COALESCING WITH SALT: A TASTE FOR INCLUSION

PHOEBE A. HADDON*

"Most of the time you feel threatened to the core and if you don't, you're not really doing no coalescing."¹

Bernice Johnson Reagon

I. INTRODUCTION

During the late nineties, the Society of American Law Teachers, known to legal educators as “SALT,” undertook to build a governing board and membership whose composition reflected its commitment to diversity and inclusion. In my view, this undertaking to bring together individuals from diverse groups that share an interest in social justice was critical to the ongoing integrity of the organization. As we were moving beyond the surface appeal of this multicultural alliance to develop deeper relationships, endeavoring to explore our common objectives and differences, the words of Bernice Reagon, set out above, often came to mind.

The organizing work sometimes broke down. Though our efforts occasionally provoked anger and tears, they were also exhilarating. It became apparent that you cannot build a coalition without exposing yourself to other people and that the discomfort from such exposure

---

¹ Professor of Law, Temple University School of Law. B.A., Smith College; J.D., Duquesne Law School; LL.M, Yale Law School. I acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of Professor Joyce Saltalamachia, keeper of the archives of SALT, in checking the accuracy of dates related to events described in this essay. I also thank Professors Stephanie Wildman and Frank McClellan for reading earlier drafts and offering their insights.

1. Bernice Johnson Reagon, Coalition Politics: Turning the Century, in HOME GIRLS: A BLACK FEMINIST ANTHOLOGY 343 (1983). Stephanie Wildman often suggested that we re-read this publication of Ms. Reagon’s speech, delivered at a women’s music festival in the early eighties, when our work seemed daunting. This essay is developed from a presentation at the Association of American Law School’s Conference on Women in Legal Education, titled Getting Unstuck Without Coming Unglued, held in Washington, D.C. on October 1–2, 1999. (The conference was simultaneously broadcast to regional locations.) As I developed this essay, I could not help but think of another coalition builder, Trina Grillo, whose scholarship and gentle presence—before her untimely death—contributed greatly to the efforts of people concerned about social justice to come together.

321
can be unbearable without trust. It also became apparent that it is necessary to see other people as having authentic and valuable perspectives and to be prepared to broaden your perspective through conversation. For the coalition to sustain itself, you must be prepared to adopt alternative strategies to advance the effort—even strategies with which you disagree—for the common good. These insights, however, are sometimes lost in the heat of controversy. Although coalition-building is fragile work and the alliances may not last forever, the challenges provide opportunities for personal growth and offer a chance to practice the theories of inclusion and equality SALT embraces.2

In this essay, I draw upon my experiences, principally as co-president of SALT with Stephanie Wildman, to make observations about coalescing.3 My life has been deeply enriched by serving with Stephanie during SALT’s extraordinary journey into the world of coalition-building. Her work examining white privilege and linking social justice to legal education is well recognized and has helped us to navigate the shoals of change.4 We share a belief in the value of dialogue that helped to forge rifts within the organization.5

Although SALT is not the only organization in legal education that has engaged in outreach, its coalition-building efforts have been self-conscious and deliberate, part of a progressive agenda that has spanned several decades.6 By the mid-nineties, SALT’s governing

---

2. I conclude this essay with some lessons I have learned that are shaped by these observations. See infra Part VI.
3. Stephanie M. Wildman and I served as co-presidents of SALT in 1998 and 1999. We aspired to work collaboratively, seeking to promote cross-cultural understanding and remain sensitive to unstated bias. In our collaboration, we intended to emphasize the power of identifying and drawing upon more than one person’s strengths and insights and to engage in dialogue that raises the consciousness of each participant. The SALT Board of Governors has continued to encourage governance by co-presidents and has sought to recognize other identities besides race and gender in the composition of its leaders and the governing body.
4. Some of Stephanie Wildman’s scholarly work can be found in her contributions to RACE AND RACES: CASES AND RESOURCES FOR A DIVERSE AMERICA (Juan F, Perez et al., eds., 2000); and in her book, Stephanie M. Wildman, Privilege Revealed: How Invisible Preference Undermines America (1996) (with contributions by Margalyne Armstrong, Adrienne D. Davis and Tina Grillo) (hereinafter Wildman, Privilege Revealed).
6. In part because of its civil rights and liberties focus, SALT’s membership always included white women and some people of color, despite the fact that at the time of its founding, thirty years ago, there were comparatively few minorities and women in academia. Justice
board had to face the incongruence of promoting a progressive agenda, while at the same time lagging in achieving broad diversity in its leadership. Over the next several years, SALT leadership was cultivated to more broadly reflect the race, gender, sexual orientation, age, geographic location and religious diversity of legal educators and their students.\(^7\) In the past decade we have had presidents who reflect the range of this diversity, and Stephanie Wildman and I emulated other co-presidents who have modeled collaborative work.\(^8\) As a consequence, the Board of Governors formulated the ACTION Campaign, an agenda of social action focusing first on responding to the attack on affirmative action and later addressing other issues of social justice affecting marginalized groups.\(^9\) This campaign took SALT's members outside of the classroom,\(^10\) influenced our scholarly work and redefined activism for many legal educators.

Stephanie Wildman and I made coalition-building and inclusion strategies our highest priority. We did so because we believe that the success of social justice work depends upon the ability of those committed to the fight—whether conceiving of themselves as insiders or

---

\(^{(\text{then Professor})} \) Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sylvia Law and Barbara Babcock were women who helped to establish the organization, as did Professors Derrick Bell and Cruz Reynoso. See Michael Rooke-Ley & Paula Johnson, SALT EQUALIZER (Soc'y of Am. L. Teachers), Dec. 2001, at 3, available at http://www.saltlaw.org.EQ-Dec2001.pdf (summarizing the history of the organization and identifying the founding leadership). The events described in this essay have been documented in the SALT Equalizer, the organization's publication. Most of the relevant issues of that publication can be found at the organization's website.

\(^7\) During my co-presidency, one long-time SALT member and friend who had examined his ballot for electing the governing board remarked: "Where are the white men?" In truth, it has been easier to recruit women and some men of color than white men to undertake this coalition work. We have listened to the admonition expressed so eloquently by Bernice Johnson Reagon: to seek out for coalition work men and women who have "an old-age perspective,"—that is, encourage people who have lived through or can be expected to embrace other movements—to remain affiliated. See Reagon, supra note 1, at 348. Thus former board presidents are invited to attend board meetings and participate on committees. This cultivation of "wise counsel" and interest in continuity has been tempered by the concern about appearing to our membership to be insular in our choice of leaders.

\(^8\) Jean Love and Pat Cain were SALT's first co-presidents, serving a two-year term from 1994 to 1995. Stephanie Wildman and I were followed by Carol Chomsky and Margaret Montoya as co-presidents, serving in 2000 and 2001. Michael Rooke-Ley and Paula Johnson assumed the co-presidency position in 2002. Whereas there is no fast rule of co-president leadership, SALT's Board of Governors has encouraged the nominating committee to consider its value in identifying potential leaders, noting how co-presidencies can maximize our outreach objectives and reinforce a commitment to collaboration.

\(^9\) The ACTION Campaign has gone through several iterations but is captured in the detailed flow chart set forth in the SALT EQUALIZER (Soc'y of Am. L. Teachers), Sept. 1997, at 6.

\(^10\) See Elvia R. Arriola, MARCH!, 19 Chicano-Latino L. Rev. 1, 2 n.4 (1998); SALT EQUALIZER, supra note 9, at 1.
outsiders\textsuperscript{11}—to come together, to work and to listen to each other. Like many SALT members, we find inequality persists in our law schools\textsuperscript{12} as well as in the larger community. It is a product not only of blatant prejudice and intentional exclusion, but also a consequence of the more subtle ways some groups continue to be subordinated while others are privileged. This is, in part, because bias is reintroduced and reinforced by our own essentialist, insular assumptions.\textsuperscript{13} We believe that drawing upon the insights and experiences of group members in candid conversations and engaging in critical self-reflection are the best ways to ensure that SALT’s equality-promoting agenda is not compromised. We seek by these actions to participate in

\textsuperscript{11} The term “outsider” has sometimes been used to refer to people who have traditionally been excluded from the practice of law. See, e.g., Margaret E. Montoya, Mascaras, Trenzas, Y Grenas: Un/Masking the Self While Un/Braiding Latina Stories at Legal Discourse, 17 HARV. WOMEN’S L.J. 185, 185 n.1 (1994) [hereinafter Montoya, Un/Masking the Self]; Kathryn M. Stanchi, Resistance is Futile: How Legal Writing Pedagogy Contributes to the Law’s Marginalization of Outsider Voices, 103 DICK. L. REV. 7, 9 n.14 (1998) (citing Mari Matsuda, Affirmative Action and Legal Knowledge: Planting Seeds in Plowed-Up Grounds, 11 HARV. WOMEN’S L.J. 1, 1 n.2. (1988)); see also Suzanne Homer & Lois Schwartz, Admitted But Not Accepted: Outsiders Take an Inside Look at Law School, 5 BERKELEY WOMEN’S L.J. 1 (1989) (describing experiences beneath the mask of equality); Mari Matsuda, When the First Quail Calls: Multiple Consciousness and Jurisprudence Methods, 14 WOMEN’S RTS. L. REP. 297 (1988) (discussing the multiple consciousness of women of color).

In its Action agenda and teaching workshops, SALT has focused on strategies to increase the recruitment and retention of outsider students and faculty in legal education, emphasizing the marginalization that can occur for students in the classroom and for minority faculty in the tenuring process. But this term, “outsider,” also connotes the scholar activists (many of whom are SALT members and some of whom find themselves in elite environments) who consciously assert the outsider or perspective of the subordinated in their writing. See, e.g., Jerome McCristal Culp, Jr., Telling a Black Legal Story: Privilege, Authenticity, “Blunders,” and Tradition in Outsider Narrative, 82 VA. L. REV. 69 (1996); Francisco Valdes, Under Construction: LatCrit Consciousness, Community, and Theory, 10 LA RAZA L.J. 1, 45 n.185 (1988) (reprinted in 85 cal. L. REV. 1087 (1997)). “Outsider” should not be limited to racial, ethnic or gender group subordination; it reaches other identities affected by hegemony, such as sexuality, and should capture the reality that we all live with multiple identities that are affected by different sites of oppression. See generally Berta Hernandez Truyol, Borders (En)gendered: Normativities, Latinas and a LatCrit Paradigm, 72 N.Y.U. L. REV. 882 (1997). The opportunity and challenge of the coalition work of SALT has been to bring together such “outsiders” and more privileged and often elite progressive members of the academy together to promote social justice.


the development of a theory of anti-subordination through our own practices.14 The coalescing experiences of SALT, however, reveal the difficulties of moving to the next stage of building a collective—maintaining our identities while confronting our differences in the hope of building an activist scholar community.

Part II of this essay will provide an analysis of the leadership roles men and women concerned about social justice have assumed in the academy. Part III will outline the challenges that exist in coalition work by discussing the hurdles SALT faced in building alliances in recent years. Part IV will present a deeper look at the coalition built by SALT. Part V will discuss SALT's experiences in fostering communication across borders as well as provide suggestions for the future. Finally, Part VI identifies some lessons learned from coalition-building that can support the next stage of development.

II. WOMEN AND MEN OF COLOR ASSUME COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP ROLES IN THE ACADEMY

SALT's coalition-building work draws from the experiences of its founders, many of whom participated as young law professors, undergraduates and law students in the civil rights movement of the sixties. Given the demographics of legal education institutions at the time of SALT's founding, it is not surprising that the first generation of leaders was predominately white and male, harking from elite institutions.15 For those of us who followed, law school feminist networks,


critical legal studies, racial affinity groups and critical race theory workshops shaped our perspectives. It was especially important to have such groups for nurturing and support when you were a minority of one\textsuperscript{16} in your legal education institution. Thus, over the last two decades, the AALS Minority Section, Women in Legal Education, and, more informally organized groups like Critical Race Theory (CRT) Workshops and the Northeast Collective\textsuperscript{17} provided women and men of color with useful connections to others who were feeling both emotionally and intellectually isolated in the profession.

These organizations became places where I found other legal educators—in particular, African American and other women of color—interested in exploring how law and legal education perpetuate exclusion. We gathered strength by identifying the commonalities of our experiences. CRT Workshops brought together “colored intellectuals of diverse racial and ethnic identities as well as sexual orientation”\textsuperscript{18} to produce scholarship and engage in praxis addressing the marginalized experiences of these identity groups. It provided the theoretical framework and catalyst for the formation of smaller communities of scholars and spawned the LatCrit and Asian American critical scholar movements.\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[16]{See Rachel F. Moran, Commentary: The Implications of Being a Society of One, 20 U.S.F. L. Rev. 503, 512–13 (1986); Jennifer M. Russell, On Being a Gorilla in Your Midst, or, The Life of One Blackwoman in the Legal Academy, 28 Harv. C.R.-C.L. L. Rev. 239 (1993); see also Arriola, MARCH!, supra note 10, at 7 (noting that one minority can experience more than one intersection of oppression, becoming a double or triple minority of one).}
\footnotetext[17]{Some of the ruminations of the Northeast Collective have been memorialized. See Symposium: Black Women Law Professors Building a Community at the Intersection of Race and Gender, 6 Berkeley Women’s L.J. 1 (1990–91). The symposium provided an important vehicle for some of the ideas that were developed in dialogue among members of that community of scholars to be crystallized in scholarship.}
\footnotetext[18]{In organizing documents for a session of the 1995 CRT Workshop, Developing an Ethic of Intergroup Identity & Scholarship: Fundamental Issues to Consider, we considered whether shared understandings that could lead to the forging of a community of colored intellectuals was possible in light of CRT’s commitment to “standpoint epistemology” and varied interpretations of oppression stemming from diverse experiences. (The document is on file with the author). But see generally Angela P. Harris, Foreword: The Jurisprudence of Reconstruction, 82 Cal. L. Rev. 741 (1994) (discussing the transformative project of CRT).}
\footnotetext[19]{Arriola, supra note 10, at 10. Elvia Arriola and others criticize CRT’s preoccupation with a black/white paradigm to understand oppression and fault its refusal to confront “internalized homophobia” within the group. Id. at 10 n.31. See generally Elva R. Arriola, Proceedings of the Third Annual Mid-Atlantic People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference Feb. 13–15, 1997, Part I, 35 U. Louisville J. Fam. L. 691 (1997).}
\end{footnotes}
At the Northeast Collective lunch gatherings\textsuperscript{20} we also grappled with how best to become effective confidantes and mentors to faculty who followed us without replicating the stifling hierarchies of power and privilege upon which the legal education profession seemed to thrive. More than many of the formal institutions, the Collective practiced collaboration and support. It included senior women who were willing to share stories about their own successes and failures in addition to giving critical feedback about the work of new scholars.\textsuperscript{21} Their advice and observations made the tenure system more transparent, enabling untenured women of color to navigate the process successfully. Both the Northeast Collective and CRT workshops provided critical nurturing places, particularly for African Americans, offering psychic and social healing and intellectual cultivation of ideas.\textsuperscript{22}

By the early nineties, SALT could be included among those organizations where women’s leadership was common. The SALT Teaching Workshops became familiar settings where women could comfortably discuss their concerns about silencing the voices of their students of color and white women who often remained at the margins of traditional classroom teaching and learning. The teaching workshops are where I and a host of others first came in contact with SALT. Not surprisingly, these teaching workshops evolved from performances by “master” teachers before large audiences to more interactive panels, role-playing and small group discourse, including sessions led by less experienced teachers who attained confidence and support for their classroom innovations. SALT’s teaching workshops drew upon clinical methodologies and insights (often developed by women participants)\textsuperscript{23} that emphasized collaborative learning, self reflection and dialogue. Increasingly, participants questioned the focus on a black/white paradigm, contending it silenced other voices. SALT’s teaching conferences and other sponsored activities offered

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{20} It is perhaps not surprising that our conversations centered around eating. African American and other cultures use food to create intimate connections and a sense of community. See discussion infra note 29.


\textsuperscript{22} See discussion infra note 29.

\end{footnotesize}
possibilities for de-centering the discussion of racial oppression, and by refocusing on other "isms,"24 to better understand the experiences of our diverse students and broaden our conception of the social activism we practiced.

The workshops included not only young faculty members and administrators25 who were black and white heterosexuals, but also participants who identified with other racial, ethnic and sexual orientation affinity groups. This made our inclusion work both richer and more complex. For many of us participating in SALT's teaching conferences, the challenge of putting historically marginalized students at the center of our teaching had more than abstract teaching or esoteric scholarly meaning—it represented the purpose of our coming to the academy and was linked to a strong social justice agenda.26 However, because we come with different identities and experiences, the conversations we shared about equality and diversity in the classroom at these workshops were not easy and sometimes reflected distrust. They required us to leave our own comfortable spaces27 and to move beyond untested theorizing to praxis. In these teaching workshops we laid the framework for our collective work.28

24. WILDMAN, PRIVILEGE REVEALED, supra note 4, at 85–102.
25. Recognizing the continuing marginalized, often untenured, status that many institutions confer on these administrators and faculty, the Board of Governors of SALT made a conscious determination to include among its active membership and leadership academic support professionals, legal writing instructors and clinicians in order to make prominent the contributions that these educators have made to our pedagogy of inclusion and invite their assistance in defining the direction of the organization.
26. See Valdes, supra note 11, at 7; Yamamoto, supra note 14, at 821.
27. Reagon, supra note 1, at 346. Bernice Johnson Reagon captures some of that experience in observing that:

Coalition work is not work done in your home. . . . And you shouldn't look for comfort. Some people will come to a coalition and they rate the success of the coalition on whether or not they feel good when they get there. They're not looking for a coalition, they're looking for a home! . . .

Id. See Deborah L. Rhode, ENOUGH SAID, 4 YALE J.L. & FEMINISM 35, 36–39 (1991) (where the author observed that fear of "getting it wrong" can lead women to seek something safe to say rather than seeking to advance the conversation by exploring differences). But see Reagon, supra note 1, at 346. Bernice Johnson Reagon exhorts us to remember: "In a coalition you have to give, and it is different from your home." Id. This is a difficult lesson for legal educators, who are accustomed to "getting it right" and often empowered by their position to silence disagreement.

28. See, e.g., Berta Esperanza Hernandez Truyol, Building Bridges — Latinos at the Crossroads: Realities, Rhetoric and Replacement, 25 COLUM. HUM. RTS. L. REV. 369, 385–86 (acknowledging variety of Latino/a cultures); Adrien Katherine Wing & Sylke Merchán, RAPE, ETHNICITY AND CULTURE: SPIRIT INJURY FROM BOSNIA TO BLACK AMERICA, 25 COLUM. HUM. RTS. L. REV. 1 (1993). Other organizations such as Law and Society and human rights societies have also brought to leadership women of color committed to equality who believe in the importance of
III. COALITION WORK ISN'T EASY

Merely bringing new guests to the (kitchen) table is not coalition-building.\textsuperscript{29} Coalitions depend on the participants' recognition of equality and mutuality of respect and entail critical engagement of competing, sometimes oppositional, objectives. This lesson was brought to light in SALT as we placed growing importance on multicultural, multiethnic and sexual diversity. It was highlighted during a painful but necessary unplanned discussion ably led by Professor (later SALT President) Linda Greene at a teaching conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1994. The conference was attended by men and women in legal education from across the country who were interested in making classroom teaching more inclusive and accessible to students. There were panels and break out discussion groups building coalitions to accomplish change. As has been true of SALT, I believe that the leadership of these women has affected the direction of the organizations by their engaging new voices and being more conscious of the dangers of exclusion and identifying the risk of assimilative assumptions. It is also the case that coalition-building has challenged women who have participated to think about diversity in new ways. Our notions of equality have been shaken and reshaped as we confront issues of sameness and difference in this outreach work. We have benefited from the thinking of these women reflected in their writing and in some cases from their participation in SALT Teaching Workshops and events in connection with our SALT ACTION Agenda. See Tracy E. Higgins, Anti-Essentialism, Relativism, and Human Rights, 19 Harv. Women's L.J. 89, 103–04 (1996). See also Isabelle Gunning, Uneasy Alliances and Solid Sisterhood: A Response to Professor Obiora's Bridges and Barricades, 47 Case W. Res. L. Rev. 445, 445 (1997) (finding “static” and “monolithic” Professor Obiora's juxtaposition of African and Western women as she criticizes the anti-female circumcision movement). SALT's work has profited from the cross-fertilization of writings of feminists advocating an equality focus and feminists writing about international law with a human rights focus. For example, international feminists have been more reluctant than scholars in the United States to reject a universalist approach and are generally more skeptical about the dangers of essentialism.

\textsuperscript{29} See Arriola, supra note 10, at 26. (LatCrit II planning committee transformed a motel room using wooden table, flowers and family photos, reminding participants of the important role of la cocina, the kitchen, especially for women, as a gathering place to cook and seek comfort and guidance through conversation.) The kitchen table symbolism has been used since the earliest feminist writing to describe the consciousness-raising project that begins with an understanding that the personal is political and draws on the personal stories of women emerging as they engage in their work and that expose gendered forms of oppression. Bernice Johnson Reagon offers this observation as to why coalescing work can break down despite earnest faith efforts to bring together folks with a variety of perspectives:

[M]any of us take ourselves too seriously. We think that what we think is really the cutting line. Most people who are up on the stage take themselves too seriously—it's true. You think what you've got to say is special and that somebody needs to hear it. That is arrogance. That is egotism, and the only line is when you have somebody to pull your coattails.

Reagon, supra note 1, at 352.
designed to foster interaction and other forms of participation, including speakers who had written about inclusive pedagogies. However, by the last day of the conference, members of several groups, including Latino/as and gays and lesbians, had caucused and sought space to present their views, arguing that the program had, contrary to expectations, left their insights marginalized and minimized their voices.

For some participants these critical observations seemed out of sync with SALT’s pedagogical objectives, drawing more sharply the willingness of some, but not others, to see our work as activist and essentially political. The comments also brought to light how some of our communication and interaction strategies and leadership structures had failed to take account of cultural differences and perspectives of the participants that SALT sought to include. As a consequence, the workshop planners and members of the governing board hastily struggled to provide time and space for unscripted dialogue about inclusion during the last session of that conference and urged everyone to become involved in planning the next workshop.

In my view, this opportunity for critical reflection was invaluable in redefining the future of an organization at risk of growing insular despite its commitment to diversity. Many participants who were vocal or had alternative views to offer in the critical exchange were

31. This protest action can be seen as “a claim to voice . . . a claim to experience, to a being or place within the public domain, within law.” Peter Goodrich & Linda Mills, Race, Culture and Legal Education, 51 J. LEGAL. EDUC. 1, 19 (2001). The fact that this expression of opposition was made in the context of a conference identifying effective pedagogies in support of students of color and white women and that some participants found this “claim to voice” disruptive or silencing is perhaps better understood today in light of the “filtering down” of scholarly analysis of “the law of white spaces” than at the time of the Minneapolis conference. Id. at 18-22. See also Melissa Harrison & Margaret E. Montoya, Voice/Voces in the Borderlands: A Colloquy on Re/Constructing Identities in Re/Constructed Legal Spaces, 6 COLUM. J. GENDER & L. 387, 392-90, 398-405 (1996) (using borders metaphor to make roles of outsiders problematic); see, e.g., Taunya Lovell Banks, Both Edges of the Margin: Blacks and Asians in Mississippi Masala, Barriers to Coalition Building, 5 ASIAN L.J. 7, 8 (1998); Eric K. Yamamoto, Rethinking Alliances: Agency, Responsibility and Interracial Justice, 3 ASIAN PAC. AM. L.J. 33, 61 (1995) (“simultaneous racism” experienced and engaged in by racial groups). See discussion infra note 34.
32. The dangers of culturally dominated thinking were identified in the talk of Margaret Montoya who pointed out that the quick pace and response time left little time for reflection that is savored by some groups. Also, meaning can be lost in the translation. Montoya, Unmasking the Self, supra note 11, at 201; Margaret Montoya, Rompiendo Silencio, SALT EQUALIZER (Soc’y of Am. L. Teachers), Dec. 1994, at 8.
encouraged to stand for election as members of the Board of Governors of SALT. They have continued to press us to seek broader inclusion by identifying and reaching out to other groups.33 On the other hand, the interruption in the formal conference proceedings also came at a price: From the vantage point of the presenters and some of the audience, it appeared to challenge the importance of another often devalued group, educators providing academic support, whose session had been disrupted.34 It also threatened the sense of order and process that some workshop participants relied upon and found safe, part of the “culture of SALT.”35

Out of this controversy emerged the need for active, self-critical engagement of all constituencies affected by SALT’s work. Several years later, the institutional response, emphasizing outreach, was SALT’s development of a vision and agenda for action. The ACTION Agenda, initiated by the Board of Governors, sought to take account of the range of ideas about how legal educators could address social injustice in the classroom and in our communities. The Agenda emphasized the importance of connecting theory and praxis in this work. It, too, was a product of heated debate, caucusing, reconciliation and compromise. At its spring board meeting in 1997, the Board of Governors proposed that all members of SALT join its “ACTION Campaign for Diversity” to address social justice. The Board asked that the campaign not only involve the challenge to affirmative action

33. Some of the “heart-wrenching” and exhilarating quality of the conference is captured in the recounting of experiences by the organizers and participants in SALT EQUALIZER, supra note 32. Linda Greene, who moderated the ad hoc discussion at the Minneapolis conference, became president of SALT and served in 1996 and 1997. Not surprisingly, managing the resulting extraordinarily diverse board proved challenging. During one board meeting in her presidency, Linda Greene made available to the board personality assessments utilizing the Meyers-Briggs instrument, a tactic some board members questioned. Some clinicians and academic support proponents, however, champion the use of this instrument.

34. Of course, critical race theory informs us that what appears to transpire is a consequence of one’s standpoint and experience of privilege and oppression. One person’s effort to claim space in the conversation can be perceived by another as a disruption, and the same action can have the effect of engaging some and silencing other voices. Whereas it is tempting to conclude that for this reason broad-based coalitions are fated to fail, I agree with activist scholars who seek to identify a unifying ethic that makes possible recovery from such episodes. See, e.g., Truyol, supra note 11. It is also important to provide opportunities for honest and searching dialogue about how our cultural differences and histories contribute to conflict. Eric K. Yamamoto, INTERRACIAL JUSTICE: CONFLICTS AND RECONCILIATION IN POST-CIVIL RIGHTS AMERICA 172–277 (1999).

35. Of course, what is “natural” can be oppressive to others coming into the room.
that was a logical outgrowth of SALT’s commitment to the recruitment and retention of student and faculty, but also address other inequities reflecting the diversity of our constituents’ interests. Among the priorities identified and set forth in the Campaign’s ACTION Agenda were defeating state and federal proposals to deny benefits to undocumented immigrants and challenging the Solomon Amendments’ withdrawal of student financial aid from educational institutions which banned the military from on-campus recruitment because of discriminatory policies against gay and lesbian members of the military.

The ACTION Campaign was structured to provide SALT members with three channels for activism: developing social justice curriculum, creating alternative admissions and undertaking political resistance to the conservative backlash challenging gains in civil rights. The latter, an explicitly political avenue, engendered the most controversy among members of the governing board since it depended on SALT’s aligning with other social activist groups and required the sustained involvement of SALT’s membership in projects outside the classroom. However, in this way the ACTION Campaign gave concrete meaning to the abstract intellectual engagement with change as SALT members could align themselves with movements organized by students, labor organizations and community groups with agendas similar to SALT’s.

The ACTION Agenda has likely diffused disagreement about the organization’s direction. Though all of the activities have not been embraced with the same degree of passion and energy and some agenda items have been left fairly undeveloped, the construction of an ACTION Agenda and its organizational structure based on Task Forces provides a means for sustaining coalition-building within SALT. The risk is that the Campaign’s division of projects leaves some members unengaged and even indifferent to the emerging political agenda of the organization, yet unwilling to speak up. Years after the Minneapolis conference, SALT continues to grapple with the problem of how to build respect for differences, and how to respond

36. The scapegoating of undocumented immigrants was a focus of a Robert Cover Workshop in the mid-nineties and was highlighted during the Alliance for Justice’s First Monday in 1997. See Anne C. Shalleck, First Monday’s Focus on Immigration Generates Change, SALT Equalizer (Soc’y of Am. L. Teachers), Dec. 1997, at 18. SALT is a supporter of First Monday activities.

while still promoting opportunities to identify common interests in social activism which allow us to coalesce. One of the insights of our coalition-building work is that such a movement can never be static and is almost never comfortable.38 A sobering corollary is that because of the fragility of these alliances, they may not be long lasting and do not feel like "home."39

As we have built alliances, I have become more keenly aware that the often subtle but persistent cultural dominance that affects our efforts to be more inclusive can create mistrust40 and a profound sense of isolation. Although coalition work can be exciting, sometimes I have also felt that we have made little headway and confront ever more complex barriers to change because of the tendency to succumb to group insularity and to ignore the differences of others.41 This may be more, not less, likely in an organization like SALT that has long prided itself on supporting civil rights and liberties of minorities and, as a consequence, starts with assumptions that its equality promoting goals are well intentioned and good. A sense of skepticism about the authenticity of inter-group relationships and even distrust is likely a product of the critical scholarly position that many of our members embrace and our identity-group experience. For me, Bernice Johnson Reagon’s observations about coalition-building,42 published almost

38. See supra note 19. Twenty years after Bernice Johnson Reagon’s observation about the short-lived quality of coalitions, scholars and activists have recognized that the prognosis for long-lasting commitment to multicultural coalitions is not good. See Taunya Lovell Banks, Both Edges of the Margin: Blacks and Asians in Mississippi Masala, Barriers to Coalition Building, 5 ASIAN L.J. 7, 11, 36-37 n.124-25 (arguing that group insularity and “simultaneous racism” pose barriers to long-lasting coalitions for racial justice); see also Rachel F. Moran, Foreword: Demography and Distrust: The Latino Challenge to Civil Rights and Immigration Policy in the 1990s and Beyond, 8 LA RAZA L.J. 1 (1995) (questioning the civil rights model of Brown v. Board of Education for the Latino community).


40. “Most of us think that the space we live in is the most important space there is and that the condition that we find ourselves in is the condition that must be changed or else.” Reagon, supra note 1. She describes the unconscious resistance to including others who are different as barring the room to those who “aren’t us” even as we say we are welcoming them. Id. Small slights can confirm one’s experience and one’s group experience of oppression. See JOE R. FEAGIN & MELVYN P. SIKES, LIVING WITH RACISM 169–72 (1994).

41. Taunya Lovell Banks attributes this indifference, even hostility, among people of color to identity-group insularity and “simultaneous racism,” a term she uses to characterize the non-white’s seeking of white appeasement. See Banks, supra note 31, at 8.

42. See Reagon, supra note 1, at 346.
twenty years ago, still ring true because they suggest that openness to change, critical introspection and humility are hard but necessary components of coalition-building and must be undertaken by all participants.

IV. LOOKING MORE DEEPLY AT THE COALITION WE HAVE BUILT

It may not be surprising that a social justice organization of legal educators has tended to attract passionate and strong-willed individuals at early stages of the organization's development and continues to do so today. Educators and administrators historically seek membership in SALT as a consequence of finding no critical mass of persons in their law school who share a commitment to work for social justice. More recently, SALT has captured the interest of socially progressive individuals uncomfortable with the predominantly white male privilege of legal education institutions and who challenge the status quo in their scholarship and teaching.\textsuperscript{43} Both now and at its inception, SALT creates an opportunity for legal educators to resist the insularity of a privileged profession even as they make a place in the academy. The ever-present challenge in SALT’s self-conscious alliance-building effort lies in bringing together characteristically rugged individualists, many of whom also see themselves as outsiders, to collective work.

Whereas SALT had always been committed to justice issues, leaders of the SALT ACTION Campaign have emphasized the urgency of addressing persistent inequality and the need to strengthen our course by bringing together academicians and communities experiencing continued oppression in praxis. An example of collective action that reached beyond the classroom was the SALT March in San Francisco in 1998. Several thousand demonstrated against California’s Proposition 209 under the broad and unifying banner, “WE WON’T GO BACK!”\textsuperscript{44} This highly visual event energized our constituencies and was very successful.

The Campaign itself, however, has prompted soul-searching and introspection, provoking emotion-laden conversations among the

\textsuperscript{43} See generally Wildman, Privilege Revealed, supra note 4.

\textsuperscript{44} Arriola, supra note 10, at 2–3 n.4. The SALT March brought together legal educators, labor and civil rights organizations and students and immigrant groups concerned about the entrenchment on affirmative action in the courts and legislature symbolized by the Hopwood case in Texas and California’s Proposition 209. SALT organized the march and invited other organizations to join it under the collective identification, Communities Affirming Real Equality (CARE).
Board of Governors and other members about their individual commitments to social change and their comfort with activist roles. For some board members, anything less than total devotion to change is unacceptable. To others, the call to activism has been confined to offering scholarly ruminations and experimenting with more inclusive classroom methodology.

During our co-presidency, Stephanie Wildman and I, along with the Board of Governors, sought to foster dialogue about the range of activism that was relevant to the work of academicians. Our teaching workshops were organized to include political action components that encouraged law teachers and administrators to share ideas about how to translate their commitment to concrete action that bridged teaching, scholarship and community work or praxis. The ACTION Agenda's organization of task forces, emphasizing the political, academic and social goals, also encouraged members to think broadly about ways of involving themselves in social change, and implied that the organization promoted engagement that respected diversity of interests.\(^{45}\) Inevitably, however, controversy arises over the degree to which members of the governing board are expected to be engaged in the task force work. This conflict can divulge sharp differences about the authenticity of individual commitment, provoking silence in some members and impatience among others. An insight derived from this activity has been the need to share competing perspectives yet accept the moral authority of self-defined commitments of our constituents.

Our work has both benefitted and been challenged by the fact that we included people who were involved in groups that have shaped the academic dialogue about CRT, LatCrit and Asian liberation theory,\(^{46}\) white privilege, essentialism and differences among people of color and feminists and who drew insights from clinical methodologies. We have profited from the theorizing of this scholarship\(^ {47}\) as their theories likely have advanced because of our practice.\(^ {48}\) But we have also been challenged by the potential for distrust that

\(^{45}\) See, e.g., SALT EQUALIZER (Soc'y of Am. L. Teachers), Apr. 1998, at 10 (outlining board of governor and other member assignments).

\(^{46}\) For a listing of representative writings in critical theory work, see Arriola, supra note 10, at 8 n.14–16. Many of the authors she cites have recently served or continue to be members of SALT’s governing board.

\(^{47}\) Mari Matsuda has argued that jurisprudence of women of color must come out of coalition experience to provide an understanding of the “patterns of oppression” that are experienced. Matsuda, supra note 39, at 1189.

\(^{48}\) See generally YAMAMOTO, supra note 34.
understandably arises when coalescing groups do not have long histories of working together or have pasts that reflect a lack of mutuality of support. Without an understanding of the different cultural histories of the constituents, coalitions are easily fractured and bound to fail. Breaking the patterns of old alliances, creating better understanding about history and forging new connections is taxing work, but it is necessary to foster respect\(^{49}\) and ultimately it is critical to sustaining coalitions. This project lies ahead for SALT if its coalition is to be sustained.

**V. FOSTERING COMMUNICATION ACROSS BORDERS**

In this work, we face many borders that inhibit the type of communication necessary to facilitate coalescing. Undoubtedly, legal educators have had trouble communicating beyond law school walls. In fact, the culture of law schools itself works against cross campus, much less cross-country, alliances. During the semester, each of us is consumed with classes, interfacing with students, fulfilling institutional obligations and writing. During the summer, few SALT members are accessible in their offices or their homes. Moreover, many of the most energetic SALT members are young and are often counseled by their colleagues against getting too involved in outside work until after achieving tenure. After tenure, some are too tired or have developed local organizational ties that replace their SALT connections. The hierarchy of law school prestige and power, size and distinctions between private and state schools can also disable meaningful cross fertilization among SALT members.\(^{50}\)

A challenge to the ACTION Campaign has been SALT’s tradition of doing work within the confines of meetings which are scheduled during the semester and at the AALS Annual meeting during the

---

\(^{49}\) For example, in her teachings, Margaret Montoya shares her knowledge about the role of Latinos and Latinas in the sixties civil rights movement as a way to reshape the dialogue about the need for broad-based affirmative-action linkages. Students need to learn about these histories in talking about equality. See also Margaret E. Montoya, *Affirmative Action in Higher Education: A Brief History of Chicana/o School Segregation: One Rationale for Affirmative Action*, 12 *La Raza L.J.* 159, 165–71 (2001).

\(^{50}\) We have experienced the effects of these differences in terms of resource allocations and also in institutional recognition of the value of our work. The effects are noticeable when we seek locations for our conferences, face disparities among faculty ability to get institutional support for travel and accommodations and confront barriers to drawing broad participation of students to annual retreats—the Robert Cover Public Interest Retreat, the Trina Grillo Public Interest and Social Justice Retreat and the Norman Amaker Public Interest Retreat. See [http://www.saltlaw.org/publicinterest.htm](http://www.saltlaw.org/publicinterest.htm).
winter break. Attendance at meetings scheduled at other times can be uneven, leaving perspectives missing in the dialogue about social change and compromising the authority of decision making. Before the ACTION Campaign, SALT depended on small planning committees, often connected to the location where the workshop would be held, to produce its bi-annual teaching workshops. There was little ongoing communication with membership other than at these events and the workshops organized around the AALS annual meeting. The teaching workshops have more recently taken on added significance for building support within the organization and continuing SALT’s outreach efforts. Advances in technology have made possible long distance collaborations among members in planning and producing these workshops that would have been impossible a decade ago.

In addition to its decision to organize in task forces and to use its teaching and other workshops to continue the social and political work between formal meetings, SALT made an early commitment to use the internet to foster communications among members of the governing board and with the membership. Today this seems hardly novel. It was the rupture during the Minnesota conference that prompted the organization to explore using the internet for dialogue—conversations that were intended to be more than cursory responses to administrative or governance matters. The proposal met with some skepticism. Some members (and I confess that I was one of the nonbelievers) feared that the impersonal, cryptic, email style would not generate a feeling of familiarity or promote deeper connection among members and would risk incivility that could compromise our coalition work. The cultural shift of law schools in support of email communication has helped dramatically. At the Minnesota meeting where the first discussions arose about how to communicate with each other more effectively by using the internet, I argued that because law faculty tended to work alone, often in isolation, we needed to focus our attention on constructing more face to face interaction. I thought this was particularly important when it appeared that some groups felt disconnected and alienated even as we reached out at our workshops and formal meetings. As a consequence, during our co-presidency I supported Stephanie Wildman’s proposal that we establish periodic regional meetings and a vice-president governance structure that would provide leadership and be responsible for identifying topics for discussion. This proposal never took hold, perhaps because it was “countercultural” to SALT’s more ad hoc, less formal
participation style. It may also have conflicted with emerging priorities of the ACTION Campaign.

Email, in contrast, has become surprisingly valuable as a vehicle for promoting conversation on matters of common interest. On several occasions email communications on the SALT listserv have enabled the SALT governing board to vet fairly controversial issues in anticipation of our meetings; for example, we have explored language alternatives for our public position statements and learned about the range of views supporting them. Whereas the internet has offered possibilities for making the collective feel connected, it leaves open the opportunity for some of us to opt out of discussion and not confront our differences. Ultimately, sustaining coalition-building requires strategies that foster dynamic interaction and a richer context for promoting passion than this communication process.

SALT has undertaken two such important strategies worth mentioning here. First is its decision to respond forcefully to the Solomon Amendments—the legislative and administrative efforts to prevent law schools from banning military recruiting on campus.51 The second is SALT’s purposeful scheduling of spring meetings to precede or follow meetings of organizations likely to include members of SALT and which share interests similar to the SALT agenda.

A. Building Connections in Response to the Solomon Amendments

SALT has led a successful effort to inform legal educators of the importance of the AALS’ extension of its nondiscrimination policy to include sexual orientation along with race, gender and other categories. It has exposed legal educators and students to the history of resistance to that nondiscrimination posture by members of Congress and the Department of Defense. As a result of this project, increasing numbers of legal educators and students have supported the ban on military recruitment on their campuses or have urged law schools to take meaningful ameliorative efforts if banning is not practicable.52


52. For a full discussion of this effort, see Reports of AALS Section on Gay and Lesbian Issues, available at http://www.cwsl.edu/aalsqueer. A summary of SALT efforts and its position can be found at the SALT website, at http://www.scu.edu/law/salt, and in Frank Valdes, Solomon: An Update, SALT EQUALIZER (SoC'y of Am. L. Teachers), Dec. 2001, at 13. The SALT efforts have been spearheaded by Frank Valdes, a former member of the board.
This project has included conducting a workshop exploring the meaning of the Solomon Amendments and their impact on broader issues of education autonomy at the AALS Annual meeting, collaborating with the Section on Gay and Lesbian Legal Issues in the production of reports, outlining the history of discrimination and providing concrete advice on resistance and amelioration in brochures, carrying out a letter-writing campaign directed at Congress, and consulting with the AALS on effective amelioration and urging of more vigorous enforcement of its policy on nondiscrimination.53 The collective work of SALT and other supporters like Congressman Barney Frank54 led to the repeal of the Solomon Amendments’ provisions that threatened to deny student financial aid at law schools which banned on-campus military recruitment.55

Although the battle is presently at a stalemate, since the Solomon provisions still apply and continue to pose the risk that portions of university-wide funding will be withdrawn if the recruiting bans are enforced by a University’s law school, SALT’s participation has been remarkably successful at mobilizing its constituencies and others in support of resisting this discrimination. It enabled those who would not necessarily have appreciated their stake in responding to sexual orientation bias to understand it and discover the interconnectedness of subordination56 as the Defense Department responded by trampling on academic freedom and autonomy. For SALT, the additional importance of this project lay in reinforcing the necessity for identifying forms of subordination “that sometimes impact more directly on our partners in coalition.”57 By facing this sexual orientation discrimination, we crossed boundaries to coalition-building and exposed new patterns of bias.58 This work has even greater significance since it links the national push for equality for gays and lesbians to earlier efforts to create equal opportunity in the military and connects local sites of resistance and protest for faculty and students, some of whom

53. Valdes, supra note 52.
54. Congressman Barney Frank was honored by SALT at its Annual Awards Dinner in January 2000.
55. Valdes, supra note 52; Frank Valdes, Shaming “Solomon,” SALT EQUALIZER (Soc’y of Am. L. Teachers), Apr. 1999, at 11.
56. Matsuda, supra note 39, at 1189.
58. Matsuda, supra note 39, at 1189.
have risked losing funds for expressing their opposition to the continuation of this discriminatory policy.\footnote{See Valdes, supra note 52.} This kind of coalition work is sustaining because it reveals in so many ways the importance of our connections as legal educators, scholars and activists for social justice.

B. Scheduling Meetings to Afford Cross-Fertilization of Ideas with Other Groups

Coalition advocates have taught us that lack of knowledge about the history of outsiders and misunderstandings about their perspectives have posed barriers to coalescing and cut short the potential for creating long-lasting communities. In recent years, SALT has tried to address these barriers by scheduling its spring meeting to occur near the beginning or the end of other meetings and conferences scheduled by affinity groups that may include many of our board members. Thus, rather than choosing meeting times that leave us isolated, forcing our board members to choose between the two meetings or confront the inconvenience and expense of traveling to two separate meetings at different locations, we have tried to "piggyback" our meeting dates onto others, alternating among groups who also plan spring meetings or conferences. In addition to eliminating some conflicts and providing obvious economies of travel and time for those who were inclined to attend both meetings, this scheduling has the potential to promote new relationships and interchanges, enriching alliances. By attending a LatCrit meeting or conference of clinicians, members of our board who are not as familiar as others with the scholarship or methodology of these groups can acquire a better understanding of the group's perspective through the formal meeting settings; they can also interact with our board members and others who are identified with the group and develop new connections in informal gatherings. In this way we can further solidify our own collective work or at least maintain linkages with other coalition builders toiling in neighboring fields.

VI. CONCLUSION

Despite some progress in bringing activist scholars together and encouraging them to coalesce, SALT faces a turning point in its coalition work and perhaps a new opportunity for self-definition. Like other communities,\footnote{See Harris, supra note 18.} we face the danger of not sufficiently clarifying
the ethics and values that inform our practice and distinguish this
group work from other projects undertaken by communities with
common identities or ties that make them "feel like home."61 We also
risk the pitfalls of seeking commonalities to establish our community
in ways that are assimilative and therefore compromise the differences
in outlook and history that give meaning to coalitions for change. Our
success may be attributable to finding good leaders, many of whom
are women and who are committed to collaboration and consensus-
building to promote the collective interest. Our rugged individualistic
natures and outsider perspectives have often propelled SALT's ability
to do this social justice work but these qualities also sow the seeds of
self-interest and insularity that can cause a coalition to implode.

It may be that SALT will determine that some of the work we
have begun must fall to smaller, more narrow coalition groups that
form communities with closer connections than a community of
activist scholars, leaving SALT to become a cooperative or loose net-
work of legal educators who support social justice. I believe, however,
that the coalition work we have successfully begun has been valuable
in terms of the personal growth for those of us who have been work-
ing at coalition-building and in the effects this practice will continue to
have on our teaching and our scholarship.

Notably, there are lessons to share from our coalition building
that affect the next stage of this work for us or others who take it on.
First, we can bring what we have learned from our homes, but we
should acknowledge that the knowledge we bring is incomplete. We
have learned, for example, that the civil rights black/white paradigm
was too narrow for our coalition work with other people of color. We
have also come to understand that we all must be open to learn from
the experiences of others, despite its discomfort. Second, we can draw
upon the experience of women (kitchen politics) and the idea that the
personal is political while seeking to avoid glossing over the fact that
there are always missing voices to be identified and that our personal
experiences are not commonly shared. As CRT, Asian Americans and
LatCrit scholars who have joined us have emphasized, it is critical to
social justice coalitions to keep the most marginalized at the forefront.
Third, we can incorporate ideas drawn from international law in order
to bring home the notion that it is important not to confuse "home"

61. See Reagon, supra note 1, at 346.
and "coalition" and not to rush to judgment that others are essentializing their claims. Fourth, we grow from our own earlier individualistic and outsider experiences and can share that knowledge, but we must also be open to leaving to others similar opportunities to learn from their own experiences and to share what they learn. Finally, there is always the danger not only of essentializing the struggles with which we are concerned, but also of privileging ways of expressing goals which are socially just. We should seek opportunities to cross borders in order to better understand the interconnectedness of inequality.