

**Sonia Nieto (Ed.). *Why We Teach Now*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. (2015). 276 pp. \$29.95 (paperback). (ISBN 978-0-8077-5587-7)**

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SONIA NIETO (Ed.). *Why We Teach Now*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. (2015). 276 pp. \$29.95 (paperback). (ISBN 978-0-8077-5587-7).

Teaching and learning after the implementation of the *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB, 2002) has increased teacher accountability through greater amounts of testing and the standardization of the core curriculum. Approximately 40-50% of teachers are exiting the profession after five years, citing dissatisfaction, lack of respect, and poor administrative support as the main reasons for high teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2012). As a result of the high level of American teachers leaving the teaching profession, Sonia Nieto (2005) published a compilation of stories called *Why We Teach*. *Why We Teach* sought to increase teacher accountability, featuring stories from 25 teachers with varied amounts of experience (1-35+ years) prior to the implementation of the NCLB act. *Why We Teach Now* serves as a follow-up to Nieto (2005), focusing on the impact that the NCLB act has had on teachers. *Why We Teach* (Nieto, 2005) asked teachers what motivated them to teach, despite the pressure to maintain test scores and teach a highly standardized curriculum. Nieto (2005) gathered perspectives from 23 teachers at various stages of their career, as well as teachers who have retired and/or left the profession, and discovered that teachers continued to teach simply because they wanted to make a difference in the lives of future generations. The desire to make a difference has been labeled as the *discourse of possibility*, a way of thinking critically but hopefully about teaching and learning in the quest for equality and social justice (pp. 10-11). Even though all 23 teachers featured in this book teach in different contexts, they shared a deep passion and commitment to teaching and belief in the power that teaching has to sustain a democratic society and transform the lives of their students.

In Part 1 (Chapter 1), the authors provide context regarding the challenges facing public education as a result of the NCLB act, focusing on how the work of teachers has been hindered as a result of a renewed emphasis on testing. The rise of poverty and inequity are cited as the root cause of failure in American schools, while standardized testing and privatization were seen as attempts by stakeholders and government to increase academic performance. Nieto argues

that despite these difficulties, it is the perfect time for new teachers to enter the profession, as teachers who are willing to work for and on behalf of their students can have an enormous impact on the personal and academic success of future generations. After the first chapter, each section is divided up into parts encompassing a specific theme; each chapter within the different themes detailed a different teachers' experience. In Part 2 (Chapters 2-4), the authors look at the experiences of three retired teachers, specifically examining their careers in education, what they were able to accomplish, and whether they would still choose to teach, given the current situation. In Part 3 (Chapters 5-7), the authors look at how four teachers' identities were shaped by their role in society, including their families, cultural identities or individual experiences. In Part 4 (Chapters 8-11), four teachers write about hope and how they have maintained hope in their profession – four teachers write about how they sustained hope in spite of the challenges they faced. In part five (Chapters 12-15), the authors examine how, in the case of four teachers, teaching acts as an experience that heals both teachers and students. The last two parts (Chapters 16-24) revisit the idea of critical discourse by looking at activism and teachers who motivate political action in their classroom as well as the impact of looking back in order to look forward. In conclusion, in this book, Nieto brings together the experiences of the teachers, showing that teachers continue to teach because they feel a sense of responsibility towards their students. In addition, she emphasizes the desire for social justice in the classroom with the intent to help build a community of young people who will aim to change the world.

Notably, this book provides motivation for teachers in all stages of their career. The struggle for all contributors was visceral, as they were clearly very passionate about fighting, not just for the students, but also for the communities in which they taught. Maintaining these communities was not only essential for learning, but also for personalizing the experience of students in a way that could be understood and supported by individuals in the students' lives outside of the classroom. Regardless of background, the book relays the message that teachers who are remembered are not the ones who just show their students amazing things, but who helped them see something amazing in themselves (p. 27). In addition, contributors provide a realistic outline of the challenges teachers face in the classroom, mainly detailing the all-encompassing nature of the profession. The political, ethnic, and personal diversity among the stories make each section relatable to teachers who may teach in more challenging environments.

To provide relevance for Canadian readers, further re-contextualization of the NCLB program is recommended as Canada is not under the legislation of the NCLB. At least 38% of first year teachers in Ontario are unemployed, with more than half of new teachers having to go abroad to find regular teaching work (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014). The ongoing struggle for Canadian

teachers to find employment serves as a meaningful and reflective context for aspiring teachers to question why they have chosen to teach and may motivate them to keep searching, despite the difficulties that are presented in terms of employment.

*Why We Teach Now* is particularly useful for teacher candidates, as well as teachers who are transitioning to a different age division or subject. In addition, this book serves as a valuable resource for researchers who are examining the impact of the NCLB act and contributes to future educational research that will determine the influence it will have had on the education system.

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