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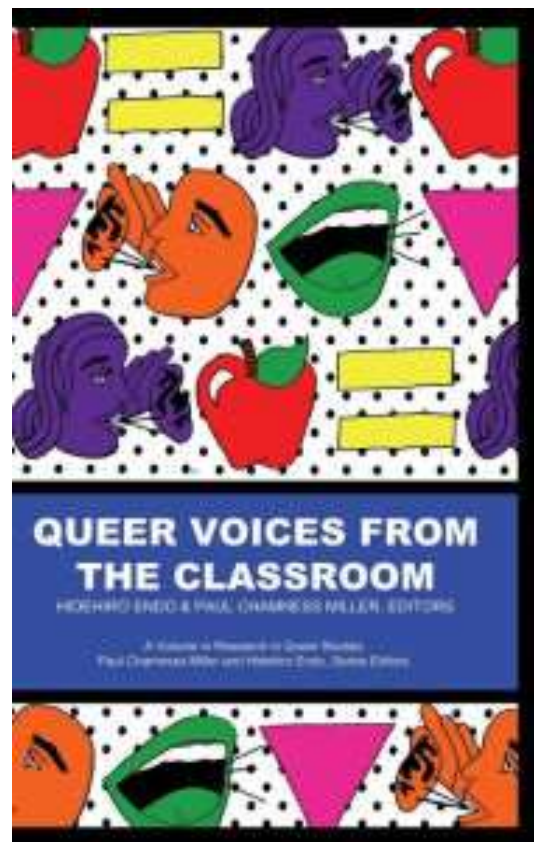
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Queer Voices from the Classroom shares the stories of 23 teachers and administrators who negotiate their Queer identities in school settings on a daily basis. Storytellers of diverse genders and sexualities share their past and current experiences of trials, tribulations, struggles and victories as individuals and as educational leaders. Future visions for equitable societal and educational systems are articulated by many, if not all, the writers. These Queer teachers and administrators seek to transform educational systems to become more inclusive of and supportive of students, peoples, and communities of multiple and diverse identities. As they share about their Queer identities and experiences, writers also highlight the intersections of their diverse racial, gender, socio-economic, and differently abled identities and experiences.

The stories found throughout the book underscore the ways in which teachers and administrators are often forced to silence their Queer identities in school settings. Although schools proclaim themselves to be



family friendly environments that support students and communities of diverse backgrounds, schools often do not allow Queer teachers and administrators to openly share information regarding their Queer partners and personal lives. Personal stories accentuated the ways in which teachers and administrators do not feel comfortable and safe disclosing their Queer identities because they fear the loss of their jobs and the degradation of their esteemed reputations. As some teachers and administrators noted, they felt the need to keep their Queer life separate from their school life and unable to bring their partners to school events or showcase family photos in their classrooms.

Coming out is a lifelong process not only for students, but for teachers and administrators who often do not know how others will react when learning about their Queer identities. The contributing authors demand that school settings be more inclusive and supportive of not only Queer students, but Queer teachers and administrators as well. Throughout the book, teachers and administrators articulated their longing to fully express themselves in the classroom and become Queer mentors and possibility-models for kids who often do not have Queer mentors. The writers seek to support Queer students because Queer students should be able to explore the depth of their unique identities without fear, judgment, or penalty.

Since many of the writers were bullied when they were young, some of the writers' desires to become teachers was rooted in their heartfelt passion to make schools a safer place for kids who find themselves bullied and/or isolated. Although bullying stereotypically occurs during youth, several of the contributing teachers and administrators shared their own experiences of harassment directed at their Queer identities during adulthood from students and/or colleagues. Queer teachers and administrators recounted how they were made to feel inferior, invisible, and isolated in school setting when their own students and administrators would tease them.

Some teachers express the ways in which they are being bullied, other teachers describe the ways in which they are taking back their power when expressing themselves as openly Queer through dress and dialogues in school environments. A high ranking administrator speaks about wearing a suit and tie in order to be openly read as Queer by students, parents, and colleagues. Since many of the writers were forced to hide or silence their Queer identities when they were young, as teachers and administrators, they resist marginality when openly sharing the ways in which they are embracing their Queer identities in order to become possibility-models for Queer youth.

Through the stories in this book, Queer teachers and administrators seek to dismantle heterosexist environments and instead seek to cultivate school environments that not only include, but honor diverse identities. Since many students, especially Queer students, experience low self-esteem and isolation, Queer teachers and administrators seek to challenge systemic school policies that often silence and degrade Queer identities. For example, teachers and administrators seek to create age appropriate curriculums that teach about Queer identities and how K-12 subjects impact diverse communities which include Queer communities. Additionally, heterosexual proms that encourage the selection of one prom king and one prom queen along with acceptance of straight relationships and punishing of Queer relationships were critiqued by the writers who envision school activities moving beyond binary norms. Writers seek systemic changes when declaring the need for not only students to be educated about Queer issues, but for their professional colleagues to learn about Queer identities and issues.

Queer Voices from the Classroom provides an excellent glimpse into the personal narratives, past experiences, current lives, and future visions of Queer teachers and administrators. Stories of anguish, longing, fulfillment, and desire depict the diversity of experiences of Queer educational leaders. The

stories share a common theme of demanding equity for students of diverse genders and sexualities as well as for all people who have felt bullied, isolated, and/or silenced by individuals, groups, and societal systems and structures of oppression, including schools. The writers emphasize the critical need to incorporate Queer identities, issues, and studies into K-12 curriculums in order to advance social justice for all people.

Although I appreciated all of the stories shared in this book because they represent the personal struggles and victories of Queer teachers and administrators, I was left seeking voices, intersectional voices that were left out. Since the majority of hate crimes are directed towards Transgender and Queer People of Color, I expected this book to share more stories that focused on the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability. Since few stories mentioned the intersections of race, class, and ability, I encourage future storytellers to write about the intersectional, multiple, fluid, and complex identities of students, teachers, and administrators. As intersectionality scholars argue, race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability are interwoven, connected, simultaneous, and inseparable. Therefore it is important for writers and storytellers to narrate their experiences from their unique positionality as Queer teachers and administrators as well as from their other multiple, fluid, and interconnected identities


and backgrounds. I specifically hope more transgender, two spirit, androgynous, pansexual, polyamorous, and/or asexual voices will be explored by future writers.

Since close to 90% of LGBTQ who face violence are People of Color, it is also critical for future writers and storytellers to include the experiences, struggles, and victories of Transgender and Queer People of Color. Writers can expand upon the issues LGBTQ encounter and connect these issues to the struggles People of Color encounter. Storytellers need not only to share their experiences in the classroom, but to create action plans to transform the systems and policies that impact their classrooms. I call for Queer teachers and administrators to build coalitions among multiple communities to advance not only Queer issues in education and society, but multiple critical issues which predominantly impact Transgender and Queer People of Color such as school discipline, school to prison pipeline, police violence, incarceration, poverty, hunger, homelessness, mental health, domestic violence, immigration, deportation, and more. Just as the inspiration for this book revolves around need to include, instead of silence, queer teacher identities and voices in the classroom, it also inspires us to expand the voices telling the stories and use the stories as a call to action.

About the Reviewer

Paulina Abustan is a Queer Pinay scholar-activist and doctoral student of Washington State University's Ph.D. in Cultural Studies and Social Thought in Education program. She studies the dynamics and intersections of race, gender, and sexuality in education and society. Her research focuses on the ways in which K-12 and higher education teachers and leaders can become allies to students of diverse identities, especially Transgender and Queer Youth of Color.



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