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Introductory Remarks

Gail Y. Okawa and Thomas Fox

All of us involved in writing centers (indeed, all of us in education) must recognize that the educational community of the 1990s will continue to grow more diverse culturally, linguistically, scholastically. Given this diversity, students, teachers, and tutors will become more, not less, interdependent. The ready, predictable answers and assumptions that existed once in a monocultural classroom or university don't exist anymore. "Success" will not be meted out by one authoritative figure, but will be measured by the mutual nature of the success, hinging on the degree to which all members of this threesome of tutor, student, and teacher can become what Paulo Freire calls the "subjects" of their own learning process. Our hopes for these redefined social relationships in the writing center carry with them hopes for a redefined sense of academic literacy as well. Multi-cultural student populations will not only change social relationships but challenge monolithic conceptions of academic literacy. We will need to seek out views of student literacy that will emphasize interdependence, such as the ones articulated in David Bleich's *The Double Perspective*, Marilyn Cooper and Michael Holzman's *Writing as Social Action*, and Deborah Brandt's *Literacy as Involvement*. By

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situating literacy in social relationships and communal action, these studies have begun, as the title of a recent article by Bleich makes clear, "Reconceiving Literacy." Although there are differences between these explorations of literacy, all emphasize that literacy invokes, embodies, and mediates social relationships and initiates, as Bleich says, "discussion of a new allocation of responsibility, a new program of social initiative" ("Reconceiving" 34). Particularly for students who feel marginal or who are marginalized in school, who feel dissonant with academic culture and language, writing centers can become increasingly important—even essential—settings for cultivating this more expansive sense of literacy, one that legitimates their voices and their experiences.

Developing such a setting requires hard, collaborative work. Most universities are inhospitable to more democratic definitions of literacy and to the more democratic set of social relations such a definition implies. The status of writing centers' place in the university, their position as across-the-disciplines institutions, makes them a strategically important place for change to begin. Such change entails greater institutional support: writing center administrators and instructors with tenure-track or tenured appointments, permanent and regular budgets, and adequate support for tutor training. Since change occurs not only at the administrative level but in the particular relationships between students and tutors, we focus, in this multi-authored essay, on tutor training. We specifically advocate critical reflection as being of major importance in tutor training, emphasizing the manifold nature of this reflection, the way it moves among text, tutor, student, and tutor trainer. Our version of critical reflection in tutor-training programs focuses on conscious explorations of language within a society stratified by race and cultural background and the implications of this social context for education.

This article joins the voices of two tutoring program coordinators and four peer tutors from two institutions: The University of Washington's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) Writing Center and California State University, Chico's Writing Center. By doing this, we don't seek a blend of voices so much as a series of distinct but related points of view on the experiences, responsibilities,

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problems, and possibilities of cultural diversity in higher education.

The variety of voices in this article illustrates, in a way that the single voice of a writing center director could not, the importance of critical reflection in a tutor-training program. In particular, our tutors' essays help make concrete the accent of our training programs. Their voices show how Bizzell's concept of world view stimulated Lucy Chang's sense of identity awareness or how Ogbu's idea of "oppositional identity" informs LaGuan Hayes' understanding of this experience. Both our programs invite students to transpose theories of cultural difference to their own life histories and subsequently to the students they tutor. By including the prose of tutors from four different cultural backgrounds, we hope to heighten our own critical reflections about multi-cultural education, gaining a better sense of the obstacles and opportunities of a multi-cultural university. Finally, we hope that our tutors' reflections inspire those involved with tutor training to reconsider their responsibilities to students of color in higher education.

Tutor Training at the University of Washington's Educational Opportunity Program Writing Center
Gail Y. Okawa

When I began working at the University of Washington's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) Writing Center after years of teaching in higher education, I found myself revisiting the difficulty I had had as an Asian American undergraduate in learning the language and culture of academia. On the one hand, I found that students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, especially at a large research university like the UW, were often confronted by institutional indifference. On the other hand, these students had to confront their own anxiety about fitting into the academic discourse community. EOP Writing Center tutors and instructors thus have a complex charge in bridging the gap between the institution and the student population they serve.

Student diversity in the Educational Opportunity Program has many dimensions: ethnically students are from African American,

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Hispanic, Asian American, Pacific Islander, American Indian, and economically disadvantaged Caucasian backgrounds; linguistically, they're from as many as 20 language groups; economically, from those at the poverty line to those from the upper middle class; scholastically, from those who are academically erratic to those who are consistently successful. In age, they range from students just out of high school to returning adults. Most are non-traditional in a historical sense.

Conferencing with these students as a writing instructor, then recruiting and training our writing tutors, coordinating the writing center, and participating in the training of English Department graduate teaching assistants have taught me that such diversity can lead to a highly problematic environment plagued by cultural insensitivity, elitism, and text appropriation. I have also learned that *how* we empower these students to take an active role in their writing process has to do not only with the academic issue of text ownership but with our basic social and political assumptions about the student's right to be writing in the academy.

Reasonably confident writers who come to the writing center for collaborative feedback are less likely to raise such issues of authority and hierarchy because they are in the process of developing their individual voices. However, if we tutors and teachers continue to serve as authorities over the texts of "unempowered" writers (inexperienced voices), we are simply perpetuating the hierarchy of haves versus have nots. If, instead, we develop egalitarian rather than hierarchical relationships between ourselves and our students, if we arrive at ways of maintaining cultural respect and encouraging the greatest development of student potential, these writers may revise their attitudes toward their writing ability and their writing.

For non-traditional, ethnic minority, and working-class students, such collaborative relationships can be enhanced by shared experience and cultural sensitivity. As I have discussed in greater depth and detail in "'Diving In': Recruitment and training in a Multi-cultural Tutoring Program," we can maximize the possibility of such relationships developing in the writing center first by actively recruiting and hiring tutors to mirror the cultural, linguistic, gender, and class diversity of our students. In 1989-90, 86 percent of the EOP

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Writing Center tutors were students of color, and two-thirds were EOP or former EOP students.

But productive working relationships across ethnic, linguistic, and class lines do not occur or emerge magically. After we hire a multi-cultural contingent of tutors, we need to provide a training program to foster the tutors' critical awareness of willingness to grant writers the authority of text ownership. Precisely because of cultural, linguistic, and other differences among students, tutors, and teachers, training based on a liberatory model like Freire's is essential.

In the training/learning process that evolved in our program, I found that one major consideration, especially in a multi-cultural writing center, is this: both tutors and students come to each tutoring session with experience and expectations that are culturally based. As a trainer, I need to encourage writing tutors to develop an understanding of and respect for this situation. To develop such sensitivities, tutors must engage in various forms of critical reflection or inquiry that may include an exploration of their own assumptions, values, and world views—a process I call "self-discovering"—as well as those of their students. What I have learned in six years of working with tutors is that I must share in an ongoing process of critical reflection with them precisely because of my own cultural perspectives. To do this, I see myself, as well as our tutors, as teachers and learners/researchers. In a multi-cultural tutoring program such as this, I need to foster a sense of community rather than separation and competitiveness among the tutors, and between them and myself, so that we may support each other in this learning process. Thus, as much as possible, I use a collaborative, non-directive approach in training, modeling the reflective method that the tutors need to use with their students.

In addition, I provide some of the tools for critical reflection by posing questions regarding writing issues, tutoring methods, learning theories, academic culture, social and political issues, and events impacting education. We confront cultural issues directly, discussing stereotyping, differences in identity, world views, and ethnicity. In this regard, for instance, I ask tutors to read Bizzell's "What Happens to Basic Writers When They Come to College?" This article raises productive questions for some tutors (as Lucy demonstrates below);

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some reject Bizzell's conclusion as being too assimilationist and see her position as being the very root of the conflict. Above all, in seminars, conferences, and journal responses, I try to use positive feedback and validation of individual insights, learning styles, and insight into cultural differences to facilitate our mutual growth through the critic reflection process.

With such issues being of current concern, tutors from diverse backgrounds respond to the writers they tutor and their peers by making responsible choices. As Knoblauch and Brannon point out, it is important for teachers—and similarly tutors—to develop a conscious philosophical basis for their work because "nothing short of that consciousness will make instruction sensible and deliberate, the result of knowledge, not folklore, and, of design, not just custom or accident" (2). The following essays by Lucy Chang, a third-year tutor at the time, and Shana Windsor, a second-year tutor, reflect not only their personal struggles and successes through the process of critical reflection but also how their awareness of cultural and social issues allows them to work with student writers with greater perceptiveness and sensitivity.

The Spirit of Vision: Writing from the Inside/Outside
Lucy J. Y. Chang

When I was a child, my grandmother wove rich stories for me from old Korea. There was one particular Korean riddle about a lioness that perturbed me for years. You see, there was once a mother lioness who had three cubs. One of her cubs was lame, and she feared that if she should ever leave her cubs by themselves, the other two healthy cubs would kill and devour their lame sibling. One day, the lioness found a river to be crossed, and she sat to consider her dilemma. She wondered how to transport all three cubs across the river when she could only carry one cub at a time in her mouth. How does she finally take all three cubs across the river without exposing the lame cub to her siblings? This is where the story hung in unfinished suspension. My grandmother turned to face my dumbfounded expression, urging

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me, testing me to find the solution for this complex riddle. I was only eight years old, attending Haugan Elementary in Chicago, and this riddle haunted me for weeks. When my teacher asked all of us to write a poem and draw a picture beside it to hang on the wall for Parent's Day, I decided to write a poem about the cubs called "See How the Kittens Play." It unfolded with three cubs playing and pouncing on each other until, by the end of the poem, blood, fur, and dislocated paws remained where there had once been a lame cub. My teacher was horrified by this poem and consulted my parents about my abnormal state of mind. All I remember of this incident was that on Parent's Day, all my schoolmates' poems were lined up like trophies on the wall, all except mine. My hand had been slapped, and my medium of expression retreated deep inside like an insecurity. This was my first experience writing.

I reflect on this incident now and wonder what my world would be like if my teacher had validated and encouraged me that day instead of penalizing me. If only she could have understood the cultural context behind that poem and empathized with my child's reaction toward the lame cub. My teacher represented "Academia" at that age, and academia had no place for my stories. I found that it was easier to keep my home culture at home and to assimilate at school. I had decided that no one would hear about my stories again. Before I realized what I had done, I had erased my ethnicity. At school, I crinkled my little nose at the other Koreans who exposed their Korean ways to the world. I laughed at all of them.

As a sophomore at the University of Washington, I got the unique opportunity to start training as a tutor at the EOP Writing Center while simultaneously going into my first English major Chaucer class. In training seminars, Gail asked all of the tutors to examine our world views. This term had no meaning for me at the time. I labored over its possible meanings. In the seminars my fellow tutors spoke freely and openly about their experiences as ethnic entities. In time, I allowed the silent part of my cultural past to unfold through reflections encouraged in the seminar. My reflection led me back to my culture and to my grandmother's stories. My reflections taught me to value my heritage rather than to be ashamed of it as I had been before. While experiencing a reunion with my Korean culture,

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I entered my Chaucer class. As soon as I walked into the class which was taught in the Mechanical Engineering Building, I saw the tension in the curious eyes that turned toward me. I ignored them and waited patiently for the rest of the students to file in. At the sound of the bell, three Asian students stumbled into the room and found seats at all corners. As soon as the professor wrote the course title on the board, the Asian students looked at each other from across the room and then collectively rose from their seats to leave. At their untimely exit, the eyes now riveted onto me in expectation, and an intense silence followed. I cringed at the eyes of the students and the professor, for in their eyes I was an outsider who belonged outside.

Many of the students I speak with at the writing center feel the same way. They are the non-traditional students who are stuck outside of academia with their noses pressed to the window with little means of entry. I had participated as a non-ethnic student and believed that I could blend in and be a part of academia this way, but I was wrong. The Chaucer class incident proved this to me. If I hadn't had the power of cultural confidence that day, a confidence provided by the tutor training, I believe that I would have dropped out of the class and the discipline. In my "old state," I would have been handicapped by the accusing eyes turned to me. Instead, my culture wrapped me like a warm and comfortable blanket to stand up for who I am, to speak out with a louder voice than I had before. Working at the writing center with many students like me has taught me to examine the world around me as a Korean American, to validate my cultural perspective. In turn, by validating and acknowledging the world that the students see and live in, I am essentially empowering them to own their writing, own their experiences, and call their perspective their own and worth having. I believe that the ownership of these things produces powerful and visionary writers.

Last year, I conferenced with a Chinese woman, whom I will call Jenny, who illustrates the valuable new awareness I have attained. She had written a paper entirely in Chinese, and with her bible (her Chinese/English dictionary) she had translated the whole paper into English. The result was a chaotic dance of ten letter words. I came to understand the cultural reasoning behind this through conversation. First, in China a scholar's intellectual power is

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measured by the number of Chinese characters he or she knows, not by how coherently words are arranged as this particular assignment demanded. Second, the words she knew in English translated into something else, a distant relative of her initial thought. She believed that with one English word she could express everything she was feeling as she could with one Chinese character. Third, she believed that good writing was the kind that is found in textbooks, language that is condensed and lacking in emotion. The confusion and conflict began here. Last, her deficiency in English grammar was a huge insecurity. As a result, she took no responsibility for her writing, as a means of protecting herself from the shame of her grammatical mistakes. From this collective understanding, I believe that I was better equipped to facilitate her writing process.

In a journal entry I wrote shortly after this conference, I recall looking at myself, the student, and academia. I wrote,

> I think that one must have an internal structure capable of understanding one's own world view as well as acknowledging and empathizing with others. One must have the proper lenses (supplied through discussion, reading actively, and subjectively experiencing different world views and experiences) to "see" and "live." These lenses have empowered me. The crucial point though is that these empowering lenses are required in order for the teacher to empower students. Now with the new perception, I can move from my world view to a student's world view and in the process understand where and who I am in relation to this world and beyond.

To conclude, I would like to quote a notable Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. A student once asked him about how he writes and in what language, since he is fluent in so many. He said, "It's hard to differentiate words from experiences, the spirit of vision. It's language in a deeper sense. Our view of the world ... our conception of the world ... it is not just words." Achebe is telling us that writers are first and foremost involved with vision, not with words. I believe that writers, all writers, even those on the outside, must begin here, and the words will come.

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Writing and Tutoring with Bi-cultural Awareness
Shana R. Windsor

Before I began tutoring for the University of Washington's EOP Writing Center, my opinion of the role of a tutor was that a tutor was an editor, one who made a paper look and sound "better." By "better" I meant grammatically and academically "correct." And an academically correct paper was one which used complex language and rhetoric.

Therefore, writing in academically correct language, even in personal essays, was the only way in which I allowed myself to write. I did not put any of myself into my writing. What resulted was writing that came from my hand but was not my own. And the worst part was I didn't know why my writing didn't sound right to me or why I shied away from letting others read my writing. After all, all the commas and semi-colons were in the right places, so why shouldn't I feel comfortable with my writing?

I figured out through our tutor-training seminars exactly what part of myself was missing in my writing. I was allowing my culture, the part of my life that had taken over two decades to cultivate, to evaporate within a matter of months. And just as I had no idea that my writing did not reflect who I was, I was as totally unaware of my cultural suppression.

Upon reflection, I see that my reasoning behind my cultural suppression was that I thought my Indian reservation-type language was not appropriate in my new academic world. I felt that I had to leave my culture behind in order to be successful. What resulted instead of academic success was failure and no sense of belonging within my Indian culture as well as my new academic culture. Ironically, in merely trying to belong, I belonged nowhere. I felt I was the female version of Horatio Alger's "Ragged Dick" who, in gaining social status, gave up his heritage and ended up in loneliness and despair. I had in essence succeeded in doing exactly what Indian elders feared their young people will do when we go to college: I was not allowing my home culture to exist in hopes of gaining academic validation. Of course, what little academic success I had achieved

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dissipated. I spent so much energy trying to shed one world, it never occurred to me to consider that the two worlds which existed within me, despite my denial, could complement instead of contradict each other.

What was wrong with my writing, then, was not that I was trying to write in an academic context and couldn't, but that I was not allowing my quest for academic success to co-exist with my cultural values. And so, my writing was not genuine.

When I came to the writing center, I was amazed and shocked that others found my culture a valuable asset instead of a hindrance. This environment as well as our training seminars taught me to embrace my culture. I remember our writing center director, the designer and implementor of our tutor-training seminars, making a distinction between her academic language and the pidgin English she sometimes slips into whenever she visits her Japanese family in Hawaii. I remember her stating that pidgin is not wrong or improper, just different and appropriate at different times. Her experience comes to mind whenever I visit my own family and slip into "reservation talk." My language isn't bad but a reflection of my own culture's communication. I've come to view my home language as precious, not something to be suppressed or forgotten.

Academically, our tutor-training seminars emphasize a fundamental belief that both writing and tutoring are culturally based, and I realize more and more just how unique this philosophy is. We find that no matter how hard one tries, his or her writing and/or tutoring styles will reflect cultural beliefs and norms; we've learned to respect those beliefs regardless of our own. We call our method the "Hands-off" approach. In addition to literally keeping our hands off the student's papers, we respect the writer's concept of personal space, keep our dialogue as open as possible, and constantly reinforce in the writer that the work is his or her own. I tutored a young Vietnamese immigrant who wanted me to "Americanize" her paper for her. She didn't say this in so many words, but she insisted on writing down everything I said—verbatim. I tried to explain to her that it was her paper and she should write her own thoughts and ideas rather than mine. But she said that the way I said things sounded so much better, and she wanted to write them down so she

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could remember them later to help her speak better.

When I told her that I didn't speak that way all the time, she seemed puzzled. I explained that I spoke differently, less formally and grammatically, when I was with my family, but that was okay. I didn't have to change my language completely, just at certain times when it was necessary. She seemed to understand, for she was a lot more at ease, and she did not write down my words for the remainder of the conference. At the end of the conference, she asked me when I worked next so we could work together again.

The most important part of the "Hands-off" style of tutoring is that it lets the writer know that the way he or she chooses to manipulate language is a personal statement about the writer, no matter how formal the text is. The writer knows, then, that the text is his or her own and that no one has the right to infringe upon that space. With that sense of ownership comes a sense of validity and empowerment. The student is no longer a student attempting to write, but a genuine writer with the power to write academically in a style that does not conflict with his or her culture.

Experiencing not only cultural suppression but also the acceptance of my cultural world's necessity to interact with my academic world, I feel I am a more effective tutor. I have developed an empathy for those who seem to be struggling with the dilemma of bi-culturality. In recognizing my own writing style, I now recognize that other styles of writing exist and are just as valid. Moreover, those styles deserve respect for what they are and encouragement for improvement in their own right or context. And in recognizing my culture's right to exist within academia, I have not only developed a pride for who I am but a strength to express—and encourage others to express—their own cultural ideals, beliefs, and values.

Tutor Training at California State University, Chico's Writing Center

Thomas Fox

In 1986, California State University (CSU), Chico's English Department called me up and said they wanted to interview me for a

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job as coordinator of their writing center. 1 had read Stephen North and Kenneth Bruffee, but, frankly, I was worried (unnecessarily, as it turns out) that I would be asked to direct a "comma clinic." I held strong views about attending to meaning in writing; I believed that writing could be liberating and empowering; and I didn't want to participate in what Mike Rose has called "the mania for correctness." In my own writing classes, I had studied the ways that educational, cultural, and social hierarchies inhibited students' use of writing for liberation (most students seemed to see writing as a means of coercion), enforced a formalist agenda of correctness over the force of meaning, and functioned to exclude non-mainstream students instead of empower them.

I wondered, in an eighties revival of sixties rhetoric, which side writing centers were on. So I read more, and I was inspired by the real opportunities writing centers offer for democratic education. Two ideals in particular influenced me. One is Kenneth Bruffee's well-known exploration of collaborative learning, especially the idea of a "status equal" conversation. The second vision that I found inspiring was Tilly Warnock and John Warnock's article "Liberatory Writing Centers." I saw in their work an enactment of the values that I held in teaching writing. They described a writing center where authority worked communally, where the director, teachers, tutors, and students were at once teachers and learners. Fortunately, Chico's writing center had a progressive history and a supportive administration.

These visions of writing centers work for us, in Giroux's words, as a language of possibility. Tied to this ideal we also focus on, again to borrow Giroux's phrase, the language of critique. The tutor-training program in CSU, Chico asks tutors to react critically on how social and education inequalities affect writing and learning. While keeping our goal of democratic learning firmly in place, tutors and I explore how the institution around us is shot through with actual hierarchies and habits of hierarchies and how we more easily fall into these habits than into a truly democratic writing center, no matter whether the tables are round or square. There are the obvious hierarchies of educational level and status: director-teacher-tutor-student. In my center these levels correspond to the letters after

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one's name—PhD, MA, BA, or upper division, and no letters. We even have finer distinctions. We employ two graduate assistants who, despite their efforts, are seen as "super tutors"; we have those tutors who have graduated from the tutor-training course and are "paid tutors," receiving money for what they do; and finally, we have those tutors who are still in training, receiving only college credits for their efforts.

These are educational hierarchies; they are endemic to schools, colleges, and universities. There are also social hierarchies, the ones that stratify privilege, status, and opportunity along the lines of gender, class, race, and cultural background, sexual orientation, and in other ways. Disturbingly, for those who wish education to serve democratic ends, these social and political hierarchies correspond to the educational ones. I'll hold my own center up as an example. The director is a white male; the teachers are also white, but exclusively women; the tutors are mostly white, but with heavy recruitment we've increased tutors of color—we went from zero to six (we employ nearly forty tutors); finally, the students we serve are predominately students of color, about equally divided among African American, Latino, and Asian, with a minority of white students. So the hierarchies of our culture are unfortunately, but not surprisingly, reflected in the hierarchies of our personnel. Reading excerpts from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, particularly his exploration of banking vs. problem-posing education, helps tutors develop senses of authority that rest on knowledge and experience and not solely on social class or institutional "position" (i.e., being hired as a tutor).

We are, of course, working very hard to recruit and retain a diverse teaching staff to reflect the diversity of our students. In the meantime, the make-up of our personnel does not prevent us from teaching and tutoring democratically; it just makes it harder because in our case cultural hierarchies reinforce educational ones. This fact makes it more necessary that we are fully conscious of the hierarchies that surround us, conscious of the ways that we can resist their power.

That's why critical reflection is at the core of my tutor-training program. Through team journals, papers, and presentations, I ask my students to observe the hierarchies that surround us in order

to get at the question: What are the politics of tutoring? Students write, read, and wrestle with the difficult questions of assimilation, resistance, and social and educational change. The readings I assign reflect the concerns of social and cultural inequalities. We read Paulo Freire on how all education is political, Dale Spender, Richard Ohmann, Geneva Smitherman-Donaldson, and John Ogbu on how gender, class, and race affect language use, and we read Mike Rose on how institutional history and politics shape our conceptions of writing, especially remedial writing. Tutors reflect on these readings, thinking about how these discourses shape themselves and their students. These readings give shape to the exploration of tutors' own educational histories. For instance, when they see John Ogbu's point that school success for some African American students represents a threat to their social identity, they also ask themselves how school success changed their own identities. We try not to lose sight of the possibilities that accompany these critiques, asking how could the institution change so that students do not feel like they have to give up their social identity to be successful. How can the writing center help? Students see how, on the micro-political level, the writing center can work toward legitimizing the experiences and voices of students from all cultures. But they also know from their own academic experience that the success of this work does not rest on the work of writing centers alone. We learn from our own academic histories and those of our students that for most students of color, higher education remains a problematic mix that is insensitive and sometimes opposed to marginalized students. We have to face, finally, that we work with the contradictions of being both within and against our institution. While the writing center can promote democratic ways of learning about writing, we have an obligation to work outside the center, too, on the institution as a whole. Faculty forums, writing-across-the-curriculum programs, tutoring programs that are housed in academic departments all are possible ways to expand the influence of the writing center.

Critical reflection of experience and the educational and social structures around us give tutors a chance to play an important role in arguing for more democratic universities. When tutors reflect on and define their own role in a multi-cultural writing center and explore the

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relationship between a progressive writing center and a conservative university, they gain a sense of control over the interpretation of their experience. This control can lead to action both within and without the writing center. The two essays by CSU, Chico tutors that follow help show this kind of reflection.

To Hell with Nonsense: Literacy, Meaning, and Ethnocentrism
Frank Bella Chavez, Jr.

I felt really excited when Tom and others recruited me for English 231, CSU, Chico's tutor-training course. After the initial glow wore off, I began to doubt my abilities and wondered what I had gotten myself into this time. I geared myself up with the idea that I would struggle through the grammar rules in marathon memory sessions and make good. I consoled myself with the thought that at least I would be a "grammar expert" after the class was finished. Was I surprised when I realized that Tom wasn't running a "grammar" class.

Additionally, more enjoyable surprises included the open democratic atmosphere in which different issues were discussed. I especially enjoyed the frank discussions about minorities and women. Being treated as an individual was great. I could see the recognition that I wasn't white, and I wasn't expected to know everything about minorities either. And yes, I often sat in class wondering what other people were talking about until I realized that I had better start worrying about what I was talking about. What I briefly want to go into more deeply is the personal relevance I felt about the lesson we learned in class dealing with connecting literacy with meaning when tutoring basic writers and the importance of tutors understanding the role of value conflicts between themselves and their students. I'll first look at literacy being separated from meaning in my life, and then I'll look at an experience with my students.

During the first few weeks of the semester, Tom gave us an approach to use in tutoring. We regularly critically evaluated our experiences with it. We were to (1) understand and communicate to the basic writers that they had valid, worthwhile, interesting

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experiences to write about; (2) get the basic writers to begin thinking about writing to convey meaning and purpose, saying something that matters to someone who matters—writing as citizenship, as Tom (after David Bleich) calls it; (3) use problem posing as the technique to emphasize meaning. This is done by proceeding from what the students actually write and questioning why they wrote what they wrote and why they wrote it in that particular way. This is based on the understanding that the student has chosen a subject on purpose and with a definite idea of who the audience is. Problem posing helps the students distinguish between their own intentions and that of their teacher or tutor. It helps the students become aware of why they are doing what they are doing. Knowing why will give them more control over the writing process.

Tom's approach was different from the one I had thought of as correct. The other approach focuses on mechanical correctness as the starting point and guiding principle. As I critically examined these two approaches, I prepared to write a final paper that grew from my experiences in class, my tutoring, the readings, and my observations about writing and learning. Then an experience from my junior high school days came back to me and at last fell into place.

When I was in ninth grade, like so many other minority youths I was well on my way to dropping out of school. I was filled with confusion and feelings of inferiority and meaninglessness. Besides adolescent problems, I had racial problems that bothered me. When we first moved to Oakland, I was a child and remember getting out of the car with my father to see about renting a place. The owner told us that he only rented to whites. Incidents like these had built up in my life and taught me that my family and I were not only different but we were despised as well. As some Irish phrase it, "They scorn us just for being what we are." Doubt, fear, and hostility filled me. I couldn't reconcile any of this with being an American nor with getting an education. I saw education as a way to become more like "them." That was the last thing I wanted to be. Why not go to work and at least make some money like some people I knew. I began skipping class regularly.

One day I went to English class. The teacher gave us an abridged edition of Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* to read. As I read the book, a

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thrilling experience happened to me. I became totally engrossed in the story. I could see the characters. With all my heart I followed the life of the main character Jean Valjean, a man convicted of stealing a loaf of bread to feed his hungry sister and her children and sentenced to become a galley slave. I saw how he took good care of himself as a slave, and I wanted to take good care of myself. I thoroughly enjoyed his escape from slavery and the way he eluded the police. I marveled at his strength, courage, and determination. I saw him help the young girl Cosette. Victor Hugo's stand on the side of the oppressed moved me deeply and became a glorious beacon for me. I wanted to scream out the name of Jean Valjean and, along with Victor Hugo, announce to the world that wherever man, woman, or child was oppressed and ignorant to let their story be told. I knew there would be a time when the teacher and I would connect on the joy and meaning that the book had brought me. I just knew she had assigned the book because she understood what I was going through.

We weren't allowed to take the books home because the teacher was afraid they might get lost, stolen, or damaged. The book had to be read in class, so we had to show up to read it. I arrived every day so I could continue reading the story. I looked forward to going to school and figured that while I was there I might as well attend my other classes.

In English class I remember trying to bring up how much the book meant to me. The teacher informed me that we were there to "improve our English grammar" and that is what we had to focus on. She had already decided what we were to do and discuss, and there was no changing it. She drew lines on the board and talked about what I now know to be grammar terminology and sentence diagrams. I vaguely felt I was being required to become too much like those who hated and despised my family and me. I wanted to scream that Mexicans, Indians, and Filipinos needed to become Jean Valjeans. I remember low grades on my papers because of grammar errors. I saw no connection between learning the grammar and my images from the book, nor with my life for that matter. I flunked that English class. I felt that perhaps even the bright spot created in my life by the book was a sign of my inferiority and hopelessness. The following year I was kicked out of school, and the school authorities stamped

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"dropped out" on my records.

I couldn't figure out why such a joyful story produced such a sour class experience until I pondered the matter of connecting literacy and meaning. There was a conflicting intention in that classroom: mechanical correctness vs. meaning. That book produced major meaning which lasted the rest of my life. For turning me on to it, I owe the teacher a debt of gratitude. But I've also learned a lesson that I think can help basic writers. Basic writers have valid, worthwhile, and interesting experiences to write about. They can say something that matters to someone who matters. Through problem posing, teachers and tutors can help connect these experiences to mechanical correctness.

However, insights into my past experience wasn't all there was to my learning as a tutor. As I tutored, I found myself in a similar situation to my ninth grade English teacher. This time the shoe was on the other foot. This time I was in a position of being able to help someone else out or not. I developed a problem with certain eating customs of the Asian students I tutored in a basic writing class taught by Kate Hulbert, an instructor in CSU, Chico's English department. Luckily for my learning experience this matter was dealt with in Kate's class. She is really great at drawing out the different questions and points of view for discussion of touchy subjects.

It began with a lab assignment where the students had to describe a feast they had participated in which was non-traditional. My job was to help them describe it better. The problem began with the narration of an illegal meal. A student's paper told of his going to a restaurant with friends in Hong Kong. A small, screaming, tied-up monkey was brought out. In plain view of the diners, its head was cracked open with a hammer. Boiling oil was then poured into the cracked skull. Then the cooked brains were served to the customers. I had been unfamiliar with this practice. It caught me off guard. I tried to regain my composure and carry out the assignment of helping the student to better describe the feast. I got out a few questions like "What color was the monkey?" and "What color were the brains?" and "What did it smell like?" But I knew something was bothering me because my brain was rapidly tightening up on me.

We discussed the matter in Kate's class. She described the back

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of a restaurant in China where her son was taken to choose a dish for dinner. In cages were dogs and monkeys among other things. The discussion moved away from the monkeys, which the Asian students didn't seem to be interested in, and focused on dogs. "Well, aren't dogs more intelligent than other animals?" I asked, meaning I didn't like the idea of eating them, though it would be all right to eat animals of less intelligence. Kate asked me, if by the same token, we should use the level of intelligence as a criterion for killing humans, the answer being obvious.

What followed was a distinctly stern rebuke from the Asian student about the put-down they receive for eating dog. They pointed out that there was basically no difference in eating beef, pig, and dog. They were all meat. I was reminded that people in India find the eating of cows abhorrent. Later outside of class, the student who brought up the monkey brains example told me that Americans needed to know that such things exist. He said in some parts of Indonesia fried cockroach is eaten. It didn't sound appetizing to him but he knew it existed. I think that what he meant by "knowing that some things exist" is that ethnocentric Americans should realize that other people receive a sense of pride and dignity from what they do and won't be dropping their cultural habits nor hating themselves in order to conform to American's disdainful attitudes.

In the days that followed, I continued to discuss this matter and found much to think about. Gradually my brain loosened up on me. I thought about all of the racial slurs and acts of violence directed against Asians that I have heard of. I thought about my own experiences. I seemed to hear the same defiant note from the Asian students that I have made to protest unjust treatment directed against me and people I care for. I realized that the Asian students were expressing the pride and dignity of their own cultural and historical experiences, their own worth as human beings. Bringing this into focus was as important to them as being a Jean Valjean had been to me. I realized that while I didn't have to practice the customs of others, I needed to understand what was going on with their lives. I also thought about how many of these Asian students fight the natural elements and armed political tyrants and pirates to get to America only to be hassled by some racist white, black, or brown

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American when they get here. Playing the indignant ethnocentrist with these students and cramping my tutoring style didn't make a lot of sense. I'd rather continue helping them with any tutoring skills I have.

In conclusion, all I can say is that dealing with the matter of connecting literacy with meaning in tutoring basic writers and continuing to help students with cultural and historical backgrounds different from my own has been personally relevant. Critically examining my experiences as a writer and tutor has given me insights I appreciate. I still feel glad and excited that I was recruited into tutoring even though Tom's class wasn't a class on mechanical correctness.

Tutoring as Rehumanization
LaGuan Hayes

Becoming a tutor in CSU, Chico's Writing Center gave me the opportunity to reflect on the major changes that have occurred in me and in my attitudes toward writing over the last three years. There are few remaining similarities, in style or complexity, between my freshman self and my present self. My freshman theory of how to accomplish satisfactory writing was that you write for clarity and correctness and you mimic the authors you read for style. This may have contributed to my frustration with my writing—I possessed no originality with thoughts or ideas; I merely retold things I heard or read. I learned to write this way in general education courses that required research papers with specified numbers of words.

Although I wrote very little in high school, I still kept a diary, of no great volume, which spoke of little more than love, delirium, and what concerns hormone-stricken teenagers. I read very little, as well, though I prided myself on my not-too-shabby vocabulary and knack for spelling. My entrance into college was dependent upon performance in the Equal Opportunity Program/Educational Equity Services "Summer Bridge" program, a program designed to ease the transition from high school to college for disadvantaged students. I experienced few problems passing their curriculum, having a desire

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fueled by a mixture of hate, contempt, restlessness, and an undying sense of idealism. The hate and contempt was for authority. Authority placed expectations on me that couldn't be reconciled with my own self-made expectations. Without turning this into a needless autobiography, I'll just say that I maintained conflicting standards, values, and world views due to growing up in an environment of poverty, drugs, and a broken family.

Encountering the university required a toning down of my honesty about that environment. Eventually I learned that honesty was unbecoming in certain social contexts; people's ears were usually not primed for different points of view. So I suppressed a real aspect of my writing--the confusion resulting from growing up in that environment. On those occasions that welcomed it, I wrote out of my true feelings because writing helped me to do away with the alienation that the conflict between past and present was creating for me.

But those occasions were rare in school. Mostly I found that writing had an advantage over unrehearsed speaking because there was time to think about it. It gave me a chance to impress the teacher with big words and lies. My writing became far removed from my system of language or aspirations. The lie was becoming the teacher, for the teacher was the literature. In a sense, I disguised myself in the language the instructor and the literature put forth.

I chose English as a major partly from the disgust my earlier majors left me with. I wanted to get away from the whole scheme of making a living of making money. English presented me an opportunity to express my selfish, introverted, and cynical self with the power only the written word could harbor, power that I needed. If nothing else came of my education, I would at least be literate. In English classes, my writing was allowed a much freer discourse; I was to react to literature, give an opinion, or elaborate on the prevalent one. Between you and me, a few English teachers thought my papers were "good"; thus, I thought I had a chance of succeeding in the university doing something in a decent fashion.

When I heard of the tutoring program, my curiosity was only slightly piqued. I had developed my views of how writing was done. At this particular point in my college career, "really good writing" was

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this sense of originality, being brilliant. Where it came from was not to be discussed, for who knew where it came from? Even after taking a few creative writing classes I was left with this incomplete idea of how you become a "good writer." Good writing certainly could be recognized, though it could not be explained or taught to someone else. I thought that those people who had problems with writing were in need of more time spent with grammar, reading, and vocabulary.

I was lucky to have a counselor, Susan Pereira, who was responsible for a newfound belief in myself at this particular stage in my college experience. Her degree of concern, without condescension, overwhelmed me. I came to trust her as a counselor and friend and valued her opinion of me. When she told me to tutor, that I could do it, I was awestruck. Here I was, as disillusioned as could be, receiving an invitation to perform an invaluable service.

I had other doubts. As a tutor, how do you keep your biases from dictating someone else's creativity or style? I could see no point in influencing someone's manner of writing with my own ideas—I am not an expert. I did not even see myself as a competent writer or student for that matter. Much of my prior education had been regurgitating, remembering, and forgetting, all with an accompanying indecisiveness about what I was to do with my English major. I had no intentions of teaching, for all my streaks of benevolence had been wiped out.

I purposely tried to summon up mental images of myself performing with my best characteristics to the fore. Maybe my intuition, flexibility, and skin color would be attributes that would serve me best. Though I knew it would be hard to maintain, I wanted to be a perfectionist in the tutoring sessions. The preliminary dread and anxiety came to a head the week before tutoring. I wanted to make no mistakes in the fragile situation of tutoring other students. A lot of pressure was taken off me during the first few seminars when we read Paulo Freire's "Reading the Word and the World." Tutoring was to be a collaborative process where the tutor would be tutored as he or she learned or learned anew. I would not need to represent the entire body of knowledge or the only body of knowledge. My place was not to grade, but instead to facilitate and enhance understanding of the instructor's assignments. And what

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little experience I had before tutoring validated me as someone who knew what good writing was. Grammar took a back seat to what was meaningful, substantial, critical, analytical, and thought-provoking in writing. I ceased viewing "good" writing as something the muse or some ethereal force gave to unsuspecting souls. It would not be elusive or indescribable, instead learnable and explainable.

I came to enjoy the tutoring aspect of the course the best. The students had little idea of how they were rehumanizing me. My cynicism faded in their presence.

Sometimes they would ask what it was like being an English major. I'm sure my responses made it seem like I was partaking in an ordeal. Having thought about it, my English experience had changed. Before, I was alone with the literature I dealt with. Romantic, Victorian, and Modern were titles that were interchangeable to me at first. The literature I read had little practical application and was not nearly as important as the literature my tutoring group read. I was not reading it only for myself; others depended on me. Even if I came away from the reading with a limited perspective, I would be able to bounce it off others in order to generate different understandings. They were the deciding factors in this experience, and I wanted them to succeed because I would succeed through them.

Their writing was made good by meaning and "realness," and correctness was an attribute that could be added later. While I had thought my writing skills were unsatisfactory, they were not. My early career was a real struggle and I am still evolving now. Members of my tutoring groups were encountering those areas I had already passed through. I was helping them to become original, proficient, and brilliant in their own eyes. I began to think of my writing in a more hopeful light than before: I was thinking about it. So as I struggled with their papers in an effort to understand what was going on in their minds, I began to think about what was going on in my mind.

I thought my being black would bring about some resentment in certain people. Oddly enough, I think I dwelled on this a little too much and, needlessly, ended up acting quirky and ill at ease. I had this weird idea that I would not get the respect needed from the people I tutored; I was wrong.

Being black is one thing. Thinking about it in order to find out

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where you stand is a different thing. There is such a thing as what Ogbu describes as oppositional identity and, as well, a reactionary system developed by minorities. To a certain extent, black people still think that white people are trying to pull a fast one. Certain words are said only in the company of black people; this is what the Pan African Union (the black student organization) is for. The writing center has presented itself as one place where I am neither white-washed nor a token and can get on with my education. Racism and prejudice have taken up enough of my time.

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