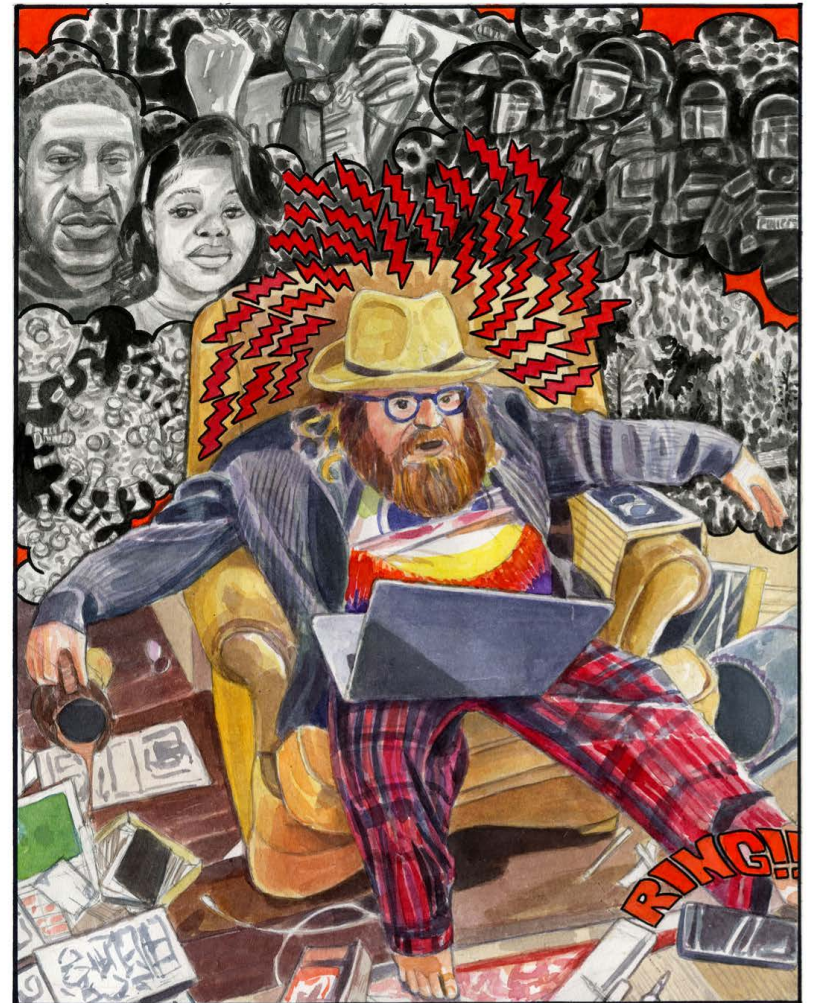
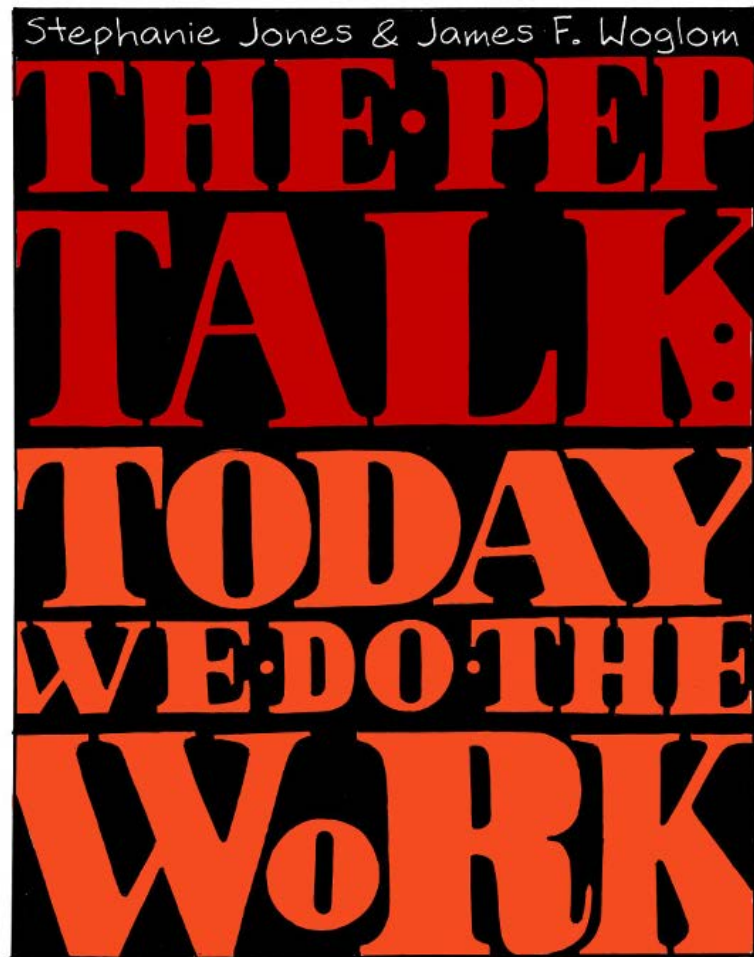


The Pep Talk: Today We Do the Work

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Hey Stephanie!

Hey Jim! How're you holding up?

Barely. I feel a little overwhelmed by, well, everything...

It's all so overwhelming. Everything feels so unstable and out of order doesn't it?

How can we know anything for sure, much less how to prepare teachers when everything is uncertain?

I don't know. But it seems like people keep trying to re-establish things that appeared to maintain order in a pre-pandemic and pre-insurrection society.

A lot of those things didn't work for a lot of people to begin with. But some of them kept up a facade of institutions carrying out their business, like grading and testing in schools.

The old things just aren't going to work anymore, including teacher education.

Not many people opposed these pre-pandemic, and even though their fault lines are more visible now, a lot of people seem to be doubling-down on requiring grades and testing.

Yeah, it's almost like we can't imagine learning and teaching happening without the assumption that they progress along a predetermined path and should be measured against predetermined outcomes. Grading and testing uphold a facade of progress, productivity, or accountability.

Isn't it ironic, though, that we've also witnessed people learning so much by pursuing their interests? Baking bread, studying racism and white supremacy, creating Tik-Toks, painting, exploring nature, learning about voting rights and election processes, studying the U.S. Constitution, cooking, and so many other things!

It's like the uncertainty of these times has opened up infinite creative and even joyful possibilities. But we're not in unique times, unfortunately. Other crises in history, including movements toward authoritarianism and fascism, have inspired everyday people and educators to create new ways of being and doing.

You're right, and their persistence in not giving up and not giving in, especially to fascism, can offer some hope to us all as we improvise our way through this day, time, and opening for possibility. Let's highlight a few that we can be inspired by in this tumultuous sea of unpredictability.

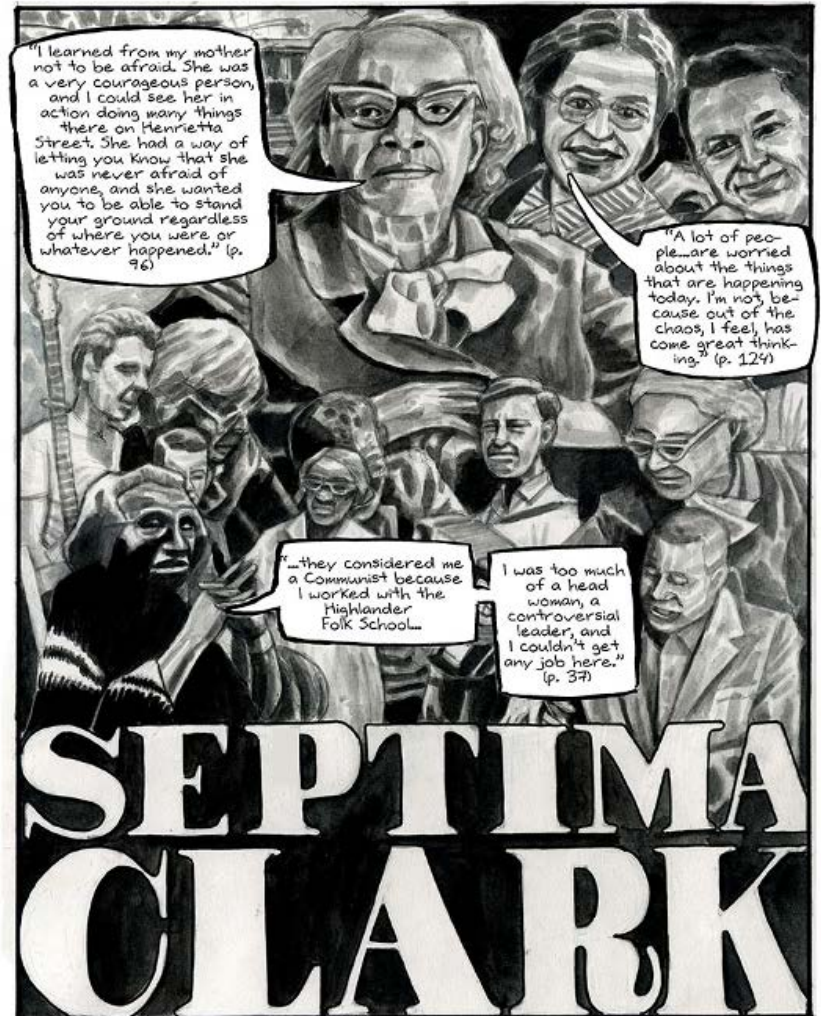
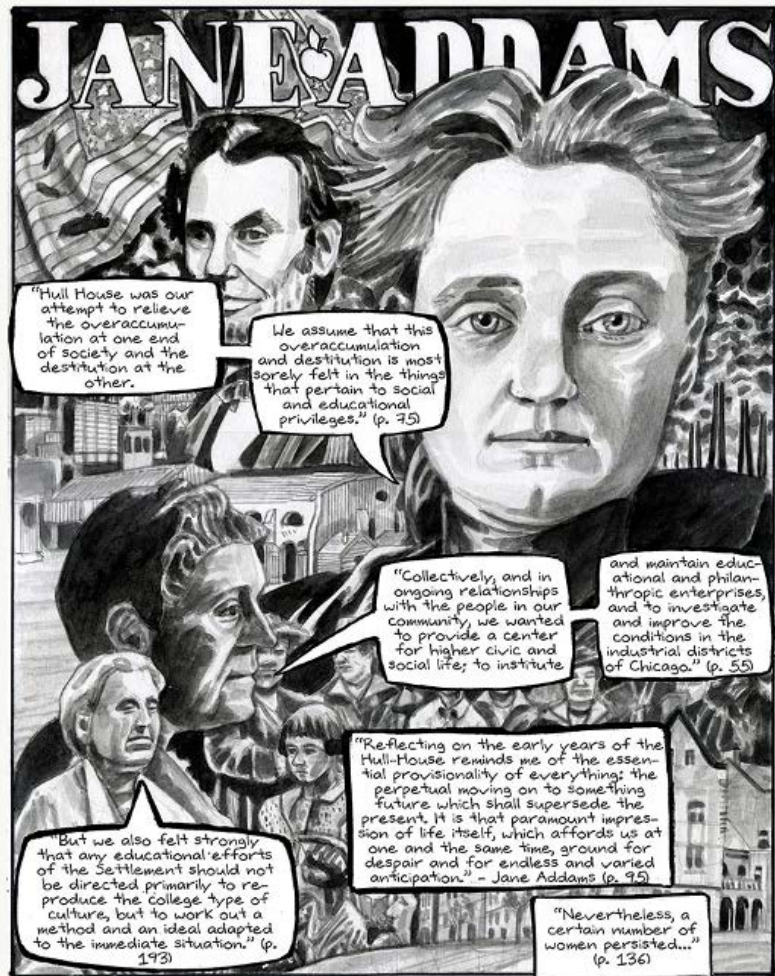
Some folk who generated newness out of crisis:

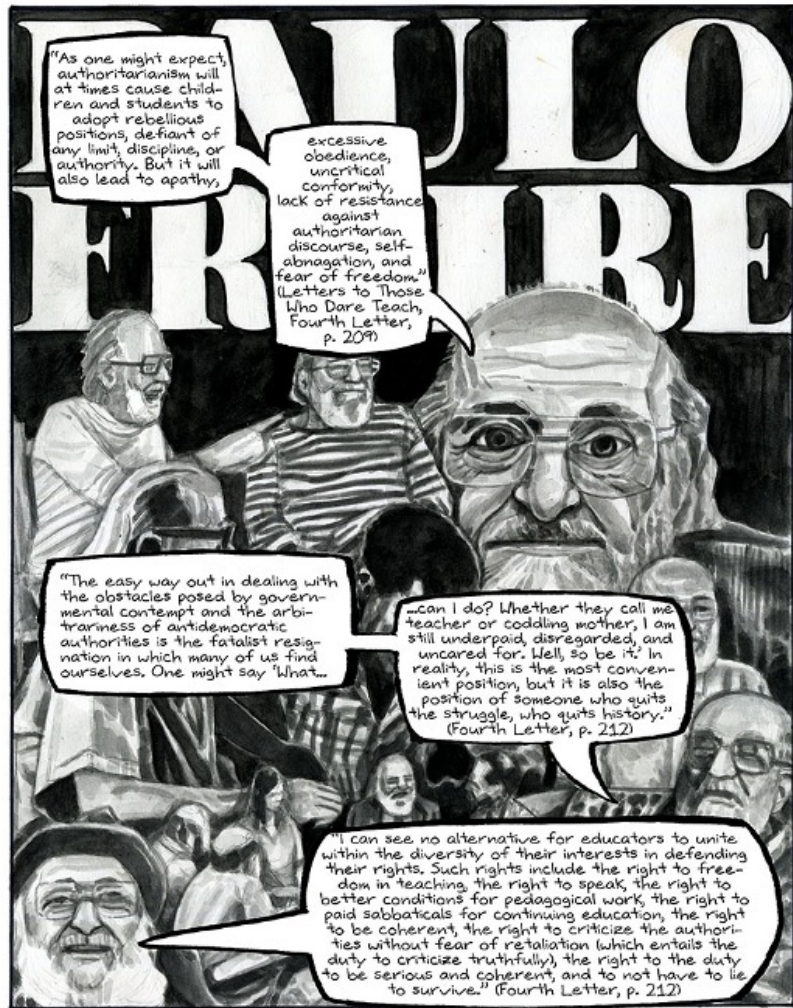
Jane Addams (1860-1935) and her colleagues, for example, were creating new ways of working for justice on the heels of the U.S. Civil War. They lived with and listened to the most vulnerable people during Reconstruction, ongoing racialized violence, and an intensification of industrialized capitalism in Chicago. What they learned shaped the educational offerings for young children, adolescents, and adults. Organizing workers, buying communal property to provide security for women to live together and protect them from evictions, supporting immigrant youth to honor their home languages and families, providing childcare and meals, advocating for the end of child labor, setting up a labor museum, and bringing in influential intellectuals to give public lectures are some of the free and public education Addams and her collaborators provided.

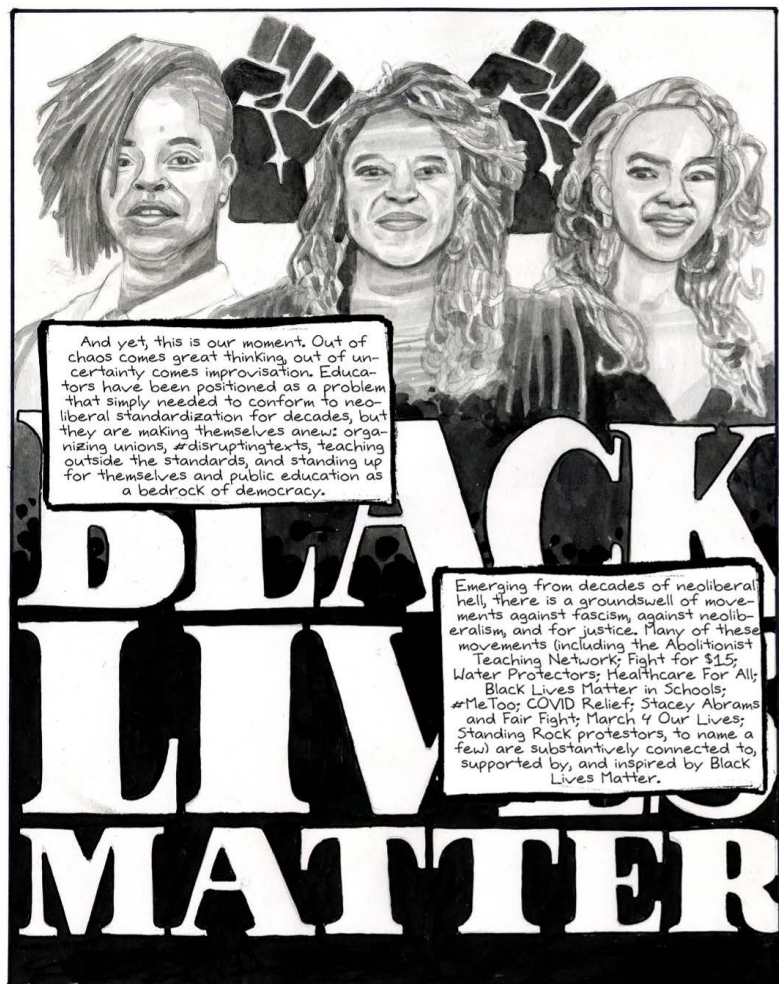
Septima Clark (1898-1987) created community-based literacy schools throughout the Civil Rights era to expand Black voter participation and political engagement. While much of her and her colleagues' work was focused in the U.S. South, Clark worked all around the country, including her influential work at the Highlander Center in Tennessee with Myles Horton. She faced discrimination and mistreatment by many men in the Civil Rights Movement, but her eventual recognition as one of the matriarchs of the Movement indicates the power of her work as both someone who assembled critical pedagogies for teaching literacy and as someone who organized against structural racism.

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) and colleagues were using Cultural Circles in Brazil as anti-poverty, democratic education spaces in response to the devastation of the Great Depression until the 1964 right-wing authoritarian coup d'état in Brazil shut down his work, imprisoned, and then exiled him. Cultural Circles were designed to teach literacy to adult workers by centering the importance of their work to the larger cultural context and society, thus illustrating the value of their work and their rights as workers to be treated with dignity and decent wages. While exiled, Freire worked around the globe with adult literacy educators to adapt and create many versions of Cultural Circles for transformative literacy and language education. He also published books on literacy education and the importance of teachers being intellectuals committed to their own deep learning as well as their students'.

Patrisse Cullors (1984-), Alicia Garza (1981-), and Opal Tometi (1984-) founded Black Lives Matter in 2013, creating an evolving grassroots, social media, and educational network in response to systemic anti-Black racism and police violence in the U.S. and around the globe. Black Lives Matter provides ongoing multi-platform education (in person and via media) about race and economic inequality, racist policing policies and practices, and interpretations of current events as well as affirmative practices humanizing Black, brown, and indigenous people, LGBTQ+ folk, people with disabilities, and people across the gender spectrum building an inclusive network of action toward justice.







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