing the bothersome fish and shellfish from their otherwise pristine catch is slammed into by a floating Marriot hotel that has come unmoored.[1] As the fishermen's ship takes on water, they are approached, first by a French frigate and then by a Canadian coast guard cutter, both of which offer to rescue the sailors from the sinking vessel. The Quebecers refuse both offers, preferring to drown rather than accept European or Canadian aid, in French or English. It is a brutal if hilarious parable for a province that, lately, has been turning ever more inward, as evidenced by recent laws outlawing public servants from wearing "religious symbols" (mainly hijabs but definitely not crosses),[2] barring entry into English junior colleges to students whose parents did not receive English schooling in Canada, and strengthening already restrictive language laws to force said immigrants to prove their fluency before achieving legal status or receiving public services.[3] This legislation is the result of two principal factors: on the one hand, disinformation concerning the supposedly fragile status of French, as well as the supposed resistance of immigrants to learning French; and, on the other, the refusal of Premier François Legault's government to acknowledge the existence of systemic racism anywhere in the province.[4] In an increasingly global economic and political context, one that is seeing "native" population declines across Europe and North America, it is a short-sighted and yet politically expedient campaign that panders to nativist and nationalist voters in a bid for re-election, all the while hobbling the future of the province with underpopulation and political, economic, and linguistic isolation. Absurdly, as García González's story lays bare, the most negatively affected individuals with respect to the educational policy are the Quebecois, themselves, whose

Anti-Disinformation Pedagogy: Tackling the Power of Manipulative Media
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freedom to choose their institution of higher learning is determined not by their academic and professional aspirations but by the educational record of their parents. In almost every sense, Legault's government and his supporters would prefer to cut ties with a diverse and multilingual world and sink even deeper into a monolingual and fear-driven echo chamber.

In the end, the figurative shipwreck of Quebec makes for an instructive sounding board for what is happening to higher education in the United States, which, it is fair to say, is under increasingly aggressive assaults, especially in states that have Republican majorities in their legislative and executive branches. Most prominent are Ron DeSantis's multi-pronged attacks against what he has legally codified as "woke ideology," "liberal indoctrination," and "gay speak," especially with respect to critical race theory and nonbinary sexuality and gender identity. Although it is encouraging that Florida's House Bill 7, otherwise known as the "Stop Woke" Act, eventually ran into legal injunctions due to its blatant violation of First Amendment rights,[5] and it is probable that HB 1557, commonly called the "Don't Say Gay" bill, will run into similar obstacles in both its implementation and application, these are just two of the weapons in DeSantis's and other state politicians' arsenals for silencing the teaching of African American history, gender and sexuality studies, and any number of intellectual pursuits that intersect with anything that extreme conservatives consider dangerously anti-American.[6] According to Eric Kelderman, "Over the past two years, state lawmakers in fifteen Republican-controlled states have passed nineteen bills that seek to restrict teaching on issues of race, racism, and gender, according to figures from PEN America. Laws in seven states specifically address instruction on those topics at public colleges".[7]

Another strategy in DeSantis's regressive educational "reforms" has been to require state colleges and universities to account for all funding related to DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives, which by most measures accounts for less than one percent of university expenditures.[8] In addition, his demand that the College Board radically revise a new Advanced Placement course on African American Studies, followed by a call for the elimination of all Advanced Placement courses (DeSantis, himself, was a top-ranked student of AP History in Florida), position the Sunshine State at the vanguard of US states attempting to exert political and ideological control over higher education.[9] This includes his aggressive attempt in 2023 to reinvent the New College of Florida as a bastion of conservative educational policy and content, if such a moniker in these circumstances can be called anything other than an oxymoron. He carried out this mission by overhauling the school's Board of Governors, populating it with conservative allies and members of conservative think tanks, like Christopher F. Rufo, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and director of the institute's initiative on ("against" would be a more accurate preposition) critical race theory. Rufo and his

colleagues have authored model legislation to ban DEI offices at public colleges that can be used by anyone who is interested.[10] Bringing Rufo in as a member of the Board of Directors at the New College may seem like overkill, given the fact that the New College has less than a thousand students, but his nomination and DeSantis's focus on the school have kept the Florida governor, a one time hopeful for the Republican nomination for president in the 2024 elections, on the front/home page of news outlets across the country.[11]

It has also emboldened other states to introduce legislation that is equally if not more aggressively aimed at the teaching of the history of race, the expansion and servicing of minority and marginal student populations, and arguably freedom of inquiry and expression more generally. The remaking of institutional boards of governors in the attempt to enforce ideological conformity with conservatism has become commonplace across Republican-controlled states, most famously perhaps in North Carolina. It was the Board of Trustees at the University of North Carolina (appointed by the Republican majority state legislature) who in 2021 denied the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and public historian Hannah-Nicole Jones's application for tenure when she was appointed to the Knight Chair in Race and Investigative Journalism at UNC's Hussman School of Journalism and Media, in reaction to her leading role in the 1619 Project at the *New York Times*.[12]

At least twenty states have followed Florida's lead by demanding that state institutions account for all DEI funding, and many of these same states had previously passed laws outlawing the teaching of Critical Race Theory at primary, secondary, and university institutions.[13] What has become clear through this coordinated effort to remake higher education in their own image is that the traditional concern of conservative thinkers over ensuring that universities and colleges are properly preparing students to make economic and professional contributions to a market-driven society have become markedly ideological in an apparent effort to replicate the kinds of voters that would keep such demagoguery in power. Martha Nussbaum's definition of "Old Education" is very useful at this point:

> The spokesman for the Old Education is a tough old soldier. He favors a highly disciplined patriotic regimen, with lots of memorization and not much room for questioning. He loves to recall a time that may never have existed—a time when young people obeyed their parents and wanted nothing more than to die for their country, a time when teachers would teach that grand old song "Athena, glorious sacker of cities"—not the strange new songs of the present day.[14]

Nussbaum's emphasis on the nostalgic and mythical nature of this desire for an indoctrinating educational (and socio-political) model reveals the links between DeSantis's anti-democratic agenda and similar dogmatic jingoisms coming out of Trump's MAGA movement. Just as importantly, the fictional, even fraudulent, accusations against university education and DEI initiatives mimic in tone and political strategy the regressive laws coming out of Republican-controlled state legislatures against voter fraud, in that such fraud hardly ever happens. DEI initiatives have received an amount of attention completely disproportionate to the systemically underfunded offices and units charged with establishing and cultivating DEI on college campuses.

A case in point: in January 2023, Ryan Walters, the Oklahoma State Superintendent of Education Secretary, veiled his previously documented open attacks against "wokeness" and DEI behind financial scrupulousness. Like Florida, the Oklahoma State Regents were asked by state politicians for a comprehensive review of the university system's budgetary spending as well as administrative and pedagogical programs and materials tied to DEI. As in the case of the voter fraud talking points, the hype being raised by politicians and board members has been completely out of proportion to the actual resources being dedicated to DEI, which amount to less that 0.3 percent of all higher education spending and 0.11 percent of state expenditures in Oklahoma.[15] As journalist Andrea Eger writes, "Put another way, the entire higher education system spends less on diversity, equity, and inclusion than the University of Oklahoma or Oklahoma State University spends on basketball coaches."[16] Nevertheless, by bringing into focus the roadblocks that these ideologically motivated initiatives inevitably encounter in the form of existing laws and constitutional rights, a pedagogically minded individual can use these cases as pointed teaching moments. This is what the Chancellor of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Allison D. Garrett, did when she stated in her response to Walters's request, "It is important to note that there are certain laws that require diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. Additionally, the Higher Learning Commission and program-specific accreditors—including those for nursing, engineering, education, and business degree programs—require institutions to demonstrate diversity, equity, and inclusion in their practices, policies and curriculum to maintain accreditation."[17] Of course, Garrett's response also places a target on the very laws she is hoping will blunt the blow coming from such legislative overreach.

Indeed, in our view, focusing on the legal aspects partially misses the point of such initiatives. Nell Gluckmann notes in his 2023 piece for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* on Idaho state legislation that was passed on the heels of the 2022 Supreme Court overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the new law made it illegal to use "public funds to 'promote' or 'counsel in favor of

abortion,'" prompting the University of Idaho to issue a memo instructing employees to remain neutral on the issue.[18] Laws such as these run headlong into safeguards for academic freedom, freedom of speech, etc., but until such extremist legislation is itself brought into court to determine its legality or lack thereof, a pall is cast over freedom of inquiry and expression on the college campus. Gluckmann cites Jeremy Young, senior manager of free expression and education at PEN America: ""Such guidance allows legislators to regulate speech 'not through direct censorship but through prudent managing of risk,'… [Young] said that the laws amount to the most severe intrusions into free expression on campuses since the McCarthy era, in the 1950s. The PEN America staff, he said, has started referring to them as the 'Ed scare' because they're so reminiscent of the 'Red Scare'."[19] As Young points out, "this is how censorship happens…this is the banality of censorship."[20] Similarly, Jonathan Wickert, the provost of Iowa State University, has stated, "We know we are being watched… Faculty have been trolled and doxed. There have been media requests for syllabi for programs… Lectures have been videotaped, and there have been attacks on the arts and humanities."[21] These political attacks are based on the fiction that so-called liberal teachers and professors are indoctrinating students in liberally-biased approaches to US history, climate science, gender identity, etc., and are at the forefront of institutionalized efforts to misinform and discriminate against an imaginary and imperilled white heterosexual majority through DEI initiatives. In the words of Janai Nelson, "[The] disturbing pattern of silencing Black voices and aggressive attempts to erase Black history is one of the most visible examples of performative white supremacy since the presidency of Donald Trump."[22] Returning to Nussbaum, it is clear that these attacks are aimed at the heart of the Socratic model of education: "The extension of education to women, and also to slaves and poor people, followed directly from the Socratic sense of education's importance for every human being—combined with the recognition of a simple fact, that these people are also human, worthy of respect and concern."[23]

The mis- and disinformation tools used by the protagonists and champions of these regressive laws and policies are as diverse as they are effective. In the case of Quebec, the so-called law to protect secularism is solely focused on religious symbols and their supposed elimination from public spaces. It is instructive to learn that a large crucifix hung above the speaker's chair in Quebec's National Assembly from 1936 until 2019, when its glaring contradiction with Bill 21, passed by that same legislative body, made its continued display untenable. Ironically, Legault had argued to maintain the symbol by declaring it a *cultural* as opposed to *religious* symbol, which is of course largely accurate in a secular society with a Catholic history.[24] Tragically, or blindly, he and the rest of the lawmakers were unable to apply this same standard to the hijab, which is the

only so-called religious symbol to have been prosecuted under the law. Thus, the disinformational misnomer for the legislation is combined with misinformation about the cultural role of religious symbols across society in support of a law that negatively affects the personal freedoms of all.

In the meanwhile, the tactics of the protagonists of the anti-DEI movement can most accurately be called gaslighting, in the sense that what they accuse CRT or DEI proponents of is precisely what their laws and policies are carrying out under the guise of intellectual integrity. Consider the words of Rufo in Tom Bartlett's 2023 article for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* on the Manhattan Institute's model legislation for outlawing DEI: "the campus is suffering from a 'culture problem,' according to Rufo, and has fallen victim to a 'suffocating left-wing orthodoxy' that will silence 'anyone on the wrong political end of the intersectional hierarchy.'"[25] Likewise, DeSantis's announcement of his plans to eliminate DEI declaims: "We're centering higher education on integrity of the academics, excellence, pursuit of truth, teaching kids to think for themselves, not trying to impose an orthodoxy."[26] In both cases, academic administrators are silenced into toeing the line on conservative orthodoxies through the very policies that Rufo and DeSantis are imposing.

While the brazenness of these racist and oppressive tactics and the cynical demagoguery that justifies them are symptomatic of our political moment, the sleight of hand is clearly recognizable in historical forms of authoritarian discourse and policy, as David Castillo and Carmen Moreno-Nuño remind us in their contributions to the present volume. Both call attention to the central role that emerging forms of mass media have historically played as vehicles of disinformation capable of manufacturing support for toxic ideologies and violent actions. If we could paraphrase from Voltaire's eminently quotable reflections on the workings of tyranny, "there's no doubt that those with the power to make you believe absurdities have the power to make you commit injustices."[27]

In modern times, the power of demagogues to manipulate reality to suit their interests is intricately tied to the ever-increasing reach of communication technologies, from the spread of print culture in early modern Europe to the invention of radio, cinema, and television in the twentieth century, and the omnipresence of digital media today. The printing press played a key role in the consolidation of early colonial powers (Castillo), while the "yellow journalism" of the nineteenth century would drive the propaganda campaigns that helped justify the Spanish-American War of 1898, a defining moment in the early history of US imperialism (Moreno-Nuño). Likewise, the authoritarian regimes of the twentieth century, including fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism, would have been unthinkable without the galvanizing power of print propaganda, as well as radio and audiovisual media.

As for the twenty-first century, Hal Langfur makes an explicit connection between the "misrepresentations" that sustained and justified colonial projects in the early modern period and the internet traffic that's driving the resurgence of neocolonial dreams in our own time of inflationary media. In this same line, Carlos Amador shows how the mere repetition of the hashtag *#hispanidad* in stitched-together images from TikTok videos serves a similar neocolonial and transatlantic function for a revived Catholic Hispanic imperialism revolving around the symbol of the Cross of Burgundy, ignoring the obvious anachronisms and incoherence of the discourses involved. The mere repetition of hashtags and images allows the interested internet surfer to create their own fabric of meaning in what Amador calls an "antipublic . . . confederation of Hispanophone fascists in commune with Roman Catholic ultra-right associations."[28] Similarly, Nelson Varas-Díaz, Daniel Nevárez Araújo, and D.L. Miranda focus much of their essay on the persistence of coloniality today and its self-denying disinformation apparatus, which has found fertile ground in social media and other internet spaces, as well as in some traditional news outlets. As they write: "This denialism of the manifestations of coloniality, which has been a permanent staple in colonial settings, feels entirely in tune with our times. . . . We have seen this disconnect with historical facts take root in academic accounts of colonialism, which aim to deny its death-inducing effects on those who experienced it and continue to live through it. . . . In fact, we would argue that colonial subjects have always lived within post-truth; the coining of a new term does not erase the fact that the denial of truth has been deployed by empires and colonist since the inception of these models of hostile, extractive settlement."[29]

This is indeed the sleight of hand playing out in 2023 in a growing number of Republican-controlled states all over the United States, including DeSantis's Florida, Sarah Huckabee Sanders's Arkansas, and Glenn Youngkin's Virginia. When these governors and their propaganda machines talk CRT and "don't say gay," when they ban terms like Latinx and go after "woke" books and school curricula, and when they target courses on black history and gender studies, this is all about (re)colonizing education and imposing a sanitized version of history that erases the traces of past and present forms of colonialism, systemic violence, and discrimination.

In this political context, as Varas-Díaz, Nevárez Araújo, and Miranda write, "Coming to this realization sets up an important question: how do we face disinformation in these spheres defined by coloniality, where the aesthetics, narratives, and methods of a post-truth era seem to negate the longlasting effects of colonialism?."[30] While this question is central to the entire volume, in their chapter, the authors focus their search for potential answers on Puerto Rican metal music, which they argue sensitizes listeners to the ongoing manifestations of colonialism in their own Caribbean setting. Their findings, along with Langfur's

and Amador's reflections on colonial misrepresentations and their afterlives in the "colonized space of the internet," may be best understood in connection with the dire warnings of a rapidly growing list of domain experts working in fields as disparate as philosophy and social psychology (Shoshana Zuboff), media studies (Siva Vaidhayanathan, Safiya Noble, Mark Shepard), data science (Cathy O'Neil), journalism (Richard Stengel, Maria Ressa), and environmental history (Erik Conway, Naomi Oreskes, Jennifer Jacquet), as well as tech industry engineers, including former Facebook and Google insiders turned whistle-blowers.[31]

Among the most effective wake-up calls of the last few years regarding the state of the media landscape in our *market society*,[32] we would foreground María Ressa's *How to Stand Up to a Dictator* (2022) and Jennifer Jacquet's *The Playbook* (2022). Ressa's latest book is a powerful indictment of the corrosive effect that social media (Facebook in particular) has had on journalism and democratic freedoms everywhere in the world, while Jacquet's satirical how-to manual for corporate denialists is a point-by-point exposé of the manipulative tactics employed by industry giants to hide inconvenient truths from the public, sell lies, and make a killing in the process (both figuratively and literally). In their defense of journalism and evidence-based research and knowledge, Ressa and Jacquet reveal the skeletons in the closets of those corporate deniers, from tobacco and fossil fuel conglomerates to Facebook and other social media platforms, whose business practices have endangered the livelihood of large swaths of humanity in regions near and far. Their devastating exposés are built on lucid critiques of the profits-at-all-cost business model that drives our market society and empowers opportunists, demagogues, and *attention merchants*[33] who benefit from (and offer cover to) the winner-take-all economic and political structures of global capitalism.[34]

Outside of academic and journalistic circles, we would argue that the 2021 film *Don't Look Up* is among the most effective illustrations/denunciations of the deadly inertia of our market society and its attention-grabbing machinery. In particular, we are thinking of the sensationalized infotainment industry that traffics in disinformation, conspiracy theories, and salacious nonsense. The ironic strategies of the film are reminiscent of the satirical craft of late-night talk show hosts, from Stephen Colbert to Trevor Noah, Jimmy Kimmel, John Oliver, and Samantha Bee, among others. As Golden Age specialists, we also hear echoes of Cervantes's demystifying strategies and narrative tropes, especially his ironic take on manipulative rhetoric and toxic mythologies in *El retablo de las maravillas*.[35]

For their part, Moreno-Nuño and Colleen Culleton use the central conceit of *Don't Look Up* to set up their respective analyses of such films as *The Last of the Philippines*, both the Francoist 1945 version and the 2016 revision/contestation (Moreno-Nuño), and such narratives as *Insensatez*, the deliciously dark 2004 novel by Horacio Castellanos Moya (Culleton). Their critical commentary sheds new light on the devastating effect of the language of denialism and violence in

our communities. As Culleton writes: "In the face of such lies, seeking emotional or intellectual distance becomes a way to keep ourselves safe. But that safety is illusory in the face of a language of violence. Racial minorities, the Jewish and Muslim communities, LGBTQ+ people, among others, know this all too well."[36]

Likewise, in his compelling retracing of the complex circumstances of colonial exchange deep inside the backwater zones of Brazil in the early 1800s, not quite under the control of the Portuguese imperial machine, Hal Langfur shows how language can work (and often does) as a tool of obfuscation rather than cooperation. The implications of Langfur's supple argument about the perversion of language and information in colonial contexts find an analogue in Castillo's description of the proliferation of manipulative rhetoric and disinformation in imperial and Counter-Reformation Spain, as the morisco minority of Granada resorts to archeological fakes as an act of self defense against the fraudulent monarchical chronicles that were erasing them and their ancestors from the cultural history of Spain to justify imperial policies of cultural homogenization.

These vertical slices of the history of colonialism and imperialism reveal what is at stake in our own time, as mainstream political platforms embrace authoritarian (disinformation-filled) rhetoric and discriminatory policies against racial, religious, cultural, and sexual minorities. This is the vital area in which Bradley Nelson and Vivek Venkatesh make their intervention in this volume and, more importantly, in their collaborative pedagogical practice. As they write, "recent and ongoing attempts to 'disappear' critical race theory, basically, the history of race relations in the United States, through political misinformation campaigns, legislative action, disinformational news commentary, and social media blitzes demonstrate that the crisis of othering is at its nadir."[37] Their proposed solution, beyond standard practices of denunciation and activism, is an agile and inclusive social pedagogy "to imbibe and supplant the hierarchical notions of knowledge production, exchange, and transfer—both within and without socio-political institutionalized structures, especially in the digitized and connected social media landscape."[38] At the heart of this initiative is the realization that only a collective and socially engaged pedagogy can start to penetrate the narcissistic and solipsistic subject of algorithmically driven social media siloes and work toward actual political and social change.

In his contribution to this volume, Stephen Hessel provides a particularly apt illustration of the sort of "social pedagogy" that Nelson and Venkatesh are calling for and rehearsing. Hessel's chapter describes his own experimental teaching praxis inside the literature classroom, beginning with a purposeful and self-reflective dismantling of traditional pedagogical structures that depend on hierarchical versions of discursive authority. Hessel introduces instead a non-hierarchical model of "production-based active learning," within which information can be disseminated "using situationally appropriate rhetoric."[39] In this

context, political disinformation may be approached through "the formulation of an effective anti-rhetoric that does not engage disinformation within its preferred dialectical posture, but instead uses its reliance on 'either, or' to disarm it [revealing] the rules of the medialogical game."[40]

The advantage of Hessel's self-reflective situational approach, as with Nelson's and Venkatesh's "social pedagogy," lies in its potential to transform the parameters of our social conversation to offer alternatives to the polarizing, isolating, exclusivist logic of the familiar "this, not that" rhetorical posture in the form of a "yes, and" invitation to open-ended discussions. As Hessel writes, "The more participants understand the process of meaning-making, the more they can remain open to engaging in it fruitfully with others that may not share their perspective."[41] We would argue that this is indeed the Cervantine approach par excellence, which is why such texts as *Don Quixote*, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, *El Coloquio de los perros*, *El licenciado Vidriera*, and *El retablo de las maravillas* lend themselves particularly well to this kind of pedagogical treatment.

Stacey L. Parker Aronson makes just this case apropos of the power of *Don Quixote* to shed light on disinformation and its guiding "Big Lie," inside as well as outside of the textual landscape of the novel. Her approach underscores the role of desire in driving disinformation, or rather the acceptance of disinformation, even in the face of contrary evidence. As she concludes, referring to the desire for the promised "insula" that drives Sancho's credulity, "The 'Big Lie' of an *ínsula* and increased prosperity is just that, and Sancho encourages Don Quijote to continue the disinformation with the hope that it might be true . . . the disinformation is difficult to dispel as its influence often remains elusive even in the face of truth."[42] The elusive line between real and fake, truth and pretense, in life and art, is also the focus of Paul Michael Johnson's contribution, albeit in the context of baroque theater. Johnson is particularly interested in the potential of certain theatrical performances to hone reality-reading skills, the kind of strategies and interpretive abilities needed to navigate not just the early modern age of inflationary media but our own age of media saturation. As he writes, "the growing realism of declamation and theatrical performance in early modernity—which Castillo and Egginton call 'the first age of inflationary media'—required individuals and institutions to develop tools analogous to what experts in digital forensics today employ to expose the pixelation, visual inconsistencies, and other telltale signs of deepfake videos and images. The increasingly nuanced abilities of early moderns to recognize untruth in what, to employ a visual anachronism, we might call pixelated performances likewise offer lessons in media literacy for our contemporary moment."[43]

Johnson makes an interesting case for the need to retrain ourselves in the art of "critical spectatorship" at a time when the pervasiveness of immersive

digital media seems to be eroding our capacity for discernment and increasing our vulnerability in the face of disinformational forces. He aligns himself with early modern specialists who call for our renewed engagement with forms of fiction that can sharpen our interpretive skills. He thus advocates for a similar approach to early modern drama as a kind of *pharmakon* that "might offer at once a perilous simulacrum and the palliative balm of critical discernment."[44] Antonio Gómez L.-Quiñones picks up on this concept of "critical thinking" to take direct aim at the Cartesian practice of distanced and "objective" criticality so often packaged and publicized as the "prized commodity" that the modern university offers to the student. He starts with the observation that the critical "detachment from reality" on which so much Cartesian analysis continues to be built is a "factual impossibility."[45] Echoing the analogous critique of solipsism by Nelson and Venkatesh, he calls this free-floating notion of critical thinking the main "commodity fetish" of much humanistic pedagogy and criticism in Sandel's *market society*, as cited by Castillo, whose practice "*reinforce[s] the deep structure of our socio-political status quo.*"[46] The idea that a distanced and free-floating critical thinking can alter either the ideological liberalism of the academy or the political fakery, fraud, and injustices of the world in which it resides is, according to Gómez L.-Quiñones, "*our* own fake news."[47] Like Castillo, Nelson and Venkatesh, as well as Hessel, Gómez L.-Quiñones ultimately advocates for an active and participatory critical enterprise that seeks to transform reality through its analysis and engagement with it: "there can be no dependable information without hands-on, open, and significant *organized participation* . . . against capitalism and its abstractive compulsions."[48] This kind of intellectual activism is also advocated by Nussbaum in her critique of Old Education: "Instead of learning logical analysis in a vacuum, students now learn to dissect the arguments they find in newspapers, to argue about current controversies in medicine and law and sports, to think critically about the foundations of their political and even religious views."[49]

In conclusion, it would certainly seem that DeSantis and his imitators, to their credit, have recognized that CRT and LGBQT-based research and pedagogies are, in their essence, just these kinds of transformational critical practices, and their political and legislative agendas are every bit as transformational (and regressive) in their molecular structure and mission. Nevertheless, the extreme right's political and epistemological movements are attempting to undo the socially open, collectively organized, and historically pluralistic and inclusive relation between scientific and humanistic inquiry and the world around us (and its history) through demagoguery, disinformation, and anti-democratic electoral and legislative manipulation. Such denials of the ethnic, linguistic, and sexual richness and pluralism of the world can only end, as illustrated by García-González's maritime allegory, in shipwrecked silence. In this light, we see this collection of essays as a participatory and action-oriented collective effort to

change the conversation and provide discursive tools and a willing community for helping to transform the world around us.

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