

**Fragments Against Forgetting**  
**By Rachel Rosekind**  
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I am pained when *anyone* experiences harm. Visceral, full-throttle, endemic—my experience of others’ suffering and harm cuts deep and broad. It has shaped, echoed, and shadowed me my entire life. I take social justice, repair, and bridging work very seriously—it is most of what I do in my service life and constitutes much of my professional practice. Last night, I traveled to a County meeting where I sit on a commission tasked with making funding recommendations to address the needs and concerns of vulnerable populations. Much of the abundant and diverse public comment we receive centers on the pain of living as a minoritized individual in this county, and country. Last night, a group of twenty-five Black youth traveled to our meeting to speak live in the chambers to urge us to fund an African American Holistic Wellness Hub (there is a long backstory to this, which I won’t delve into here). Why must People of Color revisit and rehearse their trauma for our government to make repair and take accountability? It is a question and a scene I have seen play out for decades now over the course of my involvement in this work.

If history is a wheel, it is also a web. Paulo Freire said that teaching is about the ethical formation of selves and of history. In that vein, we neither teach, study, or learn history to memorize facts and figures but to understand our position in the present and articulate a vision for the future. If we do not use history as a lens on the present, then we are, indeed, forever trapped within it. Hamas’s actions were/are **thoroughly reprehensible and utterly indefensible**; and yet, they did not emerge in a vacuum. To me, this is what activists, many historians among them, are calling out: this is a situation with open wounds on all sides—no one is pure and no one is blameless. Radical empathy demands that we practice the highest forms of forgiveness and atonement, which cut through individual ego to attain beloved community. It is hard work. Slow-going and pain-staking.

I have been teaching for twenty-five years through many, many difficult discussions and controversial topics. It is a striving of mine to present balanced views; uplift voices, experiences, and stories that are not duly represented; and show how our systems and structures empower and resource different populations disparately. This articulation is something I am known for as

a teacher and facilitator in different institutional and community-based spaces. Having said that, there have been instances when white students have left class discussions about slavery, reparations, economic inequality, and other issues that touch at the heart of our painful history and its endurance in our ongoing present. I've had white students complain about having to read *Beloved*. And *Black Boy*. But nothing on the scale of the number of students of color who have thanked me for introducing them to these books—these lifelines—and holding space for these critical conversations and affirmations. I use literature as a primary entry point to engage these difficult issues precisely because it has the capacity to be both potent and disarming at the same time, creating room for opening instead of shutting down. If we choose to allow it to do so. Which doesn't mean it's going to be easy, or soft. A wound takes time to heal. If we cover it with a band-aid, it cannot breathe; if we pick at the scab, it will keep coming back. Sometimes we need to let things bleed so we can steep in the pain collectively in order to heal individually. And collectively.

Most of the anti-CRT bills and phrasing around revising or banning African American Studies explicitly call out concern for white students' mental anguish, but Black students have long suffered from lack of representation in school curricula and regard in educational environments, and their mental health has suffered mightily as a result. I do not think there's an either/or here. There is *always* a both/and. Or, at least, an *aspiration* toward that affirmation and fullness. Paradox is the soul of wisdom. We must work to uplift a world in which centering one person's or population's feelings does not mean we silence others'.

The truest, deepest parts of our selves—the ones that reach beyond our momentary landing in space/time to encompass our ancestors and progeny—encompass conflicting *and* coincident experiences, voices, perspectives, and narratives. Repair and restoration demands that we lean into these parts. Indeed, this nexus is where we find compassion, equity, discernment, patience, reflection, and Truth. What we hold space for in our minds, bodies, and emotions opens space in our souls for a world where we live in abundance and struggle is rewarded with sustenance.

This is the world where we finish each other's sentences, not in interruption but in understanding. This is the world where situated knowledges transcend baseline claims to (a

false) objectivity or universality to respect our unique positionality and universal strivings toward Justice, Love, and Humanity.

In many of the solidarity spaces I inhabit, we are having very, very tough discussions around the Israel/Gaza/Palestine issue, and there is far more division than shared vision. It has been tremendously challenging, and painful. As a Jewish American who attended a progressive, experimental Jewish day school from K-8, has relatives in Israel, and who is committed to retaining a tenacious focus on the massive scale and devastation wrought by the Holocaust and ongoing anti-Semitism here and elsewhere, I have literally lived and breathed these issues for decades. I continue to teach Primo Levi, Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel, Victor Frankl, and others and to teach the history of the Jewish people and their persecution and perseverance. These are fraught issues and times, and there is a sense of entrapment on all sides given the sheer reality of the bounded geographical space within which the Palestinian and Israeli populations are living.

We must find a way to create a society rooted in love of one's fellow human being not hatred of the outsider. To open up a heart space that includes **everyone** and rejects no one. We are not there yet. Here. Or there.

Let this moment be an inflection point on the path of universal healing. Away from violence, terror, and dispossession toward repair and reconciliation. Not in the vein of forgetting but in the service of honoring history, making ourselves whole, and acting courageously to right our wrongs.