

Claiming an Education

Adrienne Rich

1. University education implies an ethical and intellectual contract between teacher and student.
2. You cannot afford to think of being here to receive an education, you will do much better to think of yourselves as being here to claim one. One of the dictionary definitions of the verb "to claim" is: to take as the rightful owner; to assert in the face of possible contradiction. "To receive" is to come into possession of, to act as receptacle or container for; to accept as authoritative or true. The difference is that between acting and being acted-upon.
3. Take responsibility toward yourselves.
4. Responsibility to yourself means refusing to let others do your thinking, talking, and naming for you; it means learning to respect and use your own brains and instincts; hence, grappling with hard work.
5. Responsibility to yourself means that you don't fall for shallow and easy solutions-predigested books and ideas, weekend encounters guaranteed to change your life, taking "gut" courses instead of ones you know will challenge you, bluffing at school and life instead of doing solid work.
6. Refuse to sell your talents and aspirations short, simply to avoid conflict and confrontation.
7. It means that we insist on a life of meaningful work, insist that work be as meaningful as love and friendship in our lives. The courage to be "different."
8. The difference between a life lived actively, and a life of passive drifting and dispersal of energies, is an immense difference.
9. Expect faculty to take you seriously.
10. Clear thinking, active discussion, and excellent writing are all necessary for intellectual freedom, and that these require hard work.
11. This means seeking out criticism, recognizing that the most affirming thing anyone can do for you is demand that you push yourself further.

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<http://web.bryant.edu/~fsp/modules/1/Claiming%20Education%20Summary.htm>

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