Participatory Action Research – Feminist Trailblazers and Good Troublemakers Podcast - host Patricia Maguire with Alice McIntyre: Participatory Action Research: Making meaning, Exploring Identities, Using Photovoice

Episode 6 – January 4, 2023 – https://www.parfemtrailblazers.net/episode-6-with-alice-mcintyre/

[00:00:00] **Patricia Maguire:** Hello, folks. You're listening to Participatory Action Research, Feminist Trailblazers and Good Troublemakers, Episode six with Alice McIntyre. I'm your host, Patricia Maguire. Our podcast amplifies the contributions of feminist trailblazers to participatory and action research, and by discussing their work, their struggles and successes, bringing feminist values and ways of being to par. We hope to encourage you whether you're engaged in participatory action research or thinking about doing it. We hope these conversations help all of us revision of participatory and action research that's deeply informed by intersectional feminisms.

I'm really excited to talk with today's guest, Dr. Alice McIntyre. Alice is an activist teacher educator whose feminist participatory action research projects, known for including Photovoice, are one concrete expression of her social justice. And I have to confess that Alice and I started exchanging fan mail back in 1994 as we learned about each other's work. So Alice, welcome.

[00:01:19] **Alice McIntyre:** Thank you for having me. I'm delighted.

[00:01:21] **Patricia Maguire:** All right. Let me give a little bit of background here about Alice before we jump into questions. Alice has been a social justice activist in education for over 45 years. She began as a classroom substitute teacher in 1980. And by 2020 she was Professor Emeritus at Hellenic College in Massachusetts.

Currently, Alice teaches in the Boston College Lynch School of Education, as well as she teaches and chairs dissertations at Northeastern University's College of Professional Studies doctoral program, which we'll get into later. Alice has done feminist PAR, including using photo voice. With classroom teachers to make meaning of their white identity with adolescents of color in Connecticut to examine and take action on how they wanted to improve their community. And with working class women in Belfast in the north of Ireland to make sense of their experience of three decades of sectarian violence. Finally, Alice and I, along with our brilliant colleague, Mary Brydon Miller, we organized a working conference to bridge the gap between feminist research and participatory action research. The work of the conference scholar practitioners was published as an anthology titled Traveling Companions: Feminism, Teaching, and Action Research.

So, Alice, we're going to start here - after being a classroom teacher for almost 12 years. You started a doctoral program at Boston College and you entered interested in exploring the differential treatment of females and males in the US education system.

[00:03:04] **Patricia Maguire:** So what then brought you to participatory action research, which in the early nineties was still a relatively new, alternative approach to knowledge creation, at least in graduate programs. So what, what brought you to PAR?

[00:03:18] **Alice McIntyre:** Well, I'd like to say it was something, you know, heavy, deep and real. I know you had Brinton Lykes on your podcast. So she was teaching at Boston College and she started the same year I started as a student. And so I was interested in gender, looking at gender and teachers. And I happened to have Brinton in a course in adolescent psychology and I was instantly like attracted to her vision and the way that she taught, and she'd speak a little bit about what she was doing in Guatemala and her own research, and that's the first time I actually heard participatory action research.

[00:04:00] **Alice McIntyre:** I never heard the word. Okay. But I had been teaching that way for so many years in very participatory classrooms, whether they were seven years old or 13, and used a lot of dialogue and collaboration in all the messiness that goes with that. So I made an appointment with her and I told her what I wanted to do and she said, yeah, you know what? Gender isn't really my forte. She said, I'm not sure I'm the one that you would want to work with around gender. My focus is definitely gender related, but I tend to come at it through also looking at race. That's how I ended up getting involved in PAR and over time, taking more courses with Brinton.

[00:04:47] **Alice McIntyre:** Out of that came this idea of trying to do a PAR project in a university, which also was pretty unheard of. So that's why I came to it. And just to wrap this up, we had a doctoral student sort of holiday end of the semester get together at Brinton's house, and we had gone to the dean because Brinton wanted to teach a PAR course which no one had really heard of. And so we went to the dean and said, we definitely want her to do this. We'll all take it, et cetera. So the dean said, fine. So Brinton comes up to me to get together and she says, oh, Alice, wait till you see the book we're going to use. And she shows me your book, Doing Participatory Action Research – a Feminist Approach, you are going to love this. and that's how I was introduced to you. That book is my Bible. So that even got me more excited. And so that's how it all started.

[00:05:47] **Patricia Maguire:** Okay. And so how did you get student teachers involved then, with a willingness to and they were all white student teachers, I think. How did you get them on board with using PAR to look at their own white racial identity?

And, and if I could just insert here, because one of the things I, I reread your, one of your books or a couple of them over the last couple of weeks and, and you said that one of the things that had been left out of feminist theory was what it means to be white. So talk a little bit more about how you involved these student teachers in exploring their own white identity.

[00:06:28] **Alice McIntyre:** For sure. I had the fortune of teaching at Boston College while I was doing my dissertation work, so I got to teach undergrad. So I did a lot of invitation, you know, a lot of inviting people through the courses. I put flyers up everywhere. I was also supervising student teachers, so I would go down to the supervision office and I would put letters into everybody's boxes. And yeah, I did a lot of promotion and I wanted at least 12. Didn't know if that was going to happen, if it wasn't going to happen, I didn't quite have a plan B. Just kept pushing the, pushing the envelope and didn't offer them money, didn't offer them anything. Just thought this would be in addition to how you think about teaching. And we often talked in my classes about the racial differences in particularly elementary teachers. And that's what I was working with. So I, I, they all came and they all had an interest in it. And what kept them is a whole other story, but that's what brought them there. And so I do give them credit, all of them, because they didn't know what they were walking into. But neither did I, to be honest. I had one question that really guided the whole project, and that's one of the things that I value so much about PAR, the open-ended questions. How do you make meaning of yourself as a white teacher? How do you make meaning of whiteness? And I had no idea it was going where it was going to go, and that was a little risky, and yet I was really drawn to that. So I give them a lot of credit because it wasn't an easy process on a lot of levels. But they stayed.

[00:08:24] **Patricia Maguire:** You said one thing brought them, but what do you think kept them in their willingness to engage with that?

[00:08:30] **Alice McIntyre:** Bagels and cream cheese, pizza, food. You know, I'm a big one for food and I know that from teaching. You know, one of the things that gets people together because it, it allows people to take a breath, to engage in doing something with their bodies while they're mulling these difficult questions. And so I don't say that jokingly. That was really important.

[00:09:02] **Alice McIntyre:** Another thing that I learned so much about doing that research, which I didn't realize before, because I am white and probably engaged in it many times and didn't know it was what I call in the book White Talk - how often white people subvert a conversation by nodding agreement by Oh, ah-huh, changing the subject. Oh, I, I totally understand. Oh, yes. I identify a lot of trying to make connections with other white people about something that really is racist or really is unrecognized, and by doing so, how

affirming that in one's distorted belief. I had no idea that was going to happen, but because of PAR, because of the space that is given to dialogue, to watch them engage in that kind of conversation was so important.

Another thing that I do, and this comes out of being a classroom teacher, elementary, I used markers and chart paper and creative things and collages and I still do that in college today. Them being able to, again, use something else to express themselves around difficult topics, and I think that kept them coming too. And then one week would lead to another week, and I think they became very interested in their own journey, and in listening to one another that was much more important than anything I had to say, I think was them listening to each other and being able to share stories. Now, whether they came to share the stories about being white, there were all student teachers and they loved talking to each other about what was going on in school, which even though they might not directly speak to it had a lot to do with race and a lot to do with social class, and a lot to do with perceptions and assumptions and stereotypes, et cetera.

[00:11:09] **Patricia Maguire:** Well, in the end of your book about that project and the book, for listeners, is *Making Meaning of Whiteness: Exploring racial identity with white teachers*. You observed that the lack of time really constrained the depth of the reflexivity of the teachers, and you noted there's no talking cure for racism - that takes action and time. And your subsequent PAR projects took years. Yes. So talk some about time as a critical factor in doing PAR.

[00:11:42] **Alice McIntyre:** Oh, absolutely. It raises the question of PAR within a university setting and the constraints upon that. And I do write about that in the book and in other books as well, because as you know, there's some criticism from some practitioners that that's not really pure PAR when you're engaging in it an institution that sometimes is actually contrary to the principles of PAR. So I completely understand that. I get the contradictions. I don't think though that just because you're engaging in PAR outside a university, that somehow that's pure as the driven snow, because every project, as you know, has its own set of conflicts and contradictions and power relations and et cetera.

I do think that one semester is not enough. And what I did with that project, and this was I think more beneficial, was the next semester we actually did independent studies with any student that wanted to analyze the text. Now, I had given them the tapes. I had given them the transcripts, which I transcribed myself. No machines, no programs, just did it myself, all the time. But this was a chance for them to choose a particular topic and analyze the texts themselves. Now I think it was only 5 students that took us up on that, but that semester was a mind blower.

That's where the self-reflexivity came in and really being able to go in depth about what we talked about. The time definitely was a factor in I think, not being able to really get at the, the social change part. If it's just sitting around dialoguing and talking, that's wonderful. That's great. But the action piece is what's so core to PAR.

[00:13:47] **Patricia Maguire:** So your next PAR project, which spanned three years, was with adolescents of color in an urban community, and that included a photo voice project that you and the students and Patricia McKierman published as *At A Split Second: Visual Stories of and by Young People Living in an Urban Community*. So what stands out for you about that project, because then you're making the shift to using photovoice.

[00:14:15] **Alice McIntyre:** I actually think that was just a piece of. I started teaching in Connecticut and the schools in Bridgeport. By then I had been doing anti-racist work since I was a classroom teacher. So I definitely wanted to do something with young people in an urban school. I learned from you and other practitioners and from the BC project, just, what are you interested in, Alice, and what is the question and what would be most beneficial? And what kept coming up for me was how do young people experience this community? And it was pretty violent, lot of drugs and definitely under-resourced. How do they experience living in this community? And that was the question. And again, I had no idea where it would go at all. I knew some things that I would do to engage them. They were fourth grade, fifth grade. So again, having been a fourth-grade teacher, um, I thought about the cameras because I had learned about photo voice through Brinton and through other things that we had read, you know, and again, markers and crayons and chart paper and clay and you name it, we did it. And that project took off in ways that I could never have imagined. It was challenging. It was rip your heart out delightful and rip your heart out heartbreaking, but I learned so much and I was much more, I had more ability to be free with time. I wasn't constrained by that, even though I was teaching in a university, the project was outside the university. I did use a lot of graduate students who wanted to be part of the research team which was fabulous, but I didn't have any definitive end.

[00:16:14] **Alice McIntyre:** So we did that photo voice book, which who would've thought of that? I had no idea we were going to do that. But the book itself really showcases the young people and it really showcases how their perspectives, well, first of all, are so not listened to, so not recognized, so dismissed, so ignored. And the book talks a lot about that and the different things that they did. They're so active and so curious and so unafraid. I loved it about them and it was, that to me was really aligned itself with the kind of feminism I like, which is, doesn't matter what title you have, doesn't matter how much money you have, you know, it doesn't matter what kind of car you drive, like we have something to say and you should listen.

17:04 Now I say that because that's how they were unless you were an entertainer or athlete, they were totally in awe of them. But regular Joe-Smoes from the Governor to the City Council to the school committee people, they would stand in front of them and rattle off things. And I just loved that.

And they would not call that feminism. I don't think they ever heard the word until I mentioned it, but that's the kind that I like, you know, stand in your own space and even if you don't listen, I'm speaking anyway. And that's what they did.

[00:17:44] **Alice McIntyre:** So I continued to like hone my skills and I learned a lot about myself. I mean, if somebody is interested who's listening and doing PAR. It's a wonderful way to learn about humility, isn't it? I mean, even in the whiteness work, oh my gosh, I'm always learning about how much I want to control, how much I want to direct the conversation, how much I want my priorities to be the same as your priorities. And now try doing this with, you know, 13-year-olds.

[00:18:27] **Patricia Maguire:** So you, you and these 13 year olds were able to take what they perceived as the problems, the actions that they thought should happen. Some they took. And, and take it to community policy makers.

[00:18:42] **Alice McIntyre:** And the policymakers ignored them. From an adult perspective, sitting in the city council, watching the, the council members and how they acted when these 13-year-olds stood there, you know, at the podium and told them that the city council needed to take action around the trash in the community, and that's what came out of the project.

[00:19:11] **Alice McIntyre:** If you had told me, Pat, that trash was going to be the focus when I first started, I would've been like, oh my gosh. And we co-wrote everything, and they did everything. They made the phone calls; they wrote the letters. Now granted, the graduate students and I, we made sure spelling and how to write it properly, et cetera, but if they wanted it done, I told them they had to do it. That I wasn't going to do things for them they could do for themselves. And the way that some of the council members acted towards them, yeah, it was disgraceful. As did one of the senators of Connecticut who we finally got to visit and they sat there with him and they told him what they thought. And again, as an adult, I looked at him and I knew that he was nodding yes and, and it was phony, and they knew it was too.

[00:20:00] **Alice McIntyre:** I don't know what it is about adults that they think that 12- and 13-year-olds cannot sense when they're being, you know, pushed aside, especially kids that grew up in marginalized communities who have such a better understanding of us than we do of them for sure. But they kept speaking anyway and they were able to do some

things and not other things because they don't vote and they're young and they don't have access to some of the resources that would've made the change, I think, go deeper into the community.

(20:37) But what does success mean in PAR? And I write a lot about that as well. And to get out of that academic space of, well, success means, and then actually deciding what it means. And there's different ways of thinking about success. And I think one of the things PAR might, where I think I hope that I've contributed is the personal and interpersonal confidence and sense of purpose that people can get from being engaged in PAR, whether there's outside social change or not, to be able to see people gain a sense of self and a sense of being able to speak and give voice to things.

[00:21:30] **Patricia Maguire:** that's very powerful.

[00:21:31] **Alice McIntyre:** Yeah, and I like to put that under that rubric of success in PAR. You know, the whole thing can come tumbling down in terms of which it did in our area, in some areas around the trash. But that didn't take away from the participants feeling, you know, like they had a superpower, and what a great gift that is that PAR offers.

[00:21:57] **Patricia Maguire:** Let's go into your next project where you spent a five-year period in Belfast, in the north of Ireland with working class nationalist Irish Catholic women to make sense of three decades of sectarian violence. So what's something particularly memorable from what you call the Monument Road Project? I know that's a pseudonym, but you did photovoice as well with these working class Irish Catholic women. What, what are some memorable things out of that project?

[00:22:28] **Alice McIntyre:** Oh, we don't have enough time. I went over there for 20 years. I'm still friends with a lot of those women, well, growing up Irish working class in Boston and having a interest in and a love of Irish history, I had such an open heart when I went there, and this was right at the end of the war, so the war was going on still a little bit. What I take away from that and bring with me is their loyalty to one another, the generosity of spirit is through the roof. They were all younger than me. Because they lived in a community that was under siege, the contradictory thing that was going on was everyone's door was open, everyone took care of everyone else, everybody knew where everybody's children were or partners were, and at the same time, anything could happen on any given day, no matter where you were, no matter what was going on, no matter who had been in jail, no matter what tragedy had just happened, the women, and they're great men over there too, but the women just incredibly generous.

[00:23:45] **Patricia Maguire:** What did your PAR project contribute?

[00:23:49] **Alice McIntyre:** That started off with children. They had asked me to come over and because I was a teacher and they had an Irish school in this community, they asked me if I would come and help develop a curriculum. So I didn't go there thinking I was going to engage in PAR, but then just from hanging around with the women, I asked them if they would be interested in doing a project to give women a chance to, first of all, get together and talk about what it's like to live in a community like that with years of violence and their parents and grandparents and people that had been killed and people that had died, people that were in prison, would they like to get together to talk about that and, and maybe find a way to address how violence has informed their lives, and they reluctantly said yes. And that's how it started. And again, the question, what is life like for women living in a war and living in this community? And that turned into, you know, a few years and transatlantic PAR. And it is challenging to do it that way. It really is because there wasn't someone on the other end who was sort of facilitating things when I wasn't there. They didn't have time. They're all working close people. They're working every day and they're taking care of their kids and their families, and they're fighting a war. That was a whole other level of learning about the fluidity of PAR, the expectations that need to be addressed in PAR.

[00:25:34] **Patricia Maguire:** So what were their expectations? What were they hoping that they might get, learn from this process?

[00:25:43] **Alice McIntyre:** Just having time to have some good crack, as they would say. And again, I'd get food, I got a little funding, I got daycare for them if they needed it. We met in this community center. We would bring fruit. I would tape things. The same thing: clay, collages, chart paper, conversations, belly laughing. Well, they're like many people who grow up in war, they have this perverse sense of humor because they have to have one. And they can also, in very few words, speak volumes to what it means to live in that kind of environment. And I attribute that a lot to just a working-class sort of way of being in the world, unlike, well, you know, being in universities where things have to be long and drawn out and multi-syllabic and theorizing and you know, you just get lost in that stuff.

[00:26:47] **Alice McIntyre:** So they loved being able to get together and not have any responsibilities, and they grew to really enjoy one another's company. And when it came to doing the Photovoice project, they enjoyed taking the pictures. They did not necessarily enjoy or look forward to the, the entire project being part of a celebration in Belfast.

[00:27:17] **Patricia Maguire:** And that project ended in some kind of exhibit of their work, which,

[00:27:26] **Alice McIntyre:** Like I said, they don't like the spotlight. That's not their thing. And I said to them, the decision is always up to you. We don't have to do anything if this is all you want to do is get together for a couple of hours and have some tea and be able to relax and have a cigarette, you know, and just talk. That's fine. But they just needed more prodding because on their own, they just would've said, this is so sweet. We love having you here.

And part of it is I became really good friends with them. They felt an obligation to continue to participate because I kept flying over there. But we recognized that and we said that, and that was the beauty of it. I didn't force them to come, but yet they felt like they had to come if you can get that sort of vibe. But once they were there it was so robust and rich and, then when my friend Pat came over to do the photovoice project, and I mean, they were so impressed by her talent, as was I, because she was the one that sort of formulated how to put something like that together, and they really enjoyed that. It was very creative for them and they were the ones that chose which pictures they wanted. And I think when it became more focused like that, they were more intentional about what they wanted to share and what they didn't. And to be honest, Pat, they didn't want to share a lot, but that is typical of that population anyway, and I respected that.

[00:29:10] **Patricia Maguire:** So the photovoice, the project then went from dialogue and using artwork and together-time to discuss, explore what it was like to live with that kind of violence. What it meant for their lives. And then the photovoice was then using photos as a way almost to gather data, if you will, about what it was like for them. And then they analyzed, chose the photos, and the exhibit was showing what it was like for this group of women to live in this war zone or 30 years of sectarian violence.

[00:29:50] **Alice McIntyre:** And it was also a chance, a lot of them are Irish speakers, not all of them, but they wanted it to be both an English and in Irish, which I loved. And I didn't realize this at the time, but there was an exhibit happening at a festival at the West Belfast festival. And so I had said to them months ahead of time, what do you think about doing something at the festival? And no, no, we're not going to, no, no, no. So I said, well, maybe we could do the photos, maybe we could do a photovoice, you know, panels, and that's what it came out to be. These beautiful panels that we had made, which was a whole other project for me from here.

[00:30:30] **Alice McIntyre:** And so I said, you know, there's other women that might really benefit from seeing this. Women that you know, and women that you don't know. And maybe that's, that's part of why we're here, is to carry a message of reality, you know, a message of hope, a message that you already know anyway.

You know what I learned, Pat, early on. This comes back to your original question. I did not need to go over there and sort of explain what participatory things mean or what action means. They've been doing that for years, right, to protect their community. So they, they knew all about that, which was wonderful for me. The change part was a little different. Can we, and I don't mean change in some, we're going to change the war, but again, women so marginalized in the history of Ireland anyway, and I talked more about that in the book.

[00:31:32) **Alice McIntyre:** But to give them a shot at at least showing other women ways in which everyday life, sometimes you just survive it, but sometimes you can thrive in it and this is how we do it. So that's how I approached it with them, and I think that they got that. Yeah, that makes sense. Beautiful. Alright, let's do it. So that's how it happened.

[00:32:00] **Patricia Maguire:** What do you think happened for them?

[00:32:03] **Alice McIntyre:** I think it gave them confidence. Just like I said before, I don't think it really had much to do with the festival as much as it had to do with them having more confidence in themselves as women, them being able to tap into memories or things that here to for they knew about, but they never talked about. Not necessarily because it was a secret, but they just never had the time or the inclination or the space. So it gave them an opportunity to do that.

Storytelling is so key to life. People are made up of stories and PAR is such a beautiful, robust vehicle for allowing people to tell their stories without judgment. Tell what you want to tell. Tell it how you want to tell it. It could be in one word, it can be in a whole story, it can be in a picture, it can be however, in that moment. So that was a wonderful gift for them to be able to do that with one another and with me. And sometimes they would tell me to turn the tape off, because there's stories that they really cannot tell in safety or they wanted to tell to the group, but they didn't want us to go anywhere else.

[00:33:22] **Alice McIntyre:** There was one woman in particular who stopped coming the last, I think the last two visits, and I went to her house and I had a cup of tea with her and she was on the quiet side, but she always came and she said to me, it's too stressful for me. It brings up too many memories. I can't talk about those things. I really wanted to come. I love when you come. I love seeing all my friends, but I feel like the quieter I get, the less I'm contributing, and so I don't want to go. And I understood exactly what she was saying. I did say to her, your presence is so powerful. What I didn't do, I didn't say oh, that's nonsense. Of course, you're, you know, I didn't try to talk her out of her own anxiety in her own discomfort. I told her, her presence was powerful. She was always welcome whether she spoke or she didn't speak, and we had a nice conversation. And I talk about her in the book and some of the things that she told me and she didn't come back, isn't that

beautiful? Like, and she is as important as anybody else, and that story's important. The people who don't stay, why aren't they staying? And sometimes it's, well, they have to work or whatever, some kind of practical reason. But sometimes the dialogue gets too much. The speaking, the listening, it, it's too hurtful or it's too uncomfortable. And so those people who aren't usually, you know, highlighting PAR work. Wow. Are they just as important in terms of how we tell the story?

[00:35:14] **Patricia Maguire:** It also shows the power of people to decide for themselves when they want to be silent.

[00:35:21] **Alice McIntyre:** Absolutely.

[00:35:23] **Patricia Maguire:** You know, that the, the valuing of people choosing to be silent is a right too.

[00:35:31] **Alice McIntyre:** I worked with inmates for 15 years here in Massachusetts in the women's prison I did, volunteered on a weekly basis, and I did a little project with a lot of inmates post-incarceration in Boston at a transition house. And I ended up writing an article for a journal that looks at prison issues, and I made the case just like you did Pat, because women and around feminism, I think that this is an issue as well, speak up. Now, I'm one of those, you can't shut me up, but not all women are. And somehow that if you're silent, you are betraying, you know your gender, you're betraying women, and you need to speak up. And so I wrote this piece about the value of silence. And sometimes people are silent for really valid reasons. And for someone like me who would speak up around anything and I pay the price for it, how selfish of me or egotistical of me to look at a woman who isn't and say, you should. You should. I totally disagree with that. I think silence sometimes can be really self-sabotaging for some women, but silence in the way that this woman talked about and the way that some of these inmates, that's self-protection and it's not just protecting them, it's protecting their children mostly, and that there's something honorable about that that maybe isn't always acknowledged, but there's room for silence sometimes.

[00:37:10) **Patricia Maguire:** Our podcast is called Participatory Action Research. Feminist Trailblazers and Good Troublemakers to honor John Lewis's phrase in Good Trouble.

[00:37:20] **Alice McIntyre:** Yes.

[00:37:22] **Patricia Maguire:** Well, Alice, you're a troublemaker.

[00:37:25] **Alice McIntyre:** Totally.

[00:37:26] **Patricia Maguire:** And it seems to me that of all the people, many of the people I know in the participatory action research world, you've paid a high price in higher

education for your constant anti-racist, pro-feminist social justice stance. So can you talk to us a little bit about some of the battles you've had within universities for that pro justice stance.

[00:37:49] **Alice McIntyre:** Well, I mean, I had them when I was teaching in Boston in middle school, you know, I had a principal who was like, you're out of here as soon as this year is over. And I taught low-income kids, kids of color, and, I said, oh, don't worry about it, I said, but I'm taking these kids to Washington, DC before it ends. And I, I sold more cupcakes than you could shake a stick at to get them there.

[00:38:15] **Alice McIntyre:** So university, it was a whole other kettle of fish. I'm so grateful that I ended up in BC, I can't even tell you. And that Brinton was there at the same time, and that I was with this cohort of women that were older like me. I mean, I think we were in our twenties, late twenties, but we had all been out in the world. So we were able to make some changes at BC, small but important for us, and that never bothered me. Now for a couple of the women, they were more, like I said before, they were on the silent side. But there were a few of us that were troublemakers for sure. And we had a wonderful Dean Mary Brabeck, who I think you, you're familiar with. She was fabulous and she gave us a lot of space and a lot of support. So, being a troublemaker never bothered me. You know, I was never sort of afraid, if I say that, then you might flunk the course. Or if I say that Brinton might not, blah, blah, blah, like, I don't know. I just didn't have that fear in that, in that context, and I was just a hundred percent supported over there. I got grants, I got money, I got awards. Yeah, I couldn't have had it better, honestly, even with the troublemaking.

And then, I was hired that I was going to direct the graduate program in, in education with a focus on whiteness and in terms of, you know, anti-racist teaching, which at the time was welcome. But then, you know what happens, there's different deans, there's different chairs, different people come in and that's what happened. I got into some trouble trying to get a photo project on campus that dealt with LGBTQ and interracial marriages, and I persevered, persevered, persevered, it happened, but there was some consequences for that as well.

I was wildly successful from an academic point of view. I published a couple of books and articles, and I was traveling at conferences and I had good teaching evaluations, et cetera. But what happens with troublemakers like me, and I take ownership for this, I really do. I can get loud about things that I really don't need to get loud about. People would say to me all the time, Alice, everything isn't a battle. You don't have to fight every war. But I didn't know that then. And I did go to every fight I was invited to.

[00:40:52] **Alice McIntyre:** That's a stupid troublemaker sometimes, you know? And I wasted some of my energy on stupid things, and that piles up with people who don't particularly like that kind of personality anyway. And Brinton and I write in one of our articles about me being working class and sort of coming in with, you know, sort of boxing gloves and, you know, universities aren't quite like that, certainly middle-class universities or upper class. Everyone talks very nicely and nods a lot and agrees a lot. And yeah, so after about five years, that was it. And they, yeah, fired me, which was pretty shocking to me. I thought well maybe I won't get tenure. Now people have different ideas about why that was, I would argue that it had a lot to do with my stance in the way that I saw teaching, which I always did, as a site for social change and social action. Teachers to me are the key. The, the profession that can really, you know, to be a little audacious, sort of move mountains in their own classrooms. And I don't think that's what they wanted.

[00:42:18] There's something about misused power that brings up all my defiance, you know, and I just, sometimes I just don't contain myself. But then again, change of leadership, change of focus and then Covid came. Six of us were let go, full professors. I do have a sense now that I can persist, as you know, but I don't have to persist in a tank. You know, I can persist just by walking slowly, sometimes. So that's come with time. I've never changed my beliefs. I haven't changed my ideologies or my politics or whatever, so I could get along. That's just, it's not my DNA.

[00:43:07] **Patricia Maguire:** So I've got a couple more questions for you here. What would you say to people who are listening who want to do feminist participatory or action research? What would you say to people who listen, and they hear your incredible body of work over many years. What would you say to people who want to embark on participatory action research?

[00:43:34] **Alice McIntyre:** Well, I'm going to put a plug in for Northeastern University. I was unaware of their Ed.D. program in action research. I was contacted, would I chair some dissertation committees on their new doctoral program which has been around for about three years. They have totally revamped their doctoral program, and it is completely focused on action research, so that students actually do an action research project as part of their dissertation, finish it, and actually sort of analyze it and then write about the entire project. It is so exciting. It is asynchronous so there are students from all over the world in it. I've taught two classes and I chair a few dissertations. The faculty is phenomenal. They're open and they're fluid and they are constantly learning and the work they put into putting this together. The readings build on each other. You get to really learn the sort of intricacies of action research. It's not PAR but it's action research. So most of the students are superintendents, principals, teachers, but there's other people too from the medical

field and technology, but it's mostly educators of some stripe and they want to make some change in their community and they learn every single thing about how to go along that process. I love being a part of that. What a rich place to, to experiment. So if you're a doctoral student or you want to be a doctoral student and you know that you just don't have the time or the energy, or you are working full-time in some kind of field, but you want to step foot into that way of thinking, which definitely has some PAR threads to it, check out Northeastern.

[00:45:41] **Alice McIntyre:** Other than that, what I would say is that you really need to suit up because from the get-go, you really need to know that the university is going to support what you want to do and I had that in spades, but not everybody does. So I would definitely make sure ahead of time that you have the people and the support that you need, because it just requires a different set of investment from professors as well. It's not a traditional type of project. You need to have somebody who can speak for you as a staff person or as an instructor, as a professor, because without that I think it's almost impossible. So I think that's number one, is needing to find somebody who can support that.

And two, PAR is more visible today than it was certainly when you started, and certainly even when I started, and I think sometimes it's like fitting a square peg into a round hole. There's something so attractive about PAR for some people, but that doesn't mean what people are doing is actually PAR. I would really try to get a better understanding of what PAR is by reading a lot of practitioners work over the years because you can still do valuable work that isn't necessarily PAR, maybe it's PR, maybe it's AR, but as I said, from my own experience, I've had, you know, quote unquote successful projects in the sense that they could keep going for years, but they were outside the university and I was already situated in a position.

So I think that's another thing. I would find somebody who, who can mentor you. And I would also really get a really good understanding of what PAR is. And then, you know, if, if those two things work out, I'd go for it. But there are a lot of constraints, and we already know 50% of people don't finish their dissertations anyway. So, you know, there's a tradeoff of what people can do in terms of their time and their money and, you know, life circumstances. So I hope that doesn't sound too much of a downer, because, I think it's fantastic. Wow. It has, it's fit me like a glove.

[00:47:18] **Patricia Maguire:** So, last question here I'm going to ask you, and that's, how would you say your feminist values express themselves in your PAR or your action research?

[00:48:32] **Alice McIntyre:** So, my take on feminism is much more expansive than it used to be when I was, you know, a teenager. All women, not just white women, all women, and not just white women with resources, all women. It's this joy of connection and this joy of knowing that there is life. And I think about that as a feminist, that it is so hard for so many women in the world. What do I bring? And that's the kind of feminist that, that I like to think I am, which is I want to bring a lot of energy and a lot of joy and it is my obligation to accompany however I can do that in my own little world.

I know you mentioned before, you know, we got on Jill Morawski's talk about the near environment and what am I doing in my near environment. And I just feel such a strong obligation to do that because I have been given so much, not financially, but in terms of the opportunities I've had, and that I have been able to step up and, and take them. And again, it wasn't because of money. It wasn't because my parents never, my father dropped out as a sophomore. My mother never went to high school. I was the first one that went to college in my family. I didn't even know how I ended up in college. I mean, so that, that's the kind of feminism I like, like down on the ground with people ***with***, I love that about PAR, with people most of whom know more about daily living than I do. Know most about what issues we should be focusing on. Know most about how to gain economic, um, equality, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And I have no bones about admitting that, so I'd like to think that that's the kind of feminist I am.

[00:50:35] **Patricia Maguire:** All right. Alice, thank you for sharing your inspirational work with us. I want to give a huge thank you to our listeners. Please help us grow our listenership by sending the link to this episode to your colleagues and networks. Give us a boost on your social media.

A transcript of today's podcast, citations, additional information about Alice McIntyre is going to be posted on our companion website https://www.parfemtrailblazers.net And if you've missed earlier podcasts, you'll also find those on our companion website, which is parfemtrailblazers.net. So that's it folks, for episode six of Participatory Action Research Trailblazers and Good Troublemakers. And as John Lewis urge, go make some good trouble of your own.

Alice McIntyre: Absolutely. Thank you so much, Pat. It was just delightful

Patricia Maguire: oh, this has been wonderful