The on campus community, surrounding local community, national community, and global community are not disparate and do not function in isolation. Rather, these communities and the populations that occupy the spaces and the roles in them are symbiotic. Recognizing these boundaries while learning to operate across them by being contextually aware and building healthy relationships with a collaborative spirit, is a delicate but necessary function for the authentic adult, community, and professional educator.

Thus, I am beholden to the belief that “when we want to help people learn, we must use all three aspects: ideas, feelings, and actions” of dialogue education (Vella, 2002, p. 150). Though, some argue that one’s identity, personal values, feelings, politics, and belief systems have no place in our active role as educators and therefore, must be appropriately separated from the learning process. However, I problematize that notion. For one cannot profess to be an arbiter of transformative education, and yet, pretend that those aspects of who we are and where we are, do not impact how we learn or teach. Moreover, culture and context impact learning because of the “importance of context and social interaction as determinants of the learning that takes place. And context and social interactions are culturally and politically defined” (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 118). Though academic institutions of higher education are not always seen as overtly political, they have been and remain rooted in a system of social networks, which indeed makes them political (Foucault, 1983). So, it is this conundrum that shall be a point of focus in my analysis.

Using autoethnography, I will examine the journey of reconciling my educator-activist self through my experiences within my university community in hope of understanding the following: how does an educator-activist negotiate the standards of propriety and the subsequent implications for not adhering to those prescribed standards when engaging in activism? Is it necessary to displace the sociocultural, political self when working in a higher education institution? And if one fails to facilitate transformative learning experiences that openly recognize and address disparities, inequities, and oppressive experiences through authentic dialogue, then are they, too, complicit in its propagation?

Because I will use autoethnography informed by the epistemological framework of Black Feminist Thought (BFT), I will analyze my concrete subjective experiences while unapologetically professing my dual role as an educator-activist. As an educator-activist in the Black Lives Movement, my intersectional identity as a Black woman and consequent marginalization are integral to my activism. This marriage is seamlessly couched in BFT, as outlined by Patricia Hill Collins (2000) who posits:

Black feminism remains important because U.S. Black women constitute an oppressed group. As a collectivity, U.S. Black women participate in a dialectical relationship linking African-American women’s oppression and activism. Dialectical relationships of this sort mean that two parties are opposed and opposite. As long as Black women’s subordination within intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation persists, Black feminism as an activist response to that oppression will remain needed. (p. 22)

It is those sentiments that I hold most true and dear in the shaping of my own role as an educator who work to impact social change through emancipatory educational practices.