

TIMOTHY You know, different students have different capacities in terms of being willing to step into a
PATRICK space where they lead a class. It's amazing to me, even in a place like Harvard, where you
MCCARTHY: would think the students have a certain threshold of confidence, especially intellectually, just
how many of them are insecure. And how this kind of a thing causes an enormous amount of
anxiety, which is another reason why I do it.

Well, there are students every term who really find their voice doing the provocation. It's their
first time where they're kind of center stage and where they have an opportunity to lead. And
some of them are very nervous about it, some of them are very anxious about it, some of
them are reticent even going into the class.

But also oftentimes, and I find this every semester, there will be a student that hasn't said
much at all and then the provocation just gives them an opportunity to flourish. And then once
they do that, their confidence coming out of that is much greater.

TYMAN Sometimes it is intimidating when you have brilliant seniors giving amazing comments. For me,
JACKSON: being a sophomore, I would wait until maybe 30 minutes into the seminar, 40 minutes in, to
really just give my meaningful, impactful comment because I know I had it in me.

CLAIRE BENOIT: I tend to talk a lot, probably too much. And so if there's a certain idea I have about the
readings that week, I will manage to say it out loud at some point in the two hour window. And
not everybody does that. So I really liked provocations by people who have a certain way of
reading texts that didn't really get to be shared in other weeks.

TIMOTHY I always tell the provokers that they should be the most informed people in the class on that
PATRICK day. They should be as familiar with the texts, more familiar with the texts than anybody.
MCCARTHY:

They should have wrestled with them, and read them, and reread them, and taken notes, and
thought about them, and so forth. And that's almost always the case. It's almost always-- it's
very, very rare for someone who's up to provoke, who mails it in.

In part, because they have to meet with me and in part because they're part of a team. And so
they're accountable to one another. That's another reason why I pair them together.

TYMAN

So there was a senior in the class who I very much respected from the black community. And

JACKSON:

then she was the person that I got to work with for my provocation. And so having that role model in the class, really, really motivated me to be like her. And to really give my meaningful comment that she was always known for in the class.

OLIVIA CASTOR:

He came up, he was like, yeah, I heard a lot about you. I heard you're brilliant. And I was super nervous to say anything at the beginning of class. Especially, after you had made a comment.

And we ended up signing up to do a provocation together. And they said that they had intentionally signed up to provoke with me, because they were someone-- they had admired my work, or the comments that I made in previous classes or other spaces and they wanted to learn from me.

And at the end of the course, this student was talking all the time and felt extremely comfortable and was making a lot of really substantive and important comments in class. I think just the interaction that you had with your peers and the professor and the nature of the class conversation really created a space where students actually were growing.