

DREAMING-ON-HUDSON: SPATIAL PEDAGOGIES AND HOLISTIC SOCIAL  
STUDIES EDUCATION IN OSSINING, NY

A Thesis

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of Cornell University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Science with Honors

by

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## ABSTRACT

The Dreaming-on-Hudson project involved developing interactive mapping activities and place-based lessons that engage students' spatial imaginaries and root sociological concepts in place and lived experiences. These activities and lessons constitute the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum, which was implemented at Ossining High School in Ossining, NY within the SUNY Racism, Classism, and Sexism (SUNY Race) course during the 2022-23 school year. The curriculum was co-developed and co-taught by the author, SUNY Race teachers Samuel North and Jillian McRae, and Joyce Sharrock Cole, the Ossining Village Historian. We began with activities that mapped and explored students' own identities and communities, and widened towards understanding how sociological phenomena manifest within the town and region. At a time when attacks against critical race theory and educational equity initiatives are at a high, the Dreaming-on-Hudson project and SUNY Race provide a model for holistic social studies education that empowers students to shape the future of their community.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kellen Cooks earned his Bachelor's degree in Urban and Regional Studies from Cornell University, and is from Ossining, NY in Westchester County. At Cornell, he minored in Spanish and Latin American and Caribbean Studies. His previous work has included municipal planning in Ossining, researching histories of urban political protest for HR&A Advisors, and working with the Kawe Gidaa-naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin collaboration on the preservation of wild rice in Upper Midwestern lakes.

Dedicated to patience, creativity, and my loved ones

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## PREFACE

I first moved to Ossining when I was three years old. I have grown up in Ossining, and this town and its communities have shaped who I am, how I relate with others, and how I see the world. Ever since I was in elementary school, I have been deeply fascinated by Ossining, with all of its beauty and diversity, its uniqueness and its possibilities. On school bus rides that crisscrossed the town, I'd press my face up on the cold window glass and dream about where the stations of an Ossining subway system would be, or what it would be like to have a transit system of waterslides sloping down the town's hills. The extreme socioeconomic and racial diversity within the town's public schools was instrumental to my upbringing. I felt both blessed to have friends of so many cultures and backgrounds and to be in such a global place, and isolated by being a Black boy in a town with a rapidly diminishing Black population. I simply could not stop thinking about this place that surrounded me.

However, for most of my schooling, I was frustrated with a lack of outlets for my fervent interests. No class or teacher was telling me how so many Ecuadorian families ended up in Ossining, or why we were the only Black family in our neighborhood, or how a town developed to surround a maximum-security prison. Instead, probably due to state or federal educational standards and not the teachers' own volition, social studies classes remained abstract and far away. The American Revolution happened over there, the Civil Rights Movement happened down there, and World War II happened all the way over there, but we barely learned about how anything happened and affected *right here*. While I still ate all these distant histories up, I didn't blame most of my friends and classmates for lacking interest in social studies. Good grades in social studies were not going to put you on a

college-prep track like math and science. The format of many classes in middle and high school involved endless rote memorization. The content of the classes was simply far away from the classroom, and the lived experiences of the students.

Jillian McRae and Samuel North's SUNY Racism, Classism, and Sexism course, known within Ossining High School as "SUNY Race", was a highlight of my schooling in Ossining. The course's formation arose during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 (McRae, 2021). Ms. McRae had been teaching a pop culture and literature course while Mr. North had been teaching a race, ethnicity, and identity course. The school videographer, Martin McDonald, wanted to videotape a student discussion on the social dynamics of Hurricane Katrina's impact, and invited both of their classes, which had starkly different racial makeups. The discussion was a great success according to McRae, and the next day Mr. North brought his students to Ms. McRae's class, and he has never left, as that was the genesis of the SUNY Race course (McRae, 2021). The class has been taught by the two of them for the last 18 years and has gained a legacy as one of the most popular, engaging, impactful, controversial, and occasionally notorious classes in the high school.

I had heard many rumblings about the class throughout my time in high school, and once I enrolled in the course for my senior year, it was an experience completely different to any other class I had enrolled in prior. According to the course catalog, SUNY Race "focuses on understanding issues of race, gender, and class in the United States with an emphasis on the sociological construction of identity" (Ossining High School, 2023). The class was a microcosm of the school. Cool kids and nerds, social justice types and Young Republicans, students of various races and socioeconomic classes. I'd long known that we had one of everybody in our school, but this was the first place where we were encouraged

to interact and discuss our politics and our beliefs. Discussions were often personal and contentious, and news of explosive debates would quickly ripple throughout the school building. When I walked into class each day, I knew I was entering a classroom where the teachers cared for me, respected me for my beliefs, and treated me like a human being. We had a freedom to share our thoughts that felt a level above other classes, yet the energy was still raw and casual and intimate within the classroom. Activities such as the Privilege Walk, where students would respond to questions that decipher social privilege by walking forwards or backwards on the football field, encouraged us to self-reflect and unveil the realities of social inequality in our town. That classroom felt like Ossining looking at itself in the mirror, learning its many beauty marks and blemishes, and really getting into the mud of the “-isms” that define our lives.

A specific activity from the class was instrumental. One day, after a few lectures on the history of redlining, McRae and North handed out maps of Ossining along with colored pencils, and told us to redline Ossining. It is disputed whether Ossining was officially redlined, but the town has a deep history of segregation and racist real estate practices (Costello, 1994; Prial, 1974). With my classmates alongside me, we practiced employing this racist spatial logic on our town, thinking about house size, racial composition, and proximity to the Sing Sing Maximum Security Correctional Facility as we drew neighborhoods red, yellow or green. To me, it was both an absurd and necessary task, as it highlighted just how discriminatory these practices that shaped our American urban landscape were, and it forced us to think about how inequalities are baked into even small towns like ours on a block-by-block basis. It was a prime example of social studies made local, made relevant, and made intimate.

Even during my time at Cornell in its Urban and Regional Studies program, I reminisced about my experiences and learnings in SUNY Race. While I have taken several seminars at Cornell, few matched the freedom, joy, and chaos that McRae and North fostered in their classroom. I'd experienced hegemonic teaching styles from professors at Cornell, and felt myself striving for a creative setting that would encourage our spatial minds to run rampant, to run free. I had kept in contact with McRae and North throughout my freshman year, and had done a guest lecture on graffiti and gentrification during the Winter of 2020. When I began researching spatial imaginaries and development trends in the Hudson Valley in the Spring of 2022, I reflected on SUNY Race as one of the few ready-made spaces in Ossining where my own spatial imaginary was engaged as a teenager. It was one of the few spaces where the identity of my town was on full display and was being contested by the very people who knew it best: teenagers whose development was shaped by this community. From memories like those, I knew that SUNY Race was a prime space to test and experiment with pedagogical techniques that engage the spatial imaginaries of teenagers, as it already has been doing so in such a unique, public, and incisive way for years, and I could learn from their success as I brought tools from cartography, geography, and urban planning.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

From Washington Irving to the Hudson River School, 19th-century anthropomorphizing narratives of haunted, mysterious, restorative, and romantic nature grew to define the image of the Hudson Valley of New York far into the future, even while the region has drastically evolved under these stories' feet (Richardson, 2005). Now, as the highly socioeconomically, culturally, and ecologically diverse region marches deeper into a deindustrialized and COVID-shaped 21st century, the future is gray and malleable. Children dream, activists organize, planners plan, developers develop, politicians promise, yet everyone is speculating, grasping at strings for what comes next. At this juncture, the Dreaming-on-Hudson project posits: *How can mapping as a pedagogical tool encourage the exploration of young spatial imaginaries, especially amongst teenagers in a suburban environment?*

The Dreaming-on-Hudson project is a collaboration between me, Jillian McRae and Samuel North, who are teachers at Ossining High School in Ossining, NY in the Hudson River Valley, and Joyce Sharrock Cole, the Ossining Village Historian. Together we co-teach the SUNY Racism, Classism, and Sexism (SUNY Race) course at Ossining High School, which McRae and North have been teaching for the past 18 years. Dreaming-on-Hudson involves reforming the SUNY Race curriculum to include new activities and lessons that utilize mapmaking, along with concepts of place and community, to root sociological concepts in place and in students' lived experience. The mapmaking activities encourage students to find ways to represent and understand themselves and explore their relation to their community and their environment. These Dreaming-on-Hudson lessons and activities, interspersed within the SUNY Race curriculum, culminate in a final project where students

identify an “-ism” to investigate in Ossining, speculate what a better Ossining in the context of their “-ism” would look like, and identify possible actions to reach that potential future.

The first section of this thesis explores theories of spatial identity and examples of participatory and radical cartography projects and educational initiatives that were inspirational to the formation of the Dreaming-on-Hudson Project. Then, more information on the general methodology of the project and curriculum is provided, as well as the general logistics of the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum’s implementation, and the process by which our teaching team formed. The third section tells the story of the Dreaming-on-Hudson project from its conception and planning phases in mid-2022, throughout the school year and the implementation of each Dreaming-on-Hudson lesson and activity at Ossining High School. This section includes details and reflections on each Dreaming-on-Hudson intervention, along with the story of the curation of the Dreaming-on-Hudson exhibit at the 2022 Cornell Biennial, “Futurities, Uncertain.” The following sections of the thesis involve my own reflections on teaching and what I’ve learned about education through my experiences at Ossining High School, along with goals and desires for future iterations of the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum. The thesis concludes with a brief review of threats to educational equity in the present-day, and Dreaming-on-Hudson’s potential and promise during this era of conservative backlash in the world of education.

Altogether, Dreaming-on-Hudson attempts to facilitate self-exploration and self-reflection through the holistic teaching of sociology, and utilizes creative mapping activities and place-based lessons to explore the multiplicitous pasts and presents of Ossining, and dream about the future of their community. While the Hudson Valley is rich in its history of speculative environmental narrative-building and is unique and complex in its

socioeconomic and racial composition, it is not unique in its capacity to hold myriad identities within its geography and people. The story of the Dreaming-on-Hudson project serves as a model for the potential of mapmaking as a tool for educators to facilitate self-reflection and absorption of sociological concepts, and the potential of rooting such concepts or “-isms” in place and in students’ lived experiences to make them relevant. This is all done with the promise that participating students understand more of the complexities of their surroundings, and are inspired to get engaged in the shaping of their community’s future.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

During the fall of 2021, I was conducting a literature review for the Dreaming-on-Hudson project. I bounced from source to source, gradually absorbing each one and developing the vision for the curriculum. These sources are diverse in form, spanning from Doreen Massey's spatial-theoretical work regarding identity, to radical participatory cartography projects, to place-based education initiatives. These projects and articles vary in their geographic focus, spanning from the New York Tri-State Area to the Gran Sabana of Venezuela. All of the following sources share an ability to see interconnections in place and space, and utilize various approaches and media to shape change in communities.

### **Identity**

What does it mean for places to have “identities” in the first place? For this exploration, the late Doreen Massey's “Places and their Pasts” was extremely influential to the conception of this project, with her theorizations on the intersection of spatial identity and collective memory (Massey, 1995). Within her essay, Massey portrays the past as multiplicitous, gray, and shifty, and questions what authenticity and a rigid “realness” of place even means. If everyone has their own memories connected to their community, their own sacred places, and their own past, how can there only be one *true* identity for a neighborhood, city, region or country. How could there ever be an *objective* spatial authenticity? Instead of this fabricated rigidity, Massey claims that the multiple conceptions of the past that exist in communities compete against each other and fuse into each other to shape the place's identity. Within this competition and fusion lies power dynamics regarding who can write or rewrite history, and who can dominate the process of identity-construction. Furthermore, through fore-fronting the importance of historical fusion, Massey pushes that

places are formed, *not destroyed*, by new importations that add layers to their communal memory and identity. Outsiders and immigrants are key to the making of place.

From Massey's work, we can start to build a set of questions to explore the process of identity-building in Hudson Valley and how it connects with the environmental imaginations and memories of residents. What pasts are fusing and competing to form the identity of the Hudson Valley, and how is the region's identity interpreted differently by different people and social groups? Do affluent newcomers to a quaint Hudson Valley downtown have the same conception of the region as a family that's been living next to Sing Sing Prison for generations? It's doubtful in a place with so much difference, so much heterogeneity, so much change and so many layers to its past and present. From these potentially disparate conceptions of the region's identity, we then question which conceptions dominate in how the region is portrayed to those on the outside looking in. According to Massey, "the identity of places is very much bound up with the histories which are told of them, how those histories are told, and which history turns out to be dominant" (Massey, 1995, p. 186). Once we explore the impacts of collective pasts on the region's identity, we can turn towards the future and speculation, and question how the process and power dynamics of spatial identity-building shape the Hudson Valley's future.

Generally, the lessons learned from the article pushed this project to approach the Hudson Valley like a temporal whirlpool, where the past, present, and future spin around each other and fuse together to shape each other and create this beautiful place.

## Cartographical Inspiration

Maps are a vital medium for the Dreaming-on-Hudson project to assist conveying students' spatial dreams and imaginations. They are the way in which we implant stories and social dynamics onto our landscape. They are how we know where we are. They are how we know where to go. Yet, traditional geographers often see space and maps as apolitical and objective (Philip, 1998). In "An Atlas of Radical Cartography" edited by Lize Mogel and Alexis Bhagat, radical cartography is defined as "the practice of mapmaking that subverts conventional notions in order to actively promote social change" (Bhagat and Mogel, 2008). Within this project, approaching mapmaking from this perspective will be key to ensuring that political claims and subjectivity are encouraged from students.

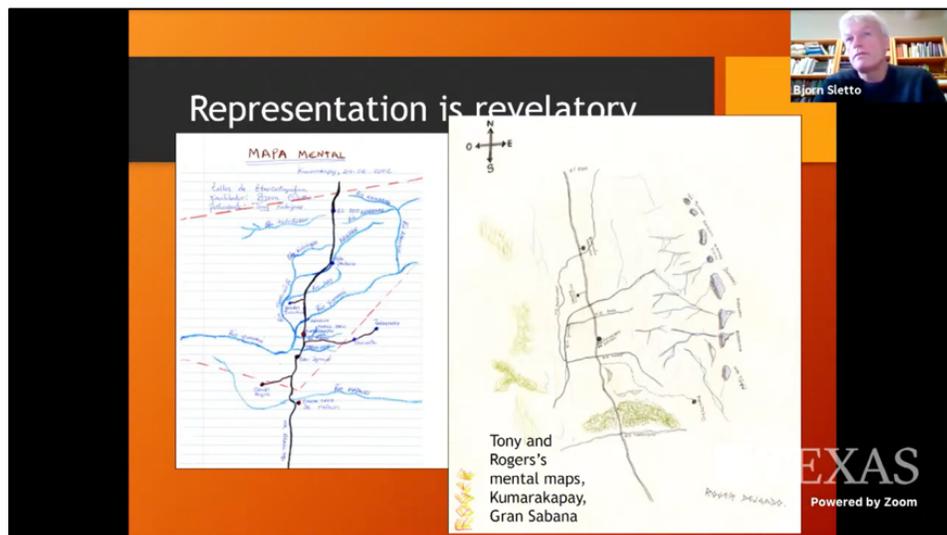
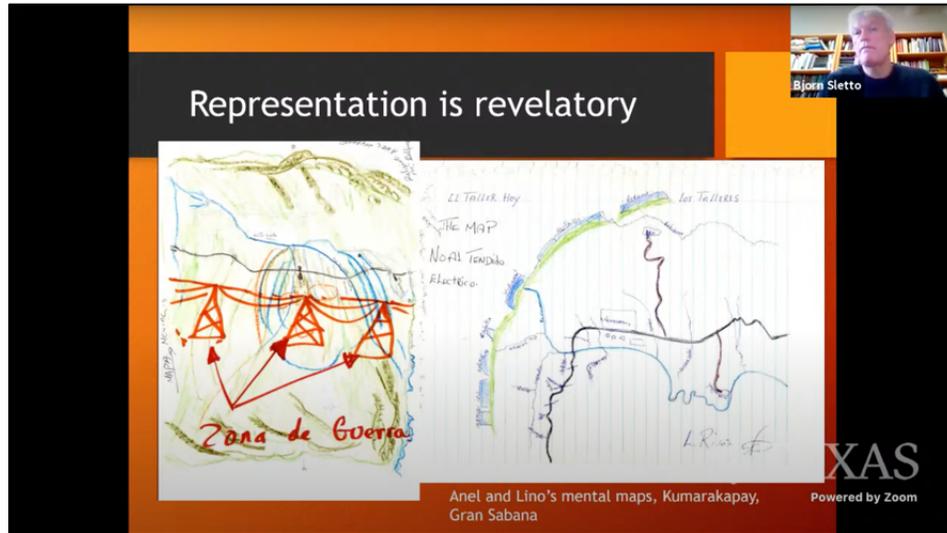
J.T. Roane and Justin Hosbey's Mapping Black Ecologies project is a striking example that helps foreground the radical mapmaking potential of our Dreaming-on-Hudson project, especially through its desires to "unflatten" the map. According to Roane and Hosbey, "projecting and transforming a multilayered 3D place onto a 2D digital map necessitates the literal and figurative flattening of that location, producing a colonial, 'bird's eye view' of a landscape" (Roane and Hosbey, 2019). Instead of flattening places, they aim to create deep maps and develop an active, malleable cartography of Black ecologies. Roane and Hosbey attempt to map Black ecologies through collecting and georeferencing social media posts, rap music, oral histories, and other sources of spatial knowledge. They map Black ecologies not only in their position at the receiving end of climate change and the ripple effects of plantation development, but also as their own insurgent environmental knowledge systems. These systems can help navigate the present and redefine our environmental future. This process of deepening the map and highlighting alternate

conceptions of space is exactly what we desire to do within the Dreaming-on-Hudson project, in attempting to democratize the ability to speculate about one's environment, and potentially influence development pathways and future-building in the Hudson Valley.

Bjorn Sletto's experiences with radical participatory mapmaking in Pemon and Yukpa territory in Venezuela give more insight into the processes, emotions, and social relations that go into making radical maps with communities. In this specific project, Sletto's team engaged with all ages and genders in these rural, semi-nomadic Indigenous communities to make mental maps of their lands (Sletto, 2021). These mental maps, demonstrated in Maps 1 & 2, showed a great deal of variety, and differed by social groups. For example, some more affluent teenagers mapped more conventionally utilizing GPS, while poorer teenagers created more abstract maps, depicting danger zones and perilous development projects. These processes of collective mapmaking therefore carry with them all the social dynamics of the community that is doing the mapping, and that's worth remembering when approaching extremely diverse Hudson Valley high school classrooms with radical mapmaking curriculum. Different students make different maps.

Furthermore, the aim of the project was to make their territory visible to the state as Chavez-era land tenure projects were developed for the country's rural regions. These radical maps would allow for this community to last through time in the digital world and in the archives even if infrastructural development erodes at their lands in the future. This ability to create spatial stickiness is vital for the Hudson Valley, so that communities can implant themselves, and not just get washed away in the region's tides of rapid change. Lastly, Sletto's reflections on his own experience in these communities was insightful towards mentally approaching this project. He and his students couldn't just swoop in and

start drawing maps. They needed to join the community to conduct “intimate ethnographies” (Sletto, 2021) and engage in producing insurgent spatial knowledge. He and his team needed to root themselves into communities by building trusting relationships and developing deep understandings of local power structures over years. Those principals of trust and understanding are inherently at the foundation of the Dreaming-on-Hudson project.



**Maps 1-2: Radical Cartographies: Participatory Mapmaking in Latin America**

Source: Sletto, & Texas Architecture (Directors). (2021, February 12). *CAAD Lunch Forum: Bjorn Sletto, “Radical Cartographies: Participatory Mapmaking in Latin America.”*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOuk91mE9s0>

Note: Map 1 displays mental maps of Kumarakapay, Venezuela from two poorer local children, while Map 2 displays the mental maps of more affluent children from the same area.

### Storytelling + Educational Inspiration

Expanding from mapping, “A People’s Guide to Los Angeles” is an excellent example of a project that actively redefines a city’s identity. According to the guide’s creators, “A People’s Guide does not simply offer an alternative reading of the past, but rather integrates history and place as a pedagogical lens through which to engage diverse people in critical analysis of their present reality and future dreams” (Cheng et. al, 2010). Through highlighting ordinary places where extraordinary things happened, and telling activist and alternative stories about mainstream landmarks, A People’s Guide reimagines the role of tourism into a tool to disrupt the mainstream, marketed identity of Los Angeles, and teach radical lessons about the city to outsiders. Many of the place-based lessons within the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum contain similar goals to share underpublicized histories and narratives of Ossining and the Hudson Valley, and influence how the identity of the area is conceived.

LitLabs’ Dear Iola, Love South LA project is a beautiful example of insurgent spatial storytelling *with* South LA high school students. Within the project, students read Frances E.W. Harper’s *Iola Leroy*, and then carried over their lessons learned from the abolitionist work to create short films and documentaries to highlight the networks of love, care, and struggle that exist in their communities (LitLabs, 2021). Each film showed truly stunning engagement with their communities, sharing what home means for them, what places are sacred, and how their communities and upbringings are wrapped up in the politics and economics of their city. This project humanizes counter-hegemonic spatial stories, and provides a pathway for students to critically engage with concepts of community change, urban planning, race, and development.

The spirit of this project is the blueprint for whatever the Dreaming-on-Hudson project will become, in its deep engagement of students with their environment through literary fiction and grassroots spatial storytelling.



**Figures 1-2: Screenshots from “Color Coded”, a student film from Dear Iola, Love South LA**  
Source: LitLabs. (2021). *About—Dear Iola, Love South LA*. <https://lovesouthla.org/About>  
Note: “Color Coded” is a short film by Ashley Segura, Katelyn Moore, Jagroop Ghuman, and Mariah Smith. Their science-fiction film envisions a world where Los Angeles is systematically divided by skin color, and teenagers must have their skin evaluated for where they will be placed in the city as adults.

## Curricular Inspiration

The Montclair History Center’s “Suburban Housing Discrimination in New Jersey” lesson plan deeply influences what a curriculum vision for Hudson Valley high school students could look like. Within their lesson plan, students collectively define “discrimination”; analyze redlining maps of Montclair, New Jersey; listen to local oral histories; find themselves on the redlining map; and then chart the lingering impact of redlining into present-day (Montclair History Center, 2015). This lesson plan appears excellent at teaching students about the impact of discriminatory housing practices and connecting them with exploitative spatial structures. The Dreaming-on-Hudson project aims to build on this model through encouraging students in the Hudson Valley to represent their own interactions and lived experiences with spatial structures. In addition to learning about the toxic, racist spatial practices, students will be asked to consider: “how can we create our own spatial knowledges?” In addition to conceptual inspiration, this lesson plan’s structure is also influential.

Modeling after this plan, the initial Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum vision (Figure 3) developed in the Fall of 2021, has a succinct description, learning objectives for students, and considers what materials and handouts might be used in the curriculum. This can serve as an easy way for other teachers influenced and inspired by Dreaming-on-Hudson to learn the bare minimum they have to know to facilitate the project and consider connections to standardized public education goals.

Curriculum Vision

## **Dreaming-on-Hudson: Creative Mapmaking for Social Change**

### **Grades 11-12**

#### **Essential Question: How do you dream about your community?**

**Overview:** Through the analysis of historical and fantasy maps, and collaborative student-led mapmaking, students will explore their own imaginations of their communities and environment and convey these imaginations through home-made maps and spatial representations. They will utilize maps as an artform to communicate their unique conceptions of their community's past and present, and forecast the futures they foresee and desire for their surroundings.

**About This Curriculum:** This curriculum is best implemented over an extended period of the school year as a complement to American history and social studies curricula. By nature, history is tied to place and space, especially in the United States where the Constitution revolves around the freedom to own property. Implementing this curriculum simultaneously with traditional American history/social studies curriculum can encourage students to absorb dominant spatial histories and processes. From there, they can innovate their own knowledge informed by history but rooted in their communities and their imaginations.

This curriculum could be implemented in a split-week format, where for example, three days of each week are spent teaching history, social studies, or government, and then two days of each week are spent developing students' geographical skills (through collaborations with art classes) and creating mental maps about their community that are influenced by the week's content.

#### **This curriculum can be used in:**

History classes; art classes; law classes; government classes; sociology classes

#### **Learning Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- Deepen their understanding of American history and social studies by connecting large-scale historical and social trends to their local contexts and surroundings
- Sharpen their geographical skills, especially regarding the ability to read maps and wayfind without digital assistance
- Articulate how all maps and primary sources are loaded with political and personal motives
- Collaborate to develop a layered history and identity of their communities
- Envision futures for their communities and learn more about the processes of development and planning

**Figure 3: Dreaming-on-Hudson Curriculum Vision**

### **CHAPTER 3: METHODS OVERVIEW**

The Dreaming-on-Hudson Curriculum was created by Kellen Cooks, Jillian McRae, Samuel North, and Joyce Sharrock Cole (Figures 4-7). Samuel North and Jillian McRae agreed to work with me to create and implement the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum in the spring of 2022, and Joyce Sharrock Cole, the Ossining Village Historian, joined the project during the summer of 2022. Place-based lessons and interactive mapping activities were developed in advance during the summer of 2022 to be implemented within the first few months of the 2022-23 school year, and lessons and activities were developed more spontaneously later in the school year. These lessons and activities were implemented within the SUNY Racism, Classism, and Sexism course (SUNY Race) at Ossining High School, which has been taught by Samuel North and Jillian McRae for the past 18 years. These beginning months of the school year focused on mapping and understanding oneself, and their community in Ossining and the Hudson Valley. The activities and lessons then evolved to complement topics surrounding race, class, gender, and other concepts that are conventionally covered in SUNY Race, via rooting the topics in place and students' lived experience. Within this chapter, I further outline the general approach and structure of our creation of the curriculum.



**Figures 4-7: Samuel North, Jillian McRae, Joyce Sharrock Cole, and Kellen Cooks, respectively**

Early in the summer of 2022, Jillian McRae, Samuel North, and I began to meet regularly to solidify a vision for the upcoming school year and how Dreaming-on-Hudson could be integrated into their SUNY Race curriculum. Almost immediately, McRae and North encouraged Joyce Sharrock Cole, the Ossining Village Historian, to join our teaching team and develop activities and lessons for the coming school year together. Joyce Sharrock Cole is a premier example of someone who has shone endless light on Black and underrepresented histories in Ossining, and has made key efforts to make Ossining’s history public and relevant for the community. Beyond being the Ossining Village Historian since 2020, she is also a board member at Bethany Arts Community, a local arts organization, and has curated exemplary and creative exhibits on Ossining’s Black history for the last several years. Joyce had been invited by McRae and North to their class to present on Ossining’s history in the past, especially on the Ossining Riots and the desegregation of the Ossining School District. She has a profound ability to develop activities and programs that make Ossining’s history interactive and engaging. She also has a deep literacy of the community’s nonprofit and governmental organizations. After a heartfelt conversation McRae, North, Sharrock Cole, and I had in July 2022, it was clear that Sharrock Cole was going to be a key member of our teaching team and was going to be pivotal for how we explored Ossining’s past as a part of the curriculum for the upcoming school year.

## Structure of SUNY Race

SUNY Racism, Classism, and Sexism (SUNY Race) is a college-credit course at Ossining High School taught by Jillian McRae and Samuel North, and has been taught by them for the last 18 years. Joyce Sharrock-Cole and I are teaching assistants for the course for the 2022-23 school year. McRae and North teach SUNY Race every school day, while Joyce and I mainly only come into class, virtually or in-person, for specific Dreaming-on-Hudson activities and lessons. I have facilitated and led collaborations between us four to develop the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum, and implement the curriculum within SUNY Race throughout the school year. SUNY Race is taught twice a day (to two different cohorts) every school day, with 44 students in the 2<sup>nd</sup> period class, and 27 students in the 8<sup>th</sup> period class.

On average, one day every 1-2 weeks directly involves Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum, with much higher frequency of Dreaming-on-Hudson days at the start of the school year. The design and structure of the course is officially equal for both 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> period. However, due to differing class sizes, differing personalities and energies, and our ability to alter activities and lesson plans during the school day, the 2<sup>nd</sup> period class experience differed from the 8<sup>th</sup> period. This is exemplified in accounts of Dreaming-on-Hudson interventions discussed below. For each Dreaming-on-Hudson day, McRae and North organized logistics, introduced me and/or Joyce, kept the students' attention, fostered discussion, and facilitated class. On non-Dreaming-on-Hudson days, McRae and North taught class without Joyce and I, following the curriculum and teaching style they have been utilizing and finetuning for the past 18 years. This project and thesis are not the only attempt to highlight the brilliance of SUNY Race and its teachers. Educational advocacy

organizations such as RE-Center (McRae) and the Ethics in Education Network (Moscow, 2021) have profiled McRae and North and sung praises of the course's history and impact.

### Approach to Curriculum Design

Within the Summer of 2022, our teaching team of myself, Samuel North, Jillian McRae, and Joyce Sharrock Cole managed to develop a flexible plan for all lessons and activities for the first two months of the school year. This roughly aligned with conducting the activities in which students would produce the materials exhibited at Cornell University at the “Dreaming-on-Hudson” exhibit that was part of the 2022 Cornell Biennial “Futurities, Uncertain”, which was on display from November 7-18, 2022. After November 2022, the process for developing Dreaming-on-Hudson lessons and activities for SUNY Race was more iterative, as McRae and North repurposed curricula from previous years, and Joyce and I would improvisationally develop activities and lessons that complemented what students were learning in class, and that fit into their calendar.

For the planning of these first two months of the curriculum, we made it imperative to start as intimate as possible with the students, and then slowly broaden out to the sociological theory that has historically been at the heart of the course. We aimed to begin the course with the employment of mapping as a technique for students to explore their own identities in creative ways. One of the primary goals of Dreaming-on-Hudson is to make racism, classism, sexism, and all the social ideologies and phenomena traditionally taught in SUNY Race even more visible to the students. We define mapping liberally, not in the cartesian sense with strict coordinate planes and georeferencing, but as a mode of students' free-form representation and their connections to others and their environment. This liberal definition of mapping is prevalent throughout all the map-based activities generated as a part

of the Dreaming-on-Hudson project. Our goal for the beginning of the school year was to do many interactive mapping activities that encouraged students to look into themselves and their lives and represent that as a base of their year-long exploration of race, class, sex, and society-at-large.

### Classification of Dreaming-on-Hudson Interventions

The Dreaming-on-Hudson interventions designed for SUNY Race that differed from the typical course curriculum can be organized into two categories: interactive mapping activities, and place-based lessons and discussions. These categories are not mutually exclusive, and some interventions blur the line between these two categories.

Interactive mapping activities (IMA) were introduced to the students by our teaching team during class time, and students were often provided multiple days and in-class time to work on the activities. Activities ranged from individual to small groups to involving the entire class working together. Due to both technological and logistical constraints and a desire to ensure that students had free-range in how they wanted to construct their maps, hand-drawn mapping was the primary mode of illustration within the interactive mapping activities, and no digital mapping software were involved within these activities. Most interactive mapping activities were conceived during the summer and conducted early in the school year as an introduction to the course, and to create materials for the Biennial exhibition at Cornell. The interactive mapping activities were designed to provide maximum freedom for students to represent themselves and their relationships to their communities and the environment, as part of a process to ground their learning of social theories in their own experience and in the context of Ossining.

Place-based lessons (PBL) and discussions would consist of lecture slides, often interspersed with maps, video, and/or music. The lessons are designed to be concise, and provide ample extra time within the period, which allows for students to disrupt the lesson and ask questions throughout the class period. Throughout these lessons, a common thread was their focus on using place as the context to describe how “-isms” play out on the ground, and how they’ve affected the past and present, and how they seem to be affecting the future. Ossining was almost always the focus, as Joyce’s expertise in Ossining’s history and my expertise in development and politics in the Hudson Valley guided our development of the lessons. The place-based lessons conducted early in the school year were pre-planned over the summer. Place-based lessons later in the school year stemmed largely from witnessing what sociological topics McRae and North were discussing in class at a given point, identifying an opportunity to connect topics to events or histories in Ossining or a relevant specific place to the students, and then quickly developing a lecture within a few days to keep in-step with the flow of the curriculum.

In short, place-based lessons were where our teaching team led this grounding of “-isms” in place, and interactive mapping activities were chances for students to do this grounding themselves in creative ways.

## Booked and Busy

All four members of our teaching team had commitments and extenuating circumstances in addition to SUNY Race and Dreaming-on-Hudson. These other aspects of our lives gave both context to who we are and why we do our work, and provide explanation for some of the limitations of the project.

For much of the conception and implementation of the Dreaming-on-Hudson project, I was also a full-time student enrolled in a full course load at Cornell University. This involved working on Dreaming-on-Hudson while studying abroad in Rome and while being on-campus in Ithaca, NY. While I was in Rome during Spring 2022, I applied for and received the Biennial grant (explained later), McRae and North agreed to implementing the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum the following school year in their class, and I began working with the Just Places Lab at Cornell University as a collaborating researcher. During Fall 2022, I was living in Ithaca and taking classes at Cornell while implementing the curriculum in Ossining, which meant frequently traveling from Ithaca to Ossining to teach lessons and mapping activities in-person at the high school, while also coordinating the curation of the Dreaming-on-Hudson Biennial exhibit at Cornell. Throughout this entire process, since October 2021, I have had hip impingements that have caused severe pain and have significantly limited my mobility. This condition worsened with time, to the point that I took a health leave during the Spring 2023 semester. During this time, I was done with graduation requirements, and I was living in Ossining with family while continuing teaching and implementing the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum. This condition severely affected my quality of life and my state of mind, and deeply affected my ability to be a student and do this project, as it has been a difficult balance balancing my health with my studies. At the

point of writing this thesis, I had recently undergone hip surgery and I am presently healing, with hopes of a smooth recovery.

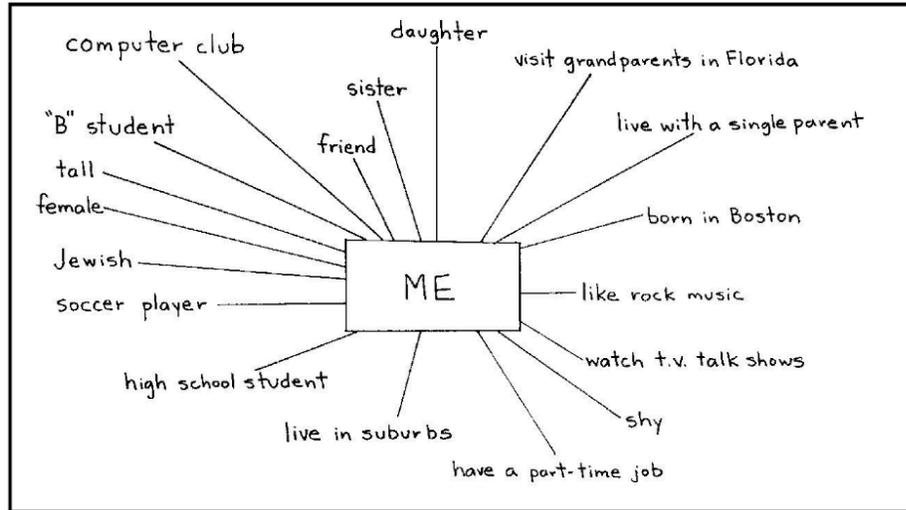
The rest of our teaching team also has significant commitments beyond SUNY Race and Dreaming-on-Hudson. Joyce Sharrock Cole has a full-time job within the Westchester County Government, is on the board of five community-based organizations, and is a member of the Ossining Historic Preservation Commission, along with being the Ossining Village Historian and working with SUNY Race and Dreaming-on-Hudson. Along with teaching at Ossining High School, both Jillian McRae and Sam North work with Hudson Link, which provides higher education services to imprisoned people at prisons across the Hudson Valley. North teaches classes at Green Haven Correctional Facility in Dutchess County, while McRae teaches at both Green Haven and Sing Sing Correctional Facility in Ossining. North is deeply involved with community organizations in Peekskill, NY. McRae is also a Racial Justice Strategist and Consultant with RE-Center, an organization focused on race and equity in education. In addition, all of us have families and friends that we love, and have lives that don't *completely* revolve around our work. We manage to balance all these commitments and circumstances with our involvement in SUNY Race and Dreaming-on-Hudson, and we always try our best to prioritize ourselves and our wellness while loving what we do.

## **CHAPTER 4: DREAMING-ON-HUDSON IN ACTION**

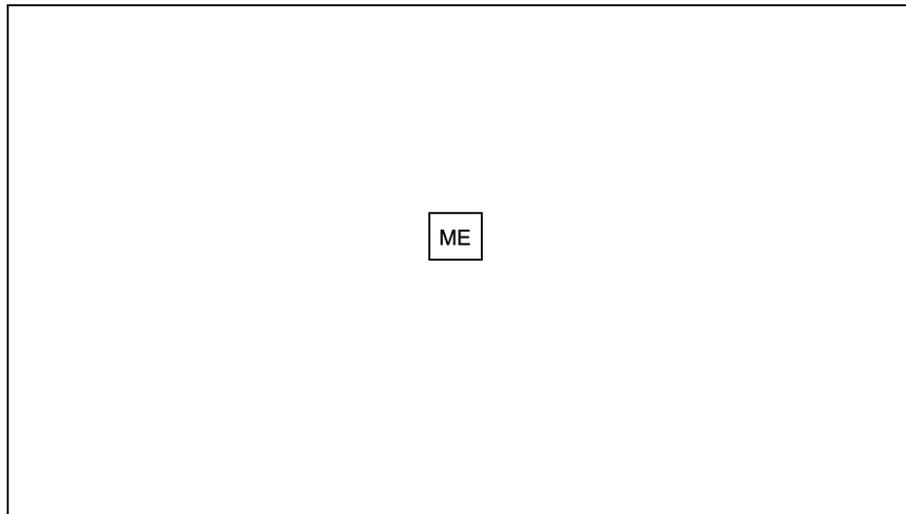
### Summer and Finding Where To Start

In July 2022, I had been living in Ithaca as a part of a Cornell Pre-PhD program and had been working alongside Jennifer Minner and the Just Places Lab (Wyeth Augustine-Marceil, Melody Chen, Yu Wang, and a team of other student researchers). For the prior month, I had been having brainstorming meetings alongside Jillian McRae and Sam North, both in-person and virtually, to discuss what our vision would be for the school year and create some potential activities and lessons for the start of the year. At that point, we had found that we wanted to start our mapping activities at the most intimate level possible. As their usual curriculum begins with the topic of intersectionality, North led the creation of the “Intersectionality: Mapping Your Own Identity” activity, demonstrated in Figure 8, where students would fill an empty human outline with different colors that represent all the different aspects that form their identity. It made sense to start here, asking students to represent what they are composed of, and see their complexity and humanity in pen and paper.

### Intersectionality: Mapping Your Own Identity



Create your own identity map that looks like the one above. Then translate your multiple identities onto the blank human form on the other side of the paper. Use different colors to represent each identity and create a key showing what color corresponds with what identity. You should indicate how significant each element is to your identity by using more (or less) color in filling in the human form.



**Figure 8: Intersectionality: Mapping Your Own Identity – Handout**

Source: Handout created by Samuel North



**Figure 9-10: Jennifer Minner, Kellen Cooks, Wyeth Augustine-Marceil, Yu Wang, and Melody Chen, respectively**

Therefore, by July, we were making great progress with the curriculum. In the Just Places Lab, we made plans to come down to Ossining, where Melody Chen, an experienced videographer studying regional planning at Cornell, would film a brainstorm session for Dreaming-on-Hudson between me and the teachers. This footage would assist us in creating a video we planned to include in the exhibition in the Biennial in November 2022. We planned to introduce ourselves quickly to the camera, answer a couple questions about the project's genesis, and then pivot towards brainstorming new lessons for the curriculum as the cameras would fade to the background. McRae also invited Joyce Sharrock Cole to this brainstorm, as we had never officially met before, and we were excited to get in touch.

Well, those introductions and couple of questions turned into a beautiful, rich, and winding 2.5-hour conversation, led by Minner and Augustine-Marceil, where we dove deep into not just the project's genesis, but all our deeper motives for why we love Ossining, why we seek the change that we seek, and why we choose certain ways and mediums through which to make that change. One of two massive takeaways from that conversation was that I have a deep, borderline-obsessive passion for maps. I have since I can remember, and I see them as a vessel for empowerment, expression, and liberation. The other takeaway was that Joyce has an equally deep, equally borderline-obsessive passion for history, and specifically

genealogy and Black histories. During the conversation, I mentioned our goal to start intimately with the “Mapping Your Own Identity” activity, and Joyce challenged us. She said that wasn’t necessarily the most internal we could get. While we have our own perceptions of our identities, we have all of the traces of our ancestors that form the genetic code that makes us from the womb. A family tree, she said, was a critical place to start if we wanted to really start mapping from our insides out. She shared a story about her own experience when she was a child and her elementary school teacher gave her a family tree activity to do. When Joyce asked her parents for information about her ancestors, she was met with hostility and a lack of knowledge, and she was unable to do the activity. When she told the teacher about her difficulties, the teacher made Joyce do a project on cats, while everyone else presented on their ancestry. That experience is one of the many sparks that drive Joyce Sharrock Cole to be the historian-genealogist-activist that she is today. My mind was blown, and from then on, Joyce would be a key member of our Dreaming-on-Hudson teaching team.

As the summer went by, our teaching team of now-four kept coming together to form lessons and activities for the first two months of our curriculum, starting from our ancestral roots, growing through our souls and identities, extending through our relationships and communities, and reaching towards understanding Ossining and the Hudson Valley’s place in a world defined by -isms.

## Starting With Self

The first concepts introduced to SUNY Race students each year are binary systems and intersectionality. The Dreaming-on-Hudson complementary activity to this introduction was the “Intersectionality: Mapping Your Own Identity” activity, which McRae and North facilitated with the students from September 7<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The activity was well received by the students, and their maps were simply beautiful. Someone can talk about intersectionality and the convergence of different identity groups and all the other theories involved, but the identity maps were clear examples of how being human necessitates being intersectional. The maps, displayed in Figures 13-15, encourage students to internalize the concept of intersectionality, and approach it as simply part of life.

The following week, Joyce came into class for a week focused on genealogy and making family trees. She began by introducing the concept of genealogy, and then encouraged students to start listing their family members and ancestors to find out when their family got to Ossining, and think of questions they’d like to ask their family about their history. Her presentation was interspersed with examples of how to read archival records to learn how to understand one’s family’s story, and with examples of Joyce’s own genealogical journey of finding her roots. During the lessons, the students also discussed how their families affected Ossining, and what different street names and place names meant to Ossining’s history. By the end of the week, students were asked to map out their family tree and visualize their genealogical findings. Throughout this genealogy week, Joyce was consistently available and there for the students, ensuring that no student came out of this with their own “cat story”, and rather that they felt a little more rooted in themselves, their identities, and their rich histories.

Intersectionality: Mapping One's Own Identity

Name: Emma Seijo

Daughter:  
light red

Determined:  
light blue

Female:  
light green

Puerto Rican:  
orange

Mock Trial  
Club:  
Dark Blue

Social:  
Dark Red

Short:  
Yellow

80% Student:  
Dark Green

NBA:  
Violet

Highschool  
Junior:  
light Black

Traveling:  
Dark  
Brown

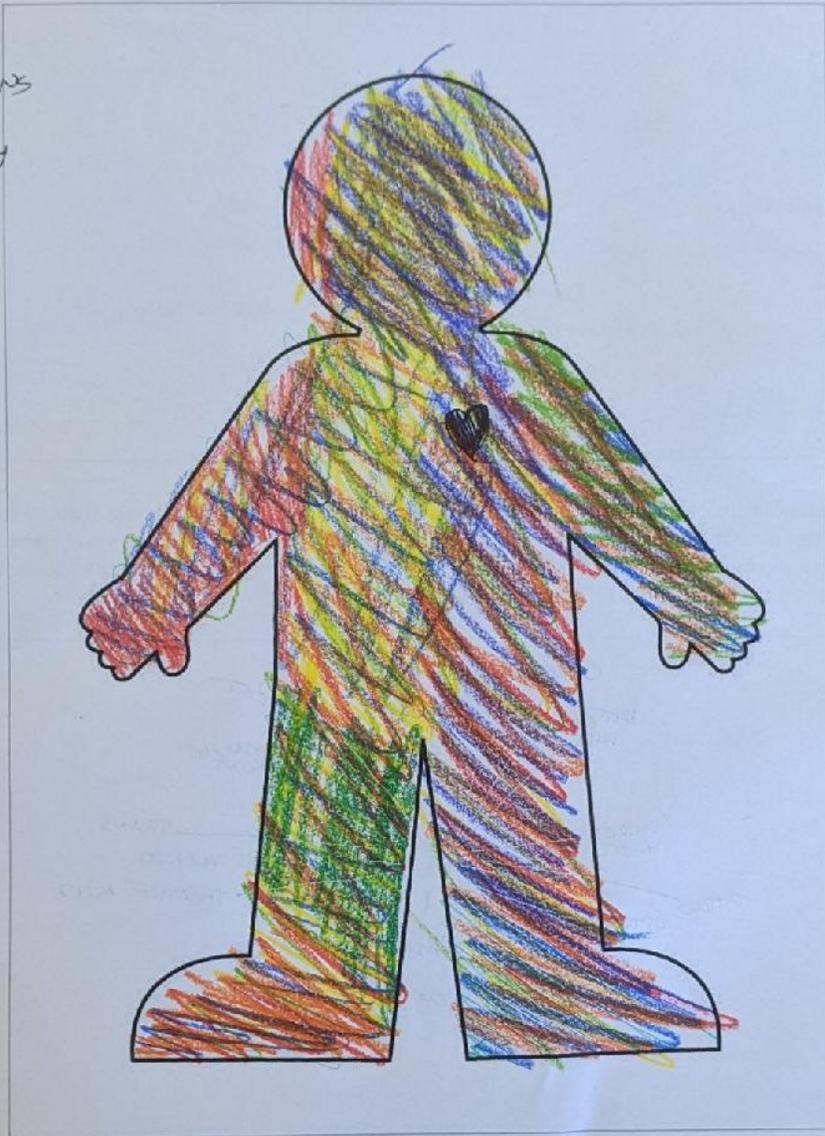


Map 3: Emma Seijo's Identity Map

# Intersectionality: Mapping One's Own Identity

Name: MARS WARD

-  BROTHER
-  QUEER/TRANS
-  KAT DAD
-  MUSICAL THEATRICAL
-  FRIEND
-  READER
-  STUDENT



Map 4: Mars Ward's Identity Map

Intersectionality: Mapping One's Own Identity

Name: Waniya Ahsan



- Extrovert
- Going out to eat
- The color pink
- Field Hockey / Lac
- Grounded
- FBI water
- NYC/gossip girl
- Middle child
- Friendly
- Determined

Map 5: Waniya Ahsan's Identity Map

## Genealogy: the study of the tracing lines of descent; ancestry

**1. Begin to make a list of all family members going back as far as you can.**

(Look at birth certificates, pictures | [familysearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org) | talk to grandma/grandpa... whomever you have available, research the information you find out.)

**2. When did your family get to Ossining? What street do you live on? Use [fultonhistory.com](https://www.fultonhistory.com) to see the history of street names.**

(What is your connection to Ossining | What is your family's connection to Ossining? Even if you feel disconnected, you are all part of [Ossining's](https://www.fultonhistory.com) history...)

**3. What questions do you have about your family's history? | Where did your family find their "place" in Ossining?**

Did your family own a business? Where did they live when they first moved here?

**4. Find "case studies" that relate to your family and your family history.**

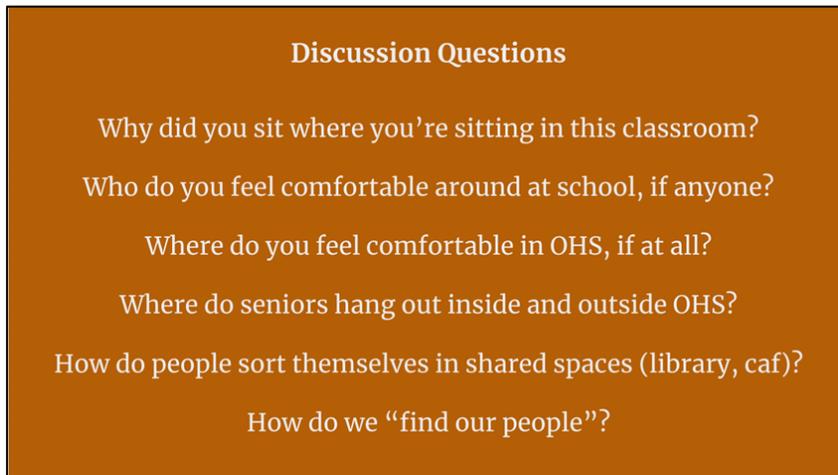
Has your family been in the news?

**Figure 11: Slide from Joyce Sharrock Cole's Genealogy Study Presentation**

Note: These were the instructions provided for students for their family tree activity.

### Exploring Concepts of Community

Once students had worked on their identity maps and family trees, we then wanted to begin opening up the conversation, moving from focusing on intersectionality within the individual and their history, to the class seeing themselves as a collective and a part of complex communities. On September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022, I led a discussion that was titled "Why do we sit where we sit?" that was aimed to encourage students to think about how they organize into friend groups and cliques, and how that was visible within their seating decisions during those first few weeks of SUNY Race. While we discussed that topic for a short period of time, the conversation evolved into a fruitful, passionate discussion where students vented their feelings around just how uncomfortable they felt within the high school.



**Figure 12: Discussion Questions from "Why do we sit where we sit?" Lesson**

They shared stories about the significant increase in security measures taken by the Ossining High School administration, and how it was limiting students' freedom. More specifically, strict policies regarding walking the hallways between classes were especially disliked, as there are very few open spaces within the high school and their grounds where students feel comfortable to talk with friends, study, and just exist between classes. Those few spaces where students had that opportunity were overcrowded and chaotic. Furthermore, many of the SUNY Race students (mostly seniors and juniors) were thoroughly annoyed with continuous unruly and disruptive behavior from underclassmen, which kept leading to stricter policies for all high schoolers from administration.

After weeks of focusing mostly on their individual complexities, I could feel the class beginning to come together as a unit in their general anger with their lack of freedom within their schooling environment. This was the first Dreaming-on-Hudson intervention that (inadvertently) led to the students beginning to problematize their surroundings, share their grievances, and start thinking about what ought to be within their surroundings. This line of thinking would continue amongst the students throughout the school year as they geared up for their final projects.

Later that week, we would create the social maps, which was one of our largest (both in literal physical scale and in effort) mapping activities of the entire school year. The intervention was titled “How are we in community?” For this activity, Minner, Augustine-Marceil, and Chen of the Just Places Lab, and I traveled from Ithaca to Ossining to assist in-person with the implementation activity. Furthermore, Chen brought videography equipment with her to film each SUNY Race class as we created our social maps, and to film B-roll shots within different parts of Ossining. She planned to use her documentarian skills to combine this footage with the July interview in her efforts to develop a Dreaming-on-Hudson video for the Biennial exhibit.

The activity’s design involved massive sheets (up to 15 feet long) of canvas paper that covered entire walls of the classroom, a seemingly endless amount of post-its of various colors, and lots and lots of colored markers. In our 2<sup>nd</sup> period class, I instructed the students to think of up to five spaces or groups within Ossining High School, and up to five spaces or groups in Ossining at-large where they felt in community, felt safe, and/or felt cared for by friends or family. As they thought of each one, they would write it boldly on a post-it, and then one-by-one they would come up to the behemoth of canvas paper, take a marker, write their name, stick their post-its on the paper, and draw lines connecting their names to these post-its, as shown in Figures 13-14. If someone else had already placed the space/group that a student chose, that student would place their post-it on top of that one, and still draw a line from their name to the growing post-it stack, creating a dense hub. While this was all happening, McRae, Minner, Augustine-Marceil, Chen, and I were working in tandem to help students, in the words of McRae, “Get on that wall!”



**Figure 13: Social Mapmaking in Action – Period 8**  
Source: Photo from Just Places Lab



**Figure 14: Adjusting Maps and Filming Classroom – Afterschool**  
Source: Photo from Jennifer Minner

The 8<sup>th</sup> period class did generally the same activity, but we heard pleas from some of the 2<sup>nd</sup> period students that the most important communities to them were outside of Ossining altogether, whether it be in other parts of Westchester County or down in New York City. To adjust, we added a classification scheme to the 8<sup>th</sup> period map, where communities in OHS would be written on green post-its, Ossining communities on yellow, and communities beyond Ossining in blue. These same-day adjustments were commonplace for each Dreaming-on-Hudson day throughout the school year, feeling things out during 2<sup>nd</sup> period, discussing throughout the day, and adjusting the lesson or activity for the 8<sup>th</sup> period class.

The result of this activity were two messy, chaotic, detailed, personal, and beautiful social maps that displayed the networks of community that defined the lives of our SUNY Race students, and showcased the hubs where our students' communities intertwine in OHS, Ossining, and the greater New York Metro Area. As our teaching team and the students observed the final products, we found popular community hubs like Ossining's Waterfront and vital OHS communities for the students such as the Prestigious Ladies of Power, a mentoring and student support group for girls of color. There were many communities that were unique to each student, such as their homes, their workplaces, specific communities beyond Ossining, or in one student's case, their boyfriend's house. Through showcasing the students' communities, we had made a sentient map of Ossining, made from connections of care, safety, familiarity, and love.

## Community and COVID

There were certain hubs present and some missing that surprised me as an alumnus of Ossining High School. For example, places like Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, and Chipotle, which are all a distance from the high school, seemed to be more popular than Lucy's Pizza, the landmark pizza spot across the street that would be packed shoulder-to-shoulder all school day when I was a student. In fact, I was able to find a whole table for lunch at Lucy's for myself, Minner, Augustine-Marceil and Chen to eat, and the place felt borderline-deserted. This was one of many reminders throughout the school year that COVID-19 had left a deep, traumatic, and indelible mark on Ossining and especially its youth.

Westchester County and the Hudson Valley was one of the first epicenters of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, and over 3,400 people in Westchester have died in the past three years due to the pandemic, with thousands more having been sick and potentially experiencing long-term effects (The New York Times, 2023). The seniors and juniors of SUNY Race have had their high school experiences traumatically disrupted by the pandemic, by both the graveness of the pandemic's medical impact on the area and their loved ones, along with the subsequent impacts on their education. Many of them took over a year of remote classes, and the 2021-22 school year was continuously interrupted by outbreaks such as the Omicron variant that forced schools back into remote learning.

While this school year appears to be less turbulent in terms of the pandemic, many of our students have had a hole cut out of their high school experience, and the impacts of that loss are extremely clear each day within Ossining High School. The chaotic behavior from first-years and sophomores that brings such ire from our upperclassmen SUNY Race students is, according to some teachers, due to their loss of an in-person middle school

experience, which is key to their social adolescent development. Many teachers have told me that these have been by-far the most difficult and draining years of their careers, and many have shared desires for retirement and career changes. This all manifests in the classroom with teacher fatigue and decreased student engagement, as their phone usage in class has skyrocketed, and holding student's attention has become much more difficult. In sum, this is a drastically different schooling experience compared to my class (OHS Class of 2019) and years before. The Dreaming-on-Hudson discussions and activities don't only represent the effects of COVID-19 on the high school experience in Ossining, but also serve to encourage collective retrospection on our community's dynamics as our interpersonal ties have been so severely strained during the pandemic.

### Defining Ossining's Identity

The following week, we pivoted from exploring our classroom community to exploring Ossining's identity over different periods of its history via a four-lesson series, as we continued to expand outwards from the self within the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum. On September 28, Joyce zoomed into class to teach a lecture titled "Ossining, Before the Riots", showcasing an array of photographs of Ossining from the 1890s (shown in Figure 15) to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and audio clips about that era's racial and ethnic dynamics and tensions via Ossining oral history projects. Between these photos and clips, she shared newspaper articles from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, highlighting the town's marketing as a picturesque village along the Hudson, and the evidence of segregated public services, such as the Hunter Street Park for Negro Children and the Negro Recreation Committees.



**Figure 15: Photograph of Main Street in Ossining, NY from the 1890s**

Source: Procured by Joyce Sharrock Cole

After students had learned about Ossining’s complex identity and aesthetic differences in this era, the next day, Sharrock Cole again led a lecture on “Ossining Schools and Unrest at OHS”, where she led the SUNY Race students through what Ossining was like for students in the 1960s and 70s. This lesson was placed at the center of this lesson series, as the Civil Rights Era and specifically racial conflict amongst Ossining High School students led to arguably the most transformative policy decision in Ossining’s history. As context, Sharrock Cole shared how Ossining’s neighborhood schooling plan (where each neighborhood had its own elementary school for local children) had influenced the town’s de-facto segregation for most of its history up to this point, with US Route 9 creating a “Mason-Dixon Line” that divided the village between its White and Black populations. Inspired by civil rights movements across the country, and dismay over the killings of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr, racial tensions flared between Ossining High School

students continuously during 1968 and 1969. Sharrock Cole shared photos and press from Together Weekend, a massive concert and festival organized in 1969 and 1970 to ease racial tensions, but she then recounted the eventual summit of this strife in 1974, when one cafeteria melee led to 19 people injured, 27 students suspended, brawls spilling out of the high school into Ossining's downtown, and lingering legends of a student being thrown out of an upper-level high school window.

*Still-Tense Ossining Eases Racial Strife*

*Year After Racial Clash, Ossining Copes With Tension and 'Inferiority'*

**Figures 16-17: Headlines from New York Times Articles**

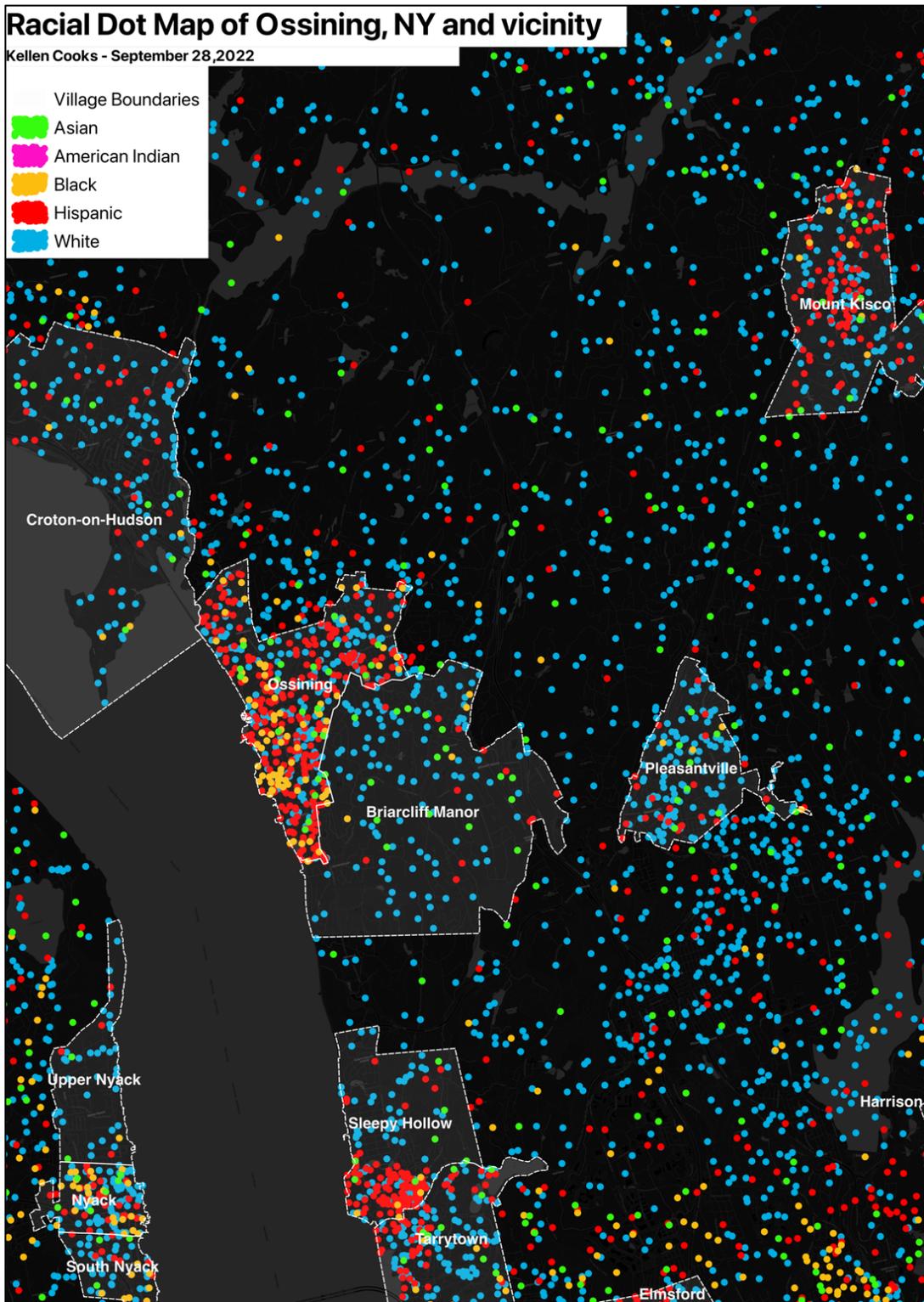
Note: Articles written by Frank Prial on March 18, 1974, and James Feron on February 24, 1975, respectively.

She concluded the class by describing the subsequent reports created on Ossining's segregation in the '70s, and the implementation of the Princeton Plan in Ossining which forced all students within the school district to attend the same public schools at every grade. This policy would essentially de-segregate Ossining's public education system by the 1980s, and transform race relations in town. Throughout this lesson, Sharrock Cole shared newspaper articles (including those of Figures 16-17) that strayed far from the quaint depiction of Ossining in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as by this point Ossining became regionally and nationally known as a center for racial tension and violence.

The following day, I taught the “Telling Ossining’s Story” lesson which focused on how Ossining’s identity has transformed and has been portrayed since the Princeton Plan implementation to this day. The core of this transformation has been a pivot from a reputation for racial tension to a reputation for diversity and “Racial Harmony” (Costello, 1994) that has been reinforced by regional press outlets. I presented newspaper articles and demographic maps to describe this evolution in Ossining’s identity and composition, along with the story of my own journey to Ossining, as I was born in Fairfield County, Connecticut in a very White and affluent enclave, and my parents moved to Ossining in large part because of the prospect of raising their Black son in a racially and socioeconomically diverse community. While the town was literally diversifying racially, this growing reputation for diversity was in turn transforming Ossining, adding to the currents of change in the village around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and present day.

While we taught this series of lessons on Ossining’s changing identity throughout its history, students were assigned the “What Is Ossining?” assignment, where they would have to describe what Ossining was to them in a concise paragraph (selected responses shown in Figures 18-20). The purpose of this assignment was for students to reflect on their own experiences, along with the individual and collective mapping projects we had done, to define Ossining’s identity for themselves, while we presented all the different spatial identities that had existed and persisted through Ossining’s past. Connecting to Massey’s work, we aimed to involve and forefront the students in the construction of Ossining’s identity, and not present this history as some dynamic that is detached from them, but rather that flows through them. Their responses were stunning. They were intimate and complex, and in their pointedness, illuminated more about the village than any headline could provide.

On the following Tuesday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, I taught the “Telling Ossining’s Story...For Money” lesson, discussing the current development trends in Ossining, and instances where Ossining’s story has been constructed by institutions to attract capital, such as with the New York State Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI). At the end of this lesson, I shared the video that the Village of Ossining had submitted as a part of their application for the \$10 million DRI grant. In response to discussion questions, students showed interest and excitement in the potential projects detailed in the video, and pointed out how specific Black and Brown neighborhoods seemed to be strategically omitted from the video.



**Map 6: Ossining as an Island of Ethnic Diversity**

Sources: 2020 US Census and Westchester County GIS.

Note: This map was produced via QGIS and included in the “Telling Ossining’s Story” lesson.

When someone asks me about what Ossining means to me, I think of the history. Some kids may say, "I hate Ossining because we don't have a mall or a movie theater." But, in the last 2 years of school, Ossining High School has helped open me up to the past of Ossining and how it sets up the present and future. I love learning about Ossining and its history surrounding the Prison, cultural similarities and differences, and more. I also appreciate how much the school does for helping young adults find their own way. I came into freshman year of high school as a decent wrestler who was lost as a person. I come into senior year with a chance to be a state champion and as an intelligent leader who is preparing to do great things in the future. I have to give appreciation to my parents, but Ossining definitely played a big part in my maturity.

**Figure 18: Tristan Robinson-July's Response to "What is Ossining?"**

That is a question I don't think I can fully answer. I have lived in Ossining since I was in the 5th grade, but I was still mostly in The Bronx. I still went to school there, all my friends were there, my doctor was in The Bronx and that was my whole life. Then in my freshman year I moved up here full time due to Covid, but I was still doing school in the Bronx online. Ossining will have a big impact on my life but I know that it will be just a stepping stone. However, it will have a big impact on my family. It was my parents' first house after living in an apartment. It was where I got to have my own room and a backyard. Ossining was also just a big change for me, with the schools, the environment, and everything else. At the end of the day, Ossining is just a chapter for me and I think that is what it will always be.

**Figure 19: Samantha Gordon's Response to "What is Ossining?"**

Ossining is home  
Ossining is where me and my family grew up  
Ossining is where I feel safe and I know wherever I turn there will be someone there  
Ossining is warm sunny days at Nelson Park  
Ossining is trips down to the library or grandmas house on Spring Street  
Ossining is hot summer days at the waterpark at Louis Engel Waterfront  
Ossining is where my family enjoys being

Figure 20: Shaniah Rivera’s Response to “What is Ossining?”

## Ossining’s DRI Video

While your watching, think about these questions:

- How does this video answer “What is Ossining?”, with its motives to attract investment?
- What development track is this video representing and attracting? Immigrant revitalization, amenity development, both, neither?
- Who and where are included? Who and where are excluded? How do these choices shape the video?



Figure 21: Discussion Questions from “Telling Ossining’s Story...For Money” Lesson

## Not Everyone Thinks Like You

After the series of lessons on the history and construction of Ossining's identity, McRae and North assigned Toni Morrison's short story "Recitatif" for the SUNY Race students to read by the end of the week. "Recitatif" is based in Newburgh, NY and the mid-Hudson Valley, and tells the story of two women who first meet as children in an orphanage, and meet again five more times throughout their lives. Each encounter is marked by class and racial tensions in their lives and communities, but the races of the two women are never revealed.

On Friday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, I came into class to lead the "Mapping 'Recitatif' and the Power of Mind Mapping" activity. At the start of the period, I presented the concept of mind maps, being visualizations of thought processes, and shared their potential as a tactic for note-taking, processing complex ideas, and for brainstorming. As an example, I shared my own notes for college classes (Map 7), which are very abstract, visual, and non-linear, and then I asked for the students to create a mind map of their learnings from "Recitatif".

This activity was, at the least, very humbling. My notes are very near and dear to my heart. I've saved my notebooks from each school year since high school. The students roasted my notes with no mercy. It wasn't the entire class for sure, but there was an audible gasp of disgust from about half of the students when my notes on Chilean authoritarianism appeared on the Smart Board. It was clear that my personal note-taking style can be daunting and unintelligible for some, and my notes might not have been the most accessible or worthy introduction to mind mapping. Furthermore, a good number of students had read the story, but did not see how mind mapping would do more for them to understand Recitatif compared to the traditional notes they had already taken. I told them that I did not develop

this style of note taking until college where I felt that new note-taking strategies were necessary for my courses, and that mind mapping could be good to know for the future.

Lastly, I created my own mind map for Recitatif at the end of the class, shown in Map 8.

I still believe that it was worth introducing mind mapping as an option for students to use in the future, and to affirm any students in the class who might take their own notes in unorthodox ways. This activity could plant a seed that could come in handy as they encounter college courses or future responsibilities that demand creative thinking. However, I think that the implementation of this activity was not ideal. For one, this was the first Dreaming-on-Hudson intervention that was conceived spontaneously (a couple days before the 7<sup>th</sup>), and not weeks in advance, so that was an adjustment that I would improve upon later in the school year. More importantly, I think this activity was an example of forcing spatial thinking onto the students, in comparison to the more seamless and gentle implementations of mapping activities throughout the rest of the curriculum. For a short story like “Recitatif”, no matter how I might see the character’s stories intertwining and crisscrossing, and have the ability to illustrate that, it does not mean that every student has to do that as well, or that their note-taking style should be overshadowed by my visualization.

Learning from this activity, I’ve found it best to put the student’s imagination and their mode of thinking first. You can introduce new modes and new approaches, but they can’t overshadow how the student’s mind naturally works. Part of the goal of the entire class is to empower and highlight student’s spatial imaginaries, and in hindsight, I don’t feel like this activity did that. Furthermore, I learned that I need to be careful with how I utilize my own work as examples for student activities. It needs to be done tactically and in a purposely accessible manner. While I chose notes of mine that were specifically messy and all-over-



## 2022 Cornell Biennial: Futurities, Uncertain

On a parallel and intertwining timeline to the implementation of the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum was the creation of the Dreaming-on-Hudson exhibition at Cornell University. In January 2022, I prepared a proposal for the Dreaming-on-Hudson project, and applied to the Cornell Council of the Arts' (CCA) 5<sup>th</sup> Cornell Biennial, "Futurities, Uncertain," which would be held in Fall 2022. According to the CCA, the biennial would "stage an artistic call and response to counter singular utopic models, colonial visions, and socio-cultural sameness." In February 2022, the Biennial Curatorial Committee selected to generously fund my Dreaming-on-Hudson proposal, and as a part of that funding, I would exhibit the project in some artistic form on-campus at Cornell in Fall 2022. In July 2022, the College of Architecture, Art, and Planning at Cornell University accepted my application to exhibit, and the "Dreaming-on-Hudson: The Politics and Power of Speculation in the Hudson Valley" exhibition was booked for the Hartell Gallery at Sibley Hall at Cornell University, from November 7<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup>, with a closing reception on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

When I had been selected for Biennial funding in early 2022, I generally had no clue what an exhibition in the Fall would look like. That was partially by-design. This was not the type of art project where I already had a set of works that would be ready to install, or where I could create a plan that I could easily control to create works to exhibit. For one, I was studying abroad at the time in Cornell's rigorous Rome urban studies program, so I was not really supposed to be working on Dreaming-on-Hudson in the first place. Second, I had not yet confirmed with McRae and North that I could do Dreaming-on-Hudson in SUNY Race in Ossining. The curriculum vision was designed to be applicable to any Hudson Valley social studies class, with McRae and North's SUNY Race being far-and-above my

first choice. Third, even once it was confirmed that I'd be working with McRae and North, we would not have a chance to truly collaborate and create plans for mapping activities until the summer and early fall. On top of that, I would not have much of the materials completed and in-hand until maybe a month before the exhibit opening, as the school year didn't begin until September 2022. The turnaround between implementation of mapping activities in the classroom and the curation of the exhibit was extremely tight.

The curation of the Dreaming-on-Hudson exhibit was an iterative and organic endeavor that unfolded in step with the collaborative implementation of the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum at Ossining High School. The curriculum and our learning objectives always came first, but as we were designing these interactive mapping activities, I knew that I wanted the end result to be something big and visual that could be presented in an exhibition. The aesthetic of the students' mapping projects that would fill much the gallery wasn't something I could control with an iron grip, but rather something I could guide and influence through curriculum design and the structuring of student activities. For example, the social maps are gigantic to provide ample space for students to make themselves and their communal relationships visible and pronounced. The social maps are also gigantic to fill the massive walls of the Hartell Gallery and make a statement within that space. That dual consciousness between learning objectives and aesthetic curation was a constant throughout the summer and fall in the design of the mapping activities for the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum. That dual consciousness created chaos, as it was difficult to provide a concrete vision for the gallery until extremely close to the exhibition date, which was generally stressful for me, and was seemingly confusing to some supporters of the exhibition. Navigating that chaos, especially while being a full-time student, teaching in

Ossining, and harboring severe hip injuries, required lots of advice, assistance, and guidance from the many supportive people and organizations involved with Dreaming-on-Hudson and with my own life. Put shortly, we needed all hands on deck to get this done, and I was blessed to have sufficient help and care and love around me to put it all together. I think that that the process of creating the Dreaming-on-Hudson exhibition was a crucial example of what a more communal and collaborative artistic practice can look like, and the beauty that such an unorthodox approach to curation can behold.

### Kickstarting the Process

Seeing and analyzing Jade Doskow's Freshkills exhibition in Hartell Gallery in October 2022 was pivotal to kickstarting the curatorial process for the subsequent Dreaming-on-Hudson exhibition. Jade Doskow is the photographer-in-residence for Freshkills Park, which is a massive project to convert the former Freshkills landfill into one of the largest parks in New York City. Her exhibition was a collaboration with Jennifer Minner and the Just Places Lab. The exhibit consisted of a series of photographs of the site, and involved videos of the site and Doskow's process created by Melody Chen of the Just Places Lab, and sound from the site composed by Heather Campanelli. As a collaborating researcher with the Just Places Lab, I had met with Jade a few times and had heard her speak about her artistic practice, and I was in attendance at many of the planning and organizational meetings for the curation and installation of the Freshkills exhibition.

There were three critical takeaways from the Freshkills exhibition. For one, installing and publicizing a gallery exhibition takes an immense amount of work, and I would need significant help from volunteers, friends, fellow lab members and collaborators, and AAP staff to make this happen. Witnessing each step necessary to make the Freshkills exhibition

possible at the Hartell Gallery made it easier to create a template for how to *do* an exhibit, and to know all the big and little things that needed to be done. Secondly, I found the mix of media utilized (photo, video, sound) to be a cool attempt to engage the visitor in creative ways. With my exhibition, I knew that I wanted to immerse visitors in Dreaming-on-Hudson and in all that Ossining is, and I learned that creative and multifaceted approaches to media would be very helpful to do that. Lastly, I began to see the exhibit as a map, and tried to see how Jade was clustering different photos by color or temperature or theme. At her opening reception, she made these clusters clear in how she walked through the gallery describing different photos. There wasn't a linear story that the visitor is forced to undergo, but rather a collage of themes and messages that can take different forms to different visitors. From this, I began to visualize how the deliberate positioning and curatorial design of the different maps and student materials could form a narrative, and take visitors on a malleable journey through the spatial imaginaries and identities of Ossining.

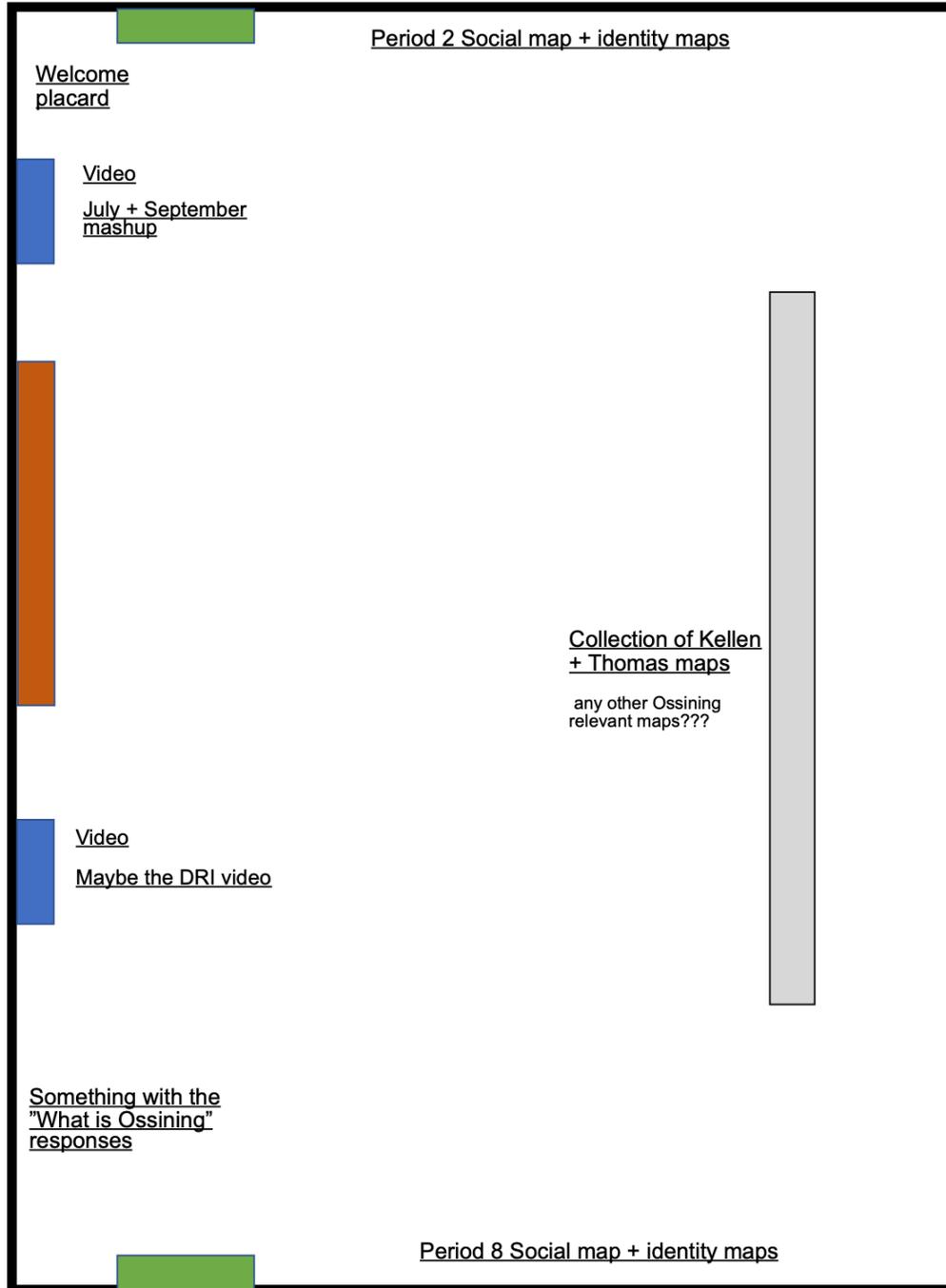
The week after the Freshkills opening reception, I'd had a brainstorming meeting scheduled with the Just Places Lab and my Rawlings faculty mentor, Raymond Craib of Cornell University's History Department. By this meeting, I had been able to create a general plan for the organization of the exhibit within the gallery, as shown in Figure 22. Still, the JPL and Craib were excellent at helping me to finetune my vision, and create detailed plans of action for how to execute the curation and installation of the exhibit. At many times throughout 2022, the exhibition seemed like simply too much for me. It was from this meeting on that I had felt a true support team coalesce to make the exhibition happen. I knew that the Dreaming-on-Hudson exhibition would not just be possible, but would be exceptional.



**Figure 22: Poster for Jade Doskow’s Freshkills Exhibition at Cornell University**  
 Source: Photo by Jade Doskow. Poster designed by Wyeth Augustine-Marceil



**Figure 23: Photograph of Freshkills Park with Staten Island and Manhattan’s Skyline in the Distance**  
 Source: By Jade Doskow



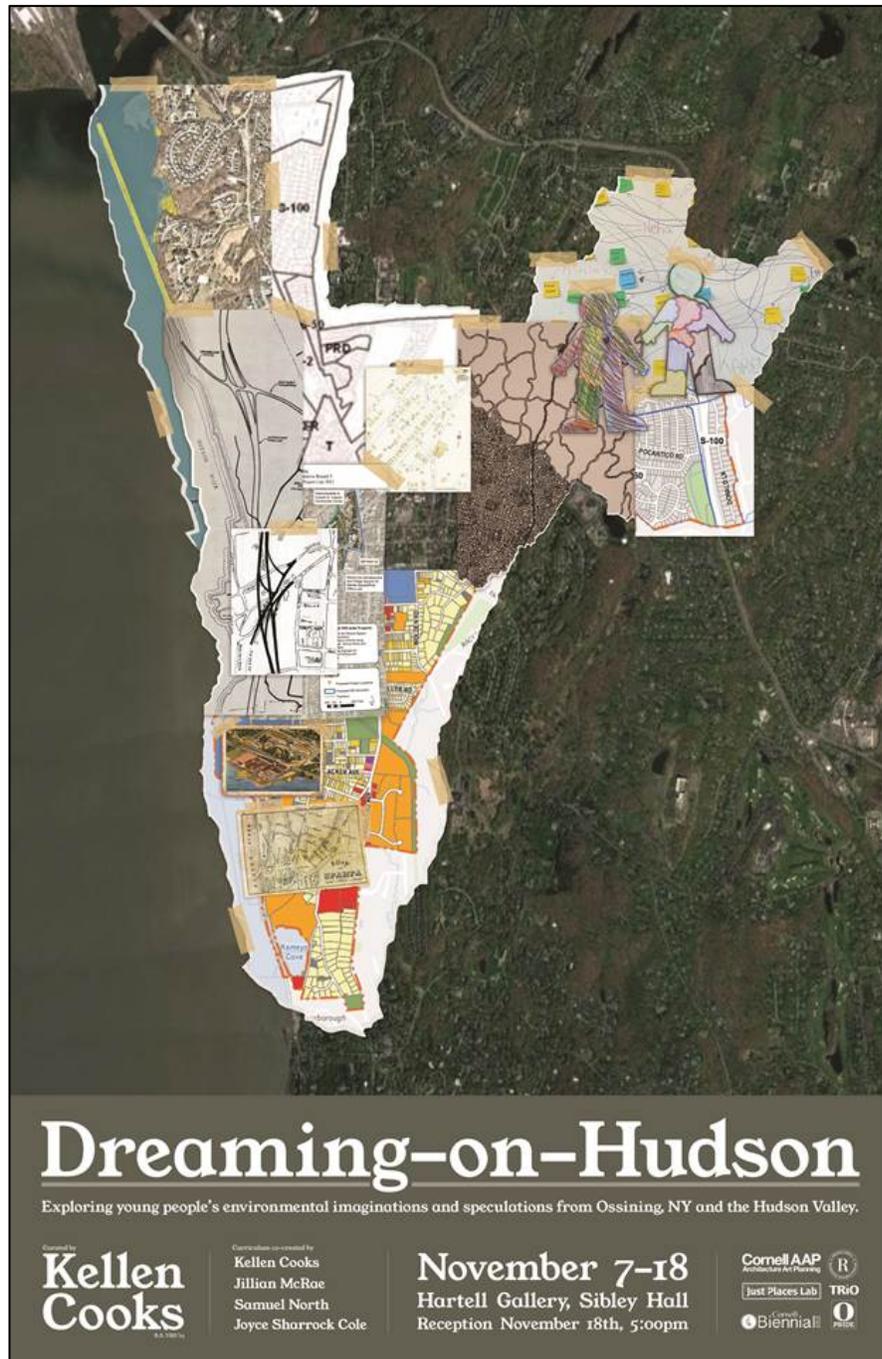
**Map 9: Early Draft of Plan for Dreaming-on-Hudson Exhibit in Hartell Gallery at Cornell University**

## Dreaming-on-Hudson Exhibition

The installation of the Dreaming-on-Hudson exhibition was a family affair. The week before installation was an extremely painful time for my hips, so my parents came up to Ithaca to assist in setting up and installing each physical material in the exhibit. My parents and I worked together through the first weekend of November to put the exhibition together with no previous experience in exhibit installation, so it was a learning experience for all of us, and I am so grateful for the assistance with the exhibition, and their support throughout the Dreaming-on-Hudson project. Volunteers from the JPL assisted us with the installation and dismantling of the exhibition, along with additional support from AAP Facilities. Belle McDonald (BFA '22) assisted me in learning how to produce high-quality scans of the maps, and AAP IT was essential for high-quality printing of the exhibit's maps.

Wyeth Augustine-Marceil, who was a former product designer, was pivotal with developing materials to publicize the exhibition. My vision for the flyer was to have a collage of maps and visuals that came together to form Ossining. I'd collected an array of maps, such as zoning maps and unrealized infrastructure plans, along with pictures of student-made maps from Dreaming-on-Hudson, and historical aerial photos. However, for as much as I could imagine, Augustine-Marceil's excellent graphic design skills enabled him to translate and execute this vision. His flyer design was beautiful, and encapsulates the differing identities of Ossining with a chaotic order that was personally stunning. Augustine-Marceil, along with the rest of the JPL, the Cornell Council of the Arts, and personal friends helped to distribute the flyers across campus. The flyer and exhibition information were also shared digitally by the College of Architecture, Art, and Planning, and numerous other university organizations in efforts to generate buzz for the exhibit. The flyer, displayed in

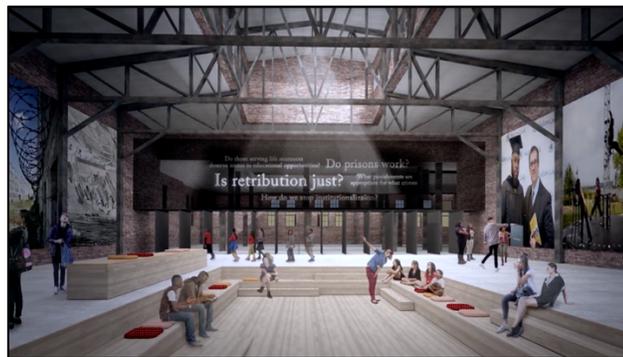
Map 10, was also printed large at the entrances to the Hartell Gallery, serving as a first impression for the Dreaming-on-Hudson exhibit.



**Map 10: Dreaming-on-Hudson Flyer**

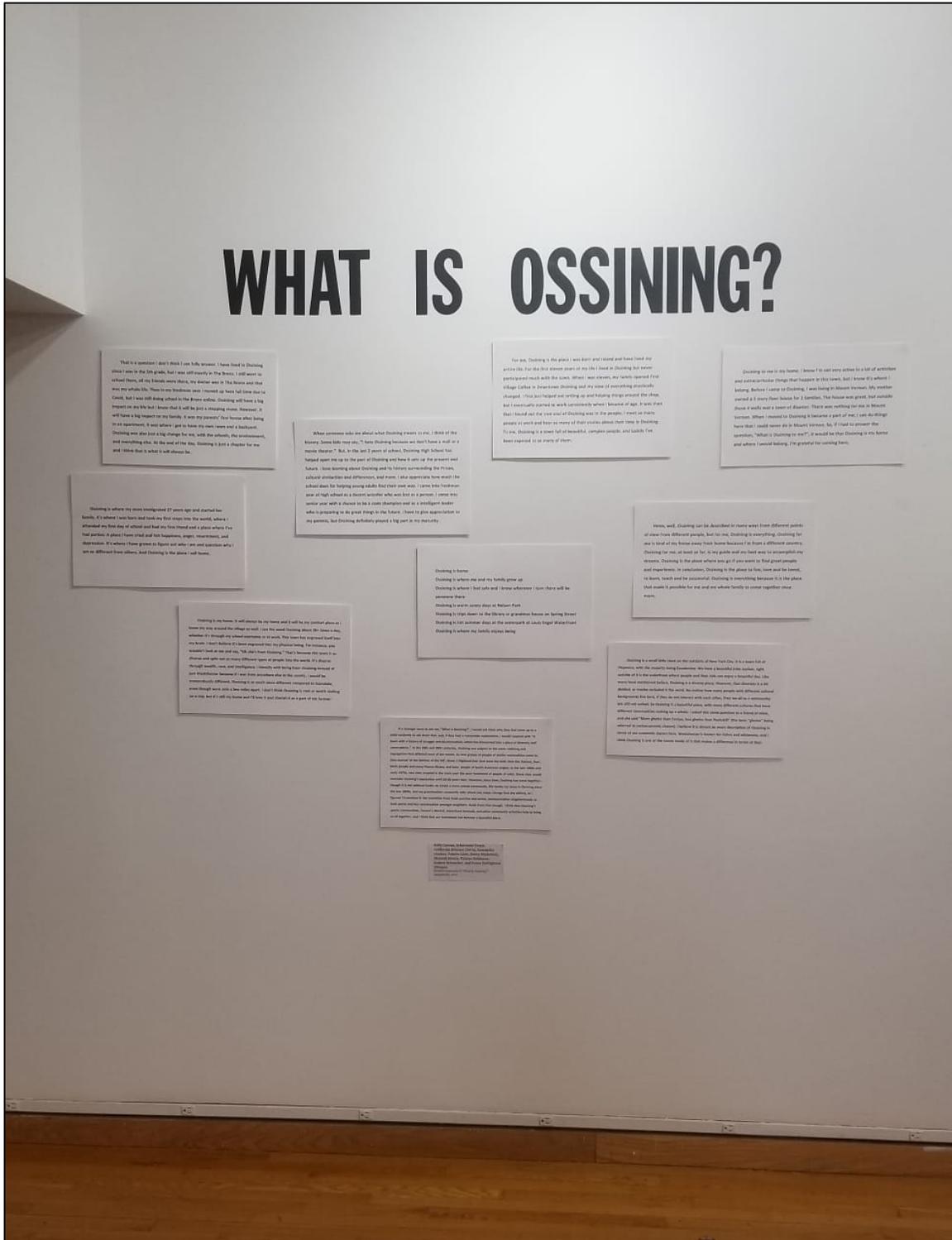
Source: Designed by Wyeth Augustine-Marceil. Maps procured by Kellen Cooks and Joyce Sharrock Cole. Maps from Village of Ossining, Zillow, SUNY Race students, Google Maps, Cornell's Climate-adaptive Studio, and other sources,

Within this installation, ten of the SUNY Race students' responses to their "What is Ossining?" assignment were printed and exhibited (specific examples in Figures 18-20). These specific responses were selected to showcase an array of perspectives and identities of Ossining, and to give voice to how teenagers experienced the town. This was personally my favorite part of the exhibition, as I found the students' responses especially touching and authentic, and it felt like such a genuine representation of place. Alongside the students' responses, an edited form (edited by Melody Chen and I) of the Village of Ossining's Downtown Revitalization Initiative video played from an adjacent monitor. The video was edited to highlight how the narrator -- Rika Levin, the Mayor of Ossining -- and the interviewees (local business owners, real estate developers, and community leaders) describe what Ossining is, what makes Ossining special to them, and how Ossining's future could benefit from \$10 million of state funding. Quotes from the video include: "Once just another left behind Main Street, our historic downtown district has become a hub of entrepreneurial energy," and "This one-time gritty prison town has come a long way." I found it critical to position the student responses alongside the DRI video to display the various ways that a town's story can be told to different audiences, and how these stories interact and conflict with each other to define what a place is.



**Figure 24: Still from Village of Ossining's Downtown Revitalization Initiative Presentation**

Note: Picture above is rendering of future Sing Sing Prison Museum.

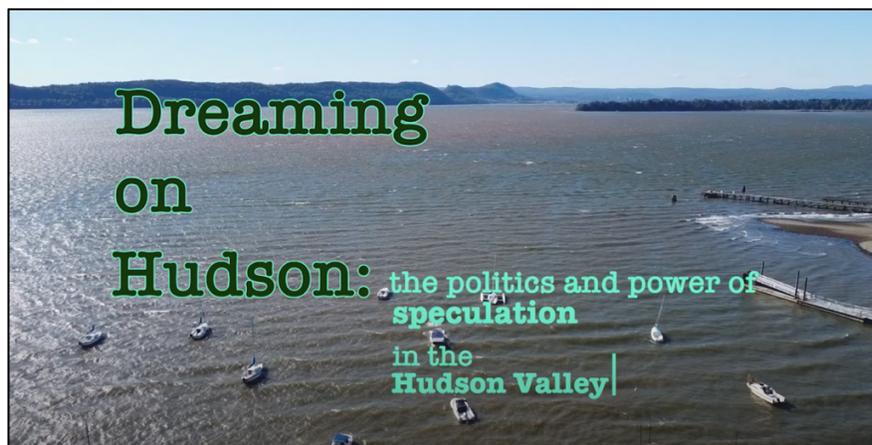


**Figure 25: What is Ossing? Installation**

Source: Includes student responses from Ruby Corena, Schavonne Evans, Guillermo Jimenez Garcia, Samantha Gordon, Valeria Leon, Navey Mickelson, Shaniah Rivera, Tristan Robinson-July, Audrey Schneckner, and Karen Inchiglema Zhispon

On a separate monitor down the wall from the student responses and DRI video was a documentary video produced by Melody Chen for the exhibition. The video included footage from our July interview and from the classroom, alongside drone video and B-roll footage of Ossining and its surroundings. The video introduced McRae, North, Sharrock Cole, and I, described some of our motives and visions for the Dreaming-on-Hudson project, and took viewers to the classroom as the students created their social maps. Chen did a superb job of documenting the vibe of the SUNY Race classroom, and the process of teaching and implementing the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum, and the video serves as an excellent introduction for those interested in the project.

On two opposing walls of the gallery were the massive social maps (Maps 11-12), with one side being Period 2's, and the other side being Period 8's. I decided to frame each social map with the students' identity maps, so that each wall served as a map of both the social connections and the personal identities of each SUNY Race class. All student materials and videos including students were exhibited with the permission of the SUNY Race students.



**Figure 26: Still from Dreaming-on-Hudson Video**

Source: Just Places Lab - Cornell (Director). (2022, November 22). *Kellen Cooks: Dreaming On Hudson*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eBofU5Q77M>



**Map 11: Period 2's Social Map and Identity Maps**



**Map 12: Period 8's Social Map and Identity Maps**

The back wall of the exhibition departed from the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum. Instead it focused on Thomas Petluck (URS '22) and my artwork and maps that we have created throughout our lives. Thomas and I are both really good friends who are Ossining High School graduates, who both took SUNY Race in in our senior year in 2018-19, and who both attended Cornell University as Urban and Regional Studies majors, and have both created speculative maps of imaginary cities and potential futures since we were little.

On the far-left side of the back wall were maps I had made of imaginary cities when I was six and seven years old, next to whatever else my little mind was thinking about at the time. I had kept making maps for much of my childhood, but I had slowed down for a while in high school, as extracurriculars and sports and anxiety and hormones started to get in the way. After being inspired by Gary Evans' Intro to Environmental Psychology and Minner's Art, Community Preservation, and the Just City classes at Cornell during my freshman year (2019-20), I had started to get back into drawing my maps, and I dove into it even deeper during the early months of the pandemic.

connecticut Rhode Island Vermont New Hampshire  
 maine massachusetts

Love is in the  
 1 2 3

The TV has all the  
 1 2 3 4 5

Who will win Use CNN to  
 1 2 1 2 3 4 5

Daddy  
 1 2

Rules a lot  
 3 4 5

X

~~Obama's gonna Win~~

Election Day Rules  
 The TV has all the news  
 Go, Obama, GO

Daddy Does Rules a lot  
 Mommy Does a very lot  
 Northern likes a lot

Love is in the air

Valentines Day here now

And we share the love

~~Daddy loves~~

~~I want~~

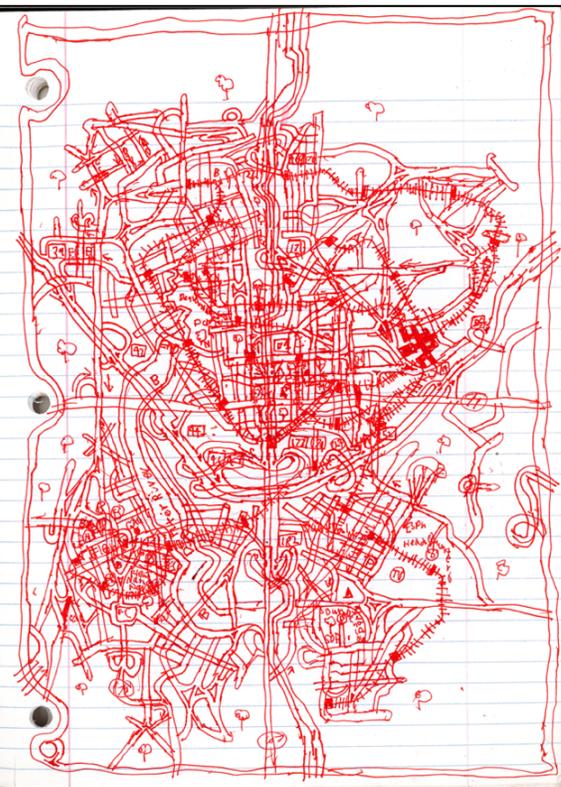


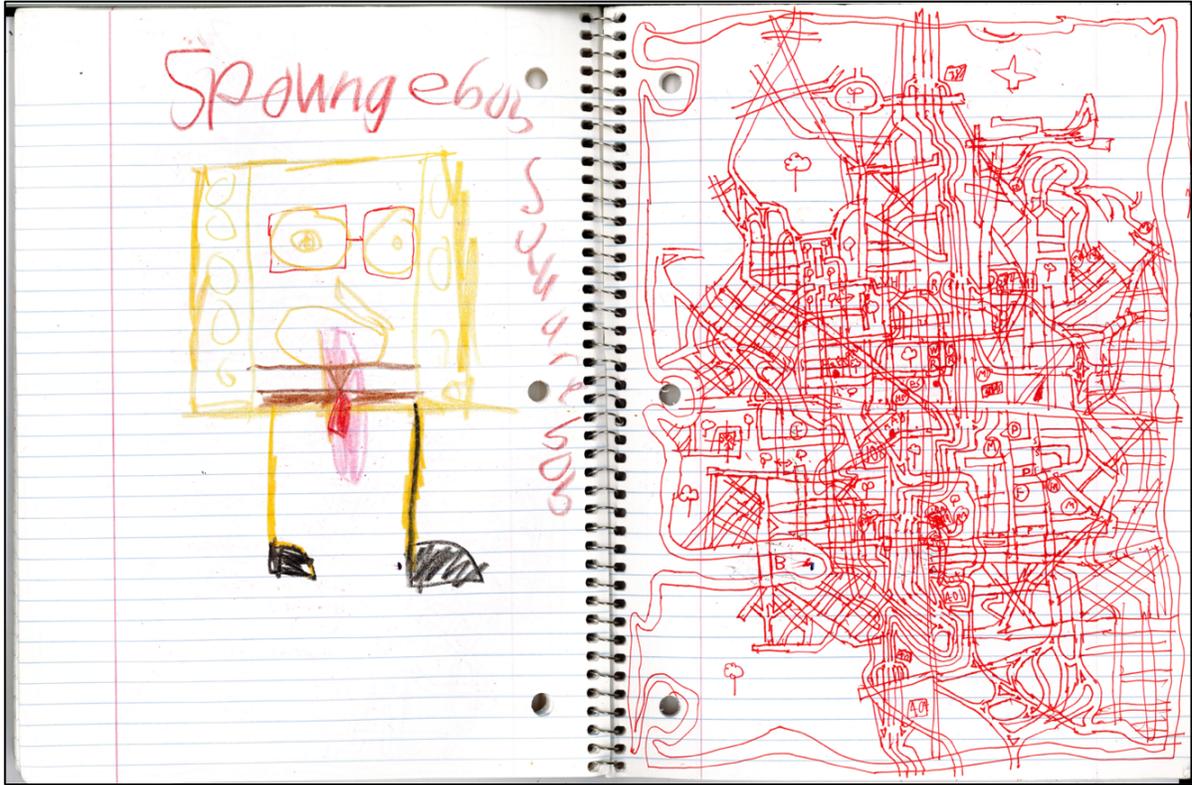
From home to Grandma's House:

- 1) Right onto 2nd Ave
- 2) Left onto Third St
- 3) Right onto 4th St
- 4) Get onto Exit 10
- 5) Take Exit 10 to I 248
- 6) Get off at exit 10
- 7) Turn Right onto 3rd
- 8) Get onto Ocean Rd
- 9) GO over bridge
- 10) You are Home

From Home to Egan Headquarters (Brookfield)

- 1) Right onto Second Ave
- 2) Left onto Third St
- 3) Right onto 4th St
- 4) Get onto Exit 10
- 5) Take Exit 10 to I 248
- 6) Get off at Exit 10
- 7) Turn Left onto 3rd
- 8) Get onto Dexter Rd
- 9) Turn Right onto Hunt Ave
- 10) Get into Left lane
- 11) Get onto Elder Rd
- 12) Get onto Central Pl
- 13) Get onto Dexter Ave
- 14) Keep straight onto Wacker St
- 15) Turn Right onto Flixter Ave
- 16) Get onto Egan St
- 17) Get into parking lot
- 18) You are Home

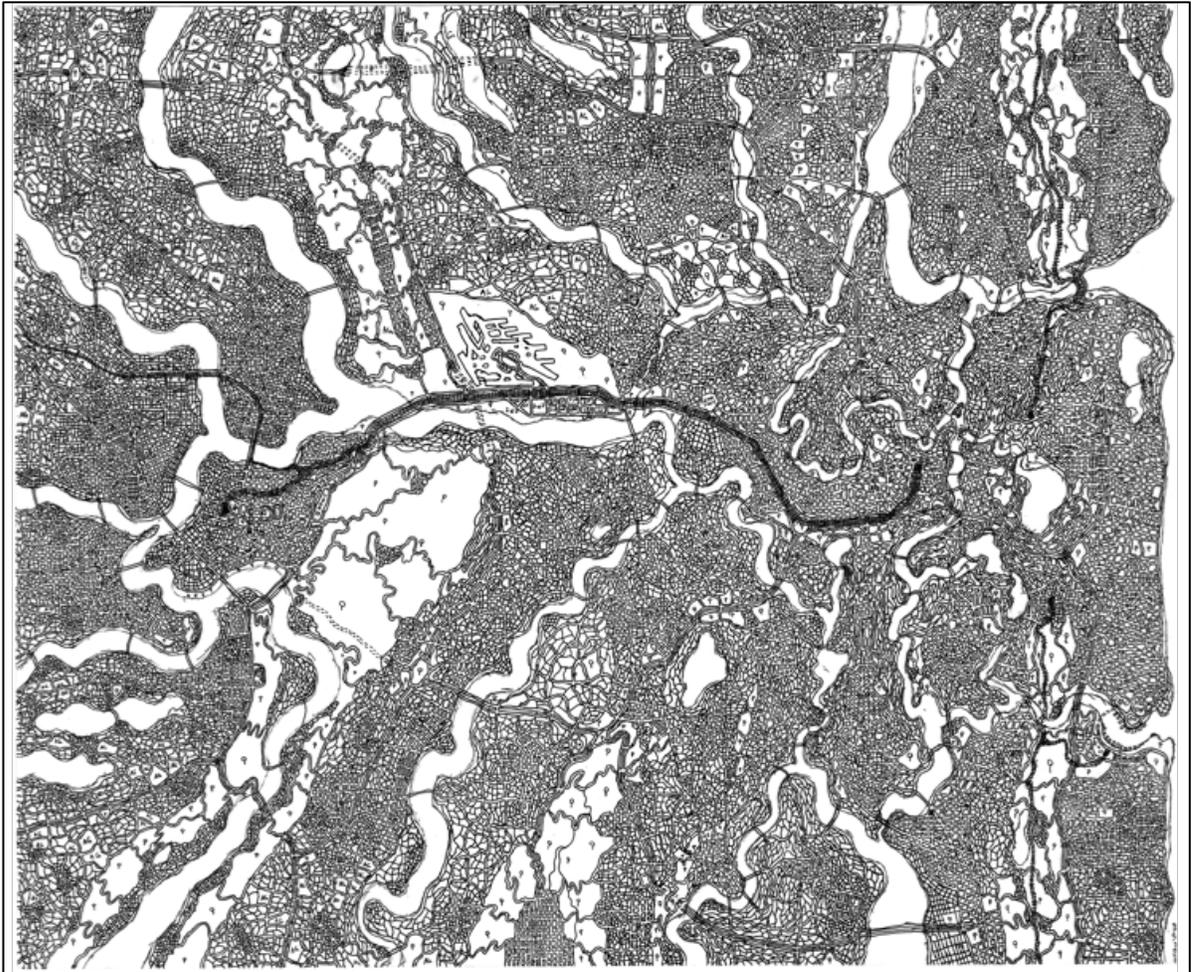




**Maps 13-15: Kellen Cooks' Childhood Maps and Notes – 2007-08**

Note: Drawn with ballpoint pen and crayon

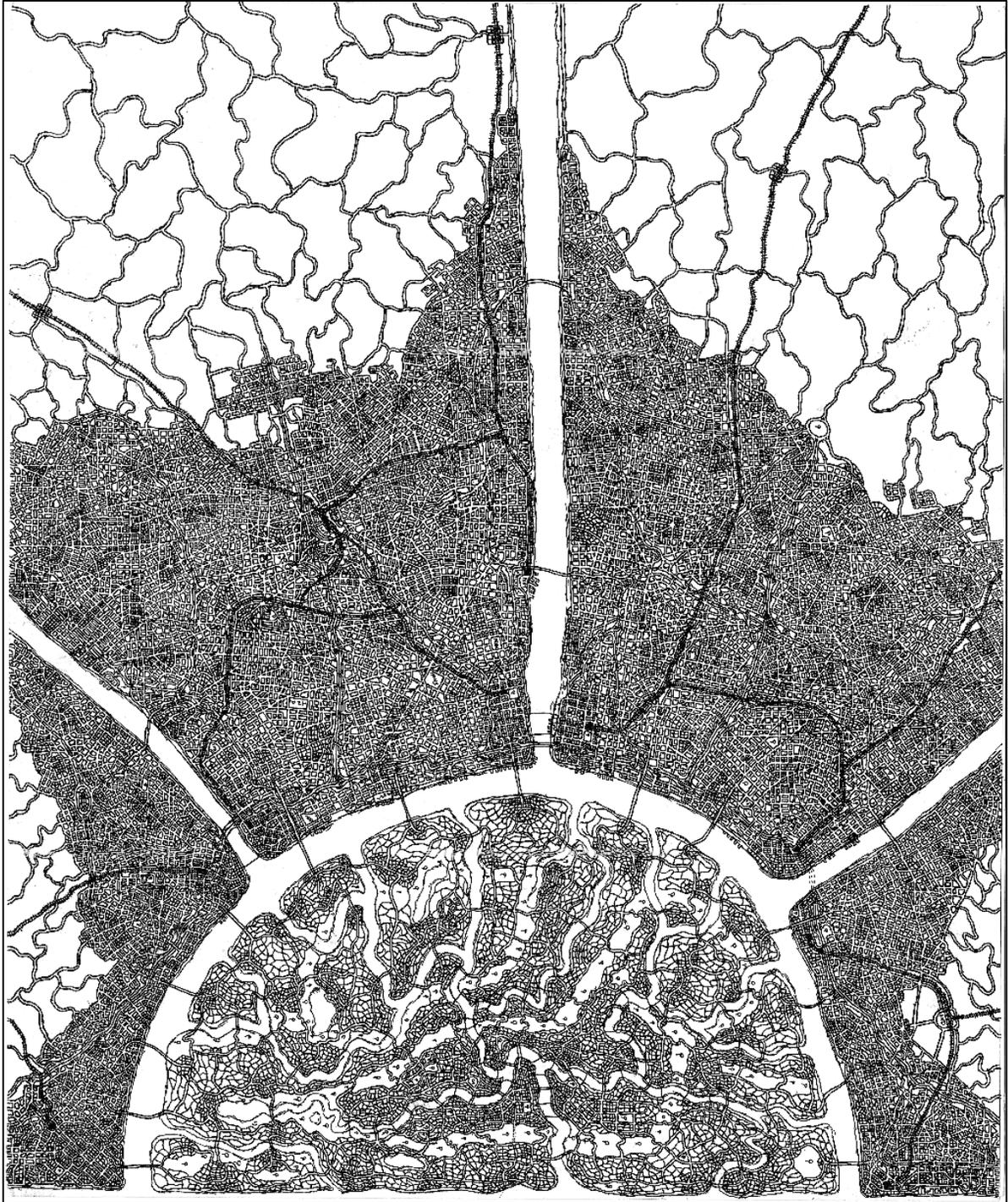
The following map on the back wall took about eight months to draw, from October 2019 to mid-2020. This was the first big map I had drawn in years, and was one of the only maps I had ever actually completed. Almost all of my childhood maps would be left barely unfinished, as I'd often get bored from drawing suburbs and would start another city on another page.



**Map 16: Untitled, by Kellen Cooks – 2019-20**

Note: Drawn with ballpoint pen

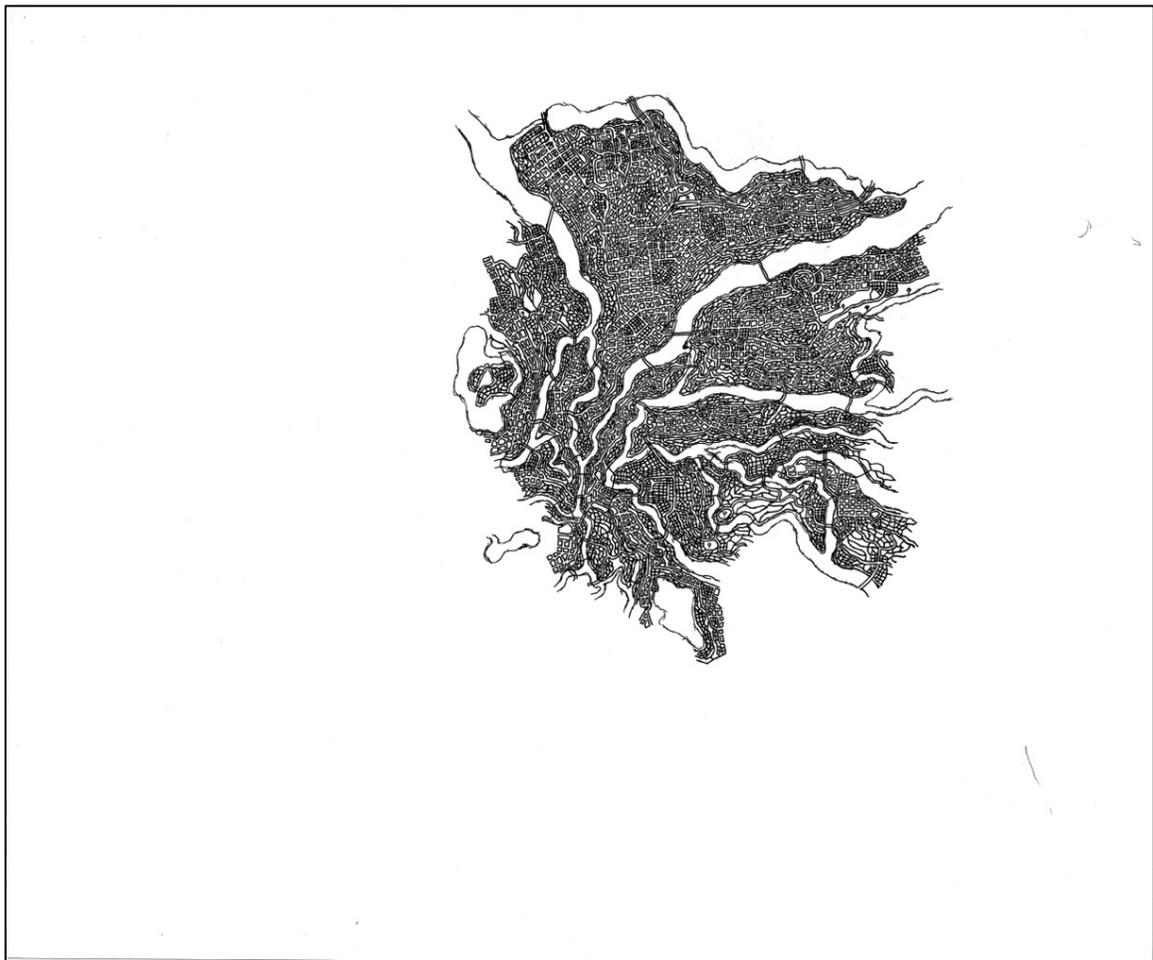
The next map was drawn from the Fall 2020 to Summer 2021, and it is a bit unique compared to my other maps of imaginary metropolises. This map attempts to display a metropolis sharply divided by three modes of development. The inner core represents an urban planner's dream, but that core is surrounded by a massive waterway, and beyond that lies dense industrial development and urban sprawl. This sprawl then tapers out to a straggly frontier, that is left purposely empty on the map. This was the core message of this map, to play with the concept of cartographical emptiness, and question how "empty" places are never truly empty, but just aren't understood by the mapmaker. Could be jungles, could be massive civilizations of another culture, could be a mystical kingdom, who knows!



**Map 17: Untitled, by Kellen Cooks – 2020-21**

Note: Drawn with ballpoint pen

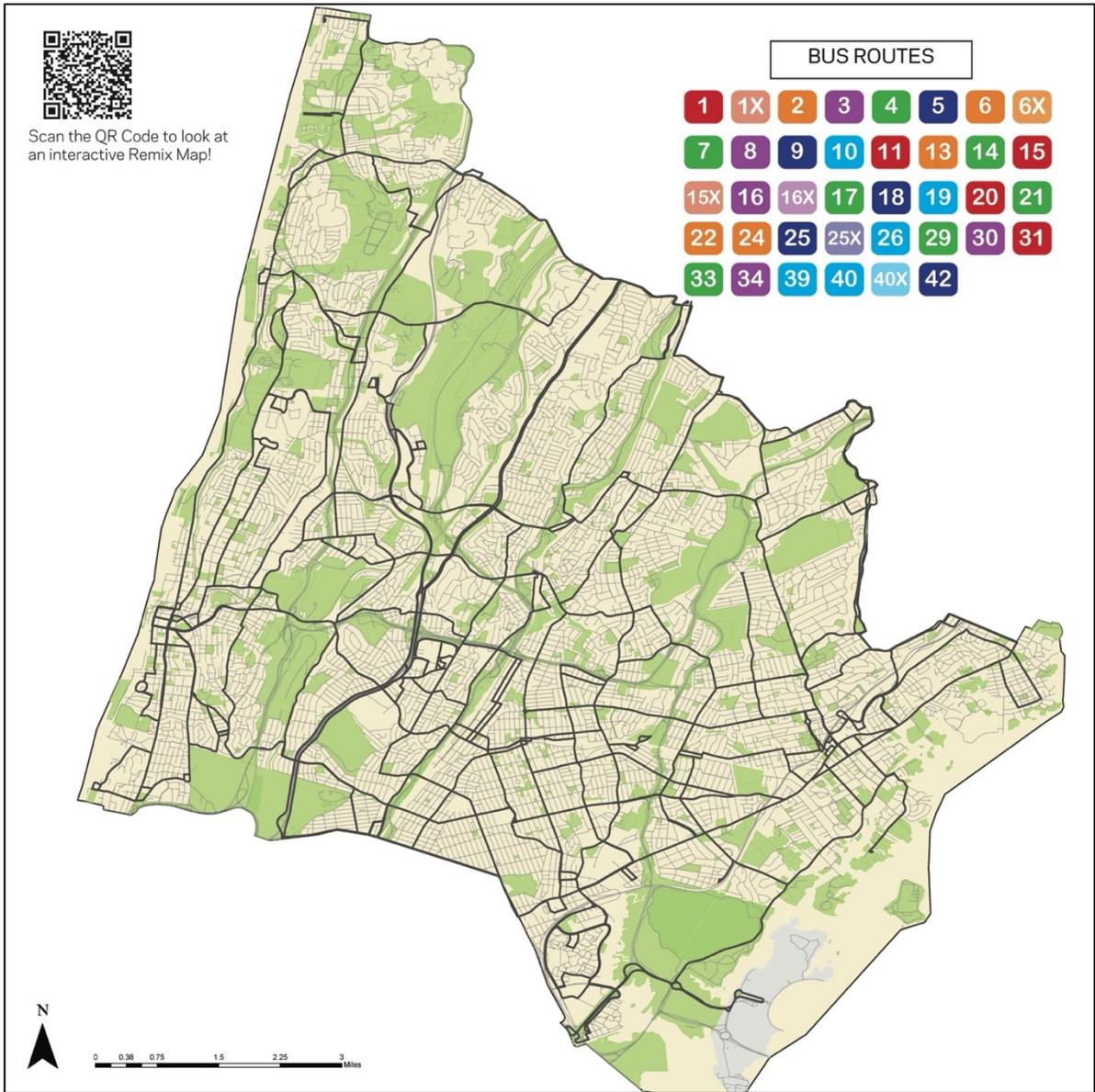
The last of my maps is one that I have been working on since the Winter of 2022, and it doesn't have as much of a deep spatial-political message. Sometimes my maps are just something to draw for fun while I watch Netflix. I find this map interesting though as it is my first map where I start from the middle and expand out as I wish. Since I was eight, I had a ritual of always having a coastline on the right side of the paper (the 2020-21 map was originally drawn horizontally), and expanding westwards across the paper. With this one, I wanted to start from the middle and see where I go, and I've found that to be a very different mapmaking experience.



**Map 18: Untitled, by Kellen Cooks – 2022~**  
Note: Drawn with ballpoint pen

The following maps are Thomas', and we have different approaches to mapmaking. While I exclusively draw maps of completely imaginary places, cities, and regions, he more often draws maps that layer on top of reality, or that speculate futures within our existing environment. Both of Thomas' maps were first imagined utilizing Google My Maps, Google Street View, and Remix, and were polished for exhibition using ArcGIS Pro, Adobe InDesign, and Microsoft Publisher. I highly recommend scanning the QR codes on both maps, which include detailed and interactive visualizations and descriptions of each imagined transit line. The italicized text is Thomas Petluck's words.

*The City of Vertana has been designed and edited since 2018, and is a fictitious city that manipulates borders and reimagines density on current, physical built environments. The map includes a QR code with detailed visualizations and descriptions of each bus line within Vertana. The city exists on what is currently the northernmost portions of the Bronx and reaches into southern Westchester County, going as far north as Scarsdale and Irvington. Today, there is not a demand nor a mindset for such a concentration of bus-oriented transportation. While this is mostly mere fantasy, it could lead to speculation regarding what transit options could be if travel behaviors shifted, if amendments to zoning regulations occurred, and if Westchester, the county where most of this fantasy is situated, addressed the rigid, gerrymandered borders of the county.*



**Map 19: Vertana by Thomas Petluck – 2018-2022**

*The Future NYC Subway – Petluck Plan is a passion project/pipe dream/conversation-starter about the future of New York City’s transit infrastructure, which has been a work in progress since 2014. To be clear, this is not MTA endorsed, nor am I suggesting that every line drawn here is the best – in all senses of the word – way to serve New Yorkers.*

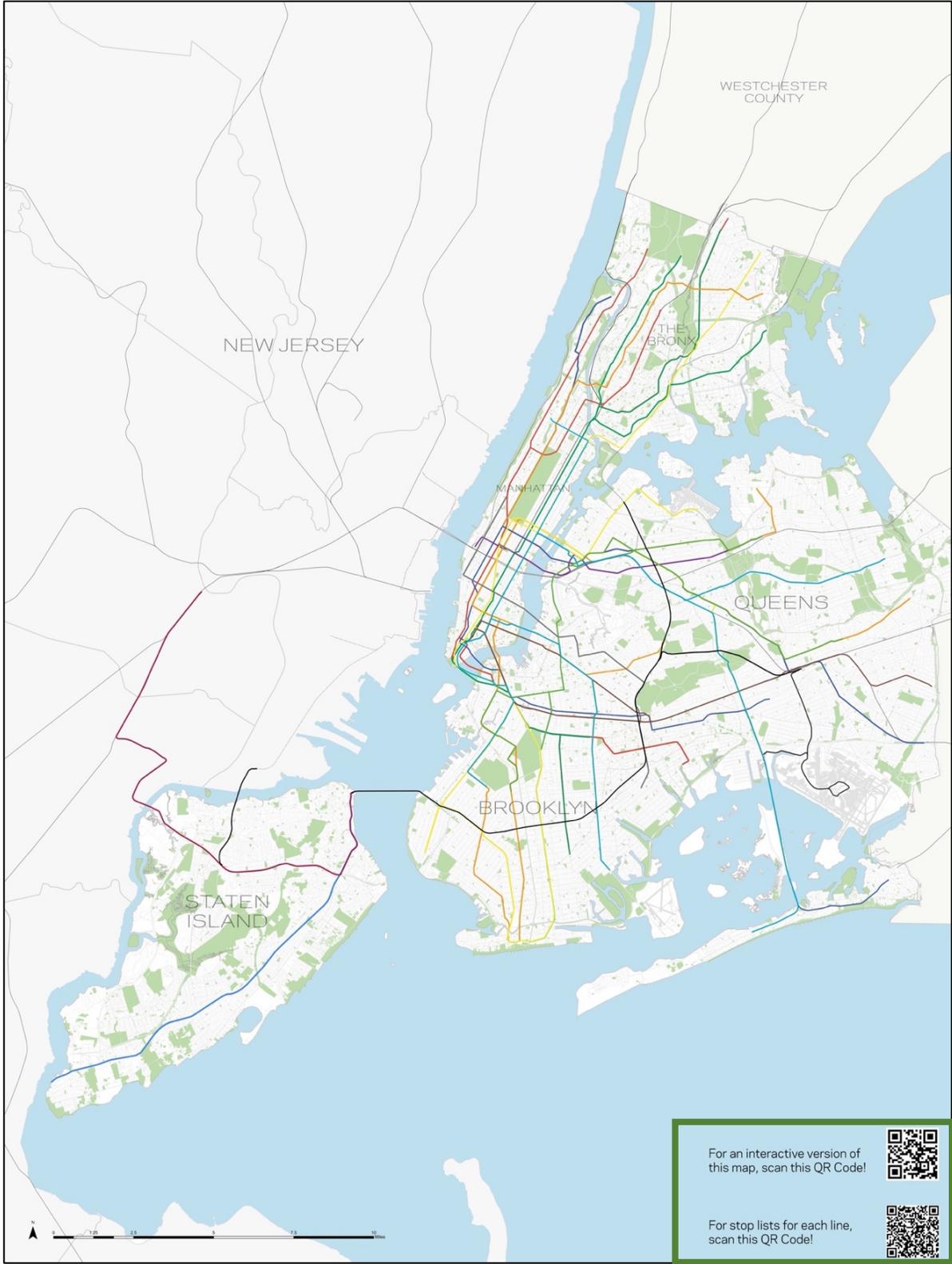
*This map is a dream.*

*This map is self-care.*

*This map is an affirmation of the intricate beauty of Black minds that occupy only 5% of the planning profession.*

*At its core, this map represents what it means to “Dream-on-Hudson” in the context of transportation justice and all that intersects it.*

We have been Dreaming-on-Hudson for as long as we can remember, and our maps add another layer to the multiple ways in which the exhibition showcases the environmental imaginations and speculations of young people in the Hudson Valley.



**Map 20: Future NYC Subway – Petluck Plan – 2014~**

### Closing Reception

The closing reception for the Dreaming-on-Hudson exhibition was a complete success. McRae, North, and Sharrock Cole were generously hosted by the Cornell Council of the Arts in Ithaca for the weekend to attend the reception, and each of them shared their thoughts on the exhibition and project at the reception. In attendance were the many people who assisted with the exhibition, along with faculty, staff, and students from across Cornell, many of whom were familiar faces, and many of whom I'd never seen before, which was especially promising to see. Jen McKean, who works at the City and Regional Planning Department office, was especially helpful in organizing the reception, helping to source refreshments from Wegmans and the Dish Truck to provide reusable utensils and plates. The reception allowed for around a hundred people to gather and converse in the space, and then I gave a speech that is virtually a speed-run through this thesis, along with a walkthrough explaining each section of the exhibition. Once I was done, guests lingered and pictures were taken, all while a curated jazz playlist of music by Julius Rodriguez, a Westchester native and acclaimed jazz artist, played in the background. Every piece of me was so excited and honored and exhausted and in awe, all at the same time. The closing reception was a celebration of all the labor and love that has gone into this project and exhibit, and all the potentials and imaginations that this project and exhibit represent.

### Back to SUNY Race

Throughout much of the Fall, while I was curating the exhibition and completing my last full-time semester at Cornell, McRae and North continued teaching SUNY Race in Ossining. During this period, they progressed through their gender and sexuality unit, where they explored what gender roles, masculinity, and femininity meant to the students, and

dove into issues of sexism and how it plays out in society. Apart from gender-specific lessons, McRae and North also explored the concept of land acknowledgements, including Ossining's own land acknowledgement, on the school day before Thanksgiving Break. They also went on a field trip to the official unveiling of Gate of the Exonerated at Central Park in New York City, which will be a monument towards the Exonerated 5 (formerly known as the Central Park 5 who were falsely convicted and publicly defamed for the assault and rape of Trisha Meili in 1989). By the end of the 2022 calendar year, with this field trip to the Gate of the Exonerated, McRae and North had started to pivot from gender and sexuality towards the race module of their curriculum.

### Going With The Flow

By the beginning of 2023, I was on health leave from Cornell and living in Ossining with my family. This was a good situation for my mind and body, as living and studying in Ithaca on my own put immense stress on my hip injuries, and at home I could be supported by loved ones and seek medical care. This also made it easier to teach and assist SUNY Race in-person more often, and in general be more present with the students. At this point, we had done most of the pre-planned lessons and activities we had plotted out over the summer and early fall, and McRae and North were beginning the race module of their curriculum. Therefore, I began to join class without a lecture in mind, just to be there, see how class was doing, and get a feel for where they were going. I found these non-Dreaming-on-Hudson days where I sat in to be especially cool for me, as they were opportunities to be there in discussion with the students and assist McRae and North as needed, without the pressure of a new lesson or activity. These days were especially key to building relationships with the students themselves, and becoming more of a staple within the classroom.

After attending class earlier in the week, on Friday, January 6, 2022, McRae had updated Sharrock Cole and I about the discussions the class had had on racial stereotypes throughout the week. McRae shared how by the end of the week, students were discussing the question of whether to keep the street names of “Indian Village,” an Ossining neighborhood where all the streets are named after Indigenous tribes. She asked Sharrock Cole and I if we had any resources to share with the students. Over the following weekend, I had developed the “Indigenous Place Names in Ossining and the Hudson Valley” lesson to teach on Monday, the 9<sup>th</sup>. Within this lesson, I started with the story of Ossining’s name origin (coming from “Sint Sinck”, a term used by the Mohegan tribe meaning “stone upon stone”) (Reynolds, n.d.), and showed the students the Native-land.ca map, which is an open-source interactive map of Indigenous territories across the world. McRae and North had utilized the Native-land.ca map with the students once before in class, so they had some familiarity, and this time they were extremely interested in exploring the map deeper and spotting names they’d recognized across our region. The map was especially useful to highlight the multiple tribes who had overlapping claims and relationships with the land that is now Ossining, and in general display a completely different vision of what a map of our region could look like.

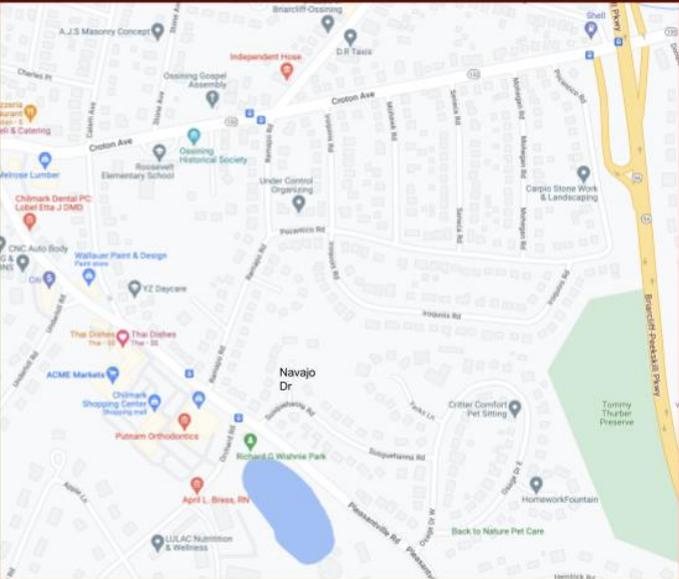
Later in the lesson, in direct relationship with the students’ previous conversation, I walked through the names of each street in Indian Village and utilized the native-land site to see where these tribes actually had territorial claims to (Figure 27). Some such as Navajo and Osage were critical to broader Native American history, but were based thousands of miles away and had little direct relationship with Ossining. Others such as Iroquois, Pocantico (which students taught me I had been pronouncing wrong my whole life), and

Mohegan reflected tribes local to the Hudson Valley and reflected phrases in the Munsee language, which was prevalent across tribes in our region. The last example introduced was Ramapo Road, which reflects on the Ramapough Lenape Nation, who are a nation based across the Hudson River, are recognized by the State of New Jersey, and consist of thousands of Lenape people. The lesson concluded with a 2021 video titled “The Way of The Ramapough” from Vincent Mann, a leader of the Ramapough Lenape Nation, where he shares the origin story of his people, their way of living and ancestral connections within the Hudson Valley, and his outlooks on how modern development has conflicted with Indigenous claims to the land (map from video included in Map 21).

I am not an expert in Indigenous Hudson Valley history by any means. However, I feel this lesson was a great example of spontaneously implementing the Dreaming-on-Hudson vision to complement the SUNY Race curriculum. Take any topic, and root it through its connection to place, specifically in Ossining and the Hudson Valley. Focus on both the past and the present to make the topic hit home. Present concisely to leave room for meaningful discussion, with no need to provide a 41-minute exhaustive academic lecture. Use multiple forms of media to engage students, and provide examples that are experts or representative of the topic. I felt this lesson really worked with the students. During the lesson, they took the conversation to another level, discussing the commodification of Indigenous cultures, and Ossining’s process in the 2000s to switch our mascot from the “Indians” to eventually become the “Pride”.

## Tribes/Nations of “Indian Village”

- Navajo - American Southwest
- Osage - American Midwest
- Susquehanna -> Conestoga - Pennsylvania
- Narragansett - Rhode Island
- Iroquois Confederacy -> Haudenosaunee Confederacy
  - Mohawk - around Adirondacks
  - Seneca - Finger Lakes
- Pocantico -> Pocantico River -> Pocanteco - “run between two hills” in Munsee language
- Mohegan - Connecticut, Hudson Valley, Ossining
- Ramapo - Ramapough Lenape Nation



**Figure 27: Slide from “Indigenous Place Names in the Hudson Valley” Lesson**

Source: Information gathered from Nativeland.ca



**Map 21: Screenshot from “The Way of the Ramapough” Video – Map of Northern New Jersey**

Source: Video produced by the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, featuring Vincent Mann, Chief of the Turtle Clan of the Ramapough Lenape.

By Mid-February, McRae and North let me know that they were preparing to do their yearly lesson on Mario Balotelli, an Italian soccer star of African descent who underwent significant racial abuse from fans. As a precursor to this lesson, I reflected on my time studying abroad in Italy in 2022, and created the “Race and Blackness in Italy” lesson to be taught the day before the Balotelli lesson. For this lesson, I invited Thomas Petluck to help me create the slide deck and teach class with me, as we were in the same study abroad cohort. We had not only both been Black Americans living in Rome, but as urban studies students, a significant portion of our studies was focused on immigration and race in Italy. We taught a crash course in the origins of the tensions between Northern and Southern Italians, and the histories of fascist racism and race blindness. We then pivoted towards discussing how Afro-Italians have grown in population and how “Afro-Italianness” is being defined through music and other forms of media. This progress in Afro-Italianness was demonstrated through a racially mystifying laundry detergent ad from the 2000s (Figure 28), and the music video for “Brividi” (Figure 29), the top song in Italy in 2022, which is sung in part by Mahmood, an Afro-Italian pop star of Egyptian and Sardinian descent. Lastly, Thomas and I shared accounts of our experiences in Italy and about what being Black in such a different place from Ossining was like, especially as Black Americans who were othered in multiple ways (Black, tourist, not fluent in Italian, etc.).

Throughout the lesson, students chimed in with accounts of family members who experienced different racial dynamics in other countries, and one student drew connections between the history of African migrants in Italy and the experiences of Latin American migrants in the Hudson Valley. The classroom environment during this lesson felt very fun, and while this was one of the few Dreaming-on-Hudson days that departed from the Hudson

Valley, it remained an example of rooting abstract racial concepts in place, and in the lived experience of people from Ossining, which seemed to elicit cross-cultural comparisons within the students.

Especially compared to the first spontaneous Dreaming-on-Hudson day with Recitatif and the mind maps, these two lessons were examples of employing the idea of Dreaming-on-Hudson in rhythm with the class to complement student interests and take that next step to relate it back to their lived experience and their hometown.



**Figure 28: Screenshot from Coloreria Italiana Advertisement – 2006**

Source: Aldo Biasi Comunicazione S. r l (Director). (n.d.). Coloreria Italiana—"Coloured is better". Retrieved April 19, 2023, from <https://www.adforum.com/creative-work/ad/player/6683205/coloured-is-better/coloreria-italiana>



**Figure 29: Screenshot from “Brividi” by Mahmood & Blanco. – 2022**

Source: Mahmood (Director). (2022, February 1). Mahmood, BLANCO - Brividi (Sanremo 2022).

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MA\\_5P3u0apQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MA_5P3u0apQ)

Note: Seen here is Mahmood (left) and model Otmar Martina (right).

### Fulfilling the Vision

At the beginning of March 2023, the SUNY Race students were invited to visit Joyce Sharrock Cole’s third annual installment of her Black History & Culture exhibition series, “Black History & Culture: Fulfilling the Vision in Westchester.” The exhibition was open from January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 to March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 at the Bethany Arts Community, a local arts organization in Ossining. According to Cole, the exhibition highlighted “the steps taken by Black visionaries in our neighborhoods who worked diligently, intentionally, and purposefully to uplift the Black race in Westchester and beyond.” When I first walked through the exhibition, I was absolutely floored by the scale in which she dove into Black Westchester, including a replica early-20<sup>th</sup> century Ossining Black barbershop, a recreation of Sharrock Cole’s childhood bedroom, and a section on the Rising Sun Country Club, a

short-lived 1940s golf club for Ossining's Black elite. The students who were able to visit appeared equally amazed, and in their reflections on the exhibition they were especially struck by seeing all the creative and transformative things that Black people from Ossining have done. Seeing those connections and legacies was illuminating for the students, and I hope that this visit was just another reminder of the richness that has passed through the place they call home.



**Figure 30: Flyer for Fulfilling the Vision Exhibit at Bethany Arts Community**  
Source: Joyce Sharrock Cole and the Bethany Arts Community

### The -Isms Project

In February 2023, McRae, North, and I introduced to the students their final project assignment, “The -ISMs in OHS & Beyond”. This project has been administered by McRae and North yearly since the course’s inception, and is the culmination of the SUNY Race curriculum. The core of the project is for students to choose an -ism, analyze how it manifests, and think of potential solutions. Their project is split into four parts to facilitate their progress: an initial project proposal, a list of primary and secondary sources, their completed final projects (in form of video, PowerPoint, etc.). More detail on the final project is in the assignment sheet in Figure 31. The project was not heavily altered this year as a part of Dreaming-on-Hudson, except for putting emphasis that students can focus on Ossining or the Hudson Valley-at-large in place of the high school, and emphasizing the need to think of potential solutions for their -ism.

## The -ISMs in OHS and Beyond Final Project & Presentation

### Assignment:

In groups of up to three people choose one (or an intersection) of the -isms we have discussed (or have yet to discuss) in class (racism, classism, ageism, heterosexism, ableism, sexism, linguicism, or your own -ism) for further interrogation. Think about how this -ism manifests in the context of [Ossining High School](#), [Ossining](#), and beyond. In what ways is the problem evident at the high school (or the larger school system), or in the local community as a whole? Do these issues mirror problems outside the school community, or are they unique to the school environment? What does the school/community do, or not do, to address this issue? Your analysis may involve student interviews, investigating classes, looking at student clubs/athletic groups, examining the layout of the cafeteria, looking at the village/town of Ossining, speaking to community members and/or shop-owners, and/or interviewing former Ossining students/residents among other examples. Your task will be to present your findings to the class, and **offer some solutions** that would help to shed light on the -ism(s), and eventually dismantle it. Your solutions should include "futuristic/what you'd like to see happen" ideas AND more practical "what can actually get done now" ideas.

In addition to your own primary research, you are responsible for including a source from secondary research that helps propel your argument or analysis. Please use the [citing sources](#) document for help with the Works Cited portion of your presentation.

We are looking for all members in the group to speak and share their ideas with the class. All preparation work should be shared equally and the presentation time should be a maximum of ten minutes (we will also use an additional 10 minutes for a question and answer session). Your method of presentation is up to you and your group. We hope to exhibit some of your work in a public gallery space here in Ossining, so think about creative ways to display your findings. In order to gauge preparation, all projects have to be posted to Google Classroom and/or brought to class on the due date, **Tuesday, May 30th**.

**Each group should be ready to present on Tuesday, May 30th.**

This grade will be the final exam grade for the course.

**Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Group Members:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Resources:**

[Institutionalized Practices at OHS](#)  
[Ossining High School: By the Numbers](#)  
[Citing Your Sources](#)

[The -Isms Chart](#)  
[SUNY RCS 2022-2023 class calendar](#)

### **Due Dates:**

[Part 1 - Initial Project Proposal](#)  
[Part 2 - Primary + Secondary Sources](#)  
[Part 3 - Final Project](#)  
[Part 4- Final Reflection](#)

**due Wednesday, March 8th**  
**due Wednesday, April 12th**  
**due Tuesday, May 30th**  
**due after your group presents**  
**(Tuesday, June 13th)**

**Figure 31: Handout for SUNY Race/Dreaming-on-Hudson Final Project**

As preparation for Part 2 where students specify their primary and secondary sources, I introduced the last interactive mapping activity of the school year on March 20<sup>th</sup>, titled “Mapping Your -Ism in OHS”. For this activity, I procured copies of the detailed floorplans for each floor of the high school from a construction project ten years ago. In preparation for the activity, I chose able-ism as my hypothetical final project, and mapped out the accessibility of the high school based on my experiences with my hip injuries. This served as a model for the students to try to map out their own -ism within the high school, and pinpoint specifically which classrooms, hallways, teachers, staff, spaces, and people would be useful to include as primary sources for their final project. When implementing this activity, the detail of the floorplans was daunting to some students, but even in their pushback, it was clear that they were learning to read the documents. They would point out sections of the floorplans that were out of date, or question why the high school has been renovated recently in piece-meal stages and not in larger projects.

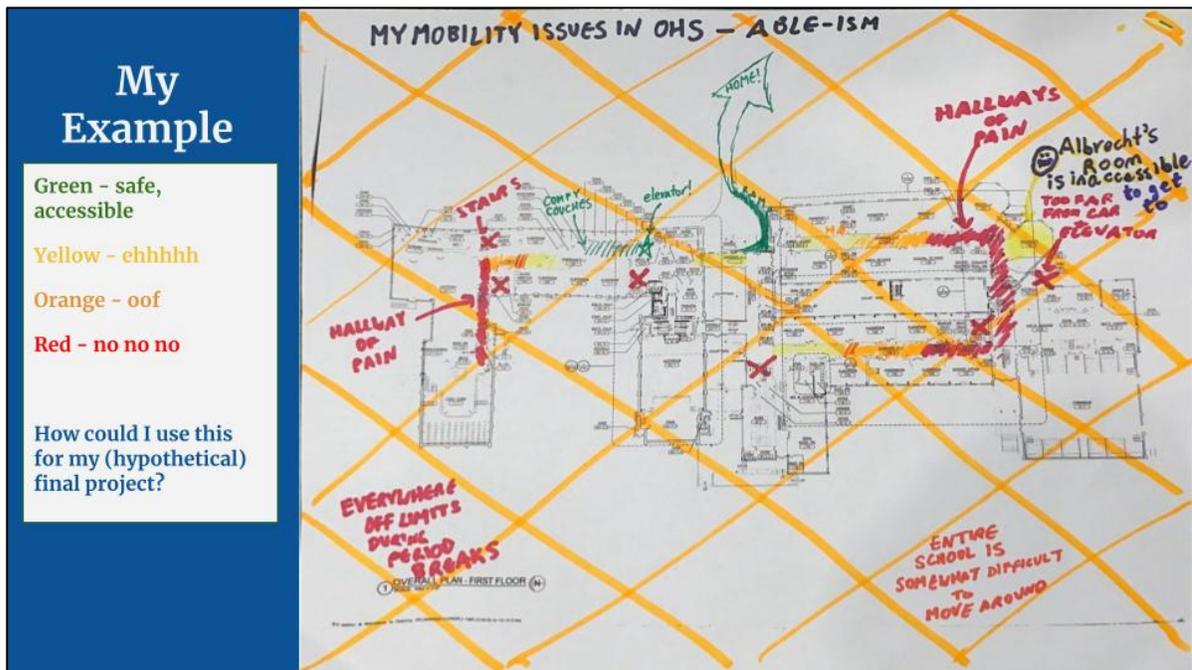


Figure 32: Slide from “Mapping Your -Ism in OHS” Presentation + Kellen Cooks’ Map of Ableism and Mobility Issues in Ossining High School

The following day, McRae and North created a collective activity to do with the floorplans, detailed above, to further orient students with the floorplans before they would use them as templates to brainstorm sources for their final projects. At the time of writing this thesis, students are still in the process of defining their sources and researching their final projects.

## **CHAPTER 5: A REFLECTION ON TEACHING**

Teaching is an art. That was clear from my time in Ossining High School, observing how McRae, North and other teachers conduct their classes and work with their students. Each time I came into the high school, McRae or North would greet me at the entrance. Each time that I'd ask how they were doing, I'd receive some type of ridiculously sarcastic comment about the existential dread of being a teacher. Subsequently throughout the day, I'd watch the magic unfold. When class would be just starting in SUNY Race, as each student filed in, I'd watch McRae and North greet them nearly individually. You could feel a sense of trust and care and respect between the students and the teachers. They were in it together as they dove into tough topics and shared personal opinions and experiences. The classroom was warm in a way that I hadn't felt in so long. One day I visited Mr. Douglas Albrecht, who was my engineering teacher and robotics mentor when I was at OHS, and I watched him teach his engineering class. He somehow made vector equations interesting. I couldn't look away, and neither could the students. He was performing, and had his audience captivated. I've seen McRae and North similarly engage their classes with such passion. As I would wait between SUNY Race classes in the English office, I'd listen as teachers would discuss specific students and try to understand why they were slumping or acting out in class. Not every teacher pulls all these stops, but it really has been beautiful this school year to see how some teachers care for their students, and perform and put in effort to make information matter to their class.

An important aspect of SUNY Race and the way McRae and North teach is their ability to maneuver and adjust through the school year. Each year, there is very little within the SUNY Race curriculum that is rigid or set in stone. Projects and lessons change,

deadlines and schedules shift, all based on how McRae and North judge the temperature of the class. When a discussion catches fire amongst the students, McRae and North always make sure to dedicate the next day or someday soon to continue that discussion for as long as the students need to process the topic, no matter what might be previously scheduled. Traumatic events such as the death of Tyre Nichols, the Nashville school shooting, and especially the sudden death of Mr. Farmer, a security guard at Ossining High School, each had massive impacts on the psyche of our SUNY Race students. After each of these events, McRae and North decided to clear their schedule and devote multiple days, as much as a week, of class time for students to decompress and discuss how these events made them feel, and these events' implications on their lives. I personally remember how the USC college admissions scandal broke during my senior year of high school, and how SUNY Race became an outlet for us students to vent our frustration with the college admissions system, and how class and privilege was shaping our educational experiences. In regards to the death of Mr. Farmer at Ossining High School, discussions in SUNY Race led to desires amongst certain students to create a memorial for the guard they loved dearly. Within SUNY Race, McRae and North fostered a safe and malleable space where students can dive into the difficult topics and issues that were affecting their lives, and where students have agency over the trajectory of their in-class experience.

The students themselves of SUNY Race were absolutely awesome. Many of the students are seniors. In the last year of high school, almost everyone gets affected in some way by senioritis, as there is little incentive for students to be very invested in their classes. That makes it so much more amazing how engaged the students were each day in SUNY Race, and how involved they were in each Dreaming-on-Hudson lesson and activity. Each

time I'd join the class, whether it be virtually or in-person, I was continuously fascinated by the student's takeaways and thoughts. They would be having deep, rich conversation about extremely complex topics in a tone that was so conversational, honest, and real. Their maps and writings have been fascinating portals to their views on society and their surroundings. These students are brilliant, and they were the core of Dreaming-on-Hudson.

## **CHAPTER 6: LOOKING FORWARD**

The most important thing for the Dreaming-on-Hudson project in the future is to obtain extensive student feedback. I hope that at the end of the 2022-23 school year, we can hold a few classes with our SUNY Race students to talk with them about what worked and what didn't work for them throughout the curriculum. An anonymous feedback form will also be useful for responses that students might not want to share in front of the whole class. Their feedback will be critical to adjusting the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum for future implementation. Furthermore, when it comes to academic writing and reflection on the Dreaming-on-Hudson project, it will be vital to include students' remarks in the discussion and analysis of Dreaming-on-Hudson thus far. Once we get that feedback from the students, we will truly know what was successful about the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum.

I am also extremely excited to see what the students create for their final projects. At the point of writing this thesis, they are deep in the process of completing their final projects, but all the students have already solidified the "-ism" they plan on exploring. Their ideas are fascinating and impactful, spanning topics from "Sexual Predator-ism" in OHS, to investigating racist attitudes amongst Ossining's Latino communities, to analyzing the patterns of who enrolls in SUNY Race. In late May and June 2023, students will present their finished final projects to the class, in the form of PowerPoints, videos, or however they decide to communicate their findings. We also hope to hold a Dreaming-on-Hudson exhibition in Ossining that showcases the students' final projects, along with the materials exhibited at the 2022 Biennial installation at Cornell. The logistics for this exhibit is to be determined.

The prospect of co-authorship between our teaching team and SUNY Race students is crucial regarding future academic publications and communications regarding Dreaming-on-Hudson. This is inspired by my own experiences with Kawe Gidaa-naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin, a tribal-university research collaboration between Upper Great Lakes tribes, tribal resource managers, and University of Minnesota researchers, focused on the study and preservation of Manoomin (wild rice) (Matson et al, 2021). I was a part of this collaboration as a student researcher in the Summer of 2021, analyzing the environmental worldviews that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people develop through relationships with Manoomin. Since that summer, lead researchers of the collaboration have reached out to me multiple times to ask if I'd like to be a co-author on their academic papers and presentations, even if I hadn't directly written a word of the paper. The Manoomin collaboration has a policy where they offer co-authorship on their papers to their full All-Hands email list, and to past tribal partners and University of Minnesota researchers who had previously worked with the team.

For Dreaming-on-Hudson, co-authorship for students on academic publications would be critical for the project's aims to highlight their imaginations and knowledge, I plan to offer co-authorship to students on academic publications such as this one that detail and analyze the implementation of the Dreaming-on-Hudson project. This is not just because the students are the entire focus of the project and of these papers, but also because student feedback will be included in future publications about Dreaming-on-Hudson. Furthermore, I plan to include students' final projects in future academic publications that spin off from Dreaming-on-Hudson, in attempts to create an archive of local spatial knowledge and speculation from the Hudson Valley's youth. This could lead to potentially working with

students to translate their final projects into their own larger research projects that they might wish to continue themselves and publish in research journals. Through both scenarios, co-authorship on Dreaming-on-Hudson related publications could provide SUNY Race students with experience and exposure in academic writing, massive boosts for their resumes, and the chance to spread their analyses and ideas for the future with the masses.

Regarding my own health, I pray that the hip surgery that I have recently undergone will lead to me being able to live a life where I can resume normal everyday activities without serious pain limiting my mobility and activity. It is hard for even me to understand how draining this injury has been for my psyche, and I'm excited to see how I will move through the world once I am healed, including how I will continue my work with Dreaming-on-Hudson. I hope that I will be able to be more present in the classroom in future implementations of the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum, and that in general the work will go smoother and be even more enjoyable without all the medical worries.

### Curriculum Adjustments

Student feedback will ultimately be the main factor to decide how we reform the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum for the future. However, there are already ideas and opportunities for improvement, beyond the lessons learned detailed earlier in the account of the school year.

For future implementations of Dreaming-on-Hudson at Ossining High School, it will be a priority to invite more guests to the classroom who are community leaders and/or changemakers within the area. Joyce Sharrock Cole's extensive involvement was extremely fruitful in exploring the history and pasts of Ossining, and our class discussions and mapping activities were vital for understanding what Ossining is for our students in present

day, but there could be more emphasis on exploring how the future of Ossining and the Hudson Valley is being shaped, and who are playing key roles in that process. Through inviting local elected officials, activists, artists, planners, architects, real estate developers, and other people making a difference in the community, we can expose students to the multiple ways through which they can translate their deep and growing knowledge of their community's social dynamics into action to change, preserve, and/or improve their environment. This could also align with field trips to the organizations and sites at which these people work. Between McRae and North's local celebrity status as beloved teachers, Joyce Sharrock Cole's broad array of relationships with local government and community organizations, and my own connections and understanding of the community, I expect for us to be able to invite an array of excellent guests to the classroom.

It is also important to remember the more moral takeaways from this school year in our efforts to improve the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum for the future. For our interactive mapping activities, it will remain important to design the activities and implement them in the classroom in a way that forefronts the students' process and their knowledge. These mapping activities should be designed in a way that provides students as much freedom as possible to express their understandings of themselves, their communities, and/or their surroundings, without highlighting some expert map as the ultimate goal for their efforts. Alongside this, these mapping activities should continue to be introduced patiently, providing students with time and opportunities to ease into the activity, do practice runs, and ask as many questions as possible to ensure that they can map to their best abilities.

Another key for future school years is to remember and lean into our ability to produce lessons and activities spontaneously. The curriculum planning of summer 2022 was extremely helpful to hit the ground running at the start of the school year with the various lessons and mapping activities that would be showcased in the November Biennial exhibit, but it also created a false notion in my mind that everything had to be planned in advance, and a false feeling that we would “run out” of Dreaming-on-Hudson interventions. In reality, improvisation on the day-of is what made all those pre-planned interventions work, and our lessons and activities that were formed more improvisationally in 2023 were equally impactful and enjoyable to those earlier in the school year. For the next school year, I would try to trust the empty patches on the class calendar, and be in the moment with the flow of the school year. This trust and presence will hopefully allow for us to create more Dreaming-on-Hudson interventions in stride with the school year, spontaneously implementing our mission of rooting social studies in place and in students’ dreams and lived experiences, through creative lessons and mapmaking activities.

## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS IN CONTEXT OF ATTACKS ON CRITICAL RACE THEORY**

In this honors thesis, I have told the story of the Dreaming-on-Hudson project, from my childhood growing up in Ossining to the present day as I reflect on the work that has been done both in Ossining High School and at Cornell University. The theoretical background section highlights the project's influences, including Massey's multiplicitous and shifty definition of spatial identity, the use of mapmaking from Venezuela to Black America to embolden underrepresented spatial imaginaries, and educational initiatives from Los Angeles to New Jersey that empower student knowledge and spatial creativity. The methods and journey sections detail how our teaching team formulated and implemented each mapping activity and place-based lessons. We adjusted and improvised throughout the school year as we began with ideas focused on self-identity, and expanded outwards towards concepts of community and our area's social dynamics. The journey section also explores how students appeared to respond to each activity and lesson, positive or negative, and details the curation of the Dreaming-on-Hudson exhibition at the 2022 Cornell Biennial. The reflection section praises the artistry of teaching showcased by Ossining High School teachers, and the way that SUNY Race serves as a caring and empowering space for student thought and imagination. The looking forward section speculates on the possibilities of student co-authorship and increased guest appearances within the Dreaming-on-Hudson curriculum. However, as we look forward, we must consider a current political climate that threatens learning environments such as what we have fostered at Ossining High School.

According to the UCLA School of Law's CRT Forward Initiative, "a total of 209 local, state, and federal government entities across the United States have introduced 670 anti-Critical Race Theory bills, resolutions, executive orders, opinion letters, statements, and

other measures” since they began analysis in September 2020 (Alexander et. al., 2023). Critical race theory (CRT) itself is a very broad and loosely defined term, but has been described as a movement to see race not as a natural biological feature but as a social construct that has been weaponized (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023), and has been described as an “interdisciplinary approach [to education] that seeks to understand and combat race inequity in society” (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2017). Florida Governor Ron Desantis’ 2021 Stop the Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees (Stop W.O.K.E.) Act is one of the most expansive and notable examples of Anti-CRT legislation. Gov. Desantis likens critical race theory to “state-sanctioned racism,” and the law prohibits K-12 schools from teaching critical race theory or from hiring “woke CRT consultants” (Governor Ron Desantis’ Staff, 2021; State of Florida, 2021). Within the Hudson Valley, parent-led anti-CRT organizations have risen to have significant impact on regional educational politics, such as the organization Save Our Schools (SOS) for Westchester Children. This organization led the ouster of Lakeland Schools superintendent Brendan Lyons, who oversaw the growth of Lakeland’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, and was subsequently persecuted by SOS parents for “pushing critical race theory” into their children’s curriculum (Save Our Schools, 2022; Trujillo, 2021). During the 2022 Midterm elections, Republicans made significant inroads within federal and state-level seats in the Hudson Valley by campaigning heavily on empowering parents to push back against “age-inappropriate curriculum within their school districts” (Lawler, 2022). The conservative backlash against critical race theory and equity initiatives in Hudson Valley schools is powerful, and is showing few signs of slowing down.

Save Our Schools maintains a registry on their website where they have identified each school district in Westchester County that is presently implementing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), Critical Race Theory (CRT), and/or Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework (CR-S) within their schools. Ossining Union Free School District, home to Ossining High School, is not on their list. For one, their list barely includes any school districts with significant Black, Latino, and/or working-class populations, so I think there is some racial coding within who is the “our” in Save Our Schools. However, I think that there is a difference between what we do in Ossining with SUNY Race and Dreaming-on-Hudson, and the CRT boogeyman that organizations like SOS deploy in their rhetoric. Save Our Schools positions itself as an organization pushing for unity in Westchester County, in contrast to DEI, CRT, and CR-S programs that intend to “permanently separate us by race, gender, and community” (Save Our Schools, n.d.). However, permanent separation is antithetical to our mission in Ossining, and I would say is antithetical to most equity-oriented educational practices and initiatives across the country that could receive the CRT or DEI label.

In SUNY Race, McRae and North have fostered a classroom environment that is a model for holistic social studies, where discussion and input is prioritized as students are encouraged to work through their emotions and opinions on sensitive, complex topics. Dreaming-on-Hudson adds to this through rooting these complex social constructs in place and lived experience, through lessons that explore the past, present, and future of how these constructs manifest in community, and mapping activities that help build understanding of how these social constructs acutely affect us and our communities. Furthermore, Dreaming-on-Hudson encourages students to act with this knowledge of the social constructs that

shape them and their surroundings, through speculating, dreaming, and planning for how they can shape a just future for their community. Together, SUNY Race and Dreaming-on-Hudson explore how race, gender, class and other social constructs are inextricably woven into the fabric of our lives and communities, and that in order to really understand one another, understand our environment, and forge a better future, we must interrogate these matrices of identity and social stratification that undergird modern life. We can't detach ourselves or our children from critical race theory or diversity or equity or any of these theories and concepts because every single one of us live them every single day.

Horace Greeley High School in Chappaqua, NY is currently seeking to create their own SUNY Race course and are seeking inspiration from Ossining, with teachers talking with McRae and North and visiting the classroom to see how we do it. As our model for holistic social studies spreads across Westchester, I foresee more students having a chance to put up a mirror to their lives and communities, and dream of what could be next for our region. There's not so much to be afraid of.

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