


## Chapter 9

# Being Nepantleras While Resisting “Everything, Every Where, All at Once”

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### ABSTRACT

*As the idea of trauma-informed education has moved to the center of many conversations in PK-12 education, it demands that PK-12 professionals seek to act as Nepantleras in navigating pervasive deficit perspectives in schooling, like book banning censorship and erasure, to counter the ways trauma feeds false narratives of damage and brokenness about students. Under this neoliberalist project, in this chapter, the author seeks to explore how this body of knowledge and their value are produced and thus policed and assigned value. To combat this, the author invokes Gloria Anzaldúa’s philosophical concepts of the Nepantla, specifically the Nepantleras. The author explores how Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida has positioned himself as the avatar of white grievance politics to resist any culturally responsive/relevant/sustaining pedagogy taught in PK-12 schools with a specific counternarrative focus on the experience of teaching Amanda Gorman’s poem “The Hill We Climb” in the author’s seventh/eight grade classroom.*

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*“To tell the truth is to become beautiful, to begin to love yourself, value yourself. And that’s political, in its most profound way.” – June Jordan*

*“The material body is center, and central. The body is the ground of thought.”  
– Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality**

*“Personal experiences—revised and in other ways redrawn—become a lens with which to reread and rewrite the cultural stories into which we are born.” –Gloria Anzaldúa, “Now Let Us Shift . . .” *From this Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation**

*“Banning books put simply means giving some folks the opportunity to know less about a thing than others.” – Jacqueline Woodson, author of *Red at the Bone* and *Brown Girl Dreaming**

*“Censorship is the child of fear and the father of ignorance.” – Laurie Halse Anderson, author of *Shout**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In light of the recent wave of educational censorship that has swept across the United States in 2023, with eighty six educational gag orders introduced as of February 14<sup>th</sup> (Friedman et al., 2023), teaching any body of knowledge in any PK-12 school environment is fraught with trauma. As Gloria Anzaldúa (2015) writes, bodies hold deep knowledge. Bodies are the ground of thought. As the idea of trauma-informed education has moved to the center of many conversations and initiatives in PK-12 education, it demands that PK-12 professionals seek to act as Nepantleras in navigating pervasive deficit perspectives in schooling to counter the ways trauma feeds false narratives of damage and brokenness about students.

Many of these bills expand censorship of books with thematic content focused on gender and sexuality as well as seek to prohibit teaching about race, racism and American history, a neoliberalist project of education. Under this neoliberalist project, in this paper, I seek to explore how this body of knowledge and their value are produced and thus policed and assigned value. This application leads to the debility and vulnerability of this body of knowledge as well as creating a space of vulnerability as any knowledge that fits into these categories are constantly surveilled and policed.

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