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Teaching Activism: The Feminist Pedagogical Possibilities of *Why We Fly*

Miranda M. Findlay

In her foundational text *Feminism is for Everybody*, theorist bell hooks imagines new possibilities for feminist thinking and the subject expected to do that thinking. She writes, “Literature that helps inform masses of people, that helps individuals understand feminist thinking and feminist politics, needs to be written in a range of styles and formats. We need work that is especially geared toward youth culture” (22-23). In what we might see as a response to hooks’s call, authors Kimberly Jones and Gilly Segal offer a narrative adopting one of mainstream American culture’s recent controversies.

Colin Kaepernick is a Black civil rights activist and former National Football League (NFL) quarterback who became a divisive symbol after he began kneeling during the National Anthem at his games in 2016. His peaceful protest was meant to call attention to social injustice and police brutality, but the NFL made it clear that this powerful message had no place on their field, and he has not since signed with any other teams (West). Jones and Segal found great power and potential in Kaepernick’s story. Their young adult novel *Why We Fly*, published in October of 2021, encourages readers to look at the world around them to identify injustice. The authors illustrate the complexities of participating in social justice activism while also delivering entertaining and inspiring characters. This novel, with its nuanced representation of discrimination and activism, holds pedagogical possibilities that make it an exceptional choice for educators to share with their students. From a feminist perspective, the young adult novel *Why We Fly* is a narrative that would enable teachers to present students with the opportunity to analyze systems of oppression and power structures, develop a critical consciousness, and question ways we revere knowledge and ways of knowing.

As hooks argues, youth literature operates as a critical tool for feminist education because of the formative nature of childhood and adolescence (23). In this same vein, Valentina Adami points to young adult literature as a genre in which the readers are often exploring their identity and constructing opinions about the world (130). Novels in this genre are relatable and entertaining, leading to an increase of such texts in the past several years. This surge means that educators now have more options than ever before when it comes to choosing texts that are not only pedagogically useful but also enjoyable for students. *Why We Fly* proves to be an exceptional option in this way. The text follows two perspectives, the first of which is Eleanor’s, a white Jewish teen Segal creates. Eleanor, or Leni, cheers on the competitive squad at her high school, but she has been out for several months due to a concussion. Because of this, she is so surprised when she is elected captain. Leni has never had the best grades, but she begins to struggle academically and emotionally due to the stress of her captainship, and a lack of support from her best friend takes its toll on her. Other chapters follow the perspective of Chanel, a Black teen Jones creates. Chanel, or Nelly, spent the summer at an exclusive

cheerleading camp. She is competitive, organized, and determined to attend a top business program for college. One of Nelly's goals for her senior year is to be elected captain of the cheer squad, but after Leni takes the title, their relationship is strained.

Jones and Segal create Cody Knight to represent Colin Kaepernick; he is the reason the novel's climactic event takes place. He is an alumnus of Leni and Nelly's high school and the town's pride and joy after he is drafted into the NFL. But like Kaepernick, he becomes a figure of controversy after he begins kneeling during the National Anthem at his games to draw attention to racial inequality. Frustrated with the way the world receives Cody Knight's peaceful protesting, Leni suggests that the cheer squad do something in solidarity. As a group, they decide to kneel during the anthem at their first football game of the season. The following week at school, they are praised by their peers, many of whom volunteer their own student organizations to join in the protest at the next game. After their second bout of kneeling, the squad reaps the repercussions; they are barred from participating in pre-game events, including the National Anthem. While the team is angered by this treatment, Nelly takes the most heat. The rest of the story follows the girls as they deal with the aftermath of their protests and learn more about themselves and what it means to be an activist.

Jones and Segal's *Why We Fly* demonstrates great feminist pedagogical potential in many ways, including in its recognition of power dynamics and navigation through realms of domination. Adami praises the young adult genre for its ability to work with notions of power in ways that educate readers into being better and more active citizens (131). In such texts, the protagonist often faces social and political problems as they develop, and their emotional crises are often implicitly or explicitly linked to such problems (Adami 130). This is certainly the case for Jones and Segal's protagonists. In Leni and Nelly's high school, we see a stark divide in appreciation between the football team and the cheer squad. Leni bonds with the high school quarterback Sam first as a workout partner and later becomes his girlfriend. When she meets Sam's parents, Sam praises her athleticism and relates her experience with a demanding sports schedule to his own, to which his father responds with visible disdain (Jones and Segal 34-35). Before the football team goes to their state competition, the high school holds a pep rally with the entire student body. However, when the squad wins the national cheerleading tournament, they are only greeted with a short congratulatory message over the morning announcements (265-66). Additionally, the administration consistently treats the cheer squad's Coach Pierce, a woman, differently than the football coach. After the squad kneels at the first game, the football coach and the principal approach Coach Pierce. While the reader does not see a scene in which a conversation among this group takes place, we are meant to understand that the principal threatens her with a termination if the team engages in the kneeling spectacle again (Jones and Segal 133-35). Christine Jarvis explains that critical feminist theory promotes a re-engagement with dominant culture, as well as exposing power and its sustainability, shifting the focus from just class to include gender and patriarchy. With these moments in *Why We Fly*, we see a clear difference in treatment between the way a "men's" sport is treated compared to the "women's" sport, even though there are male cheerleaders on the squad. The administration demonstrates that a "women's" sport is easily disposable, and even after the football team participates in the peaceful protesting, the school only punishes the cheer squad and excludes it from public space. However, as the novel demonstrates, especially with references to Leni's concussions, the cheerleaders are athletes who risk their physical health

with each daring stunt they perform, just as the male athletes are at risk for serious injury (Jones and Segal 52-53). The authors attempt to show that the stakes are just as high for the women's sport as they are for the men's and that both deserve respect. This, in turn, models an analysis of inequitable power dynamics for readers in which it is revealed that traditional male roles are often given primacy in our everyday lives.

The characters must also navigate power dynamics within the school after the cheer squad receives the punishment for their protests. After the squad's second kneeling demonstration, Nelly gets called to the principal's office. He tells her she is being suspended, and she sits up abruptly and exclaims, "'What?'" The text continues: "'Calm down,' Officer Nichols [the school resource officer] says. He grips the top of the baton hanging from his belt" (Jones and Segal 184). Nelly immediately gets nervous and steels herself against her seat, fully aware that this officer holds the power to physically hurt her, and because she is Black and he has institutional power on his side, he would have an easier time defending his decision in the aftermath (Jones and Segal 185). As Jarvis highlights, feminist educators should show commitment to explicating to students how systems of oppression specifically target and subordinate people who are Othered by gender, sexuality, race, and class (120), and this scene would allow teachers to facilitate this conversation. Ultimately, Nelly's family has to get a lawyer involved to remove the suspension from her record, but this does not happen for several weeks, and she is forced to withhold her college applications from early submission as she waits for justice. News of Nelly's punishment quickly spreads, but in a show of support, Nelly's peers call attention to the fact that she has been racialized and that her treatment is unfair (Jones and Segal 185). In a conversation between a group of students, Marisol—a queer, Hispanic girl who is very involved in social justice activism—says "...you can't ignore the fact that the only person who got in trouble just happened to be a Black girl'" (195). Another peer, Paris, adds in response, "'This ain't nothing new...I bet that office became an interrogation room'" (195). Through this conversation, the authors illustrate students' potential for identifying and critiquing power dynamics and systems of oppression, even going as far as to connect the treatment of Nelly by school administrators to the larger systemic issue of policing. Jones and Segal consistently display their willingness to confront power and domination through the presented storylines and character interactions. Because of this, their text operates as an effective tool with which teachers can encourage their students to critically analyze their world.

Along with the identification and analysis of power structures, another important aspect of feminist pedagogy is the development of one's critical consciousness. The phrase comes from Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who introduced the term "conscientização" as a way of addressing systemic oppression (Jemal 604). Freire recognized oppression as the core of most interpersonal and structural inequity, suggesting critical consciousness development as a way "to think critically about oppressive realities and challenge inequitable social conditions to reclaim [one's] humanity" (Jemal 604). Developing this critical consciousness can mean that gaining a critical understanding of social issues comes with a deeper awareness of their privileges (Clark-Taylor 6). This certainly becomes true for Leni. Several of her peers and mentors help her realize why her position as a white individual prevented her from experiencing harsher punishment after kneeling. At a party, Leni and Sam get into an argument about Leni's ideas for activism. Leni wants to stage a walkout in protest of the squad and Nelly's

punishment, but Sam pushes against this idea. He says that some of the students involved have too much to lose, to which Leni replies that they all do. Sam snaps, arguing, ““We’re not all going to have the same consequences...How come your girl got suspended, but you’re still in class, still on the sidelines at the games, still sitting here talking about walkouts?”” (Jones and Segal 204). Leni maintains that Nelly got into more trouble because she tweeted a picture of the squad. Sam retorts, ““You think that’s why? Your whole squad did this thing. You’re the captain. How come they didn’t come down on you? How come she’s the only one?”” (Jones and Segal 204). Haley Cannizzo asserts that by using teaching practices aimed at raising students’ critical consciousness, feminist educators can facilitate a space where students begin to identify the ways in which power and oppression work in their own and others’ lives and subsequently act towards combating inequality (Cazzino 3). Leni could easily ignore Sam’s claim because the school supposedly supported their decision to suspend Nelly with language from school codes, but she must learn to look past the school’s rhetoric to recognize her privilege as a white girl and see the underlying power structures maintaining the disparate treatment of marginalized communities. *Why We Fly’s* narrative offers points of inquiry through which teachers can emphasize for students the connection between what they read and how they live.

Developing a critical consciousness and acknowledging one’s privilege requires accepting that our choices are never neutral, especially when they could inadvertently influence the lives of someone else, which is something Leni learns through the text. Her rabbi and family friend, Rabbi Spinrad, checks in with her in the aftermath of the peaceful protests. He asks her not only how she is feeling after all the attention, but also how Nelly is doing. Leni says she’s not sure how Nelly feels about the protests, admitting to herself that she and her squad made a split-second decision that did not allow for much discussion. Rabbi Spinrad tells Leni about how their synagogue and a local Baptist church have partnered together to get faith-based organizations involved in social action. He says, ““We’ve been talking about the difference between an ally and an accomplice... An ally supports a cause without suffering any consequences for their actions. But an accomplice takes the hits along with the people they’re trying to support”” (Jones and Segal 173-74). Rabbi Spinrad calls on Leni to reflect on what she wanted out of the squad’s show of activism and if she had consulted her teammates of color about their feelings. She is in a position of privilege and needs to be aware that she could potentially be putting members of marginalized communities in danger because of her decisions. Rabbi Spinrad acknowledges how important it is that Leni wants to help, but he compels her to reconsider her choices in how she goes about it (174). He later tells her, ““Don’t give yourself a pass. Your good intentions are not good enough”” (Jones and Segal 247). This is a critical example for young readers who may be interested in social justice activism, especially those who possess greater privilege than their marginalized peers. This aspect of the narrative necessitates a conversation about what exactly Rabbi Spinrad is asking of Leni and what Leni must ask of herself if she wants to continue engaging in activism.

Acknowledging one’s privilege and the need to reflect on social processes as sites of oppression proves to be important throughout the novel’s entirety. In addition to these important appeals, part of developing a critical consciousness also entails ““seeing one’s potential to make change or social justice self-efficacy”” (Clark-Taylor 106). This becomes particularly important for Nelly on her journey. After her suspension, she begins attending group therapy, and by spending time reflecting in community with the other attendees, she

realizes, "...I do genuinely want to help people. I just have to take my personal wants out of the equation to do what's best for them. Now I need to figure out how best to do that and balance it all" (Jones and Segal 255). She reaches out to Marisol to ask how she can get more involved with community work. To Nelly's surprise, Marisol asks her to consider her own strengths. Nelly, who is the queen of efficiency, shyly replies that one of the only things she is good at is creating organizational systems. Marisol says, "Listen, don't devalue the importance of who you are. Community organizing is nothing without the organizing part" (Jones and Segal 258). As someone who wants to be the best at everything she does, Nelly is a bit apprehensive about trying something new for fear of failure. With the help of her peers, she begins to recognize her potential as a participant in social change. Readers engaging with *Why We Fly* may have similar worries as Nelly. They may feel the desire to help and stand up against oppression but might not know what path they should take to do this. From a feminist pedagogical perspective, Nelly's realization becomes a model through which to validate student fears and demonstrate that we are all capable of engaging in this work.

In her discussion of the relationship between feminist pedagogy and critical consciousness, Cannizzo refers to feminist pedagogy's concern with the "feminist process." The phrase comes from Nancy Schniedewind, who details the classroom processes that exemplify feminist principles as educational tools. The point of the process is to teach students how to partake in a feminist classroom and involves steps such as communicating, cooperating, and incorporating theory and practice (Schniedewind 17). To prepare students to "survive and thrive in a patriarchal society," Schniedewind also emphasizes the importance of teaching students to network and organize, which can involve anything from forming support systems to coalition building (26). Discussing the intricacies of organizing can help students to be active participants in bettering society outside of the classroom. These inherent complexities are a major conversation presented in *Why We Fly*, as it prompts young people to consider the difference between a simple moment of action versus an activist movement. After the cheer squad gets in trouble with the school, the energy that accompanied the student body's ideas dies down. Leni gets frustrated, and she feels they lost all their momentum. She relents that the school has "won" and the students have lost, and the feeling of hopelessness seeps in (Jones and Segal 231). Sara Ahmed speaks to this difficulty of maintaining a movement, explaining:

I think of feminist action as like ripples in water, a small wave, possibly created by agitation from weather; here, there, each movement making another possible, another ripple, outward, reaching. Feminism: the dynamism of making connections. And yet a movement has to be built. To be part of a movement requires we find places to gather, meeting places. A movement is also a shelter. We convene; we have a convention. A movement comes into existence to transform what is in existence. A movement needs to take place somewhere. A movement is not just or only a movement; there is something that needs to be kept still, given a place, if we are moved to transform what is. (3)

With the help of Rabbi Spinrad, Leni learns that "Moments are not movements...Moments attract a lot of attention, and they are important. They can kick-start things. But the real work is behind the scenes" (Jones and Segal 245). As Ahmed explains, feminist action is comprised of

many little movements, a fact that Leni and her peers must embrace. It can be easy to see a lack of change and just want to quit, but young people need to be confronted with the fact that change will not happen quickly, and the work must continue anyway. The characters must also learn that organizing a movement takes more than a moment of inspiration. As a white woman, if she wants to help marginalized communities, Leni needs to open herself up to their needs, not to what she thinks or feels is best. Feminist process skills enable educators and students to be intentional in the classroom, facilitating a space in which students can develop a critical consciousness to become empowered agents for positive change (Cannizzo 2-3). *Why We Fly* illustrates for students the importance of intentionality, and also that working together and listening to each other is crucial for organizing and sustaining momentum.

The work of Angela Davis speaks to the struggles experienced by the novel's young activists as they utilize their critical consciousness to network and organize. Davis explains that a movement takes more work than simply inviting people to join the cause and receiving their immediate interest "particularly when they were not necessarily represented during the earlier organizing processes" (31). One must develop and implement organizing strategies so that people feel compelled to take up the issue at hand as their issue (Davis 31). Leni comes to this realization after a student leader group meeting held at school the week following the cheer squad's first peaceful protest. At the meeting, other student groups share their praises with Leni, who represents the squad at the meeting. Marisol, the meeting leader, proposes that the other student groups follow suit and join the cheer squad in protest at the next game. Leni is surprised, thinking, "...the squad hasn't talked about taking a knee again... I don't think anyone's feelings have changed, but I didn't imagine anyone else would show up with the same level of enthusiasm" (Jones and Segal 145). While some other student groups agree, the band and the football team display apprehension, and Marisol badgers the leaders of the respective groups until they begrudgingly agree to participate. She says, "'We're stronger together...It would be a powerful image, that whole group of kids taking a knee. Think about it. They can't come down on a hundred kids, can they? No'" (Jones and Segal 148). As the book moves forward, readers witness as the students' enthusiasm dies down after the cheerleaders get into trouble, until the kneeling events entirely slip from the school's consciousness. The novel prompts readers to consider if pressuring others to participate is the best way forward. Considering Davis's words, it would be beneficial for the participants and the movement for people to learn about the issue and develop the inspiration and willingness to join through their own experience. With a reading of the novel, students can discuss how organizing means more than simply going along for the ride or being forced to join in.

Why We Fly also encourages readers to network with people outside of their immediate communities and the people they have always known when engaging in organizing. We may be surprised by what we find and learn from others when we venture outside our own communities. For example, Leni is surprised to discover that her synagogue has a social justice committee that works with a local Baptist church to put on voter registration drives. Rabbi Spinrad tells Leni that the committee and the Baptist Church approached the local organization Clean Records Georgia (CRG) to ask how they could assist. CRG said they needed more volunteers for events, so that is what the synagogue provided. Leni learns that their synagogue has a history of participating in social justice movements, but as Rabbi Spinrad points out, "'The prior generation's participation doesn't absolve us of our responsibility to keep doing the work,

internally and in the broader community” (Jones and Segal 246-47). The synagogue’s interaction with the Baptist Church and Clean Records Georgia shows that different communities can find a common cause and collaborate for social justice activism. It also demonstrates the importance of critical consciousness and acknowledging one’s privilege specifically as this relates to the necessity of considering what marginalized communities need from organizing efforts.

In addition to developing a critical consciousness, feminist pedagogy guides students in critiquing knowledge formation, questioning how knowledge is assumed to be formed and what types of knowledge are seen as valuable. According to Karen Barbour, western contexts define “knowledge” as information gained through reason, produced by a neutral subject, and determined to be valid against objective criteria. However, as Barbour clarifies, the feminist perspective understands that this epistemological project privileges western white “knowledge” and is therefore not gender-neutral (210). In their novel, Jones and Segal engage a feminist epistemology that challenges dominant notions of “knowing” and knowledge construction. The oppressive dominant group—the high school administration—maintains that proper education is free from disruption, and they determine the peaceful protesting to be an unwanted disruption. By prohibiting students from participating in the protests, the administration delivers a clear message: The struggles, priorities, and experiences of people of color are of no concern to students in an educational space. Many of the young characters pick up on this, pointing out that the school is only calling their protest a disruption because they do not want to be held accountable for the harms to which the demonstrations are meant to draw attention (Jones and Segal 203). Through their actions, the school declares its position: The pursuit of objective knowledge is the only appropriate educational goal for students, and attempts to empathize with and learn from people of color should be prevented.

As feminist pedagogy exposes the nature of knowledge in a western context, it also stresses the importance of articulating women’s lived experiences with issues of knowledge and power (Barbour 210-11). In their official statement, *The Combahee River Collective* takes a Black Feminist perspective to the conversation of epistemologies and speaks to Black women’s lived experiences and knowledges. They explain that Black women develop a political realization from their personal life experiences, but those experiences are more so political than personal. Black women experience some form of sexual and racial oppression in their everyday lives; therefore, they need to conceptualize what they experience (2-3). Nelly develops a compelling need to acknowledge her lived experiences and the discrimination she has faced from her school. Towards the end of the book, Nelly is preparing to attend a legacy event for her mother’s sorority, historically made up of Black women. At this point, Nelly has come to realize that her school life is not her whole life and self, and while she may feel equal to her friends and peers, she will often be racialized by authoritative figures. Before her squad began their peaceful protest, she did not consider herself to be a Black girl above all else. She believed that because she worked hard in school and her extracurriculars, she deserved respect, not considering that larger societal structures would likely see her as a Black girl first and foremost. Now, as Nelly prepares for the sorority legacy event, she possesses a new mindset. She meets other legacies but is apprehensive when they refer to Nelly as a “hot topic.” She worries that, like so many internet trolls before, they will berate her for her involvement in the protest. However, one girl says, “We’re proud of you, sis. Jacked up how you got railroaded, though...

We see you out there, doing it for the culture” (Jones and Segal 294-95). In this group with other young Black women, Nelly finds people who honor her experiences and celebrate her for who she is. She’s now not only willing to acknowledge her racial identity and knowledge; she sees that there is strength and community within it. As Cannizzo illuminates, the feminist classroom seeks to validate students’ self-knowledge by encouraging them to pull from their own lived experiences and emotions as a resource (3). In reading Nelly’s story, students will witness her transformation as she learns the importance of listening to her own experiences and honoring her needs and desires. Sharing this novel in a feminist classroom will help ensure that teachers and students acknowledge each other’s experiential realities as valid sites of knowledge.

As *Why We Fly* exposes dominant ideas of knowledge production, it also highlights how people from marginalized communities develop the need to understand and navigate multiple ways of knowing and being. Barbour discusses how multiplicity is recognized within feminist epistemology, and that the “knower” can be contextualized through various embodied differences (212). Because reasoning as well as experience can form knowledge, recognizing the different possible knowledges is a crucial aspect of the feminist perspective (Barbour 212). Jones and Segal offer two significant representations of Black identity through the characters Nelly and Sam. Each must navigate their experiences as athletes and students while being racialized by the institutions in which they exist. We see how they embody contradictions and multiple ways of knowing in a manner connected to the idea of a “double consciousness.” Gloria Ladson-Billings discusses W. E. B. Dubois’s notion of double consciousness, clarifying that it allows for the deconstruction of western notions of “knowledge,” and exposes how white people construct Blackness and construct themselves against it. Ladson-Billings asserts that all marginalized people who are “othered” from the mainstream can possess a double consciousness. These communities develop perspectives regarding and through their own experiences, but they also come to know the dominant group through their interactions with them (Ladson-Billings 260-62). The events of the novel require Nelly to see the disparate ways knowledges are valued based on one’s race. After the protest, Nelly was forced to reckon with her racial identity and the treatment she might receive from white men in power if she placed even one toe out of line. Now, after all the turmoil, Nelly recognizes the realities of a racialized society and the difficulties of navigating it, but she also accepts the significance of her family history and identity. Before she attends the sorority legacy event, Nelly’s mother gives her the family cotillion pearls that have been passed down since the mid-1800s. They belonged to her great-great-grandmother who was gifted them by a wealthy plantation owner who fell in love with her and then freed her and her children. Women in Nelly’s family have since been presented with the pearls before significant occasions. Nelly narrates, “I have been instructed for as long as I can remember how to maintain them. One of the first rules is that they cannot be worn daily, not if they are to be preserved for the next generation” (Jones and Segal 292). The pearls, now gifted to Nelly, physically represent the experiences of her family, shaped by race, but also by love and perseverance. She enters into this new time in her life aware of mainstream viewpoints but simultaneously embodying generational memories and knowledge as she dedicates herself to community involvement. Her double consciousness will allow her to disrupt structures of power for the benefit of herself and her social justice activism.

Like Nelly, Sam also possesses a double consciousness and knowledge about the dominant group. He is under immense pressure from his parents to receive a full scholarship to college and eventually get drafted into the National Football League. When the situation with the peaceful protests at the school escalates, and Sam and his team are asked to participate in the spectacle, he feels even more stressed. Sam identifies with Cody Knight and supports his willingness to draw attention to police brutality and racial injustice. However, what Sam knows to be true about being a Black man runs counter to the message the school consistently delivers to students: that they are all equal, and that the kneeling demonstration does nothing but disrupt everyone's education. He is asked by his parents and his coaches to compromise his principles to secure his future, and as a young person of color with his career on the line, his choice seems simple. After the cheer squad kneels for the first time, Sam confronts Leni. She says that she is not worried about threats from the football coach, but Sam comes to the coach's defense. He says, "...I get the point, but the sidelines isn't the place to start a revolution" (Jones and Segal 142). Leni is shocked to hear this stance from Sam, arguing that Cody Knight is a football player, and he engages in sideline protest. Sam replies, "Yeah, well, Cody Knight's already got that contract, don't he? Some of us are still trying to get there, and we have a lot riding on playing ball...I can't get canceled before my career even starts" (Jones and Segal 143). Sam's story demonstrates to readers how people of color must navigate a double consciousness in which their perspectives based on their own lives and the perspectives of the dominant group clash. Ultimately, as Sam declares, "...the powers that be don't agree with Cody Knight" (Jones and Segal 143). Ladson-Billings explains that the liminal perspective of double consciousness allows marginalized communities to understand how the dominant group operates through power to oppress (260-62). This is an understanding Sam possesses; he is very aware of society's perceptions of racial protest and his precarious position as a Black athlete. In the end, Sam is signed to a college team and Cody Knight offers a statement ahead of Sam's signing day: "I'm proud of this fine young athlete for his conviction as well as his talent... I have confidence that a coach will see him for the leader he is and understand the passion he will bring to everything he does, especially the game" (Jones and Segal 271-72). It's difficult to predict what will happen to Sam, knowing that he is entering a venue in which thousands of people will scrutinize every action he takes. But perhaps his involvement in the peaceful protests will inspire him to find ways to get involved in activism in the future, especially as he receives support from an NFL star who has been in his shoes. The liminal double consciousness perspective plays out through Sam, and it prompts readers to consider power dynamics and how the dominant way of knowing and understanding race is privileged over the experiences of a young Black man.

Sam's Aunt Rhonda, an African Studies professor at Georgia State, reflects on the Cody Knight controversy: "What I wonder is what these young minds are going to do with this information. What I wonder is what these aspiring athletes before us would do to support their teammate if they were on those sidelines with Mr. Knight" (Jones and Segal 109). The questions she poses exactly point to the issues Jones and Segal grapple with in their narrative. What will young minds do when they are given a fictional story that directly addresses the issues they find in their everyday lives? What will white readers learn about stepping up and stepping aside to work in tandem with marginalized communities? hooks describes feminist education for critical consciousness as "rooted in the assumption that knowledge and critical

thought done in the classroom should inform our habits of being and ways of living outside the classroom” (*Teaching to Transgress* 194). *Why We Fly*, as a feminist pedagogical tool, shows readers that what they learn through reading can directly affect how they live as citizens. Jones and Segal deliver an inspiring tale of young people who come to terms with the realities of our society but maintain their hope and determination for doing what they can to make the world a better place. By sharing this text in their classrooms, feminist educators can teach students about the necessity of analyzing power and knowledge, guiding them to develop the critical consciousness essential for becoming social justice change agents.

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