



Centering/Burdening

A DIALOGICAL RESOURCE ON RACISM, ANTI-RACISM, AND PEDAGOGY

BACKGROUND

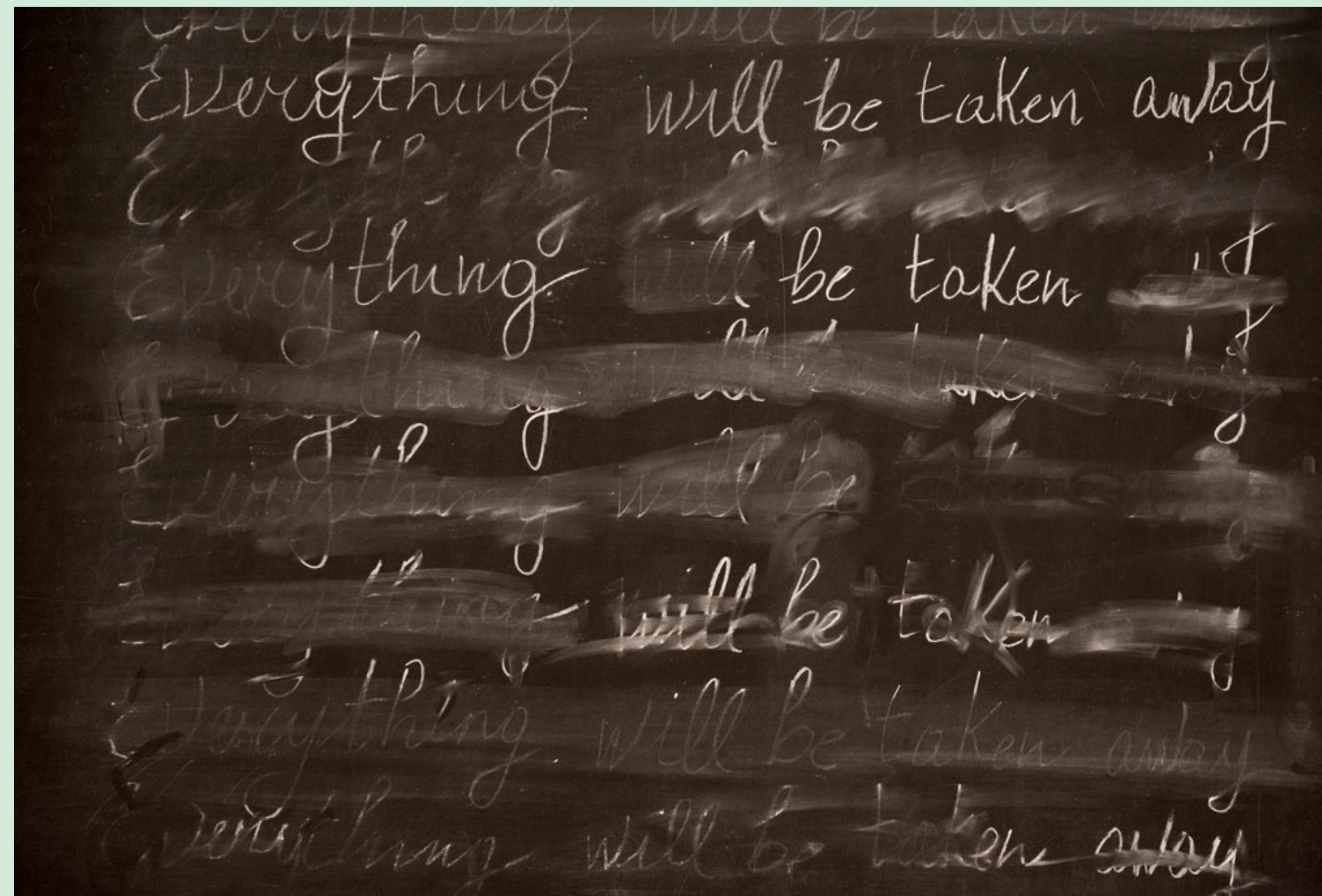
"How do classes that center narratives of racial marginalization end up putting students of color into the position of teaching their experiences of oppression to others?"

Over the course of the 2020-2021 academic year, Barnard's Center for Engaged Pedagogy spoke to a number of students who asked different versions of this question. Raised during a time in which many colleges and universities started describing their missions in terms of racial equity, inclusion, and democratic engagement, this persistent question suggests just how necessary it is to examine and address some of the tensions and unresolved contradictions that animate this time in higher education.

It is clear that student experience resides at the heart of questions like the one above.

And yet, students are rarely consulted as people with investments in and complex understandings of pedagogy. Typically, they are treated as recipients, not creators, of pedagogical innovations.

In the summer of 2021, the CEP subverted these tendencies by forming a group made up of 10 students who wanted to explore this subject and collaborate with each other on producing a document for faculty and students alike. "Centering/Burdening: A Dialogical Resource on Racism, Anti-Racism, and Pedagogy" is the outcome of this collective effort.



INNOVATIONS

Divided into four main chapters, alongside an introduction and a coda, Centering/Burdening has several elements that make it unique within the genre of anti-racist pedagogical resources.

A collective process of reflection and composition

The four main chapters and the coda of this resource emerged from a collective process of reflection and composition.

A dialogical structure

Reflective questions, which appear at the end of each chapter, differ from other anti-racist pedagogy guides in that they are designed to produce dialogue rather than to provide a checklist.

A collection of visual art

Rather than illustrations of key points, the resource features artworks that resonate with the themes of each chapter, pointing to the enduring nature of the phenomena they describe and the creative ways people have engaged with them. Above is an example: a detail from Adrian Piper's *Everything #21* (2010-2013)

IMPACT

Since its publication in January 2022, Centering/Burdening has circulated in and beyond Barnard and Columbia.

- A faculty of community of practice on anti-racism made the resource and the broader topic it explores the subject of one of their monthly meetings.
- During a workshop hosted by the Liberal Arts Racial Equity Leadership Alliance (LACRELA), Centering/Burdening was shared with college leaders as innovative contemporary anti-racist pedagogical resource.

But most importantly, the resource demonstrates the importance of student research and expertise on pedagogical matters.

Centering/Burdening is the first student community of practice that the CEP has formed, and the results of this project suggest many more will come.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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