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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

Ethnic Studies Pedagogies is an open access online journal committed to critical race, decolonial, and ethnic studies movements, bridging public pedagogies with PK-12 contexts. We invite submissions using critical frameworks and methodologies that theorize, investigate, and reflect upon the ecologies of power and resistance both inside and outside the PK-12 classroom.

All submissions are reviewed by editorial board members, scholars, together with teachers and community members. We invite submissions from scholar-activists, educators, organizers, and students in the form of scholarly research, archival histories, action research pedagogies, testimonios, photo essays, and art.

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ISSUE THEME

Ethnic Studies Pedagogies as Living Archives for Social Justice, Resistance, and Transformation

LEAD EDITOR

Ezekiel Joubert III

CONTENTS

Introduction to the Journal: Why a Journal on Ethnic Studies Pedagogies? Michael Dominguez, Brian Lozenski, Miguel Zavala, and Marie Nubia Feliciano	1
Editor's Introduction: Ethnic Studies Pedagogies as Living Archives	7
Ezekiel Joubert III	
Lessons From the 1 st Ethnic Studies Educators in O.C.	20
Jose Paolo Magcalas	
Intergenerational Pláticas as Ethnic Studies Freedom Dreaming in Kern County	48
Tim Monreal, Felisa Patiño-Longoria, and Marlene Herrera	
Cultural Intuition as a Guide: Pedagogical Resonance in Ethnic Studies Teaching and Learning	62
Cindy Mata, Sara Díaz-Montejano, Mariana E. Ramírez, and Alice Im	
POETRY: Let's Vibe by Marisol Ruiz	71
Tiahui: A Decolonial Framework for Pedagogy & Practice	73
Anita Fernández, Sean Arce, Jose Gonzalez, and Mictlani Gonzalez	
Oral Histories and Pláticas as Ancestral Conocimientos and Ethnic Studies Pedagogies	88
Lisa Mendoza Knecht and Sylvia Mendoza Aviña	
Animal Artifacts and Narratives of the Mesoamerican Clay-Figurine Project	110
Santiago Garcia and Priscilla Hernandez	
Plantita Knowledge: A Journey of Writing a Healing Text	126
Marisol Ruiz and Nancy Perez	
ART: Butterfly Release by Lani Cupchoy	138
Sensing Home and Archiving the Self: A Black Feminist Autoethnographic Mapping to/through Ethnic Studies Pedagogies	139
Chelsea Bouldin	

Feminista Reflections of a COVID Food Project: Disrupting Pedagogical Norms, Theorizing from Homespace, and Healing Collectively	152
Dolores Delgado Bernal, Cynthia Alonso, and Yessica Barojas	
Witnessing the Pedagogical Impact of Ethnic Studies Through an Intergenerational Collaborative Autoethnography	166
Meghan Green and Priscilla Green	
The Legacies of Memory: A Liberatory Tool	173
Aria Gilliam	
ART: Ofelia y Adolfo by Clara Nieblas	176
POETRY: Mexidorian by Joanna Flores	177
An Emotive Testimonio Approach to Critical Race Educational History: Building Reciprocal Relationships with and for Our Communities	178
Bryant Partida and Mariana E. Ramírez	
Writing Puerto Rican Public History: Ethnic Studies Curriculum in Connecticut	194
Elena Rosario	
PHOTOGRAPHY: The Work of Memory by Boone Nguyen	210
Weaponizing Diversity: The Survival of Ethnic Studies Pedagogies, Resistance, and Transformation amid University's Neoliberal Project of Diversity.....	212
Elaine Correa and Jorge Moraga	
"J'ey Alex, let's talk about unos proyectos": Reflections on Mestizo and Indigenous collaboration in Indigenous Latinx community filmmaking	219
Alexander Mejía	
Ethnic Studies Pedagogies as Living Archives in Black and Indigenous Americans' Dual Educational Politics	227
Nathaniel Stewart	
SONGS: Re-spiriting Songs and People from Cultural Memory to Now/Future Harmonic Consciousness	241
Gregory Esparza	

Why a Journal on Ethnic Studies Pedagogies?

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While ethnic studies may seem new to K-12 classrooms and policy conversations, as a field, ethnic studies is anything but new. With its roots in the theorizing of early anti-colonial intellectuals and community leaders, this distinct field we call ethnic studies grew from the community protests led by the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF)—a collective of Native, Latinx/Chicanx, Black, and Asian-American student and community organizers—at San Francisco State University (SFSU, then San Francisco State College) and UC Berkeley in the late 1960's. First on the list of demands these early activists pushed for was:

That a school of Ethnic Studies for the ethnic groups involved in the Third World be set up with the students in each particular ethnic organization having the authority and control of...the curriculum in a specific area of study.

Exploring the full nuance and history of the TWLF's multiple demands and struggles is beyond our scope here, but what is unquestionably the case is that when the dust settled, these early activists had forced the creation of a new, transdisciplinary academic field; one that would ensure marginalized voices, experiences, and perspectives were clearly and distinctly heard in the academy, and had clear homes on campus. At both SFSU and UC Berkeley, Colleges of Ethnic Studies were established, with the four departments—Black Studies, Chicana/o/x/Latinx Studies (then Mexican American Studies), Asian American Studies, and Native American Studies—in place and in position to recruit faculty, serve students, develop curriculum, and chart new paths forwards for communities of color.

In the 50-plus years since the TWLF's victories, ethnic studies colleges and departments began to spring up in universities across the country as students and community members carried the TWLF's demands forward. They argued for the importance of their place in educational settings, and the value of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian-American, and other marginalized communities' epistemologies and ontologies. This was not just a revolution of representation and inclusion, but of re-thinking and transforming in fundamental ways what it meant to examine, explore, understand, and create knowledge.

But while ethnic studies was able to establish a strong foothold at the university level, and the discipline has been clear, evolving, and productive in higher education since its inception, K-12 schools were slower to respond. Rather, communities, activists, and ethnic studies alumni would spend over 50 years negotiating space, pressing forward with strong ideas that would be twisted and watered down by multiple decades of neoliberal policy-making and the standardization of a Eurocentric curriculum. Thus, working from the margins and centering the perspectives of working-

class communities of color in the school curriculum, we would see the implementation of ethnic studies programs rise (prominent among these being the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson Unified), be attacked, and fall, and organizing efforts hunker in for the long haul, pushing on political leaders to center community ways of knowing in the K-12 classroom. While exciting, we know that California's passage of AB 101 in 2021, mandating ethnic studies as a graduation requirement for all students, nor the many district, city, and school policies that do the same nationwide, are not final successes, but small steps forward in a longer struggle.

As we look to the launch of this journal, it is valuable to consider this genealogy and history of where ethnic studies comes from. The themes we are exploring here in *Ethnic Studies Pedagogies* is not a new trend or fad, nor is it a re-badging and re-branding of the diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts that have been done over and over in schools. We are excited to see a field with 50 years of history and inter-disciplinary roots finally emerge as a topic of study and attention in K-12 contexts, and to create a grassroots journal as a space that furthers knowledge of, and exists in service to, ethnic studies in K-12 contexts.

Another Kind of Truth-Telling, Another Kind of Hxstory

The movement for ethnic studies has been iterative since its inception. Ethnic studies exists as both a critique of the colonial contexts in which it stands, and as a space to imagine, strategize, and enact new ways of being. This duality places complex demands on ethnic studies practitioners, theorists, and students. We are positioned to respond to the material realities of communities who have experienced economic, political, and intellectual dispossession. Ethnic studies spaces must help to provide historical context, analyses, and what philosopher Charles Mills (1994) calls, "revisionist ontologies," to understand our current realities. We might think of these revisionist ontologies as ways of knowing based on the subjectivities of those who have borne the brunt of colonialism. How have Indigenous communities conceptualized land and humans as one in the same? How have the enslaved understood education as a literal embodiment of freedom? How have displacement and dispossession shaped the ontologies and epistemologies of marginalized peoples in the United States? How have perceptions of ethnicity, language, and migration come together to racialize communities of color? These are the stakes of ethnic studies frameworks. They provide an alternate set of questions, presuppositions, and thus, *realities* through which to navigate our current moment.

In 1938, an article in the the *Negro History Bulletin* (Dagbovie, 2004) titled, "The Right to Know the Truth Denied", stated:

Education is always a problem. Many of the things which we study today are detrimental to us; but we have to accept such education because it is imposed upon us, and we cannot help ourselves. Things taught in schools in various parts of the world are not true, but authorities want the people to believe that such things are true. Those in power try thereby to use education as means to reach other ends. (p. 8)

Ethnic studies spaces inherently deal with this question regarding the nature of truth, and invite educators to reflect on what engaging with such questions mean in terms of praxis. For this reason, ethnic studies and spaces of critical educational exchange have long been deemed dangerous to

those who want to perpetuate the status quo of colonial education. *Ethnic Studies Pedagogies* emerges from this tradition; reflecting a perspective that beyond conceptual understandings of how truth is constructed, there are pedagogical practices that encourage students to grapple with the nature of truth, history, and reality. These pedagogies often integrate the arts, embodiment, direct action, and collective inquiry. Understanding the pedagogical practices that support ethnic studies inquiry is as important as the content that ethnic studies attempts to convey. And importantly, when these practices are shared, they spread.

From black educators teaching in segregated Jim Crow era schools across the U.S., to Mexican-American communities resisting English-only education, to tribal elders maintaining cultural traditions, languages, and narratives even as their communities were ravaged by the impacts of the boarding schools, the opportunity to share lessons, archive learning, and disseminate deeper understandings of the practice of sustaining community were critical to early anti-colonial educators. In our current moment of entrenched epistemic ignorance (Lees, Tropp Laman, & Calderón, 2021) (i.e., the denial of the right to know the truth), this new journal is as vital to ethnic studies practitioners today as those publications were during those eras of more overt and codified discrimination and segregation. With all this in mind, *Ethnic Studies Pedagogies* seeks to illuminate and disseminate pedagogies of truth-telling and world-building based on the knowledge systems that have existed outside of formal colonial education institutions.

The Future of Ethnic Studies

As ethnic studies expands into more classrooms, we are experiencing and witnessing an ethnic studies futurity in the present. This present moment has led to the creation of learning spaces in high schools where students of color see themselves for the first time in the curriculum; where students engage in YPAR (Youth Participatory Action Research) as they explore problems and issues in their communities with the tools of ethnic studies; where middle schoolers use art as a vehicle for identifying aspects of their own community cultural wealth; where high school youth create picture books on historical issues and use these to teach elementary children about these omitted histories; where students write schooling biographies and read them to each other in ways that allow them to name injustice; and where healing trauma begins as students learn about their rich ancestral legacies. These and other examples of practice can help us imagine the future of ethnic studies in and outside schools, and transform how we view schooling, where education takes place, and how learning happens, at a critical social moment.

As we look forward to 2023, our students require different skills than those classrooms have traditionally offered. The United States nation-state we have inherited is a colonial, capitalist construct, but also a multiracial, multicultural, multireligious, and multilingual society, full of creativity and innovation. Yet for decades, the education system has done little to center and value this emerging future. The present resurgence of white supremacy is a reminder both of this failure, and that we are still engaged in a struggle to determine who we *are* and what kind of collective society we want to form. Our students are facing an epistemic conundrum as the reality of a pluralistic future lives in real tension with nationalistic, Eurocentric forces trying to circumvent this creative, generative inevitability. An ethnic studies education for the future will need to center life experiences as sources of truth, critically examine ideas, assumptions, and discourse, and encourage learning experiences that help our students engage with their world from an informed and empowered position.

Within ethnic studies, we are able to grapple with the notions of race, identity, power, belonging, community, and nation. We can critically interrogate where and how we define a collective notion of identity that is inclusive and broad enough so that all are seen, but none are foreclosed upon. Ethnic studies equip us in the now with forms of study that contextualize insider and outsider group differences, our intertwining histories, and collective struggles. It provides a roadmap that, although not straightforward, accounts for pauses, side trips, crossroads, and the creation of new paths of self and collective discovery. Ethnic studies insists on intersectional thinking and an acknowledgement of our subjectivities. It is decolonial, it is antiracist, and it is a study of hope and possibility, not, as some would argue, victimization, identity-silos, and grievance. Knowing about oneself permits a perspective to receive others and their experiences with humility and care as we learn, grow, create, and innovate together. Ethnic studies looks like us, both collectively and individually.

The future of ethnic studies will bridge classroom and community learning. The future of ethnic studies will rethink recognized fields of knowledge and pedagogical processes. The future of ethnic studies will transform and disrupt disciplinary boundaries. The future of ethnic studies will be attuned to hope; to the relational, the spiritual, and prophetic possibilities. The future of ethnic studies will invite youth and families to be co-creators of knowledge, teachers to facilitate empowerment and healing, and scholarship to speak with humility and solidarity. The future of ethnic studies is now; etched in the prefigurative world-building and liberatory love that guides the varied, contextual, and creative projects it engenders. *Ethnic Studies Pedagogies* aims to honor, nurture, and further that future by archiving, sharing, and celebrating the creative and exciting research, praxis, and visions that are happening in classrooms as we write.

Humanizing The Publishing Experience by Honoring Our Epistemic Diversity

In practice, we are operating with a humanizing publishing and editorial experience. For many of us, if not all, publication and editorial reviews of our work have been scaring and damaging. Traditional reviews follow a predictable, linear process. Scholars work incessantly on their research, write about it, and then submit for publication (in mostly corporate run journals). Not diminishing the value of these publication outlets, because many of us have published pieces that are contributing to growing fields of knowledge in the study of race, power, and pedagogies, we often find that editors are distant and unknown. Reviews tend to be punitive, with feedback (if any) leading to a decision: "accept with revisions, revise and resubmit, and reject and submit elsewhere." We hear from other scholars of color the ways journals privilege ways of knowing over others, how they become a sort of guessing game, and at worst police what counts as knowledge.

Our approach, therefore, is to proceed with a critical publishing pedagogy (Buenavista, 2022) and Chicana feminist approaches that encourage collaborative writing and nurturing editing processes (Saldaña & Aléman, 2019). Our approach is holistic, encompassing strategies and relationships that support emerging and minoritized scholars, and those on the margins of scholarly writing and publishing including K-12 educators, artists, organizers and youth, so that their writing, perspectives, and community ways of knowing are supported and published. Two aspects of a critical publishing pedagogy are that feedback operates at the pedagogical level, and that editors build community with and alongside contributing authors.

Feedback as pedagogy proceeds by providing technical and explained feedback on writing. It proceeds with seeing pieces as developmental and guided by others. For instance, a lead editor on a specific issue may bring authors together to discuss their writing and share ideas. Other examples include establishing a mentorship relation to authors, where editors (and other authors) work closely with contributors at various stages of their writing. While this approach is time intensive and not without challenges, we believe prioritizing the relational aspects of writing will lead to purposeful and meaningful experiences that provide transformative opportunities for not just contributing authors, but also editors. We, therefore, seek to model the notion of working alongside authors, of nurturing their development (and ours), and to guide them in ways that model the values of ethnic studies.

Critical in understanding the field of ethnic studies is understanding that epistemic diversity—a rich appreciation for knowledge expressed, explored, and demonstrated in a variety of forms and formats—is at its core. Our educational institutions, from Pre-K up through graduate schools, are built upon Eurocentric, colonial models that have traditionally valued only one form of demonstrating knowledge. As professionals and academics, this is nowhere truer than in the ways scholarly and professional journals—now widely controlled and published by an “educational industrial complex” of academic corporations—insist on standard formulae for how knowledge must be presented, and whose standards it must meet to “count” as contributions to our understanding of the world. Ethnic studies, as a field, rejects such constraints, and so do we.

None of this is to say that ethnic studies, or this journal, is not interested in rigorous research, reflection, empirical inquiry, or knowledge creation. Rather, we understand that all of these things might all occur without it being translated into a very particular type of writing format, with the proper subheadings, structure, and codified norms. The idea that this type of formulaic, often-sterile writing is the only way to produce and share knowledge is absurd. Traditional, formal inquiry and research papers have their place in sharing community voices, informing praxis, and guiding future research, but so too do unrealized, creative formats that spark us to think in new, unforeseen ways. We are interested in seeing and uplifting both traditional research inquiry, but also unexpected and creative pieces that push the boundaries of what scholarship might be.

We look to innovators and creators like Gloria Anzaldúa, who never did get that PhD, but whose genre-bending work is widely celebrated today, or, thinking hypothetically, of a teacher eager to share the multimedia creations their students have put together through their own multimedia reflection, as archetypes of the epistemic diversity this journal is interested in. Ethnic studies has always been interested in centering, cultivating, and celebrating the creative ways of knowing and thinking—the decolonizing methodologies—that communities participate in. We look forward to publishing work that bends and challenges genres, and marries the creative with the scholarly with the grassroots, and, when necessary, working with contributors to determine how to share non-traditional formats that make meaningful contributions to the field and knowledge, and ultimately transform peoples’ lives and the social institutions they are a part of.

A Note on the Foundations of This Journal

The creation of *Ethnic Studies Pedagogies* preceded the first convening of the editorial collective, which took place in July of 2022. Prior to that gathering, several editorial board members had crossed paths in other spaces, such as at the American Educational Research Association, and

through community-activist spaces like the Free Minds Free People conferences and the Xicanx Institute on Teaching and Organizing (XITO). While many in our Editorial Collective come from scholar-activist spaces, we have sought to bridge relations with teachers and community educators/organizers, who have also joined the editorial board. The initial invitation to an emerging editorial board was framed as follows:

This journal is envisioned as a relatively autonomous space not owned by a university or corporate publisher but rather a space where scholars, educators, teachers, teacher educators, and organizers--who converge on anti-racist, decolonial, and rehumanizing praxes--come together to study, theorize, reflect upon, and contribute to an emerging archive of their work and local projects, and that links up to larger movements and scholarship.

Following this initial invitation, we had a set of meetings convening a national representation, from places like Pennsylvania, Minnesota, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, and the four major subfields of ethnic studies. Gaining momentum, an editorial collective was formed. The initial meetings focused on the vision for the journal and defining collaborative and humanizing editing processes that subvert the traditional, patriarchal and corporate model, experienced as punitive and imbued with knowledge policing, by emerging scholars of color. As we look forward, the journal, and our editorial board, will continue to challenge ourselves to stay true to our initial vision, while seeking to grow, develop, and cultivate the most humanizing, rigorous, decolonial, and productive space of pedagogical reflection and discussion on K-12 ethnic studies possible.

For more information about *Ethnic Studies Pedagogies*, please visit www.EthnicStudiesPedagogies.org.

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Editor's Introduction: Ethnic Studies Pedagogies as Living Archives

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The contemporary context is altering the ways we live and learn. The shift towards privatization, marketization and digitalization of education intensifies the utilitarian¹ and instrumentalist function of K-12 schools and universities in the U.S., and globally. This approach to education promotes the belief that our lives should be measured by what we do for a living and how much we earn rather than how we want to live; with and for each other. For Indigenous and people of color, increasing meritocracy, individualism, and standardization in order to prepare them to compete in the global economy cannot fully address historical educational inequalities and educational violence and dispossession experienced daily in our communities. Reifying their status as non-beings, these structures of racialized accumulation by education necessitate a re-alignment with and re-remembering of radical movements for educational change. The current ethnic studies movement in K-12 is rooted in that vision and struggle and is a vital step toward developing an educational system that cultivates a desire for dreaming, building, and living differently. To help children and youth live in a world where freedom, justice and equality is yet to come, ethnic studies educators will have to develop pedagogies that are responsive to the urgency and instability produced by endless wars, mass carcerality, neoliberal militarization, state imperialism, climate change, and global capitalism. With our educational lives simultaneously becoming intensely more mediated by our everyday engagement with corporate archival technology (i.e. Zoom and Meta) and affected by the growth of state sanctioned silencing of social and historical content, it is necessary that we turn to the archive of knowledge that is within us—our histories, communities, and bodies—in order to study the wisdoms that bring our pedagogies to life and the possibilities these wisdoms carry for moving towards a humanizing and liberatory praxis. This special issue considers our ethnic studies pedagogies as living archives to draw upon the resources within ourselves and our communities that will nourish and sustain our lives, no less our future educational lives.

Notes on Ethnic Studies and Living Archive

I returned home to the dirt roads of the South End during the summer to better understand the educational lives of Black rural people in Southeast Michigan. Caught up in the web of positivist methodologies demanded by the neoliberal university, I felt pressure to discover something original or novel in the local archives that would provide evidence on how the restructuring of the public schools ruptured Black life. I arrived at the area library with optimism. The librarians there, who

¹ My reference to the utilitarian function of U.S. education draws directly from the "Proposal for Establishing a Black Studies Program." (Black Studies proposal, Spring 1968, CES ARC 2015/2, Location 2:7 TWLF box 2 Folder 7. Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley. The Berkley Revolution: Digital Archive of East Bay 1960s and 1970s, Black Studies Proposal, Retrieved May 2, 2023. <https://revolution.berkeley.edu/assets/Black-studies-proposal.pdf>)

were more than generous, taught me how to use the microfilm reader and led me to several local newspapers that might reveal clues to the debates about the dissolution of the local school district. For weeks-on-end I sat alone in the enclosed air-conditioned room, only to find a couple of brief statements by local white leaders against the state's decision. While useful, I began to feel unfulfilled and disconnected. But maybe I was not looking hard enough or just alienated by the whole process.

After getting buried underneath the collection of absences and possible erasures of Black education, something urged me to turn my project toward more social forms of collective remembering that would give breath to various ontological silences. During an oral history interview with a Black township leader, I was encouraged to speak to an elder named Jewel. However, he had no way to contact her. I showed up to the senior center and asked church members that I knew from childhood. Most folks knew her, but no one had her phone number, or at least they would not give it to me without her permission. Serendipitously, I found her landline number and address. I rushed to call her but got no answer. Eager to learn from her experiences, I rode my father's bike a couple miles down the road to her home situated across from the old landfill, which sits idle due to Black community organizers who fought against environmental racism and demanded its closure. I walked up to her side porch because in the country most people do not use their front doors. I knocked nervously in anticipation. I began to walk away, when she opened the door and greeted me affectionately. It was as if we were both waiting for each other.

We talked that evening about the intersections of our educational experiences with youth and children, her migration from Detroit to the rural South End, and her years of community engaged activities. Through her oral history, Jewel opened a portal into the perspectives of Black women organizers who sought to ameliorate the isolation experienced by Black children and youth following the dissolution of the school district. She described the development of afterschool programming, her involvement as an organizer, and the call for young Black women and their families to take a more active role in the education of their children, as well as the differing political and institutional attitudes towards this work. Jewel and I connected around our common interest in and possibilities of preserving and restoring communal knowledge. She narrated how she and her mother collected and preserved documents about the township and particularly about Black people who lived there. Outlining their intergenerational social practice of uncovering and recovering Black community life, I became fascinated by the pedagogical implications of this practice. Reflecting on what I could learn from these methodologies, I gained a deeper understanding of the archival labor marginalized peoples develop to teach each other about life under a social system that inherently smothers knowledge about their lived experience and political perspectives, both in the official archive and through formal archival practice.

Our conversations also reminded me of the critical care in which my grandmother Josephine holds her recipes, crates of three ring photo albums, our sports trophies and newspaper clippings, and obituaries of family and community members. It all felt so familiar. Since the first unannounced visit, Jewel has gifted me a brown clasp envelope full of historical documents containing the rich history of Black educational life in the South End and we continue to connect every summer to dialogue about local history and regional politics, our shared interests in writing speculative fiction, and our commitment to educational liberation for youth and children in our community and beyond. This has made me feel at home and rooted, laying a foundation for understanding ways of

re-remembering with our ancestors, geographies, and resistance that has had a lasting imprint on my pedagogical imagination.

Our conversations sparked critical questions that feel relevant to the collective work in this special issue: What methods of documenting, recording and collecting arise when you are absent (but present and integral) from the official record and dominant cultural and historical memory? How have organizers and community involved people preserved memories and histories? What role has and should organic archival practice play in the liberation and education of people of color? What are the possibilities of a socially engaged archival practice? How can the sharing of histories and memories through storytelling, (auto)biography/ethnography, and personal reflection inform and enhance a praxis-oriented pedagogy? What collective and communal perspectives of social, political, economic and cultural life emerge when the archive is imagined as alive and with us, collective and intergenerational, engaged and embodied, rather than hidden, lost or dead? The multilayered themes in this special issue situate these questions and provide starting points for developing ethnic studies pedagogies with the ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies of Indigenous and people of color, as a move to root our educational labor in their everyday lives, struggles, resistance, and futures.

There is a symbiotic and even parasitic relationship between archival practice and the lives of the oppressed. Archival practice is generally imagined as the holding and collecting of knowledge, in the forms of images, artifacts, ephemera, audio/video recordings and other primary sources, of which can only take place in the obscure, dusty, and silent rooms of state and national institutions. Despite its appearance of objectivity and neutrality, the “science” of this practice is steeped in western definitions of knowing, being, doing and learning and notions of positivism, liberalism, and humanism. Scholars, writers and organizers committed to decolonization and anti-racism remind us how western archival practice mobilized mythical grammars of race, ethnicity and personhood to legitimate the violence and dispossession necessary for western economic and cultural expansion and dominance. However, when the maintenance of this practice was passed down from the colonies to the imperial racial state and corporate elite to define, manage and fund what they believed to be valuable knowledge, minoritized peoples took it upon themselves, using formal and informal methods, to recoup what slavery and colonization had stolen from them: a historical, political, social life.

Much of the archival labor that takes place in ethnic studies classrooms revolve around the edges of historical restoration. There is an effort to dig up every little-known piece of history—person, place, event, and text, juxtaposing significant and sometimes anonymous representations of Indigenous and people of color to the abundance of Euro-American male heroes, inventors, saviors, and sympathizers. This primarily serves to connect a more inclusive version of history to the realities and perspectives of children and youth for the purpose of developing healthy identity and sociopolitical consciousness. Interacting with relevant knowledge and becoming aware of omitted cultural pasts enables a *remaking* of the future, to the extent the collecting and preserving the buried genius of racialized and ethnic peoples center their self-determination and active participation in holding the U.S. accountable to its purported democratic principles and practice (Schomburg, 1925)².

² “The Negro Digs Up His Past” by Arthur Schomburg was introduced to me Professor Carl Grant, during a brief conversation I had with him on the presence of Black death in culturally responsive curriculum. I am forever grateful for connecting me with this fundamental essay on Black life and historical archive.

Ethnic studies come with the awareness that racism and colonialism is a persistent force that requires alternative methods for interpreting our relationship to history. Reading Schomburg amidst the calculated neoconservative backlash to recent social movements for racial justice, reinforces the need to prioritize the social and historical agency of oppressed people (Tintiangco-Cubales et al. 2022). The investment and adoption of a colorblind “post racial” anti-woke ideology silences “the full story of human collaboration and interdependence” because it exposes how narrow versions of history conceal the violent impulse of global white supremacy and the extractive nature of its epistemology (Schomburg, 1925). Here the past is justifiably feared because it gives life to the present. More than ever, it is necessary that our pedagogies bring to life the historical presences of diasporic peoples and their intellectual and direct activism against the enduring production of social and premature death. When the archive of movement building is a constant thread, reading the movement for Black lives and fights for Indigenous sovereignty help children and youth define and imagine alternative meanings of life and living that empower them to sustain solidarities for a decolonial and multiracial movement for a world without racist colonial nationalist rule.

Following Lisa Lowe (2015), “the archive invites inquiry into what is to be recovered and under what conditions” (p.85). The motion toward a practice of collective recovery occurs within the confines of present social, political, economic, and cultural, and spatial dynamics and interventions. The maintenance of global racial capitalism and settler colonialism often coalesce around a politics of recognition and representation in order to convince the masses that free markets can make freedom and liberty possible for all. Within this unequal and unforgiving system, claims that the Civil Rights movement ended racial oppression, or the international protests of Summer 2020 sparked by the murder of George Floyd brought about a racial reckoning are simplistic and crafty attempts to camouflage the ways the neoliberal racial state and corporate foundations profit and arrest the politics of grassroots organizing.

Under these vexed conditions, ethnic studies approaches to archival work benefit from a politics of refusal that forcefully rejects incorporation into the present social order (Omowale, 2018). Refusing to allow our lives—joys, pains, and political victories—to be used to advance the reordering of the social world generates contradictory links, between for example Walmart, Starbucks, and other corporate celebration of marginalized histories, communities and experience and the exploitation of prison labor; between the Fourth Industrial Revolution, its scores of digital and social advancements (autonomous technologies and artificial intelligence) and the excessive mining of raw materials such as copper, silicon, and plastic and the return of expropriation in Global South; and between calls for gender and ethnic educational equality in developing nations and the disregard for the Rights of the Child in the U.S. Embracing pedagogies that engage in participatory acts of recovery (e.g. youth participatory action research) provide children and youth a method to interrogate the violence, theft and inhumanity associated with the conservation of white supremacist patriarchal capitalism. If we understand that diasporic peoples are not absent nor marginal to the archive but integral to its development, the silences and invisibility cannot be dismissed (Omowale, 2018). This allows for the development of archival practices that aim to recover our humanity from the conditions of non-being, while acquiring methods for engaging in and negotiating the present.

An archival praxis that rewrites historical narratives and challenges contemporary conditions as a route toward living more fully and justly involves an intentional and embodied reclaiming of our social lives—the quotidian, everyday (inter)actions of survival and resistance that emerge from our homeplaces, street corners, barbershops and salons, churches, factory floors, labor camps, and school hallways. This work is brought to life through a critical engagement and relationship with stories, storying, and storytelling, “as a way to hold on to the rebellious methodological work of sharing ideas in an unkind world” (McKittrick, 2020, p.7); that talks back to images and evidence of permeant subjugation and impoverishment. Stories *prompt* ethnic studies to recuperate our lives (McKittrick, 2020). When we call upon the knowledge we carry with us there is reclamation of living, learning and storying differently. Legislative bodies that resurrect the science of reading and other literacy programs that emphasize basic skills and standards across common content areas are motivated by the potential to hide forms of reading, writing and speaking that unmask how our lives are shaped by daily interactions with intersectional, interlocking and (inter)national oppression. Of course, this is a neoliberal project aiming to revive at-risk and culture of poverty narratives, and though it reeks of profit motives that impoverish the purpose of education to the vocational needs of the free market, it is important that we story this as a move to singularize, regulate, and censure the archive, to give it one stable author, named Euro-America.

On the other hand, ethnic studies approaches to stories are intrinsically polyvocal. They are connected, passed on from one generation to the next. They are shared with those we live and learn with like a never-ending game of telephone that bridges our understanding to the current context, and to one another. Stories are adaptive and flexible. We bend them and play with them to imagine how things were and how they can be something else. They are not formulaic but formed out of cultural and historical knowledge and experience. The structures are built on disrupting prescription, like blues and jazz singers, hip hop performers, and graffiti artists, who use improvisation to enunciate what we sometimes cannot explain yet feel deeply. Stories help us deal with the complexities of our lives and open us up to re-remembering the nuances of homeplace. We can unpack what it means to desire “nice things” even when the “nice things” often reproduce social and ecological damages without shame, guilt, or banishment. In all that it does to assist us in the process of getting to know ourselves, realities, politics, and identities, stories are most powerful at helping us hold each other, fostering tenderness that exceeds accountability. Stories collectively empower, uplift spirits, heal wounds, and affirm being while simultaneously directing us to move toward possible collective futures. Stories must be permanent in our practice.

These budding understandings and interactions identify an engaged, embodied and experiential archival practice that leans into the possibilities of an archive that refuses to be dead, that views life and living of those who have struggled and resisted racial oppression and (neo) colonial state imperialism, as valuable sources of knowledge. Because ethnic studies requires not only thinking but action (Lozenski in Tintiangco-Cubales et al. 2022), the work ethnic studies educators do with the holding of history and sites of memory is never severed from real life, it is connected to our liberation, organizing, materialities, social practices, and futures (Imarisha, 2018).

When the archive is reduced to objects meant to be discovered rather than the traces that make up our human experience and cultural production, the silencing of social and historical knowledge is made possible and normalized. Recognizing this as the dominant approach of the power structure, there is a need for those who seek to transform our society and educational system to bring forth ways to hold history and ways of remembering that tap into our human capacity,

foregrounding how our histories are interconnected and memories are intertwined. With this as the ground on which we take up the archive as a living record, creative performance, and social transmission³ of who we are and how we want to live, this special issue invites thinking about our relationships to living archives.

Encountering Ethnic Studies Pedagogies as Living Archives

The contributors of this issue demonstrate various entry points to commune with ethnic studies pedagogies as living archives. They are K-12 teachers, teacher educators, educational researchers, independent scholars, organizers, poets, artists, public historians, and graduate students. Their empirical studies, conceptual essays, praxis reflections, deconstructed lesson plan, visual art, and poetry best represented the call to work alongside the archives of our communities, classrooms, and institutions for the purposes of extending the possibilities of ethnic studies praxis in K-12 settings. Included in this issue are critical engagements with the themes to demonstrate pedagogies as living archives that attend to the senses as well as the spirit and to carry out the journal's dedication to work beyond the constraints of mainstream publishing⁴ and research practice; in fact I would like to propose that all the works are recognized as studies because all the projects consist of systematic processes of and for inquiry. There were many ways to curate these articles as living archives and I have sorted them by differing themes before presenting them here. But the articles can also be read "out of order." They are grouped by the following themes: ethnic studies educators as living archives; living archives and ancestral and heritage wisdom; homeplace as a living archive; public institutions and living archives; and living archive as educational politics to extend our thinking on ethnic studies pedagogies and to address the intellectual and political implications of this work. In what follows, I present some brief reflections on individual works to situate contributions. Each section takes a praxis orientation, of which the reader will find examples of theory, practice and reflection. Each section ends with artwork, poetry, and song, as interlude, a pause, a transition, to give space for contemplation and dialogue.

The exploration of ethnic studies pedagogies as living archives begins with the efforts of K-12 classroom educators. Since this journal seeks to provide space for us to imagine and work towards the possibilities of ethnic studies with children and youth, it felt fitting to start with the lives of ethnic studies educators, to contextualize their experience, wit, struggle, and resistance and what we can learn from them about what it takes to bring ethnic studies pedagogy to life.

In "Lessons From the 1st Ethnic Studies Educators in O.C.," Jose Paolo Magcalas foregrounds the wisdoms of seven secondary educators who through their commitments to anti-racism, decolonial pedagogies, and community engaged learning created the first ethnic studies courses at their

³ This approach to the living archive draws from: Sabiescu, A. G. (2020). Living archives and the social transmission of memory. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 63(4), 497-510.

⁴ The journal takes a stance similar to what is articulated in this quote: "Independent journals give open access to academic knowledge to anyone interested, and charge neither the readers nor the authors. Some practice openness in the review process, too, aiming to make it more transparent, collegial, or evaluated by voices beyond academia. The latter is part of a larger aspiration shared by all the collectives that have contributed to this forum – to create spaces for different voices and ways of knowing, making unheard voices more visible." Delat, C., Network, E. P., Earth, U., & Chertkovskaya, E. (2021). Alternatives to mainstream publishing within and beyond academia. *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization*, 21(4), 117-142.

school sites. Through a culturally responsive methodology, Magcalas draws from his relationship with these teachers, focusing on their lessons, projects and activities to respond to the question of what ethnic studies educators *actually* do in their classrooms. We learn that ethnic studies can be brought to life by classroom engagements that center the development of sociocultural knowledge of self and community through arts and action. Magcalas provides an example for school districts and educators who seek to institutionalize ethnic studies where it is assumed to be not welcomed.

Similarly, in “Intergenerational Pláticas as Ethnic Studies Freedom Dreaming in Kern County,” Tim Monreal, Felisa Patiño-Longoria, and Marlene Herrera ask us to consider the implications of ethnic studies in spaces where the legacies of white supremacy are maintained by the community and the state. Their writing emphasizes the possibilities of tracing our ethnic studies desires and practices through collective reflection. The use of intergenerational *pláticas* presented in their work show how situating our positionalities can be generative and essential for building solidarity in white and rural spaces and between higher education and K-12 schools. The critical conversations in this article prompt us to think about how we might intentionally develop intergenerational relationships to advance the vision of ethnic studies pedagogies.

Former and current K-12 teachers and women of color scholars, Cindy Cecilia Mata, Sara Jasmin Díaz-Montejano, Mariana E. Ramírez, and Alice Im offer us an important frame for how ethnic studies teachers can draw upon their lived experiences and embodied knowledge to confront the technologies that restrict the growth of community centered approaches to education, in “Cultural Intuition as a Guide: Pedagogical Resonance in Ethnic Studies Teaching and Learning.” Their insightful approach to employing cultural intuition encourages educators to trust their commitment to justice as a way to talk back to pedagogical approaches that encourage teachers to prioritize apolitical and standardized reflections on teaching and learning. This use of cultural intuition can be a powerful tool for unsettling the positivism entrenched in educational spaces. As you transition to the next set of articles read “Let’s Vibe” by Marisol Ruiz to attend to the energies you are holding after reading with ethnic studies educators above.

There is no ethnic studies without the educational dreaming of our ancestors. The next group of articles work from the premise that ethnic studies spaces can be transformed by cultivating ancestral (heritage and communal) knowledge forcefully stripped away through colonization, but preserved, adapted, and inherited by the descendants of the colonized, enslaved, and racially and ethnically oppressed. Our journey on the ancestral plains begins with the work of Anita E. Fernández, M. Sean Arce, José A. Gonzalez and Mictlani Gonzalez: Xicanx Institute for Teaching and Organizing (XITO) and their article “TIAHUI: A Decolonial Framework for Pedagogy & Practice.” Arising out of the well-documented political struggle for ethnic studies in Tucson, AZ and drawing from their experiences with educational and community institutions, their framework, TIAHUI, is a model for how we might consult with the ancestors as both an action to decolonize educational systems and to rehumanize communities that live and learn in/with/for them. The application of Indigenous wisdom works to establish a relationship with this knowledge that can be used to foster critical views of and organizing against the dehumanizing structures that are supported by schools and other state institutions. This visionary work can compel students and teachers to not only better understand their own history but to take it upon themselves to make a new one.

Lisa Mendoza Knecht and Sylvia Mendoza Aviña apply their ancestral wisdoms to demonstrate their pedagogical commitment to ethnic studies. In “Oral Histories and Pláticas as Ancestral Conocimientos and Ethnic Studies Pedagogies,” sisters, Knecht and Mendoza Aviña present a compelling reflection on how oral histories and ancestral knowledge can be used to rupture the culture of maleness and whiteness that permeates educational spaces. Using the four elements (*tierra, aire, agua, fuego*) present on their ancestral altars as a frame for their pedagogical offering poetically connects us to the relevance of the ancestral knowledge for ethnic studies spaces. They outline how an engagement with the ancestors opens a space for critical inquiry, vulnerability, compassion, healing, connection to communities, femtorship, and solidarity. This work evokes a practice of caring for one another that is modeled by our care for the memories of our ancestors.

Another example of how ethnic studies pedagogies can draw on the knowledge and practices of our ancestors is articulated in Santiago Andrés García and Priscilla Yvette Hernández’s “Animal Artifacts and Narratives of the Mesoamerican Clay-Figurine Project.” Their work proposes that ancestral animal knowledge can be an important tool for understanding one’s past and for reshaping the future. This article shows us how community college students mold animal objects with their hands to help promote a healthy relationship with history and to provide a way to narrate the social agency of displaced peoples. Together these objects act as a living museum of struggle and collective restoration that sustains one’s connection to Indigenous ways of interpreting our world.

This section is completed with Marisol Ruiz and Nancy Pérez’s “Plantita Knowledge: A Journey of Writing a Healing Text.” As actual lesson plans used with youth, Ruiz and Pérez introduce a practice that draws upon our ancestral wisdoms about the earth and their healing properties to rebuke the damaging educational praxis that our schools reproduce through the exclusion of multilingualism and non-western knowledge. Having students study plant knowledge for its medicinal value and purpose and its relationship to the history of their communities can help students learn ways to nourish and repair their collective spirit. This approach also indirectly encourages students to engage in critical questions about environmental preservation, industrial pharmaceuticals, and language revitalization. Following the conjuring of our ancestral wisdoms, sit with Lani Cupchoy’s “Butter Fly Release” to meditate with the unfettered moves of your ancestors.

While the previous section envisions how we find place in our global homes, the next set of articles conceptualize our pedagogies as living archives by analyzing the experience of *homeplace* (hooks, 1990). This section reminds us that our pedagogies must be place-based and that we should develop our pedagogies to address situated struggles occurring in the quotidian spaces of interaction and power. These articles consult with women of color feminisms, which demands that we take the structures of social life seriously. It begins with “Sensing Home and Archiving the Self: A Black Feminist Autoethnographic Mapping to/through Ethnic Studies Pedagogies” by Chelsea Bouldin. Her intriguing work brings to ethnic studies pedagogies a Black feminist autoethnography as intervention for mapping the ways educational spaces, in particular predominantly white institutions, impact Black women’s educational experiences and identity development. Drawing upon the self as an archive, she extends the notion of self-making as a process that unfolds spatially, through embodied interactions and reflexivity. Storying the encounter with her first Black woman professor illustrates the importance of professors of color and their wisdoms. Though schools reproduce intersectional violence, ethnic studies spaces have the potential to aid in the

development of social identity and awareness by tapping into the presence of teachers and teacher educators of color and their constructions of home in their classrooms.

Building on this framing, we move toward homeplace in “Feminista Reflections of a COVID Food Project: Disrupting Pedagogical Norms, Theorizing from Homespace, and Healing Collectively” by Dolores Delgado Bernal, Cynthia Alonso and Yessica Avila Barojas. This article expresses how what nourishes our bodies and the histories embedded in the dialogical processes of making cultural dishes are essential sources of knowledge. During these often mundane processes, there are lessons about and alternative ways to explain life and living at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship that surface in our social lives, at kitchen tables with our mothers, sisters and aunties. This article offers us an example for how ethnic studies educators might embed familial knowledge into our classroom settings. However, they remind us not to romanticize this knowledge, and instead to sit with discomfort and messiness of it all to bring about a more nuanced understanding of notions of for example, motherhood and queerness, all the while finding healing for assuaging the social damage commonly experienced on educational terrain.

In the next article we learn that the homeplace can be a site of witnessing ethnic studies pedagogies. The geographies of education here take us to the South, at HBCUs to learn about the meaning of ethnic studies there. Mother and daughter, Meghan and Priscilla Green in “Witnessing the Pedagogical Impact of Ethnic Studies Through an Intergenerational Collaborative Autoethnography,” reflect on their life histories as students in the Deep South and their relationships to ethnic studies and K-12 teaching. Drawing from endarkened feminist epistemologies, their intergenerational testimonies observe how ethnic studies pedagogies are passed on from generation to the next through dialogue in homeplace. This work demands that we consider the conversations between children and parents about their experience with and struggles for relevant education; here arising in the forms of African American literature or practices of fugitivity. Additionally, this article unearths some central inquiries related to the histories of ethnic studies in minority serving institutions, where there seems to be much needed study about the possibilities and tensions that come to light in spaces that are presumably relevant to their students. This rings true for not only universities, but racial and ethnic themed K-12 schools.

This section ends with Aria Gilliam’s reflective essay titled “The Legacies of Memory: A Liberatory Tool.” I invited Aria, my former student to contribute her thinking about the living archives, after a dialogue we had about our desires to connect with our ancestors through practices of rememory (Morrison, 2010). Her essay is a meditation on the development of practices of remembering rooted in homeplace. Building upon her grandmother’s practices of tucking history in the basement, we learn that taking this labor seriously allows for growth and what she calls *(inner)standing*. Engaging with the living ancestors, for her, is a spiritual question. It involves prayer because as she articulates, remembering is heavy. As a liberatory tool, the homeplace is viewed as a site of re-remembering that disrupts the colonial gaze and structures of violence when we attend to our familial knowledge archived in our homes. Reflect. Can you remember how your grandparents’ belongings were organized and what those belongings invoke you to say about their lives and the world we live in? Can you remember the everyday places that help you understand who you are and where you want to go? The break here calls for reflection with our cover art titled Adolfo, by Clara Niebla, accompanied by her painting titled Ofelia and the poem by Johanna Flores titled “Mexidorian.”

As we move toward the institutionalization, or maybe a better word is mobilization, of ethnic studies in K-12 spaces, librarians, archivists, and historians and public, private, and community institutions that hold knowledge about Indigenous and people of color will play a key role in the building of a relevant education. It is advantageous for ethnic studies spaces to employ decolonizing and antiracist methodologies for examining cultural memory to contend with the current struggle over critical social cultural knowledge. This section centers relational and collaborative approaches to working with public archives and how these practices can produce community and social awareness.

Anyone who has encountered ethnic studies archives, in particular the disturbing images of violence against student protestors or powerful video footage of collective student led organizing from the 60s and 70s, understands how it evokes emotive responses. Bryant Partida and Mariana E. Ramírez outline the implications for valuing the emotional dimensions of archival work in “An Emotive Testimonio Approach to Critical Race Educational History: Building Reciprocal Relationships with and for Our Communities.” Drawing from critical race educational history, using emotive testimonio unearths how the hidden curriculum obscures the historical lives of people of color and how feelings towards recovered archives can transform the participation and commitment of young people and educators. Future ethnic studies classrooms should be a community that allows students to explore what angers, saddens, confuses and inspires them, to collectively ameliorate the silences in the historical record and the work this silence does to help produce the daily attacks against their realities in educational space.

The article by Elena Marie Rosario, “Writing Puerto Rican Public History: Ethnic Studies Curriculum in Connecticut” contributes to growing knowledge about community struggle for state required ethnic studies curriculum. As case study, Rosario contextualizes community activist labor for the inclusion of ethnic studies alongside the current work she has done in community to develop lesson plans that address the state policy that requires the inclusion of Black and Latino Studies in public school curriculum. Using local archives, Rosario presents a case for a deeper understanding of Latinos and Puerto Ricans in Connecticut. Developing an engaged pedagogical relationship to archives, outlined in this article, makes it clear that ethnic studies spaces are enhanced when public historians, community organizers, and educators work collectively on curriculum. Though the next transition does not attend to the formal archive, the video stills presented by Boone Nguyen titled “The Work of Memory” galvanizes us to take a closer look at how we might repurpose our archival labor to help us capture and zoom in on the communal labor needed to preserve our ancestral knowledges as we move into the struggles of the future.

It is assumed, rightfully so, that ethnic studies has been and should be a political project. This section reflects emerging political and ethical questions that ethnic studies educators encounter as they navigate contemporary political struggles and desires for coalition and solidarity. The praxis article by Elaine Correa and Jorge E. Moraga, titled “Weaponizing Diversity: The Survival of Ethnic Studies Pedagogies, Resistance, and Transformation amid University’s Neoliberal Project of Diversity” was chosen to launch this section because it establishes a useful critique for interrogating how universities, a space where ethnic studies educators will be trained, invest in diversity discourse as an apolitical move to incorporate the lived experiences of marginalized communities. Using Peña’s (2022) logic of “The One,” Correa and Moraga propose that ethnic studies engage in intentional, purposeful and meaningful activities to reject the individualist and

competitive behaviors that seep into educational practices in neoliberal learning environments. This article directs us to think about our classroom embodiments, which are the primary models, a living archive for how to (be)come an ethnic studies educator.

In “J’ey Alex, let’s talk about unos proyectos”: Reflections on Mestizo and Indigenous Collaboration in Indigenous Latinx Community Filmmaking,” artist-researcher Alexander Feliciano Mejía draws on living archives to story the nuances of community engaged projects. In this narrative essay, Mejía conducted a film project with Indigenous communities from Central America. Lessons on the ethics of sharing visual representations of Indigenous life materialize. The ethnographic gaze regularly haunts ethnic studies spaces. Although this may be true, ethnic studies educators recognize and attend to the impacts of visually representing the wisdoms and oppression of marginalized groups. Mejía’s dialogical approach to resolving this complexity provides insights for teacher educators and K-12 teachers who engage in projects that engage community struggle and social life.

The final article of this special issue is an empirical study that explores the pedagogies and politics of an educator activist collective. In “Ethnic Studies Pedagogies as Living Archives in Black and Indigenous Americans’ Dual Educational Politics,” what Nathan Stewart identifies as *diradicalism*, reframes educational labor as pedagogical and political acts. By envisioning the melding of these dynamics as a collective engagement, Stewart builds the case that relationality and joy are necessary for sustaining our lives and educational movement building. As state policy (liberal and conservative) arrest, circumvent, and appropriate contemporary social movements, the motivation for educational change in ethnic studies spaces must be rooted in mutual desires and communal activity. As the final interlude, Gregory Esparza’s original song lyrics in “Re-spiriting Songs and People from Cultural Memory to Now/Future Harmonic Consciousness” will hopefully move you to commemorate, assemble, and dance.

Moving With our Living Archives

We have reached the point where I must provide some concluding thoughts but as I write, I prefer to imagine this work as a beginning rather than an end. As special issue editor, I am grateful for the space given here to dream and collectively build a platform for exploring the possibilities and participating in the movement for ethnic studies in K-12 settings. This space would not have been possible without the envisioning of Miguel Zavala, the support of the editorial collective and advisory board, the thoughtful copy editing by Cynthia Wise, and many others who took time to dialogue with me about the themes and who were willing to read drafts of this introduction. Back in March 2023, the authors and I convened to reflect on the themes, to build a community of shared interest and commitment, and to honor the efforts to think differently about the publishing process. As we garnered joy and contemplation, I expressed my desire for leading a humanizing and collaborative process. I hope I have lived up to these aspirations. That said, I especially would like to voice my gratitude to the authors and contributors to this issue, whose contributions I admire and endorse. I acknowledge that, despite our collective efforts to articulate ethnic studies pedagogies as living archives, there is so much more to explore and learn regarding this promising framework, including contributions of youth and elders and global perspectives. As a mode for understanding our current context, confronting the social conditions and rooting the visions of the ethnic studies movement in higher education and the growth of ethnic studies in K-12, we hope this special issue advances the ways ethnic studies pedagogies engage with living archives, extending curricular activities that offer children and youth tools for understanding how our social

world is made, sustained, and destroyed, finding ways to study interlocking systems oppression while centering communal and heritage knowledge, and developing local and international coalitions and solidarity. There are considerable implications concerning the enhancement of the pedagogical imagination and practice of ethnic studies educators in K-12 spaces (Titantiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Sleeter and Zavala, 2020) that can be addressed by drawing from archival practice from ethnic studies scholars, community practitioners, and artist of color who are leading efforts to redress the injuries of dominant archival practices by introducing alternative work with the holding of history and sites of memory, including but not limited to queerness and archives of desire (Ramirez, 2005), decolonization and indigenous archives (O'Neal, 2015), the carceral state and fugitive archival practices (Sojoyner, 2021). Our longing for humanizing and liberatory praxis must attend to the cultivation of a *flourishing life* (Grant, 2012), that is a rejection of an instrumentalist education and a commitment to a social justice vision that vows to eliminate the role making mechanisms and technologies that reinforce boundaries of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and citizenship. Constant with the themes here, moving with our living archives compels a communing and conjuring, as a primary practice of re-remembering our stories and re-aligning our bodies, minds, and spirits with the wisdoms that bring our pedagogies to life.

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Lessons From the 1st Ethnic Studies Educators in O.C.

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Abstract

This article provides a critical analysis of 7-12th grade Ethnic Studies curriculum and pedagogy used by teachers throughout Orange County, California. Findings from this study will provide school districts throughout California direction and guidance on what to include, and how to implement Ethnic Studies in their schools. This study was guided by culturally responsive methodologies—an approach to research that validates and brings in the very participants that are being studied. Participants for this study included seven secondary Ethnic Studies teachers who developed and taught the first Ethnic Studies course for their middle or high school. Findings from this study revealed a multitude of lessons, activities, projects, and teaching methods that any educator could engage in. It's my hope that these examples be a living archive for future educators to use, adapt, and add to the growing field of Ethnic Studies. With the new law requiring all high school students to take Ethnic Studies by 2029 (AB101), it's important to share best practices and continue research on Ethnic Studies classes, pedagogy, curriculum development, and implementation in school districts throughout California.

Lessons From the 1st Ethnic Studies Educators in O.C.

This article is about seven brave high school educators in Orange County (O.C.) who embarked on an arduous yet empowering journey to develop and teach a transformative course called Ethnic Studies. This incredible task of developing a curriculum, in a county that former president Reagan touted as being the place "...where the good Republicans go to die" (Arellano, 2008), in and of itself deserves praise. These educators knew that it wasn't going to be easy. They chose to develop and teach Ethnic Studies knowing that their classes would have huge push-back by conservative politicians, administrators, counselors, colleagues, and community members. But they were willing to put in the extra hours. They were willing to unlearn and challenge oppressive histories and teaching practices that had become normalized in U.S. schooling.

On the contrary, they also knew that the fight was worth the battle as Ethnic Studies has been proven to increase high school attendance and graduation rates (Dreilinger, 2021). In addition, they knew that this course saved lives, is healing, transformative, and responsive to the needs of their students and communities. Amidst its many tourist attractions, O.C. is "... a place where people have resisted segregation, struggled for public spaces, created vibrant youth cultures, and launched long-lasting movements for environmental justice and against police brutality." (Lewinnek et al., 2022). Oftentimes, these hystories are not taught in traditional secondary education, nor is the inclusion of various racial and ethnic groups who have contributed and even lead major hystorical events throughout the U.S. (Sleeter, 2011).

According to the California Department of Education (CDE), racial and ethnic minorities represent most of the student K-12 population in Orange County (O.C.), California. They reported that 448,729 students were enrolled in an O.C. public school in the 2021-2022 academic year. Of that population, almost half (49.75%) were Hispanic or Latino; 104,151 were White; 88,304 Asian and Pacific Islander; 6,038 African American; and 820 American Indian or Alaska Native (CDE, 2022). As the ethnic makeup of students in U.S. public schools continue to change, the opportunity gap between students of color and Whites also persists (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). This is due, in part, to the fact that since the beginning of public schooling, institutionalized systems of domination (e.g., sexism, racism, imperialism) have used education to reinforce dominator values (hooks, 2003). In addition, schools are more segregated today than they were prior to the Brown vs. Board of Education decision (Duncan-Andrade, 2017).

Schools today need an engaging antiracist curriculum, critical approaches to teach against sexism and homophobia, and a decolonizing pedagogical approach that validates indigenous epistemologies (McLaren, 2015). Ethnic Studies—a curriculum that reflects the experiences of students of color—can provide schools with such a vision. It has been consistently demonstrated that Ethnic Studies has a positive impact on student academic engagement, achievement, and empowerment (Sleeter, 2011). It's defined as the study of specific or comparative groups viewed as minorities in American society (Hu-DeHart, 1993). It has also been defined as the study of race and power with roots in and connections to social movements and the quest for social justice (Ramirez, 2014).

On October 8, 2021, Governor Newsom signed Assembly Bill 101. This bill will require all high school students in California to take one semester of Ethnic Studies by the 2029-30 school year. Two districts in O.C. had already decided on requiring Ethnic Studies for their student body population. Santa Ana Unified, the county's second largest district made history on June 9, 2020, by becoming the first school district in the county to pass an Ethnic Studies graduation requirement (Elattar, 2020). The Anaheim Union High School District followed suit on May 6, 2021. Both districts will require students to complete a course in Ethnic Studies by the 2025-26 academic year. Even Los Alamitos Unified, one of the most conservative school districts in O.C. approved coursework for a high school Ethnic Studies elective (Andruss, 2021).

Although these victories have set a precedent in public education, the new fight in the movement is not whether the courses will be taught in O.C. or throughout California's 1,297 high schools. It lies within the curriculum itself. In 2016, California passed Assembly Bill 2016, ordering the creation of a model Ethnic Studies curriculum. It ordered the Instructional Quality Commission to define what Ethnic Studies is and required college faculty from Ethnic Studies departments and high school Ethnic Studies teachers to write the draft. The initial group consisted of 20 experts in Ethnic Studies pedagogy and curriculum (Fensterwald, 2021). The expert developers, represented every region of California and met four times, laboring to develop a curriculum that captured the "... often forgotten voices of Californians of color." (Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, n.d.). Upon creation of the first draft, right-wing opposition groups denounced the curriculum. They called it harsh towards Whites and capitalism, indoctrination, and ideologically left-wing. In 2019, the State Board of Education sent the draft back for revisions, disbanded the group, and shut them out of the process. The model curriculum that the State Board of Education approved in March 2021 bared so little relation to the original curriculum that every member of the group demanded

that their name be removed (Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, n.d.) because the integrity of the model curriculum had been compromised by the media and political pressures. Some of the 300-plus alterations to the curriculum included: 1) The deletion of Angela Davis and Mumia Abu-Jamal and 2) Changes to the 1960's Black Power, anti-war, Chicano, Women's, and American Indian movements (Fensterwald, 2021). Over 50 Ethnic Studies activists and educators, from all over California, committed to "... contesting white supremacist notions of academic knowledge", and convened in April 2020 to develop and implement a Liberated Model Curriculum that can be used by teachers throughout California and the U.S. (Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum n.d.).

As school districts throughout California prepare their teachers to teach Ethnic Studies, districts are faced with the task of using either the California adopted Ethnic Studies model curriculum, the Liberated Ethnic Studies model curriculum, a combination of the two, or could opt to not include any of the aforementioned guides in developing their districts Ethnic Studies requirement. Like Assembly Bill 2016, I sought advice from actual educators who've taught Ethnic Studies in secondary schools as their voices and experiences are pertinent and indispensable to this statewide mandate. Specifically, I chose to include the first Ethnic Studies educators who developed and taught Ethnic Studies in their schools. These districts include Santa Ana Unified (SAUSD), Anaheim Union (AUHSD), and Los Alamitos Unified (LAUSD). Educators from these districts will be the focal participants and co-editors of this study. The purpose of this study is to provide a critical analysis of 7-12th grade Ethnic Studies curriculum and pedagogy used by teachers throughout O.C. Since there is "... very little research on what Ethnic Studies teachers actually do in classrooms" (Sleeter et al., 2020, p. 95), findings from this study could provide school districts throughout California direction and guidance on what to include, and how to implement their Ethnic Studies graduation requirement.

Culturally Responsive Methodologies

This study is guided by culturally responsive methodologies (CRM). I define this as an approach to research that validates and brings in the very participants that are being studied. I chose this approach because it allows the researcher to work and be in community with their focal participants throughout the entire project. I also chose to use CRM as the framework because of the intimate and trusting relationships that I've built with most of the participants. Since I was also one of the first educators in O.C. to develop and teach Ethnic Studies in my high school (Roman, 2015), I turned to some of these educators for allyship, collaboration, and friendship. Being the only Ethnic Studies educator in your district can be a lonely and oftentimes dangerous place to navigate, especially if you are a person of color. At the time, we were our own professional learning community. However, we did seek advice and guidance from educators who taught outside of O.C. Some of these educators included: Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales, Sean Arce, Ron Espiritu, Jose Gonzalez, Roxana Dueñas, and Kitaro Webb. They are some of the true pioneers of Ethnic Studies. We also sought advice and guidance from organizations such as the *The People's Education Movement*, *Association of Raza Educators*, and *The Xicanx Institute for Teaching and Organizing*.

I also chose to use CRM to conduct my study because traditional research methods have been proven to be oppressive and colonial (Smith, 2012). Historically, White Eurocentric, Western frameworks have dominated research methods in academia. These traditional methods rarely include the very participants that are studied. The inclusion of participant rights to evaluate research, critique, contribute, initiate and most importantly their rights to be or not to be studied,

continue to be issues researchers debate about (Berryman et al., 2013). The power to research and produce knowledge has been sustained by outside intellectuals with ideological goals. According to Smith (2012), traditional Western researchers believe that their research projects serve the greater good for mankind and that such research, could emancipate oppressed communities. This assumption is a reflection of colonial ideology and to assume such goals would be culturally inappropriate. Researchers today are countering this methodological tradition by creating new culturally appropriate methods in scholarship that deny “. . . research conventions where the researcher unilaterally dominates and exerts power over the participants” (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 4). Such ill-researched methods are then applied to the greater society in the form of policy or law. Even worse is the fact that such discoveries become socialized as truth in both the developed world and the developing world.

CRM positions its framework in Critical Pedagogy, Decolonizing Methodologies, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Civic Education, and Kaupapa Māori Theory. One element key in understanding CRM is acknowledging insider knowledge. Traditional research methods look to bias as negative influences in research. Researchers who use CRM look to bias as a gift. In other words, bias allows “researchers [to] bring their own ‘unique subjectivities’ to any project” (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 18). Grounded in my personal experiences as a community member who taught Ethnic Studies in my local high school and who collaborated and built relationships with other Ethnic Studies teachers in O.C., this study utilizes archival data, local newspapers, conference presentations, social media, district websites, district curricula, and interviews.

Purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to select participants based on two criteria: 1) They developed the first Ethnic Studies course for their school site, and/or 2) They taught the first Ethnic Studies course for their school site. Participants for this study included seven secondary Ethnic Studies teachers who taught in O.C. I chose to focus on these participants because they were not mandated to teach this course, nor were they mandated to follow a particular model curriculum. For this study, the educators wanted to use their real names instead of pseudonyms. They felt that by participating in this study, they would be able to contribute to their commitments of sharing an authentic Ethnic Studies experience that future educators could use in their classrooms.

O.C. Ethnic Studies Educators as a Living Archive

The first educator is Benjamin Vazquez. I heard about Benjamin through a digital newspaper called the *Voice of O.C.* I read an article about the development of the first Ethnic Studies class in SAUSD and I had to meet him. When we first met, we instantly became friends. We exchanged curriculum, collaborated on many events, and even traveled to Cuba and Colombia together. Of the seven participants, Benjamin is one of my closest friends. He has been a history teacher in SAUSD for 19 years and in 2015, he developed and taught the first Ethnic Studies course at Valley High. He resides in Santa Ana and was a board member of El Centro Cultural de Mexico, and organized Santa Ana’s annual Día de Muertos Festival and Children’s March. He was recently elected to the Santa Ana City Council in 2022.

Benjamin introduced me to Mike Rodriguez, our second educator in this study. Since our first meeting in 2016, we also became friends and allies. We’ve collaborated on curriculum and have even fought alongside one another during many local protests. We also serve as committee members for the Democratic Party of O.C. Mike is in his 18th year of teaching history in SAUSD

and considers himself a community activist in the unceded Aycachemen and Tongva territories. In 2015, Mike developed and taught the first Ethnic Studies middle school course at Spurgeon Intermediate. Mike, alongside his colleague Linn Lee, have also co-constructed *The People's History of O.C.* This summer course has been co-facilitated with various university professors, teachers, and students over the last five years.

Linn Lee is the third educator in this study. I first met Linn in 2017, at an Ethnic Studies conference. She has been a history teacher in SAUSD for 20 years. Linn is now the district's Curriculum Specialist for Social Science and Ethnic Studies. Prior to that role, Linn taught Ethnic Studies at Century High in 2015-2017 and Santa Ana High in 2017-2019. She has been committed to strengthening and creating an authentic Ethnic Studies curriculum at the state level and served on the original California Department of Education Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Committee in 2018. Carah Reed is another educator in this study.

I also met Carah in 2017 during an Ethnic Studies conference. During her undergraduate career, Carah studied abroad in Kenya researching the Kenyan Revolution. After graduation, Carah became a community organizer and activist in Atlanta, Philadelphia, and San Diego. Carah has been an educator in SAUSD for 23 years and in 2016, she developed and taught the first Ethnic Studies course at Santa Ana High. Carah also advises Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), and is host to MEChA de UCI's Escuelita program. She is a non-driver and resident of Santa Ana.

The fifth educator is Joey Liu. I first met Joey in 2016 during *Anaheim's Best Dance Crew*, a hip-hop annual dance competition that I organized with Anaheim Achieves. That was the first year I taught Ethnic Studies, and at the time, I never knew that there was a course similar to mine in our district. However, her course centered on English and Oral Expressions. Since then, we became really close. She began her teaching career at Western High in Anaheim where she developed the first Ethnic Studies English class in 2015. Joey is also an educational researcher. Her focus is on teaching and learning as communion—an authentic, collective, spiritual, and humanizing return to rituals of belonging and community. Her research focuses on community-grown schools, with an emphasis on place-based and decolonizing ways of learning and being. She acknowledges her scholarship is immensely indebted to the Indigenous and Black Teachers who have granted her knowledge and experience. Joey resides in Anaheim but now teaches in Corona-Norco Unified.

Ramiro Carbajal is another teacher that taught Ethnic Studies in my former school district. He reached out to me in 2016, as he was interested in bringing Ethnic Studies to Anaheim High. He grew up in different cities throughout O.C. and now resides in Santa Ana. He has been teaching history at Anaheim High for 17 years now. In the 2016-2017 school year, Ramiro brought Ethnic Studies to Anaheim High. During his undergraduate years, Ramiro loved Chicano Studies. He even dedicated an entire unit of study on Mexican-American history in his U.S. history classes. Ramiro no longer teaches Ethnic Studies, however we did attend professional development trainings and collaborated on curriculum together.

The last educator in this study is Cyntia Aviña. Cyntia is one of my closest friends. We first met in 2013 during an Ethnic Studies conference at California State University, Long Beach. Cyntia has been teaching high school Spanish in Los Alamitos, one of O.C.'s most affluent and conservative cities, for over 12 years. In 2021, Cyntia brought Ethnic Studies to Los Alamitos High. She began her journey when she started reconnecting with her indigenous roots through Danza Mexika as

well as other traditional ways of healing. She attended the Xicano Institute for Teaching and Organizing (XITO) and this opened her eyes and heart to the transformative and healing power of a critical Ethnic Studies program. Cyntia is a member of the Association of Raza Educators where she continues to learn from Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum scholars and practitioners. She recently earned an Ethnic Studies Post-Baccalaureate Certificate from San Francisco State University.

Data Collection

Data collection took place from March 2020 to October 2022 and included interviews, classroom observations, and collection of documents and artifacts pertaining to the participating teachers. Initial interviews were semi-structured and open-ended to garner information and stories about each participants' experiences teaching Ethnic Studies. During our semi-structured interviews, three questions were asked: 1) *Can you tell me about the development of your Ethnic Studies course?*, 2) *What was your favorite lesson or assignment and why?*, and 3) *What was your favorite project and why?* Interviews were then professionally transcribed and checked by each participant for validity. Upon final edits and follow-up meetings, transcriptions were then coded. After all the sources of data were analyzed, I invited the focal participants to collectively theme my findings using Zoom. The themes that arose from our meeting included the following: 1) *Exploring Identity*, 2) *Empowering Poetry*, 3) *Ethnic Studies Murals and Street Art*, 4) *Systems of Oppression*, 5) *Action Research*, and 6) *Engaging in Dialogue Circles*. Dissemination of the findings were also validated prior to the final submission of this manuscript.

First Lessons from Our Teaching and Struggle

The first lesson favored among the educators centered on exploring identity. Cyntia had her students engage in a powerful activity called *Identity Corners*. Benjamin had his students draw self-portraits, while Joey and Ramiro had their students engage in a project where they researched their ethnic background. Although our educators content areas were in Spanish, Social Studies, and English, they still incorporated the visual and performing arts within their curriculum. Joey and Carah used spoken word poetry. Benjamin used a street art method called wheatpaste while Mike collaborated with Linn to do a summer art project called *The People's Hxstory of O.C.* Teaching about systems of oppression was another favorite among the educators. Ramiro had his students research institutional oppression, while Cyntia taught lessons around interpersonal and internalized oppression. To culminate the school year, the participants engaged their students in a variety of ways. Carah and Ramiro engaged their students in a project called *Youth-led Participatory Action Research* while Linn and Cyntia had their students create and perform *Soapbox Speeches*. All of the educators in this study engaged in some form of dialogue circle with their students.

Each of these activities, lessons, and projects provide educators a variety of examples on how to engage with their students in Ethnic Studies. As we delve deeper into each lesson and description, we encourage our readers to see the endless possibilities Ethnic Studies can provide, and how they can apply and adapt these examples into their future classrooms. Be prepared to learn and unlearn what you've been taught in traditional history and credential courses. We encourage our readers to also write and share how they've applied and adapted these lessons, so that we may continue to share best practices and build on this growing field of study.

Exploring Identity

The most common lesson favored by all the educators centered around exploring identity with their students. Sleeter and Zavala (2020) assert the importance of curriculum centered on students' sense of self, particularly their ability to claim their ethnic identity. They also point to "... research in social psychology that having a strong sense of ethnic identity and high racial awareness is linked with young people's mental health and achievement." (p. 46). Benjamin uses the visual arts as a tool to teach about identity. His lessons start at the beginning of the school year and was used to get to know his students and as an icebreaker for the entire class. It's common for teachers to ask their students questions at the beginning of the school year, but for Benjamin, he goes beyond this by engaging his students in an entire unit focused on identity. According to Benjamin:

I do a whole unit on getting to know your students. I give them a little comic and they write about themselves. Like a bunch of things about them, who they are and then they reflect on who they want to be? Then they draw pictures and they talk about where they are from. Tell me about your parents. Who your mentors are. It's about getting to know them with different arts. I give them self-drawing clay and they'll make a little object that reflects their family and that's going to be an offering to the class. That we put in the altar. We go in a circle, and they say what this is and what it means to my family. You offer it to the class as an offering. The kids really enjoy sharing and making their own little objects. That's me getting to know them and them reflecting upon themselves.

The significance of students learning about themselves first, was something important for Benjamin. This is probably why he chose to dedicate an entire unit on this topic. He uses the comic as a method for students to brainstorm ideas and as an informal assessment to see what students know about themselves and their families. Benjamin also sought to learn about their aspirations and dreams. He also sought to learn about who their possible mentors were. All this information is vital for teachers to learn, especially during the first weeks of school.

After Benjamin had his students brainstorm ideas onto a comic strip, he then had them create an art piece using self-drawing clay. Traditionally, self-drawing clay is a ceramics method where students learn how to draw a self-portrait using proportion. Their drawings are then transferred onto a clay slab. For Benjamin, he allows his students to also include drawings that reflect their families or any of the objects they chose to write about in the comic strip. Students then paint their slabs and then it's fired in a kiln. Once students were finished with their final products, he then had his students get into a circle and share what they included in their ceramics piece. As, each student shared, they then put their objects into the class altar as an offering to the class. Altars are typically used during Día de los Muertos, a national holiday in Mexico that is observed in many Chicana communities throughout the U.S. This sacred space is something that the entire class owns as they bring themselves and their histories into the classroom. This first interaction with each other is a beautiful ritual in itself, as it marks the first collective dialogue and community building activity that the class will continue to engage in.

When exploring identity, Joey starts the academic year with a project called *Our Origin Story*. During our interview, Joey describes the organic process and difficult journey she took with her students as they engaged in learning and writing about themselves, their histories, and their communities through oral expressions. According to Joey:

One of the first projects that we really dug into was *Our Origin Story* project. For a lot of our students, it was their first time to examine and speak their story. From a lens that was more authentic than the history that was given to them in textbooks. What I didn't anticipate the first time I taught that was how painful it was going to be for a lot of my kids. I probably had three white students and the other students were students of color. So, when you ask Black students to talk about their origin story, and they don't know. Right? Like where I'm from other than slavery. Or you know other students of other cultures may know their culture on one hand, but realize there's so much more to their culture that they take for granted or isn't represented around them.

That was something that we had to navigate through together. One thing that I learned too was that as we learned to tell our stories. It was always a multi-leveled experience of telling your stories. First, you are giving yourself permission to tell the story to yourself. There are so many stories you hide from yourself that you don't even know how to put pen to paper. We don't even listen or honor ourselves. So, the first level is just like can you sit with yourself enough and be your own audience and put truth on paper. Then own it and polish it through an art form. Through the vehicle of spoken word into something that, though it may carry pain and disenfranchisement. That you have reclaimed it and beautified it. Found your power in it so that you can present it to a large audience who might hear it and receive healing from it.

After students tackled through the difficult process of examining their story and the challenges that prevent them from fully realizing who they were, they were then directed to create an authentic spoken word poem that would be presented to a public audience. This first experience was not easy. In fact, Joey realized that her students had to first gain the confidence to write their truth, which was very difficult for them. Once students were able to accomplish this, they were then directed to transform their writing into an art piece that would be impactful and healing to the audience. Spoken word is a genre of poetry that is meant to be performed on stage. This art form began in the 1990's and was motivated by the development of slam poetry and hip-hop. Educators have used these discourses as sites of learning in English language arts, performance arts, civic engagement, and youth development (Weinstein et al., 2012). This art form has attempted to initiate the dialogical process outlined by Freire as necessary in overturning oppression by critically engaging with the world and questioning dominant systems of power (Fiore, 2013). In our interview, Joey continued to discuss the pedagogical process of teaching spoken word to her students. She then begins to discuss some of the topics that her students tackled and the first show that they performed in:

My units were different. But that process right there. Of finding your authentic voice and as a community working through together in many ways heal and then empower each other and ourselves to stand in our truths. To use our voices as instruments for change. That happened no matter what. So, I can think of a couple other times when that was really impactful. One was our first show. We called it the *Underground Show* because we wanted to keep it low key.

And so, it was uncensored. My kids were able to use it. They didn't have to filter out curse words or whatever and a lot of them that first show was the rawest stories. And we were

really writing to heal at that point. We touched on topics from abuse to racism, sexism, poverty, addiction. You name it. It was raw. I mean the reaction from the audience and I was terrified because there were parents that ended up coming. There were teachers who ended up coming. And I was like, awe man I'm gonna lose my job.

Content was different throughout the school year, but the process stayed the same. Students had to be honest with their writings and then work together and encourage one another. Students had to edit each other's work in terms of authenticity and style. This process alone is a great example of cooperative learning, co-constructing knowledge, and community building. Another writing requirement was that their final poems had to elicit or make some type of positive change in the community. This could be in the form of raising awareness to the audience and/or stating a call to action on an issue or problem in the community. According to the transcript, students were successful in accomplishing this each time they performed.

Joey then talks about the first event that she organized with her students. Collectively, they created a title for the show, tickets to the event, and of course the poems that would be performed to the audience. They called it the *Underground Show* indicating that they didn't want it to be another mainstream event that a high school would promote. Nor did they want the typical attendees to come. Although they had never put on a show before, it was highly successful. It was not only successful in terms of attendance, but mostly in terms of impact. Joey didn't want her students to hold back. She wanted them to be as authentic as possible. Perhaps this is why she allowed her students to use profanity. It's not easy to share about experiences related to abuse, racism, sexism, poverty, and addiction. Sometimes we need to curse, in order to heal. Joey didn't care about losing her job. Most important to her was her students and their ability to express their true selves, the systemic problems they faced, and the healing that would come out of that first performance. Even prior to the start of the show, Joey forewarned the audience:

I remember going up on stage and saying. Your probably gonna hear things said on this stage that you've never heard on the walls of our school before. But let's tonight all go somewhere where we can reimagine what school is. And where we get to be a space for healing. Let's be sure we don't give nothing but love to these kids. I taught my kids all these things about sending love and sending good energy. And the audience. You could feel it. When the kid's jitters transformed to you know. I have power, I have meaning, my story matters.

At the end of the performance, they walked out. They had parents in tears. There was a healing moment where one student who had spoken about a certain abuse that had happened to her as a child. She was terrified to reunite with her parents but still found the power to tell her story. Her whole family was in tears weeping. And I was nervous too ya know? And the mom comes up to me and the dad. And they take my hand and say thank you so much. This is gonna be the start of healing for her and for our family. Just so many reactions to that story. People coming up and being like, hearing you tell your story through that poem I realize that I can find the strength for myself.

This transcript reveals that Joey sensed that the audience could have taken her students poems in the wrong direction. The show was not a typical high school event so this made sense. Her response also revealed a motherly level of protection that she had towards her students. Her

students worked so hard with their poems and the show. She knew that deep inside, the audience would receive her students' poems well, even though it was unconventional. But the precautionary reminder to give the students love was needed, since some parents and traditional educators could overreact or fail to realize the purpose of the event altogether. Her words were beautiful. She invited attendees to go beyond the four walls of school and into a place of love and healing. Joey set the tone for the remainder of the night.

She continues to share about how authentic the show was. Her students didn't hold back. They shared their traumas, and it was a healing moment for everyone, especially for the students and their families. The students became empowered that night. They were no longer scared. One student in particular stood out to Joey because she had shared to the audience a story of abuse that she had experienced as a young child. She had never shared this with her family before. Joey's fear went away when the parents came up to her and thanked her for giving their daughter the strength to share such a traumatic truth. Perhaps spoken word can be a vehicle for change when our youth have no other outlet to express themselves. The audience transformed as well. They too became empowered to tackle their truths. Joey continued to share about additional shows that students performed in and the long-term effect it had on them. According to Joey:

My kids realized their power as agents of change that night. They still talk to me now, like five years later. Ya know? I get messages out of the blue sometimes. Like man whatever I learned in our class that year I'm now using it in college and my job. After that first event, they wanted to perform more. We just kept making up shows. We did three at the school and then we ended up doing one in the community. They competed in two poetry slams. They performed at Fullerton College. They even performed at Da Poetry Lounge. You know, the mecca of poetry.

Not only were Joey's students empowered that night, but they reached a level of what Freire (1970) calls conscientization. In other words, her students developed a critical understanding of their social reality through reflection and action. This critical understanding would continue with them throughout their college and career. After that first event, students were so empowered that they wanted to continue to take action, by hosting more shows and even competing at the national level. They even presented at one of the world's most popular spoken word venues called Da Poetry Lounge (DPL). DPL is a L.A.-based community space that provides a platform to celebrate poetry while using it as the foundation for creativity, innovation, and expression. DPL hosts weekly events every Tuesday and has become the country's largest open mic event (Da Poetry Lounge, n.d.).

When teaching about identity, it's important for educators to teach their students the differences between heritage, ethnicity, and race. Heritage is the full range of our inherited traditions, objects, monuments, and culture. Ethnicity describes the culture of people in a given region, including their language, religion, heritage, and customs. Race is a social construct. It's a human-invented system of classification that divides people into groups on the basis of physical characteristics and the process of ascribing meaning to those groups (Bhopal, 2004). During our interview, Ramiro shared his second favorite activity that he engaged his class with:

It was called *My Ethnicity Project*. They had to go do research on the difference between your heritage, your ethnicity, your race. What is the difference between a Latino, a Chicano, a Hispanic. So, they had to go and do research on the ideas themselves, and then they had

to do a personal history of how those words or ideas fit in their life. I called it *My Identity Project* or *My Ethnicity Project*. Something like that.

To teach these oftentimes misunderstood terms, Ramiro had his students engage in research to compare and contrast the differences. To ensure that the students understood each word, he then had his students apply these terms to their lives. For educators with large populations of students from South and Central America, it's equally important for them to teach their students about the differences between the terms Hispanic, Latino, and Chicano. Hispanic refers to people who speak Spanish or are descended from Spanish-speaking populations. In the 1970's, the U.S. government decided to adopt the word to have a universal term that could serve to include all Spanish-speaking groups in the U.S. Latina/o refers to people who are from or descended from people from Latin America. The term excludes those who were born in or descended from Spain. Chicana/o is a chosen identity of some Mexican Americans in the U.S. The term became widely used during the Chicana/o Movement of the 1960's (Contreras, 2017). According to Ramiro, AHS is 97 percent Latino and it was very important for him to ensure that the students knew the difference between each term. He had them research each term and had them apply them to their lives as well. I also asked Ramiro if he had students research about the "x" in Chicanx or Latinx. According to Ramiro:

Unfortunately, I no longer teach Ethnic Studies. Another teacher took the class over but if I had, I was planning on teaching the "x" in those words. It's what the kids use now so yea that's really important too.

The "x" replaces the male and female endings "o" and "a" that are part of Spanish grammar conventions. This term came in the early 2010's from American-born Latinxs who wanted to be inclusive and gender neutral (Salinas, 2020). This transcript reveals that although Ramiro no longer teaches Ethnic Studies, he is aware of the ever-changing terminologies used to ensure that all groups are included and is willing to adapt and change. This is vital for Ethnic Studies educators as the field in terms of pedagogy and content continues to grow.

Cyntia's lesson around identity was developed by University of California, Irvine's Cross-Cultural Center. The center provides a series of programs and activities centered around identity such as: 1) *Identity Corners*, 2) *Community Cultural Wealth*, and 3) *Social Identities*. When I asked Cyntia what one of her favorite lessons were, she picked the *Identity Corners* Activity. In this lesson, students gain an understanding of the various social identities (e.g. *Gender, Ethnicity, Class, Religion, Ability Status, Citizenship Status, Age, and Sexual Orientation*) in which students associate themselves with and the importance of each one (UCI-Cross Cultural Center, n.d.). According to Cyntia:

That activity was really revealing. For some students to think about. Who had never really thought about class. There was a lot of shame that they carried for different reasons. And just those reflection questions that really had them think about the way that they see themselves.

And comparisons they make to their school community because there's a lot of affluent families in the community. And not all students are. But their friends might be right? And so just the sense of like shame and not wanting their friends to come to their house because they don't live in a really wealthy community or their house isn't that nice. So, like hiding

from their Ethnic identity a little bit. Trying to assimilate to whiteness and yea those activities I think really stuck out the most.

In this transcript, Cyntia reveals the outcomes of her *Identity Corners* activity. A mental strain was created in the classroom between the students who had a grasp on the multiple identities that shape them, and the students who had never thought about these concepts before. The activity released a level of unease and fragility towards some of the students, especially when discussing class. Many of Cyntia's students come from an affluent background and some don't. Some of her students hold pressures of assimilating to Whiteness and some hide from their realities because they are ashamed of their backgrounds and their lower socio-economic status. What was most revealing was the feelings of pain and humiliation caused by the student's new consciousness of wrongdoing or foolish behaviors. High school can be a difficult place to navigate socially, especially when students' multiple identities haven't been explored. When they are explored through activities like these, and through critical and honest reflection, students can start to see themselves and embrace their lived realities. For her White students, they "... came to reconceptualize their identity and knowledge in a way that took into consideration the lives, knowledges, and perspectives of others." (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020, p. 65). Some students realized the unintended harm that their actions brought towards others. In the end, a sense of community was built among the students regardless of their backgrounds.

Empowering Poetry

Like Joey, Carah also did Spoken Word with her students and even added a visual art element to accompany her students' poetry. It's part of a project that she calls *Liberation Through Creativity*. During our interview, Carah said:

I decided to do a project called *Liberation Through Creativity*. We are going to connect to our own personal trauma. And I brought in speakers from all shapes and form. I brought in kinship, I brought in spoken word folks. We did healing circles. But really what happened is that I asked them to write down the worst thing that's possibly happened to them. It was anonymous and I read it out to the class.

And then like what do we do with that pain? This has happened to us. And what do we do with what happened to us? How do we manage it? And then we went on a journey to create these pieces of spoken word, poetry, and art that spoke to this liberation. Then we put it on the wall outside my classroom. So, for the summit I was going to put it in a Zine and I still will. But I don't have a copy machine right now. I was going to have a student panel talk about it.

It's evident from this transcript that Carah likes to take risks. That's why she experimented with something in the first semester of her class. Perhaps she didn't want to wait until the end of the year or mid-semester, for her students to start the healing process. She wanted her students to start to work through their traumas early on. Even the title of her project reveals a freedom that she wanted her students to attain. But again, they needed guidance not just from her but from a variety of community members and through healing circles. Perhaps she brought in social service workers who assist kids in getting back with their families because they could provide some of the tools they use to help their students deal with traumas. Perhaps she brought in spoken word artists

because they fight their demons with words of inspiration and hope that resonate with this generation. They too could offer ideas and examples for the students in developing their poems.

Carah's use of dialogue circles allowed her students to heal. She brilliantly facilitated a dialogue where her students were able to share a multitude of traumas that they experienced without naming names. From this exchange, they were able to collectively provide examples to one another on how to deal and heal with these traumas. The beauty of dialogue circles, especially when doing classroom check-ins, provides students the opportunity to collectively help each other by providing suggestions on how they deal with the identified problems. Next, Carah has her students create their own spoken word poems and also requires them to create illustrations. She also mentioned that she was going to have her students create Zines from this project. A Zine is a small circulation publication of original or appropriated texts and images. They derive from underground publications that focused on social and political activism in the 1960's (University of Texas Libraries, n.d.). Carah then talks about her students presenting their poems. She said:

Then I had the students share their art and their spoken word poetry. Out of my two classes. Every single person in my class was bought in. Ethnic Studies is about our own stories, our own liberation, our own collective. And the walls came down in ways. I mean so much crying. So much. And I have 9th through 12th graders. I mean there was so much healing. It was a huge gamble. Believe me. Because it wasn't in the f%#\$!+@ pacing guide. Ya know?

And I'm not sure if I will do it again but I was able to get the results of what I needed which was full buy in. I did tell them that this is the hardest s%\$&+ your gonna do here. I'm gonna push you to be transparent. But as a result, like we could do anything. All this progressive stuff is going to be easy. And I incorporated all the Ethnic Studies pieces because it was like folks from our community, it was all full intersectionality. It was like we are this, this is us and the kids got hella political. This is the thing. Is that from kids own personal pain it became political. The whole thing is personal and political right? We didn't start personal and political. But at the end it became really powerful.

It's evident in this transcript that Carah's intended goal to build community and begin the journey of healing her students' wounds was successful. The activity was powerful and emotional for everyone. It also applied to all her students, who ranged between the ages of 13 to 18. This example resembles what an organic process means when it comes to developing Ethnic Studies curriculum. First, understanding the needs and issues your students face. Second, building community through dialogue and starting to heal collectively. Carah then shares her dissatisfaction with traditional curriculum as it does not humanize the process of learning. She also defines what Ethnic Studies pedagogies ought to be—that being our stories, our liberation, our collective.

I'm not sure what Carah meant when she said that she may or may not do this activity again in the future. It was done so well. Perhaps she meant that she would try a different variation of the project. In Ethnic Studies, the educator must continually reflect on their pedagogies and adjust to their students varying needs each year. Carah then reveals that the goal to heal and liberate or emancipate her students' minds is something that she will be focusing on throughout the school year. She warns her students that it won't be easy and that it will be the most difficult thing for them to do. Carah tells her students that the content in Ethnic Studies is easy, because it's a hxstory of us. Carah then reveals that the class becomes very civic minded as well. They start to realize that

the problems and issues that affect them, their families, and their communities are directly linked to the policies that local, state, and national leaders make.

Ethnic Studies Murals and Street Art

When I asked Benjamin to share one of his favorite projects, he shared a wheatpaste mural project that his students engaged in. Like graffiti street art, wheatpasting is a direct-action technique that is a simple and visual means for communicating messages to a large audience. Activists and various subculture groups often use this adhesive to post artwork and propaganda. According to Benjamin:

I do murals from a timeline in history using wheatpaste method. Now wheatpaste is a street art. And I haven't heard of anybody else doing a wheat paste mural. You can get into it and learn. So, the first one I did in class. I said just do an image that says we are beautiful in Santa Ana. So, they made like six images and we painted a wall. And there's eight images of people. There's a day laborer from the fields on it. We put *Educate Your Mind* on it. We had Frida Kahlo, an Aztec warrior, we did an indigenous woman with a baby. We had a girl that was in my class who was half Chinese and Vietnamese. She did a picture of a Vietnamese woman with her back towards us. And we put that in the wall as well.

It's supposed represent everybody in our classroom. Anytime we do art, it's to represent the community. Even though this is Mexican American studies, this is more Santanero studies so make sure everyone is always depicted. As much as we influence each other of who we are. Because homegirl is saying we are now her and and she is now us. That's In Lak 'Ech. We're also Vietnamese Chinese. Cuz she's here talking to us, influencing our thoughts and making them better. As much as we influence her. Right?

Benjamin shares a project that to his knowledge, he created all by himself. He did a timeline mural with his students using wheatpaste. The only directions he gave to his students was to paint something that represented the beauty of them in their city. His students painted a day laborer working in the fields, an image of Frida Kahlo, an Aztec warrior, an indigenous woman with a baby, and a picture of a Vietnamese woman turned to her back. This indicates that the students had prior knowledge of their hxstories prior to creating this mural. Perhaps this was a culminating or end of the semester project that Benjamin's students engaged in. The diversity in the mural represented the class. Benjamin reveals in this transcript that he included everyone regardless of the fact that Valley High is 96.9% Hispanic or Latino (SARC, 2021) and the class emphasized Mexican-American hxstory. Everyone was included and learned from each other. That's what Benjamin meant when he echoed the popular Ethnic Studies poem, *In Lak'Ech* by Luis Valdez. You are my other me. He then continues with our interview by sharing another mural that he had painted with his students:

We also did this kind of wheatpaste mural about racism in the United States from the African American perspective. So, I took the stories from the New Jim Crow. And they had that timeline written out. We have a traveling mural and then we have one in our walls on our schools. And this year we were doing a timeline of the racist Anti-Mexican history of O.C./Santana.

This transcript reveals that Benjamin continued to do this project with his students at least two additional times. One focusing on the hxstory of racism, U.S. hxstory from the perspective of

African-Americans, and on the prison industrial complex. The second piece that he worked on with his students was a timeline on the racist history of O.C. and Santa Ana on Mexican-Americans. Unfortunately, his students were unable to finish this due to the pandemic. He plans on finishing this mural at a later time. What this transcript also reveals is that Benjamin uses these murals to spread awareness about these issues in their high school and throughout O.C. He's even shared their murals in the annual Ethnic Studies Conference at Chapman University.

Mike also engages in an art project with his students. He does an Ethnic Studies summer enrichment program with his colleagues Linn and with the Heritage Museum of O.C. director Kevin Cabrera. This program tours students throughout the streets of O.C. to study various historical murals. During our interview, Mike shared that one of his favorite things to do in his Ethnic Studies class was to take his students on this tour. Mike and Linn called the program *The People's History of O.C.* According to Mike:

It started actually with Mr. Vazquez and me. Like five to six years ago. We started doing classes in the summer. The first years it was about the history of Santa Ana. Then the last couple years I actually started working with Linn and the Heritage Museum of O.C. The director was Kevin Cabrera. We worked in partnership with the museum. Kevin was really good because he actually worked at the de Graaf Oral History Project at Cal State Fullerton and he's worked with that archive. And he's worked at U.C. Irvine doing the same thing. So he had a lot of the local history and he had studied a lot of oral history. And so he brought us in and it was great.

We took the students on tours. We studied the history. There was a couple of middle school students but many high school students. Then like every kind of community. Or kind of ethnic community that we visited and researched; we also ate some food. The students really loved that part. And it was just a great way to introduce different cultures.

Mike shares about the evolution of the Ethnic Studies summer program and discusses the importance of collaborating with local researchers and museums. They can provide students and educators with a wealth of resources and knowledge, especially when it comes to local histories. Perhaps funding was provided by the museum. The transcript did reveal that it was Kevin who invited the students and teachers to join the program. Community assets provide valuable opportunities for schools and districts to collaborate and partner with. The tours stopped at various parts of O.C., with each having their own distinct histories and culture. The students loved to learn and visit various ethnic communities, especially when they got to try the local food. By altering Zinn's *People's History* title to this program assumes that it was designed to teach stories that were written or painted by oppressed and marginalized groups in O.C.

In addition to this program, Mike also does an exhibit with his Ethnic Studies class focused on Chicanx and Latinx Civil Rights. According to Mike:

So, my students organized a Civil Rights exhibit. Like a Chicanx, Latinx exhibit. That's what we called it. The students organized an art gallery for the community. They worked on an art piece in groups of three and they also did some writing around it. They did artist statements for their pieces. They could research any person, organization, or event. Like a

history that pushed for Civil Rights for Raza. For the Chicanx/Latinx community. They did a lot of different ones. They researched the East L.A. walkouts, the formation of the U.F.W.

Some did the history of immigrant rights in O.C. We also had some students at the exhibit do Spoken Word. The exhibits were more like walk throughs and was in one room at Spurgeon and the main event was put on in the quad. There's a little side room with glass walls and that's where they put all the art. We also had a panel of speakers. There was a panel for students to listen and ask questions. We had community activists and organizers. One of the professors from Chapman was there. Lilia Monzó. It was really good and the students were there presenting their work.

A huge component of Ethnic Studies is taking informed action to make positive change in your community. Perhaps Mike wanted to raise awareness about the oppressive hxstories that are often not told in traditional textbooks—especially Chicanx and Latinx Civil Rights hxstories. Traditional hxstory classes tend to focus on African-American Civil Rights and knowing that the population in Santa Ana is predominantly Chicanx or Latinx, Mike had to share what he did with his students to the community. Mike's students worked in groups of three and were tasked with organizing the entire exhibit. This took a lot of collaborative effort given the size and scope of the event. It's evident that Mike was pleased with the variety of activities (e.g., Spoken Word, Panel Presentations, Art) that were shared to the community. He was also pleased that his students got the opportunity to learn from amazing leaders, organizers, and professors like Lilia Monzó. He was also proud of the various artworks and writings that his students created and presented.

Systems of Oppression

Two out of the seven educators shared how they liked to teach about various systems of oppression with their students. Ramiro talked about institutional oppression, and how he had his students research the school-to-prison pipeline. Cyntia shared about her experiences teaching interpersonal and internalized oppression with her students. Specifically—lessons on race as a social construct. Race is an idea that's been created and accepted by people in a society. This construct defines race as a categorization of humans based on shared physical or social qualities. According to Cyntia:

We talked about the social construction of race. Which is really eye opening for students and for my own understanding. So, talking about the four I's of oppression. Then always coming back to that. With anything that we talked about in any unit you could always come back to that foundation because everything is centered around race. It was really powerful because I think it took students. Some students came in and were like oh yea internalized oppression. Interpersonal oppression. They know. They come in with the knowledge and then for other students it was the first time being exposed to this so for us to continue to engage in that learning throughout the entire year and see how that plays out historically across different ethnic groups has really allowed students to understand the impacts of the social construction of race with each other.

And not just race. I had several queer students. The back and forth of understanding of how it's not just about race but how folks from the LGBTQIA plus community are marginalized

as well. And how it's even layered when you are a black person and so those conversations were about their own personal experience with that.

This transcript reveals that both Cyntia and her students had an unexpected and enlightening encounter when learning about the social construction of race. They began by unpacking the different types of oppression which are ideological, institutional, internalized, and interpersonal. Cyntia then reveals one of her pedagogical strategies. That being, linking Ethnic Studies content learned, in a given unit of study, to the type of oppression that occurs. For example, if students are learning about the forced education of Native American children in Indian boarding schools, then that would be linked to institutional oppression. Cyntia had a mixed group of students who already knew or had lived through some of these oppressions. Some of her students hadn't or simply couldn't name them. Regardless of each students' prior knowledge on this topic, this transcript reveals the difficulty of navigating through such a difficult subject for both the students and the teacher. It also reveals the importance of going back to the four I's of oppression as students learn various content throughout the academic school year. Cyntia then begins to discuss another layer that is important but also difficult to learn about in Ethnic Studies, that being intersectionality. Cyntia continues by saying:

And the things they have to encounter just by showing up and walking down the hallway. It really helped those students who had never thought about their sexuality or their gender expression as important to them and seeing how much it impacts the mental health of those students. I think it helps develop empathy for other people's experiences. I had students from a range of political identities and I had students coming in who were saying really harmful things that we had to hold all of us. Like we had to hold it together.

And the growth that I saw in those particular students. It was really powerful. The students were proud of each other. The students that everyone was like, yo you can't say that. There was some conflict, some tension in the beginning. Those students that were always like calling them in later in the year said yo, I am proud of you. Your growth. This was at our closing circle at the end of the school year. In order for us to come to that understanding we had to talk about systems of oppression. We had to have those lessons and those conversations for us to be able to humanize each other and even though we all come from different experiences and backgrounds like we could see the ways that we replicate those systems to each other. Yea that was such a beautiful thing to witness from them.

Cyntia describes how difficult it was to be a member of the LGBTQIA+ community and a student at Los Alamitos high. It was also difficult to be a member of Cyntia's Ethnic Studies class as well. Many students in Los Alamitos are conservative and oftentimes say very homophobic words or statements. By learning about the intersections of race, class, gender performance, and sexuality, students began to see how harmful their actions and statements were towards the mental health of their peers. To be effective, this process had to be done collectively as a classroom community and without shaming any one particular individual. Cyntia and all of her students were incredibly proud of the progress that the conservative students made throughout the school year. Overall, this transcript reveals the possibilities Ethnic Studies can have towards all groups when confronted with difficult conversations, community building, and loving accountability.

When I asked Ramiro to share one of his favorite lessons in his class, he discussed a project that he had done around institutional oppression. He wanted his students to research the *School-to-Prison Pipeline* (STPP). The STPP refers to the policies and practices that push our nation's children, especially our most at-risk youth, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems (Giroux, 2015). According to Ramiro:

What I really enjoyed doing was the *School-to-Prison Pipeline*. I wanted them to see how our system in education is set up for kids of color. And how easily a kid of color could be judged heavily on a small infraction and how sometimes white students get treated very lightly for harsh things that they did. And so, we did a project on that as well. We analyzed like school districts across the country and how the infractions and what African American kids especially, and White students did.

And they were able to see how certain school districts. It was like straight up obvious. They didn't seem like they were trying to hide it. How bad it was to be a kid of color in those classrooms versus a kid. Even like an infraction like a cell phone. I remember we read a story about an African American kid who got suspended for something to do with his phone and then that same week another student did something that was really bad and how they were basically left out with a warning. And they were really pissed off.

I think it was the St. Louis school district. We did one in St. Louis, one in Baltimore and one in Seattle and we looked at the data and then here in California. So, there were 4 different parts. And then I had them analyze. What do you see in the difference between how students were treated here? I asked them what is the difference between that community where the infractions go pretty easily versus this community where you clearly see that it's heavy on suspension and expulsion for African American kids?

Ramiro's project on the STPP revealed the disproportionate numbers between African-American students over White students when it came to school discipline. When students did research for his project, they were able to easily identify the disparity between different ethnic groups when it came to detention, suspension, and expulsions. Even when it came down to the same offense, White students were still less likely to get in trouble versus students of color. This data was similar across the nation including the students' hometown in Anaheim. Ramiro liked this project because it raised awareness on an issue that directly affected his students who are predominantly Latinx/Chicanx. This issue also relates to the disproportionate numbers of Latinx and Chicanx residents who are killed each year by Anaheim police. According to the ACLU (2017), the Anaheim Police Department has the 9th deadliest police force among the 60 largest cities in the U.S. The majority of people killed by Anaheim police officers, since 2003 have been Black or Latinx. Even worse is that 55 percent of Latinx victims killed by Anaheim police were unarmed (Anaheim P.D. Use of Force Report, 2017). Overall, the project really angered Ramiro's students and made them realize that institutional oppression is real, especially when it comes to school discipline policies.

Action Research

Five of the educators shared that their culminating project was one of their favorite projects to do with their Ethnic Studies classes. The culminating project provides students with the opportunity to synthesize knowledge and experiences gained throughout their course of study. Oftentimes in

classes, and especially in Ethnic Studies, it's used instead of traditional methods of assessment. To culminate or end the school year, the teachers discussed two projects (i.e., Youth-led Participatory Action Research, and Project Soapbox).

Three teachers shared that the *Youth-led Participatory Action Research* (YPAR) project was one of their favorite projects. According to Ozer (2016), "Youth-led participatory action research ... is an approach to scientific inquiry and social change grounded in principles of equity that engages young people in identifying problems relevant to their own lives, conducting research to understand the problems, and advocating for changes based on research evidence." Benjamin first learned about YPAR from another educator during an Ethnic Studies conference. Some of the problems his students identified, researched, and tackled included: 1) *Teen Pregnancy*, 2) *Youth Investment*, 3) *Affordable Housing*, 4) *Police Brutality*, 5) *Decriminalization of Drug Use*, and 6) *Violence Against Women*. Benjamin's colleague, Carah also engaged in YPAR with her students. However, she did it differently as she had her students focus on school issues rather than community issues. According to Carah:

I have to make things my own. I said, let's look at our educational system. Two years ago, I had students look at areas of change that can happen at Santa Ana high. I felt if they could identify a problem within the school, then they could do research. There's a process. Every year I've done it, I haven't done it the same. So, they pick an issue at Santa Ana High. They do surveys. They are the researchers, right? Instead of pulling from other people's resources they create the surveys and go to classrooms or through survey monkey and pull ten to fifteen percent of the population. You know that's about 300 to 400 students. We have about 3,800 students in Santa Ana High.

Carah reveals the importance of adapting lesson plans to one's own pedagogy of practice. Perhaps she focused on tackling school issues over community issues because she knew that would be more impactful for her students. Perhaps there was just a lot of issues in their school that needed to be addressed that year. Perhaps Carah thought that her students would take the project more seriously because their school site directly affects them. Carah also revealed that she has always done YPAR differently each year. This makes sense since educators typically get different students each year and issues of the times change. Carah then discusses the YPAR process. Similar to her previous transcription, Carah emphasizes that the students are the center of the curriculum. Rather than pull data from other studies, the students themselves are the researchers. They utilize quantitative data methods and pull from a large student sample size by distributing surveys via survey monkey. She continues our interview by saying:

This process of what's the issues. Being critical, then figuring out what they want to ask and then going and asking and mobilizing. So, this idea that they are talking about these things, right? Are going to generate discussion. Student voice. And then they come up with a proposal. And that plan of action is regulated on. You know talking to the principal or whatever it is. Then they use the research and some students find what they are researching is not a problem. Right? So, like dress code. I had a group do dress code. They were getting all this stuff and student voice and was like this is not a big issue. So that's good too. But that's still important. So, I've had students do everything from locked restrooms on campus, on mandated testing and have gone out to inform students that they do not have to take it. You know statewide testing. We have prison mirrors in our restrooms. I've had students

do a whole thing around mirrors and would have all their friends take pictures of the restrooms and would compare.

This section reveals the next steps in the YPAR process. First asking critical questions on the issues students want to tackle. Second, engaging in critical dialogue about the issue and third, mobilizing and taking informed action. Carah then reveals another dissatisfaction she has with traditional education. This time being administrative pushback. Carah continues to discuss the YPAR process by sharing that sometimes students will research an issue and realize that it's not a problem at all. What's important is the research process. She concludes by sharing some of the issues her students tackled. These include: 1) *Dress Code*, 2) *Locked Restrooms and Doors On Campus*, 3) *Mandated State Testing*, and 4) *Prison Mirrors*. The beauty of YPAR is that students can get creative in the research process. Carah's students did a comparison between bathroom mirrors using photography and social media between different high school campuses. One of Carah's students decided to do her YPAR project on how administrators don't listen to their students. She conducted a five-page survey and eventually created a student action commission called *Youth for Justice*. Her work was even published in *Pedagogies of With-ness: Students, Teachers, Voice and Agency* (Hogg et al., 2020).

Ramiro also engaged in YPAR with his students. During our interview, he revealed some of the actions his students took and the overall outcomes that came out of this project. According to Ramiro:

Some students were able to go to Sacramento and were able to take their information. Yea one of them came back with a video from Dolores Huerta. Sending me a message telling me to keep up what you are doing ... So, I showed it to the students and I'm like see this is the idea of why we are doing the YPAR project. Getting involved with the community. Civic engagement. Learn how to properly get your voice out there.

Especially with technology. Ultimately in the end they all had different mediums of being able to express what they were doing. Whether it was going to be some sort of protest, some type of survey in class or school and they presented on the announcements, going to do a podcast or some sort of a website on their topics. I had students create a website on their topics. It was really cool to see the end results where students really get into it. And getting involved with the problems that are facing their community.

Ramiro was delighted to see that some of his students were able to take their research and raise awareness to policy makers in our state's capitol. He was elated that his students even got to meet one of the original leaders of the United Farm Workers. Perhaps Dolores Huerta saw his students present or maybe they simply shared their YPAR project with her. This form of action is called civic engagement. According to youth.gov, Civic engagement involves promoting the quality of life for one's community, through political and non-political actions. Civic engagement can include environmentalism, political activism, environmentalism, community service, and national service. Volunteering and service-learning are also forms of civic engagement (youth.gov, n.d.). Ramiro also loved the variety of actions his students took. They created websites, podcasts, and school announcements. That is the beauty of YPAR. It allows for an endless variety of creative actions co-developed and constructed by youth.

Another culminating project that the teachers engaged with their students was *Project Soapbox*. Like YPAR, this curriculum calls on students to research issues that affect them and their community. They then take action by creating *Soapbox* speeches and performing them to their classmates or during community events (Mikva Challenge, n.d.). Two of the seven teachers discussed how this project was their favorite. According to Cyntia:

Students were asked to create a speech about something that was important to them. Through that process I realized that most of the students. The topics that they chose to write about were things like traumas that they were carrying. Either personally, or that they witnessed. Or from somebody close to them. It was a really emotional and healing experience. Some students had a hard time getting through their speeches because they were saying things, naming things that they hadn't named before.

And even though it was painful for them to do that they were able to process that and let it go. And that's exactly what we offered because we had an altar. They offered that to the altar. Like let whatever it is that you are carrying and holding and as you say it to your compas in this sacred space that we created, feel free to let that go into the altar. That's what altars are there for. To take the things that we don't need to hang on to anymore and just let it go. We burn sage and it was a really cleansing and just healing. That was the last project that we did. It was really powerful.

Cyntia's students learned how to use their voice through this project. It was one of her favorite projects because she saw how her students were able to name oppressions that they hadn't in the beginning of the school year. These oppressions were things that happened to them directly or things they witnessed firsthand. The outcomes of the speeches were empowering and healing for all of her students. The traumas and hurt that they carried with them was released into the class altar pushing them away from the students' lives. To solidify this, Cyntia cleansed the classroom and her students with sage. For centuries, indigenous peoples have burned sage as part of a spiritual ritual to cleanse a person or space, and to promote wisdom and healing. The culminating project was more than just an assessment of learning. It was needed ritual that allowed her students to critically engage and re-enter the world.

Linn also culminated the school year with *Project Soapbox*. In fact, she also had her students compete with other local and statewide schools. According to Linn:

It really brought the students into themselves. They had to really grapple with what they were most passionate about. They also had to dig deep inside about where they were at as a person and what they needed to work on. So, you had students who really. You know. I feel like what I did best was build a community within the classroom so that they all trusted in each other and worked well with each other. When it got to the Soapbox competition, we had students who were basically doing speeches on things like domestic violence and all kinds of abuse. Which was stuff that was coming out from their own traumas. I feel that is the essence of what Ethnic Studies is. About healing.

Linn's teaching philosophy and pedagogical practice is very similar to Joey, Cyntia and Carah. She focuses on building a classroom community first, so that students can learn to trust and work with one another. She also focuses on healing as she understands that her students also have a lot of

traumas. Like Joey's *Spoken Word* projects, Linn also applied similar elements into her students *Soapbox* speech. Students had to really dig deep and reflect on the issue or problem they wanted to research and write about. Then collectively, her students would work to edit, practice, and share with one another their *Soapbox* speeches prior to competition. I then asked Linn to share some of the topics students researched. She shared:

Immigration, poverty. One kid really focused on and was really passionate about Trump and how he was getting away with all this abuse. The emolument clause. He is using government money for his own benefit. She did this great speech about that. The most profound speech I think was a poem that this girl did about her neighbor of five years molesting her. It brought everybody to tears and every time she did it, she would start to cry. But it was such a profound piece of work. Because it was such few words but it was so profound. The way she did it and the way she performed it.

It's shocking to see how similar Joey's students *Spoken Word* speech was almost exactly similar to Linn's students *Soapbox* speech. Both students had the confidence to write and perform their speeches on something so personal as being molested. Both students got the crowd to cry. Both speeches were incredibly empowering. Like I stated earlier in this manuscript, projects like these could be a potential method for healing traumas among our youth today. Linn's students also focused on issues such as immigration, poverty, and political corruption. She was incredibly proud of all of her students.

Engaging in Dialogue Circles

Engaging in dialogue circles was a common pedagogical practice among all seven Ethnic Studies educators in this study. Throughout our interviews, it was revealed that our educators used the dialogue circle in many ways (e.g., as icebreakers, to build community, to debate current issues, to discuss readings, to share best-practices, to heal). However, Carah was the only educator to directly name this as one of her favorite activities. Perhaps the other educators naturally practiced this form of pedagogy (i.e., facilitating knowledge vs. direct instruction) and didn't see it in itself as a possible choice. For Carah, the dialogue circle went far beyond simple discussion, it was centered around meditation and healing. In our interview, she shared:

By them telling their stories there's this sense of ownership. There's this healing. They are the center of the curriculum and students are restored back to themselves. This idea of self-determination in and of itself is healing.

Students have been so penalized, especially in urban schools. Colonized. And it's so top down. The teachers have all the answers, right? So, if we say the students have the answers. Then they start to heal. They start to see themselves with having agency. When we tell our stories. All that burden. All the trauma from the educational experience, it then goes away.

This transcript revealed Carah's dissatisfaction with traditional methods of teaching and schooling. Where stories are oftentimes told from the lens of Eurocentric interpretations of history and then centered as the primary resource for knowledge construction. Rather than use such traditional methods of teaching, thinking, and learning, Carah utilizes the dialogue circle as an empowering tool for her students to share their lived realities in relation to hystories. It's organic, and when

coupled with her meditation practices, it's healing. Such methods are in line with *Restorative Practices*. According to High (2017), the basic premise of the classroom dialogue circle "... as a proactive restorative practice is that student behavior, character, and social and emotional competence is improved when they feel connected to an inclusive, supportive, and respectful community." (p. 528). According to Carah, as these behaviors improve, the trauma students received from their negative experiences in schooling begins to go away.

Conclusion

Findings from this study revealed a multitude of lessons, activities, projects and teaching methods that any educator could engage in. As we continue to build and construct an authentic, critical, liberating, and empowering Ethnic Studies curriculum for our communities, we must continue to share best-practices (i.e., curricular and pedagogical). It's my hope that these examples be a living archive for future educators to use, adapt, and add to the growing field of Ethnic Studies.

With the new law requiring all high school students to take Ethnic Studies by 2029, it's important to continue research on Ethnic Studies classes, pedagogy, curriculum development, and implementation in school districts throughout California. Findings from this study suggests several areas for further research. First, research should include the pedagogy and practice of Ethnic Studies teachers who work in a variety (e.g., rural, urban, socio-economically disadvantaged, affluent) of communities. Pedagogical practices in contexts with different racial and ethnic demographics is also an area needed for further research. The content of the curriculum as well as the tools and strategies that Ethnic Studies teachers use are important areas that researchers should also study. Many Ethnic Studies classes are using *Youth-led participatory action research* or *Project Soapbox* as culminating projects to end their school year. With this, researchers should study how teachers and students use this project and the impact on community change it elicits. Ethnic Studies impact on community change itself should be another area of future research.

It's also important that researchers study how educators adapt their curriculum to meet the needs of students with special needs and emergent bilingual students. Ethnic Studies impact on youth development and academic achievement is also needed for further research. It's also important for researchers to investigate how colleges of education are adapting their teacher preparation programs to meet the new demand of certified Ethnic Studies educators. It's also important to research how individual districts transition their departments (i.e., Social Studies, English, Visual and Performing Arts) to include Ethnic Studies into their programs. It's also important for researchers to study how these districts are preparing (i.e., professional development) their teachers to teach this curriculum. Lastly, one area of study that is needed lies within how educators assess (formal and informal) their students learning in an Ethnic Studies class.

I welcome researchers and educators to review the summary below and links to key lessons and reference pages in this manuscript as they can provide excellent tools and resources for their research and classrooms. I hope that the findings from this study can provide school districts throughout California direction and guidance on how to implement their Ethnic Studies requirement. Lastly, I encourage Ethnic Studies educators and researchers to continue to collaborate and build allies. The fight is not over and in the current political climate there are many that want to eliminate this empowering course (Elattar, 2022; Schwartz, 2021). I know I couldn't have done the work had I not met and collaborated with amazing educators in the field and in my

study. We did it together. That's *In Lak 'Ech!* I also encourage future educators to attend and present at local, state, and national conferences in both Ethnic Studies and Critical Education. We are always learning. We are always fighting. And we will not stop until we get an authentic, critical, and liberating Ethnic Studies curriculum for all! *Sí se puede!* Ethnic Studies NOW!

Summary And Links to Key Lessons

Community or Dialogue Circles are teaching methods where educators have students sit alongside them in a circle and talk about a prompt that they provide. The following guide was developed by the Oakland Unified School District (Glenview Elementary School).

<https://wpvip.edutopia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/stw-glenview-circles-overview.pdf>

Restorative Practices Lesson Plan Guide can be used to achieve a variety of goals including: building relationships, resolving conflicts, and enhancing instruction. This guide was developed by Baltimore City teachers in collaboration with the Open Society Institute in Baltimore.

<https://www.osibaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Merged-RP-Lesson-Plan-Guide-FINAL.pdf>

Identity Corners is a lesson where students share their personal stories to understand diverse perspectives and experiences, while providing a way for them to become aware of their own privileges and how that relates to institutional oppression. This lesson was developed by UC, Irvine's Cross-Cultural Center.

<https://ccc.uci.edu/resources/active-workshop-request.php>

Creating a Cultural Artifact Altar in the Classroom is an activity developed by educator Nick P. Cooper and was adapted from the book *Teaching Culture: Perspectives in Practice* (2001) by Patrick R. Moran.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/creating-cultural-artifact-altar-classroom-nick-patrick-cooper>

The Spoken Word Poetry lesson plan is part of a curriculum developed at the Youth Leading Change Project at Duquesne University. It was developed alongside Gwen's Girls, The Restorative Justice Group, Sisters of eSTEAM, Power(ed) by Grace, and Amil Cook Media Services.

<http://remakelearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Youth-Leading-Change-Remake-Learning-Connected-Learning-Lesson-Plan.pdf>

Race: The Power of an Illusion is the most widely taught documentary in the United States. The filmmakers and collaborators have created a series of lesson plans and collated other materials to guide discussion and engagement in the classroom. This production was created by The Othering & Belonging Institute, California Newsreel, University of California, Berkeley, and The American Cultures Center at UC Berkeley.

<https://www.racepowerofanillusion.org/resources/>

The School-to-Prison Pipeline Toolkit was developed by the The New York Civil Liberties Union and is one of the nation's foremost defenders of civil liberties and civil rights. The toolkit includes various resources and lesson plans for secondary education teachers.

https://www.nyclu.org/sites/default/files/school_prison_toolkit.pdf

Youth-led Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is an innovative approach to positive youth and community development based in social justice principles. This site was developed through an ongoing partnership between the University of California, Berkeley and San Francisco Peer Resources and includes various curriculum and resources to enrich any YPAR project.
<https://yparhub.berkeley.edu/home>

Project Soapbox is Mikva Challenge's public speaking program that calls young people to speak out on issues that affect them and their communities. These powerful speeches have lasting, transformative impacts on classrooms, schools, and communities.
<https://mikvachallenge.org/our-work/programs/project-soapbox/>

Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum vision is to promote the advancement and implementation of well-designed Ethnic Studies courses and programs for the purpose of advancing students' academic achievement, educational equity, community activist scholarship, and community leadership skills.
<https://www.liberatedethnicstudies.org/>

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Intergenerational Pláticas as Ethnic Studies Freedom Dreaming in Kern County

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Abstract

In this article, we center intergenerational pláticas between a recent undergraduate student, a new education professor, and a veteran K-12 teacher as a praxis, a methodological-epistemological location, for pedagogical freedom dreaming in ethnic studies. Our platicando uses our (shared) experiences to produce knowledge about the (im)possibilities of ethnic studies, not in urban or politically progressive areas, but in conservative, even hostile spaces within California's Central Valley. We share excerpts and analysis of our pláticas in order to *create* a living archive (of ethnic studies praxis) for social justice, resistance, and transformation (in Kern County).

...I throw the bleeding *nopal*
into a pan, pull out another.
It takes hours to defang cactus.
The thought of them: tender,
cooked in *chile colorado*
keeps me stooped over the *cubeta*
ignoring the tiny slivers
piercing my thumb.
(Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 134, emphasis in original)

...And past the crowded and lanky weeds
To stop me from bleeding
On the same soil she waters everyday,
Granting the weeds and the sunflowers to grow side by side
To keep me from leaving
(Herrera, 2020, p. 41)

Introduction

In this article, we center intergenerational pláticas between a recent undergraduate student (Marlene), a new education professor (Tim), and a veteran K-12 teacher (Felisa) as a praxis, a methodological/epistemological location, for pedagogical freedom dreaming (Love, 2020) in ethnic studies. As we describe in the article, platicando located our (shared) experiences as un camino to produce knowledge about the (im)possibilities of ethnic studies, not in urban or politically progressive areas, but in conservative, even hostile (Monreal, 2022), spaces within California's Central Valley (see also Sawyer et al., 2019). We found ourselves returning to the weeds,

sunflowers, y (bleeding) nopales of our (ancestors') lives in the Central Valley, and thus use the opening epigraph as a way to conjure up an image that speaks to our freedom dreams and critical hope that continues to grow in inhospitable places (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Monreal & Floyd, 2021). Our work stems from, and is inspired by recent scholarship that locates cross-generational pláticas as a path "to create a self-reflexive space to theorize ways to affirm the lived experiences along *different* points" (Fránquiz & Salinas, 2022, p. 420, emphasis ours) of Latinx teachers' experiences with ethnic studies. We prioritize intergenerational learning and platicando (Fránquiz & Salinas, 2022; see also Blanco, 2022; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Guerra & Rodriguez, 2022) - between teachers who are at different moments in their teaching journey as a way to "conjure commune, consult" and *create* the archives of "cultural homesplaces, communities, classrooms, and institutions" (Joubert III, 2022, para. 1) in the Central Valley.

We lay out the article as follows. First, we place our pláticas within the context of Kern County and Bakersfield, CA, a part of California with outsized historical and contemporary connections to conservative politics (Bakersfield is home to Republican congressman, and now leader of the House, Kevin McCarthy). Next, we use a small sampling of Felisa's family history to explain how even within racist spaces and places, Latinx families and communities find ways to preserve their culture and enact political agency. This theme reemerges in the second half of the paper as we explain how we engaged in pláticas to learn from each other's knowledges, pedagogies, and movidas (see Monreal, 2019, 2021) of everyday hope and resilience (toward ethnic studies). We conclude by emphasizing the need and power of (intergenerational) platicando as a way to support the political work of both teaching and fighting for ethnic studies. As an additional note to readers, we weave portions of pláticas, poetry, and vignettes throughout the article. We feel the notion of *weaving* to be particularly important, as it speaks to how different threads and strands of knowledge and experience come together to *produce* and *generate* ideas and understanding.⁵

Bakersfield and Kern County: Placing (Histories of) White Supremacy

As a Oaxacan daughter of immigrants I (Marlene) grew up on the East Side of Bakersfield. I grew up hearing jokes about avoiding the East Side (the majority Latinx part of Bakersfield) made by my white classmates. My teachers never addressed these comments, but instead encouraged them with a laugh. I was never taught the history of Kern County, and how the segregation of our city was literally designed by White supremacy (Cruz, 2020). It makes me grow more resentful toward the school districts that raised me. Our pláticas have provided a space to feel comfortable sharing (and rejecting) these truths, discussing them with my family, and dreaming of what could be different. It also pushes me to work in the same schools surrounded by students who come from the communities I do. (Marlene)

⁵ Moreover, the concept of weaving was a central way the Aztec/Mexica understood the (re)creation of the world. In his description and analysis of Aztec/Mexica philosophy, Maffie (2014) describes the import of the self-generating and regenerating sacred energy called *Teotl*. *Teotl* is ultimately the process of the universe weaving itself, as the cosmos is a grand weaving always already in progress, and "*Teotl* is simultaneously weaver of the cosmos, the weaving of the cosmos, and woven cosmic product" (Maffie, 2014, p. 403; see also Monreal & Tirado, 2023).

Bakersfield is the metropolitan center of Kern County, which comprises the southern tip of California's agricultural rich San Joaquin Valley. The San Joaquin Valley is a geographically and socially distinct region of California. Guarded by mountain ranges in all directions, the San Joaquin Valley – populated by numerous small, but largely Latinx rural farming towns – is sometimes called 'the other California.' Despite a deep history of activism, civil rights, and farm labor organizing by Black, Asian, and Latinx communities, the area is firmly controlled by a white, conservative political structure and many of its residents live below the poverty line and struggle to access basic necessities (see also Del Real 2019a, b, c; Sawyer et al., 2021; Weisman, 2023). Thus, writer Nicholas Belardes (2020b) describes Bakersfield: "An oppressive political shadow drips onto the landscape, one seemingly intertwined with excessive smog and decaying apartment rentals. The power structure is Trump happy; a lust-filled fervor infects them..." (para. 5).

This ongoing shadow and specter of White supremacy links directly back to history, infrastructure, and policing. Belardes (2020a, b) argues that racism is literally built into the landscape of Bakersfield, a subtle indoctrination that works to enable, and at times overlook, how White supremacy is upheld in Kern County. Belardes (2020b) reflects back to his time at *South High*, a school awash with imagery of the Confederacy. Until recently,⁶ the school featured blue and gray colors and a rebel mascot complementing nearby street names such as White Lane, Sumter Drive, and Plantation Avenue. Racist names and symbols match a geography haunted by (continuing) segregation, past histories of redlining and racially restrictive covenants, and present practices of racial boundary making encouraged by the actions of local real estate agents, public officials, and residents (Cruz, 2020). Law 'enforcement,' too has traditionally worked as a tool to advance local white power structures as corruption is prevalent and officials target people of color based (Schwaller, 2018). To put this into perspective in April of 2018, (still) Sheriff Youngblood was caught on video stating that it was better, from a financial standpoint, to kill a suspect than "cripple" them, "because if you cripple them you have to take care of them for life, and that cost goes way up" (para. 12). This surveillance of, and violence toward Black and Latinx populations was a normative part of school discipline as the city's high school district agreed to a settlement in 2017 resulting from a racial discrimination lawsuit alleging disproportionate and excessive suspensions and expulsion. In sum, (school) monuments that honor White supremacy, geographies of segregation, and education/law enforcement actions (continue to) create a hostile environment for people of color in Bakersfield, Kern County, and the larger San Joaquin Valley.⁷ Understanding this foundation of White supremacy in Kern County helps contextualize the difficulty of teaching for ethnic studies and social justice, but also highlights how actions of resistance and agency have always been necessary in the area. In other words, the common visual of Kevin McCarthy sitting next to Dolores Huerta (for example at a high school or college graduation) speaks to the (im)possibilities of ethnic studies in Kern County. Whilst we live within this violent tension of White supremacy and (Latinx)

⁶ Despite a 2021 change of South High's mascot to 'Spartans,' the street names remain, and Belardes (2020b) explains, "[South High School and Kern High School District] continue to prop up a system of indoctrination that values a racist past over the lives of people of color" (para. 14).

⁷ These particulars also speak explicitly to how anti-Blackness and attempts of Indigenous erasure/dispossession are integral parts of Kern County's structured white supremacy. Although outside the scope of this paper, Felisa's upcoming doctoral research seeks to engage directly with (anti)Blackness and Latinidad through qualitative research with Afro-Latinx *folklórico* dancers in Kern County. This future research will undoubtedly contribute toward the 'living archive' we engage with and build toward in this manuscript.

resistance, and know it to be a defining feature of our region, we also understand the need to make our navigation of such contradictions explicit and part of a living archive.

Creating Counterspaces in Kern County

My parents were high school educators, now retired. They tirelessly taught students the subject matter they were experts in and an immense amount of cultura through the Spanish language, M.E.Ch.A. club activities, Mexican and Chicanx arts and crafts, and through folklórico dance. Currently those students are now elementary and high school teachers, administrators, local university CAMP Directors, nurses, and lawyers. My parents protested unfair propositions, marched in picket lines, knocked on doors for voter registration drives, and always advocated for Chicanx student rights. (Felisa)

Felisa looks to her parents as models who “tirelessly” center(ed) Latinx and Chicanx culture in their home and community to create counter spaces and counter stories (Arango et al., 2016; Hidalgo, 2015; Yosso, 2005) of resistance and agency. Despite calling conservative Kern County home, Felisa’s parents spent their careers paving paths and forging roads of equity that remain open for others to build upon. Felisa continued her parents’ work by cultivating a 20+ year career sharing her own experiential knowledge, those pedagogies of the home (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Garcia & Delgado Bernal, 2021) she was raised with, to instruct cultural performing arts, specifically folklórico dance to Kern County students in first through twelfth grade. Felisa credits her parents for explicitly demonstrating an ethnic studies praxis, even when such classes, knowledges, and pedagogies were not sanctioned by local schools. Thus, even as Kern County school districts and school boards stymie and/or ignore local attempts⁸ to make transformative ethnic studies a part of the official curriculum, Felisa looks back to (familial) histories of everyday political agency and organization to inspire her work within such spaces. Thinking back to the many pláticas she shared with her parents and their educator friends/comadres, Felisa knows the importance of passing these culturally specific ways of teaching and learning to future generations (of educators) “to survive [and thrive in] everyday life...[by] engaging in subtle acts of resistance” (Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 625). It is within this spirit of generational resistance, that we explain our own (intergenerational) pláticas to continue a legacy of subversive ethnic studies praxis within conservative spaces.

Pláticas: Theory and Method

Pláticas allow for growth and understanding of what we all go through being Latino/a and Chicano/a in Bakersfield. Pláticas brings us closer together as descendants of Aztec warriors, now of Kern County fighting for recognition of our existence and freedom dreaming for our future generations. (Felisa)

I (Tim) too grew up in California’s San Joaquin Valley near Fresno, a bit north of Kern County. My grandparents and their families followed the seasons up and down the Valley as migrant farmworkers before finding other jobs that allowed them to stay rooted in one place. Attending schools as a child (in the midst of California propositions 187 and 227; see Bishop & Arellano,

⁸ In particular, we reference the work of the colectiva, *Kern County Educators for Ethnic Studies*.

2019), Latinx and Chicanx culture was explicitly discouraged in my formal education. College, middle school teaching jobs, and eventually doctoral studies sent me away from the San Joaquin Valley, but my first tenure track professorship brought me back. Teaching a summer class about foundations of education, I met a brilliant student, Marlene, who powerfully expressed the realities of an education not all that different from my own. After the class, and equipped with language and insight to name the White supremacist schooling systems she endured, Marlene and I regularly met to discuss her senior year, her future, and various ways to continue collaborating and learning from each other.

At the same time, after participating in local ethnic studies organizing and events, Felisa reached out to me for mentorship and guidance in completing her doctoral degree, especially since her program lacked both Latinx faculty and coursework. While I continue to provide support to Felisa's studies and research, I have learned invaluable histories and local knowledge from Felisa, her family, and her (folklórico) work. Thus, throughout my informal conversations with Felisa and Marlene, we contributed and co-constructed knowledge from our everyday teaching and lived experiences; and we "cultivated critical perspectives regarding enduring structures of racism, sexism, classism, and linguisticism...and we examined, explored, and reimagined" (Fránquiz & Salinas, 2022, pp. 418, 421). In short, these two-way conversations, these "stories of pain and trauma, current negotiations, and future hopes" (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 114) were pláticas.

Inspired by my individual pláticas with Felisa and Marlene, I invited the three of us to pláticar about our experiences fighting for, learning about, and teaching toward ethnic studies in the specific context of Kern County. Key to this triad was the cross-generational conversations across a spectrum and continuum of educational lives and careers. The dynamic and honest conversations rooted in our myriad classroom experiences were meant to open a (counter)space where we could learn from (each other's) histories, improve our pedagogies, and theorize from our intersectional identities. Speaking directly to this power of cross-generational pláticas, Fránquiz and Salinas (2022) write:

[Our] experiences are exchanged and validated as a means to further pedagogies. The exchanges...are riddled with remnants of the past and present, celebrations and failures, identity buildups and breakdowns, defiance and compliance...[we share] for the purpose of furthering [our] sense of cultural guardianship, a social responsibility that is intimately linked to furthering [our] pedagogies. Thus, opportunities for Latina[x] teachers to participate in pláticas across a professional continuum incite personal and collective hope. (p 426)

Our use of pláticas, particularly in "inciting personal and collective hope" for ethnic studies futures (in conservative spaces) was thus a collaborative method to "water the soil" and "stop the bleeding" (Marlene's opening poem). We looked to Fierros and Delgado Bernal's (2016) five principles of pláticas to drive our conversations. In particular, we started with an epistemological viewpoint, grounded in Chicana/Latina Feminist theory, that all of us were valid contributors who can and do create knowledge from our personal and familial experiences. We centered the importance of creating a safe place, one of *cariño*, trust, and reciprocity to learn and to heal, to "defang the cactus," (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 134) and to nurture the "weeds" and "sunflowers" (Herrera, 2020, p. 41) in this desolate, yet bountiful Valley of scorching sun, numbing fog, White supremacy, and Latinx resistance. Pláticas allowed for us to share the hurt, the pride, the resilience, and the possibility of

being Latinx in Bakersfield and Kern County as a location to center our freedom dreams for ethnic studies. Drawing upon, theorizing from, and connecting our experiences together as descendants of warrior peoples of the sun are thus contributions for and toward a local “living archive” of (our) ethnic study praxis. We saw our pláticas as the physical manifestation of *In Lak’ech:Tu eres mi otro yo*, a concept that emphasizes collectivity and relationships as the way to move forward and build knowledge.

Our (ongoing) pláticas started in late summer of 2022 over Zoom video conferencing technology. In our first meeting, we shared about our families, our personal educational journeys in the San Joaquin Valley, and our experiences with ethnic studies. Our goal was to build relationships and share with each other how our journeys—nuestros caminos—were our assets, our starting points for making sense of the world. We found inspiration from each other, and started to identify strengths and narratives to discuss further in a second meeting. In our second meeting, we shared specific experiences that spoke to the (im)possibilities of ethnic studies in our region. For Marlene, this was her poetry, her teaching, and her educational perseverance. For Felisa, this was her family history, her decades of folklórico experience, and her work creating space for Latinx cultural programs inside and outside schools. For Tim, this was an ongoing research project with K-12 Latinx teachers in Kern County. We took notes about each other’s stories and wrote points of connection, potential, and insight in a collaborative document. For the third plática, we prepared a short vignette or brief narrative based on our experiences. Parts of these vignettes are shared below as part of the ‘living archive’ of dreaming for ethnic studies in Kern County. During this plática, we centered our conversations on these narratives, using them as a starting point to build knowledge about ethnic studies (praxis) in Kern County (see Appendix A for example). We wrote an additional layer of notes based on our shared meaning-making, key understandings, and important resonates. In a fourth plática, we returned to our previous conversations and notes to discuss our body of knowledge as a whole and create a representation (this manuscript) of our talks. Importantly, this was an emergent process in which planning, and analysis came from our shared relationships with each other rather than a specific methodological structure and/or reductive attempts at ‘coding’ data. For example, we didn’t even think to record and/or transcribe our pláticas as such conventional research practice did not align with the spaces of conversation we aimed to create. In this way, our pláticas were also pedagogical avenues not only for future K-12 teaching, but also as aspiring researchers (re)learning what it means to do research (differently) and contribute academic knowledge (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002). Next, as findings, we share excerpts of our vignettes and narratives followed by key points of our analysis and meaning making in order to *create* a living archive (of ethnic studies praxis) for social justice, resistance, and transformation (in Kern County).

A Living Archive

Only a Few Feet Away

At sunrise we line up across one another,
Only a few feet away
Not far enough to break a sweat
But burdensome enough
 To keep her from coming to me.
With feet sinking into the pit of wallowing sand,

And past the crowded and lanky weeds
 To stop me from bleeding
On the same soil she waters every day,
Granting the weeds and sunflowers to grow side by side
 To keep me from leaving
She asks me to save leftover fertilizer,
Keep a handful in my pocket to hide on the side of the road
Where both plants continue to grow despite concrete
And we'll meet at sunset
(Herrera, 2020, p. 41)

Marlene's poetry (featured above) speaks to her freedom dream, her first-gen (college) persistence, to finish university as the youngest of a multigenerational, immigrant family, and her dare to use her education toward ethnic studies futures. Marlene explained that the other day she substituted for a first-grade class. She read her own poems to the class – poems about picking grapes in the fields – during their reading time. Then, she encouraged her students to speak in Spanish to help each other during math time, despite their teacher's "No Spanish Rule." Marlene has also been invited back to her high school to read and discuss her poetry with students in English Language Arts classes. As a result of these class visits, she explained how engaged the students were, how they treated her like a celebrity, how they connected her words to their lives, and how they "made it [her poetry] their own." While substitute teaching at her former high school, current students sought Marlene out, telling Marlene they bought the new anthology (where she published), and asking her to sign copies. Marlene went on to explain how she didn't have these opportunities growing up – chances to discuss poetry about issues that mattered to her, with people that shared similar experiences with her. Thus, Marlene's dreaming of ethnic studies is reflected in the acknowledgement that no system she encounters was designed for her/us, and in a (ethnic studies) pedagogy that centers art, narrative, resistance, and complexity.

This connection to art, creativity, and cultura is something that connected with all three of us, especially Felisa. We found this as evidence (in line with what Felisa has witnessed over her long career) that such an arts-based ethnic studies praxis was impactful for and desired by Latinx students. As inspired as we were with Marlene's palabra, we also realized how rare such praxis was, something reflected in Marlene's story and Felisa's relentless passion to make space for this learning inside all schools. In fact, while Marlene explained how poetry is her avenue to learn about, teach for, and dream toward social justice, she also found it difficult to share her poetry with her sisters, a disconnect fostered by local spaces and structures of subtractive schooling, grueling working conditions, and marginalization. As a teenager, Marlene, as the youngest of nine siblings, would rush home from school to help take care of nieces and nephews. In the summers, she would meet her sisters at 4:00 AM to work in the fields, a place that fostered more commonalities than school. She shared:

I wanted them [my sisters] to understand school was not only a government-imposed obligation on me as a result of being *de aqui*, but instead, something I cared deeply about and was slowly becoming passionate about. Having my sisters and my parents be more involved in my upbringing and education could have possibly helped them understand me similarly like I did while working with them. Likewise, if my experiences had been validated and normalized as part of my identity early on, instead of discouraged and brushed aside

by school counselors and class material, I would have been more inclined to understand my identity and embrace it.

After Marlene's words, Felisa's dreams (and professional work) shined through. Felisa was adamant that schools should be a place where families should partake in, even practice, cultural joy. The job of ethnic studies in Felisa's mind is to bring these disconnected worlds together, to build our schools from (rather than devoid of) our intergenerational knowledge, the knowledge of the elders, the knowledge of the civil rights leaders and the abuelas (see Gonzales, 2015) in Kern County. As Felisa said, "Our young students of color and their families deserve to see themselves reflected in the curriculum and a part of the educational system, not as an add on or special holiday, but as a legitimate source of education within the system. What if the school tiene mariachis y folklórico, what if the parents, Marlene's parents and family, felt welcome..." Despite being "only a few feet away," we – our families, our students, and our communities – are refused these educational spaces and circumstances to sobrevivir y mucho menos crecer. Yet we continue to grow, and to fight, and to find beauty through cracks and concrete as Felisa describes next.

If Not Us, Then Who?

Up to California from Mexico you come...
And what will you be giving to your brown-eyed children of the sun?
...You're a proud man, you're a free man, and your heritage is won
And that you can be giving to your brown-eyed children of the sun!
(Valdez et al., quoted in Farmworker Movement Documentation Project, n.d., p. 8)

El picket sign, el picket sign
Lo llevo por todo el día
El picket sign, el picket sign
Conmigo toda la vida
(Valdez, quoted in Farmworker Movement Documentation Project, n.d., p. 2)

Felisa wrote the following lyrics on our shared document and spoke about how organizing, advocacy, and cultura were at the center of her childhood. Felisa remembers singing "el picket sign, el picket sign" with her parents as a little girl and considers herself fortunate to be raised in a household that cherished Latinx/Chicanx dance, song, and history. Similar to the pláticas the three of us shared, Felisa explained how family conversations provided history, guidance, and support. This familial knowledge not only instilled cultural pride (Felisa said "we knew who came before us"), but nurtured Felisa through sometimes hostile school environments, and motivated her to share her wisdom as an educator. She explained the following picture with these words:

Three generations of strong Latina women, all college graduates. All having learned from pláticas with each other through generations. First, pláticas between myself and my mother, then myself with my children, and then my children with their abuela and now all three sit at the table or on the dance floor and we sing, platicamos, o bailamos con un entendimiento de fortaleza Latina that brings us together as family. That is where we draw our strength. Our product is bringing forth the beauty of our culture and having it flourish in conservative Kern County. The beauty in diversity must be embraced and taught, especially where we live. If not us, then who?



Figure 1. Felisa and her family. Left to right: Alondra (Felisa's daughter), Eva (Felisa's mother), Citlalli (Felisa's daughter), Felisa. Traje auténtico, Veracruz, México, Región Jarocho. Photo Credit: Raúl Longoria, November 2019.

In addition to the women in her family, Felisa shared how her father took up the idea of “if not us, then who?” as a (retired) arts teacher. Felisa's father claimed (the beauty of) art was a pathway to introduce ethnic studies (even in Kern County). During the 1970s, her father's art classroom was a place to practice ethnic studies, teaching the youth about where they came from and how their ancestral history could carry them through, and struggle against, sometimes hostile environments (see also Patrón-Vargas, 2022). Felisa grew up with a belief that art was ethnic studies; and thus connected her decades of learning, teaching, and building folklórico directly to ethnic studies stating, “Folklórico dance and study *is* ethnic studies.” Fittingly, her dreams for ethnic studies, reflect her advocacy of folklórico:

We all have beauty to share. The struggle comes with having cultural arts play a more intentional role in the regular school day at all grade levels. I dream of an educational system that infuses cultural arts, especially folklórico as an option for students of all ages. Specifically, I dream that one day I can walk down a local school campus and hear mariachi class in one classroom, folklórico music on the school stage, budding Judy Baca's painting in the art classroom, and bilingual teatro practicing outside under a quiosco.

Tim and Marlene simultaneously expressed open admiration for Felisa and her family and a tinge of sadness because they didn't have a lifetime of family instruction in the arts. Felisa was quick to remind us (Tim and Marlene) that our families indeed made, and taught through the arts, but that our formal education had not given us the tools to recognize some of these practices. For example, we discussed saving eggshells to create cascarones, the ways we used discarded farm supplies like grape bins as planting boxes, and how our families found joy in shows like Sabado Gigante and Siempre en Domingo. In fact, this conversation opened up a larger conversation on the idea of struggle, and the importance of these intergeneration pláticas for seeing the continuity of culturally sustaining education of the home. At the same time, we grew frustrated that despite the local community's cultural wealth and expertise (Yosso, 2005) in folklórico and other arts, Felisa was still struggling for cultural arts to play “a more intentional role in the regular school day.” Felisa

also expressed a belief that many students of color in Kern County struggled academically because curriculum and pedagogy lacked cultural relevance. In other words, current students may struggle to see, and/or appreciate these alternative epistemologies of the home developed through 'everyday' practices like gardening, music, and storytelling.

Picking up on this theme of struggle, Tim tied the notion of political struggle and social justice (those ideas that Felisa learned from family and Tim/Marlene learned at university) to the necessity of ethnic studies. The three of us also agreed that youth, whether our friends, students, and/or classmates, hungered for this knowledge and instruction, but were determined (to struggle) to find it. Marlene's experiences writing and teaching her poetry were direct evidence of this, and complemented the fire, the ganas, Tim and Felisa witnessed in their own students. This desire to struggle toward ethnic studies futures is thus an asset that local teachers could directly engage. *If not us then who? If not ethnic studies then what?*

Teaching as Organizing

Tim found not only hope and resistance in the pláticas with Felisa and Marlene, but also in his research with Latinx K-12 teachers in Kern County. In Tim's (ongoing) research in Kern County he uses interviews and photovoice to examine what it means to be(come) a Latinx teacher in the area. While not every teacher expresses the need for social justice and ethnic studies (praxis), Tim thought it was important to highlight examples of other teachers who have taken up the struggle in their own ways. Such evidence of solidarity and shared values can be encouraging when teaching toward ethnic studies in conservative spaces often feels isolating, if not dangerous. Tim shared the following portion of an interview with an educator who teaches high school U.S. History and an elective "multicultural study"⁹ course. Although this particular educator considers, and teaches as if the "multicultural studies" was a Chicana/ethnic studies course, he has been explicitly told by district officials not to name it such. In the excerpt the teacher discusses some of his approach and pedagogy:

Tim: So would you consider teaching a type of organizing?

Teacher: ...And what happens if you are that neutral teacher, what happens if you don't see teaching as organizing and and the implication of this question is that the consequences are really severe. Other teachers are organizing whether they think they are or not. And in Bakersfield, those are largely conservative organizers...they're organizing their students to become Republicans and, and nobody, nobody calls it that and so, so even if I would be hesitant to call my work as a teacher organizing, I think it is.

Tim had never really considered teaching and ethnic studies praxis as an act of organizing, but the teacher emphasized how important such thinking was in conservative spaces. Yet, it was clear that teachers in Kern County were organizing whether they wanted to or not. The three of us connected this point to why a (white) status quo and curriculum (Felisa) and a continued family-education

⁹ We put "multicultural studies" in quotations to show what kind of (neoliberal diversity) language is acceptable in Kern County (see also Monreal & Floyd, 2021). That is, the district eschews transformative ethnic studies by trying to forward ideas of (white) multiculturalism that highlight a hero/heroine approach to race and ethnicity (see also Sleeter et al., 2020). Still, and importantly this teacher resists this notion in subversive ways.

disconnect (Marlene) were normed in a place with such Latinx community and cultural wealth. To *not* value the knowledge (production) and wisdom of (Latinx) families, to *not* highlight (Latinx) legacies of resistance and political agency (in Kern County), to *not* include folklórico and (Latinx) arts in the school day; in sum, to *not* teach toward ethnic studies futures was/is not a neutral act, but it was/is an organizational feature of White supremacy in Kern County. Our praxis must reflect a need to organize (instruction) toward everyday actions and movidas of freedom dreaming, toward cultivating the weeds and bleeding nopales into critical hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Monreal & Floyd, 2021). With this in mind, (our) shared pláticas, and (our) use experiential knowledge to *create and analyze* this living archive (of ethnic studies praxis) are a path to intergenerationally organize. Still, such work is not easy as the aforementioned teacher also explained:

Tim: Finally, what does it mean to be Latino/Chicano teacher in Kern County?

Teacher: It means I'm in the fight for, that really is what it means, I think that, like being a teacher is fighting for social justice because, because that is unwanted here.

Linking this back to our conversations, it is clear that teaching toward ethnic studies in Kern County is certainly a "fight," but one in which there is a hunger, a desire for change. The three of us thought about how crucial it would have been to have the teacher above in our formal schooling. A teacher who even when told not to teach ethnic studies was doing it anyway, a teacher who found cracks in the pavement like Felisa's dad, or Marlene's substituting, or Tim's mentoring, or Felisa's folklórico. And what might happen if these teachers came together in mutual conversation to regularly plan, think, and organize towards ethnic studies futures?

Concluding Thoughts

We conclude by emphasizing the act of creating a living archive of ethnic studies praxis in Kern County as well as the need and power of (intergenerational) platicando as a way to support the political work of both teaching and fighting for ethnic studies. By bringing together the wisdom of educators across different moments in their teaching journeys, our pláticas not only proved to be fruitful pathways toward learning and collaboration, but also (counter)spaces to reimagine the production of knowledge. This production of knowledge valued our personal experience, our family histories, and our visions for the future. It should not go unsaid that our collaborative pláticas are evidence of the pedagogical value of pláticas (and similar methods like testimonio y palabra; see Blanco, 2022) in and for ethnic studies. As Felisa shared at length, pláticas within her family have always proved to be a source of strength, pride, support, education, and cultural instruction. Pláticas are built on, and avenues toward, foundations of cariño, love, knowledge (production), and mutual respeto. Marlene also pointed out that it modeled a vulnerability that fostered a space of inspiration and healing. Thus, while we doubt (nor desire) that pláticas should (or can) be formulized into a "best practice," it is vital that pedagogies of the home like pláticas that honor (a) specific community cultural wealth be explicitly integrated into (ethnic studies) classrooms. Similar to Felisa's decades-long advocacy to include folklórico in the formal curriculum and school day, we see the incorporation of pláticas as praxis as a necessary connection between culture to classroom. In fact, Marlene wondered how her own family's connection to education (and even each other) would be different if schools created spaces of belonging with and through (the pedagogies of pláticas in) ethnic studies. This raises important questions about who gets to engage in pláticas like the ones we describe, as well as the need to create spaces for pláticas across a variety of

intergenerational and intersectional communities. Yet, the potential of ethnic studies is rooted in pedagogical interventions that bring forth intentional, caring, and critical conversations. Toward such ends we'll keep dancing, writing, learning, struggling, and dreaming.

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Cultural Intuition as a Guide: Pedagogical Resonance in Ethnic Studies Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

As schools in California prepare for the implementation of an Ethnic Studies graduation requirement, there seems to be a priority around what is taught over how it will be taught. In this article, critical women of color scholars who are current and former classroom teachers reflect on the central role of “cultural intuition” (Delgado Bernal, 1998) as a pedagogical tool for effective Ethnic Studies educators of color. We collectively explore how educators can: (a) create dynamic and intentional curricula; (b) subvert White supremacist schooling practices; and (c) develop a community informed pedagogy. The authors draw on their experiences to expand on how their cultural intuition helped them recognize a pedagogical resonance across their teaching, organizing, and the ways that they embody an Ethnic Studies pedagogy. This article encourages teacher educators and teachers of color to center community and engage in a practice that goes beyond the intellectual and technical aspects of teaching.

Key Words: Ethnic Studies pedagogy, Cultural intuition, Central American Studies, YPAR, pedagogical resonance

As high schools in California prepare for implementation of the Ethnic Studies graduation requirement, there are discussions on what will be taught, its impact on students, and how to prepare teachers for such work. We argue these discussions should center seasoned Ethnic Studies educators of color who for years have looked inward and tapped into their *cultural intuition* to make curricular and pedagogical decisions that center communities of color. As Ethnic Studies educators, former and current K–12 classroom teachers, and women of color scholars, our everyday decisions have required critical reflection—what Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2014) has described as “continuously reflecting on their own cultural and racial identities” (p. 21). This paper is a collective critical reflection on how Ethnic Studies teaching is embodied, nurtured in community, and guided by cultural intuition that we assert is necessary to be effective Ethnic Studies educators.

Background

Though most women of color educators are discouraged from acknowledging and trusting our cultural intuition, it is the basis of a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in educational research that guides our work (Calderón et al., 2012). Chicana feminist scholars posit that cultural intuition are

the unique insights and viewpoints “draw[n] from personal experience, collective experience, professional experience, communal memory, existing literature, and the research process itself” (Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 1), and that generates a critical social justice perspective among educators. As Ethnic Studies educators, our personal and collective experiences shaped our understanding and honoring of our cultural intuition while we served communities of color as classroom teachers in Los Angeles public schools.

Our work was necessarily relational. Through an overlapping web of school sites, social and professional networks, and community-based organizations first—Roosevelt High School, Hollenbeck Middle School, and grassroots teacher’s organizations Politics and Pedagogy Collective and the People’s Education Movement—we came to be more than colleagues or community members; we became chosen family whose relations were characterized by a pedagogical resonance. We define pedagogical resonance as shared political and educational commitments nurtured by our Ethnic Studies and organizing backgrounds, that cultivate a desire and an ability to build transformative relationships among our students, colleagues, and communities. Our intuition initially sparked our connection and we find ourselves continuing to look to each other for support as we develop our understanding of theory, our teaching practices, and projects. Despite changes in roles and spaces, moving from teacher to graduate student, from East LA to UCLA, our relationships continue to sustain our spirits and commitments to an Ethnic Studies pedagogy.

We leaned on our relationships to engage in a series of *pláticas* about our praxis and everyday decision-making as Ethnic Studies educators. And through such critical reflection, we recognized cultural intuition as an important pedagogical tool. Having all attended public schools, pursued training in teacher education programs, and taught in public education, we acknowledge how traditional schooling repeatedly conditioned us to abandon our imagination. However, our Ethnic Studies experiences nurtured our cultural intuition to re-imagine education as accessible and relevant. Cultural intuition is a dynamic force that draws from our histories, personal and collective experiences, existing literature, and our teaching and learning processes. Cultural intuition also moves us toward reflexivity and guides us to create content that is critical and sustaining for students and ourselves. Lastly, cultural intuition provides access to essential tools not taught in teacher education, namely an unapologetic pursuit of community to support a recovery of oft-neglected and silenced ways of knowing, teaching, and learning.

In the following, we provide snapshots of three ways that cultural intuition manifested and toward a pedagogical resonance in our Ethnic Studies work. Throughout this piece we will shift perspectives, first, Mata engages in critical reflection regarding how she created dynamic and intentional curricula to advocate for inclusive and culturally responsive history classrooms for marginalized *Salvi*¹⁰ students. Second, Ramírez and Im then show how cultural intuition led them to subvert white supremacist schooling practices and support the critical race consciousness

¹⁰ I use *Salvi* intentionally (as opposed to *Salvadorean* or *Salvadoran*) to refer distinctly to Salvadoreñ people. *Salvi* captures what the other terms cannot. First, *Salvi* reclaims the term from the academic valences of *Salvadoran*. I embrace the colloquial tone of *Salvi* in part to push back against academic spaces that attempt to classify *Salvi* people. In making my writing more accessible and inviting to folks outside of the academy, I am fulfilling part of my role as a curandera historian.

among young women of color through geospatial youth participatory action research (YPAR¹¹) projects. Third, Díaz-Montejano examines the establishment and maintenance of community through an exploration of how Zapatismo shaped the cultural intuition and pedagogical practices of educators of color. We share these stories to illuminate how together we critically embraced and embodied our cultural intuition to nourish our spirits, and strengthen our pedagogy and commitment to justice.

Create dynamic and intentional curricula (Cindy Mata)

Becoming attuned to our cultural intuition requires that educators be in constant reflection about the content we are teaching, the pedagogical *movidas* we are making, and what guides us to make these choices. For educators of color, this type of ongoing reflection is of high importance as we are often shaped by the “colonial and racialized histories [that] have created fragmentation, dislocation, and dismemberment for many African ascendants and other people of color” (Dillard, 2012, p. ix). In the United States, this fragmentation takes many shapes—from the forceful removal of peoples from their ancestral lands to the assimilation practices in schools that strip us of our languages and cultures. As social justice and Ethnic Studies educators, part of our work is to provide a space where our students, and our younger selves, can be seen and valued. To borrow from Dillard (2012), the work of Ethnic Studies educators is “to love and heal ourselves back to wholeness, we must (re)member ourselves—recall our histories—and tell our own narratives” (p. ix).

Even before I knew the term, I listened to my cultural intuition throughout my educational journey. Cultural intuition is “experiential, intuitive, historical, personal, collective and dynamic” (Delgado Bernal, 1998, pp. 567–568). My experience as a Salvadoran migrant in California public schools showed me that schools were not committed to making space for Salvadoran or Central American histories, experiences, or people. I had *inquietudes* as a student about not seeing myself or my people reflected in the curriculum, feelings of uneasiness that I could not verbalize but that did not sit right with me. This intuition strengthened through the experiential knowledge I gained from teaching middle and high school history. I experienced a lot of resistance to including these histories because they were not assessed in state exams or covered in my textbooks, despite Los Angeles County being home to the largest Central American population in the nation, particularly Salvadorans (Motel & Patten, 2012). When I became an instructional coach for history education and went back to graduate school, I critically interrogated the standards and framework that the state uses to guide history instruction. Through my research, I could state the problem clearly for others and back up my intuition with data. My findings showed that Salvi people and Central American histories had been almost completely left out of those documents, thus perpetuating the historical erasure of these communities.

It was that constant reflection and not letting go of those intuitive feelings that also sparked the creation of resources that began to address the issues I raised, which center Salvi history specifically and Central American Studies more broadly. My cultural intuition became a dynamic force that, with the help of other Central American scholars and educators, resulted in lessons,

¹¹ Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), has been largely noted by Ethnic Studies scholars as a method by which to engage youth in community responsive pedagogy (Tintiangco-Cubales, et al, 2014), or as a way to “foster opportunities for individual empowerment and collective self-determination and social transformation” within our classrooms (Reyes-McGovern & Buenavista, 2016, p. 8).

professional development opportunities, and presentations to pre-and in-service history educators. What began as indescribable feelings grew into my purpose as I continued to listen and grow with them. This process needed time, tools, and opportunities to create something tangible from these feelings.

Cultural intuition is a pedagogical tool for reflecting on our pedagogy and content. As Ethnic Studies educators, I encourage us to sit with the schooling practices and curriculum that make us pause. Our inquietudes are valid; exploring those intuitive feelings through reflection takes time, but that should not deter us from doing the work. You are on the right track even if all the pieces are not there yet. In advocating for my people's histories to be part of the formal curriculum, I engaged in the process of (re)membering. This labor of love nourished my spirit as I learned much about myself and my people. It gave me a sense of fulfillment to know that the resources created from this process will go on to benefit Salvi and Central American students in California schools.

Subverting white supremacist schooling practices (Mariana E. Ramírez & Alice Im)

Cultural intuition, in part, calls for Chicanas—and in our case, all students of color—to “become agents of knowledge who participate in intellectual discourse that links experience, research, community, and social change” (Delgado Bernal, 1998 p. 560). As women of color educators, we accessed our sixth sense, cultural intuition, from a pedagogical perspective to develop a racial-spatial analysis (Vélez & Solórzano, 2017) as we integrated map-making into our youth participatory action research (YPAR) curriculum. Situated in East Los Angeles, we collaborated together as an eleventh-grade interdisciplinary team (English and Social Science) in a school site that manifested the growing reality of hyper and double-segregation experienced by Latino/a/e students especially in California (Frankenberg et al., 2019). In response to the authentic questions and concerns voiced by students, we subverted white supremacist schooling practices within our classroom spaces by having our students examine and confront various types of oppression (Yosso et al., 2001). We therefore engaged in pláticas (Fierros & Delgado-Bernal, 2016) with former young women of color students, given that our shared positionality as women of color embody the intersections of several systems of oppression. Here, we feature college-student Quetzalli Zamarríppa's (pseudonym) reflections on her experiences and how it helped to shape her critical consciousness.

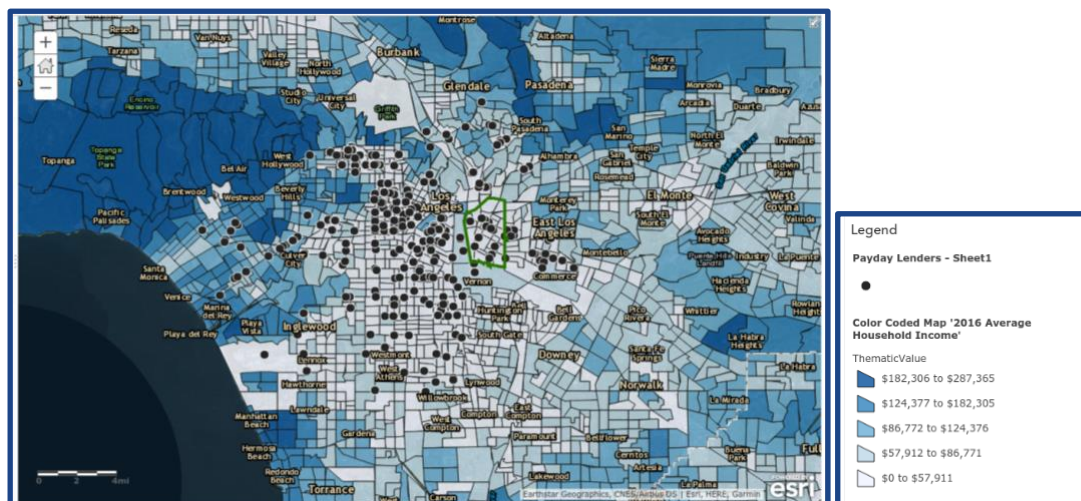


Image 1: The school community Boyle Heights, is indicated by the rectangle towards the center and East side of the city. Students' map features a high-density of predatory payday lenders in the lower-income neighborhoods that are indicated by lighter shades of the base map of Average Household Income.

Quetzalli worked with a collective research team of six teammates, where they were charged with developing, investigating, and presenting their findings on an issue that they found compelling. After reflecting on the overabundance of check-cashing institutions, and consequently the lack of banks in their neighborhood, the team began to focus on reverse redlining – or the overextending of certain types of credit – after following the history of underinvestment and financial marginalization in communities like Boyle Heights. Using their research, they used geographic information systems (GIS) to geo-visualize our realities and tell our stories with maps (Vélez & Solórzano, 2017). Additionally, students developed YPAR workshops delivered in a school-wide teach-in, where the entire junior class presented their findings and collectively strategized to change the oppressive conditions of the color line. Quetzalli states:

[The research project] definitely made me more and more conscious. Well, actually, it made me a lot more inspired to end poverty, and I know it sounds crazy. But I saw it, you know. It all made sense: our hypothesis, and our research question. This was the first time that I really felt like an intellectual, and that teachers and professors—when we would present the information, they all kind of validated our writing, our maps, and our findings, and our discussion, you know? So that was the first time that I really felt...just really validated.

Quetzalli's reflections illustrate for us the powerful learning that students gained from their research that extended far beyond academic skills and into envisioning a liberatory future. This work fed our spirits as teachers as we encountered teenagers and students that identified as intellectuals in their communities. This reminds us of what Dolores Delgado Bernal (2009) calls "transformative ruptures," or those moments or instances that shift policy or individual and collective thinking. We found that the white supremacist schooling structures limited and undermined our work with youth. On the other hand, our focus on the reciprocity of our students teaching us, all of us as learners and teachers, fed our spirits. In sharp contrast to white supremacist schooling practices, our pedagogical practice and learning experiences underscore the importance of student autonomy and self-determination, in addition to shifting the teachers' role to that of collaborator and mentor (Caraballo et al., 2017). Our classrooms prioritized the creation of open-ended learning spaces that resisted limited time frames and instead relied on responding to young people. Cultural intuition guided us to experience a pedagogical resonance to create experiences within our classroom community where the contributions made by students of color are valued and where they have the collective practice and experience to engage in transformative resistance.

Developing a community informed pedagogy (Sara J. Díaz-Montejano)

In reflecting on the ways that our cultural intuition has helped us to sustain and inform our pedagogy and organizing, we found that an experience that we all shared was that of building meaningful, caring relationships with students, families, and other educators. Additionally, we found that even before having taught, we had participated in learning spaces that taught us what transformative learning and teaching felt like. Similar to how personal experience is a source of cultural intuition in the research process (Delgado Bernal, 1998), personal experience is also a

source of cultural intuition in Ethnic Studies teaching. In my study, I examined the experiences of myself and three other critical educators both in how we collectively developed our consciousness through Zapatismo and how it informed our pedagogical practice.

While In college, we participated in a Zapatista-informed and inspired collective. Composed mainly of Black and Brown college students, we aspired to construct self-determined and autonomous spaces in the same ways that the Zapatistas did. It was from them that we learned how to engage in collective learning and to develop a shared analysis and reading of the world that allowed us to engage in direct action.

In an interview with one of the educators, Ramona, she described what made her stay committed to our collective.

I think that's really what made me stay was that being in community with folks and how much **love** we showed for each other. Also, the accelerated speed at which **we were learning to understand our reality via Zapatista text, via Black and Brown writers and speakers...we always took the time to reflect on our... spaces, on facilitation, on our actions. Showing love to each other in those ways as well...**It wasn't just our inspiration from the Zapatistas, it was the inspiration we had from each other and how amazing we thought each other was as well. [bold emphasis added by authors]

For Ramona, it was not just the fact that she was developing her critical consciousness but that she was developing it with a community with whom she shared an authentic and caring relationship. Many critical educators use Freire's (1970) ideas of conscientization and praxis to make sense of our teaching practice. However, when writing about these ideas, Freire drew inspiration from the anti-colonial liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Navarro, 2018) and considered conscientization a viable project only when praxis was practiced in the community (Freire, 1970). Additionally, he saw love as being fundamental to dialogue and praxis. Freire believed that committing to others and their liberation was an enactment of love (Hannegan-Martinez, 2019). Still, Freire was not the first to propose collective learning or believe that learning had to be relational to be effective. Indigenous communities have engaged in relational and collaborative learning since time immemorial (Cajete & Pueblo, 2010). The Zapatistas taught us about collective learning, and after engaging in it, it fundamentally changed how we believed teaching and learning could be and feel. Collective learning became part of our cultural practice and understanding of what learning should be and thus became part of our shared cultural intuition.

In an interview with another collective member, Clyde, he describes his approach to teaching:

I think when I do my best teaching, I'm most aligned to that. When I'm learning how to teach, or when I learned how to teach, that was always like, "How do I make this classroom more like a space that we were facilitating in our Zapatista collective?"

While teacher education often idealizes and focuses on developing teachers' technical skills (Curammeng & Tintiangco-Cubales, 2017), cultural intuition's role in shaping our pedagogies should be accounted for and addressed. Our teaching practices form over time via teaching and by the cultural assumptions of teaching and learning that we carry (Cohen, 1989). Furthermore, our beliefs, values, and learning experiences shape us as educators (Chan, 2006). Like other educators

in our collective, Clyde's cultural intuition supported the development of his pedagogical practice. Despite being trained in a teacher education program, Clyde's understanding of good teaching comes from his experiences in community learning and organizing grounded in love and care. These experiences have come to form part of his cultural intuition and have, in turn, shaped his pedagogy. Additionally, the pedagogical resonance amongst our collective allows him to be held accountable for engaging in and sustaining this kind of pedagogy. Technical skills and innovative curriculum are necessary, but trusting our cultural intuition can lead us to develop pedagogies that attend to our holistic needs, uphold our political commitments, and, in turn, build more loving realities and promising futures.

Implications of this work

Today's current context poses many challenges for the spirit of Ethnic Studies, as expanding policies create a drive for it to be commodified, sanitized, and distributed to meet the growing demand and simultaneous resistance from American society today. As we look at current teacher education programs, there are important shifts that need to occur with how teachers are prepared. Rather than focusing on content and strategies, Ethnic Studies teachers of color would be better served in developing their cultural intuition by engaging in teacher inquiry groups and promoting community engagement as a foundational aspect. It becomes essential that the recruitment of Ethnic Studies educators prioritizes students already centering community and organizing work in their lives, especially since the cultural intuition educators inherently embody cannot be taught as it is a product of their lived experiences.

As teachers of color, we felt and continue to feel connected to the historical and current realities of our students and created educational experiences to positively impact learning (Tintiangco Cubales et al., 2014, p. 118). Still, it wasn't until we embraced our cultural intuition that we could fully acknowledge how our feelings and thinking come together to guide our choices. Critical reflexivity done in community led us to take informed action based on our intuition, which fed our spirits and gave us strength to continue our work. Indigenous and Black scholars have referenced spirituality from a secular standpoint as "an act of consciousness that reaches beyond the mundane into connection and alignment with an essence that finds its renewal throughout the generations" (Meyer, 2008). Accessing our cultural intuition nourishes our spirits as we find fulfillment in our subversive curricular, organizing, and personal work.

Developing and trusting your cultural intuition takes practice. It can be difficult to "trust your gut" when current educational spaces promote white supremacist schooling practices that prioritize evidence-based knowledge. This is why we found it important to do this work in community, with others who we share a pedagogical resonance with. This process requires a lot of unlearning and pushing back against curriculum or schooling practices that do not feel right for us or our students. Thus, we need people to hold us accountable to the spirit of why we do this work. We were taught, and learned to teach and research in institutions that have us depend on empiricism rather than our historical memories, experiences, and intuitions. We recognize that to work in education is messy, to seek liberation in places meant to erase, mold, and dispose of us often feels ridiculous. Yet cultural intuition offers us a way back to ourselves, to our communities, and to what feels right within us. It allows us to survive these institutions and to imagine and create realities beyond them.

As critical educators of color who are engaged in teaching, researching, and leading professional development in support of Ethnic Studies, we understand the importance of highlighting effective pedagogical practices that are rooted in the field. Cultural intuition is a powerful tool to develop a thriving and ethnic studies pedagogy. We understand cultural intuition as a subversive force that when done in community can nourish and sustain our spirits. In highlighting the power of being guided by our cultural intuition, we hope to encourage educators of color to also engage in this practice toward new possibilities in curriculum, relationships, and always in loving community.

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Let's vibe

By Marisol Ruiz

Let's vibe
You and I
Let's vibe
Let's vibe
Together

Let's combine our energies
And become one

Yes let's vibe
Let's share our
Stories
Our stories of
Sins, Pain, and shame

Let's vibe, listen and
share our stories of torment
stress and distress

Let's vibe, listen and share
Our stories of
Pleasure, Laughter and joy

Let's vibe, listen and share
Consejitos
Given to us along the ways

Yes let's vibe
And share a
Little piece of
Nuestro Corazon

A little piece of
Who we are

Let me share
my energy
Mi ser y mi amor
Let me share a little
Piece of me
To you

Let's vibe and
Combine our energies into
A ball of fire and
Let the flames
Light up
Every corner
Of this world

Let's vibe
As we listen
To each other
Becoming
The humming of
The colibris

Let's vibe as
We feed each other
With the nectars of
our
stories

Let's vibe as
we Become
rain drops
nursing our
roots

Let's vibe
For you have gifted
Me A little piece of you

Let's vibe
So the seeds
Of our writing
Will Flourish
In my soul

Let's vibe
Together for
I will hold and
Cherish
Your story
Sacredly
En mi corazón

So let's vibe

TIAHUI: A Decolonial Framework for Pedagogy & Practice

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Abstract

In this article we describe our decolonizing framework for pedagogy and practice with the intention of sharing a praxis-oriented model for Ethnic Studies practitioners. Our framework, TIAHUI (Nahuatl for “moving forward”), supports decolonial and rehumanizing pedagogy using three intersecting *circulos*: Community Agreements, the Nahui Ollin, and six tenets for decolonizing our pedagogy and practice. The TIAHUI framework is a living archive of resistance embodying Ethnic Studies organizing, decolonial pedagogy and Indigenous epistemologies, tying ancestral knowledge to the present context, as a living archive. This framework has been implemented by school districts and higher education institutions to reframe their policies and practices by including these critical and decolonial approaches in all areas of their curriculum and pedagogy, and more specifically, integrated into Ethnic Studies course work and curriculum development.

As a praxis-oriented model and a living archive, it is imperative to frame TIAHUI in a specific political and historical context. Emerging from the struggle for Ethnic Studies in Tucson (Acosta, 2007; Arce, 2016; de los Ríos, 2013; Delgado, 2013; Toscano Villanueva, 2013), our collective developed the TIAHUI framework as a living archive of resistance and a commitment to authentic and liberatory Ethnic Studies. In the decade since the dismantling of the Mexican American/Raza Studies Department (MARSD) in Arizona, the Xicanx Institute for Teaching & Organizing (XITO) carried on the legacy and historic success of that program by training thousands of educators, organizers, school counselors, and administrators (Dominguez, 2017; Fernández, 2019; Zavala, 2018). With our cumulative experience as Ethnic Studies practitioners, scholars, teacher educators, and community organizers, our framework is a reimagining of the intersections between Indigenous concepts and epistemologies (Arce, 2016; M. Gonzalez, 2017; Toscano Villanueva, 2013), Ethnic Studies pedagogy, and community agreements that ground our work (Fernández, 2019).

Growing out of struggle, TIAHUI is not only a living archive of resistance, but also an Indigenous re-remembering, critical to the current movement for authentic and liberatory Ethnic Studies. TIAHUI is an ancestral historical memory informing a pedagogy of love and liberation specific to our political and historical context. As Ethnic Studies is once again coming under attack, in large part due to the inclusion of Palestine in an Ethnic Studies curriculum, we are in solidarity with all oppressed people and determined to push back against the neoliberal racism fueling this opposition (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2022). Many teachers are up against state legislation

preventing them from teaching about colonialism, white¹² supremacy, the inclusion of trans and queer representation as well as a litany of content necessary for teaching an accurate history of the U.S. All of these attacks are framed in an “anti-woke” dogma designed to focus on individual feelings and detract from naming and understanding how systems of oppression must be analyzed, rather than individual notions of discomfort. Ethnic Studies directly challenges these attempts by our opponents, by helping our students develop a love of themselves and their *cultura*, build their critical consciousness, identify systems of oppression, and develop the skills and analysis to make change. TIAHUI is a pedagogical tool as well as a strategic response to the current social and political context educators currently experience.

TIAHUI As a Living Archive of Resistance

The nationally renowned Mexican American/Raza Studies Department (MARSD) in Tucson, effectively interrogated and disrupted the educational colonial project by reintroducing indigeneity to youth of color via Chicane ancestral knowledge (Acosta, 2007; Arce, 2016) and produced measurable results that eclipsed the “achievement gap” (Cabrera et al., 2014; Cappellucci Williams, C., Hernandez, J. J., Nelson, L. P., Casteel, T., Gilzean, G., & Faulkner, G. 2011; Sleeter, 2011). Chicane students in MARSD engaged in the reintroduction to indigeneity, which led to transformation and liberation as assessed through human measures such as sense of hope, cultural identity affirmation, purpose, and agency.

Critical Ethnic Studies educators continuously interrogate the educational system to eliminate colonial practices that dehumanize youth and their communities. Decolonial education provides educational spaces that cultivate a culture of rehumanization while equipping historically racialized youth with the skills to navigate and work to dismantle colonization through acts of resistance and remembrance, in this case using Chicane ancestral knowledge. The concept of self-love is fundamental and paramount in decolonizing Ethnic Studies programs. Chicane ancestral knowledge reminds us that our ancestors elaborated on a Mesoamerican Indigenous epistemology that fosters balance and harmony among all living creatures in an interdependent relationship. We draw on this Mesoamerican Indigenous epistemology to inform our framework for pedagogy and practice toward a decolonial educational ecology of rehumanization and remembrance.

TIAHUI's *Circuitos*

The term *circuitos*, meaning “circles” in Spanish, is used to name the structure of the TIAHUI framework as an intentional acknowledgment of Indigenous ways of knowing. Countering a western, linear method of understanding history and the world, *circuitos* embrace collective solidarity, balance, and cycles that overlap and inform each other. The TIAHUI framework includes three *circuitos* to provide a structure for decolonizing pedagogy and practice. Together these three *circuitos* inform and provide the foundation and structure for a decolonial approach to teaching and learning. Specifically, each *circulo* represents components of a decolonial ecology integral to an Ethnic Studies program or class.

¹² We use the lowercase “w” for white and upper case for all racialized groups as a counterhegemonic practice. We recognize that “white” is rooted in the domination and oppression of racialized groups, whereas “Chicane/Latine, Black/African American” etc. are not rooted in domination but rather name specific racial and ethnic groups.

The outer *circulo*, TIAHUI, is the Indigenous framework for decolonial and culturally humanizing pedagogy and instruction composed of six tenets. TIAHUI is a Nahuatl word and concept that means to move forward and is the essence of positive and progressive movement through developing our critical consciousness and a sense of agency. TIAHUI's six tenets are: *Teaching Critical Consciousness*; *Interconnectedness Through Student-Centered Instruction*; *Agency Through Critical Praxis*; *Historical Literacy Development*; *Unity Through Community*; and *Intersectional Identity Development*.

The inner *circulo* is the *Nahui Ollin*- A Nahuatl concept meaning "four movements," a system of cultural relevance and responsiveness that seeks balance and harmony for self and community through curriculum and content thus providing structure. Tezcatlipoca represents introspection, self-love, identity, self-awareness, and curiosity; Xipe Totec represents transformation through counter-stories and critical consciousness; Huitzilopochtli represents our will toward positive action through civic engagement and asserting agency; and Quetzalcoatl represents knowledge and stability.

Finally, the center *circulo* represents the Community Agreements that establish the humanizing culture and climate while setting high expectations for conduct and intellectual engagement. The three concepts, all Mesoamerican Indigenous philosophies¹³, include *In Lak'Ech*, *Panche Be*, and *Xipe Totec*. *In Lak'Ech* asserts humility and mutual humanizing conduct, *Panche Be* advances the challenging task of the development of a critical consciousness that is historically contextualized, and *Xipe Totec* represents the perspective gained as a result of wrestling with cognitive dissonance.

The three intersecting *circulos* in TIAHUI inform the structure of a specific component in the decolonizing education ecology that seeks to humanize the endeavor of becoming stable human beings. All three are critical components and should be implemented for decolonizing education within Ethnic Studies programs and classes. The community agreements are foundational for creating humanizing spaces by informing how relationships are created through conduct that emphasizes self-love and respect for others. Additionally, they foster a collective positive and progressive movement forward. The *Nahui Ollin* informs the curriculum and content through decolonizing and relevant themes. Racialized youth engage with the content through the cycle of the *Nahui Ollin* toward the acquisition of self-love (*Tezcatlipoca*) for the development of a critical consciousness and transformation (*Xipe Totec*) expressed in our actions (*Huitzilopochtli*) that results in a mature human being with knowledge and stability (*Quetzalcoatl*). TIAHUI informs the critical educator in pedagogy and practice and explicitly outlines the liberatory practices. Next, TIAHUI advances the six tenets that embed the community agreements and the *Nahui Ollin*. Finally, TIAHUI outlines teacher and teaching indicators of an effective decolonizing Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies class and program.

TIAHUI's Six Tenets for Decolonial Pedagogy and Practice

Using our decades of cumulative experience teaching, organizing, and leading in Ethnic Studies spaces, the XITO collective developed TIAHUI (Arce, 2016; de los Ríos, 2013; Dominguez, 2017;

¹³ Mesoamerican Indigenous philosophies are the knowledge systems, cosmologies, and cultural practices of "Mesoamerican" origin peoples that existed in pre-colonial times, and which now serve as decolonial knowledge systems, cosmological understandings, and cultural practices in contemporary times (Arce, 2016).

Fernández, 2019; Zavala, 2018). The six tenets for pedagogy and practice that drive the implementation of TIAHUI are a result of our work and analysis of what we see as most critical to include in a decolonial Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies setting in order to ensure that the pedagogy and practice is authentic, liberatory and rehumanizing. We developed six specific tenets, each with general descriptions on how these tenets can be applied to an Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies framework.

Teaching Critical Consciousness

When applying the tenet of *Teaching Critical Consciousness* to an Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies framework:

- We understand that teaching is political and that traditional schooling reproduces inequity.
- We are critically conscious and encourage critical literacy development through praxis.
- We foster students' critical consciousness towards transformation and liberation.

We understand education and the transfer of knowledge is at its core, political as education preferences a language, a culture, a pedagogical approach, and a state-adopted curriculum deemed official (Apple, 2014; Darder, 2017; Freire, 2018; hooks, 1994). Education functions through erasing Indigenous peoples' cultural wealth and imposes the dominant culture placing racialized youth at a disadvantage. This erasure manufactures a socially constructed achievement gap resulting in disparate social material outcomes, reproducing and reifying America's social order (Bowles & Gintis, 2002; Darder, 2016; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Yosso, 2005).

We understand that youth of color in authentic Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies classes are educated to counter this destructive force by facilitating their conscientization and developing their critical literacy (Freire, 2018). As critically conscious youth of color, they become agents of change (praxis) who become aware of our institutions and their systems, which provides them the analytical tools for agency and to redress oppressive conditions and circumstances in their lives. As critically aware (Lopez, 2017) practitioners who work to facilitate this metacognition process with and for our students, we understand that youth of color's conscientization enables the student to read the world, thereby identifying oppressive conditions and circumstances initiating an empathic posture of action (praxis) allowing for redress of the oppressive condition and circumstances. Students who labor to be critically conscious can critically reflect and take informed action in and outside the classroom, thereby humanizing and creating creative, loving and healing spaces that transform education, their community, and society.

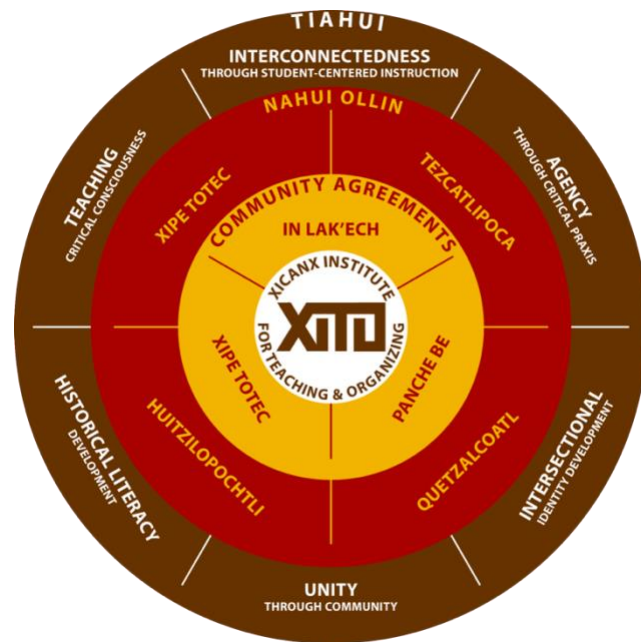


Figure 1: TIAHUI Framework

Interconnectedness Through Student-Centered Instruction

When applying the tenet *Interconnectedness Through Student-Centered Instruction* to an Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies framework:

- We integrate students' experiential knowledge through curriculum and instruction.
- We foster students' sense of belonging.
- We recognize the importance of student dialogue in the development of conscientization.

Interconnectedness through student-centered instruction fosters students' sense of belonging wherein youth of color can take intellectual risks in a humanizing space. In a student-centered authentic Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies classroom, students are provided the time to engage in knowledge co-construction to leverage the social aspect of learning and foster student voice. As a result, youth of color's ethnic identity is affirmed, and their culture is validated by integrating students' experiential knowledge when their culture is reflected in the curriculum (López, 2017). Centering students' lives in the curriculum is one way to foster a sense of belonging in what has historically been an exclusionary institution for youth of color. Once students see themselves as an integral part of the historical narrative, their engagement with the curriculum, and issues most impacting their lives, will develop.

Agency Through Critical Praxis

When applying the tenant of *Agency Through Critical Praxis* to an Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies framework:

- We guide students in the process of examining relevant social, political, environmental and economic issues.
- We provide the conditions for students to develop agency to make change to the conditions impacting communities.
- We embed the local community's vision of social justice into all aspects of the classroom and school site including the use of familial and community experts.

Freire (2018) reminds us that agency is predicated upon being informed (critical consciousness), and from this vantage point, one acts to humanize the space. Darder (2017) asks us as practitioners that our collective spaces be rooted in a notion of love. Accordingly, love can only be attained by developing one's consciousness. This cognition process of laboring to be critically conscious affords us the capacity to humanize human interaction and moves us to action in what is known as critical praxis. From this standpoint, students engage our learning spaces as subjects with their innate capacity to act, thus acting responsibly to help maintain a liberatory academic space.

Historical Literacy Development

When applying the tenet *Historical Literacy Development* to an Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies framework:

- We co-construct learning spaces with students to develop a critical historical literacy.

- We cultivate students' development of a historical consciousness and historical memory.
- We facilitate the analysis of historical counter narratives in opposition to the dominant or master narrative.

In accordance with the original tenets of Chicanx Studies, and as prescribed with the discipline's founding document of *El Plan de Santa Bárbara* (Chicano Coordinating Council on Higher Education, 1969), the call for the development of a "historical consciousness" is foundational for the liberation of Chicanx.

The role of knowledge in producing powerful social change, indeed revolution, cannot be underestimated... That is, it will help measurably in creating and giving impetus to that historical consciousness which Chicanos must possess in order to successfully struggle as a people toward a new vision of Aztlán. (p. 78)

Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies educators can embed *Historical Literacy Development* through its TIAHUI decolonial framework by the privileging and analyzing of historical counter-narratives based in Chicanx, as well as other racialized groups, and historical narratives. Because the historical narratives of Chicanx/Latinx, Black/African American, Native American/American Indian, and Asian American/Pacific Islander have been either completely erased or distorted in within public school texts and curriculum, the centering of the counter-narratives of these four traditionally racialized groups becomes necessary to correct these historical erasures and distortions as to ensure the historical memory, integrity, and well-being of these communities. Moreover, *Historical Literacy Development* affords Chicanx/Latinx youth, as well as other racialized youth, the opportunity to embrace themselves as historical subjects, as juxtaposed to being historical objects, wherein they can practice self-determination and create a more just future for themselves and their communities.

Unity Through Community

When applying the tenet *Unity Through Community* to an Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies framework:

- We practice solidarity with other racialized and marginalized groups through intersectional analysis and organizing.
- We support students on the importance of engaging in solidarity through praxis.
- We develop learning spaces that are community-responsive and are built upon community cultural wealth.

Tara Yosso (2005) asserts that the "middle and upper-class hierarchical society" reproduces itself through the inculcation of a deficit belief in youth of color and their culture. Given that assertion, as authentic Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies educators recognize community and youth of color cultural capital is essential in creating a sense of unity. Unity is fostered when solidarity among other racialized and marginalized group struggles and historical resistance are examined. The collective struggle is a primary source of examination, in an authentic Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies classroom, toward action through praxis. Authentic Ethnic Studies centers the lived experiences of the community, on the terms agreed upon by those most impacted by the issues being addressed and is reflected within the content of the curriculum.

Intersectional Identity Development

When applying the tenet *Intersectional Identity Development* to an Ethnic Studies framework:

- We co-construct learning spaces and facilitate processes wherein students will develop positive images of themselves.
- We facilitate the development of positive and fluid identities through processes of decolonization through an intersectional lens.
- We provide opportunities for students to consider all systems of oppression - including but not limited to race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and national origin - in order to transform and improve the conditions for themselves and their communities.

Intersectional identity development is essential for both students and educators to engage in Ethnic Studies classrooms. The process of *Tezcatlipoca* and applying critical consciousness are necessary for this development, which then leads to a deeper analysis and understanding of how the multiple aspects of our identities interact with systems of society. As Kimberlé Crenshaw (2017) reminds us, intersectionality provides a lens through which to analyze how our identities intersect with social forces and systemic structures (i.e., legal system, schooling system, medical system) and how those intersections then produce specific forms of discrimination.

TIAHUI's Community Agreements

Given the nature of schooling and the United States educational history of ethnocide (Spring, 2016; Valencia, 2011), we began to reimagine our classrooms as spaces of possibilities, spaces of hope, and spaces for what Chela Sandoval (2000) has termed “decolonial love.” Our understanding is that schools are subtractive and, through policy and practice, violently strip our youth of their resources, specifically their home language and *cultura*, placing them academically behind their counterparts. As decolonial educators who developed a critical awareness of the schooling system, we labor to have our students reject their imposed inferior identities and work to create educational spaces that embrace academic risk-taking, divergent thinking, and a humanizing discourse that builds *confianza* (Lopez, 2017).

Authentic Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies as a discipline is contextual and situated within communities, highlighting the often-omitted history of resistance, resilience, and struggle for human dignity. Consequently, our classes in Tucson focused on introducing Mesoamerican Indigenous notions of being, which revolutionized the field of public education with Indigenous concepts and a worldview, a legacy that reflects our students and the community we served, worked and struggled with, and for (Acosta, 2014; Arce & Fernández, 2014; Arce & Montañó, 2022; Fernández, 2019; J. Gonzalez, 2017; M. Gonzalez, 2017; Serna, 2013; Toscano Villanueva, 2013). Below are the three Indigenous community agreements which create a classroom ecology that re-centers teaching and learning as places for humanization and collective struggle for student liberation and empowerment.

In Lak'Ech

In Lak'Ech is a Maya expression and paradigm that repositions humanity in human interaction by reminding us of our collective existence and an interdependence of all living things. This concept is paramount to human interaction, thus, an integral component for an Ethnic Studies classroom's culture and climate. In Spanish, this concept translates to "*tu eres mi otro yo*," while in English, "you are my other me." *In Lak'Ech* disrupts and ruptures colonial educational spaces where student voices are in competition with each other or the teacher's voice, and instead see the full humanity in one another. This humanizing discourse through the *In Lak'Ech* principle reinforces and teaches empathy, compassion, and the skill of listening to understand. The humanizing discourse builds *confianza* and does not destroy the *confianza* (hope), *confianza* (trust), and *confianza* (confidence) of their "other me." Fernández (2019) reminds us as critical practitioners:

By agreeing to practice *In Lak'Ech*..., participants can engage in a process that can be transferred into their own classrooms to create a re-humanizing space that allows for everyone to participate from their own starting point as well as allow themselves to treat others with compassion and love, regardless of how new or experienced they are with Ethnic Studies pedagogy. (p. 7)

Panche Be

Panche Be originates from the Maya peoples and is understood in Spanish as "*buscando la Raiz de la Verdad*" in English it translates to "seeking the root of the truth." This Maya concept symbolizes people being knowledge seekers, requiring inquiry and research. *Panche Be* requires an analysis that goes beyond the superficial and demands an interrogation of the conditions and circumstances governing the phenomenon one is attempting to understand. This community understanding in an authentic Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies classroom sets a tone of high expectations and critical examination. It establishes a work ethic of study that is an arduous and disciplined task of learning, requiring an investment in time and energy. The Indigenous concept of *Panche Be* works to humanize the human experience and helps students to begin to build a Freirean critical consciousness. Both concepts, *Panche Be* and being critically conscious, work in tandem, facilitating the humanization of people moving them to question the "why" and seek the root cause of the pathology or social condition, thereby allowing for redress in changing oppressive conditions and or circumstances. This analysis, alongside *In Lak'Ech*, facilitates a classroom ecology of empathy and personal as well as intrapersonal growth; a collective understanding.

Xipe Totec

Finally, *Xipe Totec*, a Nahuatl or Mexica concept, comprises the community understanding of transformation. *Xipe Totec*, Mictlani Gonzalez (2018) explains as:

Transformation. This is a place of cohesion and order to our thoughts whereby clarity is reached as a result of reflection (*Tezcatlipoca*). Through our reflection we can begin to make sense of the chaos associated with an issue and find order. Finally, by giving order to our thoughts, new perspective is gained that must positively impact our actions.
(p.128)

As subjects with the capacity for agency, we encourage students to continue to evolve and transform as people, intellectuals, and classmates. This Nahuatl *energia* reminds us that change, or transformation, is a constant in life. According to the philosophical principles of *Xipe Totec*, change must result from a time of repose wherein we look deep into our hearts to find the solutions that will allow us to evolve, to grow, and not regress. These understandings are our shared community agreements, a commitment to a collective struggle to uncover meaning, and a code of conduct that governs this intellectual endeavor.

The Nahui Ollin

The distinguishing element of the former Mexican American/Raza Studies Department (MARSD) in Tucson, from other K-12 public education programs, and now a distinguishing element of XITO's professional development, was its decolonizing and liberatory pedagogical foundations which were based in Chicana Indigenous epistemologies. Specifically, the privileging and operationalization of the *Nahui Ollin* - the central space representing "four movements" within the Aztec calendar with its physical, spatial, scientific, and philosophical meanings - served as the main curricular and pedagogical framework within the former MARSD. Within the *Nahui Ollin* are the four principles of Tezcatlipoca, *Xipe Totec*, *Huitzilopochtli*, and *Quetzalcoatl*.

In this section, an analysis of these principles demonstrates how this framework within the *Nahui Ollin* informed the innovative, decolonizing, and liberatory MARSD, contributing to the development of strong cultural identities and the closing of the persistent and pervasive academic achievement gap for Chicana youth, which in effect created a Chicana Indigenous epistemological praxis. For these reasons, the *Nahui Ollin* continues to be operationalized within XITO's decolonial and liberatory professional development training and workshops with teachers who are implementing Ethnic Studies/Chicana Studies in their respective school districts.

Tezcatlipoca

The etymology of *Tezcatlipoca* is from Nahuatl, starting with the word "*tezcatl*" which means "obsidian" and/or "mirror" and then "*popoca*" which means "smoking," which together translates to "the smoking mirror" (Arce, 2016). Tupac Enrique Acosta, Xicano nation elder, community/Indigenous/human rights activist describes Tezcatlipoca as:

A reflection, a moment of reconciliation of the past with possibilities of the future - not a vision of light but an awareness of the shadow that is the smoke of light's passing. It is the "Smoking Mirror" into which the individual, the family, the clan, the barrio, the tribe and the nation must gaze into to acquire the sense of history that calls for liberation. (Acosta, 2006, p.3)

The process of gazing into the "smoking mirror" - Tezcatlipoca - is a process to regain the historical memory at the individual and community levels, leading to individual and community liberation. This critical reflection of self not only affords Chicana youth to reconcile and embrace their personal, familial, and community histories, but it serves as the very foundation upon which Chicana can be creators of their own futures. Within XITO professional development workshops with teachers, as well as within our own Ethnic Studies/Chicana Studies classrooms, we facilitate

with teachers how to engage their students in *Tezcatlipoca* through intersectional critical self-reflections to include, but not limited to, race, class, and gender.

Xipe Totec

The origins of *Xipe Totec* are from Nahuatl, “*xipehua*” meaning “to shed” and then “*totecuhtli*” meaning “our guide/our dignitary” which taken together means “our guide to transformation” (Arce, 2016). Once students have come to embrace their own personal histories and their own intersectional identities, as well as that of their communities, they will begin to undergo processes of transformation. The ultimate objective of engaging in the *Nahui Ollin* as an Indigenous epistemological framework is transformation. This movement of transformation, as represented through *Xipe Totec*, is consistent with the natural life cycles, further demonstrating that the *Nahui Ollin* as a decolonizing and liberatory tool is not a static model, rather, it is one that is fluid, adaptable, and transformative. “*Xipe Totec* - transformation. Identified as our source of strength that allows us to transform and renew. We can achieve this transformation only when we have learned to have trust in ourselves” (Acosta, 2007, p. 38).

Huitzilopochtli

The etymology of *Huitzilopochtli* is from Nahuatl, “*huitzilin*” meaning “hummingbird” and “*opochtli*” meaning “left.” *Huitzilopochtli* - the will to act - literally translates from Nahuatl as “hummingbird to the left.” This is in reference to the heart being on the left side of the body and the hummingbird’s tenacity of work rate to fly and the strength of its will. It is also symbolic of the sun rising in the wintertime. This concept has meaning for the will of a person or people to be positive, progressive, and creative. *Huitzilopochtli*, as praxis, presents students with the will and courage to enact their positive, progressive, and creative capacities to create change for themselves as well as for their *familias* and community. In this sense, the social realities that students find themselves situated in can be directly acted upon to improve their overall conditions. The engagement of *Huitzilopochtli*, the will to act, demonstrates the agency held by Chicanx youth to critically reflect upon their past and present (*Tezcatlipoca*), consequently becoming transformed (*Xipe Totec*), and to take action as historical subjects in constructing their futures (*Huitzilopochtli*). This process constitutes a decolonizing and humanizing methodology where the practice of self-determination, a foundational tenet of Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies, by Chicanx youth signifies their engagement in *Huitzilopochtli* as Indigenous epistemological praxis.

La voluntad. Will. The warrior spirit born with the first breath taken by each newborn infant in the realization that this human life we are blessed with is a struggle requiring physical effort for survival. The exertion of this life-sustaining effort evolves into a discipline, a means of maximizing the energy resources available at the human command which in order to have their full effect must be synchronized with the natural cycles. (Acosta, 2006, p. 7)

Tupac Enrique Acosta’s perspective of *Huitzilopochtli* provides critical insight to understanding that self, familial, and community self-reflections (*Tezcatlipoca*), as well as the subsequent personal, familial, and communal transformations (*Xipe Totec*), are necessary in facilitating processes of decolonization and liberation with and for Chicanx youth; nonetheless, these processes of self-

reflection (*Tezcatlipoca*) and transformation (*Xipe Totec*) are inadequate unless they were acted upon through direct individual, familial, and community action.

Quetzalcoatl

The root words of *Quetzalcoatl*, “quetzal” translated from Nahuatl meaning “beautiful and precious” like the iridescent feathers of a quetzal bird, and “coatl” translated from Nahuatl meaning *serpiente*/serpent, are representative of *conocimiento*/knowledge taken together is a concept meaning “precious and beautiful knowledge.”

From the memory of our identity, the knowledge of our collective history we draw the perspective that brings us to contemporary reality. From this orientation we achieve stability, a direction found in time tested precepts that allows our awareness and knowledge of the surrounding environment to develop. This awareness and knowledge merge to form the “conciencia” of a mature human being. (Acosta, 2006, p. 8)

Quetzalcoatl provides the merging of our critical self-reflections and the regaining of our collective memory with the obtaining of an awareness of knowledge (both a historical and contemporary understanding of our lived realities, which are consistently subsumed in public schools) to facilitate the development of *conciencia* within our students. Analogous to the Freirean principle of “conscientization,” students engaging in the Indigenous epistemology of *Quetzalcoatl* are critically analyzing the social realities that are steeped in their collective historical memory, identifying barriers that impede their progress in becoming fully human, and from this state of critical consciousness, they have the ability to envision, or in the words of Chicana scholar Emma Pérez, to imagine liberatory possibilities of the future through a “decolonial imaginary” (1999) to take action to transform their reality.

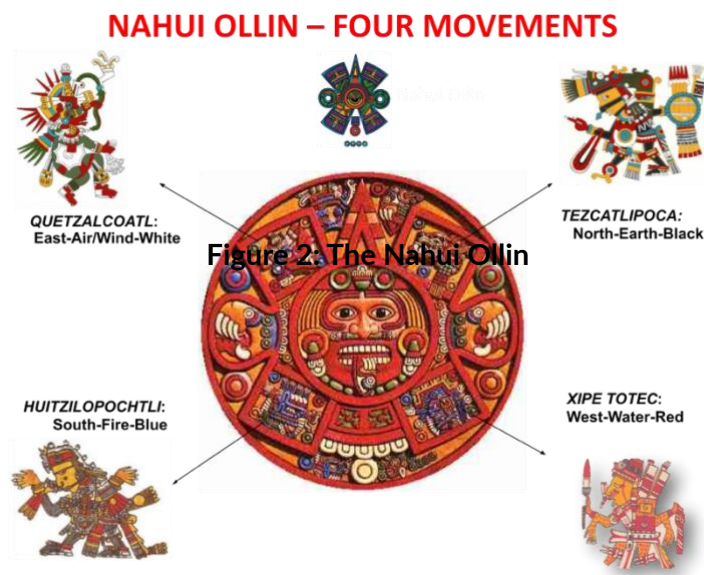


Figure 2: The Nahui Ollin

XITO colleague Curtis Acosta (2007), describes *Quetzalcoatl* as “precious and beautiful knowledge. Learning about our history follows self-reflection. Gaining perspective on events and experiences that our ancestors endured allows us to become more fully realized human beings” (p. 37). Within our XITO work with teachers implementing Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies, we guide them to accurately teach the histories of the racialized students that they serve, the histories of their ancestors, all that they endured, and the resiliency and strength to not only survive, but in fact thrive within the colonial conditions which Chicanx youth have been subject to. Chicanx youth, as well as other youth of color, engaging in *Quetzalcoatl* affords them the opportunity to see themselves as individuals within the larger Chicanx community, and as active subjects and creators

of history. *Quetzalcoatl* enables students to counter the master U.S. historical narrative that is taught throughout K-12 public schools which perpetuates Mexicans/Chicanx (and other youth of color) in the United States as mere objects of history without agency.

Moving Forward with Clarity

As a framework that emerged from a long political and legal struggle for the inclusion of Mexican American/Raza Studies to remain in Arizona schools, we offer a methodology that is both research-based and ancestrally informed by Indigenous epistemologies. Built from ancestral archives, TIAHUI manifests ancestral knowledge as a generative archive of knowledge which is co-constructed in the classroom and community. This Indigenous, ancestral knowledge, as archives of our communities, places and lives, remains a living archive of resistance, love, and cultural intuition. It is more critical than ever to ensure that Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies is being taught in a decolonial and liberatory manner and our TIAHUI framework offers one way to do so. In order for our youth to develop self-love, build their critical consciousness, and gain the skills to counter the hegemonic systems they endure, we must draw on the past to inform the present while understanding the current political climate. TIAHUI is a framework for pedagogy and practice but without educators' deep, critical self-identity work, the application of this framework will remain surface level rather than authentically decolonial.

TIAHUI is an intersectional tool for liberation that can be applied to any Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies course or program regardless of the demographics of the students, by applying the six tenets of pedagogy and practice, applying the community agreements to the educational space and integrating the four elements of the *Nahui Ollin* to provide ancestral knowledge to an Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies class. While the Mesoamerican Indigenous philosophies embedded in TIAHUI will connect most directly with Chicanx/Latinx youth, the elements are applicable to all youth as humanizing practices.

As we approach a decade of engaging in professional development that centers our framework, we are reflecting on the next decade ahead and how decolonial and anti-imperial Ethnic Studies/Chicanx Studies will be critical for students to have access to if they are going to address the social, economic, environmental, and political climates they have been handed. We are re-imagining a future where decolonial, anti-imperial theory and practice are the expectation rather than the exception to our youth's education. TIAHUI is an offering for that movement forward in a decolonial and humanizing way, as an offering of ancestral knowledge and a living archive of resistance.

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Oral Histories and Pláticas as Ancestral Conocimientos and Ethnic Studies Pedagogies

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Abstract

In this essay, we situate the Chicanx/Latinx feminist methods of oral history and pláticas (which we use in our research) within a framework of ancestral conocimientos (Mendoza Knecht, 2022) and discuss their potential as Ethnic Studies pedagogies. Ancestral conocimientos are the ancestral forms of knowledge and cultural production that have existed within Chicanx/Latinx communities for generations that also function as culturally sustaining (Paris & Alim, 2017) and healing pedagogies. Ancestral knowledges align with Ethnic Studies as they teach the value of inquiry into the self, our families, and communities. Given the violence of coloniality (Maldonado-Torres et al., 2008) and the historic and continued attempts by schools to detach students from their families, languages, ethnic identities, communities, and spiritual practices (Calderón, 2009; Love, 2019), we outline the transformative potential of oral histories and pláticas in decentering whiteness and making space for students to engage in teaching and learning with their whole selves.

The following plática took place between us, Lisa and Sylvia (hermanas and co-authors of this piece) in Sylvia's home at the kitchen table. Located across from where our plática took place is Sylvia's ancestor altar that houses photos of our father, Armando Baladez Mendoza, as well as the handwritten names and photos of our other ancestors.

Sylvia (to Lisa): When I think about your theoretical framework of ancestral *conocimientos*, how oral histories and virtual *pláticas* are an extension of this, and what drew us to this work, I think about this instance with mom in the backyard.

Lisa leans back into her chair, preparing to receive this memory.

Sylvia: We were outside and she saw that one of my potted plants had dried up. She bent over and touched the dried stems and leaves and started to crinkle them in her hand, letting the pieces fall back into the pot. She told me that I could water those dried pieces and that the plant would regrow again in the spring. Something about seeing her brown elder hand in that dried plant made me emotional and stuck with me. Yes, she was teaching me how to care for my plants, but this was also a lesson in how one day she will be gone, and as her seeds, her knowledge and spirit will remain within us.

Introduction

We begin this conceptual essay with a *plática* to highlight the ways teaching and learning occurs, not only in schools, but through conversations at home, stories, engaging with plants, and memories. In this essay, we draw from the work of Lisa and her framework of ancestral *conocimientos* (Mendoza-Knecht, 2022) to outline how the Chicanx/Latinx feminist methods of oral histories and *pláticas* can function as Ethnic Studies pedagogies (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Flores Carmona & Delgado Bernal, 2012; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). Given the violence of coloniality (Maldonado-Torres et al., 2008) and the historic and continued attempts by schools to detach students from their families, languages, ethnic identities, communities, and spiritual practices (Calderón, 2009; Love, 2019), we outline the transformative potential of oral histories and *pláticas* in decentering whiteness and making space for students to engage in teaching and learning with their whole selves.

As community activists push for the incorporation of Ethnic Studies courses and departments across the K-20 pipeline, they also advocate for the development of Ethnic Studies teaching approaches (Cammarota & Romero, 2014; Mendoza-Avina & Morales, 2022; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020; Daus-Magbual & Tintiangco-Cubales, 2016; Zavala, 2019). Chicanx/Latinx feminist educational researchers have identified and created powerful pedagogies that are useful for both traditional and Ethnic Studies classrooms (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Delgado Bernal et al., 2006; Elenes, 2010; Mendoza Aviña, 2016; Tijerina Revilla, 2004; Villenas, 2019). We situate the Chicanx/Latinx feminist methods of oral history and *pláticas* (which we use in our research) within a framework of ancestral *conocimientos* (Mendoza Knecht, 2022) and discuss their potential as Ethnic Studies pedagogies. Ancestral *conocimientos* are the ancestral forms of knowledge and cultural production that have existed within Chicanx/Latinx communities for generations that also function as culturally sustaining (Paris & Alim, 2017) and healing pedagogies. Ancestral knowledges affirm the wisdom and beauty of our ancestors. It is a knowledge process that negates any deficit misconceptions of students, particularly students of color. Ancestral knowledges align with Ethnic Studies as they teach the value of inquiry into the self, our families, and communities. This is especially important for youth as they navigate life with the long-term impacts of surviving a global pandemic.

At the start of this essay, we mentioned Sylvia's ancestor altar. We return to the altar here and the four earth elements that are traditionally present (*tierra, aire, agua, fuego*) to structure this essay. As we advocate for the use of oral histories and *pláticas* as pedagogies that facilitate ancestral *conocimientos*, we also model one ritual that we use in our homes, research, and writing that keeps us connected to our ancestors.

In this essay *tierra* represents being grounded and/or rooted. In the following section, we use *tierra* to provide a condensed literature review on existing Ethnic Studies pedagogies. Within the research on Ethnic Studies pedagogies, we center the work of Chicanx/Latinx feminist educational scholars and their theorizations on oral histories and *pláticas*.

In the section titled, *aire*, which is represented with incense and can function as an invitation to the ancestors as well as be used to send our prayers to them, we provide a discussion of the theoretical framework of ancestral conocimientos (Mendoza Knecht, 2022). Through *agua*, which is an offering to our ancestors (along with their favorite foods) and represents sustenance and life (through the use of a glass of water), we discuss how oral histories and pláticas can be used in the classroom to center students' ancestral ways of knowing. We end with *fuego* (usually represented with candles) which reflects intense energy and a guided path to facilitate a discussion on the contributions of ancestral conocimientos to Ethnic Studies.



Utilizing an ancestor altar for the structure of this essay drives home our larger argument: that oral histories and pláticas as Ethnic Studies pedagogies provide the opportunity for students to draw upon their ancestral knowledges and engage with teaching and learning in a meaningful and embodied way. An ancestor altar recognizes the existence of and connection to ancestors, and as such, the existence of other histories, epistemologies, and ontologies outside of what is taught in schools. It recognizes the home, spirituality, cultural practices and ancestral knowledges of students and their communities as sites of valuable knowledge production. For those unfamiliar with their ancestors, we emphasize the value of inquiry to themselves.



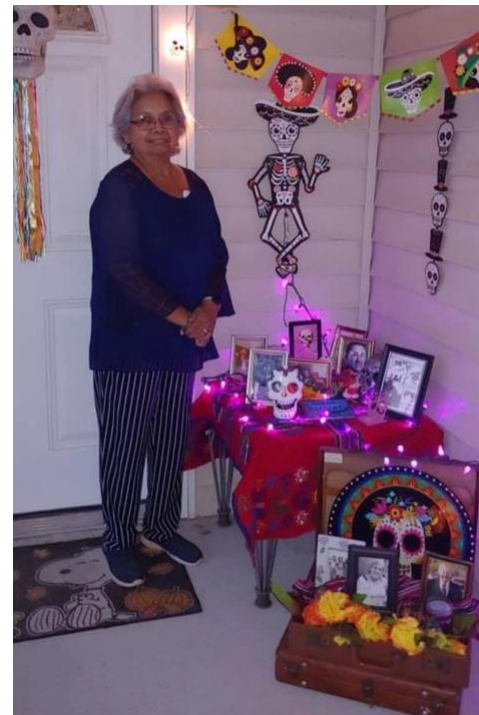
We recognize ancestral conocimientos as a powerful intervention to education especially given the place we are writing within/from/against in Yanawana/San Antonio, Texas. We are living and writing on the lands of the Carrizo/Esto'k Gna, as well as many Coahuiltecan-speaking bands (Payaya, Pacoa, Borrado, Pacawan, Pawame, Papanac, Hierbipiame, Xarame, Pajalat, and Tilijae peoples). We situate our positionalities as Chicanx feminists who have Indigenous ancestry, yet are not Indigenous and are in the process of expanding our knowledge of Indigenous and Black histories of this region, while also learning and practicing rituals rooted in our family's ancestry.

We experienced the violence of Texas public schools as former students (and for Lisa, as a public school teacher for 17 years), that continues to perpetuate settler colonialism and attempts to erase the histories and contributions of queer/trans, Black, Indigenous, and communities of color (Montejano, 1987; Pérez, 2003; Torget, 2018). Presently, the Texas legislative session is in the process of reviewing anti-DEI, anti-CRT, anti-LGBTQ, and anti-academic freedom bills. These bills were put forth by conservative politicians who use discourse around child safety to "protect" youth from critical thought, meanwhile ignoring the material danger of gun violence in the U.S. Some

school districts in Texas, such as the North East Independent School District located in our hometown, have banned at least 100 books, most by authors of color and relating to themes relevant to queer, Black, Indigenous, and communities of color.

We recognize this violent backlash by policymakers as a response to the 2020 racial uprisings, and the increased discourse amongst mutual aid organizations, youth, community activists, and scholars around abolition. The principles of Ethnic Studies, as adopted and published in the California State Board of Education, Sacramento (2022) explicitly critique empire building and its relationship to white supremacy; challenge racist, bigoted and imperialist/colonial beliefs and practices; connects students to past and contemporary social movements to imagine change; and places high value on pre-colonial ancestral knowledge (p. 15). As such, Ethnic Studies poses a threat to those with investments in white supremacy.

It is no wonder that we now, as educators, researchers, and feminists, utilize oral histories and pláticas in our research and praxes given our experiences with silencing and erasure within Texas, U.S., and Chicano historiographies and schools, and within traditional Chicano culture (Espinoza, Cotera, & Blackwell, 2018; Covarrubias & Tijerina Revilla, 2003). We learned from our mother, grandmothers, communities, femtors (Brown, 2006; 2009), and ancestors, as well as the stories they pass down to us, that other forms of knowledge, history, activism, and power exist outside of what we are (mis)taught in schools. To tap into these knowledges requires talking with and to our families, elders, and communities. As such, ancestral conocimientos are an offering from our ancestors to future generations of learners, teachers, storytellers and culture keepers. In the next section, tierra, we ground this essay within the legacy of activism and scholarship of Ethnic Studies and Chicanx/Latinx feminisms.



Tierra: A Brief Overview of Ethnic Studies Pedagogies

Movements for Ethnic Studies emerged out of community and youth activism, as evidenced with the 1968 student walkouts in East Los Angeles, California, Edcouch-Elsa, Texas, and San Antonio, Texas, as well as by the Third World Liberation Front at the University of California, Berkeley the following year. This activism gave way to the development of a number of discipline organizations in the 1970s, such as The National Association for Ethnic Studies, The National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, The American Indian Curriculum Development Program, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños at Hunter College in New York City, and The Ethnic Studies Department at Bowling Green University in Ohio (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). As these movements swelled over time and contributed to the creation of Ethnic Studies in universities and eventually high schools, it became clear that teachers and faculty would need training in the history, principles, and praxes of Ethnic Studies. Tintiangco-Cubales et. al. defined Ethnic Studies pedagogy by observing K-12 Ethnic Studies educators and identifying the following patterns:

First, strong Ethnic Studies teachers had a sense of purpose of Ethnic Studies, which was to help students critique racism and its personal and social impact, as well as to challenge oppressive conditions... Second, the strong Ethnic Studies teachers brought a culturally responsive pedagogical orientation to their work. They believed in their students academically, knew how to situate students' questions and lives within Ethnic Studies content, and knew how to lead students through a process of identity exploration and transformation in relationship to Ethnic Studies. Third, they were able to engage with focal ethnic communities on an ongoing basis using the framework of community responsive pedagogy. They recognized the importance of building relationships with their students and students' parents and wider community, and built curriculum around those relationships. Fourth, while there were strong white and non-white Ethnic Studies teachers, being a person of color was a distinct asset. (p. 111)

Years later, Cuauhtin, Zavala, Sleeter, and Au (2019), expanded upon this conversation and identified four macrothemes of Ethnic Studies pedagogies which include the teaching and learning of the following: 1) pre-colonial ancestral roots, traditions and stories; 2) historical and contemporary exposure to intersectional racism, white supremacy, and settler coloniality faced by Black, Indigenous, and communities of color; 3) the normalization of colonialism through hegemonic practices and policies; and 4) the transformative resistance leading to radical healing and liberation (Tintiangco-Cubales, Montaño, Carrasco-Cardona, & Gallagher-Geurtsen, 2020). For us, oral histories and pláticas within a framework of ancestral conocimientos facilitate the macrothemes of Ethnic Studies. In the next section, we ground ourselves in the work of Chicanx/Latinx educational scholars with an emphasis on oral histories and pláticas.

Tierra: Chicanx/Latinx Feminist Pedagogies

In 2001, Elenes, Delgado Bernal, Gonzalez, Trinidad, & Villenas introduced the concept of Chicana feminist pedagogies, or the "culturally specific ways of organizing teaching and learning in informal sites such as the home - ways that embrace Chicana and Mexicana ways of knowing and extend beyond formal schooling," (p. 624). This includes dichos, cuentos, storytelling, and *corridos* as sites of knowledge production. Delgado Bernal expanded upon these pedagogies with her conceptualization of pedagogies of the home in relation to Chicanx college students. What white supremacist education would have people believe as obstacles to learning, Delgado Bernal found, were crucial for Chicanx/Latinx students and their education, such as their bilingualism, biculturalism, commitment to communities, and spiritualities

This provided the foundation for other critical race and feminist scholars to flesh out and identify other Chicana/x feminist pedagogies that exist within our communities. In her research with an organization called Raza Womyn, Tijerina Revilla (2004) outlined a *muxerista* pedagogy informed by Black and Chicanx/Latinx feminisms and critical race theory that emerged within the collective. Tijerina Revilla's muxerista pedagogy highlights how raza womyn not only engage in knowledge production, but also community building and relationship building, and how these elements are not mutually exclusive and in fact, necessary for Chicanx/Latinx feminist education.

In 2006, Dolores Delgado Bernal et al. published the edited book, *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology* that outlined how

Chicanx/Latinx communities engage in knowledge production, to include: teaching and learning with and from the land, pedagogies that emerge while laboring in campesinos, and how teaching and learning occurs through the use of humor. Important to note is that these pedagogies emerged from research being conducted by Chicanx/Latinx feminist scholars in collaboration with the community. Chicanx/Latinx feminist scholars were not only creating and using innovative methodological research approaches with their participants, but were also co-creating and documenting emerging Chicanx/Latinx feminist pedagogies in the process (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012). As such, some Chicanx/Latinx methodologies/methods, like oral histories and pláticas, can also function pedagogically.

Chicanx/Latinx feminist oral histories and pláticas: Methodology, method, and pedagogy

Chicanx/Latinx feminists have relied on oral histories and pláticas to inquire into their lives, to disrupt silence, to locate women and queer folks within the historical record, and to tap into sacred knowledge. Collaborative anthologies, such as *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* and *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios*, have utilized oral histories and narratives to document the shared and divergent experiences of Latinx communities within the U.S., across the diaspora, and across cultures.

Chicanx/Latinx feminist educational researchers and historians, such as Dolores Delgado Bernal, Maylei Blackwell, and Vicki Ruiz have used oral histories to center the leadership and activism of muxeres. Through their use of oral histories, we now have access to the names and contributions of women who organized and participated in the East LA walkouts (Delgado Bernal, 1998), who organized within the larger Chicanx Civil Rights Movement across the Southwest (Blackwell, 2016), as well documentation of Mexican women laborers along the Mexico-U.S. border (Ruiz, 2008).

While these aforementioned scholars used oral histories as their research method, other scholars have inquired into the transformational potential of oral histories as pedagogical praxis. Flores Carmona and Delgado Bernal (2012) examined the use of oral histories in the K-6 classroom to disrupt settler colonial curriculum within a Salt Lake City public school. They found the use of oral histories pedagogically empowered students, introduced students to other languages and experiences, and provided a space to center their home and community knowledges within the curriculum and classroom. Similarly, pláticas within a Chicanx/Latinx feminist framework, have been used by scholars as methodology/method, and can also function pedagogically. We expand upon their pedagogical nature in the next section.

Pláticas

Pláticas have been an integral part of Chicanx/Latinx communities. The act of platicando con nuestrxs familias and friends has been a way for us to better understand ourselves, each other, and to learn from the stories and insight that our sisters, mothers, tias and grandmothers share. We both share many moments with the women in our families gathered separately from the men - in the kitchen, backyard, or patio - coming together to check in on each other, to ask for consejos, to chismiar, laugh, dance, and sometimes cry. These instances made us see our elders through a different lens, where the women in our lives were vulnerable, at times crumbling from exhaustion, doubled over from laughter, and holding each other's hands and rubbing each other's shoulders to affirm experiences and offer compassion and comfort. As such, we understand pláticas as

methodology/method and pedagogical praxis because it was modeled for us by the women in our lives as young girls growing up, as well as with our comadres in undergraduate and graduate school, and now in our roles in higher education (Flores Carmona et al., 2021; Hampton & Mendoza Avina, 2023; Morales et al., 2023).

As method, Delgado Bernal & Elenes (2011) explain pláticas as a series of informal conversations and dialogues between the researcher and the participants of a study that departs from traditional approaches to qualitative research interviews. With pláticas, conversations are informal, vulnerable, and based on a sense of confianza (confidence), trust (respeto), and personalismo (mutual holistic sharing) between the researcher and the contributors (Valle & Mendoza, 1978 as cited in Applewhite, 1995). The use of pláticas in research was born from the belief that traditional models of research such as surveys did not work well with Chicana/Latinx communities (Beccerra & Shaw, 1984 as cited in Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016).

As methodology, pláticas are rooted in Chicana/Latinx feminist theory and include the following principles: 1) draw upon Chicana/Latina feminist theoretical frameworks, 2) honors and acknowledges study participants as co-constructors of knowledge, 3) makes connections between lived experiences and the research process, 4) provides potential spaces of healing, and 5) is a reciprocal process based on vulnerability and trust between the participants and the researcher (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Because of COVID-19, national shutdowns, and quarantine requirements, Lisa adapted plática methodology when collecting data for her dissertation research on Chicana/x community leaders in San Antonio into virtual plática methodology.

Virtual plática methodology was the result of navigating qualitative research in the summer of 2020, a time when no one could be physically close to one another. The ongoing global pandemic challenged emerging qualitative researchers needing to collect data in a virtual environment. Virtual pláticas at the height of COVID taught Lisa to trust her cultural intuition as a qualitative researcher, and to exercise compassion and mutual aid in a way not immediately required of plática methodology pre-COVID.

Conducting research during the pandemic challenged Lisa to think about reciprocity in different ways, including donating money to her participants' community organizations when possible, partnering with these organizations a part of her study, and participating in their hosted virtual events, attending virtual funerals of loved ones who passed due to COVID, and reflecting and processing the arrebatos that came with COVID with her participants. While virtual plática methodology was used to collect data on these women's leadership as community organizers, the pláticas also became a space for researcher and participants to unpack fears, anxieties, confusion, pain, and also reminders of how to access joy in the midst of a global pandemic. As the women continued to suffer loss at the time (whether through bereavement, financial loss, as a result of isolation), they reflected on their shifting priorities and a sense of urgency to hold tight to loved ones.

Inherent within the tenets of a plática methodology then, whether virtual or in person, is pedagogy. To recognize participants as co-constructors requires a pedagogical component: researchers must be open to radically listening to and learning with and from their participants throughout the research process. Within a plática methodology, participants are teaching researchers - not only about the research topic - but also about ethics, reciprocity, material needs, collaborative problem

solving, and power dynamics. For a researcher to engage this methodological approach, they must be open to pivoting and shifting based on the insight, expertise, and feedback they receive from their participants.

Morales, Flores, Gaxiola Serrano, and Delgado Bernal (2023) discuss how pláticas are part of a methodological disruption in educational research, as pláticas require the bodymindspirit to remain intact as part of the theorizing and research process. This is a departure from white supremacist binary thinking that attempts to locate theory/theorizing only in the mind. Through pláticas, our bodymindspirit build theory and are also pedagogical devices, holding embodied knowledge that “. . . comes from a need to identify our multiple ways of knowing and reclaim the intergenerational knowledge that has been passed down to us from our mothers, grandmothers, and other women in our families" (p .4).

Our goal in this section was to highlight how the Chicana/Latina feminist methods of oral histories and pláticas have been used by scholars as methodology and method, and to highlight the pedagogical nature of these approaches. We also discussed the ways that pláticas and oral histories align with the aforementioned macro themes of Ethnic Studies pedagogies. In the next section titled *Aire*, we elaborate on the framework of ancestral *conocimientos*.

Aire: Ancestral Conocimientos

Aire is represented through the incense we breathe in and out from our altars, which can function as an invitation to the ancestors, and is used to send our prayers to them. *Aire* is the wind, the faint breezes in between rustling leaves, our ancestors whispering, “We’re here.” In this section, we theorize with and through *aire* and Lisa’s framework of ancestral *conocimientos*, informed by Black/Chicana/Indigenous feminist thought (Gumbs, Martens, & Williams, 2016; hooks, 1981; & Love, 2019).

Ancestral *conocimientos* are processes of knowledge formation that help make sense of the *arrebatos* (Anzaldúa, 2002; 2015) of our lives. Anzaldúa (2002; 2015) explains *arrebatos* as the chaotic disruptions of our lives that create opportunities for consciousness raising and healing. For many students returning to K-20 classrooms, the material and psychological impacts of COVID have left them dealing with uncertainty about the future, financial stressors within the family, loss, anxiety, and mental health issues. Ancestral *conocimientos* gives both adults and youth a path toward healing from these *arrebatos*, which is a central component of the framework and Ethnic Studies.

Ancestral *conocimientos* are epistemological orientations rooted in care for oneself and the community. It takes into consideration the lived experiences, including childhood, racialized, classed, and gendered experiences of all students, and particularly students of color. The term ancestral refers to our Indigenous, Mexican, Mexican American/Chicana and African ancestors, those who have come before us to lay the stepping stones needed for us to continue to work and heal ourselves and each other.

Ancestral *conocimientos* acknowledge the tensions of not being Indigenous but living as Chicana and Latina mujeres connected to an ancestral past (Cotera and Saldaña-Portillo, 2015; Zepeda, 2020). This includes ancestors that we can name - family members whose names we know and can

call upon directly. As well as unknown ancestors who traveled these lands hundreds of years before we were born, as well as ancestors across the diaspora who survived through communities of care.

Ancestral *conocimientos* evoke a return to our ancestors for the wisdom needed to build, heal, and strengthen ourselves and our communities. Guided by *femtors*, women with experiential knowledge based on gender and race who guide other women in their personal, professional, and sometimes spiritual journeys, ancestral *conocimientos* invite Latinx communities to remember their inherent beauty and knowledge of their ancestral past, knowledges that have been under attack by white supremacy and the white-washing of curriculum in schools, to include storytelling and other oral traditions (Brown, 2006; 2009; Gonzales, 2012; Love, 2019). Adopted from Tijerina Revilla's (2004) Muxerista framework, ancestral *conocimientos* encompass the following:

- Are informed by Black/Indigenous/Chicanx/Latinx feminisms.
- Validate racialized, gendered, and lived experiences of Chicanx and Latinx women and youth.
- Are useful for coping with the *arrebatos* of our lives.
- Use oral histories and *pláticas* as praxis.
- Engage in intentional practice of remembering and honoring one's ancestor(s).
- Incorporate and center healing.
- Include *femtors* as guides for reflection, reciprocity, and problem solving.
- Align with the principles of Ethnic Studies Movements.

These components of ancestral *conocimientos* are important for critically examining oppressive structures that impact communities of color and for remembering our inherent knowledge of ourselves before colonialism. Oral histories and *pláticas* are the pedagogical *aries*, or paths, that guide students to ancestral *conocimientos*. They are pedagogical tools affirming outloud what we go through. Oral histories and *pláticas* are spiritual offerings in that we use memory, spirit, stories, and vulnerability to understand ourselves and our people more deeply and intimately, while in community with each other. Ancestral *conocimientos* affirm our wisdom, knowledge, beauty, interconnectedness, complexity, ancestors, languages, herstories and community support networks. For these reasons, ancestral *conocimientos* are fundamental in the building and healing of communities of color.

Agua: Oral Histories and *pláticas* as Ethnic Studies Pedagogies and Ancestral *Conocimiento* in the Classroom

The glass of *agua* we place on our altars serves as an offering for our ancestors to replenish themselves from their journey from earthly to spiritual realm. *Agua* replenishes, cleanses, and represents life. In this section, we discuss how oral histories and *pláticas* can be used in the classroom to center students' ancestral ways of knowing, replenishing themselves while simultaneously replenishing community.

Before expanding on these offerings, we return to Tintiangco-Cubales et. al. (2014) and their study identifying the teaching practices of Ethnic Studies teachers. In order for oral histories and *pláticas* as ancestral *conocimientos* to function as Ethnic Studies pedagogies in the classroom, the same axioms apply. First, teachers must have a sense of purpose of Ethnic Studies, specifically critiquing

systems of oppression. Second and third, teachers must believe in their students academically, as well as their families and communities, and develop relationships with all parties. Lastly, Black/Indigenous and teachers of color embody unique insight into Ethnic Studies and ancestral *conocimientos*.

The question of whether or not white teachers, researchers, and students can utilize oral histories and *pláticas* as ancestral *conocimientos* is not as simple as yes or no. As mentioned before, we would not ask educators and students to engage in pedagogies and practices that we ourselves would not normally engage in. This includes continuous critical reflection and honest dialogues regarding reciprocity. Perhaps the best response to this question are the deep reflexive questions that Delgado Bernal (2023) offers her students in her research courses:

- What is my personal past relationship to *pláticas* and oral histories?
- What are my collaborators' relationships with *pláticas*?
- How deeply have I delved into the Chicana/Latina feminista literature?
- Why do I believe this might be an appropriate methodological approach?
- In what ways am I willing to be vulnerable in a *plática* and oral history and how might my vulnerabilities parallel or differ from my collaborators? (As cited in Morales et al., 2023, p. 10)

Questions such as these serve as a good starting point for educators utilizing these methods, methodologies, and pedagogies. As discussed earlier, it is important that educators have a strong sense of Ethnic Studies so that they help students critique racism and its personal and social impacts (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). Educators must bring a culturally responsive pedagogical orientation to their work, dispel deficit notions of communities of color and believe in their students academically (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014; Valencia, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999). Teachers should know how to lead students through an inquiry process of identity exploration and transformation in relationship to Ethnic Studies and engage with ethnic communities using a framework of community responsive pedagogy (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). The intentional act of making time for practicing talking with their students on a regular basis is not only good for building trust and rapport, but it allows and encourages opportunities for students to theorize and process.

Educators should also be orientated in and work from the position where they recognize the importance of building relationships with their students, students' parents and wider community and build curriculum and projects around those relationships (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). Relationship building and trust is essential for those educators committed to providing authentic care for their students (Valenzuela, 1999).

We encourage teachers, of color and white, to explore their ancestral knowledges and practices, and reckon with their ancestral histories/legacies in order to develop approaches for students to do the same. We also understand that teachers and students may feel uncertain about who their ancestors are, and as a result, uncertain how to tap into their *conocimientos*. We draw from the work of Black feminist scholar Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2020). In the context of the Black diaspora, Gumbs offers that a call within to practice something, whether that is writing, meditating, or dancing, could be an invitation from the ancestors to commune and to engage in ritual. As such,

we invite teachers and students to sit with the discomfort of new practices and rituals and to trust their inherent knowledges, as well as their ancestors.

Offering 1 - Inquiry

Oral histories and pláticas intentionally make space for students to ask questions about themselves, their family members, and larger communities. The act of platicando, as well as listening, provides students with opportunities and time to reflect, deconstruct, process, share, and heal. Oral histories and pláticas afford students opportunities to explore their ancestral conocimientos through talking with elders, developing and writing questions to ask their families and communities, strengthening intergenerational relationships that become part of legacy work. Drawing on ancestral knowledge is to participate in inquiry. What this looks like in the classroom can include:

- creating lesson plans that teach students the practice of inquiry into the self, their identities, cultures, communities they feel a part of. This can be done through:
 - daily journal/writing exercises (prompts can include: A letter to the elders in my family, A letter to the ancestors, A love letter to my future self);
 - narrative inquiry/autoethnography assignments, which involves reading Black/Indigenous and of color literary authors and scholars like Zora Neale Hurston and Gloria Anzaldúa;
 - bringing in personal/cultural artifacts from the home to practice storytelling (bring a photo to engage memory and practice storytelling).
- creating lesson plans that teach students the Chicanx/Latinx feminist method of oral histories and pláticas, which involves:
 - practicing writing interview questions for the family (UCLA has excellent family history and oral history resources, as well as other community organizations like the Texas Freedom Colonies Project);
 - practicing interviewing each other in the classroom (to practice interview protocols, consent, speaking in class, listening, taking notes, making observations, developing follow up questions);
 - conducting interviews with family members and learning how to preserve these interviews, as well as collecting and preserving photos and other materials;
 - inviting families and community members/organizations into the classroom to story tell.
- Making assignments that have students research generations back into their family histories to evaluate labor, gendered expectations, access to education, etc.
- Having students observe their homes, families and communities as researchers, taking field notes, developing research questions, and interview questions.
 - Neighborhood walks
 - Photo story

- Grounding activities to connect to nature
- Completing family trees.

Offering 2 - Exercising vulnerability and compassion

Pedagogically, we would not ask students to engage with methods and practices that we ourselves would not use in our own everyday lives. Practices that honor our ancestors that we engage in include: building altars for the living and dead in our homes, writing creatively and academically about our lineages and cultura, creating artwork alongside students and the youth in our lives, visiting our loved ones and leaving flowers or letters at family grave sites/cemeteries, listening to and sharing music, and sharing these practices with our students. In acknowledging our bodymindspirit, we are returning to our Indigenous ways of knowing, feeling, and relating to one another and our surroundings. To do this, being vulnerable means being open to spirit, to all the facets of emotions and knowledges shaped for us by our ancestors.

For educators, exercising vulnerability and compassion in the classroom can look like:

- communicating with students about our limited knowledge of other cultural practices and traditions outside of our own, and inviting students and their families to teach about their expertise/experiences;
- acknowledging to students the white supremacist history of schooling institutions and curriculum that privileges European epistemologies and histories;
- modeling to students the ways that educators are learning about their own histories and ancestral practices, and being honest about the complexities of this process;
- selecting texts and resources to use in the classroom that utilize local oral history interviews and pláticas (can include assigning videos/podcasts of people engaging in oral history/pláticas, or the oral history interviews collected by local community organizations);
- practicing radical listening, first with their students in the everyday, and also intentionally through assignments that require students to listen to their peers. This can also be facilitated through somatic exercises that require students to sit with and listen to their bodies and emotions and reflect on them, and later practice these check-ins with each other;
- through healing círculos to start/end class discussion by asking students to share about their days
- Creating music playlists of students' favorite songs and artists to share and dance to.

Offering 3 - Healing

Ancestral conocimientos center and incorporate healing. Utilizing oral histories and pláticas creates intentional opportunities to address the arrebatos that students deal with on a daily basis. Schools, colleges, and universities are currently struggling with the impacts of COVID, citing concerns regarding attendance, grief and loss, recurring sickness and long COVID, mental health, teacher attrition, and declining enrollments. In the U.S. alone, 120,630 children under the age of 18 lost a

primary caregiver due to COVID-19, and 22,007 children experienced the death of a second primary caregiver (Hillis et al., 2021). A total of 142,637 children are estimated to have experienced the death of at least one parent or custodial guardian (Hillis et al., 2021).

The racial and ethnic disparities of these caregiver losses is cause for great concern. In southern states such as New Mexico, Texas and California, between 49% and 67% of children who lost a primary caregiver were Latino/a/x (Hillis et al., 2021). In southeast states such as Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, between 45% to 57% of children who lost a primary caregiver were Black (Hillis et al., 2021). The need for prevention interventions to help children navigate this trauma and support current and future mental health and well-being is paramount.

Using oral histories and pláticas in the classroom gives intentional space, time and opportunities for students, families and communities to process arrebatos such as grief and loss, as well as other sites of pain and confusion. In addition to the support and wraparound services provided by schools and campuses, ancestral conocimientos can offer healing to students, schools and communities dealing with the aftermaths of COVID-19 and other life stressors. Oral histories and pláticas offer the opportunity to explore and name our pains and share with one another the processes we go through to deal with those pains. These pedagogies challenge us to collectively work together and practice vulnerability so that we take time to process, while the rest of the world continues to move at a high-speed avoiding the fact that the U.S. has lost over one million lives in the ongoing pandemic.

- educators can utilize resources such as the Voces of the Pandemic Oral History collection from UT Austin, to showcase how other communities have used oral histories to reflect on the realities of the pandemic;
- educators can walk students through their own process of interviewing each other, or engaging in pláticas with the class, on the contemporary realities of students' lives. This can be done in partnership with counseling and community organizations;
- educators can create lesson plans for students to problem solve issues or needs for their communities using pláticas;
- educators can create check-ins with their students through either one-on-one pláticas or via free writes, letter writing, to process any current events;
- oral history interview assignments can provide opportunities for students to express their thoughts and emotions to family members, and to ask questions about the past, present, future;
- writing reflection papers after engaging in oral histories and pláticas, as well as after reading and discussing culturally affirming literature, can be helpful for students in understanding behaviors, ideas, and practices within their families.

Offering 4 - Connection to communities, femtorship, and solidarity

Just as we have had women in our lives to guide and provide us with consejos for navigating this ancestral plane, ancestral conocimientos through oral histories and pláticas acknowledges and utilizes femtors as part of the knowledge production process. The term femtor gives visibility to Black/Chicanx/Latinx/Indigenous women whose actions as mentors helps students to see and tap

into their own power (Brown, 2006; Gonzalez et al., 2015). Femtoring is an inherently political and public work in that it highlights the political force of relationships that validate caring, connections and community (Brown, 2006). As Gonzalez et al. (2015) explain, fostering femtoring relationships “. . . encourage individual and collective growth and wellness in service to social justice” (p. 111).

Hampton and Mendoza Aviña (2023) use pláticas as a pedagogical tool for engaging in solidarity and femtorship. They sit with what non-Black Chicanx/Latinx solidarity looks like and does materially for Black colleagues and students, offering strategies for coalition building through their use of testimonios and pláticas. Hampton and Mendoza Aviña (2023) provide a framework of critical care where they affirmed each other, centered the experiences of Black faculty and Black students, made space for Black pain, rage, and joy. Their weekly pláticas offered a space for validation, as well as opportunities to discharge, heal, laugh, strategize, chismiar in ways that offered protection and healing from white institutional violence (Hampton & Mendoza Aviña, 2023). The use of pláticas provided the women with support, femtorship, and healing they were needing as women of color in predominantly white spaces.

Pláticas can facilitate femtorships, connection to communities, and solidarity in the classroom through the following ways:

- inviting and creating systems of support that connect students to potential femtors in the community;
- inviting graduated students to share their experiences since completing high school;
- creating after school organizations that center Black/Indigenous/women of color;
- researching local community organizations that practice femtorship and ancestral practices and creating relationships with these organizations, inviting them into the classroom;
- advocating for the inclusion of Ethnic Studies courses/clubs across the educational pipeline;
- Incorporating literature and history lessons that highlight moments of gender/class/racial solidarity.

Fuego: Contributions to Ethnic Studies

On our altars, we use candles to light the path for our ancestors to return, and we also ask them to be with us and guide us in our own journeys. Fuego is an invitation back to us, and it is a symbol for the life force, the connection of the ancestral forces between Earthly and Spirit realms. Ethnic Studies in K-12 schools is vital for reconnecting to our ancestral conocimientos because Ethnic Studies courses provide a place to return and learn about the contributions, narratives, and herstories of our early ancestors.

In engaging in ancestral conocimientos, it is important to note the crucial role culturally relevant curriculum and Ethnic Studies pedagogies plays on students early on in their educational trajectories (Arce, 2016; Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017; Daus-Magbual & Tintiangco-Cubales, 2016; Mendoza Aviña, 2016, & Morales, et al., 2016). For states such as California, Ethnic Studies programs in high school campuses have led to an increase in grade point averages (GPA), and attendance and earned credit among students of color (Dee & Penner, 2017). Unfortunately, most students do not have access to these types of courses until college (Saldaña, 2021).

Consequently, relatively few students receive the opportunity to learn about their racialized and ethnic identities in spaces where they can talk openly, critically and honestly about the systemic injustices impacting them and their communities (Mendoza Aviña, 2016; Morales et al., 2016). Ethnic Studies courses are important for the growing number of students of color in our schools and communities (Daus-Magbual & Tintiangco-Cubales, 2016; Puente & Alvarez, 2021; Saldaña, 2021), specifically for states such as Texas where Republican legislators currently passed laws such as House Bill 3979 and Senate Bill 3 (Lopez, 2021). These bills are attempts to restrict how race and history are taught in our public schools (Lopez, 2021).

While states such as California are pushing for laws that include Ethnic Studies as a required course for high school graduation (Gecker, 2021), Texas is simultaneously passing legislation banning schools from teaching the truth about racism and white supremacy in this country (Baker, 2021). Ethnic Studies courses and curriculum allows students of color to examine their lived realities from critical perspectives (Saldaña, 2021; Morales et al., 2016). These courses connect students of color to the stories and histories of marginalized groups left out of Texas' white-washed curriculum (Puente & Alvarez, 2021; Saldaña, 2021). When students study the true histories of their ancestors, they become critically conscious of themselves and the racist systems that insist on keeping us in our place. Ethnic Studies are part of ancestral *conocimientos* because it calls us back to our roots; it acknowledges and honors our ancestors' experiences and memories, and ultimately sets the foundation to keep us grounded and connected to our ancestral ways.

For an increasing number of BIPOC in our Texas K-12 schools, providing Ethnic Studies courses is important to meet the needs of students. Ethnic Studies courses provide the space for critical discourses and can empower students of color in ways that can support them emotionally and academically beginning in the elementary school years as opposed to having to wait until their college years (Arce, 2016; Daus-Magbual & Tintiangco-Cubales, 2016; Mendoza Aviña, 2016).

Conclusion

We began this essay by situating the Chicanx and Latinx methods of oral histories and *pláticas* within an ancestral *conocimiento* framework for Ethnic Studie pedagogies. Using an ancestral altar as a structure for this essay, we argue that oral histories and *pláticas* are Ethnic Studies pedagogies that provide students opportunities to connect to their ancestral knowledges and engage in teaching and (un)learning in meaningful and embodied ways. We grounded this essay in the four elements as they exist on our altars.

Beginning with *tierra*, we provided a brief overview of the history of Ethnic Studies and Chicanx and Latinx feminist pedagogies. We show how Chicanx and Latinx feminist oral histories and *pláticas*, including virtual *pláticas*, function as method, methodology, and pedagogy.

Next, we use *aire* to situate and define ancestral *conocimientos*, a framework rooted in Black/Chicanx/Indigenous feminist thought. Ancestral *conocimientos* validate racialized, gendered, and lived experiences of Chicanx and Latinx women and youth. They are useful for coping with the *arrebatos* of our lives. Ancestral *conocimientos* use oral histories and *pláticas* as praxis to engage in intentional remembering and honoring of the ancestors and incorporate and

center healing. They include femtors as guides for reflection, reciprocity, and problem solving and align with the principles of Ethnic Studies Movements.

Our third element on our altar is agua - the water and other offerings we provide on our altars - so that our ancestors replenish themselves along their journeys. We provide four offerings of oral histories and pláticas to discuss how they facilitate inquiry, exercising vulnerability and compassion, healing, connection to communities, femtorship, and solidarity. Within these offerings, we include pedagogical practices that help students tap into their ancestral conocimientos.

We end with the fourth element of fuego, as represented with candles, to emphasize the life force of Ethnic Studies courses and programs and its many contributions to students and communities of color. As we begin to slowly process the long-term impacts of these last few turbulent years, particularly those impacts on marginalized communities, ancestral conocimientos through oral histories and pláticas have implications for individual and collective healing.

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Animal Artifacts and Narratives of the Mesoamerican Clay-Figurine Project

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Abstract

Animals and animal knowledge have played a significant role in helping to shape the health and well-being of humans since time immemorial. Animals provide food, important resources, and an allegory of lessons vital to our own Native way of existing. In this essay, we (Instructor García and Curator Hernandez) share with readers an assemblage of clay-figurine artifacts in the shape of animals and their accompanying student narratives. We do so to demonstrate how life's trials and traumatic experiences find resolve and positive meaning through the animal spirit. Modeled as a living archive of intergenerational testimonials in a Los Angeles area community college—Rio Hondo College—this praxis-oriented and critical reflection essay situates human health and well-being, reverence, and sobriety as essential to the Ethnic Studies project.

Keywords: Ethnic Studies Narratives, Animal Knowledge, Mesoamerican Clay Figurines, Community College Teaching

Animal Artifacts and Narratives of the Mesoamerican Clay-Figurine Project

The Mesoamerican Clay-Figurine Project¹⁴ housed at Rio Hondo College in Whittier, California, contains a living archive of student narratives and small-scale clay figurines made by Humanities and Anthropology students (Figure 1). In addition, the material is accompanied by a growing body of open-access essays that describe the teaching and research behind working with Indigenous students¹⁵ of Mesoamerican ancestry (see García, 2014, 2021; García et al., 2018; García & Márquez, 2021; Márquez & García, 2021). The project came to life in 2014 in a Humanities “Introduction to Mexican Culture” class and later spread to Anthropology courses with the goals of: (1) cultivating a strong sense of Native identity in disenfranchised students of color, (2) equipping students with an awareness of contemporary problems, and (3) offering avenues for

¹⁴ The official project website address is <http://mesofigurineproject.org>

¹⁵ In this paper, we identify Indigenous students as those with ancestry in the regions of Turtle Island (North America, Mexico, and Central America). Commonly labeled Hispanic and Latinx by colleges and universities. An assimilated and detribalized group, though not entirely, we acknowledge the Native values in long-held diets, language, and ceremonial practices still not entirely lost. We experience liberation in the small but steadfast decolonization efforts of Indigenous students and teachers.

students and teachers to organize around just causes outside of the classroom. As a place of emergence, our praxis in the classroom follows a series of critical lenses and exercises designed to learn from the living realities of students, while pointing to the US colonial legacies embedded in our Western areas of study, which have historically silenced and harmed Indigenous peoples and people of color worldwide.¹⁶

In our push to archive living student knowledge with traditional knowledge, and knowledge we learn along the way, a humanizing model arises. It is an ethical approach, and according to the Chicana scholar and community college educator Silvia Toscano-Villanueva (2013), it is an intervention for students during their formative years of adulthood when their place in the world and values are being cemented. Through the clay-figurine project, we sought to reclaim the “I” in writing exercises, read literature compelling to the lives of students, and validate personal narratives as rigorous intellectual thought. Our clay-work component is unique for consulting with small-scale representations of the human body as a source of knowledge. Working with clay challenges us to re-think ourselves. Students often ask, “Is this piece worth making? Is this aspect of my life worth the effort? Wow, how did I, or did I not, come full circle? What was taken from my body? What level of responsibility am I sharing? Where is the meaningful story I am hoping to produce?” When taught and performed with a keen sense of responsibility for the self and community, clay-work emerges as a critical form of teaching, and in the process, generates a living material archive of student knowledge. In Garcia et al. (2018), we describe these critical teaching and learning points as part of a therapeutic experience:

When students make their own figurines that promote positive health and well-being: 1) bodies reconnect with forgotten ways of being with the land, thus reconciling negative feelings toward the land; 2) the small-scale body is repeatedly shaped, destroyed, and built up in line with perceived ideas of wealth and happiness; 3) the body is symbolized alongside the departed and disenfranchised, assisting with feelings of guilt, bereavement, and reconciliation; 4) the body making the figurine shares the work with other figurine-makers, thus sharing stories and providing one another with emotional support; 5) heat-fired figurines serve as intimate gifts for the self, family, and community, thereby becoming an example of validation and hopeful resistance; and 6) clay figurines embody the ill-health and well-being of the body, and because of their materiality, sustain medical information for future inquiry. (pp. 143–144)

In the spirit of “Ethnic Studies Pedagogies as Living Archives for Social Justice, Resistance, and Transformation,” this essay interconnects the themes of curriculum as archive, intergenerational testimonial, and place-based pedagogies of the greater Los Angeles (LA) area. What is equally important, is that the topic of “Animal Artifacts and Narratives” in the lives of students of color represents an area that is culturally responsive to and sustaining of the home values, ceremonial practices, and healing beliefs of Indigenous people. Animals live in Native art, architecture, temples, and in the storytelling of students of color. For thousands of years, the animal and the animal spirit, among Indigenous people of the Americas, have been their source of inspiration, liberation, and

¹⁶ In early 2022, the project received a significant NEH/ACLS grant as part of the American Rescue Plan Act to support public engagement between students, teachers, and local community organizations around the issues of racial equity and social justice, community health and medicine, and Indigenous sovereignty. The project’s website contains the recorded conversations that describe critical teaching strategies, community projects, and Native knowledge.

autonomy, as this paper shows. Based on the significant presence of animals in our current collection (21/68), we assert that Indigenous students often seek their deeply rooted animal knowledge as a tool to generate positive health and well-being. Students intuitively choose to make animal figurines as their primary source of knowledge, challenging troubling Eurocentric notions that separate humans from nature, or that situate nature as an object of control and erasure. And so, “What role shall the animal and the animal spirit play in the critical instruction of our student communities?” is one question we ask ourselves while teaching and learning with an Ethnic Studies lens in mind.

In this praxis-oriented paper, we share the storytelling (handmade clay figurines and their accompanying narratives) of three students of color and how they experienced their trials and traumas through the animal world. The four parts of this essay represent a critical reflection practice (Toscano-Villanueva, 2013) as part of the commitment we share here in the greater Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley. In Raza studies (i.e., Ethnic Studies and Chicanx Studies), self-reflection serves as a mirror that cultivates critical thought and action. Like the revered Mesoamerican physician and intellect Tezcatlipoca, teachers of color carry mirrors to help ward off attacks on their lesson planning, teaching styles, and living bodies (Márquez & Garcia, 2021). And yes, critical educators constantly work under attack, such as the latest case (see Stutman, 2022, May 13) with the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, which was served with a federal lawsuit over claims that students in LA Unified were being taught an antisemitic agenda. Divine tools are needed in a learning era when the history and culture of Mexico and Central America is under-supported, whitewashed, and banned in places where it would most likely flourish (Arce & Montaña, 2022). With *mirror medicine*, educators of color remain grounded in dangerous times.¹⁷

In the first part of this essay, we share a guiding theory of the Mesoamerican student body (see also Garcia et al., 2018), the reflections of each author about their own position, and finally, how we engage our clay data. This part is followed by a presentation of three student animal artifacts and their transcribed narratives, which we find value in as a living archive of diverse human experiences (intergenerational testimonials). In our third section, we write about animals as a source of autonomy and liberation by citing and weaving passages from our student narratives, and cross-cultural understandings. Finally, our fourth reflection includes our final thoughts and conclusions concerning animal knowledge and learning. Our closing message entails one of reverence and sobriety of the human body and practice, in the spirit of Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s (2012) Coatlicue State, where sobriety is seen as a disruption to the addictions that harm our personhood.



Figure 1: Clay Figurines at Rio Hondo Community College

Note. Curation by Pricilla Yvette Hernandez. Photo taken by Santiago Andrés Garcia at Rio Hondo College, 2019.

¹⁷ Although we are not Ethnic Studies instructors, our teaching practices and values, public literature, and community work aligns with the goals of Ethnic Studies (see Acosta, 2007; Bonilla et al., 2021; Cabrera et al., 2014; Sleeter, 2011; Zepeda, 2020). As Tintiangco-Cubales and Duncan-Andrade (2021) noted, Indigenous peoples have been fighting and organizing in favor of a dignified life long before the institution of Ethnic Studies was built.

Our reflections and praxis stem from the greater Los Angeles area, but we see these applicable broadly across the Ethnic Studies project.

Guiding Theory, Author Reflections, and the Clay Data

Guiding Theory

Interdependence between humans and animals exists in diverse forms throughout Mesoamerica. The Early Olmec of the Gulf Coast (1200 BC–900 BC) often saw their bodies as anthropomorphic in nature. They carved themselves in stone with feline faces, jaguar paws, and talons. Even their writing script is represented by animal imagery. This tradition was followed by the Maya, who created a phonetic script dependent on human and animal symbolism. In the classic city of Teotihuacán (700 AD–300 AD), people were buried with wolves, pumas, and raptors. Teotihuacano's imagery is devoted to nature, fertility, and rejuvenation. Plant life was no exception, and we witness the Mesoamerican healthcare system in unique human sculptures, such as the Xōchipilli, which depict mushrooms and tobacco, among other medicinal plants. Our Wixárika relatives from Jalisco, Mexico (the Huichol), perceive no distinction between peyote cactus, deer, and maize plants. All three remain part of their daily life activities and lore, and all three provide nutrition, healing, and avenues for teaching and learning.

The people of Mesoamerica, past and present, converted this awareness into scientific, medical, and mathematical practices not seen elsewhere in the world. Our students inherited this wisdom, and for that reason, our Indigenous lens of the human body follows a kinship principal that values the intergenerational testimonials and place-based teachings of students, their families, and their ancestors. In the essence of Mesoamerican archaeology, we *excavate* in the classroom to understand human behavior—past, present, and future. We acknowledge the borders we traverse, good and bad, both internally and physically. We judge no one. Together, we get through the teaching with empathy, with good intentions, and where all things created are sacred.

Author Reflections: Santiago Andrés Garcia

Rio Hondo College offers faculty multiple opportunities to engage students and reflect on the process. It sits in the homeland of the Gabrielino, Kizh, and Tongva Nations (Figure 2). There is a major cemetery next door (Rose Hills Memorial) where generations of ancestors rest. An abundance of energy lives here, and teachers and students are connected to the area in profound ways. Every semester, instructors are tasked with serving a diverse group of students with ancestry from the Mesoamerican region. A handful of Indigenous students still maintain their traditional values and speak their Native language. Occasionally, I get to serve students from the Gabrielino, Kizh, and Tongva Nations, who share unique heirlooms and experiences about living Native under the LA radar. In addition to the nuances of race and ethnicity, we serve large groups of dis-abled students, Dreamers, seniors, LGBTQ+ youth, the formerly incarcerated, and veterans of war from all parts of the world. This diverse group of backgrounds provides a wealth of insights and keen knowledge only found in community college classrooms.

Over the years, I have relied on keen observation, compassionate instruction, talking circles, and public engagement to get to engage students and build trust. This is in addition to constantly looking for ways to re-imagine the White-Eurocentric and male-dominated areas of Anthropology

and Humanities. My signature teaching practice involves the craft world of Mesoamerica and is further grounded in the daily life activities and philosophies of Native American practices—the ancestral and living. Anything small scale that can be worked with the hands (clay, stone, wood, paint, plants, feathers, etc.), I use in Humanities and Anthropology lessons to meet learning outcomes and mediate topics of health and medicine, language and culture, land and cosmology (see Table 1 for additional praxis details). Specifically, I use clay-work and clay figurines as a teaching tool to introduce students to a Native way of learning that involves the hands, elicits comprehension, and is therapeutic in value (Garcia, 2021; Garcia et al., 2018). The clay-work is partnered with writing assignments that describe every piece created. This is the “I” work I see as intellectually rigorous. As an Indigenous Xicano Educator, I strive to further students’ knowledge of values native to them, which were lost during the US assimilation project, and encourage them to build capacity outside of the classroom.



Figure 2: Map Showing the Site of Rio Hondo College, Major Regions, and Landmarks
Note. Map created by Santiago Andrés Garcia using ArcGIS Maps. Revised from Garcia (2021).

Table 1: Core Themes, Important Questions, and Activities That Define the Clay-Figurine Project

Core Themes	Important Questions	Activities
Land and Cosmology	Where was I born? Where was I raised? What relation do I have to the land, animals, and the cosmos? What duties do I share in caring for the land and its elements?	Clay-work, storytelling, self-reflective writing, video production, photography, drawing, giving and receiving, painting, trading, public engagement, stargazing, watching the sunrise,
Language and Culture	What language do I speak? Why do I speak this language? What language do	

	my parents speak, and why? What language shall our children speak? How do I express myself around people?	fire-keeping, daily exercise, cooking, sharing meals, learning new languages, tending the wild, sowing seeds, caring for gardens, practicing medicine, building shelters, guiding youth, caring for animals, working with elders.
Health and Well-Being	What is the current state of my body? Am I healthy? What is health and medicine? Is my community healthy? What do I eat and drink? What can I do to cultivate healthy practices?	

Author Reflections: Pricilla Yvette Hernandez

I graduated from Rio Hondo College in 2019. I spent four years at this campus completing courses and learning about just topics that would eventually lead to earning a degree in Anthropology. I took all the Anthropology classes available at Rio Hondo and met Professor Garcia in the Spring of 2019. At the end of one of his courses he asked the students if anyone was interested in joining the Mesoamerican Clay-Figurine Project that had recently received a major grant. I immediately thought what a great opportunity to gain valuable research skills before I transferred to San Diego State University. I then found myself interviewing with him, and after learning about the curation and research opportunities, I agreed to partake as the project curator; the work came with a significant stipend.

In the Summer of 2019, still enrolled at Rio Hondo, this time in Humanities 125-Introduction to Mexican Culture, I catalogued and curated the clay-figurines made by students, and then later, I transcribed the accompanying narratives; three of which we share in this essay. During this time, we read Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands*, carefully citing her text on a nightly basis, and drawing inferences to our own living experiences. We also created an altar where students brought flowers and personal sacred items as ofrendas to reflect on. I contributed my own blue macaw feathers to represent the air and wind. These macaw feathers came from the exotic birds that I care for, they are a part of my Maya Guatemalan ancestry, and my family considers them sacred. Having a living altar in the classroom allowed us students to share deep personal experiences and family stories that had never been shared publicly among my peers.

The focus of the Mesoamerican Clay-Figurine project is the human body and ideology. How it changes through time, and place, and how it is healthy when one with the land, and the cosmos. As a teaching practice, creating clay-figurines to connect with our *testimonios* and our storytelling is therapeutic on multiple levels. To share without fear and judgment, came in a safe and timely manner for students that had been holding back. After receiving their clay-figurines fired and glazed for the first time, students reported positive understandings of meaningful work. Sharing these offerings gave students the opportunity to gain worthy insight from each other's lived experience, something that I had felt was truly grounding in a healthful manner. It gave me the courage to continue receiving therapeutic services outside of the classroom. Through my reflections, through this inaugural issue, and through the Ethnic Studies lens, I hope that we can all continue imagining and building non-traditional ways of engaging with students.

The Clay Data

In ancient Mesoamerica, people used clay figurines as gifts, toys, burial offerings, and healing tools (Figure 3). They also represent good indicators of social status and racial and ethnic identity. Since 2014, students at Rio Hondo have continued the tradition of making small-scale clay figurines with similar intensity and diverse benefits.¹⁸ When students make clay figurines, they follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. They recover lost aspects of their identities and mediate real-life experiences, both good and bad. Working repeatedly with clay births critical learning moments and encourages a host of reciprocal behaviors: working together, sharing stories, and gift-giving. Clay-work in mental health therapy is a proven tool that helps to combat stress, anxiety, and depression. Students who work with clay absorb similar therapeutic benefits, and on various occasions, we have noticed intimate bonds form between students and their clay-work. For that reason, extreme care is taken when documenting and curating figurines and transcribing the written narratives that accompany each piece.

Critical educators of color find therapeutic value in the healing stories of students. Our second author, for example, has found meaning in working with sacred objects and finding new pathways for looking inward, acceptance, and forgiveness. Our first author too uses clay-work daily in his home to teach patience, lifecycles, and ancestral knowledge. The clay-work leads to discussions about migration, natural resources, human health, racism, and the common grounds we share as Indigenous people. When clay is present, altars nearby with elements (fire, water, earth, and air) help to mediate the unresolved. Both authors recognize students for bravely trusting the learning we created and for sharing their life experiences through the clay-work. The clay figurines made by students are kept for themselves, gifted, or donated to our standing archive. Occasionally, figurines are left behind and never claimed. Furthermore, we believe that no student narrative should lie in wait and go untold after being unearthed. In Garcia et al. (2018) and Garcia (2021), the therapeutic benefits of clay-work in the classroom are discussed in detail.

Animal Artifacts and Their Narratives

Over the years, students have made animals relating to their own family traditions, creation stories, and individual identities. The animal figurines stand alone, alongside their human counterparts, or as one form combining human and animal characteristics. An abundant number of animal types exist. Horses, snakes, birds, raptors, fish, turtles, bees, butterflies, rabbits, mules, elephants, cats, and dogs are present. To the novice eye, the figurines appear unrelatable and childlike. However, the narratives that accompany the clay-work describe the daily hardships of students, beloved family histories, and healing journeys. Yet the storytelling is also jubilant. Students share their hopes and dreams, write highly of their families, and describe what it feels like to be in love. As critical students and educators, we realize the importance of self-reflective writing in keeping us grounded and creating new meanings and understandings. Telling stories, self-reflective writing, and making things with our hands are how we fight bigotry, misogyny, and racist policies.

¹⁸ Student clay-work is on display in classrooms, but unlike curations of the “Other” that have troubled anthropological collections, the present work reflects a living archive of public contributions where students and teachers have collaborated, published together, and created living artifacts of their experiences and ongoing work.

With the permission of students, we felt strongly about our living assemblage, where sharing and telling the stories materialized in clay figurines – fitting of an Ethnic Studies archive. Collections of intergenerational testimonials (pictures, narratives, and videos) exist in Garcia et al. (2018) and Garcia (2021) and are published on the project's website. We embrace this place-based pedagogy as a revered, intuitive, and anti-racist act on the part of Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley students. As members of a historically disenfranchised group in the U.S. denied access to proper health, housing, and schooling, we seek to develop a critical consciousness in students as essential to building generational health and well-being. Our society's wealthy class, still majority White, sustains power on a platform that is well fed, healthy, rested, and has access to healthcare. In turn, we recognize a healthcare system embedded in the history and culture of Indigenous students, and those of color. By sustaining projects like the one mentioned herein, we strengthen our capacity to generate family and community well-being.



Figure 3: Mesoamerican Clay Figurines in the Olmec-Style of Once-Living People Showing Forms of Racial and Ethnic Identity, and Social Status

Note. Photo taken by Santiago Andrés Garcia at the National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City, MX, 2022.

We begin our focus on animals with the work of Nikka Mamaid, who was born in Bulacan in the Philippines, and now calls LA home. She created a vibrant “Tortuga Migratoria,” with flowers, thorns, and swirling clouds (Figure 4). It is a turtle glazed in the colors of her country.

“Tortuga Migratoria”

Me and my whole family migrated from the Philippines 10 years ago. I chose to make the decorated turtle as my first piece. Just like the leatherback turtles who travel 10,000 miles in search of jellyfish, my family and I traveled 11,563 km in search of a better life. I was born and raised in the Philippines and spent 20 years of my life in a country that I love. My turtle piece is heavily decorated as a symbolism of my life back in the Philippines and my life here in America. Just like a turtle, I carry my “home” everywhere I go. I am proud of my country and culture, and it is something that I can never take away; hence, the turtle and its shell. The swirls symbolize the clouds. Why? Growing up as a child, I remember my parents sheltering me and



Figure 4: “Tortuga Migratoria”

Note. The clouds and thorns give rise to blooming flowers. Photo taken by Santiago Andrés Garcia at Rio Hondo College, 2019.

filtering out the bad in the world including violence, sadness, real-life struggles. The “thorns” sprouted when I was 12 years old. I was exposed to violence when I personally saw my aunt being hit by her abusive husband. My uncles were struggling with addiction and started hitting their sisters in the process. I urged my dad to let me study Taekwondo for self-defense because I do not want to be abused and want to learn to protect others. My father agreed, and I became a 1st-degree black belt by 18 years old—that’s my “thorns.” I learned discipline and built self-confidence in the process. The flowers symbolize my cultivation and growth from my early adolescent years to the present year. I will continue flourishing, growing, and giving myself as I get older. And finally, just like the sea turtles, after they migrate, live, and reproduce, they go back to their birthplace and die. That is my plan, and hopefully I will go back to my homeland and be at peace & rest in my country’s soil.

Elizabeth Martinez from Pico Rivera created a figurine that she named “She Who Breathes for Many.” It is a cobra with a coiled and patterned body (Figure 5). Although not shown here, Elizabeth glazed her final piece purple.

“She Who Breathes for Many”

On the snake’s left side, there is a symbol of a climbing staircase leading to a line turning in on itself to form a square. This is an ancient symbol representing the stages of life and life’s relation to the stars. All life comes from stars; humans contain the same matter found in stars, or so my ancestors believed. This link evolves with women, who birth new people to make up for the people that are dying or returning to their origin. Recently, I have associated my femininity with snakes. Snakes have long been known as divine and worthy of veneration. I am so proud to align myself with such a beautiful creature. The image of the snake alongside my femininity challenges the modern image of a snake being a vile, evil, melancholy, and destructive figure by uniting two precious ideals. My feminine body is powerful; I can create life within myself. Bleed

intensely without dying and withstand sexism proudly. I take pride in being my mother’s daughter and carrying on the strong convictions. My ancestors believed in snakes birthing life, often referring to snakes as caves in reference to the cave of life. Similarly, a cave bears a strong visual link to the birthing canal. I emerged from my mother’s body, her cave, her snake; she gave me my form and a cave of my own. I am forever grateful. I created this piece to not only represent my own identity and relationship with my ancestors, but also to challenge conventional thinking in order to encourage free thinking. The snake is colored purple to honor the animal’s divine link, and red to represent passion and love for my culture and past. I believe I carry the memory of every single person that combined their genetics



Figure 5: “She Who Breathes for Many”

Note. Cobra with a coiled body and cosmic symbolism. Photo taken by Santiago Andrés Garcia at Rio Hondo College, 2019.

to let me have been brought to creation. I am honored to have been given an opportunity to live in this life and be educated and connected to this life.

Kristen Salazar created a hummingbird (Figure 6), whom she describes as “with me all the time” and that “lives in my soul.” It is named “The Spirit of Margarita,” and the narrative follows.

“The Spirit of Margarita”

This hummingbird symbolizes much more than the animal itself. As a little girl, my grandma (Margarita) and I were incredibly close, but she passed away after only a few years with her. As little time as I had, I still have always felt an unimaginable and unexplainable closeness with her. Even after her passing, I always thought it strange to miss someone so dearly from a time in my life I shouldn’t even remember. It wasn’t until I was about 10 years old that my mom once told me she believed that the souls of our loved ones carry on into creatures of the earth. We both have faith that my grandma watches over us as a hummingbird. My family home has always had a hummingbird that nests just under my bedroom window. Even when I’m not at home, I have seen a hummingbird at times of need, or just when I feel I would have made her proud. I know my grandma is always with me in my heart, but it means the world to me when I hear the flutter of a hummingbird flying by, watching over.



Figure 6: “The Spirit of Margarita”

Note. Hummingbird relative (grandmother). Photo taken by Santiago Andrés Garcia at Rio Hondo College, 2019.

Animals as a Source of Autonomy and Liberation

Working with clay leads to a host of transformative moments, with an onslaught of themes that surface from deep aspects of the human body and practice. We have materialized the sexualized naked body, the morbid body, the praying body, queer bodies in divine-like states, and the maternal body. It is also important to note that we are not creating art. In Garcia et al. (2018), we explained it as follows: “Sculpting the body became ritual, as we all partook in forming new understandings of what it meant to be Native considering trauma to the flesh, self-determination, and good health. Student figurines surfaced from a place of ancestry, memory, and Native land” (p. 47). Members of the Gabrielino Nation who identify as Tongva say they are people of the Earth; rightfully so. Clay teaches this, and when we touch it, we go back to our place of origin and birth.

To add to this, animals, since day one of the project, have served as a source of autonomy and liberation. Why, one asks? Animals provide inspiration and companionship and stand as a basic tenet of our healthcare system. Nikka, for example, witnesses her traveling body in the migratory body of a sea turtle. In her work, there lies an appreciation for the natural order of living things and a yearning to return to her Native homeland. She says, “That is my plan, and hopefully I will go back

to my homeland and be at peace & rest in my country's soil." In other parts, she writes that her turtle bears colorful clouds and sharp thorns, both as a symbol of safe times under her parents' care, and of moments of violence when her family members would hit each other. Physical abuse and addiction and joyful thoughts of returning to one's Native land characterize Nikka's clay-work. Similarly, Elizabeth calls attention to the likeness of serpents, caves, and women, and of the birthing knowledge that is passed from mother to daughter. There is an interconnectedness here between generations and the teaching and learning that ignites healthy and positive thoughts. Elizabeth says, "The snake is colored purple to honor the animal's divine link, and red to represent passion and love for my culture and past." In the "Spirit of Margarita," Kristen tells us that her mom once explained how the spirits of their ancestors lived in the animals of the earth. That her beloved and dearly missed grandmother lives in the hummingbirds of the family home. Animals mediate our thoughts and understanding of life in positive ways.

Since the beginning of time, animals have provided Native people with nutrition, and they remain part of our creation stories. Northern Plains relatives, for example, cultivated an ingenious, adaptive, and nutritionally successful daily life by following egalitarian principles and hunting animals (Prince & Steckle, 2003). Although now existing in low numbers, the wide-roaming American bison, "the buffalo", was once a source of food and sustainable supply for everyday life. Today, the buffalo serves as a source of sacred learning and motivation for young adolescents in search of their Native roots. We came across this passage in a 100-page school curriculum on the buffalo (see Buffalo, n.d.) archived by the South Dakota State Historical Society, their Museum Education section.

One of the most important stories in their culture is that of the Buffalo Calf Woman. Buffalo Calf Woman appeared to the Lakota and presented them with the sacred pipe. She showed them many important spiritual things, including how to pray. As she walked into the sunset, she rolled over four times and turned into a black buffalo, brown buffalo, red buffalo, and then finally a white buffalo. The Lakota believe that the mighty buffalo herd came about and allowed itself to be killed so that they might survive. The white buffalo is a sacred Lakota symbol.

Humans have lived alongside animals for so long that their visions and dreams, their most profound thoughts and actions, evolved as intimately tied to the animal world. As mentioned previously, our Huichol relatives of Jalisco do not distinguish between the peyote, the deer, and the maize. It has long been known that Huichol families travel long distances (just as their ancestors did repeatedly) in search of food and medicine. They follow the deer tracks for miles because that is where the peyote grows. Where they find the green buttons is where they plant their wishful arrows, deposit gifts, and leave their corn seeds. It is also said that after the morning hunt, a large buck will lift the Sun with its antlers. This place of origin, where all life was created, is called Wirikuta, and is seen and revered from the Cerro Quemado. According to archaeological evidence, peyote was in use seven thousand years ago in the Texas and Mexico borderlands area. Today, it is the sacred sacrament of the Native American Church.

The theme of traveling long distances as an act of liberation and autonomy commonly surfaces during clay-work among students; and, in a recent paper on Quetzalcoatl and Venus cosmology (Garcia & Márquez, 2021), interregional interaction is seen as a stage for giving and receiving, establishing networks, and legitimizing corridors of learning where healing often takes place.

Transient behavior and the supernatural remind us of Gloria Anzaldúa's (2012) version of Coatlicue—a mother with a serpent skirt who wields eagle talons as weapons of life, love, and war. Anzaldúa tells her readers that Coatlicue lives in our people, and that she upholds qualities vital to developing a critical consciousness. We Chicanos and Chicanas “blame ourselves, hate ourselves, terrorize ourselves” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 67). We are hurting, and we suspect daily that something is fundamentally “wrong” with us; we stand accused and pending trials. When we legitimize our knowledge, those with power sue us, fire us, or they do not hire us. Those close to us ignore us, quickly shame us, and attack us. To cope with fear, we focus on addictions: drinking, smoking, popping pills, and aligning with hurt people who harm us.

Although Gloria Anzaldúa's work is over three decades old, current research (Valdez et al., 2022) points to a steady and growing rise in alcohol, marijuana, and opioid addictions tied to a series of social and mental health problems. A non-sober lifestyle for generations has amassed in internalized colonialism, external oppression, and violent acts of physical and sexual abuse (Holleran & Jung, 2005), oftentimes, within our own organizing communities. Anzaldúa warned us, the *atravesados*, people of color fighting for liberation that if addictions go unchecked and stick around, we become possessed. This is Coatlicue theory. She tells us that we need to be arrested. Coatlicue needs to slow us down so that we can assimilate previous experiences and process the changes. Anzaldúa (2012) stated in her own words:

Let the wound caused by the serpent be cured by the serpent. The soul uses everything to further its own making. Those activities or Coatlicue states which disrupt the smooth flow (complacency) of life are exactly what propel the soul to do its work: make soul, increase consciousness of itself. (p. 68)

Through this project, we have seen that the storied experiences of students and animal relations play a crucial role in shaping positive responses to human hardships and traumatic events. To develop a significant understanding of their own lives and experiences (to develop a critical consciousness), students often equate their perseverance with the instinctual behaviors of animals and the animal spirit—for their autonomy and liberation. Like Kristen did, who wrote, “I know my grandma is always with me in my heart, but it means the world to me when I hear the flutter of a hummingbird flying by, watching over.” Or Nikka, who said, “Just like the leatherback turtles who travel 10,000 miles in search of jellyfish, my family and I traveled 11,563 km in search of a better life.” And Elizabeth, who tells us, “I created this piece to not only represent my own identity and relationship with my ancestors, but also to challenge conventional thinking in order to encourage free thinking.” Other equally meaningful animal artifacts and narratives existed that we have not detailed here, such as the story of *canta ranas* (singing frogs), oldies, and sexuality in the barrio. Or the one student who morphed into a donkey after receiving treatment for a life-threatening disease. There are even stories of make-believe animals developed to mediate *susto*, broken heartache, and aspiring love. This paper advises that animals, animal knowledge, and the animal spirit be incorporated into Ethnic Studies teaching materials and be part of critical learning archives.

Going back to our original question, “What role shall the animal and the animal spirit play in the critical instruction of our students?” Animals model the diligent spirit and work ethic of our ancestors, so we consider them sacred relatives. Their often-short-lived lives provide an allegory of important lessons that are central to our storytelling. In egalitarian societies, animals provide nutrition, tools, and companionship and are used in ritual and ceremony. When rooted in ancestral

knowledge, animals such as the buffalo, the deer, the serpent, the turtle, and the hummingbird may lead us into following a more positive path, building healthier communities, and improving our view of how the Earth sustains itself. For our historically disenfranchised students of color, this would promote positive thoughts, restore Native values, and may support healing outcomes. In his "Stalking Words," the late Juan Gómez-Quiñones (2012) writes, "studying the intellectual heritage of Native Americans expresses appreciation of a particular legacy and deepens our understanding of other human societies" (p. 64). In an Ethnic Studies curriculum, animal topics may involve conversations about ecosystems, conservation practices, human health, and Indigenous land ways. Learning about animals should involve advocating for and protecting their habitats. They surely belong to part of the LAND BACK initiatives. The topic of animals should be taught keenly, considered sacred, and, when possible, learned from elders who work with animals. When we de-center "the human" from animals, we relate better to life and others.

Final Thoughts and Reflections

On December 17, 2022, it was announced that P-22, the celebrated Griffith Park Mountain lion, was euthanized after 12 years of life (Natural, 2022). Wildlife scientists determined that he was severely ill and suffering after a recent collision with an automobile. Shortly afterwards, P-22 was taken to the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles after tribal members from various Southern California Native American communities (Chumash, Shoshone, Luiseño, Tataviam, Gabrielino, Kizh, and Tongva) requested their relative puma be laid to rest in a good way and not put on exhibition. It was later reported by the museum's social media accounts that *Tokoórōt* (mountain lion) (McCawley, 1996) was received with reverence and songs by Native American voices and wildlife officials, who had tracked his movements over the past twelve years. *Tokoórōt* was born in the Santa Monica mountains, survived crossing the 101 and 405 freeways (the site where relatives of his were killed), made his home in Griffith Park, and endured episodes of starvation, poisoning, mange disease, and contact with scientists that disturbed his body.¹⁹ Despite these hardships, the puma persevered in the most urbanized and dangerous part of California. Native American communities of Southern California buried their relative in a private ceremony in the Santa Monica Mountains. The story of *Tokoórōt* also exemplifies one of our greatest responsibilities as critical educators working to restore a balance between humans, nature, and the destructive effects of the colonized world. What role shall people play in the restoration of Native habitats? How do we become one and learn from our animal relatives so that they do not fear us? How do we continue to honor the animal for all that it has given us? These questions stand for us to sit with and act upon them with greater capacity.

To that end, the topic of animals strikes a serious chord when critical educators consider the sacredness behind such teachings and its importance to our own health and well-being. The life of *Tokoórōt* remains a local lesson of all that is good and bad living here in the greater Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley. Our way of existing, our way of responding to neo-colonialism and White supremacy, our way of responding to one another all begs for constant self-reflection. Let us not forget that Ethnic Studies arose from a need to free ourselves from physical and psychosocial violence. In the process of organizing for our liberation as a people, we neglected our own selves and families. We cultivated forms of stress, illness, and conditions unique to the people involved

¹⁹ A full-length documentary on *Tokoórōt* is published on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQ1PDsNRfTk>).

in the struggle. No Ethnic Studies project stands to thrive if we ourselves are not thriving in practice. How do we generate good health, wealth, and medicine? The wrath of the COVID pandemic exposed a lack of readiness in housing security, health outcomes, and emergency responses (Chang et al., 2021; Pedraza et al., 2022; Riley et al., 2021). During the ensuing chaos, large groups of Southern California activists, organizers, and educators scrambled to care for the severely sick, the vulnerable, and for themselves. Under COVID, the poor health resulting from generations of chronic stress and disease, substance addictions, homelessness, and illness unique to the movimiento worsened; we rapidly lost relatives young and old. COVID taught us that the major questions of our era are about human health, housing, and medicine. If Ethnic Studies are about building power, saving lives, and developing a critical consciousness, then we must all learn how to be cured by the serpent and not killed by it.

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Plantita Knowledge: A Journey of Writing a Healing Text

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Abstract

The following are lesson plans for high school teachers implementing Ethnic Studies in the classroom. The purpose of the lesson plans is to open up conversations about healing through plantita knowledge. Plantita knowledge as the title suggests engages students in a series of journeys that allow them to reflect on family and community relationships to plants through the themes of history, memory, place, self, and collective healing. We have included the words of youth which tell us why they believe writing a healing text is useful in helping them transform spiritual harm in educational spaces. We conclude that these lessons and healing texts enable youth to begin their own healing process as they begin to identify their pain, begin to critically reflect on their trauma, and then begin to find ways to work through it by remembering or finding affirmative places, plants and people who will help support them through their journey.

Introduction

Why is it important for us to have students write their healing text? Implementing healing text in our classroom is more important than ever before because of the anti-ethnic studies rhetoric, banning of books, and enduring impacts of COVID-19 which have taken the lives of our loved ones, and racialized police violence which have affected so many of our students' lives. We need to remind youth that they matter and that their stories matter. Healing text is done in community and in solidarity with each other. Healing text is not an individual act but an act in community where we help each other strengthen our roots and spirits.

Pedagogical Framework

It is important for teachers to show the pedagogical framework we are operating under in order to show that we are being intentional about our work. Schooling has been a place where students' spirits are murdered, where their dreams and visions for the future are killed as a result of interlocking systems of oppression that contribute to discrimination and harm. As the author Bettina Love reminds us with her book *Abolitionist Teaching*, "We want to do more than just survive," reminding us of how students are surviving and not thriving. Therefore, we used the work of Anita Revilla Tijerina and her concept of being spirit protectors and restorers, which she defines as "people, places, organizations, beliefs, and/or practices (they can also be art, poetry, books, music,

and dance) that give marginalized people the strength to reject and survive attempted spirit murder and/or restore our wounded spirits, especially in the face of repeated attacks and woundings both inside and outside of institutions of education” (2021, p.39). As we embarked on the work of creating and implementing lessons that can inspire youth to write their own stories as a form of healing. We were intentional about using *plantitas* as medicine in order to help their journey through restoring their spirit. Plantitas are also used as spirit protectors. For instance, lavender helps to protect our anxious spirit and ease the mind when we are triggered. Gifting students lavender pouches is a way students can use them whenever they feel triggered or want to calm the mind in order to be able to focus their learning (see Image 1).

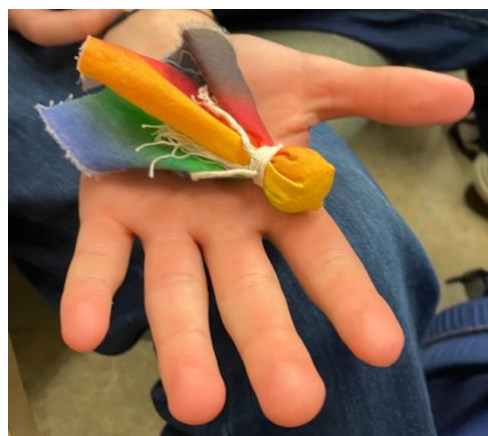


Image 1: Student holding a lavender pouch.

Spirit protector means we as teachers are protecting students from a schooling system that controls their every move to create space where they are able to freely write an essay or poem that helps to restore their spirit. These are the three concepts we kept in mind as we created and implemented our lessons:

- Borrowing from Tijerina’s concept of spirit protectors and restorers, we would like to emphasize and expand *writing with and alongside plants* as a practice of spirit restoring, which gives youth the opportunity to reflect on a plant that is deeply rooted in their identity, culture, and family and community history.
- Through the plantita lessons students were able to *practice deep awareness, deep conocimiento, and connection to self and community, so that they could interrupt the spiritual violence and instead choose spirit restoration, spirit protection, and harm reduction* (Tijerina Revilla, 2021, p. 43).
- Tijerina Revilla says *healing and freedom require the restoration of people’s spirits and minds. It includes the reclamation of people’s worth and value* (Tijerina Revilla, 2021, p. 41). This methodology of centering students’ lived experiences is at the center of an ethnic studies pedagogy, which is about identifying power and oppression that creates harm in students’ learning, and reclaiming their spiritual connection to their embodied, collective knowledge and worldviews that decenter whiteness and place value in their *organic intellectualism* (Levins Morales, 2019).

These concepts helped us be intentional about how we cared and reviewed student writing, reviewing their work with love and giving suggestions on how to improve their writing. One can see the samples of their writing in *Courageous Cuentos*, Volume #6.

Recommended readings on spirit protecting and restoration:

- Tijerina Revilla, A. (2021). Attempted Spirit Murder: Who Are Your Spirit Protectors and Your Spirit Restorers? *Educational Foundations* (Ann Arbor, Mich.), 34(1), 31–46.
- Love, B. (2019). *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*. Beacon Press.
- Levins Morales, A. (2019). *Medicine Stories: Essays for Radicals* (Revised Edition). Duke University Press.
- Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editions.

Student Voices

We implemented the lessons in two bilingual high school classrooms. At the end of the three-week lessons, we surveyed students if their writing healed them and they wrote the following:

- *Si porque pude compartir ese sentimiento que estaba dentro de mi y lo pude enfrentar.*
- Yes, because I got my feelings out and I felt better.
- I think this text did heal me because I think that it helped me open up and be comfortable with who I am and as long as I keep that mind set, I will always stay healed.
- Me sanó al escuchar los ensayos de los demás, porque me di cuenta que al igual que yo, muchas personas están pasando por lo mismo.
- They allowed me to have a voice.
- These texts helped me realize how much of a privilege speaking two languages is.
- Si, me sanaron los sentimientos que tenía guardado, porque no pude despedirme de mi padre, y al expresar mis sentimientos en un papel me sentí mucho mejor.
- Yeah, in a way as I didn't realize many things about myself that I now know.
- Yes, a little bit because when I listened to the essays of my classmates I realized that some of them were similar to mine and I felt better because I thought I was the only one.
- Yes, because I could talk about my past.

As one can see from the survey, students felt that these lessons and writing their healing text helped to restore and protect their spirits—students were able to return to themselves and who they are and what has shaped them. In doing so, they began to express their feelings that they had been forced to conceal and not confront. Plantitas served as their protectors as they opened up and shared their feelings, memories, and intergenerational traumas. As they embarked on their plantita healing journey, they also shared with one another *consejos* passed down by their families that highlighted the important role of communal spirit protectors and their words that help strengthen our spirits as we journey through schooling together.

Defining Healing Text

- Healing text is the ability to write freely meaning multilingually – no translating
- Healing text are about our ability to be our true selves without borders
- Healing text *es a veces contando/cantando nuestro dolor/* pain because you are detecting the cause of your dolor/ anger/ *impotencia/impaciencia.*
- Healing text unveil the path to your own healing
- Healing text are about happy moments that keep you going

- Healing text are about the *consejitos* we got along our path that made us stronger/ wiser / freer
- Healing text is about being in the spaces that make you zen/ happy.
- Healing texts are about the stories we are told, *familia* strength.
- Healing texts are stories about who we are because those stories *fortalecen* nuestras raices.
- Healing texts tell stories of love/*amor* - receiving pure love -love gives us strength
- Healing text is about important places/ people in our community– gives us roots /*raices* to place and people
- Healing text are the medicinal *plantitas* are ancestors taught us about how to plant harvest and use to heal
- Healing text can be working together because our thoughts and creations are strengthened

This broad definition of healing text gives students the ability to choose what they want to write about but also acknowledges that healing looks differently for all of us.

In this we will share five lessons we created for youth in order to get them inspired and grounded in writing their own healing text.

Collective Reflection (6 Lessons)

Lesson 1: Manzanilla (Healing)

1. Bring fresh/dry *manzanilla* chamomile to your classroom. Most people know this plant because it is given to us by our parents, guardians and aunts in order to heal menstrual cramps or stomach aches. Manzanilla is always handy ready to be used by our family members.
2. Ask- What is manzanilla/chamomile used for? Who uses it? What do you use it for?
 - a. Then ask “Where are the seeds of the manzanilla?” How do you know? If no one knows then ask - Why does no one or just some of you know how to find seeds in a plant? Are we seeds? How are we seeds?
3. Explore seeds through a literary analysis -*Read and discuss the following poem:*



Image 2: Manzanilla
(Chamomile) plant

Semillas / Seeds

Powerful seeds
Strengthen our roots

Somos semillas
You and me
We are seeds
You see
Tu y yo
As we plant
Them in dirt
As we grow
Our roots
Strengthening
our
community

Our seeds
are
beautiful words
That strengthen
Our wings
Helping us
Fly on our path

Just like
Seeds when
They sprout,
grow,
and
Heal our
bodies,
Earth and
soul
Beautifying every
Step we take.
Loving each inch
of our
Community.

But some seeds
Do not sprout
Like hurtful
Words they
wither us
away like
the wind

We flounder with
A lack of purpose
As we try
To land
Run and love

Just like too
much water
rots
our roots
unhealthy seeds
Lose their power
To grow
becoming
a beautiful
Rose

Seeds are
What we
Read
Listen
Learn
Helping us
Grow
wiser
Sensible
And witty
as the
Land we walk on
becomes
bountiful
With every step
we take.

Powerful
Seeds
Strengthen our roots

As we grow
To who
We are
And who
we
are becoming
Together

Protect
Your
Seeds
As you
Walk
Scattering
And Sprinkling
them through out
Your path.

Make sure
You protect
The seeds
sacredly
So you
Strengthen
Your roots
As you spread
Your power
To the world

4. Discuss poem

- What do seeds symbolize? What do seeds mean to you and your life? What were the authors trying to convey? What did this poem mean to you? How do you relate to it or not? Why?

5. Quick journaling: What do seeds mean to you? How are we seeds? Have we been good seeds or have we been broken seeds? Rotten seeds? How and why? How have we changed?

6. Share – Have students share their writing to class in a safe space. Students will share if they feel safe. Make sure to create these spaces in the class before you implement them.

- You can create safe spaces by asking students to create community agreements. Have students tell you what they need to make them feel safe to share. It might be aesthetics and also peer reactions to their stories. Then have everyone agree to guidelines from which they want to operate from in a collective supportive manner.
- You can ask students the following 3 sets of questions:
- Support: What does support look like? What does support feel like? What do we need to see in a supportive space? What do we need to hear in a supportive space? Now what guidelines can we create where we feel, hear, see and believe this is a supportive space?
- Solidarity: What does solidarity look like? What does solidarity feel like? What do we need to see in a space of solidarity? What should I hear in a space of solidarity? Now what guidelines can we create where we feel, hear, see, and believe it is a space of solidarity.

- Safety: What does safety look like? What does safety feel like? What should we see in a safe space? What should I hear in a safe space? Now what guidelines can we create where we all feel, see, hear and believe this is a safe space?

These questions will help you to create a solid set of agreements which you can point to when youth are being rude. But usually this works to build a respectful collective safe space because youth helped to create these agreements so their voice and opinions were respected and uplifted.

Lesson 2: Cempasúchil (Memory / Remembering)

- Bring fresh or dry cempasúchil flower (marigold)
- Ask what are Cempasúchi flowers used for? How are they used?

Cempasúchil flower is used for Day of the Dead to remember those who have passed away and what they have left behind. Their words or lessons stay with us – think about those who have passed away and have left us profound lessons on how we live our lives and how we walk on this earth.

- Journaling- write about someone you love who has passed away. Include an important lesson that person taught you, or describe a particularly transformative moment you shared with them. Include something they'd say in their own words. If you have no one who has passed away, then you can write about a popular author, singer or celebrity who has taught you a lesson in life.



Image 3: Cempasúchil plant

- Example you can share this example with students before they write, like the one below:

My grandma taught us how to have fun and laugh. She liked to play cards so she taught us how to play "montoncito." When I remember my grandmother, I remember when we laughed and had fun playing montoncito." I would laugh so hard when she caught me trying to cheat because she would lift her glasses and tell me "I see what you are doing." She looked funny and I would try to cheat to see if she was paying attention to the game. It was a game within a game - as she always taught me "Gavilán que se duerme se lo lleva la corriente" ("Hawk that falls asleep is taken by the current") so I was testing the popular theory and I concluded that my grandmother was a hawk.

Just like this story I am remembering the lessons and words my grandmother taught us. These teachings can also be seen as healing seeds because they help strengthen our roots and help to define our philosophy of life.

- Share by asking students share their writing

- Close by asking students where the seeds are in the flower? Show students how to find seeds.

We must always find the seeds in life because they are teaching us something about how to live and move in this world.

Lesson 3 - Creosote Bush/ La Gobernadora / Chaparral (History and Place)

Before listening to the podcast, show a picture of the creosote bush plant also known as la gobernadora/chaparral. Before you name the plant - Ask students do you know this plant? What is the name of this plant? What is it used for? Have students share and brainstorm.

Show a map of El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico and ask students: Have you been there? What do you know of this place? Then say this is the place where the creosote bush/la gobernadora/ chaparral grows.

Listen to Episode 1: Selena and Me from the podcast Anything for Selena (Futuro Studios, 2021). 30 minutes

Before listening to the podcast, show a picture of the creosote bush plant also known as la gobernadora/chaparral. Before you name the plant - Ask students do you know this plant? What is the name of this plant? What is it used for? Have students share and brainstorm.

Show a map of El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico and ask students: Have you been there? What do you know of this place? Then say this is the place where the creosote bush/la gobernadora/ chaparral grows.

Maria Garcia, the host of “Anything for Selena” (2021), opens up her podcast (Ep. 1: Selena and Me) by telling her story, introducing you to the place where she is from (Texas-Mexico Border) through the creosote bush plant. Later in the episode, she talks about discovering Selena, and how her music and legacy helped her find her place in the world.

Now let’s listen to the podcast and as you listen, take out your journals. Write/ draw/ doodle what you feel and think about how this person is healing themselves.

After the podcast show a picture of her with the creosote bush/la gobernadora/ chaparral.

You can share with students the medicinal properties of this plant [here](#).



Image 4: Maria Garcia, the host and creator of “Anything for Selena,” in El Paso, Texas, where she was raised. Image Credit: Ivan Pierre Aguirre for The New York Times. ([Link](#))

Then proceed to have a mini discussion with students about podcast and what they learned about the chaparral /la gobernadora/creosote bush: How did she heal herself? (Music, her story, and the plant). Why is this plant so powerful? How does the plant help tell her/our story?

This plant is like our thoughts/stories because no one can kill what lives in our memory and even when they ban our books or our studies, they still live within us and therefore just like chaparral it will always grow back even stronger like us!

Plants hold our stories, our memories. They are our spirit protectors because they help ground us to the place where we belong.

Lesson 4: Affirmation- You Belong Here: A Self-Portrait with a Plant (Identity and Celebration of Self)
(Note: this might take 3-5 days)

Students can look at Courageous Cuentos for ideas on how to draw their self-portrait.

1. Draw a self-portrait of yourself. Include as part of your self-portrait a plant that tells your story, that tells us something about who you are and/or where you come from.
 - Feel free to use pencil, pen, markers, colors, paints, etc.
 - I recommend using a photo of yourself that you can use to create your self-portrait.
 - The focus of your portrait must be of your face/head. (Shoulders are ok, and hands if they are part of the pose).
 - Make sure to give your self-portrait a title.
2. Once they complete their portraits, have them respond to the following reflection questions:
 - What plant did you include in your self-portrait, and why? What story does it share about who you are, and where you come from?
 - Discuss your experience creating your self-portrait. What were your initial thoughts/feelings on this assignment, and how did they evolve during the making of your self-portrait?

Lesson 5: Read Healing Text (Building Community)

1. Silent reading (10-15 min) -have students read healing text from Courageous Cuentos: A Student Journal of Counternarratives (Volume 6, Spring 2023).
2. Students get into groups of 3-4
3. Groups choose the writing they want to focus on.
4. Have students read the text they have chosen and ask themselves how did the author/s heal? What is the message the author is trying to convey?
5. Share the piece of writing they have chosen with the whole class

You can give students these instructions:

- Choose a piece of writing → Read piece → Summarize it → Discuss the piece
- How did the author heal themselves? Did you like the piece? Why or why not? Could you relate to the piece? Why or why not? Why did you all choose this piece to read?

6. Share the piece with the whole class (choose someone to summarize the piece, say how they believe the author healed, and overall thoughts of the piece: Did they like it? Why or why not? And could they relate to the piece? Why or why not?)

Lesson 6: Write your Healing Text (Creando Raíces / Creating Roots)

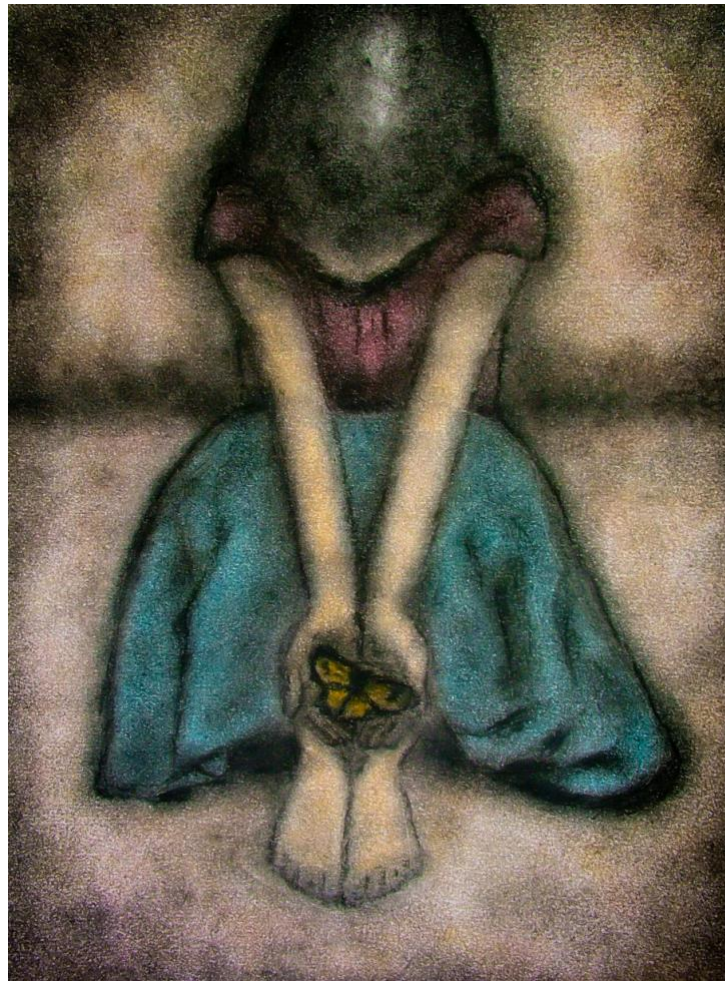
Have students begin to write and go through their writing process. During this time, you can do 10-minute mini lessons that can strengthen student writing. Ideas on mini lessons (strong openers, active verbs, descriptors/adjectives, dialogue, titles, strong conclusions, etc.) are below. This is how we conducted the second to third week but you can change it around depending on what you observe of student writing needs. It took us three weeks to finalize and publish student writings.

1. Talk Story: Have students orally tell each other stories about how they heal themselves or how they are trying to heal their wounds.
2. First Draft: Have them write their first draft.
3. Peer Editing #1: Share your first draft with classmates.
4. Author's Chair: You can invite students to orally read their stories in front of the classroom and get feedback from peers.
5. Mini Lesson #1: Active Verbs/ Active Voice: Ask - What are active verbs? Have a list of active verbs. Make the connection between active voice and active verbs. Tell students to use them in their writing (As students are editing their second draft).
6. Mini Lesson #2: Strong Openers: Engage the reader, make the reader want to read your text. Give students examples of strong openers and discuss why they are strong (As students are editing their second draft).
7. Draft #2: Keep in mind strong openers and active voice/ active verbs.
8. Peer editing #: Students can focus on openers and active verbs.
9. Author's Chair #2: Invite students again to share their story and get feedback.
10. Mini Lesson #3: Include Dialogue: Show examples of stories and poems they have read that include dialogue- Yosimar Reyes and Julio Salgado's poems are a good example of this as students are writing their third draft.

11. Mini Lesson #4 - Adjectives: Show a list of cool adjectives and let students know the importance of adjectives in their story. Adjectives help to describe people, places, and things. They help the reader to see and connect to your story.
12. Draft #3: Students can focus their writing by including dialogue and adjectives in their third draft.
13. Peer Editing #3: Editors focus on writing to help their peers include adjectives and dialogue. Texts do not have to include dialogue if the author does not want to. Nevertheless, in some instances dialogue does help the text come alive.
14. Author's Chair #3: Invite students again to share their story and get feedback from the whole group.
15. FINAL Mini Lesson #5- Strong Conclusion: Show examples of strong conclusions and why they are strong. Have students look at their ending and see how they can strengthen their concluding words or paragraphs. (Students are writing their final draft).
16. FINAL Mini Lesson #6- Strong Titles: Show examples of strong titles and discuss why they are strong titles. Ask students to look at their writing and think about a strong title -have them play with words. (Students are writing their final draft).
17. FINAL Draft: Students focus their writing on conclusions and titles.
18. FINAL Peer Editing: Students do their final peer editing work- they focus on the whole story.
19. FINAL Author's Chair: Last chance-invite students again to share their story and get feedback from the whole group.
20. Publish: Have students finalize their edits and PUBLISH! You can publish your own classroom book or have students submit to *Courageous Cuentos*. If they consider publishing their article in *Courageous Cuentos: A Student Journal of Counternarratives*, contact: Nancy Perez nancy.perez@humboldt.edu or Marisol Ruiz mr1890@humboldt.edu.

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“Butterfly Release”

By Lani Cupchoy
Medium: Soft Pastel
Year: 2010

A migrant herself and part of the 1.5 generation, a little girl sits on the ground releasing a butterfly as a symbol of hope, resilience, and love for an unknown future. Connected to *Latine* migration struggles, this art piece symbolizes the migration journey and stories children carry with them into the United States. It also connects to a child’s educational pursuit for knowledge, creativity, and development. This image exemplifies the theme issue of “Ethnic Studies as Living Archives” by alluding to the importance of an individual playing a part in the larger collective and how our histories, stories and memory are often interconnected and intergenerational.

Sensing Home and Archiving the Self: A Black Feminist Autoethnographic Mapping to/through Ethnic Studies Pedagogies

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Abstract

Although Black women's internal responses to systems of domination in *places*—in the geopolitical locales of higher educational institutions in particular—of hostility have the potential to inform transformative pedagogical practices, these [often] private negotiations are under accounted for and undertheorized. I argue, however, that leaning into Black women's specific educational experiences offers us tools to refine, develop, and evolve Ethnic Studies pedagogies. In this paper I offer a sensory, Black feminist autoethnographic intervention to this interstice and center what I name as an extended epiphanic moment—a “moment of heightened awareness of the situated self” which was prompted, namely, by my first class as an undergraduate student not only with a Black woman as my professor but a Black woman professor who taught Black Feminist Theory (Durham, 2014, p. 13). I draw on the concept of self-making—the autonomous creation of the self—as a reflective Black ancestral practice within the politics of (re)membering and as a place-based process using endarkened feminisms as frameworks to inspire how we imagine ethnic studies pedagogies (Dillard 2012; Jackson, 2020). I ask, broadly, how Black women's educational accounts may offer portals to inform ethnic studies pedagogy (Butler, 2018).

Keywords: Self-making, Black feminist autoethnography, ethnic studies pedagogy, critical geography

Although Black women's internal responses to systems of domination in *places*—in the geopolitical locales of higher educational institutions in particular—of hostility have the potential to inform ethnic studies pedagogical practices, these [often] private negotiations are under accounted for and undertheorized. I argue, however, that leaning into Black women's individual educational experiences offers us specific segues to refine, develop, and evolve ethnic studies pedagogies in closer relationship with social justice. Since positive educational experiences for Black women students is often facilitated by the pedagogical choices of Black women educators, this practice of writing autoethnographically on said experience(s) simultaneously honors the work and labor of Black women intellectual antecedents. Although this piece centers my own personal reflections, educators in higher education at all levels can benefit from geographical rememberings, antecedent honorings, embracing testimonials to remain rooted in the dreams of ethnic studies, and explicating

the social movements from which the field continues to be built. These elements are essential for ethnic studies educators to refine our own praxis and externally assess others'— with both criticality and affirmation. In this piece, I use italics to emphasize the intimacies of my thoughts, memories, and questions; and to encourage pauses to contend with significant language.

As an experience orientation, and not a fundamentally cross-group orientation, much of what I offer asks us to consider, personally, what a practice and lens of ethnic studies pedagogy looks like for us as both individuals and as parts of collectives. In this paper I offer my own Black feminist autoethnographic intervention to this interstice and center what I now name an extended epiphanic moment –a “moment of heightened awareness of the situated self” (Durham, 2014, p. 13). I conceptualize self-making—the autonomous creation of the self—as a reflective Black ancestral practice within the politics of (re)membering and as a place-based process using endarkened feminisms that has the potential to inform how we imagine ethnic studies pedagogies (Jackson, 2020).

My heightened awareness was prompted, namely, by my first class as an undergraduate student not only with a Black woman as my professor but a Black woman professor who taught Black Feminist Theory. I saw and heard, read, and theorized with, a curriculum that I was fully implicated in—a curriculum where I did not have to search to find its relatability to the materiality of my life, to the lived experiences inhabited by my Black woman-ness. Through this piece and the experiences included, it has become clear that my first introductions to Black Feminist Literature extended the language I had access to in defining my racialized, gendered experiences and self on my own terms— “my language has very much [been] based on what I [have] read and how it affects me” (Christian, 1987). I evoke the senses both literally and metaphorically to highlight this [on-going] experience.

Because this account is particular to my experience at a Predominately White Institution (PWI), I also query the role of physical space in relation to Black women's processes of self-making, and ultimately ask how Black women's educational accounts, broadly, may offer portals to inform ethnic studies pedagogies. In turn, I ask educators at all levels to consider the role that physical space, the 'cartographic underpinnings' play in their pedagogical choices (Butler, 2018). Building largely from Hartman's (1997) and McKittrick's (2006) work that centers scenes and sites in the context of the hauntings of enslavement, I extend critical framings of space to contemporary iterations of self-making. More specifically, this paper imagines the way that ethnic studies pedagogy provides a lens to both reflect on and read Black women's processes of site-specific (and uses the example of a college classroom at a PWI) self-making.

Next, the discourse of performance is essential in my framing of Black women's processes of self-making because it is fundamental to the argument of *compressed* agency—a concept that asserts that partial transgressions are site specific, locatable, witnessable, and dynamic and that agency itself is not static. Emphasizing the specific, geographical locale at which performances of relative transgression can occur is helpful in conceptualizing the innumerable factors that shape, restrain, inspire and/or enable the specific transgressive performance(s), and ultimately move forward to consider pedagogical implications. As Hartman (1997) describes, “not only is the dominant space pilfered and manipulated in giving voice to need and in making counterclaims about freedom, humanity, and the self (*a reconstructed self that negates the dominant terms of identity and existence*), but also this space becomes ineffably produced as a sacralized and ancestral landscape” (emphasis mine) (p. 72).

Ultimately, I argue that the growth and value of ethnic studies pedagogies must be informed by Black women's own accounts of our educative experiences; and that space, particularly in formal institutions of education, primes these experiences and narratives. I assert that conjuring collective memory in White dominated locales is essential in *creating* the "appropriated space" needed for realizing the potential of ethnic studies pedagogies because of the literal space in which these pedagogies are often developed, used, in proximity to, and implemented. Thus, we must *remember* that these naturalized spaces are, in fact, hostile constructs. These spaces include formal institutions of higher education that are threaded with white supremacy in ways that are both conscious and subconscious. Using Black Feminist autoethnography, this paper offers a sensory exploration of self-making as a Black ancestral practice within the politics of (re)membering to consider ethnic studies pedagogical developments in aims of social justice and liberatory praxis.

Seeing

I saw a living, breathing, speaking, mirror. I saw brown leather skirts, honey blonde locs, witty humor, iced coffees, eccentric frames. The assertion of an insistent preface of "Dr." Her erect and lively posture seductively, respectfully, yet effortlessly demanded attention. "I am here!" said in every non-verbal iteration. Your hyphenated last name doubled down on the demand that we see you; a you that thrives both autonomously and in commune.

Platform espadrilles, vibrant Célines, bold monochrome paired clothing, gravity defiant-sun reaching top-knots, fresh white manicures. "If you miss class, don't ask me if you missed anything important"- I got up and washed my pits, and if nothing else, you missed that!" Practiced and shared vulnerabilities. "History is written by the winners!" she mockingly recounted harmful iterations of past academic lives whiteness subjected her to. Artistic expressions and spaces of processes. Media, art, music. The beauty of annotation. A capitalized Black. A historian by training and a dreamer by defiance. Unprocessed mesmerization, pleasant shock, and a fogged idolization of my first Black woman professor. I saw you. I can now name and conceptualize this utter fascination that manifested in eager, unyielding hand raises, a desire to "overachieve" and a demand to be noticed. I saw and see a future caricature, a current self, and a past representation. All of whom I subconsciously thought barred from this place. I'd decided that the history of the literal and figurative genocide of Black women in this space, left no room for future me's here. But then I saw you. My own celebrity, a part of my aspired evolution. Toni's playground prompted us to Play in the Dark and insert Blackness in the classroom's Literary Imagination.

Being a Black woman student at a PWI as an undergraduate student was one of my first apparent, conscious experiences of what it means to be a Black woman, and to experience my Black woman-ness. So, during my sophomore year when I had not only my first Black professor, but a *Black woman* professor, I was met with visceral, sensory responses that my body marked *epiphanic* long before I had the language to do so.

I gained more than a "sense of belonging"— and instead, I realized that the foundations on which "belonging" sat were often antithetical to the juncture at which my situated-self sat. Although not risk-laden, and never completely beyond systems of domination, yet in defiance, I more importantly experienced an example of what it looks like to show up as oneself despite persistent messaging telling you not to do so. However, I quickly moved beyond the inaction of awe, to the irate realization that this professor, who I and others problematically categorized superwoman, was not

coincidentally one of few women of color, and certainly Black women, on campus. This *epiphany* pushed me to confront the oppressive power dynamics that defined and saturated the very threads of this institution—one that Barbara Christian (1987) might describe within the lineage of the Black Arts Movement via explicitly tracing the inception of Black Studies and Women’s studies, and the political attenuation with which these fields have been institutionalized. This tracing maps the inherently political plane that these subversive fields, and certainly their intersections [Black Feminism] have been actualized. In other words, the fact that my first Black woman professor, who taught Black Feminism Theory, was one of few, is in line with the literal and figurative cartographic characteristics and systems that make up the capitalist university.

Hearing

Enterprising Black Women on Wednesdays from 4:30pm from 7:10pm. I heard the words “Black Women” repeatedly. Hearing not bound by audio, a perceptibility beyond confines. I read what I heard and heard what I heard. Annotation checks, Integrative Concept Journals, Concept Maps. Nina’s Four Women, Geographies of Black Feminist Thought, Black Women’s Body Politics, Anti-Slavery Apostles, Race Women in the Age of Jim Crow, Respectability and Black Club Women, Black Girlhood and Black Feminist Dissemblance, Club Women in Defense of Blackness, Black Radical Women, Mothers of the Movement, Queering the Black Freedom Struggle, a Black Feminist Gaze²⁰.

I recognized the rare omnipresence of ancestors’ and I’s voice in an educational space such as this. A language I could hear was newly available. I could speak because I could hear. Making sense of what was in front of us. Who knew syllabi could speak? Words of Fire – incited flames that allowed me to self-eradicate the resistant, ever mutating, white supremacy I consumed as neutral as water. I found out that for us, by us transgressed garments. FUBU syllabi! Product placement and embedded marketing would naively be considered irrelevant to the capitalist university where syllabi have their place.

Home is where the hatred is. Home is filled with pain, and it might not be such a bad idea if I never went home again.²¹

Hearing the collective ring of Blackness in an academic classroom surprised my once limitedly attune tympanum. The prevalence of the vocalized “Black woman” that echoed each class, bitterly emphasized the places where I never heard the words “Black women”. I now ask the rhetorical question of who it is that we are hearing and speaking to when no specific demographic is named, and the literal question of what does this mean for the assumed way we teach that which umbrellas under ethnic studies? Then, I began confronting what I already knew—there was an encrypted code of whiteness that many do not have the password to obtain. However sinister, this realization prompted me to begin developing my own voice because I had learned my racial and gendered alphabet. Consonants and vowels, pronunciations and enunciations, meaning making of self could commence. Language could be exchanged and shared. Beyond my self-implication, the larger structural systems that my individual experience highlights suggests that my experience is not the

²⁰ Dr. Wendi Manuel-Scott, *Enterprising Black Women Syllabus*, Fall 2018

²¹ Gil Scott-Heron. *Home is Where the Hatred Is* [Song] (2012).

exception but is instead the rule. Whiteness permeates ideological reckoning, too— “take the Eurocentric curricula that pervades Higher Education. It is the historically contingent, racialized construction of intellect that acts to normalize the whiteness of the curricula, rendering all white male canons the ‘natural’ state of being” (Joseph-Salisbury, 2019, p.7). What is “normal” then, is the sounding absence of hearing Blackness in curricula.

Tasting, Smelling, Feeling

Insatiability. Illocatability. A never-ending search. Until I heard and saw. The always sought, yet unrecognizable chase of reflection was quenched with a glass of my mirrored self.

I tasted Black.

At the juncture of seeing and hearing I taste a once incomprehensible flavor made unidentifiable to my virgin palette. Or had I just become socially callous to such a sensory experience—a tongue historically and contemporarily subject to ideological and epistemological rape, abuse, and violence to the extent of stupefaction. Partus Sequitur Venetur—my stolen womb now my stolen discernment. White ways of knowing yield damaged papillae—a stripped parlance with filtered reception and expression. Seeing and hearing reclaimed the taste, the palette, of Blackness and Black receptivity and Black language and Black recognition and Black assertion. Seeing and hearing Blackness—I smell coffee beans in an attempt to decolonize the scent-subjected nose, the appropriation of a recognizable whiff, the cleansing of that which has been altered and tainted by toxins masked as perfumes. I, too, could now pinpoint which violently became one in the same—demystified disguised scents, now recognized as worldviews that disintegrated my own. Refinement recouped. Mahogany, dark roast, chocolate and licorice ideologies became nameable.

Mahogany, dark roast, chocolate and licorice ideologies became nameable.

The epiphany that I could feel and be touched by Black.

Here, my realization that a class could reflect my first-hand experiences was perplexing yet incredible. Not only was the presence of Black bodies witnessed, but episteme was equally recognizable. A class I could experience. A class I did not have to suppress queries of relevance. A class whose books I opted to buy and not rent.

²²A playlist for the Black girls tryna' feel something again, a playlist for the Black girls holding all the emotions, a playlist for Black girls tryna' find their home in the white academy, a playlist for the Black girls asking is this class seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling me?

- 1) *Time* by Snoh Alegra
- 2) *What Cha' Gonna Do for Me?* By Chaka Khan
- 3) *You Gonna Make Me Love Somebody Else* by The Jones Girls
- 4) *A Song for You* by Donny Hathaway
- 5) *Certainly* by Erykah Badu
- 6) *2* by HER
- 7) *She Dgaf* by The Internet
- 8) *After The Storm* by Kali Uchis ft. Tyler, The Creator
- 9) *CHANCES* by KAYTRANADA & Shay Li
- 10) *Millionaire* by Kelis ft. André 3000

Situating Ethnic Studies Pedagogies

I often think about how I have come to know myself as a Black woman. I chose to tell my epiphanic moments by describing “epistemological watermarks” (Durham, 2014) or “scenes” (Crawley, 2012) and distinctly by drawing sensory, visceral qualities, curating a playlist, and describing my notion of *home* in the white academy to critically engage the material realities and evolutions of what it means to exist in relative isolation as a Black woman at a PWI. The distinction between these senses has more discursive significance than that of material distinction. There is much overlap. However, by evoking the senses, I adopt an embodied practice that builds on the extensive work of Black feminists who have long queered the relationships between text, body, and writing, and is part of the named traditions and research practices of Black feminisms and is methodologically produced by way of critical, performance autoethnography, counternarrative, critical bifocality, and performance writing as research (Collins, 2009; Crawley, 2012, Durham, 2014; Fine, 2018, Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). I include this analysis piece as “center” to invert traditional linear framing confines, and to unapologetically begin and end “I” pieces that do not over rationalize or appease Eurocentrism with such justifications. Finally, it is important to note that the readings from which I draw and the process of layered reflection support my practice and envisioned pedagogical practices. These practices not only embrace an ethnic studies ethos but are also direct manifestations of the pedagogical requirements that accompany such a claim.

As a Black feminist autoethnography, my story is significant only in relation to the systems of power and larger societal patterns in which it exists and what it means to be an “outsider-within” (Collins, 2009). Although this work relentlessly uses “I” it is not about me. The situatedness of my own

²² I include this playlist as a culmination of the embodiments of this piece. It is an embrace of what Barbara Christian (1987) describes as the freeing potential of creative literature that is not subject to singular, unidirectional creations and responses to the world. It is also an honoring of a multiplicity of literacies that take shape beyond the “conventional” forms of reading and writing, particularly those that are resonant for Black women and girls (Muhammed & Haddix, 2016; Royster, 2000).

positionality in relation to my “scenes”, and these “scenes” relation to larger systems of power is the significance of this chosen method. Also, in the spirit of Black feminisms, the experience is an embodied localization alongside a critical awareness where its relevance is born. The autoethnography is granted the critical qualifier by highlighting the “wider political economy [that] simultaneously shape[s] Black women’s subordination and foster[s] activism” (Collins, 2009, p. 11). Finally, Johnson (2008) powerfully explains the value of drawing on the visceral as a part of methodology and reflects the spirit of my work– “As an ethnographer, I want to capture the fullest picture of the lives I am portraying; to that end, I rely not just on the five senses, but also on my intuition” (p. 10).

I, too, ask “how do we describe the epiphanic moments– moments of heightened awareness of the situated self– when the real and imagined body converge or collide?” (Durham, 2014, p. 13). What is the relationship between seeing, hearing, and tasting as it relates to filling the interstitial spaces of white academia with work reflective of our Blackness and the pedagogies that embrace and encompass such nuance? How are they perhaps interchangeable or at least interlaced? This is in part in aims of re-conceptualizing reciprocity to include linguistic and epistemic exchanges with ancestors and ancestral knowledges (Dillard, 2012).

In other words, I am expanding how we frame Black women as knowers and access to Black women knowledges by asserting that epistemic and linguistic exchanges can transcend Western understandings of conversation by including ancestry and employing Endarkened Feminisms in education (Dillard, 2012). I am interested in how Black women assert epistemic agency when the audiences willing and capable of hearing us are extremely limited (Dotson, 2011). However, by incorporating the five elements of CRT (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002),: (1) intercentricity of race/racism with other forms of subordination; (2) challenges the dominant ideology; (3) commitment to social justice; (4) centrality of experiential knowledge; and (5) transdisciplinary perspective, my work moves from story to counter story and asserts Black women as knowledge producers and knowers. I choose to include a curated playlist with the understanding that a full range of creation allows for communication beyond that which is an active mitigation of epistemic silences in ways that reject consultation with whiteness. The playlist functions as a subversion of that which is deemed academically relevant. The playlist is a declaration that the lines between lived realities, arts of all forms, and classrooms are in fact fallacious. This is an intentional “diverge[ence] from standard academic theory– [which] can take the form of poetry, music, essays, and the like” (Collins, 2009, p. 11). I ask, how is it that Black women make sense of their gendered, raced selves based on varying levels of access to work that reflects their own experiences and identities? I consider the significances of access, exposure, and engagement to Black feminist work as having an impact that is greater than momentous, temporal pride by drawing on Endarkened Feminisms that emphasize ancestral and spiritual connections and epistemologies (Dillard, 2012).

The larger implications/significances are knowing that “mainstream” inclusion of explicitly Black feminist work is relatively limited, but also that Black women have never simply succumbed to the violent, white supremacist, patriarchal false representations to which they have been subjected. Black women have asserted agency through a strength-based approach to self-identity formation and a large part of this has been achieved via counterstory, via multiple literacies (Muhammed & Haddix, 2016). This is inextricably linked to reframing Black women as knowers and expanding how we capture Black women knowledges in a more expansive way. This expansiveness is necessary for ethnic studies generally, as we must confront the colonial forces that have shaped the ways in

which we know, practice knowing, and recognize the knowings of our students, particularly those most subject to multiple precarities.

Since there is much to be gained by Black women's increased access to explicitly named Black feminist work, we must not only ask *how* knowing and defining ourselves vacillates depending on this exposure and engagement, but also how is it that we can increase these works' availability in a meaningful, accessible way that mitigates foreseeable appropriation, weaponization, and consultation with whiteness. I emphasize "explicitly" named Black feminist work because Black feminisms' *influences* are arguably omnipresent. However, my interests are in the engagement of this work that is *named*, uses the clear language of Black feminism, and that permeates arenas typically reserved for whiteness, such as classroom spaces at universities and the syllabi that are often artifacts of such exclusion (Dotson, 2011).

Concepts of collective trust and epistemic agency, both distinctively and at juncture, are reminders that the ways in which us Black women have been exposed to "work" representative of our own identities, happens beyond contexts considered formal or accepted by white notions of legitimacy, like music. It is vital that my work frames Black women's self-making and self-identity formation with the possibility of being understood as active processes not totally subject to whiteness. Collective trust expands the applicability of Endarkened Feminisms as the "collective" must include ancestry and spirituality (Dillard, 2012). Similarly, epistemic agency in relation to Black feminisms demands that we holistically consider Black women as knowers. I am suggesting that these "knowings" are informed by collective trust, which is characterized by aspects of ancestry and spirituality, and is ultimately contributory to Black women's agential, strength-based approach to self-identity formation that is a part of historical knowledge (Christian, 1987).

My work is ultimately an intervention in what Kristie Dotson (2011) names testimonial quieting, which is a type of epistemic injustice that is inflicted upon a less-privileged group by a more-privileged group and deems them as unknowable or as incapable of producing knowledge (Dotson, 2011). Ethnic studies must contend with this exchange. Because Black women have historically and contemporarily been subject to epistemic injustice, and deemed unfit from producing knowledge, the "legitimized" canon also excludes their voices. In turn, the rarity of Black faculty and the Black ideological absence in curricula and in white universities continue to be part of a long tradition of failing to take the intellectual lives and accounts of Black women seriously. It is one manifestation of the 'institutionalized epistemicide' of Black women in higher education. Kristie Dotson (2011) describes testimonial quieting:

However one identifies the harm in a given practice of testimonial quieting, the epistemic violence present in such happenings should be located at the juncture where an audience fails to accurately identify the speaker as a knower, thereby failing to communicatively reciprocate in a linguistic exchange due to pernicious ignorance in the form of false, negative stereotyping. (p. 243)

Despite the epistemic injustice Black women have been subject to, Black women's self-identity development that is characterized by self-love and self-worth in the context of a racist, sexist society can be considered a significant form of resistance. Contemporarily, it is not uncommon for scholars to practice framing Black women beyond mere subjects of racial and gendered oppression, and to include highlights of agency that have always been a part of the story. However, I believe

that resistance practiced via intentional *self-definition* holds particular significance. It is a miraculous example of one learning to speak in a language often barred from institutions of alleged education for all. Although miraculous, this fluency despite institutional validation is not fortuitous, as embodied by the work of Black Feminisms.

Quotidian mustn't be equated with mindlessness. Instead, understood as a compounded, regularized phenomenon. This phenomenon is far from simple as it relates to my life as a Black woman in academia. The daily decisions that are made are far from mindless, no matter how "regular". Even decisions that are made with relative ease and with developed instinct, require a certain form of emotional and self-expenditure. I consider my contention with home and these dependent reliance of the visceral, embodied emotions within it, as my confrontation with the twoness of my daily relationship with the Academy. It is my hope that this place-based, sensory experience offers a lens through which ethnic studies pedagogy can contend.

Sensing Home

Home is Jes Grew, genealogy, Black Power, transgression, caged birds, the S.O.S. Band, cookouts, dissemblance, 1619, okra, embodied discourse, Baptist shouts, sought and discovered maternal gardens, Sethe, presumed competency, a history beyond A.D. Home is a money tree, blue bouncy balls, bonnets & scarves, back rubs, poems seen and felt. Home is resiliency, belly breaths, medium-free texts. Home is a crystalized ginger candle, fresh white linen, an intentionally prepared meal, oversized windows, mint tea, Afro-centric art, gifted lilies, mildly stocked pantries, Café Bustelo, warm baked cookies, love seats, semi-organized closets, honeybun cake, brown sugar pie, and perfectly humidified air. Often, my search for this home feels in vain at University. I crave the taste, look, feel, touch, and sound of home. Leaning into hooks' (1990) notion of homeplace, as a "site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist"—where Black women cultivated spaces in which "we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts" despite the myriad systems working against us, I use 'Home' to consider what restorative spaces look like in higher education and as a part of an ethnic studies pedagogy (p. 384). *Remembering* the historical sacredness of how Black women have politically asserted homeplace is a practice we are all tasked with.

I accept that Home is ever changing, because I am ever changing—my identities, their points of juncture and their contextualized words are water. How can I be fixed if my world is not? How can I understand my relationship between the white academy and myself, when the latter is unstable? Why doesn't the notion of codependency connote the toxic relationship between identity and world, between self and non-self? This world is the enabler of my identity conundrum, the sins that make defining home impossible, and certainly speak to the tensions with finding home in the academy. The sins that name the search of an absolute identity in vain. The myth of a finite self is the most exhausting lie. To look for an alleged fixed Self, is to neglect the connection between Self and Home, and Home within the white academy. How do I taste, see, feel, touch, and hear this home?

My Bildungsroman is a coming-to-know-Home. Home is everything and everyone that are inscribed on my life's ever changing acknowledgement page. Home is where this page has been made legible and literate. Where and how did I learn to read this granite inscribed page—how has it been demystified? My home is on the page with my ancestors who have always known better

than to accredit themselves for the knowing of themselves. My home cultivates my me, my home has been built by them. Collectivity, community, ancestry, and sisterhood are all sacred notions that should be treated as such. Home is a mirror, an affirmation... it is illimitable. Home is the ability to transgress time bound knowledge that is fallaciously defined by Truth— it is not coincidental that the word “knowledge” lacks a plural form in the English language. Plurale tantums feel more like Home. Home is knowing that my struggles are not unprecedented. Home is the privilege to situate my own plights amongst those of my ancestors. I yearn to taste, see, feel, touch, and hear this home.

I look for Home in the classroom when emotional expenditure is expected, the risks of Black women exerting such vulnerability unacknowledged. What does it mean for daily conversations in classrooms to speak directly to my embodied fears? Despite feeling seen— being genuinely listened to and my experiences as a racialized, gendered being centered on the weight of what it means to discuss these things in the classroom *while living them* presents both risk and reward. I leave class and attempt to decompress from such conversations and burdensome realities, which I can only do with restraint. At least I have my BFT canon to hug. I am beginning to taste, see, feel, touch and hear this home.

Today’s acknowledgments are not tomorrows—the page told me that. The realization of an interdependent, codependent, dynamic identity is a release of the reins. It is a hopeful, forceful blow onto the lit wick of control. The resultant smoke signifies an atmospheric release that may or may not send parabens into the air that I breathe and that fill Home. Patricia told me that this is the overlooked definitional dilemma of intersectionality (Collins, 2015). Brittany told me that we can’t site ourselves when our ancestors have not been cited (Cooper, 2017). Toni demanded that I write this page beyond consultation with whiteness. Nina taught me to harmonize the pain. Are we there yet?

Praxis + Reflection

I often think about how I have come to know and am continuing to know myself as a Black woman. The nuanced, evolving answer to this question has been fundamentally shaped by my own exposure to Black Feminisms, and has also shaped Home and how I locate myself in the academy. It has also given me the language to make sense of the weighty dissonance. My introduction to explicitly named Black feminist work has marked a distinct genesis and remembrance of major moments of self-understanding. It is in this understanding that I locate Home. This locale is one that transcends time and place— and is a chameleon characterized by an inherent resistance of shapeshifting. Home, alas.

I locate the texts written in Black feminist tradition as Home within the academy because it is here that I have been able to make sense of myself...it is here that I learned to reject notions of racialized, gendered culpability and to conjure the liberating powers of contextualization. It is here that I have released the question “why is my curriculum so white?” (Joseph-Salisbury, 2019). Home, here, has provided comfort, guidance, safety.... in a way that a place or person could not. Across contexts and time, these texts also showed me that who I am will change, because socially constructed identities that I hold are also changing. Here, a resilient home not completely bound by time and place has been offered. In other words, by showing me that what my Black-woman-ness means will vary, I have a sense of self that is not based on a fictionally bound foundation. My foundation is,

ironically, flux and the naming of socialization, construction, and power. Knowing and naming that tension is shelter.

How did I understand myself as a racialized, gendered being pre-*Words of Fire*, *The Crunk Feminist Collection*, and ain't I a woman? But more importantly, what does it mean that access to these texts, "finding" them, —my Home amid a home to others— is a luxury, and perhaps even coincidental? If we expand the notion of Homelessness to include that of ideological vagrantness in the Academy, the already grand social justice issue of the housing crisis may be considered an unparalleled pandemic. Homelessness. Home is a phantom to those whose histories remain hidden and/or sterilized. Home is ethereal to those who have the privilege of affirming c(s)itations.

If the curation of homeplace is one cartographically part of my ontology, why does the actualization of such a space not feel nearly as instinctive as its abstractive existence? I *remember* that survival here is predicated on such a space despite my often-fleeting stability to sustain, provide, and create such an exhaustive, yet nourishing space that requires an ongoing confrontation with the self, but Zora applauded me for telling lies. Folklore, truth, bedtime stories, spells, curses, praises, conjures, and prayers— their spheres indistinguishable. I will evoke these when I don't have myself to give.

What happens when this story is written from a place of callousness, of dissonance, of spectacle time and time again? How can I not write a story from this place of attempted removal and still preserve a fraction of myself? Does truth demand shared skin-to-skin intimacy of pain and suffering that is characteristic of this, previous, and future worlds? The story depends on me, but what if I have nothing to give the story?

The indelicacies of today will unlikely be the crassness of tomorrows. "There's nothing new under the sun" my mom tells me— and today's (and yesterday's) pandemics, racial reckoning, senseless violence, and perpetual colonial projects are certainly ancient, and are not escapable from the sun. Today's story doesn't feel too hopeful but I'm thankful for tomorrows. Home today may or may not be Home tomorrow but discovering that this fluidity is at the core of what Home can be for myself, is an honor I owe to the Black Feminist writers who have come before me, and the educators who have chosen to embrace their praxes.

Conclusion

Educators who embrace ethnic studies must reflect seriously on their own experiences of witnessing antecedent educators who have meaningfully practiced such pedagogies. This embrace is an embodied honoring, solidarity, and work with our teachers as living archives. By offering my own Black feminist, sensory, autoethnographic account of my first experiences with a Black women professor who taught Black Feminist Theory, it is my goal to both consider the ways that this ongoing epiphanic moment has shaped me, but also to honor the work and labor— the 'homeplaces'— created by Black women with whom I trace my own self-making. This process of critical reflection also allows us to look to our own experiences for examples of what worked pedagogically— 'knowings' of what 'worked' that are often embodied and felt as I hope to have made evident by centering sensory elements. Next, ethnic studies pedagogies must attend to *where* they are practiced. The geo-spatial underpinnings of where we uptake particular pedagogical choices must inform those choices considering that the space in and of itself is laden with power dynamics that must be disrupted both ideologically and physically. This understanding has

motivated my embrace of hooks' (1990) notion of homeplace. Ultimately, ethnic studies pedagogies must embrace dynamic processes of remembering, honoring, reflecting, and s/citing while simultaneously moving the conversation to the contemporary and future moments.

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Feminista Reflections of a COVID Food Project: Disrupting Pedagogical Norms, Theorizing from Homespace, and Healing Collectively

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Abstract

In this article, we reflect on a COVID food project completed during a Chicanx studies graduate seminar. Via our reflections on the project, we explore how feminista ethnic studies pedagogies allow us to conjure and commune with our elders and our homespaces. We argue that feminista ethnic studies pedagogies, in higher education and in K-12 settings, allow us to draw from our homespace and the bodymindspirit to create living archives of familial knowledge and healing. Sharing examples from the food project, we highlight pedagogical disruptions and collective healing that were grounded in the project.

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“The revolution begins at home.” Moraga and Anzaldúa (1981)

Dolores: I’ve been teaching for over 30 years, most of that time specifically in ethnic studies, and one priority for me in all those years has been allowing students to make connections between their bodymindspirit (Lara, 2002) and what is happening in their lives—both the struggles and the joys. I’ve done this in elementary, undergraduate, and graduate classrooms. In the spring of 2021, in the midst of the global pandemic that disproportionately impacted communities of color and specifically the student body at Cal State Los Angeles, I knew it was essential to engage graduate students in a meaningful project that allowed for the conditions of the pandemic, our familial knowledge, our bodymindspirit (Lara 2002), and collective healing. Dr. Juily Phun^[23] had developed a project she called *Food in the Time of COVID*, and she graciously shared it with me and allowed me to modify it to work with students in my Chicanx/Latinx studies graduate seminar. In focusing

²³ Dr. Juily Phun is an assistant professor in the Department of Asian and Asian American Studies at California State University, Los Angeles. As part of the Food in the Time of COVID project, she created a digital archive based on the work of students who have engaged in the project.

on how food can bring us together, the project documented home knowledge systems that are rarely honored as legitimate. As you both know, the purpose was to document our relationship to this knowledge system by interviewing a family member²⁴, recording a recipe, creating a digital/photo food diary, and theorizing about the knowledge, relationships, and food that nourish and sustain us. The assignment was grounded in feminista²⁵ ethnic studies pedagogies and was meant to invite new possibilities for how we understand the construction and deployment of knowledge. The two of you and your classmates reflected and theorized in ways I didn't completely anticipate. You moved into spaces of vulnerability, grief, healing, and the contradictory pedagogies of your home all in the context of an assignment on food. Can you both share a bit about those spaces?

Yessica: Yes, the food project placed me in an uncomfortable, but necessary space of intimacy and vulnerability. This uncomfortable space became a journey of self-reflection that allowed me to confront the open wounds left behind by heteronormativity. In this journey, I found myself wrestling with what I believed to be right or wrong. I constantly had an internal dialogue that felt like a debate between the person my family wanted me to be and the person I had become. This internal disagreement was visible in my writing as the words shied away from the truth. When you paired Cynthia and me up to read each other's papers, I felt validation I didn't realize I needed. Before you introduced the assignment to us, I received a spiritual calling to write about my family's history with cooking when I received one of the last cookbooks my great aunt Alicia wrote. I wanted to specifically focus on writing about my aunt Alicia because, as an adult, I had the opportunity to reflect on her impact on my life as one of the first queer representations I witnessed.

Nonetheless, I didn't realize that this project would be an invitation to vulnerability and healing that my bodymindspirit had been seeking. Cynthia, after reading your paper about your process with grief, I felt inspired by your openness. I felt encouraged to also look deeper within myself and understand the pain that I have been carrying. I realize now that part of my journey was to detangle the family knowledge I inherited from the harmful values that have targeted me as a queer person. As you mentioned, Profe Dolores, this project invited new possibilities. It taught me to value the contradictions of familial space and familial pedagogies while simultaneously centering joy and healing.

Cynthia: I entered our graduate program at an interesting point in my life, having just overcome COVID and beginning the last trimester of my first pregnancy. This brought on a lot of *sentimientos*²⁶, memories, and reflections. Throughout the semester, I sought any opportunity to bridge my academic work with the stories of the *mujeres* of my family especially those of *mi abuela*, *Soco*. I eagerly yearned for her presence during this time in my life. When Profe Dolores introduced

²⁴ Family was defined very broadly to include blood and chosen, oneself, or a larger extension of oneself. And while most students interviewed an elder, we also defined elder broadly and kept in mind that it is not always about age or relation.

²⁵ We use the term "feminista" to include Chicana and Latina influences that include the scholarship of US Latinas of different backgrounds, such as US Mexicanas who do not identify as Chicana and US Central Americans. We use it interchangeably with "Chicana/Latina feminist."

²⁶ Following Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) example, we purposefully choose not to translate Spanish phrases as a way to honor translanguaging/bilingualism and to ask non-bilingual readers to move out of their comfort zone and willfully engage in world-traveling (Lugones, 1987).

the COVID food project, I knew it was my opportunity to include her in this space of higher education.

I was scared to be vulnerable, and I was frightened to ask and answer those questions that involved intimacy with oneself. At times me preguntaba, “Do I really want to share so much?” Part of me wanted to pull back, restrain myself, but my bodymindspirit told me it was necessary and important work to be done. It was sharing our projects with one another that validated what I was doing. Yessica, you were going through a similar process as I because we both sought answers to questions, we could no longer ask the *mujeres* in our families due to them passing. By revisiting our family recipes, this opened the door to the messiness of the pedagogies of our homes, but also the (re)envisioning of the homes we want to build for ourselves and the generations to come. I was further validated as I met with you, Profe Dolores. Not only did you reassure me that what I was doing was of value, but you also expressed how coming to terms with the messiness is part of our healing journeys. Ultimately, I decided to cook and write for me, mi abuela Soco, and to heal from the pain her absence has left me.

We began this article with reflections that emerged from our *pláticas*²⁷ about a food project assignment in an ethnic studies graduate seminar that we were all three a part of. Dolores was teaching the course and Cynthia and Yessica were both first year graduate students in the course. The course was a Chicana/Latina studies teaching seminar that examined learning in K-12, higher education, and community settings with a focus on feminista ethnic studies pedagogies that are grounded in spirituality, the body, experiential knowledge, queer identities, and borderland sensibilities. We explored the ways in which Chicana/Latina feminist thought redefines everyday experiences of teaching, learning and how it has made significant theoretical contributions to educational studies, feminist studies, and Chicana/Latina studies. The project itself is somewhat unique to a university setting (though not to ethnic studies) in that it allows for a disruption of the apartheid of knowledge (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002) present in academia by (re)centering familia knowledge and the epistemological shifts shaped by women/queer scholars of color. Too often the academy forces us to teach and conduct research as if the body and spirit does not exist, as if there is no meeting place between the mind, body, and spirit. “If the academy, in its very mission, denies the body, except as the object of theoretical disembodied discourse... then what is the radically thinking ‘othered’ body (the queer, the colored, the female) doing there” (Moraga, 2000, p. 175). It is imperative, especially during COVID, that we bring our bodies, spirits, and homespaces²⁸ into the classroom, into our learning, and into the ways we theorize. The food project did just that. It allowed for the queering of academic knowledge so that it is informed by knowledge

²⁷ *Pláticas* are a type of informal conversations that “have a long trajectory in the lives of Chicana/Latina feminists and other Women of Color feminist circles that have engaged dialogue and community building as central to organizing and activist efforts. Though *pláticas* are a familiar cultural practice within Latina/o/x families, our understandings of *pláticas* are guided by Chicana/Latina feminist frameworks that add a feminist sensibility to how We engage with *pláticas*” pedagogically and methodologically. (Morales, Flores, Gaxiola Serrano, & Delgado Bernal, 2023, p. 2).

²⁸ hooks (1990) theorizes homeplace as a space of resistance from the “brutal reality of racial apartheid, of dominance” and where “Black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts” (p. 384). We use homespace in a similar way, acknowledging the warmth and healing, as well as the contradictions and domination of patriarchy and heterosexism that sometimes exists in our homes.

that comes from our homes and communities, allowing us to theorize from our homespace while also developing a living archive of familial knowledge and healing.

Via our reflections on this food project, we explore how feminista ethnic studies pedagogies allow us to conjure and commune with our elders and our homespaces. We argue that feminista ethnic studies pedagogies, in higher education and in K-12 settings, allow us to draw from our homespace and the bodymindspirit to create living archives of familial knowledge and healing. We illustrate how we as *mujeres* in academia disrupt and transform normative ways of teaching and learning, while at times also (re)imagining some of the pedagogies of our own homes. In order to do this, we first provide a brief overview of the pedagogical and theoretical frameworks that were part of the graduate seminar and that we brought to the project. We then share an example from both Cynthia and Yessica's food projects, highlighting the pedagogical disruptions and collective healing that were grounded in their work. We end with reflections on grief and healing.

Our Pedagogical and Theoretical Perspectives

The graduate seminar we all participated in, titled *Raced, Gendered, and Queer Pedagogies*, introduced students to an array of decolonizing pedagogies such as ethnic studies pedagogies, feminista pedagogies, and *jotería* pedagogies. Each of these pedagogical perspectives are distinct, yet there are points of intersection both theoretically and in praxis. Zavala (2018) reminds us that a decolonizing pedagogy will "draw connections between the colonial past and the present, between our lives and the social, historical, and geopolitical forces that encircle them, with self and social transformation as broader goals" (p. 59). Ethnic studies pedagogies are a decolonizing pedagogy and according to Tintiangco-Cubales and colleagues (2014), ethnic studies pedagogies also encompass at least three major concerns: access, relevance, and community (ARC). They describe the ARC of ethnic studies as having access to a quality education for students of color where they receive a rigorous education that is directly connected to the marginalized experiences of students of color. And importantly, ethnic studies pedagogies serve as a bridge from formal educational spaces to homespace, community involvement, advocacy, organizing, and activism. Curammeng (2022) adds that self-determination, knowledge of self and community, comparative learning histories, leadership, critical consciousness, community organizing, and self-love are among some of the unique experiential knowledge attributed to ethnic studies pedagogies. We draw from these scholars to conceptualize ethnic studies pedagogies in P-20 and community settings.

Because ethnic studies pedagogies are not always feminist in nature, we pair ethnic studies pedagogies with feminista pedagogies, especially those grounded in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa modeled how theory, practice, spirituality, and embodied knowledge combine to offer a specific feminista epistemological perspective. From this perspective, Chicana/Latina scholars have conceptualized various feminista pedagogies—pedagogies that emanate from brown bodies, from the insights of living in the borderlands, from queer identities, and from tensions produced by the intersection of multiple subjectivities. Some of these pedagogical interventions include *sentipensante* pedagogy (Rendón, 2009), pedagogies of *nepantla* (Prieto & Villenas, 2012), pedagogies of survival (Trinidad Galván, 2015), a pedagogy of sisterhood (Burciaga & Tavares, 2006), *muxerista* pedagogy (Tijerina Revilla, 2004), spiritual pedagogy (Figueroa, 2014), *jotería* pedagogy (Alvarez, 2014), *rasquache* pedagogy (Morales, Mendoza, & Delgado Bernal, 2016), and border transformative pedagogy (Elenes, 2011). All of these disrupt pedagogical norms, include

embodied ways of teaching and learning, and call for both healing and transformation.

Here, we very briefly introduce the reader to four specific theoretical tools that were essential to the feminista ethnic studies pedagogies employed within our classroom and to how we engaged in our food projects: *el mundo zurdo*, *jotería/queer embodiment*, putting *Coyolxauqui* together, and pedagogies of the home.

El Mundo Zurdo: Anzaldua's left-handed world (Keating, 2009) is a visionary world where the odd, different, misfit, and queer bodies exist; it is a place for people who don't belong. It can be seen as a marginalized space, but in reality, it is a transformative space informed by these bodies which leads to alternative insights, embodied knowledge, and healing. The idea of *el mundo zurdo* shaped our temporary classroom community of misfit, queer, and different students as well as the food project that took us to familiar homespaces. It allowed us to be vulnerable with each other and ourselves as we brought our full authentic selves, contradictions, and all, to our collective classroom space. That classroom space of *el mundo zurdo* allowed us to bridge what has traditionally been understood as academic knowledge with our food and familial knowledge. In doing so, our food project became a living archive of resistance, transformation, and healing.

Jotería/Queer Embodiment: The embodiment of *jotería* is centered on a queer episteme that interrupts the confines of (hetero)normativity and is "rooted in fun, laughter and radical, Muxerista queer love," and it "[rejects] homophobia, transphobia, monosexism, heteronormativity, cissexism, racism, patriarchy, xenophobia, gender discrimination, classism, colonization, citizenism, ableism, and all other forms of subordination and dehumanization" (Revilla & Santillana, 2014, p. 173). Alvarez (2014) argues that *jotería* is about existing at the intersection of the borderlands, and as Anzaldua contends, it is a place of agency and survival. Through engaging in this space within ourselves, our (family) stories are rewritten and challenge society's hierarchical, supremacist ideologies while also using love, dreams, desires, and trauma as internal knowledge.

Putting Coyolxauqui Together: The dismembered Mesoamerican moon goddess, *Coyolxauqui*, invites us to reimagine ourselves as scholar-warriors who work on valuing and healing ourselves to engage in intellectual work and spiritual activism²⁹. This idea values love, compassion, and joy as part of a healing process that allows us to piece our fragmented selves together. Anzaldúa's reclamation of *Coyolxauhqui*, not only offers a reunification of the bodymindspirit, but it is an invitation to reimagine ourselves as whole, as knowledge producers, and as "scholar warriors who think differently, recognize alternative forms of knowledge, and engage in spiritual activism with our body, spirit, and text" (Calderón et.al., 2012, p. 525). In some ways, our work with the food project is the "creative work of putting all the pieces together in a new form..." in order to heal from past wounds of heterosexism, patriarchy, and racism as well as from the attempts to separate and dismember our homespace knowledge from academic knowledge (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 546).

Pedagogies of the Home: Over two decades ago, Delgado Bernal (2001) theorized pedagogies of the home to explain the experiences of Chicana first-generation college students. In that work, she focused on the assets rather than the deficits the students brought with them into institutions of

²⁹ Spiritual activism is the seventh space of Anzaldua's path of *conocimiento* (2002). It is "a way of life and a call to action. Spiritual activism is spirituality for social change, spirituality that recognizes the many differences among us yet insists on our commonalities and uses these commonalities as catalysts for transformation" (Keating, 2006, p.11).

higher education. In doing so, she didn't address the contradictions or the harmful pedagogies that can take place in our home, such as those attached to patriarchy, heterosexism, or anti-Blackness. In more recent work with Nichole Garcia (Garcia and Delgado Bernal 2021) where they delve deeper into some of the messiness, she reflects:

When I conceptualized pedagogies of the home, in many ways I was responding to the deficit ways Chicana/o students and other students of color have been talked about in schools, society, and the academic literature. In doing so, I failed to show the contradictions and discomfort of pedagogies of our home and that sometimes home can be unsafe and dangerous (p.3).

The food project allowed us to unveil and sit with some of the contradictions and discomforts of the pedagogies of our homes while (re)imagining the pedagogies we want to embrace and the Mundo Zurdo we want to create.

Our Food Project as Archives of Familial Knowledge and Healing

We provide an example from Cynthia and Yessica's food project to explore how feminista ethnic studies pedagogies allowed us to commune and consult with the archives of our ancestral and cultural homesplaces, particularly the kitchen space. Their examples demonstrate how the food project allowed for the queering of academic knowledge by bringing in food, culture, elders, and ancestors, and simultaneously allowed for the queering of home knowledge by questioning the pedagogies of our home which are not static, but always being remade with the ideas, and theories we bring from academia. Perhaps most importantly, they also highlight healing as an outcome of each of their projects.

Cynthia: The Call Home: Cooking & Theorizing for Nosotras

Throughout my academic journey I have identified with the fallen, dismembered goddess Coyolxauhqui. Her brokenness, one caused by outside forces has been a representation of the various instances where I have been pulled apart by the academy only to be left to try and put the pieces of myself together again. As a first-generation scholar, I have felt that only part of me has been allowed into academia while my lived experiences, family, and community have been shunned away, as if they and I are undeserving of this privileged space. For many years, I struggled to understand the academic language and to find my place in the ivory tower. Through this journey towards making my bodymindspirit whole again, I came to understand that these theories are rooted in the *saberes, enseñanzas y conocimientos* of the women in my family. The food project then became a perfect opportunity to demonstrate how these pedagogies of the home are our first introduction to these academic theories, but with a more accessible language, one that speaks to us from *el corazón, cuerpo, y alma*.

My Abuela Socorro's home served as my first school, and so as I was trying to choose a recipe to cook during *tiempos del COVID*, I was called to return to it and her. At first, I was apprehensive because I knew that I would be picking at the wound that her passing has left on my bodymindspirit. Even after all these years, it has not closed, and I do not think it ever will. This calling was a spiritual one, as if she and I were ready to meet momentarily cooking *esas tortillas de harina con mantequilla* that she fed me throughout my childhood. Although I understood this process would be difficult and I would have to be vulnerable, it simply felt right. All of me told me that it would be a way to

honor the *mujer* who was my first teacher and has inspired me to pursue higher education not only for myself but for *todas nosotras*.

Her home in Rosarito started as a small shack, one purchased against the wishes of her father. My great grandfather, Florentino, threatened to kill her with a machete when he discovered that she had purchased a *terreno*. I grew up hearing this story of defiance *y fuerza*. Fue *haci que de ella aprendí del feminismo antes de reconocer esa palabra*. As a *muchacha*, she was vocal about how she deserved just as much, if not more, than the men in her family. By becoming the first landowner of her siblings, she defied the gender norms that during the 1960s were being forced upon her. With this story she would tell us, *sus nietas*, how although she was fearful of these threats, what was more important to her was taking the risk of doing anything possible for a better future for her and her children. *Nos inculco que era importante amarnos a nosotras mismas como mujeres*. She knew that by loving ourselves in every way possible we would always strive for more (however each of us defined more). And so, her home became the foundation for the feminist studies that would guide me through my work in higher education. I embodied these theories and embraced these knowledges born from the margins (hooks, 1992).

As I began to gather the ingredients in my kitchen table for the *tortillas de harina*, I (re)entered my own grandmother's kitchen space. I was brought back to seeing her cook, no measurements, or exact recipes, but rather an embracement of our bodies speaking to us. The hands know how much *manteca* must be used when the *maza* is ready and when the *tortilla* has been cooked perfectly. She would say, "*Todo es tantearle, ver con los ojos y sentir con las manos que mas se ocupa.*" Because she made an emphasis on the importance of each of us having the ability to cook in our way without having to replicate her own cooking, I developed my own *sazón*, "the ability a cook has to create flavorful food using the senses as the guiding principles" (Abarca, 2006 p.210), one that continued to center her feminist teachings. The embracing of our *sazón* translated into the embracing of our own identities and journeys.

My *abuela's* kitchen served as the space where the women in my family learned to heal individually and collectively out of the need to *desahogarnos* about the gender norms that limit our identities and independence. Not only is feminism in my family rooted here, but it also served as the space where we could (re)imagine our liberatory futures. By creating this third space, *el mundo zurdo*, *juntas* we dove into a world centering queerness and ambiguity. In this mundo, the women in my family are the *osiconas*, *contestonas*, *cabronas*, *feministas*, *chingonas* that are not accepted (nor seek to be accepted) in the heteronormative, cisgendered, white³⁰, middle-upper class world. As brown, fat, queer, working class, single mother *mujeres* my *ancestras* have turned the kitchen from a space of dominance to one of resistance and reclaiming of themselves and their children. It is here where the possibilities of what we can be are endless, when those ideas from our imaginations are vocalized, and put out into the universe to become realities. *Y es haci que poco a poco, paso a paso me construyo a mi misma de nuevo gracias a nosotras*. It is in this mundo zurdo where we find the strength within us to build ourselves again. Gloria Anzaldúa (2002) writes that our "ailing

³⁰ We follow other women of color (Aida Hurtado, 1998; Barbera Smith, 1983) and capitalize Black and Brown following that it refers not just to a pigment of skin color, but to a heritage and history of Black and Brown communities being discriminated against and experiencing systemic and institutional oppression. White is left in lowercase letters because it refers not to one ethnic group or to specified ethnic groups, but to many, and it does not refer to a collective experience of marginalization.

body is no longer a hindrance but an asset, witnessing pain, speaking to us, demanding touch” (p. 10). She tells us, “Es tu cuerpo que busca conocimiento, along with dreams your body’s the royal road to consciousness” (p. 10). This spiritual calling from my Abuela Soco’s kitchen and my own was a way to continue bridging the various parts of me. La hija, la nieta, la madre, la esposa, la estudiante, la colega, la amiga. Although it took some time to realize that my brokenness by the academy took over me for a purpose, understanding that the cracks of my shattering will always be visible (just like Coyolxauqui) but do not hinder me from being complete allows me to survive and continue living by being my authentic self. I choose myself; I choose my identities; I choose my truth and so the process continues.

After years of avoiding cooking my Abuela’s most famous dishes, I pushed myself to do so because I recognized the worthiness of my bodymindspirit in taking on this family tradition. When I unfolded my handwritten papelito guardado (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001) with the vague measurements, directions, and consejos of how to make her tortillas de harina, I was hesitant to prepare them for myself because I did not feel like I would be doing my Abuela justice. Eventually, I came to the realization that cooking is not about doing justice to someone or something. Cooking, just as other pedagogies of the home, is about combining the teachings of our elders and ancestors and mixing them with our own knowledge. It is this process of taking poquito de aquí y poquito de allá that allows for a space in which we can continue creating, thinking, and taking action without limitations. Ultimately, I conquered my fear of making the famous tortillas de harina, and by the end of the process I did not seek to replicate the taste of my Abuela’s tortillas, but rather I looked forward to tasting the sabor de las tortillas that came from me, my hands, and my love for this food item.

Yessica: Queerness Embodied Through Generations

For many years, my queer identity was silenced externally and internally due to compulsory heterosexuality, the idea that heterosexuality is mandatory (Tijerina Revilla, 2020). Growing up, I did not have the language to understand my queer identity. As an adult, I veiled references to my personal life due to the negative internalized perspective of being queer. Therefore, hetero patriarchy dismembered my relationship with my mom and myself the same way Huitzilopochtli dismembered Coyolxauhqui (Anzaldúa et al., 2013). Nonetheless, by navigating the “messy” and having vulnerable *pláticas* (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016), my mom and I are learning to build a bridge toward healing our relationship, ourselves, and our family. Simultaneously, as we navigate “the messy,” my mom and I continue to create “pedagogies of the home” by providing strategies of resistance that will help in everyday life, specifically around the relationship towards queerness (Cruz, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 2010). Nonetheless, our healing did not begin with us. Our bodies have carried “the colonial scarring of imperfect healing” for generations (Calderón et al., 2012, p. 521). Our “messy” relationship with queerness has been a blueprint “...in the bodies of our mothers and grandmothers” (Cruz, 2001, p. 658); therefore, for my food project, I found it critical to acknowledge the practices of the women before me, including my mom and my great tía, Lichita.

Moreover, I brought my own embodiment of *jotería* to the food project by discussing my family’s lived experience and rejecting the omissions of queerness (Alvarez, 2014). By situating my research in a *jotería* praxis, I facilitated the *plática* in a nonhierarchical, vulnerable space that invited the questioning and learning of all subjects (Alvarez, 2014). Nonetheless, before starting this research,

I had not reflected on how my mom's connection to queerness has been in motion since the inception of previous generations. Queerness had always found its way to be present in my family.

I have blurred memories of my childhood with my tía Lichita, most specifically because my family and I left Mexico when I was three years old. However, her presence in my life was very impactful. I was a nine-year tomboy³¹ when I saw my tía Lichita again after leaving Mexico. I recall the respect her presence demanded as she walked into the room. She was one of the matriarchs in our family and was responsible for the existence of a new generation. I always looked up to my tía Lichita; however, I couldn't put into words what she represented to me as a child. My tía Lichita never married or had kids. Instead, she focused on her career and co-parented with my grandma by raising my mom and her siblings. Like the cartoon, Alex, in Karleen Pendleton Jiménez's, *The Making of a Queer Latina Cartoon* (2014), I lacked the linguistic understanding of queerness, but I understood that my gender expression as a tomboy made me different. At that age, I equated different with being like my tía Lichita. I didn't understand what heterosexuality or queerness meant. Still, I knew that I, unlike the girls in my neighborhood, did not have a crush on boys from school, nor did I fantasize about having an elaborate wedding. The knowledge in my body understood that my tía Lichita was different and that I could be different too. After witnessing how my family loved and respected her, I thought they would also embrace the difference in me.

I decided to interview my mom and learn more about my tía Lichita through *pláticas* with her. When I explained my project and why I wanted to interview her, she was excited. My mom takes a lot of pride in her tamales. She is also very grateful for being able to sell her tamales, specifically during hard times. The first *plática* took place in my dining room, with my pup running around demanding my mom's attention. Throughout the interview, my mom was open to answering any questions. She made it clear how her tamales had helped her pay for bills and in times of *necesidad para ayudarse a uno*. When I asked her if she ever wanted to learn to cook something else to sell, she mentioned that potentially hot chocolate, but she had *mucho fe en [sus] tamales*. It wasn't until later, as we were eating together that I asked about my tía Lichita. However, she mentioned that she did not know much about my tía Lichita and that it would be better to ask her older sister, my tía Paz.

To include my tía Paz, the second *plática* was at my mom's house; I faced mixed emotions going to her home. I love the familiar smell of Suavitel when I enter my mom's home and seeing the joy she projects when I visit her. However, sometimes as I walk inside that building, I recall painful memories, like the first time my mom confronted me about my queerness and threatened to send me to Mexico because that kind of lifestyle was not acceptable in her home. I was sixteen years old when I stood in shame in front of her as she viewed me with sincere disgust. Therefore, walking into my mom's home is sometimes messy, full of contradictions, very personal, and at times harrowing (Calderón et al., 2012).

As my mom and tía shared memories about their childhood, I noticed my mom's behavior mimicked a younger sibling. My mom's body mirrored openness and playfulness around my tía, but discomfort and uneasiness around the alluding of queerness. It seemed different from her behavior in my home, where she appeared relaxed and open about my queerness. Her body language shift was specifically noticeable when I asked my tía Paz why my tía Lichita never married or had children.

³¹ In *The Making of a Queer Latina Cartoon* (2014) Karleen Pendleton uses tomboy to represent a gender nonconforming child that challenges the gender binary. I use tomboy as a subjective interpretation of a boyish girl.

My tía Paz mentioned that my tía Lichita had a boyfriend who was murdered. Afterwards, my tía Lichita was so heartbroken that she did not want to date or marry again. I then asked her if my tía Lichita had difficulty choosing to live single, specifically in Mexico in the 1950s. I also asked my tía Paz if people talked about my tía Lichita for choosing to stay single. At that point, my tía Paz showed discomfort, raising her eyebrow and gesturing that what I was about to suggest was not welcome. My mom turned her back on our *plática* and decided to focus on the packing of the tamales. She looked like she was still listening, but her body seemed to disengage. The room transformed from a place of laughter and beautiful memories to a place of discomfort and rigidity. My body felt a similar tingling sensation as I stepped into the painful memory of my mom's initial rejection of my sexual identity (Calderón et al., 2012). I felt as if I had disrespected the memory of my tía Lichita for making the *plática* too queer (Cruz, 2001). I began to wonder if it was wrong of me to make any insinuation that my aunt was queer in her lifestyle or sexual identity. I decided to wrap up the *plática* and focus on helping them organize the tamales for their clients.

Later that night, I sat with my partner as she ate the tamales my mom and tía Paz had made for her. I told her how I felt conflicted being back home and how I might have crossed a boundary by discussing how my aunt embodied a queer representation. As my partner and I were having this *plática*, I realized that I was engaging in queerphobia by feeling shame around thinking that my tía Lichita represented queerness. I felt the guilt inextricably tied to my internalized belief that queerness was inferior, an insult, abnormal. I practiced compulsory heterosexuality by centering heterosexuality as the standard and only possible identity for my tía Lichita (Tijerina Revilla, 2020). As Dr. Anita Tijerina Revilla states, "queer people also feel compulsively pulled to a hetero identity when they have internalized a negative perspective about being queer" (Tijerina Revilla, 2020, 4:44). I reflected on my queerphobia as I sat in the middle of contradiction, my partner eating the tamales that my tía and mom made especially for her. I also reflected on how different my mom's kind gesture to make my partner's favorite type of tamales contrasted with the way she confronted me about my queerness when I was sixteen years old. It felt confusing to witness how the same person who hurt me for being queer, was now showing love and acceptance through welcoming my partner.

Thus, it is in the kitchen, my mom and I enact a Mundo Zurdo as we imagine and create queer future that invites our vulnerable and authentic *pláticas* about our pain, shame, and joy. Although some *pláticas* are difficult because of our painful memories, I intentionally try to invite my mom's curiosity and move away from the counter stance (Cruz, 2001). I am aware that heteropatriarchy-imposed homophobia on my mom, which affects and informs her relationship to queerness. I understand this first-hand as I explore my relationship with queerness and unlearn my homophobia. I also understand that it was through my tía Lichita's choice of a queer life—one that disrupted the heteronormative nucleus (Bernstein & Reimann, 2001; Maldonado Dominguez, 2020)—that I learned about how the women in my family have transgressed gendered expectations and disrupted the heteronormative expectations by being single parents and becoming the primary providers of their household. They have challenged the idea of a heteronormative nuclear family, consisting of a married cis-heterosexual man and a cis-heterosexual woman, who follow gender expectations of the man being the primary provider and the woman a housewife (Bernstein & Reimann, 2001; Maldonado Dominguez, 2020). By this definition, my family has always been queer because we do not ascribe or fit into the idea of a heteronormative nuclear family.

The pedagogies of my home have always been messy, some grounded in queerness, others in homophobia. As a queer person that lives in the gray areas of life, I learned to hold the pedagogies of my home that are contradicting and messy. As I am untangling the pedagogical inheritance, I received from generations prior, I am unlearning my own homophobia, envisioning and creating pedagogies of the home that affirm and care for queer people like me.

Final Reflections on Healing Collectively

I believe that by changing ourselves we change the world, that traveling El Mundo Zurdo path is the path of a two-way movement – going deep into the self and expanding out into the world, a simultaneous recreation of the self and a reconstruction of society. (Anzaldúa, 1981, p.208)

Feminista ethnic studies pedagogies facilitate learning and growth that allow us to go deep into the self and expand out into the world. One might argue that they offer a Mundo Zurdo path to transform self, academia, family, and society; that path is a collective one. The food project of our ethnic studies graduate class allowed all of us as learners to go deep into the self and expand beyond in ways that allowed for healing collectively. Both Cynthia and Yessica share how putting Coyolxauhqui back together translated to bridging academia with their homespaces in order to heal and transform both. Healing is not something that is often talked about in academia, especially prior to COVID. But with COVID, there was so much grief that there was almost a domino effect that led back to previous grief. Perhaps the cumulative grief from COVID and other traumas provided a space for healing because of the tenderness it left us with. There is an overwhelming pain in loss and trauma, and by expressing our feelings through writing, grief became our companion, inevitably guiding us to heal. Yessica's relationship to grief is in letting go of the idea of a perfect family and recognizing the harm that heteropatriarchy has enacted on her family while acknowledging that queer people like herself deserve to thrive in loving families without the violence of homophobia. For Cynthia, grief came at a time when new life and academic accomplishments were being celebrated. The yearning for her Abuela Soco led her to understand that although our ancestors may be physically gone, they continue to guide us and be with us spiritually. For both, sharing their stories allowed for a collective healing.

We have found that one of the outcomes of ethnic studies generally, and more specifically feminista ethnic studies pedagogies is that they offer us important insights into how we can reclaim the messiness of homespaces. That is, they simultaneously ground us in the wisdom and beauty of our homes, while also pushing us to envision and recreate homespaces free from harmful practices. The healing that comes from these pedagogies often happens organically, is not forced, and sometimes not fully planned. Even as ethnic studies educators, we sometimes do not fully anticipate the outcomes—the deep learning, the open vulnerability, the power of ancestors, and the need to heal collectively.

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Witnessing the Pedagogical Impact of Ethnic Studies Through an Intergenerational Collaborative Autoethnography

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Abstract

Ethnic studies emerged as a discipline that centered the axiology, ontology, and epistemology of BIPOC communities across space and time (Kelley, 2020). At its inception and over the course of the last 50 years, this discipline examined sites of resistance from racially and ethnically minoritized perspectives while offering transformative dreams for an educationally and socially just world. Through the lens of endarkened feminist epistemology (Dillard, 2000), this collaborative autoethnographic essay offers the intergenerational testimonies of a Black mother and daughter documenting our experiences with ethnic studies pedagogies as students at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and later as pre-k-12 educators in the Deep South. Our life notes serve as our communal witnessing of the impact of ethnic studies on our pedagogical development over four decades in pre-k to 12 educational settings.

Keywords: Collaborative autoethnography, intergenerational, culturally affirming pedagogy

Witnessing the Pedagogical Impact of Ethnic Studies Through an Intergenerational Collaborative Autoethnography

Ethnic studies emerged as an academic discipline on college campuses in the U.S. in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a response to Eurocentric post-secondary models of education and served as a direct antagonist to positivist philosophical theories (Banales, 2019; Kelley, 2020). These hegemonic models of academia reproduced social, educational, and economic inequities in historically divested communities. The aims of pioneering ethnic studies activists were not to simply re-create racially and ethnically diverse intellectual silos steeped in the capitalistic structure of American society; students demanded the creation of community-based ontological and epistemological centers committed to decolonizing inequitable structures (Kelley, 2020).

Grounded in endarkened feminist epistemology, the following essay explores the intergenerational experiences of two Black women educators, Priscilla (mother) and Meghan (daughter), who graduated, respectively, from HBCUs in the 1970s and early 2000s. Endarkened feminist

epistemology (EFE) centers the racialized and gendered lived experiences of Black women as experts in our ways of being and knowing (see Dillard, 2000). We begin with a brief discussion of the creation and development of ethnic studies programs at both predominately white³² institutions (PWIs) and HBCUs in the late 1960s and early 1970s and then examine our (re)imagination of ethnic studies pedagogy and praxis rooted in our endarkened freedom dreams through our personal narratives, or life notes. Throughout this collaborative autoethnography, we reflect on the similarities and differences between our experiences with ethnic studies as students and the impact of the lessons we learned on our pedagogy as pre-k-12 educators. Each life note testifies to the promise of ethnic studies pedagogies as the spark that ignites the imaginations of all educators (Dillard, 2000; Lapadat, 2017).

History of Ethnic Studies at HBCUs

Andrews (2020) argued that ethnic studies departments were not largely founded on historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) because of the history of these spaces as elitist “institutions funded by well-meaning white philanthropists” who sought to uphold the ideals of separate but equal through paternalistic means (p. 17). Despite this contradiction in HBCUs’ stated values and their more nefarious beginnings, research conducted in the last decade highlights the positive impact of HBCU faculty members’ focus on cultural validation has had on Black students’ racial identity development (Museus, 2014; Museus et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2022). Through exposure to culturally informed learning experiences during our tenure at HBCUs, we developed pedagogies as educators that centered our students’ funds of knowledge. Our culturally affirming encounters during our undergraduate years demonstrate an example of Williams et al.’s (2021) findings of:

...two approaches used to promote Black students’ college success— advancing culturally relevant knowledge and culturally-informed pedagogy by embedding the experiences of Black people into research and curriculum; and embracing Black cultural validation by connecting with Black communities and students’ racial backgrounds (p. 752).

From speech and debate to Africana diasporic films, our ethnic studies coursework at Grambling State University and Howard University chartered the course for our ontological and epistemological journeys as pre-k-12 educators. Banales (2019) noted the counterhegemonic impact of the creation of ethnic studies departments at PWIs and explained how “ethnic studies as a field transformed the traditional understanding of what the academy counts as knowledge...” (p. 232). However, the history of ethnic studies departments, particularly Black studies departments, at HBCUs was more contentious (Zulu, 2018). Why would a historically Black college and/or university need a Black studies department if the entire institution were dedicated to the academic well-being of Black students? Ethnic studies represented safe spaces for racially minoritized students to discuss their unique histories and lived experiences while imagining futures that eradicated systems of oppression. Interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate ethnic studies programs at PWIs have thrived for 50 years. On HBCU campuses, however, Charles P. Henry

³² We do not capitalize the “w” in white as it relates racial and/or ethnic identity due to our intentional efforts to decenter whiteness and disrupt the focused attention from the perspective of a white gaze (Davis, 2019; Jackson, 2020).

argued that ethnic studies departments were not prioritized with the same zeal or “level of urgency” (Zulu, 2018, p. 92).

Beginning Our Process of Communal Witnessing

Our process began when Meghan contacted Priscilla to inquire about the possibility of collaborating on a writing project based on their experiences as alumni of HBCUs and pre-k to 12 educators. Priscilla had published her personal poetry in various anthologies over the years, but she had never explicitly written about her experiences as a secondary educator. We decided to use life notes as our method for presenting our narratives because of our focus on rendering research texts that honored our lived experiences as Black women. Within the tenets of endarkened feminist epistemology, our narrative reflections and musings embodied the mosaic of our co-constructed knowledge (Dillard, 2000).

As we considered the ways that we enacted ethnic studies pedagogies in the Deep South, we reflected on our black sense of place (McKittrick, 2011) and the ways that our racial and cultural histories were transmitted from generation to generation. Our bodies have been physically, emotionally, and spiritually tied to the land in southwest Louisiana where we were both raised and later taught pre-k to 12th grade. It was important for us to write honestly and to ruminate on how our praxis revealed larger truths about how we as Black women educators engaged with our students. Through our process of communal witnessing, we connected our experiences as mother and daughter to our shared understanding of the importance of documenting the lessons we learned about teaching ethnic studies to pre-k to 12th-grade students in a geographical location steeped in historic and contemporary anti-black racial violence.

In the first life note presented, Priscilla reflects on how her lack of experiences with ethnic studies at Grambling and a chance encounter with a supplemental textbook of Black literature became the spark that led to her journey into teaching African American studies. She also discusses how that spark ignited her passion for public speaking instruction. The second life note focuses on Meghan’s exposure to Black studies at different points in her life and the impact that exposure had on her trajectory as an early childhood educator. She connects her ethnic studies pedagogy to her enactment of Black fugitivity as a means of intellectual survival and resistance.

Priscilla’s Life Note: (Re)Imagining Ethnic Studies as Being Seen and Heard

I graduated from Grambling on December 19, 1975. I started in the summer of 1972; I graduated in three years because I went for three summers. I feel especially blessed to have attended Grambling State University because it prepared me from the inside out to be an educator who not only teaches but inspires students to be their very best, regardless of career choice. Although I was exposed to professors of diverse backgrounds and cultures, such as England, South Africa, and India, it was my interaction with proud, caring, brilliant professors who looked like me, that solidified my path as a lifelong educator (Williams et al., 2022). Children of all ages prosper when they can identify with role models who resemble them in physical likeness, speech, mode of dress, cultural practices, and family dynamics. My professors’ racial and ethnic identities greatly affected my development as an undergraduate student at an HBCU and my understanding of what it meant to be an educator. I did not take any courses on African American literature at Grambling, however.

In 1978, I started teaching senior English at Plaisance High School, which was 99% African American. There was a supplemental text with compiled entries of African American prose and poetry provided by the school board. It was divided into two volumes. That was my first experience with literature that was strictly African American. I do not know if the textbook had been used previously, but the children seemed aware of African American literature and were extremely receptive. From what I understand, the children had access to African American literature at church before they even came to school. They had annual Black history programs at their schools and churches. They regularly participated in rallies sponsored by both the school and community organizations, such as Black sororities and fraternities.

In my first few years as a teacher in Plaisance, I brought an additional focus on public speaking to the school that was a result of my public speaking course at Grambling. It was part of the regular curriculum. I taught my students the same types of speeches that I had learned in college. Their assignments were not about memorizing other people's words; they were developing their own speeches for different purposes that they would need throughout life. There is no greater builder of self-esteem than acceptance; my students' fiction and nonfiction essays and poetry were submitted to annual national contests; many were published poets. Anthologies displaying their work were donated to the school's library. Through observing the practices of first-year teachers who are successful with teaching African American students, Ladson-Billings (2002) determined that the source of the successful teaching was due to the teachers' insistence on success and their understanding of their students' backgrounds and interests. I cultivated my students' rich funds of knowledge (see Love, 2019) by building upon the strong public speaking traditions of the community.

Meghan's Life Note: (Re)Imagining Ethnic Studies as a Fugitive Space

I first became interested in Black Studies when I was around 10 or 11 years old. I can remember reading books by Carter G. Woodson, Frances Cress Welsing, and Ivan Van Sertima when I entered middle school. As a child of the 1980s and 1990s, my love of Black culture was inspired by the resurgence of Pan-Africanism in the late 20th century. Throughout high school, I listened to music by liberation-focused hip-hop artists such as Mos Def, Talib Kweli, The Roots, and Dead Prez. My demonstration of Black fugitivity was rooted in practices of refusal or disengagement with academic spaces that had been offered to me as traditional routes of escape (Sojoyner, 2017). I decided to study disciplines that offered the most promising opportunities to break away from the systems that had such a stronghold on my life as a Black girl in south Louisiana. I decided to study anthropology and African American studies at Howard because I wanted to grow academically and socially in a space dedicated to Black people.

I soon discovered the tense relationship between the more militant faculty in Black studies departments on my campus and the conservative Black administrative leaders. This tension served as the beginning of my understanding of the "radical conceptions of Blackness" upon which Black studies was founded (see Andrews, 2020, p. 19). The elite ranks of Howard University often clashed with the abolitionist aims of students like me who were direct products of an inequitable American educational system. My passion for Black studies was rooted in my desire to dismantle systems of oppression, not to replicate them. This requires a necessary epistemological shift in ethnic studies departments at HBCUs. These spaces should not seek to replace a white gaze with a Black one. They must push the boundaries of what is to (re)envision what could be in higher learning

environments meant to challenge dominant discourses. Black studies in the U.S. became a way to comfortably imitate dominant discourses in academia instead of a subversive discipline. Andrews (2020) noted Black scholars' historical disillusionment with academia's prevalent epistemic violence:

Patricia Hill Collins' Black feminist epistemology for instance offers a pathway for an overhaul the position of the academic. By embracing the standpoint of Black women this creates an organic link to struggles outside the ivory tower. This is essential for flipping the dynamics of how we understand knowledge is produced, not from the elite but from the grassroots. Collins' concept of the "ethic of personal accountability" also captures the way that our role as scholars has to be different. (p. 23-24)

Although ethnic studies initially emerged as an interdisciplinary program of study in the 1960s and 1970s at higher education institutions (Bañales, 2019; de Novais & Spencer, 2019), the discipline's impact on the pedagogy of pre-k to 12 educators is undeniable. Our life notes support the need for more research about how exposure to ethnic studies content influences pre-k-12 educators' development of a socially just teaching praxis. Culturally relevant pedagogy is inextricably tied to Black educators' post-secondary engagement in ethnic studies (Bowman et al., 2011; Sleeter, 2011).

Conclusion

Discussing our intergenerational experiences as educators reminded us of our shared love for the written and spoken word of Black communities as well as our desire to convey that knowledge to our students through ethnic studies. Although Meghan's undergraduate education was greatly influenced by courses offered at that level and Priscilla had no such experience, even at an HBCU, the vital importance of imparting those cultural memories was eminent for each of us though. In Priscilla's experience, it was necessary to compile excerpts in the form of supplementary material to positively enhance the experience of Black youth in the Deep South because early textbooks made very obscure mentions of the works of Black folks. Meghan's commitment to ethnic studies was driven by her familial connections. Her relationships with elders in her small community fostered her critical consciousness and provided the basis for the development of her ethnic studies pedagogy when she became an educator (Tintiangco-Cubales & Duncan-Andrade, 2021). The importance of ethnic studies pedagogies in the Deep South, where the legacy of anti-blackness is as visual as the large magnolia flowers on mossy trees, cannot be underestimated.

Consistent with current research findings, ethnic studies pedagogies had a positive effect on my mother's and my understanding of structural racism, our epistemological stances, and our personal and political ideologies as pre-k-12 educators (de Novais & Spencer, 2019). As highlighted throughout our narratives, direct and indirect engagement with ethnic studies at HBCUs imparted "a critical understanding and appreciation of the racial and cultural diversity in our society" and grounded our teaching philosophies in Black cultural traditions and histories (de Novais & Spencer, 2019, p. 880). The activists and academics who dared to dream of a decolonized world where those bearing the weight of white supremacy would be free to "work towards the liberation of all people and society" (Bañales, 2019, p. 233) grounded ethnic studies pedagogies in their hopes and aspirations for the youngest members of society. Green et al. (2020) noted an increase in calls for the inclusion of ethnic studies in pre-k-12 educational spaces. In the wake of the anti-critical race

theory movement, conservative political groups have led targeted efforts to dismantle the progress of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) activists and educators who seek to abolish hegemonic spirit-killing pre-k-12 curricula (Love, 2019). As our intergenerational testimonies demonstrate, (re)imagining the role of ethnic studies pedagogies will require all of us to radically dream of a future where our liberation is intrinsically tied to the lessons of our past.

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The Legacies of Memory: A Liberatory Tool

Aria Gilliam

A woman deeply interested in the practice of archiving, my grandmother born Rochelle Maryland Williams has kept my family's history and legacy tucked away in the basement of her home since the late 80's. As the historian of my family, a title bestowed upon her by me, she has preserved much of my family's history through photos, videos and recipes. Much to my surprise, this has become a role and responsibility that I have taken upon the duty of also exploring and embodying. Such embodiment and practice has shifted my (inner)standing of the purpose of memory, which I continue to explore through continuing this legacy of archiving my family's history through photography and audio recordings, and even more so in implementing in my pedagogical practices as a method of resisting (in real time) the legacies of colonialism. As I have continued to navigate the present and historical space of exploring memory, I have recognized it as not only a tool that can be utilized to preserve oneself and ancestral spirits against colonial forces, but also as something that can be used to truly embody and call upon the spirits of our ancestors and as a tool for liberation.

The question of what it takes for the body to remember is one that I have been sitting with for quite some time now. While my initial interest in exploring the topic of memory and the act of remembering is something that was prompted by the desire to understand the relationship between trauma and memory, I began to also consider the ways in which memory exists as something that lives in the body and could be re-activated. In this process, I have also become deeply curious about the potential ways in which ancestral memories and experiences can also be re-activated, as well as what it can look like to identify and develop tangible ways in which memory, particularly ancestral memory, could be preserved particularly through embodiment. What started as a simple method of documenting, preserving, examining, redefining and reinventing ways of exploring my family's history, evolved into a method in which I began to truly understand what it means to re-activate ancestral memories that continue to live in the body. Exploring the historical archives of my family, namely photography, redefined my relationship to my ancestors in a way that I also hadn't considered to be possible before. It gave breath and shape to their experiences and expanded the space for their stories to allow them to exist as real people and created an inseparable connection between us.

What is the purpose of remembering? This has served as a trajectory through which I have begun to ask myself as I have developed and explored ways in which I could not only archive and honor my family's history in real time, but also as I considered what this meant to be in relation to the people whose history I am exploring through archiving, namely through photography. I come from a family of archivists, primarily through the works of my grandmother, and I have carried out this legacy of continuing to archive my family's history starting with my grandmother as she transitions into her older age. Through photography and audio recording I have created ways in which I continue to hold onto what will eventually become a memory, and potentially a moment to be called upon in a moment of deep, ancestral prayer. Ancestral archiving has deeply shifted my relationship to my ancestors, namely my parents and grandmother, in a way that has made me

recognize that my story is directly connected to theirs. Ancestral archiving has helped me arrive at the point of what it means to choose to actively remember, particularly as migratory people. Archiving in this manner has helped me identify ways in which memory is necessary for both personal and collective liberation and has put into perspective the question of movement forward if the memory of where we have come from is missing.

I have become very curious about the relationship between memory and how it impacts our relationship to our ancestors and this in particular has been what has encouraged me to develop a practice of continuing to archive my family– as a method of preserving memory. As I have expanded my purpose behind archiving, I have identified that the intention behind why I choose to archive is to re-activate and preserve memory. The experience of memory being re-activated when looking at a photo is something that has reinforced and encouraged me to continue archiving as a practice of not only preserving memory but also of reactivating memory. The connection between photography and emotional responses when experiencing a moment captured in a photograph is something that I believe can serve as an avenue and tool for developing and redefining a relationship to our ancestors. The purpose of remembering, I have come to learn, is to assist one not only in the process of identifying who they are, but also can be used as a political and spiritual and liberatory tool to honor where one has come from historically. This has been what my call for remembering has been, not only to develop a more consistent and deeper connection with my ancestors, but also to recognize the ways in which remembering can be used as a tool for both collective and individual liberation.

The practice of remembering is one that has the capacity to ground us in where we are while also providing us with the knowledge and spiritual tools to move forward exploring and expanding new capacities for being. Exploring the topic of memory through photography has given shape to many of my ideas around what it means to acknowledge and honor those whom I am a direct descendant of, and to identify how their stories and experiences have directly impacted where I am, and the direction in which I am headed. “What is the purpose of remembering?” has also become a question of legacy. What does it mean to be the descendant of people who created tangible ways in which they would choose to remember? What does it also mean to be a part of the legacy of actively developing new methods of remembering and re-activating memory? This has become my call and commitment to my community, to continue developing and exploring new ways of maintaining and reactivating memories so that not only might we be able to recall the direction in which we have come from, but also that we might refine and re-envision the direction in which we might be headed.

The process of learning the weight that memory carries has been both heavy and liberating. Throughout the process of exploring the ways in which memory holds the power and capacity to ground students and educators in ways of existing and navigating educational structures outside of the colonial gaze, I have recognized that memory operates as the site of experiencing ourselves outside of the gaze of colonialism. This recognition is what has directly influenced the way in which I exist within the educational system, one that is deeply ridden with oppressive practices, and it has also influenced my methodology of challenging and encouraging my students to also critically examine how structures exist outside of what their ancestral practices may have been. Despite the newness of what it looks like to embody what it means to be a living ancestor while simultaneously exploring and integrating the memory of my ancestors into my daily practices, one thing has become apparent to me: memory is what brings us back to ourselves. It is what connects us to the

spirits of our ancestors in a way that ensures that true liberation, on the inside that is, is never too far out of our reach. Exploring ancestral methods of preserving memory, primarily through photography and recipe keeping, has been what has brought me back not only to myself, but also to my ancestors and ancestral ways of existing in spaces.

Through learning and re-telling their stories I have been provided the knowledge of what it means to continue their legacies through embodiment and it is through this exploration, I have begun to (inner)stand the depth and responsibility that I have in curating the space for my students to also sharpen this tool. While much of their exploration of ancestral memory has been through storytelling, some of my students have also re-imagined what the stories of their ancestors would exist as outside of the gaze and implementation of destructive colonial structures. While this process of re-imagination has not altered the stories of their ancestors, I believe that it is something that has the capacity to influence not only how they preserve the memories and practices of their *antepasados*, but also how they go about the work and responsibility of embodying the legacies of their own ancestral practices and traditions. Despite being a responsibility not chosen by them, it undoubtedly is one that they recognized that they were called and chosen to do.



“Ofelia” (purple) and “Adolfo” (yellow)

Description: 5x4ft acrylic on a wood panel

By Clara Nieblas

These two paintings depict details from the artist's grandparents' home in Mexico. Serving as a form of portraiture, where the subject is absent, one shows her grandmother's cabinet and the other her grandfather's desk. Both pieces of furniture are always kept locked, and the artist has never seen inside them.

I see these paintings as living archives because with these portraits of my grandparents I am able to create a specific environment that transcends my own family. Something as simple as these pieces of furniture and all of the little details about somebody's life and personality will now live on forever through an artwork.

Clara Nieblas is a figurative painter and art educator from the eastern Coachella Valley. She creates work stemming from her personal and familial experience and expressing her individual voice in the face of a history of social, economic and racial inequities.

“Mexidorian”

By Joanna Flores

I'm a Mexidorian.

All my cultures help create the person that I am.
I grew up in the Pico-Union area where all these immigrant groups tend to
“melt together”

Mexican, Salvadorian, y American
En la Alvarado Bulevar is MacArthur Park with its large lagoon and its three giant fountains

En cada esquina of that urban green oasis you can find every antojito
Churros, Raspados, Elotes, Pupusas, Tamales

If you need a cure for mal de ojo, or an estampita of St. Joseph, patron of the immigrants, then
you stop by *Botánica Del Pueblo*

Ni como olvidarse de *Langer's*, the seven decades old, Jewish Deli with its quintessential
pastrami sandwich

How about everyone's preferred Discount Store, El Piojito- (Tiny Lice), where you could find
every home and personal merchandise dirt cheap

“¿Dónde quedó la bolita?-¿dónde quedó la bolita?”-you would hear from a loud inquiring voice
People huddled together- loitering the sidewalks
testing their luck at a game of hide the ball

But my favorite was La Thrifty Drug Store with its creamy, savoring 25-cent ice cream cone
These were the streets que me vieron nacer

The Pico-Union barrio known for its refugees and immigrants working families con mucha cultura
and strong sense of community

Todo esto te dice quién soy yo

Joanna Flores is a first-generation American Latina born in the Pico-Union area of Los Angeles, a neighborhood just outside downtown Los Angeles. My parents are immigrants from El Salvador and Mexico. Unfortunately, Pico-Union is known more for its dangerous gangs than for its rich cultural traditions, strong sense of community, and the majority of working families who struggle to survive on a daily basis. I wrote the poem *Mexidorian* to honor my beautiful Mexican, Salvadorian and American heritage and to also celebrate the neighborhood that raised me. By recognizing the community that nurtured me helps reclaim my spiritual heritage and continues to ground me. Dr. Joanna Flores is Lecturer in Political Science and the Chicana(o) and Latina(o) Studies Department at the California State University Los Angeles.

An Emotive Testimonio Approach to Critical Race Educational History: Building Reciprocal Relationships with and for Our Communities

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Abstract

In this paper, we offer an emotive historical research methodology centering on a collaborative approach of historical preservation and documentation as an act of resistance while embracing our emotional responses to the contestations, contradictions, and continuities of these histories (Garcia & Yosso, 2020). To inform how we are shaping this emotive methodological intervention through Critical Race Educational History we draw from Rosas' (2020a) definition of emotive history and emotive archives. Through this emotive historical research methodology, we offer our *testimonios*, that highlight our lived experiences as Critical Race scholars, not only to name a critique of institutional power but also as a source of critical awareness of the affirmative feelings elicited through historical legacies and lived experiences (Prieto & Villenas, 2012). Moreover, we provide a conceptual framework grounded in Ethnic Studies and Critical Race Educational History aimed at equipping K-12 Ethnic Studies educators with pedagogical tools to understand the hidden curriculum of White supremacist settler colonialism within the archive while also grounding themselves in affirming experiences connected to the histories of struggle and joy documented in our community's archival preservation.

Keywords: Emotive histories and archives, testimonio, Critical Race Educational History, Ethnic Studies Pedagogy

"Even though my soul felt trapped in this institutional space, this small index card with Frances Crisostomo's name on it is all I needed to feel empowered. Encountering this small yet powerful document reminded me of the imagination of our ancestors and elders to move and teach us through struggle, to move us beyond the grips of the empire."

From Mariana's Testimonio

"Dr. Marin held space for me to lay out what I had learned thus far in the process but most importantly the space to share the challenging questions I was most struggling with in attempting to understand and compose a historical narrative of my community in a just and dignified way."

Soon after our meeting, I knew that my work was cut out for me in the archives and that with the help of Dr. Marin, I had the guidance, direction, and support I needed to navigate the archives and eventually gather my primary sources to write my Critical Race Educational History to complete my dissertation."

From Bryant's Testimonio

Introduction

As interdisciplinary scholars grounded in education, history, and Ethnic Studies—we find ourselves constantly asking questions of how we conduct research and how we teach while reflecting on our positionality³³. Ethnic Studies intentionally offers the perspectives and histories of ethnic or racial groups as a vehicle for students to reflect on their cultural traditions and lived experiences to build and create their own identities (Camarota, 2016; Duenas, Lopez, & Lopez, 2016; Tintiangco-Cubales, et. al, 2015). The fight for Ethnic Studies grew out of a need and demand for curriculum that reflects the lived experiences of communities of color and for pedagogy that centers community. For instance, a central objective of the Chicana/o Power movement that sprouted across the United States during the late 1960s, was naming and addressing the inhumane schooling conditions for children and youth because of the endemic forces of white supremacy (Barrera, 2004; Donato, 1997; Muñoz, 2007; San Miguel, 2013; Valencia, 2011). This historical quest for racial justice in every community has unique contours and implications, this paper is informed by our Critical Race Educational History methodological process researching the histories of the 1970 Phoenix Union High School Chicana/o Boycott and the 1968 East Los Angeles Blowouts. As Critical Race scholars focused on educational history research, one raised in Phoenix and the other a former longtime teacher in East Los Angeles, our emotive connection to these communities heightens our commitment to the work as part of a continued struggle across generations (Bell, 1993, 1995). As critical race scholars, part of our work is intent on mining communal and personal memories to identify historical threads that allow us to weave a vivid counter-story as Critical Race Educational History (CREH) (Santos et al., 2017; Alonso, 2016; Santos, 2016), in addition to engaging in reciprocal relationships with K-12 teachers, students, archivists and communities of color.³⁴

Rosas (2020) explores the significance of emotive history and emotive archives that capture the sentiments and emotions as it pertains to Latinx individuals and the immigrant experience. Building on this concept we offer our emotive testimonios that center on the collaborative approach of historical preservation and documentation as an act of resistance, while embracing our emotional responses to the contestations, contradictions, and continuities of these histories

³³ In a paper developed by Milner (2007), titled, Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working Through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen, they highlight how "when researchers are not mindful of the enormous role of their own and others' racialized positionality and cultural ways of knowing, the results can be dangerous to communities and individuals of color" (p. 388). Thus, positionality, for us as Critical Race Scholars of Color, is a guide that helps us to discover why we see the world the way we do.

³⁴ Drawing from Santos, Mares-Tamayo, and Alonso (2017) we model our metaphorical description of mining as it relates to the process of excavating counterstories that exist on the margins guided by our unapologetic objective as critical race scholars to center these stories on the margin intentionally, through collaboration, and through the creation of spaces for multiple voices to be heard.

(Garcia & Yosso, 2020; Garcia, 2018). Through our testimonios we share our critical awareness of the affirmations we feel from our historical legacies within institutional archival spaces. That in turn aids in our commitment to documenting the lived experiences of our communities (Prieto & Villenas, 2012). It is our hope that our testimonios, grounded in a CREH methodology, provide a space for historians of color to discuss and validate their archival research experiences and heighten our narratives as a site of transformational resistance (Fernandez, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001b; Urrieta & Villenas, 2013). Furthermore, by offering our emotive testimonios we intend to model how critical race scholars, archivists, and teachers can develop their own analysis of institutional archives while identifying affirming experiences in the process. This paper will begin by first providing a review of the literature that overviews the limitations of archival institutions in contrast to accounts that challenge exclusion and carve out space for scholars of color from an Ethnic Studies lens. This will then be followed by outlining the theoretical frameworks and methodology in which our emotive testimonios are grounded. We then share our emotive testimonios highlighting our affirming experiences while navigating institutional archives. Lastly, we offer a conceptual framework that highlights how reciprocal relationships through a Critical Race Educational History lens between Ethnic Studies K-12 teachers, scholars grounded in Ethnic Studies, and archivists and librarians can further encourage us to understand our lived experiences and enrich our pedagogies, scholarship, and communities.

Literature Review

Archives and Settler Colonialism

One of the most effective tools of settler colonialism is the historical erasure of Indigenous people and by extension, the histories of communities of color (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Tuck & Ree, 2013). As a settler colonial state, the United States perpetuates these erasures through institutions such as official archives in educational settings (Adams-Campbell et al., 2015; Calderon, 2014; Featherstone, 2006). Adams-Campbell et al. (2015), in a special issue titled, *Indigeneity and the work of settler archives*, assert how “the modern concept of the archive emerged alongside the Western European nation-state, together with its quest for empire and colonial domination” (p. 109). Furthermore, for Indigenous scholars and scholars of color from critical perspectives, the neutrality of institutional archives is a fallacy that is maintained by the hegemonic state. Cordova (1998) proposes that Chicana scholars take on an anti-colonial perspective at the university in order “to replace the colonizer’s definition of us with our own so that rather than being ‘candidates for assimilation,’ we are candidates for determining our own history” (p.225). From this anti-colonial perspective, our aim with this paper is to elucidate how we as critical scholars of color emotively navigate the violence of the institutional archives as a commitment to the communities that we serve. As historians of color, we recognize that while institutional archives derive from colonialism, that we play a counter hegemonic role in these spaces. Our approach is to intentionally focus on the emotions derived from the moments and relationships of empowerment in the archives as we encounter the histories of our communities.

Critical Librarianship

The work of critical librarianship offers us similar points of conversation as conveyed by scholars in the field of library studies. According to Rapchack (2021), critical librarianship positions itself as a challenge to neutrality by critiquing the role of libraries and information professionals and their

role in maintaining systemic inequalities. Moreover, Rapchak goes on to add that critical librarianship “recognizes the local context of individual libraries and the political, social, cultural, and economic contexts that extend beyond the library” (2021, p. 144). Caswell et al. (2017) contend that these issues can be disrupted pedagogically through classroom activities that guide students in analyzing white supremacy and how to challenge the marginalization that scholars, archivists, and communities of color encounter in archival institutions. For instance, Güereña and Erazo (2000), trace the lineage of Chicana/o and Latina/o librarians within Spanish-speaking populations that, as early as the 1960s, have challenged and identified structural inequalities in libraries and archival holdings by creating organizations, including REFORMA, founded in 1971.³⁵ In addition, speaking from her positionality, Godoy (2021), in her testimonio drawing on Gloria Anzaldúa, notes her frustration and anger with a “profession who has never collectively acknowledged the legacy of erasure, violence, and genocide in the United States” while archivist continue to advocate for “neutral record keeping” in conjunction with centering white narratives (p. 4). Yet, what we draw from Godoy, as Critical Race scholars, is how we embrace the emotions that come up for us while navigating archival materials and building relationships with archivists who mentor us to draw on the strength of our spirit and work.

Ethnic Studies and Emotive Histories and Archives

As previously noted, Rosas (2020b) analyzes the value of emotional history and emotive archives in relation to Latinx individuals and the immigrant experience. For Rosas (2020b), upholding emotive histories and archives stems from “the commitment and creativity of the archivist (usually a woman) [as] a feminist act of empowerment and an expression of love and honor...” (p. 274). Thus, we build on this framing of emotive archival work from our positionality as Critical Race scholars as we conduct historical archival research. In addition, Ethnic Studies pedagogy also creates a space for community histories to be explored emotively while building classroom archives based on the stories and experiences of students. Through a dialogic engagement where all parties are equally involved, Ethnic Studies curricula develop skills and sensibilities that help develop students’ critical consciousness and create caring academic environments (de los Ríos, López, & Morrell, 2015; Tintiangco-Cubales, et. al, 2015). For instance, three teachers working in the same high school in East Los Angeles co-developed an Ethnic Studies course. As part of this course students co-authored at least three books with their Ethnic Studies reflections and stories including *This Is My Revolution*, *You Are My Roots* and *We Are What They Envisioned* (Dueñas, Lopez, & Lopez, 2016). Creating and implementing this curriculum also becomes an emotive archive for teachers and students to meet at a site of possibility, where they could re-imagine what schooling and textbooks look like, how they feel like, and what they say about communities of color. While we understand the importance of preserving histories, our intent is to tune into the range of emotions that come up for us as we navigate predominantly white institutions that were not structured to preserve our histories nor foster our critical race scholarship. Thus, we offer our emotive testimonios as road maps for how to carry out this work based on our lived experiences and realities.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

³⁵ REFORMA as referenced by Güereña and Erazo (2000) and explained on REFORMA’s website is the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking established in 1971 as an affiliate of the American Library Association.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education has provided a lens for our work to analyze and challenge the systemic function of race, racism, and other forms of oppression in our schools and educational trajectories (Decuir & Dixon, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997; Solórzano, 1997, 1998, 2013; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Yosso et al., 2001). Furthermore, our work is guided by the tenets of Critical Race Educational History (CREH) which implores us to draw from the existing and innovative contributions of CRT in education through the documenting of the educational experiences of communities of color (Santos et al., 2017). According to the methodological interventions of CREH, the construction of history through a race lens is a “challenge [to] ahistoricism and insist on a contextual/historical analysis of [education]” and “adopts a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage along racial lines” (Matsuda et al., 1993, p.6). Moreover, the intersections of Critical Race Theory in education and educational history resulted in a CREH methodology “framework which argues that CRT scholars must move beyond merely placing their research in historical context and start writing history from a critical race perspective” (Aguilar-Hernández et al., 2010). CREH is foundational for educational historians asking critical questions of primary sources intent on centering the lived experiences of those impacted by racism and other intersecting forms of oppression. Thus, Santos et al. (2017) developed the following three principles and methodological commitments that make up CREH:

- 1) Intentionality: A hallmark of CREH is an intentional and explicit application of the tenets of CRT in education in every part of the research process—from the initial conceptualization of the project until the public dissemination of findings.
- 2) Embodying a Collaborative Process: This principle underscores the ways in which the educational histories of Communities of Color represent collective knowledge, or community (Delgado Bernal, 1998). We therefore see the research and writing of those stories as a collaborative endeavor that must include partnerships with multiple knowledge-holders and producers throughout the data collection process.
- 3) Creating Space for Multiple Voices to Be Heard: There are multiple histories to be written even within a single community, district, school, or home. CREH encourages Critical Race theorists to mine personal and communal memories for historical threads that can be woven into a vivid tapestry of counter storytelling.

Our contribution to the CREH methodology is centered on composing emotive testimonios as we aim to embody the collaborative process that centers the voices of those of us that are often overlooked in the archives. Testimonios come from a tradition in the global south that “names the workings and abuses of institutional power, the human costs, and our collective *sobrevivencia*” (Prieto & Villenas, 2012, p. 415). In this paper, our testimonios are intent on honoring and recognizing our emotions as we conduct educational history research that centers race, racism, and other intersecting forms of oppression. With our emotive testimonios we also intentionally move away from viewing communities of color as historically disenfranchised and instead tapping into the culturally rich legacies of our communities (Tuck, 2009). Thus, by focusing on moments of empowerment, our emotive testimonios challenge traditional historical research methodologies by sharing our affirming experiences as we navigate the archives. As we give voice to our emotive experiences within institutional archives, we disrupt the violent erasure of our community histories (Córdova, 1998). The emotional essence of our testimonios is more concerned with the moments of *empowerment* as we encounter the loving guidance of critical archivists of color in our archival

process or primary sources that enliven the power in communities of color (Tuck, 2009).³⁶ The testimonios build on our commitment to our work as Critical Race scholars aimed at bridging relationships with the communities we are from, work with, and organize in. The following section outlines our testimonios describing their affirming experiences navigating the archives including experiences with supportive archivists of color and the emotions elicited by primary sources.

Emotive Testimonios

Bryant

In many ways, my path as a Critical Race and Chicana/o educational historian has always been guided by the profound idea of coming full circle. When I first began my doctoral journey at UCLA, I learned from my mentor and advisor, Dr. David G. García, that connecting with the spaces offers us the opportunity to engage with their historical legacies and allows us to fully immerse ourselves in our history work. This resonated with me because, being raised in Phoenix, I was not previously very familiar with the depth of Chicana/o history in my city. The opportunity to learn more about its history years later made me feel seen and more meaningfully connected to the city that raised me. So, on a dry and hot summer day in Phoenix, I pulled up to the south side intersections of 16th street and Buckeye Road to an empty dirt lot. A barren desolate area just a short distance from Sky Harbor International Airport and across the street from a former Smitty's Grocery Store turned Department of Homeland Security Office. In the distance, looking into the lot, you could see Sacred Heart Church—the preserved remnants of what was once a thriving Mexican American barrio known to the community as Golden Gate. A community physically displaced through eminent domain beginning in the 1970s and well into the 1980s in the expansion of Sky Harbor International Airport.

I visited the Golden Gate Barrio out of genuine curiosity while learning about music and community venues in Inner City Phoenix that were gathering places for historically segregated Mexican, Mexican American, and Black enclaves. One venue, the Calderon Ballroom, guided my curiosity to learn more about the richness of this community that is no longer physically present. Tracing its location came with the help of various sources ranging from online discussion boards to primary sources like newspapers. While Golden Gate was not the focus of my academic work, it introduced me to a historical event that resonated deeply with me— the 1970 Chicana/o boycott of Phoenix Union High School. The introduction to this event would bring me full circle to reconnecting with my educational journey as a Phoenix Union High School District graduate and reconnecting with Dr. Christine Marin at Arizona State University.

Coming full circle, as a 2006 graduate of this district, through my introduction to this 1970 boycott, I learned more about the history and experiences of Chicana/o and Black students. In our high school and district, it was not common to learn about my community's history, let alone of Mexican and Mexican Americans. This absence of a culturally and historically relevant curriculum made me feel irrelevant because I did not see myself in my education. Second, as previously mentioned, I

³⁶ We draw on Eve Tuck's (2009) challenge to not only rethink the narratives of our research in identifying the pain or as she defines as "damage-centered research" and rather to envision and practice the sharing of our work in ways that we shift from these narratives to share reflections and experiences that are grounded in what she calls a "theory of change."

reconnected with Dr. Marin, who had served as our M.E.Ch.A. advisor at Arizona State University (ASU) for a period when I was an undergraduate between 2006 and 2010.³⁷ Dr. Marin, a pivotal figure in my work as a Chicano and Critical Race Educational Historian, has dedicated her life's work to documenting and preserving the history of Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Chicanas/os in Arizona. Meeting Dr. Marin opened a whole new world to us as Mechistas.³⁸ We invited Dr. Marin to one of our meetings in the MEChA room, and for several hours she shared with us her historical knowledge of the rich legacy of Chicana/o cultural and political resistance on our campus, Phoenix, and Arizona. Reconnecting with Dr. Marin as a doctoral student was significant to my process because it reminded me of when Mechistas at ASU, myself included, first learned of Dr. Marin and her work as a historian and archivist in founding ASU's Chicano/a Research Collection in the Department of Archives and Special Collections.

The space that Dr. Marin carved out as a historian and archivist at ASU's Department of Archives and Special Collections made my entrance and use of the Luhrs Reading Room and the Chicano/a Research Collection possible. While my research on the Teatro Campesino that first introduced me to institutional archives was short-lived, I learned to navigate this space with the help of Dr. Marin, who shared with us the skill set of navigating predominantly white spaces such as institutional archival holdings.

It was daunting and intimidating to navigate a hypervigilant space, but once the requested boxes of materials from their small manuscripts collection, it was as if only I and that moment in Teatro Campesino's history co-existed. Coming full circle to reconnect with Dr. Marin and these same institutional archives many years further affirmed the significance and importance of mentorship and building reciprocal relationships with archivists and librarians of color. Once I realized that I wanted to pursue my dissertation research on the 1970 boycott, I emailed Dr. Marin, unsure if she would remember me, and was warmly greeted by her response, "yes, I remember you, Bryant, how could I not?" Although it had been years since I last spoke

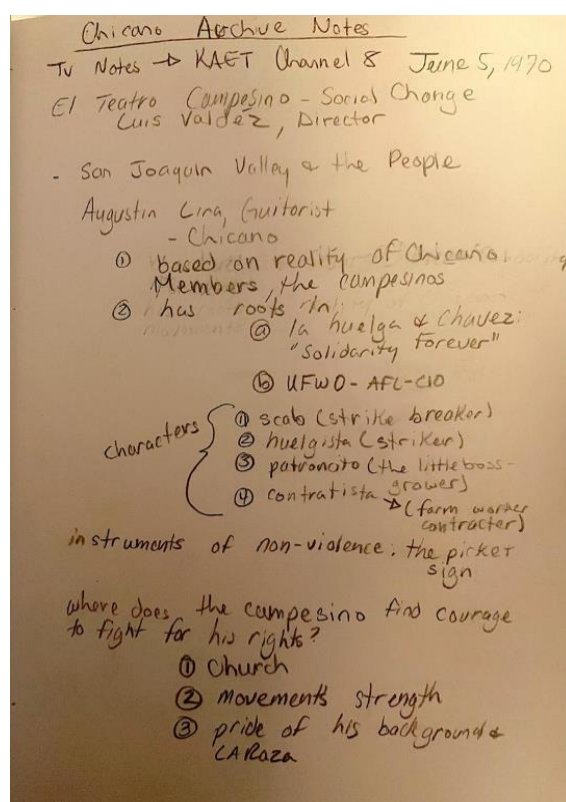


Figure 1. Notes from first to Arizona State University's Chicano/a Research Collection and AR visit in 2009.

³⁷ M.E.Ch.A. is the acronym for *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán* or Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán. It is the student-led movement and organization established in the late 1960's inspired by the Chicana/o movements of the time period. In particular M.E.Ch.A. was formally introduced through the 1969 *El Plan de Santa Barbara* and born out of other college and university student organizations such as the Mexican American Student Organization (MASO) and United Mexican American Students (UMAS). Currently M.E.Ch.A. continues to be an established and present student organization across universities, community colleges, and high schools across the United States.

³⁸ Mechistas is an identity marker that refers to individuals who were members of M.E.Ch.A.

to or had seen Dr. Marin since I was an undergraduate at ASU, and she had since retired in 2010, I felt seen while at the same time recollecting how well Dr. Marin was in remembering people in the ways she told stories capturing Phoenix and Arizona Chicana/o and Mexican history.

In this same email, I shared with Dr. Marin the focus of my work on the boycott. Instantly she began to guide me to the sources that would be essential for me to investigate as part of my work, including an essay written by Patricia Adank on the Phoenix Union High School Boycott, footnote sources, and emphasizing that I look at the Rosie and Joe Eddie Lopez manuscripts. Dr. Marin's willingness to guide me through this journey further affirmed the value she sees in our community history, and in turn, this moment made me feel seen because of her ongoing dedication to this work through her commitment to the preservation of our community histories. Nearing the completion of my proposal, I reached out to Dr. Marin again to schedule a time to meet on campus when I was back home for spring break. We met and talked for hours, with Dr. Christine Marin continuing to guide me through the archives grounded in the abundance of her knowledge, recalling the 1960s/1970s. Dr. Marin held space for me to lay out what I had learned thus far and to process the challenging questions I was most struggling to understand in order to compose a historical narrative of my community in a just and dignified way. Soon after our meeting, I knew that my work was cut out for me in the archives and that with the help of Dr. Marin, I had the guidance, direction, and support I needed to navigate the archives and eventually gather my primary sources to write my Critical Race Educational History to complete my dissertation.

I completed and defended my dissertation summer of 2021 and held my dissertation defense open to my community, that included my committee, family, friends, collaborators, and colleagues. Amongst those in attendance for my defense was Dr. Marin. This feat, I undeniably contend, would not have been possible without Dr. Marin. Dr. Marin's work and mentorship as a historian and archivist made me feel seen and that I am part of a larger significant lineage of Chicana/o history in Phoenix and Arizona at large. She reminded me not only of the impact of my work as she shared her reflections during my dissertation defense but of how much more work we have left to continue to center, document, and preserve these histories. Once again serving as a source of inspiration for me, I continue contributing to the legacy of Dr. Marin by creating work that documents and honors the rich legacies and contributions of Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Chicanas/os.

Mariana

Family love is at the core of my work as a classroom teacher. The love of reading and thirst of learning was first nourished by the stories I heard from my great grandmother about her teenage years during the Mexican revolution and her struggles as a young mother and widow in her rural community adjacent to the city of Fresnillo, Zacatecas. I became a teacher as a student of my people. Specifically of young people who stood up in the face of the years of accumulated mundane racist policies and assimilationist school culture. During a MEChA retreat in the first years of my undergraduate studies at San Diego State University we watched the documentary, "Taking Back the Schools," where we learned about the East Los Angeles 1968 Blowouts. During the post film discussion was the first time that I articulated that I wanted to become a high school teacher to be there with and for youth, *porque la lucha sigue y sigue*.

As fate would have it, I would become a high school history teacher at one of the Eastside high schools that were central sites of organizing during the East Los Angeles 1968 Blowouts. I slowly began to find myself at the intersection of the ongoing history of struggle in the neighborhood, meeting some of the organizers of the Blowouts, and teaching about the Blowouts in my classroom. I became the MEChA advisor and engaged in mentoring and supporting my students in their own community organizing. At the core of all this work with and for my students was the parents and families and their unconditional support for the work.

* * *

The first time I walked into an archive at the university where I was now a doctoral student, I did so out of the curiosity to engage with the history of my people. I remember feeling the surveillance of that process. The archives are in the lower level of the library that I didn't know we had access to as students. The librarian there asked to check in all my belongings, however I was allowed to use my phone, a notebook, and a pencil to document and keep track of my research. I didn't ask any questions and pretended I knew what I was doing. The librarian gave me access into a separate room by electronically unlocking the door. In this smaller room, the walls were made of bookshelves with an abundance of leather-bound books with gold lettering. Immediately, I noticed the cameras around the room. As I walked in, the librarian directed me in silence to the boxes I had checked out from Los Angeles Unified District papers from the era of the 1968 Blowouts. At this point in the process, I was so uncomfortable with the heavy surveillance. I felt nervous and out of place and I had forgotten about the excitement that I felt being there. My body and soul felt trapped.

By my third time there that week, the process began to feel routine, reminding me how quickly institutional oppression becomes normalized. I read through school board meeting minutes, and documents, as I recalled the times that I have signed up to speak at school board meetings, or mentored students in developing their speeches to the imposing and looming school board members. I had to work past the anger and rage of the racist letters sent into the district by people all over the city that opposed a movement. One example that is seared in my memory is this letter, written in flowery stationery, a woman blames the parents for not having "proper discipline in their homes" and calls on the board members to ask for disciplining of the "rioting" children. The underlying messaging in these types of documents from those outside of the Eastside neighborhoods subscribed to perpetuating the deficit notions of our communities, our families, and parents. Ultimately working to discredit the very real experiences with oppression and racism that the youth had named and resisted against with this movement.

Then suddenly in this journey of deep breaths and racist aggressions my eyes widened as I encountered a small index card. These index cards are still used today when people are signing up to speak at a school board meeting. This small index card was signed by Frances Crisostomo. And my eyes began to swell up with the sensation that my ancestors were there with me in that archival room. The index card (Figure 2) is officially known as “request to address the school board” and in the subject line the card reads: Parents Support. And in the description, it states: “The parents support orderliness in school walkout.” The card is dated March 11, 1968, which was a week after the police had terribly brutalized students at Roosevelt and Garfield High School for exercising their right to a dignified education. Frances supported the walk out and called for the authorities to protect the safety of the youth.

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES
Office of Clerk of the Board
REQUEST TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Name Frances Crisostomo

Check one:
☐ Authorized to speak for the following organization:
NAME OF ORGANIZATION Parents Support
☐ Speaking only as a member of the following organization:
NAME OF ORGANIZATION _____

☒ Speaking as a Private Citizen of Los Angeles City School Districts
☐ Other _____

General statement of subject to be discussed: (Board Rule 131b)
The parents support 4 orderliness in school walkout

Date to be presented 3-11-68

(OVER)

Figure 2. Francis Crisostomo, Request to Address the Board.

Note: Los Angeles Unified School District (March 11, 1968). *Francis Crisostomo, Request to Address the Board*. Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education records, Collection 1923. (Box

Frances Crisostomo, according to her daughter, Paula Crisostomo, was a community organizer. And Paula was central to the organizing of the East Los Angeles 1968 Blowouts while she was a teenager. Paula, in an oral history interview, shared with me that she first learned to organize when she was 12 years old from her mother. Frances modeled for Paula ways to speak and engage with the community, which is essential in the process of grassroots organizing. The first day of the Walk Outs, Paula shared with me that she was very nervous and afraid that morning before she went to school. And her mother Frances told her not to worry, and that she would wait for her at the front of the school. “...she said, “I’ll meet you in front of school.” That emboldened me. I felt protected. I didn’t know about anything else that was going to happen. [emotional pause]

This oral history interview with Paula Crisostomo took place almost a year after I had encountered the speaker’s card with Francis Crisostomo’s signature. And I was overwhelmed with emotion because I knew that although the institutional archives silenced our voices, that our parents and community were there in support of the youth. I felt it in my spirit. Just like I feel the spirit of my great grandmother guiding me through the obstacles in my own life. I knew it because I had worked as a long-time teacher in the community where this history of youth resistance continues to live on today and it does so from a community effort, with the involvement of families and organizers alike. Even though my soul felt trapped in this institutional space, this small index card with Frances Crisostomo’s name on it, is all I needed to feel empowered. Encountering this small yet powerful document reminded me of the imagination of our ancestors and elders to move and teach us through struggle, to move us beyond the grips of the empire.

Discussion

Reflecting on our emotive testimonios grounded in our positionalities and guided by Ethnic Studies and reciprocity, we also ask ourselves what, from our experiences in the archives, we can offer Ethnic Studies pedagogies for K-12 educators. As a result, we begin this discussion and analysis of our emotive testimonios grounded in McGovern and Buenavista's (2016) tenets of Ethnic Studies to understand better how we can translate our experiences into pedagogical tools for educators. Moreover, we seek to expand on this by offering a working conceptual framework guided by reciprocity and grounded in the tenets of Critical Race Educational History. Our conceptualization of this proposed framework is guided by questions and commitments of reciprocity defined by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991, p. 10) as an "effort to understand and build upon the cultural background of the students, and the students are able to gain access to the inner-workings of their culture (and the institution to which they are being introduced." Furthermore, as established by McGovern and Buenavista (p. 4, 2016), teaching Ethnic Studies requires educators to work collaboratively with students to learn and practice the following pedagogical tenets:

- 1) question white supremacist notions of ideological objectivity and neutrality in processes of knowledge construction
- 2) move towards anti-essentialist representations of racialized communities,
- 3) develop and practice a community-grounded praxis in the teaching of content
- 4) foster opportunities for individual empowerment and collective self-determination and social transformation.

By bridging our emotive testimonios with the tenets of Ethnic Studies, we propose the following conceptual framework grounded in Critical Race Educational History to provide opportunities for the collective preservation of communities of color histories while providing spaces for historical knowledge to be shared. Moreover, revisiting the three tenets of Critical Race Educational History (Santos, et al., 2017), this conceptual framework draws on CREH's in intentionality, embodying a collaborative process, and creating space for multiple voices to be heard. Our proposed conceptual framework centers on the reciprocal relationships of K-12 Ethnic Studies educators, archivists and librarians of color, and academics guided by Ethnic Studies and reciprocity to "provide tools and principles [to] better facilitate an amalgamation of CRT in education framework into historical research, writing, and teaching" (p. 1).

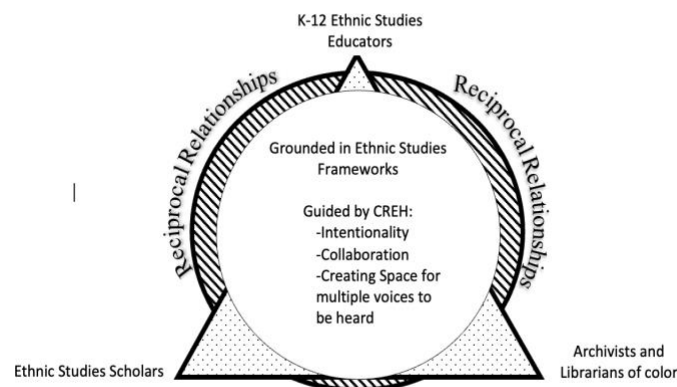


Figure 3. Triangulation of Reciprocity

Ethnic Studies recognizes the emotive aspect of working within archives ``as it actively seeks to restore humanity in historically dehumanized and oppressed communities and populations” (Villareal, 2022, p. 131). As a result, everyone involved in building reciprocal relationships to preserve and share these histories as a way to support Ethnic Studies classrooms is humanized. In order to engage this conceptual framework and build community, we must ask ourselves how we can build reciprocity to meet the following objectives: 1) support K-12 educators in Ethnic Studies classrooms; 2) encourage academics grounded in Ethnic Studies to disseminate their scholarship with K-12 teachers, students and communities of color; and 3) connect with archivist and librarians of color concerned with the histories of Black, Indigenous, people of color, and LGBTQIA+ communities. Reflecting on our conceptual framework offering, we have learned in the process of discussing, framing, and writing this piece with love for our work and communities that reciprocal relationships make us grow together. This can also be held as true for the reciprocal relationships between K-12 Ethnic Studies educators, academics grounded in Ethnic Studies, and archivists and librarians of color.

Conclusions and Implications

The emotive character of our testimonios is intentional, as we are often overwhelmed with complex emotional responses to *our* intersectional histories. While we understand that as we uncover archival documents along racial lines, that we may experience overwhelming and debilitating emotional responses, with our testimonios we instead chose to focus on those moments that energized us with joy and resistance. We sensed these feelings of empowerment when we built relationships with archivists of color that served as mentors for us, holding space for us as they helped us navigate the hidden curriculum of white supremacist settler colonialism within the archive in an educational institution. From our positionality as Critical Race scholars, we also understand the nuance in critiquing how archives are products of settler colonialism, and at the same time recognize the invaluable activist role that archivist of color play in creating special collections and advising students of color involved in uplifting histories tied to our communities.

With our testimonios we also wanted to capture our sensibility within the archival space as we sift through primary sources created by our ancestors and elders that signal the joy and resistance in our histories. As Critical Race scholars, we hope that our emotive testimonio offering to teacher-scholar-activists engaged in centering the histories of communities of color is illustrative of how to focus our energy and emotions as we enter institutional archival spaces that have been inaccessible to our communities. For instance, history teachers are often given teacher editions of history textbooks that may or may not include primary sources that are linked to the communities where the teacher is teaching. History teacher training is often devoid of archival research practice and much less how to access archives or who to speak to in those spaces. Nonetheless, as Critical Race scholars, we are more concerned with the affirming experiences that are captured by our emotive testimonios. Our work is significantly contingent on the spaces and work carved out by archivists who hold a range of intersectional identities and lived experiences. Such identities that speak to the lived experiences of communities historically de-centered from the archival narrative because of but not limited to race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. We firmly believe that their craft and practice as archivists with intersectional identities has led them to preserve our histories and guide scholars like us in the process of composing historical narratives.

With our emotive testimonios, our hope is that teacher-scholars aspire to engage in archival research and build the emotional and pedagogical tools that they can then share with students in K-12 settings. Finally, by sharing our emotive testimonios we hope to problematize for teachers, students, educational historians, what archival research feels like from a Critical Race Theoretical understanding –the empowerment, joy, and resistance that we feel as we experience how history brings culture and generations together.

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Writing Puerto Rican Public History: Ethnic Studies Curriculum in Connecticut

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Abstract

In 2019, the Connecticut State Legislature passed Public Act 19-12, *An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Black and Latino Studies in the Public-School Curriculum*. Before Public Act 19-12, community activists of color made several attempts to push for the inclusion of Ethnic Studies in public high schools in the state, and the history of Puerto Ricans and other communities of color in the state provides context for the Act's passage and implementation. Through multiple methods, this article explores ways to produce curricula that preserve and archive local history. The author draws on literature from history, Puerto Rican Studies, Engaged Pedagogy, and Ethnic Studies. Moreover, she discusses the goals, objectives, and processes employed to design her lesson plans that support Connecticut's new curriculum. One of the author's lesson plans serves as a case study for her to reflect on effective ways to write Ethnic Studies high school curricula about communities of color. This article concludes by reflecting on the author's experiences.

Keywords: Curriculum development, public history, Connecticut, Puerto Rican Studies

Introduction

In June 2019, the Connecticut State Legislature passed Public Act 19-12, also called *An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Black and Latino Studies in the Public-School Curriculum*. Connecticut students, teachers, educational organizations, and many more advocated for the legislature to pass the course. The Connecticut Legislature's Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, founded in 1976, also supported the Act (Black & Puerto Rican Caucus [BPRC], 2020). CT Public Act 19-12 (2019) states that "each local and regional board of education shall include African-American and [B]lack studies and Puerto Rican and Latino studies as part of the curriculum for the school district" (p. 3). With the passing of this legislation, Connecticut became the first U.S. state to require its public high schools to offer its students an elective course in Black and Latino Studies (Asmelash & Sturla, 2020). It may seem unexpected that this small New England state would pass such legislation before other states in the South and West, where there have been more public conversations and literature around Ethnic Studies in K-12 classrooms is more common; however, a closer look at Connecticut's population provides further context.

Why a Black and Latino Studies Course in Connecticut?

Connecticut residents of color pushed for this legislation and ensured its passing because we wanted to see ourselves and our histories in our classrooms (Exley, 2021). Demographic data helps to frame how legislation and its support in the state. During the 2018-2019 academic year, there

were 530,612 students enrolled in Connecticut public schools and nearly half of Connecticut public school students identified as students of color. According to EdSight's 2022 Enrollment Data, among the 47.6% students of color enrolled that year, 5.16% were Asian, 12.77% were Black or African American, 25.77% were Hispanic or Latino, and 3.56% were two or more races ("Connecticut's official source for education data," 2022). This data shows a need for a curriculum that is representative of the student population in the state. Students across the state advocated for the course with organizations like Students for Educational Justice, Citywide Youth Coalition, Hearing Youth Voices, and Connecticut Students for a DREAM. They held town halls, and many presented testimonies to the Connecticut Legislature (Lindsay, 2019).

Once the Connecticut Legislature officially ratified the Act, the Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE) tasked the State Education Resource Center (SERC) with creating the course's materials. SERC partnered with representatives from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and established an advisory group of over 150 stakeholders, including students, K-12 educators, administrators, and scholars from several disciplines, including history, education, and Ethnic Studies. Next, SERC broke the advisory group into several committees to oversee the curriculum's development, and the committees met several times through the spring of 2020. SERC also conducted focus groups and developed and distributed a curriculum survey to receive community feedback (Connecticut by the Numbers, 2020).

In December 2020, the CSBE approved SERC's curriculum, pending revisions, and SERC finalized the curriculum in the summer of 2021. An expert panel also reviewed the proposed curriculum before it was published. They designed the curriculum for a full-year elective in a two-semester system. The first half focuses primarily on Black and African American Studies and contains six units beginning with a unit titled "Where We Come From" and ending with "Protest, Politics, and Power," presented chronologically. The second semester is on Latino and Puerto Rican Studies and has five units. The first unit asks, "Who are We?" and the final unit asks, "Where are we now?" SERC made the curriculum publicly accessible online and created a documentary that covers the curriculum's development (State Education Resource Center [SERC], 2021).

Dozens of schools throughout the state ran a pilot of the course during the 2021-2022 school year. The 2022-2023 academic year marks the first year every Connecticut public high school has to provide the course. Since the course is an elective, it is not mandatory for students to take. Still, individual districts can decide if they want the Black and Latino Studies course or another Ethnic Studies course to serve as a graduation requirement. For example, in 2017, the school board of Bridgeport, Connecticut, passed a mandate for all their students to take a semester of coursework in "African American Studies, Caribbean/Latin American Studies or Perspectives on Race" to graduate from their public high schools (Lambeck, 2017). Bridgeport's student population at that time was about 19,000. The breakdown of Bridgeport's enrolled students was 2.75% Asian, 34.75% Black or African American, 48% Hispanic or Latino, and 12.69% White ("Connecticut's official source for education data," 2022). Bridgeport's mandate went into effect during the 2021-2022 academic year after the city provided training for teachers and completed the curriculum. Since students of color currently comprise almost half of the state's school population, we may see more districts enact similar requirements. Nearly two-thirds of Connecticut's residents of color are concentrated in 15 of the state's 169 cities and towns, especially the larger population centers (Eaton, 2020). In Bridgeport and other Connecticut cities, the proportions of Hispanic or Latino and Black or African American students are higher than the state's averages. It is likely that these

urban school districts will be among the first to adopt such policies. Moreover, based on studies in other states, Connecticut's Ethnic Studies curriculum will likely lead to positive results in student retention and testing scores (Bonilla et al., 2021; Sleeter, 2011; Wertheimer, 2022).

This article focuses on units dedicated to Latino Studies and Puerto Rican Studies to detail the process of developing and implementing Connecticut's new curriculum in public schools. The legislation likely named Puerto Rican Studies as a specific target area because Puerto Ricans make up 8.5% of the state's total population and account for more than half of the state's Latine³⁹ population. Connecticut has the largest percentage of Puerto Rican residents of any U.S. state, and 31.6% of Connecticut Puerto Ricans are under 18 and enrolled in K-12 schools (Puerto Rico Report, 2020). The histories of communities of color in the United States are often under taught or left out of K-12 classes. The implementation of Connecticut's Black and Latino Studies course points to the significance of these populations to national and state history. It also brings Puerto Ricans to the forefront of U.S. Latine history and the history of Connecticut in secondary education for future generations.

Puerto Ricans have a long history of migrating to Connecticut. Their status as American citizens allowed them to travel freely between Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland for most of the twentieth century. In 1952 the government of Puerto Rico expanded its Farm Labor Program to Connecticut by contracting Puerto Ricans as agricultural workers to the state. To help tell the stories of Puerto Ricans in Connecticut, I use interdisciplinary methods to write lesson plans that make archival material accessible to the public. In addition to bringing archival material to classrooms, my lesson plans also serve as a living archive of my community. While this article focuses on a particular population and region, it speaks to broader themes in other Puerto Rican communities stateside, such as labor, migration, settlement, and community development.

Methods

This section details the methodological frameworks used to create lesson plans that are place-based, culturally relevant, and complementary to the state's new curriculum. I draw on my experiences writing curricula for Teach It, a program by Connecticut Humanities that is a part of their digital resources. The website houses free and publicly accessible materials for teaching and studying Connecticut's history. My experiences as a public historian, community-engaged researcher, and Connecticut Puerto Rican inform the discussion of my goals and methods for writing curricula. Connecticut Humanities commissioned four lessons—one elementary school and three high schools which were published in 2021 for www.TeachItCT.org.

Positionality

Scholars use methodologies to make sense of their work; one of my methods is my positionality. Hartford, Connecticut's capital city, is home to over 100,000 Puerto Ricans. Moreover, Puerto Ricans comprise over two-thirds of the city's Hispanic or Latino residents (Puerto Rico Report, 2020). Many communities around the country have been fundamentally shaped by Puerto Ricans,

³⁹ I use Latino when that when discussing the legislation, state curriculum, and educational data because that is the official language used. However, when discussing populations more broadly, I use Latine because it is gender-neutral and more accepted among Spanish speakers than Latinx.

especially in New England, where Puerto Ricans migrated to work in farms and factories during the post-World War II era. Today, cities like Hartford, Connecticut, and Holyoke, Massachusetts, have some of the highest concentrations of Puerto Ricans outside New York, known for its significant Puerto Rican population. As a historian and a first-generation Hartford Puerto Rican, I am interested in doing the work necessary to make the history of Puerto Ricans in my city and state more visible and accessible.

A scholar's interpretations reflect the methods used and the positionality of the scholar. In this case, my identity and experiences as a Puerto Rican woman inform my selection of sources and the insights I draw and share from my research with the public. I researched Puerto Ricans' history in Connecticut using a community-based approach, which included collecting oral histories, creating curricula, designing professional development courses for K-12 teachers, and giving public lectures. These interventions all help me bring history to the public in a way that inspires critical consciousness and ensures the success of Connecticut's Ethnic Studies Curriculum. I know the importance of engaging the public when producing historical narratives because I have seen how stories of Puerto Ricans rarely make it into traditional American history courses throughout my life and education. I see my public scholarship as working to provide Connecticut residents with history about the significant Puerto Rican population and their contributions to state history. A better understanding of the past helps to enable recognition of Puerto Rican impact in the state and provides ways to redress inequities faced in Connecticut.

Public History, Engaged Pedagogy, Public Scholarship, and Ethnic Studies

My roles as a social, oral, and public historian shape my scholarship. As a community member and historian, I see myself as an intermediary between archives and the public. I can use my historical training, research funding, and position as a Ph.D. Candidate at a Research 1 university to highlight and archive community history for future generations. For example, with specialized training, financial resources, and time, I can go into local archives, locate material on Puerto Ricans in Connecticut, and bring it back to the public, who contributed to the archive and history.

I use public history to develop curricula that center Puerto Ricans in Connecticut history for public use. The National Council on Public History defines public history as "the many and diverse ways in which history is put to work in the world" (National Council on Public History, n.d.). Public history, as it implies in the name, is for the public and must benefit the public. Public historians often collaborate with other stakeholders to find the best ways to communicate history to the public. The main stakeholders for my lesson plans were Connecticut Humanities, libraries and archival repositories, educators, and students.

Engaged pedagogy and public scholarship methodologies inform how I write lessons and bring local history to students and educators. Jones (2022) coins the term "street scholar" to refer to a public scholar who is "unapologetic about the fact that, while our scholarship is shared *with* the Academy, it is done *for* the community" (p.4). Jones reminds researchers and teachers that the public is who we serve. One way to fulfill this mission is by creating spaces to elevate our public's stories (Jones, 2022). For me, this means elevating the history of Puerto Ricans and the city of Hartford, Connecticut, in my curriculum to promote the teaching and learning of the subject in K-12 classrooms. In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), bell hooks shows how teachers can use pedagogical strategies that affirm students' lived experiences. She discusses

engaged pedagogy and how it values everyone in the classroom by creating a space where all voices are heard and acknowledged. hooks' teachings inspired me to incorporate and center local sources to create lessons that allow students to see their stories reflected in their lessons with the ability to access primary sources from the lessons and the opportunity to explore them more locally.

By bringing attention to local resources, I sought to highlight the significant research materials created by Connecticut's communities of color for future generations that are often hidden in file folders and behind paywalls. I also use place-based education to guide my goals as a curriculum writer and educator. Place-based education grounds student learning in place (Gruenewald et al., 2007). These methods shape how I develop teaching documents that highlight existing archives while pointing to the need to create new, more inclusive archives.

Additionally, I use Ethnic Studies to inform the lessons I produce because, as a discipline, it shows that learning and education are personal and political. Ethnic Studies courses, curriculum, and pedagogy create spaces where students can engage with everyday issues such as race relations, racism, and discrimination. It asks practitioners to not only think critically and promote change but to disrupt colonialism and hegemony in educational spaces (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). Moreover, classes on Ethnic Studies and lessons provide a space for addressing the gaps in traditional high school curricula that favors a race-neutral, color-blind, and/or Eurocentric approach. Ethnic Studies pedagogy responds to the needs of students and stakeholders by centering student experience and knowledge in the discussion (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). This concept allows me to recover and reconstruct the history of Puerto Ricans in Connecticut with the community while also intervening in more traditional ways of telling local history.

My extensive background in historical monographs on relevant subjects also aided me in content development. I viewed several archives to complete the lesson discussed below, including the Hartford Historical Center at the Hartford Public Library, the Windsor Historical Society, and the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Centro) to develop a localized curriculum. Additionally, the Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Frameworks (CESSSF) provide standards for teaching social studies in the state. Teachers developed this framework in 2015 to guide educators and curriculum writers. The CESSSF assign content to grades that are age appropriate and fit into national standards. For example, in third grade, students explore local and Connecticut history. In high school, they study the role of Connecticut in American History and "Cultural Diversity and a Connecticut State Identity" (Connecticut State Department of Education [CSDE], 2015).

A submission template provided by Teach It served as a starting point for my curriculum development. A blank template is also available at <https://teachitct.org/contribute-an-activity/>. Guided by these methods, I established individual goals for the lessons. My goals were to:

1. Ground my lesson plans in local history.
2. Highlight local resources and institutions.
3. Point to the work that others have already done.
4. Support the state's new African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino curriculum.
5. Demonstrate Puerto Rican contributions to Hartford and Connecticut more broadly.
6. Create an interdisciplinary lesson plan that combines history, Ethnic Studies, and public humanities.

7. Provide teachers with strategies for working with communities in their local neighborhoods.

In addition to developing a set of goals for myself, another part of my method was to record my process step by step to provide a step-by-step for practitioners. Here is a breakdown of my process.

1. Representatives from Connecticut Humanities contacted me to write lesson plans about Latines in the state as part of several efforts to support the new Black and Latino course.
2. I chose four topics of focus and conducted research locally to learn more about each.
3. I identified and selected source material by asking what materials teachers and students need to understand a moment in history and what sources are interesting and grade appropriate.
4. The Program Consultant for Teach It and I procured permission to use the materials.
5. I completed the background research needed to write the lesson and developed the research questions, background statement, and activity outline.
6. I submitted a complete draft to the Teach It Program Consultant for comments, addressed the feedback, and resubmitted the updated lesson plan.
7. The lesson plan was approved by the Teach It Program Consultant and Director of Digital Humanities at Connecticut Humanities and uploaded for the author's final approval.
8. The lesson plan became publicly accessible online.

As noted in the step-by-step process, every Teach It lesson has some relevant historical information to ground the lesson. The lesson also provides teachers with a tool kit to get started that includes a key question, supporting questions, and a lesson outline based on primary sources.

Post-World War II Puerto Rican Farm Labor Migration to Connecticut: A Case Study

This activity first appeared in Teach It, a program of Connecticut Humanities, and is publicly available online. This lesson plan is suitable for high school students taking courses in American history, Puerto Rican Studies, or Ethnic Studies. Teachers can use it to teach themes such as agriculture, economics, labor, and migration. The lesson also addresses Connecticut-specific themes from CESSSF, such as "The Role of Connecticut in U.S. History" and "Cultural Diversity and a Connecticut State Identity" (CSDE, 2015). The key question asks: "How did Connecticut industries influence migration and immigration to the state and the development of new communities?" I designed the question to be broad so teachers can add it to their pre-existing lessons or meet their classroom's specific needs. Teachers can also add material about other migrant and immigrant populations in the state and be flexible with the period of time they want to cover before delving into the specifics of the lesson. The supporting questions, however, are directly related to the activity and ask students to engage critically with the sources.

D1: POTENTIAL COMPELLING QUESTION

How did Connecticut industries influence migration and immigration to the state and the development of new communities?

D1: POTENTIAL SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

- Why did Puerto Ricans migrate to Connecticut in large numbers after World War II?
- What was the impact of the tobacco industry on the racial and ethnic makeup of Connecticut?
- Why did the government of Puerto Rico lobby for Puerto Ricans to work as migrant farmworkers?

Figure 1. Image of Compelling and Supporting Questions

Sources

The lesson includes three primary sources students must consult: two from local repositories and one from a national archive. I located all the sources for this activity during the course of my research. The first source is an article from *The Hartford Courant* titled “Puerto Rican Farm Workers Chosen with Extreme Care,” published on May 18, 1952. The article explains how 300 to 400 Puerto Ricans were arriving as contract migrant laborers to work in the tobacco fields of Connecticut. It highlights that the Puerto Rican workers were temporary laborers vetted by the Shade Tobacco Agriculture Growers Association. At the same time, it emphasizes that Puerto Ricans are American citizens, which reinforces for students and teachers that Puerto Ricans are migrants to the U.S. and not immigrants. Furthermore, the director of the STGAA, Ralph Lansbury, discusses the Association’s hiring practices and provides information about the kinds of workers hired from Puerto Rico (The Hartford Courant, 1952). Researchers can miss this article tucked away on the twenty-third page of the paper. Still, it provides readers with a lot of information on the state’s newest migrant workers and provides students with the information to answer the 5Ws (who, what, where, when, and why). The article provides students with a myriad of information to review and allows them to pick a particular portion or theme that interests them.

The second primary source is a pamphlet titled “How to Hire Agricultural Workers from Puerto Rico” (Lasbury, n.d.). It is available at the Windsor Historical Society in Windsor, Connecticut, in the “Ralph C. Lasbury, Jr. Collection,” which contains the Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association files from 1943 to 1966. The pamphlet was published in 1951 by the Migration Division of the Puerto Rican Department of Labor, which collaborated with the Farm Placement Service, the United States Employment Service, the Bureau of Employment Security, and the U.S. Department of Labor. Like the newspaper article, it emphasizes that Puerto Rican workers are part of the American *domestic* labor force because of their citizenship status. There is even a section in the pamphlet titled “Introducing your fellow American citizen from Puerto Rico” (Lasbury, n.d.). The two sources complement each other, allowing students and teachers to discuss various topics like labor, citizenship, and migration. The pamphlet also contains a sample of a worker’s contract stating that Puerto Ricans laboring in Connecticut are doing so under the authority of the Puerto Rican government. This pamphlet provides students with a primary document to explore the kinds of messages sent to farmers and the broader public about the Farm Labor Program.

The third primary source in the lesson plan is a photograph titled “Interior of plane travel for migrants” (Center for Puerto Rico Studies Library & Archives, n.d.). The black and white image is

from the Offices of the Government of Puerto Rico in the United States and their records at Centro, the Center for Puerto Rican Studies in New York City. At least thirty Puerto Rican men are sitting on a plane traveling from Puerto Rico to work in the U.S. mainland. Although this picture is not from a group of men headed to Connecticut, it provides one visual of the kind of experience that Puerto Rican men went through as they traveled on airplanes to work in the U.S. mainland during the mid-twentieth century. Students can look at this photograph and may notice a hat or shirt their grandparents used to wear, or they may compare the inside of this plane to the last plane they were on. Either way, the existence of this image also reveals the importance of this photo to the government of Puerto Rico in the United States at the time, giving students a number of themes to discuss, like why it is in the archives.

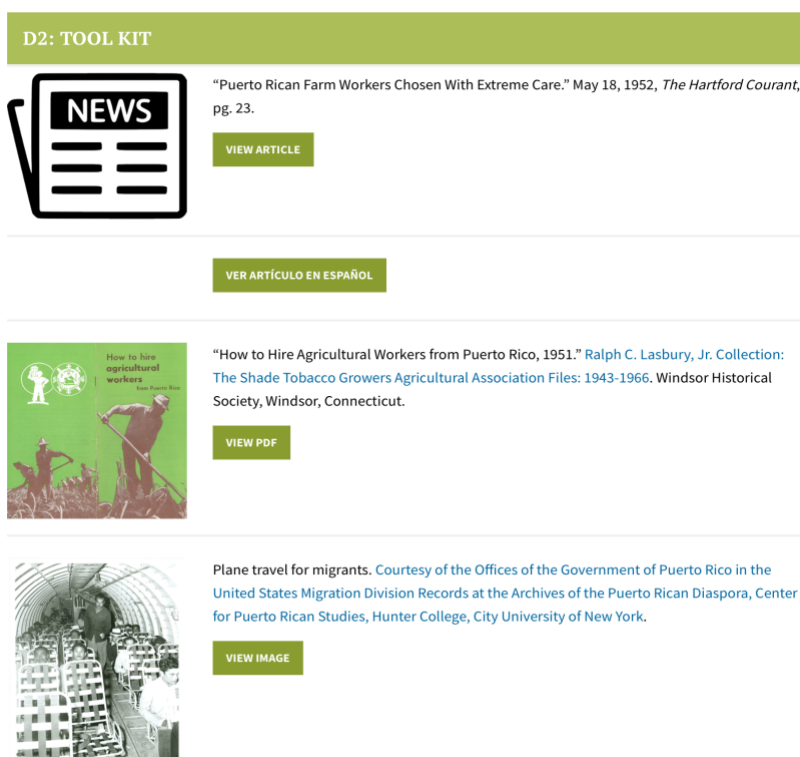


Figure 2. Image of Primary Sources Toolkit

Inquiry Activity Outline

The lesson's activity begins with a discussion on the differences between migration and immigration by having the students, and teacher define and provide examples for each term. Students will explore reasons why people migrated/immigrated in the past and relate them to current trends. Teachers then introduce students to the supporting questions to frame the source-based inquiry: "Why did Puerto Ricans migrate to Connecticut in large numbers after World War II? What was the impact of the tobacco industry on the racial and ethnic makeup of Connecticut? Why did the government of Puerto Rico lobby for Puerto Ricans to work as migrant farmworkers?"

Next, the students will read the newspaper article and take notes to understand better what type of source they are looking at and answer questions about the source's purpose, tone, and what

information it provides about Connecticut's tobacco industry and Puerto Rican migration. In pairs, students will analyze the image of Puerto Rican workers on an airplane and develop questions to share with their peers. After, students will closely read the promotional pamphlet given to Connecticut tobacco growers and answer questions in small groups. Finally, the class will come together to compare and contrast the sources. To conclude the activity, "Students will discuss why Puerto Ricans are migrants (and not immigrants) when they leave Puerto Rico to live and work in the mainland United States and what the importance of that differentiation is" (Rosario, 2021b, para. 4).

The lesson plan also includes some assessment steps teachers can take to gauge student learning. Labeled as "Communicating Conclusions," students can move beyond the material and content presented in class. For example, in this lesson, students are asked to draft a letter that responds to the article they read in class or conduct research on Connecticut's current tobacco industry and create an exhibit for The Luddy/Taylor Connecticut Valley Tobacco Museum.

At the end of the lesson plan is an additional resources section. The section separates material into categories such as "Places to Go," "Things to Do," "Websites to Visit," and "Articles to Read" (Rosario, 2021b). These resources are primarily aimed at educators because they provide more content and information for the topics from the lesson. However, students can also use them. The resources section allows the teacher to highlight local museums, historical societies, publications, scholars working on the topic, and relevant projects. Though often overlooked, I chose these historical sources purposely because they are available to students in their towns and cities or are digitally accessible because of the lessons. Learning this can be powerful for students from those communities and serve as a point of departure for further exploration.

Place to GO

[Windsor Historical Society](#), Windsor, CT

[Connecticut Valley Tobacco Museum](#), Windsor, CT

[Hartford History Center](#), Hartford Public Library, Hartford, CT

[Connecticut Historical Society](#), Hartford, CT

Things To DO

Explore the [Ralph C. Lasbury Jr. Collection: The Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association Files, 1943-1966](#) at the Windsor Historical Society [research library](#) in Windsor, CT.

Watch the "[Introduction to Connecticut's Tobacco Valley](#)" video clip, co-produced by CPTV and Connecticut Humanities.

Figure 4. Image of Local Resources on Additional Resources Page

Conclusion

This article highlights the historic passing of Connecticut Public Act 19-12, *An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Black and Latino Studies in the Public-School Curriculum*, and reflects effective ways to write Ethnic Studies curricula for K-12 students. Writing accessible lesson plans is one way to bring archives to the public, in this case to elementary to high school students, generating interest in local populations and history. Using a curriculum to archive local history helps to correct historical

misconceptions and inspires students to learn more about and effect change in their local communities. In their chapter “What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies” in *Transformative Ethnic Studies in School* (2020), Sleeter & Zavala show the need for Ethnic Studies in K-12 schools because of its positive effects on academic achievement for students of color (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). As an educator writing curriculum for a diverse group, creating spaces for students to share their knowledge and speak from their experiences is crucial. Teachers can empower students by using local materials, places, and stories in their curricula that reflect students’ lived experiences and promotes academic achievement.

At the same time, there are complexities of being included in a state curriculum. In *Transformative Ethnic Studies in School* (2020), Sleeter & Zavala also speak to the disadvantages of standardizing an Ethnic Studies curriculum, as curricula should be grounded in the communities it serves. Moreover, they discuss the critical need for educators to be adequately trained. The new curriculum in Black and Latino Studies in Connecticut draws from diverse methods and approaches to ensure that Connecticut students see themselves represented in their classrooms.

Since the course’s implementation, in addition to SERC, several institutions across the state have started offering professional and content development and creating complimentary materials. I see my lesson plans and public history work as interventions in the state’s standardization because they are all based on material from local archives and speak to specific moments in state history. Furthermore, my lesson plans show Puerto Rican students from Central Connecticut the value of knowing their histories and provide them with tools to learn more about the contributions of their communities to state history. For me, it was necessary to specifically name some of the Puerto Rican contributions to Connecticut because of the large number of Connecticut Puerto Ricans, like me, often overlooked in narratives, archives, and curricula. I want Puerto Rican students in Connecticut to know we are a part of the state and should be included in its history and curriculum. Implementing Ethnic Studies in Connecticut public schools ensures that Connecticut students of color will see themselves reflected in their curriculum from now on.

With positive feedback from teachers, students, and community members, I continue to work on ways to showcase Puerto Rican history for Connecticut students and the public more broadly. After publishing my lesson plans in 2021, I worked with Connecticut Humanities to ensure they were accessible to all community members, including Spanish speakers. With the assistance of professional translators, all the lesson plans and their written material are translated into Spanish for use in classes for English Language Learners in the state. The Spanish translations went live in January 2023.

My professional work is rooted in my community, and my scholarship lives within my embodiment as a Puerto Rican woman from the diaspora, and I continue to find ways to include and highlight Puerto Rican stories in K-12 curriculum. Writing curricula and public histories of Puerto Ricans in Connecticut allow me to leverage the historical expertise I have accessed to help ensure that the next generation has access to a more inclusive and representative version of *our* history.

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Appendix A

Complete Lesson Plan

“Post-World War II Puerto Rican Farm Labor Migration to Connecticut.”

Grade level: High School United States History

Themes: Cultural Diversity and an American National Identity; The Role of Connecticut in U.S. History

Topics: Agriculture; Economics; Labor; Latina/o/x Studies; Migration; Puerto Ricans

Towns: Windsor; Statewide

Historical Background: Puerto Rican farm labor migration was the product of both the Puerto Rican and American governments. While there were Puerto Ricans in the state before World War II, May 1952 marked the beginning of a significant increase in Puerto Rican migration. The first group of Puerto Rican farmworkers came to work in Connecticut's tobacco fields as contracted laborers through Connecticut's Shade Tobacco Growers' Agricultural Association. In Connecticut, Puerto Ricans would join a workforce of over 20,000 that labored in the tobacco industry. The number of Puerto Rican migrants to the United States would increase

Puerto Rican Farm Workers Chosen With Extreme Care
The Hartford Courant (1952-1953); May 18, 1952; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Hartford Courant
pg. 23

Puerto Rican Farm Workers Chosen With Extreme Care

This summer some 300 to 400 growers a "controlled" work force. Puerto Ricans will be imported for work in Connecticut tobacco fields. By "controlled," Lasbury said, he meant the workers could be supervised and bound by immigration regulation so that any person causing trouble to the community or creating a problem, could be immediately sent out of the country and barred from re-entry.

It will be the first time that Puerto Ricans in large numbers have been brought in for seasonal work. The difference between this project and the importation of British West Indians, which has been going on for several years, is that the latter are subject to immigration laws and can be deported for violating their contracts.

The Puerto Ricans, however, are U.S. citizens. They are not contracted to return to Puerto Rico and cannot be forced to leave once when they finish their job, said his work ends. They are subject to deportation if they break the contracts.

Ralph C. Lasbury, Jr., director of the Shade Tobacco Growers' Agricultural Association, said Puerto Rican workers with experience in agriculture are being brought in at the rate being brought to this state, he said. Lasbury said the workers, who he said felt that employment in Puerto Rico will be opportunities should be given to more likely to return after the season-off-shore U.S. citizens before for non-codes than single men with no responsibilities. Each worker is required to sign a contract.

Lasbury said the STGAA, in 1947, chose the British West Indian program after conferring with the State Labor Department. The workers themselves are expected to be excellent. The work, he said, because it offered the local men will come here, he said, with:

the object of making as much money working on the farms as they can in the short time they will be here. He said they like a long work week and are quick to learn once they are shown what is expected of them.

Few will be able to speak English. The language of Puerto Rico is Spanish. The employers have been told to demonstrate the duties of the workers with gestures and use sign language to get the meaning across.

The Puerto Ricans come from a land where the climate is always warm, Lasbury said, and it may take a short while for them to adjust to the Connecticut weather, strange food, a foreign language and large cities.

In addition to the Puerto Ricans, some 2,000 British West Indians will again work here this year. If the Puerto Rican workers succeed this summer, a larger number will probably be brought in next year.

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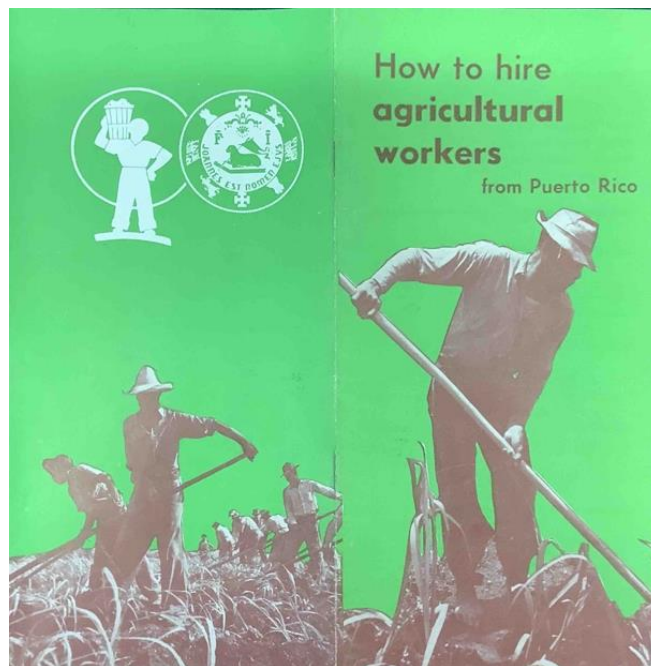
over the next several decades and lead to several Puerto Rican communities across the United States, including in towns and cities in Connecticut.

Compelling Question:

How did Connecticut industries influence migration and immigration to the state and the development of new communities?

Supporting Questions:

- 1: Why did Puerto Ricans migrate to Connecticut in large numbers after World War II?
- 2: What was the impact of the tobacco industry on the racial and ethnic makeup of Connecticut?
- 3: Why did the government of Puerto Rico lobby for Puerto Ricans to work as migrant farmworkers?



Resource 1: "Puerto Rican Farm Workers Chosen with Extreme Care." May 18, 1952, *The Hartford Courant*. ProQuest Historical Newspapers, pg. 23.

Retrieved from: <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/puerto-rican-farm-workers-chosen-with-extreme/docview/561810208/se-2?accountid=40258>. Full pdf available here: https://teachitct.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/08/Puerto_Rican_Farm_Workers_Chosen.pdf.

Resource 2: "How to Hire Agricultural Workers from Puerto Rico, 1951." Ralph C. Lasbury, Jr. Collection: *The Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association Files: 1943-1966*. Windsor Historical Society, Windsor, Connecticut.

Link to full pamphlet here: https://teachitct.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/08/How_to_Hire_Agricultural_Workers_1951-compressed.pdf.

Resource 3: Offices of the Government of Puerto Rico in the United States (OGPRUS) Records, 1930-1993. Interior of plane travel for migrants: OGPRUS_MD_boxunknown_fCg_0005. Center for Puerto Rican Studies Library & Archives, Hunter College, CUNY.

Retrieved from: <https://centroca.hunter.cuny.edu/Detail/objects/11182>

The Inquiry Activity:

1: Begin the class with the following open-ended discussion questions:

- a. How do you define migration?
- b. How do you define immigration?
- c. What are some of the reasons people migrate today?
- d. What are possible reasons people migrated in the past?

2: As a class, come up with definitions for migration and immigration and give 2-3 examples for each term to guide the lesson.

3: Read the newspaper article alone (source #1) and take detailed notes.

- a. Identify source type.
- b. What is the purpose of this piece?
- c. What is the tone?
- d. What information can you glean from this source?



4: Look at the image (source #3) and answer the following questions in pairs:

- a. What do you think is going on in the image?
- b. What questions do you have about the image?

5: Break the class into three groups. Each group will read three sections in the pamphlet answer the following questions:

Group 1: pages 3-5

Group 2: pages 6-8

Group 3: pages 9-13

- a. Who is the audience?
- b. What are some of the main points presented in your sections?
- c. What information can you glean from this source about Puerto Rican farm labor migration?
- d. What are your other observations and thoughts?

6: In a large group, compare and contrast the sources:

- a. Do these sources challenge each other?
- b. Are they in conversation with each other?
- c. What do these images and newspaper articles reveal about the past? How do these sources affect your perception of the present?

Communicating Conclusions:

- 1: Students will write a letter to the editor in response to the newspaper article “Puerto Rican Farm Workers Chosen with Extreme Care.” What questions do you have for the author? What new information can you provide?
- 2: Students will create recruitment material from the perspective of tobacco growers or associations to attract potential migrant laborers.
- 3: Students will investigate Connecticut’s tobacco industry today and create an exhibit for the Luddy/Taylor Connecticut Valley Tobacco Museum.

Additional Resources:

Places to go:

- Windsor Historical Society (Museum), 96 Palisado Avenue, Windsor, CT 06095
- Connecticut Valley Tobacco Museum, 135 Lang Road, Windsor, CT 06095
- Hartford History Center, Hartford Public Library, 500 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06203
Connecticut Historical Society Museum and Library, 1 Elizabeth St, Hartford, CT, 06105

Things to do:

- Explore the Ralph C. Lasbury Jr. Collection: The Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association Files, 1943-1966 at the Windsor Historical Society research library in Windsor, CT.
- Watch the “Introduction to Connecticut’s Tobacco Valley” video clip, co-produced by CPTV and Connecticut Humanities.

Websites to visit:

“Puerto Rican Migrant Farmworkers: Enduring Experiences in Continental U.S. Agriculture” online exhibit by Dr. Ismael García Colón.

Articles to read:

Duany, Jorge. “A Transnational Colonial Migration: Puerto Rico’s Farm Labor Program.” 304 *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 84, no. 3–4 (January 1, 2010): 225–51.

Glasser, Ruth. “Tobacco Valley: Puerto Rican Farm Workers in Connecticut.” *Hog River Journal* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2002).

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The Work of Memory

Video Stills, 2012-2023

By Boone Nguyen

I am an artist of the Southeast Asian diaspora. My experience as a refugee in the metropole informs my work through the themes of displacement and place-building, landscape and historical memory, leaving and returning, loss and transformation. I use documentary video, moving images, and soundscapes to create immersive installations storying a continuing search for a distant yet familiar homeplace where the intimacies of life and death and the dialectic of subjection and resistance serve as a living archive of memory that is both personal and collective.

The Work of Memory is a series of seven video stills that visualizes the concept of the living archive. This archive lives in the reproductive, cultural, and spiritual labor that sustains communities subjected to social, political, and economic dislocation, for instance an elderly man feeding bananas to fish raised in a bomb crater pond or spirit money flying from an outstretched hand during a funeral procession. The hands in each still represent the labor communities perform to sustain intergenerational knowledge and practices of remembering our histories and ancestors. This provides an education, and interaction with knowledge that militates against nostalgia, in favor of a critical memory that remembers not only the violence of (neo)colonial expropriation, but of the collective labor required to sustain places that have been subjected to its depredations.





Introduction

Like many Ethnic Studies educators and practitioners of social justice, In Lak'Ech is one maize-based concept (Rodríguez et al., 2010; Rodríguez, 2019) that helps tap into student consciousness-raising, regardless of institution, course title, or students' ethno-racial, socio-cultural, and national identities; *"tu eres mi otro yo / you are my other me / si te hago daño a ti / if i do harm to you / me hago daño a mi mismo / i do harm to myself / si te amo y respeto / if i love and respect you / me amo y respeto yo / i love and respect myself"* becomes the heartbeat for classrooms and community-based events alike, and serves as a reminder that beyond the walls of the colonial university (Cordova, 1997) and "structures of colonialism and racism" (Garcia Peña, 2022, p. xvi), we must ultimately love and respect each other as we love and respect ourselves in order to sustain trust, accountability, and mutual understanding.

In recent years, Ethnic Studies has been institutionalized in public education systems, enjoying unprecedented expansion, but this growth portends conflicting best practices approaches regarding pedagogies and among pedagogues. Despite a lack of training in the discipline, some faculty have attempted to encroach upon Ethnic Studies general education requirements by offering courses that engage the studies of indigeneity, ethnicity, and race, but are not in fact, Ethnic Studies courses. Thus, in this newly burgeoning educational landscape comes renewed opportunities for co-optation and further whitewashing of the field and its pedagogies. In fact, as the only Ethnic Studies collaborator to this piece has shared, a common lament among Ethnic Studies educator-scholars is that with Assembly Bill 1460⁴¹, it seems "everyone and anyone can now teach Ethnic Studies" seem to abound. However, as García Peña (2022) indicates, to transform the colonialism and racism ingrained in U.S universities, "we need more than inclusion and diversity; we need revolution and rebirth," (p. xvi); simply adding new courses that lack the integrity of Ethnic Studies tenets does a disservice to the field.

In institutions of higher learning, "diversity" has become the latest buzzword, a problematic pillar, and a single metric in which racism, sexism, and classism are assessed, interpreted, and among other things, used to secure grant funding (Karimi, 2022). Several scholars have suggested that the Global North's current 'diversity moment' is more placebo than cure (Ahmed, 2012; Ferguson, 2012; Melamed, 2011) to historic and ongoing socio-political illnesses; they condemn how historically marginalized identities and people have been commodified to serve the Neoliberal University's commitment to and participation in the global racial capitalist order.

Our own educational, social, and political positionalities provide the impetus for this collaborative praxis essay. We are all educators committed to the critical study of difference, privilege, and social (in)justice. Collectively, we reflect on the consequences of the development of department and policy while recognizing our various privileged positionalities. We consider the impact of Assembly Bill 1460 which resulted in the 2020 state law which requires 1 course in Ethnic Studies (worth 3

⁴¹ Assembly Bill 1460 requires all students enrolled on all 23 CSU campuses to take a 3-unit class in Native American studies, African American studies, Asian American studies or Latina and Latino studies. The bill was proposed by Assemblywoman Shirley Weber. The new law (2020) makes California the first state to require ethnic studies as a university graduation requirement.

credit units) for all California State University (CSU) graduates that generated considerable conflict between Ethnic Studies faculty and university leadership over its implementation. As Bañales (2019) reminds us, “In its current iteration, [Ethnic Studies] should continue to actively challenge and call attention to racism, power relations, and the inner workings of the neoliberal university, which includes how it implicates and seduces marginalized scholars and students to conform” (p. 235). As incorporated in General Education in the CSU, this element of Ethnic Studies pedagogy runs the risk of losing integrity.

While public teaching institutions with a dearth of faculty of color may applaud themselves for their willingness to rapidly embrace and respond to state mandates to build and offer Ethnic Studies curriculum, the principals of the discipline are threatened. The leveraging of funding to redirect research agendas—Francis (2019) has coined it ‘movement capture’—along with the strategic manipulation by those in power to distort and distribute public resources to meet their own ends—Táiwò (2020) refers to this as “elite capture” directly impacting teaching and the way diversity unfolds in practice. The challenges of developing new programs and curricula with limited faculty experts in the field – in addition to offering new courses at institutions with weak tenure density – exacerbates the tensions that arise in merging theory with practice in the Ethnic Studies classroom. Put simply, the ‘move fast and break things’ approach does not serve Ethnic Studies well.

Weaponizing Diversity; In & Outside the Classroom

This problem, we believe, can be aptly described as the ‘weaponization of diversity discourse.’ “Weaponizing Diversity” charts a critical intervention into how Ethnic Studies educators, social justice practitioners, and students should understand the contemporary forms of appropriating the discipline and the violent implications of legitimating this practice. When diversity is weaponized, it damages meaningful discourse, and Ethnic Studies’ responsibility to cultivate social justice, resistance, and social transformation is eviscerated.

Diversity is weaponized when it:

- is used for self-serving purposes;
- argues superiority and authenticity based on identity politics;
- impedes the ability to be critically conscious, reflective, or accountable;
- manipulates resources to serve superficial purposes (i.e., metrics, checking boxes, and benchmarks of ‘liberal progress’); and,
- obscures the pedagogical purpose of Ethnic Studies as rooted in the 7 Cs (cultivate, celebrate, center, critique, challenge, connect, conceptualize).

Currently, the ongoing cultural wars crossfire in which Ethnic Studies finds itself requires that educators reflect and re-assess the direction in which the discipline is headed. As Bañales (2019) cautions, “Ethnic Studies should further question our academic training, pedagogy, curriculum, means of evaluation, and ways of relation to one another” (p. 235).

From justifications by Ethnic Studies K-12 educators envisioning the inclusion of Ethnic Studies as a way to address gaps in educational achievement, opportunity, equity, and justice (Tintiango-Cubales et al., 2019), to the ways Ethnic Studies are embraced and integrated into institutions,

which remain resistant to responding to inherent systemic structural inequities, critical questions of legitimacy, efficaciousness, and impact of pedagogies, Ethnic Studies must be examined from within and outside of the academy.

Ethnic Studies Pedagogies as Intentional, Purposeful, Meaningful

Ethnic Studies pedagogies are rooted in love and activism that at their core, challenges power, hate, and ignorance. In the classroom, student engagement is achieved through the 5 S's: (1) "recovery of self-identity"; (2) *stories* that "honor the historical and contemporary voices"; (3) interrogating U.S. systems through "developing critical consciousness, reclaiming hope and healing"; (4) examining *social* movements and the need to become active community agents to ensure education as liberatory practice, and; (5) fostering *solidarity* and cross-racial and inter-ethnic relationships (LESMCC, Curriculum, n.d.). As Sleeter's (2011) seminal review found, Ethnic Studies pedagogies are effective and transformative, and have social and academic value for students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Indeed, the value of multiple, diverse voices speaking from various vantage points, subjectivities, and platforms fosters a synergy that avoids the situation that is created when groups are trapped with detached insular thinking and become mired in circles of isolation (Fyre, 1983). For Ethnic Studies practitioners, the advantage of many perspectives is that they serve to uphold the values of the field while self-examining one's own practices, and not dehumanizing one another. For example, In Lak'Ech grounds, connects, humbles, and reminds us that for many of our students or colleagues who are new to exploring the current Ethnic Studies movement and the historical traumas and material realities of settler colonialism, imperialism, and racial capitalism, we must cultivate and center empathy, accountability, and sense of holistic worth.

The upward battle and struggle from what Lorde (1984, p. 110) identified as the complexities of "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" necessitates understanding how the relationship between Ethnic Studies content and pedagogy is interwoven and grounded within an intellectual framework that promotes critical consciousness, while challenging oppressive conditions, and recognizing the diverse positionalities of all contributors. Ethnic Studies, as a pedagogy of possibilities, becomes problematic in the current neoliberal multicultural arrangement that privileges fleeting diversity initiatives at the expense of deconstructing structural inequality and transforming it with empowering alternatives. Below we offer observations of 'weaponized diversity' as counterproductive to the intellectual, political, and pedagogical project of Ethnic Studies.

Theory Meets Practice: On "The One" and the Weaponization of Diversity in the Name of Ethnic Studies

In her powerful memoir, *Community as Rebellion: A Syllabus for Surviving Academia as a Woman of Color*, Latinx Studies educator scholar-activist Lorgia García Peña (2022) dissects her experiences navigating higher education systems in the United States and while unpacking the hegemonic colonialist and racist logics that sustain discourses of racial liberalism, offers recommendations to ethnic studies scholars and allies on how to push back and transform the University, using localized, ephemeral projects.

In describing the logic of “The One”—a lone faculty of color who can/must simultaneously checkmark “diversity” for several service commitments—García Peña (2022) identifies top-down (vertical) violence that institutions founded upon white male hetero-patriarchy create for faculty- and women of color, and also names the lateral (horizontal) violence that faculty/people of color can inflict upon each other, which she notes is a “most pervasive” and “hardly spoken about” effect of “The One” (p. 20).

As in some violent video game, there could be only one winner once all the competition was eliminated; thus I –along with any other ‘competition’—would need to be eliminated for them to succeed. The logic of The One is inherently violent. Believing ourselves to be The (Deserving) One can be.... paralyzing, isolating, and incredibly damaging.... [faculty of color’s] glaring complicity with the university colonizing project hindered their ability to create freedom spaces for themselves and their students, for their energy was focused on becoming The (Only) One. (p. 22)

We take García Peña’s (2022) notion of “The One” and return to central tenets of Weaponized Diversity, describing how it operates in academia diametrically juxtaposed across politicized spaces capable of leveraging critical dialogue, solidarity, and community-based action.

Weaponizing Diversity occurs when “The One” assumes sole mastery, authenticity, and intellectual ownership over the sublime premise and promise of Ethnic Studies and its original four founding academic fields (African American/Black Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicana/o Studies/Puerto Rican Studies, Native American/American Indian Studies), in addition to its expanding and evolving fields of intellectual inquiry (i.e., Arab American Studies, Pacific Islander Studies, Queer of Color Critique, Central American Studies). Weaponizing Diversity allows for the self-serving purposes of “The One” to assume that critical pedagogy (the ability to create, engage, and learn with our students) belongs to one person exclusively. Within the breadth of Ethnic Studies, this type of thinking limits opportunities for others, and therefore detracts, rather than enhances, or as Lorde (1984) reminds us, “divide and conquer must become define and empower” (p. 112). What does it signal to students when educators of color minimize other faculty’s credentials, academic skill sets, and scholarship in the name of Ethnic Studies (and AB 1460)? Furthermore, when these transgressions occur with little accountability, the status quo is perpetuated, reinforcing normative practices historically entrenched within the educational system.

Weaponizing Diversity allows for hierarchies of oppression to sustain logics of superiority and authenticity based on identity politics. Combined, it erodes the central tenets of intersectionality, a central foundation by which Ethnic Studies practitioners understand the 7 C’s and 5 S’s. When we allow faculty to assume positions of power based solely on the premise that “*my identity is my credential*” (Lugo-Lugo, 2023) the notion of “The One” ultimately rationalizes any individual’s claim to superiority and authenticity. What message does this convey to students, and how does it effectively negate the value of learning in Ethnic Studies?

Weaponizing Diversity also impedes the pedagogues’ abilities to be critically conscious and reflective, both vital requirements for effective Ethnic Studies pedagogies. When diversity is weaponized, it allows bad actors to seize spaces reserved for critical reflective discourses and turn potentially fruitful discussions into damaging and distracting sideshows that diminish colleagues’ expertise, perspectives, and contributions. When such provocateurs intentionally justify the use of microaggressions, including micro-assaults, micro-insults, and micro-invalidations to denigrate

others, they derail collective efforts in many areas, including in curriculum development and in the carryout of department initiatives. The message to students is: *practice what I teach, even if it is counter to what I do*. Essentially, the weaponizing of diversity sustains a hierarchy of oppression, internalized racism, and internalized forms of oppression (Tolteka Cuauhtin, 2019). The consequence of witnessing such disruptive practices is that students may interpret and assume that toxic behavior is acceptable practice in Ethnic Studies, that the *end justifies the means*. This message subverts the very tenets of Ethnic Studies pedagogies.

Conclusion

If such practices are allowed to go unchecked, Ethnic Studies as a revolutionary, transformative, and critical apparatus to combat the modern colonial, racist, classist, and heterosexist formation of North American society and the Western/Euro-centric neoliberal university (Maldonado-Torres & Figueroa-Vasquez, 2020) will be misunderstood, undervalued, and denigrated. The destructive nature of critique from external sources is damaging, but when disruption emanates from within, it serves to frustrate, undermine, and sabotage the field's inherent transformative power.

Weaponizing diversity is antithetical to the purpose and vision of Ethnic Studies, which strives to "respond to students by developing their critical understanding of the world and their place in it, and ultimately prepare them to use academic tools to transform their world for the better" (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019, p. 21). Students are likely to absorb what educators and faculty model inside and outside the classroom, and therefore beyond conveying subject content, it is vital that Ethnic Studies educators and social justice practitioners be "reflective and be able to critically interrogate their own identities and experiences" so that students, our future leaders, professionals, and organizers, remain willing to entertain critical reflection and practice empathy (p. 24). In Lak'Ech is a classroom pedagogy, but it is one of many pedagogies required to know one's self, and the self in relation to others. We urge Ethnic Studies educators and social justice practitioners to be aware of how the current moment is conducive to the repurposing, co-optation, and appropriation of Ethnic Studies by those who stand to benefit from identity politics. In many ways, the struggle remains the same, but it is now masked in 'new' and compelling sinister formats.

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“J’ey Alex, Let’s Talk About Unos Proyectos”: Reflections on Mestizo and Indigenous Collaboration in Indigenous Latinx Community Filmmaking

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Abstract

In this narrative essay, I engage in storying as a form of practice to reflect on several ruptures in a community filmmaking project that happened across Oakland, California, and San Juan Atitán, Huehuetenango, Guatemala. These ruptures disclosed possibilities for anti-racist, pro-Indigenous practices through the shifting roles of authorship and authority among *ladino*, the term for “mixed-race” Mestizos used in Guatemala, and Indigenous Guatemalan collaborators from Maya communities. I reflect on how these ruptures were negotiated, focusing on the orientations that emerged toward my role as a *ladino* artist-researcher working with a Maya community in the Cuchumatán mountains of Western Guatemala, and how these emergent possibilities were both nurtured and foreclosed on at various stages of the project. All names are pseudonyms chosen by collaborators.

Keywords: community filmmaking, Indigenous diasporas, Maya-Mam, Mestizos and ladinos

I met Mintz initially at one of his Mam language classes in Oakland, California. I was starting my ethnographic fieldwork at a continuation high school for students institutionally labeled as “Newcomers,” recent immigrants, and the vast majority of the students at the school were from Maya-Mam communities in Guatemala. I attended the language class because it was a rare opportunity to study a Maya language in a community-based setting that would potentially help me with my fieldwork. While I wasn’t able to stick it out with the class long-term that time around (I’ve since rejoined), I knew that Mintz was doing important work in the community around civic participation, public health, and language education. For this reason, I was excited to learn that the following school year he had taken on a job as office manager of the continuation high school where I was doing my dissertation fieldwork.

One day, during the pandemic shutdown and while the classes were meeting entirely on Zoom, I came to volunteer with the food distribution program happening on the school campus. In order to get into the building, the principal had put me in touch with Mintz. He didn’t remember me from the class, but I mentioned to him that I had taken a few sessions of the Mam language class and that I was excited to re-join it in the coming semester. He politely asked me about the work I was doing with the school, and I explained to him a bit about my dissertation research, the audiovisual recordings I was having some of the students do in their homes while they were on their Zoom classes, and how this intersected with my interests in filmmaking, video art, and audio production generally. When I mentioned this, I noticed that Mintz’s attention piqued in a way I hadn’t noticed

before. He asked me, “Do you work with video editing?” and I responded yes. He went on to explain that he wanted to learn to fly a drone so that he could film in his hometown in the Cuchumatán mountains of Guatemala. I froze for a moment . . .

Here I was, a 2nd generation Guatemalan-American *ladino*, talking with a community leader of the Mam diaspora in Oakland about his interest in filming with a drone. While I didn’t fly drones, a member of my film collective, Jabari Jones, was an excellent drone pilot, and I knew that Jabari would probably be down to coach Mintz on the basics of drone filming. I hesitated though--was it my place to suggest someone that could help him? Was there any problem with me seeing this as a possible intersection of our joint interests in filmmaking? Was I acting like the leftist guerrilla that came into the community during the civil war and claimed to lead the community in the anti-oligarchic insurgency? Sure, this last question was a bit extreme, but the resonance of my immediate present with those historical experiences of cross-cultural collaboration and interaction between *ladino* activists and Indigenous community members certainly came into sharp focus for me. I went for it—I asked Mintz if he would be interested in me talking to Jabari about doing a drone tutorial and he responded, “Yeah, that would be great!”

From Drone Practice to Diasporic Soccer

Mintz instructed us to meet up on Sunday at the park where he was going to be playing soccer with his friends. I imagined a pick-up game, but when I arrived at the park the first Sunday, I realized it was much more than this. The soccer game that Mintz had talked about playing with his friends was actually a full-blown soccer league called el Torneo Chapín. For the next few months, every Sunday, Jabari and Mintz and I would meet up at the Torneo Chapín, or Guatemalan Tournament, where over a dozen teams, each with over a dozen players, would compete. Decked out in jerseys with customized names--both team names and each player’s individual name--the teams would compete with one another while friends and players waiting to play would hang out on the sidelines, eating food from the two tents selling chips, pozole, and gatorade. After the first two weeks, I started bringing my own handheld camera with the idea that maybe I could do some interviews with people since some of the folks hanging out each Sunday were relatives of the youth that I was working with at the school. Even though I had this initial intention, one of the friends of the team that we hung out with--called La Vieja Escuela, or “the old school,” all of whom were from San Juan Atitán--asked me if I could share my footage with him. I agreed to this and this began a regular practice where I would compose 15-30-minute edits of the footage from that week’s game and share it with the players on Mintz’s team so that they could circulate the footage among their friends and family in Guatemala.

It was from this weekly filming practice that I started developing the idea of producing a video installation out of the footage. The social dynamics of food, camaraderie, and transnational solidarity that happened on a weekly basis impressed me, and I felt like it would be amazing to develop an immersive three-channel video installation out of the footage I was already producing and sharing. I started to organize the footage into categories--social interactions, penalty kicks, attempted goals, passes, drone practice, food, etc--and made a mock-up version of the three-channel installation and shared it with film mentors, visual anthropologists, and academic mentors. I got positive feedback from everyone I shared it with initially, and I felt excited to share it with the team. I texted Emiliano, the goalie for La Vieja Escuela, explaining a bit about what I’d been working on with the footage and sent him the link to the draft triptych. He responded, “This is cool, but

what about just having it be a single video so that you can focus on it easier?" I read the text and froze. Here I was again, the ladino artist-researcher-filmmaker, coming up with a fancy idea for an immersive triptych, but my new found Maya acquaintance was basically telling me to scrap the idea and turn it into a single-channel video, completely challenging the aesthetic vision and choice that I had been leaning into and getting good feedback on. What was the decolonial option in this situation? What would be the anti-racist and caring way to approach this situation where a community member, whose likeness is represented in a visual composition, proposes an entirely new direction for the work?

I hesitated. Anxious, nervous, and full of self-doubt, I waited to respond and thought about what was happening. Here I was, engaging in an open-ended community filmmaking project that I hadn't planned out in advance; I was making weekly edits of footage for the team to share, while simultaneously working on this immersive triptych for my own artistic purposes. I debated myself about whether the responsible thing would be to follow Emiliano's lead and scrap the triptych approach, or whether something else was in order. I finally landed on the following approach: I realized that Emiliano and I weren't completely on the same page about what the purpose of the triptych was. While we had been talking for months at that point about audiovisual production on a technical level, we had not talked concretely about questions of aesthetics, spaces for display of the work, nor genres of visual arts that I was drawing on in conceptualizing the triptych. I decided that it would be good to talk about some of these questions as a way of at least getting on the same page about the thinking behind my triptych proposal, which would open up space to revisit his proposal for a single-channel version of my proposed project.

That following Sunday we chatted about these questions after their victory over the opposing team, and what we landed on was that it made sense to continue making the single-channel edits that the team could share, and to also experiment with the triptych for the sake of creating different works with the same footage. The situation resolved itself by doing both of our approaches, but in so doing we effectively set out to create two separate projects with the footage--one project aimed at sharing footage from the soccer tournament with friends and family of the players, and another project aimed at creating a visual representation of the themes that I had been focusing on related to diaspora, community, and placemaking. Two separate projects, each respecting our individual orientations to the space, the footage, and to our imagined audiences.

"Proyecto Audiovisual" and The Meeting After the Meeting

After the soccer tournament ended in May, Mintz invited me to come along on a trip to his hometown of San Juan Atitán, Huehuetenango, Guatemala. This felt incredibly special because I had spent the previous months hanging out with him and his friends, all of whom were from San Juan Atitán, so the invitation to come along on the trip with some of Mintz's other collaborators was exciting. Not only did he invite me to come on the trip, he told me that we could work on a video project using drone and handheld camera footage. This was a dream come true. I hustled and found a community arts fellowship that would provide some funding to carry out a community-based project, so Mintz and I met, developed a proposal, submitted it, and ultimately got the funding. Excited, we developed a plan to purchase a set of cameras, audio recorders, and projectors to bring down on the trip and use to facilitate a filmmaking workshop with a group of youth that Mintz would organize to attend and that I would facilitate.

The group was composed of five youth, ranging from 17-20 years old, who met with me several times throughout the course of our six-week trip. Throughout our sessions we practiced using the audiovisual equipment, doing mini projects and presenting them during the course of workshop sessions, and talking about the larger documentary project that Mintz and I had gotten the community arts fellowship to produce.

During the course of our second meeting together, we went through the stages of pre-production, production, and post-production on a mini project aimed at documenting a cultural practice that they had chosen: dancing to marimba music. The session was full of interesting discussions about storyboarding, angling cameras, punching in and out of shots in post, etc. Once the session was reaching its conclusion for the day, we planned out the date for the next meeting, set some goals for what types of work to bring in, and then started saying our goodbyes for the day.

While I was packing up the projector and laptop set-up, three of the students remained seated at the table. One of them, Geovani, turned and said to me, "Excuse me, Alex, would it be okay if we stayed and talked for a while?" He was referring to himself and the other two youth who were sitting on either side of him. I said, yes, of course, and continued packing up. They spoke to one another in Mam, though there were a few Spanish words sprinkled in that I understood. Since many of the youth who were participating in the audiovisual workshop (or "proyecto audiovisual" as they titled our WhatsApp group chat) were also part of the Asociacion Maya-Mam that was planning a big cultural festival in the coming weeks, I figured they might be discussing this.

After a few minutes, Geovani turned to me again and said, "Um, excuse me, Alex, we have something we want to share with you." I turned and listened as he continued, "We'd like to make a complete documentary." Again, I froze a bit. How would I respond to this? My whole reason for being in San Juan Atitán was to work on a documentary project—we'd gotten funding to make a documentary! —and the youth who I was hoping would help me produce the documentary now wanted to do something on their own. Separate from me. What was I going to do? Since I wasn't clear on what they were asking of me, I decided to ask questions: What did they want to make the documentary about? They explained that they wanted to focus on the past and present of the town, or "el pasado y la actualidad," as they explained to me in Spanish, accommodating my beginner status as a Mam speaker. Another moment of panic: this was more or less the approach I was hoping to take in the documentary that Mintz and I were developing. Would I be stealing their idea if I were to continue? Did I need to propose to Mintz that we abandon our project and just help the youth produce theirs? What was at stake in how I responded to their proposal to develop their own documentary project independent of me?

What helped me through the anxiety of uncertainty I experienced in this moment was grounding myself in the perspective that I was there as a guest on their lands, and that my main purpose in this project was to learn about their own filmmaking goals and to see what opportunities for collaboration might emerge. I responded to the three of them and told them that I was excited about what they were proposing, that it would certainly be important to produce something from their perspectives, and that I would be happy to help them in any way they might like. I put aside the anxiety about the documentary film project that I was directly involved with, and centered the fact that this group of youth that I had the honor to collaborate with was proposing something huge and that I needed to recognize the potential for me to support their initiative and not center myself.

“Alex, I Want to do a Short Film”

During the course of the trip, it became clear that the documentary project would need to be something that I took charge of and focused on. Mintz was invested in it, but from the start we knew that he would be pulled in a variety of directions during the trip as a result of his multiple commitments, including the important cultural festival that he was leading along with his collaborators in the Asociacion Maya-Mam. My path forward in relation to the documentary project was to collaborate with some of the youth from the Proyecto Audiovisual to begin making a list of people we wanted to interview and film in their everyday contexts in San Juan Atitán. I started engaging in daily outings to carry out the tasks on the list and got into a rhythm that began to feel streamlined, effective, and exciting. It was in the midst of this generative filming routine that Mintz pulled me aside one evening, the regular time we had to check in once each day was over, and told me he wanted to talk to me about something.

Excited to hear his idea—perhaps a proposal for including some of the cultural festival in the documentary—I waited for him next to the wood fire stove in the kitchen as he finished putting his baby to sleep. When he arrived, he sat down across from me and said, “Alex, I want to make a short film.” Excitement, concern, confusion . . . a rush of emotions moved through me. We were just getting into a groove with the documentary project and now here we were, with three weeks left in the trip, and he was proposing an entirely new project. Should I propose that we double down and just focus on doing the documentary? Was that the right move? Should we do a narrative short film on top of the documentary? Wouldn’t that just split our already short time left? . . . What was the right response in this context?

I listened to him explain his idea about doing a short film about a young man’s last day in San Juan Atitán before leaving to go to the U.S. and I kept thinking to myself, “Couldn’t we incorporate this type of story into the documentary project?” But, once again, I was reminded of the fundamental reality—I was there to learn from the community and figure out ways to work in solidarity with them; and if a member of the community, especially one of my most important collaborators, had energy around carrying out a narrative short film project, then the wise thing to do would be to roll with the energy and make it work: make the documentary project work around the narrative project, or abandon the documentary project altogether. I realized as I thought about it while sitting there with Mintz that he was demonstrating an excitement for this project that I hadn’t felt around the documentary, and that this was meaningful. We could still carry out the documentary project since it was in motion and some of the youth from the Proyecto Audiovisual were collaborating with me on it. We could figure out a way to make both work, even if focusing on the narrative film project would take away time and resources from the documentary project. Simply put, whatever hit the documentary project would take would be worth it because it was something that my community collaborators wanted to happen.

The documentary project did take a hit. We continued working on it, but the priority slowly morphed over the last few weeks into the narrative short. At a certain point, we realized that this would be the first narrative film in the Mam language, so the project’s importance started to take on a larger scale than originally anticipated. From writing the script, shooting scenes, carrying out editing, and, finally, planning a premiere of the short film in San Juan Atitán, this project became the focal point of our time in the town.

Orienting Toward Filmmaking Projects as a Practice of Caring Labor

Throughout these three examples I see an underlying structure of interaction within the tensions that arose in each multimodal project. In each example, an existing project that I was pursuing was interrupted by separate proposals from one of my collaborators. In the case of the triptych, Emiliano's comment was an aesthetic proposal that differed from the existing approach I was pursuing. In the second two examples, separate projects were proposed altogether that potentially put the projects that I was pursuing at risk. Rather than see this as a purely contingent set of circumstances, I want to think through each of these tensions as part of a dialogic process that was constitutive of the community-based media arts compositions we were all orienting toward. While there were constant attempts to define projects as "mine" or "theirs," the degree to which the projects were actually bounded in neatly defined spaces of ownership and authority was not at all clear. The fact that Mintz and I had secured funding to engage in a documentary film project did not stop the narrative film from emerging as the central project that we both oriented toward. The fact that I was working with youth from the Proyecto Audiovisual on a documentary project did not stop them from pursuing their own documentary film project, and the emergence of their film project did not end up becoming completely separate from the original documentary project that Mintz and I got funding to produce.

Rather than conceive of the porous and evolving projects as indicative of a singular set of filmmaking experience, I find it generative to consider them as moments where community collaboration morphed into moments of co-authorship where each author maintained their positionalities. Instead of obliterating the distinctions between me as a ladino artist-researcher and these Maya community collaborators, the moments of porousness and tension between the various projects we were pursuing reinforced our racialized positionalities. The expertise and insight of the Mam youth I collaborated with was never subsumed into a documentary film project that I was in charge of. Instead, the understanding that I had of myself as an outsider from the US and as someone socialized as a ladino/Guatemalan-American provided me opportunities to carefully and intentionally orient toward tensions in the filmmaking production process in ways that contributed toward self-determination for my participants. Instead of foreclosing on their proposals from the position of a more expert and technically equipped audiovisual producer, I held back and encouraged them to pursue their ideas and asked them how I could help them in realizing them. I made these decisions based on ongoing reflection about how the ways that I oriented toward their proposals carried the racialized weight of hundreds of years of anti-Indigenous racism on the part of ladinos who, despite their class status and Maya ancestries, still looked down on their Maya neighbors and colleagues.

The space that we all jointly created through my collaborators making proposals and me stepping back and encouraging them to develop their ideas came at the expense of the projects I originally set out to produce. In the case of the soccer triptych, I ended up spending more time making single-channel edits of the soccer footage which cut into the time that I had left over to develop the triptych. Similarly, the time I spent filming and exporting footage from the narrative film took away time from filming and exporting documentary footage that I was able to schedule and film. Rather than see this recalibration of time, energy, and resources as the result of the contingencies of community-based art projects, I want to think of these as signs that the work that I engaged in with my Maya collaborators was precisely that: collaborative. If the work had simply gone according to

my plans, with my collaborators helping execute what amounted to my plans and ideas, the project would not be collaborative in the sense of being co-authored. It would be something that might better be described as community supported art and filmmaking practice. However, the shifting roles of authorship, emergent proposals, and changing priorities of time and energy indicated that there was a collective between all involved in the project. Our distinct experiences and positionalities were never abandoned through this co-authorship, but, rather, they became the basis for a thoughtful and careful set of experiences that drew on each individual's strengths and insights. This careful engagement with each person's ideas and skill sets was always approached through the lens of Maya self-determination, while still maintaining a sense that I was invited to collaborate as precisely that: a collaborator. I had a dual responsibility: to be careful of not taking up too much space, while simultaneously needing to not recede into the background. I needed to take leadership and be willing to share my opinions and perspectives, but to do so from the respectful position of a guest on Mam lands.

Two Years Later: "Can We Not Show the Short Film Anymore?"

Two years after the work that we did on the short film, I got a call from Mintz. We caught up for a few minutes since it had been a few weeks since we'd last talked. After catching up for a bit, he said, "Alex, I want to tell you that I'm done being a cultural activist. I will always be Indigenous, but now I'm going to be an activist for Christ." I was caught off-guard, but I was also excited; I'd recently made the decision to get confirmed in the Catholic Church as part of preparing to get married, so I was freshly reconnected with Christian traditions. For me, this was a contradictory process: pretty much everyone I knew was shocked that I would affiliate myself with a church that had such contradictory relations with colonialism. However, in this instance, the person I was talking to, one of the most strident anti-colonial and pro-Indigenous Maya friends I had, was explaining to me that they were taking action for Christ now.

I told him that I was excited for him, and that I felt like there didn't have to be a tension between promoting the culture and promoting Christ. After talking for a bit about our interest in reading the Bible together, he brought up what turned out to be the biggest point: "Alex, you know the short film we made, you know how there's that scene in it where the character gets possessed? I don't believe in that anymore, and I don't want to promote that. Is it ok if we don't show the film anymore?" I was thrown off for a moment—here I was again, a Mestizo artist and academic, being told by an Indigenous collaborator that we shouldn't show the film we made because it goes against the Christian faith. I took a breath and responded, "yes, of course we can stop showing it. It's not listed on YouTube, so we can consider it a thing of the past." It somehow felt relieving to say this, to agree to honor the wishes of my friend and collaborator and decide to not showcase this project of ours anymore.

Some might say that putting the first ever Mam-language narrative film into a private archive as a result of one of the director's turns toward Christianity is a form of internalized oppression, a form of colonial gaze. There's something to this—Christianity certainly has a direct history with colonial dispossession and attendant ideologies that have shaped how Indigenous practices of spirituality are perceived. The complication in this case was that the person enacting the Christian viewpoint was a Maya educator, artist, and community leader, not me, the Mestizo collaborator. Complexities like this are part of what makes community-engaged work like Ethnic Studies what it is: a tradition of emancipatory and empowering educational practices that don't seek out easy answers. The key

to being in line with the traditions of Ethnic Studies pedagogies is to center the relationships between community members and the epistemologies that we enact, no matter how contradictory they might be. In this case, it meant deciding to do the right thing and agree to the terms set by Mintz and his rejuvenated Christian faith.

Not all things can be shared at all times. Sometimes the archives that we construct and relate to need to be closed. While I won't be including the link to the film in this essay as I originally intended, I feel proud to have been part of the collaborations that I've reflected on here. My gratitude extends not only to everyone involved in the project, but to all the educators I've learned from over the past 18 years of being a student and teacher of Ethnic Studies. From my undergraduate years in the Latina/o Studies department at San Francisco State, to my fourteen years working as an educator and teaching Ethnic Studies in middle schools and high schools, to my work now as a scholar and artist drawing on these traditions as part of my creative work—I am grateful for the lessons I've learned about what it means to center the people and perspectives that colonialism has constantly undermined.

This will always be a complex process, and it's precisely this complexity that Ethnic Studies pedagogies help us to navigate. My own teaching, working to support the development of student-teachers, continues to grow based on navigating these complexities. Many of the student-teachers I work with are focused on building caring practices that support the self-determination their students. I learn from their reflections of what this looks like in their classrooms, and I share about what I've learned from working alongside collaborators in ways that center forms of self-determination. I hope we all continue improving in our navigation of complex and contradictory trajectories across teaching contexts in secondary school classrooms, Ethnic studies classes, and teacher education programs. Centering self-determination practices through all of these educational spaces takes intentional reflection. I hope that sharing experiences from a set of audiovisual projects helps inspired you to identify further examples of how creative collaborations can provide insights on power, authorship, and self-determination.

Ethnic Studies Pedagogies as Living Archives in Black and Indigenous Americans' Dual Educational Politics

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Abstract

Ethnic studies pedagogies hold living archives that are dually political. Scholar-activists, educator collectives, and students are positioned to interpret living archives as we story and converse about how to navigate oppressive realities and engage in resistance. Ethnic studies pedagogists simultaneously engage in justice-oriented pedagogical and political acts—diradicalism. These acts take place within ethnic studies pedagogies' central tenets—ancestral (re)connection, collective transgression, and power (re)distribution. In our (Love, Akeia, Malcolm, Rosa, Serena, and Nate) contribution to the *Ethnic Studies Pedagogies* issue, I share two interpreted, living archives from our Black and Indigenous educator activist collective's conversations to bolster and extend ethnic studies' dual educational politics. Our relational and joyous archives implicate how we may sustain our acts of justice, resistance, and transformation.

Key Words: Joy, Knowledge Co-Creation, Educational Politics, Social Justice, Educator Activists

Introduction

Love, Akeia, Malcolm, Rosa, Serena, and my knowledge contributions reside in the living archives that emerged from the Black and Indigenous political and pedagogical convergences in our ethnic studies pedagogies. I (Nate)⁴³ tell this story and interpret co-created knowledge from our Black and Indigenous educator activist collective that was convened to envision the types of educational policy structures Black, Brown, and Indigenous⁴⁴ students need and deserve. In turn, we shared our living archives that affirmed how we may converge our dual political activities. We had hoped

⁴² Here, I want to acknowledge my comrades, Love, Akeia, Malcolm, Rosa, and Serena (pseudonyms), for their contributions to this piece. Their knowledge(s) live(s) within these pages.

⁴³ I use a first-person narrative to demonstrate transparency on what knowledge was co-created and what is my own interpretation of multi-interpretable living archives.

⁴⁴ I use "Black, Brown, and Indigenous" to acknowledge the lived experiences of those darker-melanated people in the context of the United States. Lower-melanated, white supremacist, colonizers used skin complexion differences and pseudo-science to justify the enslavement of darker-complexed Africans. Then, used violence and forced African labor to theft Indigenous American land and commit genocide. This history mandates terminology use that acknowledges these complexities. To me, using "Black, Brown, and Indigenous" acknowledges this history and illuminates the violence to which darker-complexed people are subjected.

our knowledge co-creation connected and extended other Black and Indigenous ethnic studies educators' arguments that assert teaching and learning must be understood as a political act. I write this article with a combination of first and third person in pursuit of radical transparency and to demonstrate how the Collective co-created knowledge in conversational spaces. The switch between tenses invites readers to assess how our knowledge co-creation may connect to or extend their ethnic studies living archives.

Many Black, Brown, and Indigenous educator activists engage in political activity in the classroom and beyond (Chávez-Moreno, 2022; McKinney de Royston et al., 2021; Tuck et al., 2014). My middle school teaching experience, and living archive, connects to these political acts when I delivered general science education, critical pedagogy, and curriculum rooted in the scientific advancements and contributions of my students' African ancestors. Concurrently, my location within a privatized, educational space hindered my ability to participate in movements beyond my classroom walls. These hindrances manifested through leaders' treating families as deficits, minimizing localized knowledge, removing children from school, compliance-based, punitive school policies, political bans of knowledge, and minimal accountability to community (Morgan, 2022; Shearer, 2022). To circumvent hindrances, we, Black, Brown, and Indigenous educators, invoke asset-based pedagogies, such as ethnic studies, to center the knowledges of students who look like us. The circumvention of harmful structures is a dual political act.

Teachers and educators' dual political activities within and beyond our classrooms, are living archives because we illuminate and connect our critical approaches to teaching and learning. We forward living archives as we cultivate justice, resistance, and social transformation that stems from our knowledge contributions and ancestral connections. Our dually political context demonstrates how ethnic studies pedagogies emerge in living archives through educators' instantiation of its central and political tenets—ancestral (re)connection, collective transgression, and power (re)distribution.

Ethnic Studies Pedagogies as Political

Ethnic studies pedagogies as *political* defines how systems are organized and where power resides in socially-constructed hierarchies (Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2020; Rodríguez, 2010). However, ethnic studies pedagogies move educational politics to the tenets of Black, Brown, and Indigenous ancestral (re)connection, collective transgression, and power (re)distribution. I forward these tenets from my ancestral knowledge (Givens, 2021), the Black Panther Party's theorized political education (Todd-Breland, 2018), and my studies of Black intellectual thought in education (Grant et al., 2015). However, these ethnic-studies tenets are not exclusive to those scholar-activists, educator collectives, and students within the African diaspora. In fact, Black, Latin*, Filipina, Asian-American, and Mexican-American college students co-founded the ethnic studies movement on multiethnic solidarity-building and political education principles (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). There are several important connections between the forwarded ethnic-studies tenets and their relationship to K-12 educational politics.

Ancestral (Re)Connection

The tenet of (re)connection to ancestral knowledge cements the historical fluency in Black, Brown, and Indigenous intellectual thought in its antiquity (Gomez, 2019). That is, our knowledges and

contributions existed well before violence enacted by European, settler colonial, and white supremacist actors. (Re)connection is political because students and educators simultaneously learn about their ancestors' contributions while critiquing political oppression and tracing the point where their ancestors were forced to mobilize teaching and learning to transgress oppressive forces (Stewart, in press). The reconnection process roots educators and students' teaching and learning in their ancestral ways of knowing and being.

Collective Transgression

Collective transgression, ethnic studies pedagogies' second tenet, delineates how political education is mobilized to build movements purposed for building equitable futures. Transgression moves educator and student political activities to a collective endeavor. Here, educators build on ancestral knowledge and invite students to see themselves as political actors in collective movements for justice. Yeh et al. (2021) have described collective transgressions as ethnic studies-initiated resistance and liberation. Teachers and students, engaged in resistance and liberatory praxis, imagine worlds beyond what has been given, and then build strategies on making equitable imaginaries a reality (Zion et al., 2021). In the collective transgression ethnic studies tenet, educators and students turn their attention to coalition-building strategies to capture the power necessary to transform systems.

Power (Re)Distribution

The final tenet, power (re)distribution, connects to educational politics because it illuminates teaching and learning as a practice of power (Levinson et al., 2009). Strategies for societal transformation void power analyses tend to lead to reactionary solutions (Horsford et al., 2019; Pham & Philip, 2021). Ethnic studies pedagogies' tenet of power (re)distribution redresses a lack of power analyses through robust interrogation into how power is hoarded by elites. Most importantly, educators and students examine the strategies, transgressions, movements, and other collective activities that have captured, and will capture, transformational power (Dozono, 2022). As a result, students see themselves as capable in participating in collective spaces pursuing Black, Brown, and Indigenous liberation, and self-determination.

Interpreting Living Archives at the Convergence of Pedagogical and Political Activism

Unequivocally, ethnic studies pedagogies' central tenets are steeped in educational politics. Simultaneously, ethnic studies pedagogies' political framing reaffirms the lenses under which Black and Indigenous educators may operate. The interplay between ethnic studies pedagogies and educational politics cements an important living archive. The living archive is in how Black and Indigenous educators describe their journeys maneuvering ethnic studies pedagogies' central tenets. It is at the convergence of pedagogical and political activism that we, a Black and Indigenous educator activist collective, offer living archives to which we hope our comrades and readers will connect.

Diradicalism is an exploratory theory that names how Black and Indigenous educators converge their political and pedagogical activism. Table 1 shows a visualization in how diradicalism's convergent focus can be used to chronicle Black and Indigenous educators' living archives.

Table 1. Diradicalism in Ethnic Studies' Central Tenets

Central Tenet	Educator Political Activism	Educator Pedagogical Activism	Ethnic Studies' Diradical Convergence as Living Archives
Ancestral (Re)Connection	Supporting student-led protests demanding ethnic studies curriculum	Teaching students from lenses stemming from their ancestral knowledge(s)	Educator-supported, student-led protest stemming from having the educational space to explore communal knowledge
Collective Transgression	Organizing mutual aid for students and families subjected to violence from Immigration and Customs Enforcement	Co-investigating historical, social movement actors' strategies and their efforts connections to modern contexts	Educators engage in the activities in which they invite their students to participate
Power (Re)Distribution	Participating in community organizing purposed to reimagine policing and carcerality	Supporting students' equitable imaginaries and world-building activities.	Educators and students co-imagine equitable structures, explore nuance, realize we need everybody, and strategize our pursuits of power

I grounded diradicalism in lived experiences and relational methodology stemming from my journey as a Black, middle school science teacher and the Collective's study seeking to envision equitable educational policy structures. Operationally, *political activism* is educator participation in the collective efforts related to ancestral (re)connection, transgression, and power (re)distribution. *Pedagogical activism* is instructional, facilitatory, and curriculum instantiations that foster student efforts to engage in ethnic studies' central tenets. This article purposes to explore the interpreted and living archives in Table 1's last column.

Table 1 visualizes the intersection between diradicalism and ethnic studies pedagogies. The examples under the Educator *Political Activism* and Educator *Pedagogical Activism* columns and crossed by the *Ancestral (Re)connection* row, demonstrates dual political activity at different levels. An educators' support of student-led protests would take place beyond the classroom. However, teaching students the history of Black and Indigenous resistance takes plan within the classroom walls. The last column, *Ethnic Studies' Diradical Convergence as Living Archives*, cements convergence in the tight coupling of political and pedagogical acts. Ethnic studies pedagogists story and converse about their dual educational politics as they facilitate student ancestral (re)connection, collective transgression, and power (re)distribution. I offer Table 1's ethnic studies pedagogies, as living archives, through sharing our Black and Indigenous educator activist collective's co-created knowledge.

Our Black and Indigenous Educator Collective Methodology

To demonstrate ethnic studies pedagogies' convergent and political, living archive, I pulled from conversational data that stemmed from a collective of six Black and Indigenous⁴⁵ educator activists. The Beyonce-referenced⁴⁶ Table 2 provides a summary on how we define dual educational politics and our roles at the time of the study.

Table 2. Okay Black and Indigenous Collective, Let's Get into Formation

Comrade	Role	Self-Definition of Dual Political Acts
Love	Instructional/Curriculum Coach; Former Dean of Students	This means that I work to raise questions, dialogues, and changes about inequities in hiring practices of teachers and staff, pedagogy, curriculum content, school culture, extended contract opportunities, racism and bias in the school workplace, racism and bias in the teacher to student relationships etc.
Akeia	K-12 Classroom Teacher; Graduate Student	This phrase encompasses both aspects of what I do as an educator. My role involves more than just delivering content to 3rd grade students. I am committed to actively working to dismantle systems that oppress my students, my own two children, and our families.
Rosa	Administrative Assistant; Aspiring School Leader	Being socially competent and active in gaining knowledge of current injustices surrounding education to be capable of teaching others. I am a licensed school counselor working as a teacher on special assignment to coach teachers on social emotional learning, trauma, equity, and restorative justice practices. I help teachers incorporate topics of race in the classroom and invite them to discover more about what matters to their students from a cultural lens. I also bring attention to social issues to other educators in the district.
Malcolm	SEL Instructional Coach	

⁴⁵ The study's call for knowledge contributors opened the invitation to Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) educators. However, knowledge contributors who participated in all conversations were Black and/or Indigenous. That being said, the knowledge contributors' perspectives often included other racialized and marginalized groups to signal solidarity. Therefore, terminology-use for racialized and marginalized groups shifts depending on section and study context.

⁴⁶ In Beyonce's (2016) song, *Formation*, she takes a direct approach to rallying Black Americans in resisting oppression. I borrow the lyrics, "Okay, okay, ladies, now let's get in formation," to call the Collective's knowledges to the forefront.

Serena	K-12 Classroom Teacher	To me, a teacher activist is someone who uses their work inside the classroom to spark the minds and hearts of children to seek change. I use the resources I have such as lessons, stories, and discussions to build empathy in kids, so they can change the oppression they see in the world.
Nate	Former K-12 Teacher; Graduate Student	As an educator, scholar-activist, and educational policy researcher, I want to continue to mobilize knowledge co-creation to support educational justice movements aiming to redistribute power, and pursue Black liberation.

We established a relational research environment that explored political and pedagogical activism through reciprocity, vulnerability, and paradigm shifts. We demonstrated reciprocal vulnerability when all members shared stories, asked questions, and unpacked pain. We shifted paradigms when we co-created a space beyond oppressive systems' gazes. The collective explored the question, "How does a K-12, Black and Indigenous educator activist collective theorize the dynamic interaction between pedagogical and political activism (or, engage in dual educational politics—diradicalism)?" We engaged in twelve hours of discussion from a combination of one-on-one conversations and four collective sessions where we storied about our lives, acknowledged the people who inspired us, and named the actions we have taken in the pursuit of justice, thrival, and liberation.

To us, thrival stemmed from Bettina Love's (2019) work that forwards abolitionist pedagogy. If we think about a spectrum of experiences from survival to thrival, survival connects to what learners do to insulate ourselves from harmful systems. However, thrival is an imaginary where Black and Indigenous learners' ways of being and knowing are centered in public educational spaces. Thus, the pursuit of thrival involves our co-imaginaries as we continue to strategize around survival. Four collective members have a Black Studies or American Indian Studies undergraduate degree; however, none of us formally taught an ethnic studies course in our educator roles. I argue pedagogists' ethnic-studies connections transcends the socio-political factors and barriers related to schools' offering an ethnic-studies courses or program. In other words, we are ethnic studies pedagogists because of our firm connections in our discussions related to ancestral (re)connection, collective transgression, and power (re)distribution.

The NVivo project held 5000+ references assigned to 45 coding categories across twelve files. The Collective entrusted me to thematically code and interpret our transcribed conversations. The conversational data informing his article comes from the coding categories *Political Black & Indigenous joy*, *Pedagogical Black & Indigenous joy*, *Intersection between one's identity and justice-oriented activism*, *Student relationships*, and *Co-researcher Considerations*. Table 3 explains how each reference became labeled to a given NVivo node, or coding category, and the categories' number of coding references.

Table 3. Coding Category Description and Selection Explanation

Node Name	Node Description	Reason for Inclusion	# of Ref.
Political Black & Indigenous joy	Instances of pride, happiness, and fulfillment stemming from political activism.	The political victories the Collective experienced gave us critical hope.	84
Pedagogical Black & Indigenous joy	Instances of pride, happiness, and fulfillment in the outcomes of instructional practices.	Seeing students experience a glimpse of thrival engendered joy.	83
Intersection between one's identity and justice-oriented activism	How educators' background led them to activism.	The Collective's lived experiences as Black and Indigenous people founded our activist disposition.	167
Student relationships	Discussion on how educators work against norms that harm students and build relationships with students.	All efforts were in support of our students.	158
Co-researcher Considerations	Instances where comrades indicated relationality in conversations	Situating us all as knowledge contributors allowed our relationships to continue beyond the confines of the project.	765

I selected Table 3's coding categories from the larger structure because they exemplified the central tenets of ethnic studies pedagogies and held the potential to inform my interpretation of powerful living archives. Table 3's *Reason for Inclusion* column demonstrates an ethnic studies pedagogies-related throughline I interpreted from the Collective's conversations. The throughline is considerations into how living archives may stem from ethnic studies pedagogies when Black and Indigenous educators collaborate to sustain our dual educational politics. This knowledge exploration process promoted my interpretation of two living archives that stemmed from our diradicalism in our ethnic studies' pedagogies.

Evidence of Living Archives in Dual Educational Politics

Entrusted to me by my comrades, I forward two living archives that were interpreted from our conversations that interconnected our political and pedagogical activities in ethnic studies' central tenets of ancestral (re)connection, collective transgression, and power (re)distribution. Love, Akiea, Serena, Malcolm, Rosa, and I shared, storied, conversed, and catapulted interpreted living archives into dual educational politics. I interpret the first living archive from our attempts to be good relatives to each other in the knowledge co-creation process. The second interpreted, living archive illuminates how joy contributes to movement sustainment.

Living Archive #1: Relational Knowledge Co-Creation

The first living archive centers relational research considerations that established the knowledge-creation space capable of exploring dual educational politics. Nate⁴⁷, the facilitator and dissertator of the collective, started each one-on-one conversation with an invitation to shift how knowledge is valued in research activities. Nate's comment near the start of his one-on-one conversation with Rosa demonstrated the shift.

Rosa: I feel like every opportunity is a chance to learn something. You don't have to be in a classroom to learn something.

Nate: That is the type of research that I'm interested in right there. Like, you don't have to be a professor and you also don't have to have a Ph.D. to learn something. You know what I'm saying? Everyday conversations with people. Out in public, on the bus, you know, going down to campus. Yes, learning something, talking to people. I just feel like interactions with people are the foundation of knowledge creation, or research, is what we call it an academia, but that's just a fancy term to exclude folks, exclude certain ideologies [or knowledges].

Rosa and Nate co-theorized their stance on the types of knowledge they hoped to have prioritized in the project. There was acknowledgement that people's connection, built through dialogue, should be an important activity in knowledge co-creation. Further, Nate wanted to make a point to illuminate oppressive gatekeeping that excludes Black and Indigenous knowledges as research. He coded *Co-researcher considerations* across all twelve NVivo files and it was one of the larger referenced codes (765). The consistent and high-frequency coding indicated a strong centering of relationships in the Collective's conversations.

A collective acknowledgement about the turn toward relational methods and shifts in prioritizing Black and Indigenous knowledges led to feelings of affirmation. In one of the last conversations related to this project, Nate asked the group about the impact of their participation in knowledge co-creation. Malcolm shared his reflection on Nate's question.

Until this project or this research, I have never questioned the modality of the research like, I've never questioned white supremacy's impact on how we research. I just took it for granted like "this is just because this is what we were born into." It's like, "this is all I've known", and when you begin to question that and to show a different perspective, it was a learning experience for me because I'm like, "Wow, this is different."

I equate that sometimes to our kids. A lot of them are there as well. They've just been in this system, and they accept it for what it is. So, it was like this study gave me permission to filter everything, to say, "Okay, well, how has white supremacy impacted this? How has it impacted that?" And, now I can bring that additional lens when I interact with our people.

⁴⁷ I switch to a third-person narrative to help a reader understand how each collective members' knowledge contributions are genuinely egalitarian. Still, I interpret and explain the two living archives through my positionality juxtaposed to all comrades' knowledge contributions.

Malcolm answered the question about self-impact through acknowledging the space we co-created. The ways to which Black and Indigenous people illuminate white supremacy is seminal knowledge creation in this learning space. Further, Malcolm makes a profound connection between the Collective members' learning and students' experiences. His participation in relational research bolstered his perceived beliefs in supporting his students and other racialized and marginalized people.

The Collective frequently referenced how their efforts are always in support of students. Nate coded *Student relationships* 158 times with a large portion being assigned to Akiea's contributions. She frequently described how her dual educational politics were in support of students in her early childhood education classroom. When Nate asked his comrades about how their participation in knowledge co-creation impacted them, Akiea responded and connected her student-centered pedagogy with her and Nate's shared identities as emergent co-researchers.

So, Nate, I have to, again, say, this experience, for me, was liberating. As someone, you know, who was also doing research and taking-in research.

Akiea and Malcolm emulated the Collective's *Relational Knowledge Co-creation* living archive. Nate interpreted the living archive as full of relational, learning spaces that established the environment necessary to critique systems of oppression, connected to their students' lived experience, and opened feelings of liberation that bolstered their political activities.

Living Archive #2: Black and Indigenous Joy

Nate interpreted Black and Indigenous joy as a powerful living archive in sustainment. The Collective demonstrated that an essential fuel in sustaining their diradical, ethnic studies pedagogies was the joy engendered by seeing their students connect with a glimpse of thrival in their teaching and learning experiences. Thrival is a concept that captures an imaginary where society establishes the educational systems Black, Brown, and Indigenous students need and deserve (Love, 2019). Nate's coding structure separated political and pedagogical joy to explore how the two ideas converge. There was an 80% similarity rate between the two Black and Indigenous joy coding categories. In other words, when Nate coded political joy to conversational data, there was an 80% chance that pedagogical joy would be coded. This demonstrates a strong relationship between how Nate interpreted Black and Indigenous joy's convergence within a diradicalism lens. Collective members agreed that their experiences with educational systems made them cynical about how faraway Black, Brown, and Indigenous students were to be thriving in current political environments. However, conversational data and coding processes illuminated how a glimpse of joy sustained their continued transformative efforts.

Nate connected Serena, Love, and Rosa's efforts in supporting Black and Brown, queer students to the *Black and Indigenous Joy* living archive. Serena shared how her students were feeling more comfortable identifying across the gender spectrum through school-level supports. Her awareness led her to share with the group, "I don't know, it's just like, beautiful, the more I stay in education, because now, I have kids in my current school, who are identifying [openly] as something different than their biological sex." Rosa connects to Serena through her story about billboard creation full of LGBTQIA+-affirming decorations. This display was another school-level initiative that brought Rosa joy to know that students could feel affirmed by the billboard's content.

Love shared a powerful example of the joyous living archive in describing the experiences of one of her high school students. She started by describing how her student, Vin⁴⁸, would share how he switched between an urban and suburban context. The contexts were different for him across his intersectional identity as queer, young, and Black man.

Love: A young man named Vin, who is gay, said look, "I ain't going nowhere. I ain't fitting into no more spaces for nobody, I'm staying right here," he said... "I'm tired of fitting into everybody else's space. I ain't doing it no more. I'm staying right here.", "This is my space and that's where imma stay. I ain't doing it. I'm not fitting into no more spaces."

And I was just like laughing because I was like, "Yes, Vin. Aye, yo, yo. Yes, yes," and he sat there and took out his mascara and put it on in class.

Vin's act to put on his makeup, an action that tends to be outside traditional definitions of masculinity, after serving refusal to oppressive systems, was profound. Love shared her students' experience to demonstrate how one of her Black, queer students was exhausted in the suburban space because of his Blackness and the urban space because of his queerness. Most importantly, she wanted the Collective to know how her joy stemmed from Vin's connection to his unapologetic sense of being related to his experience in spaces not made for him.

Love: Vin was the joyous part [of the experience] like [he said], "I'm not fitting in nobody's spaces, no more."

Love and the Collective members conversed frequently about the joy stemming from students' connection to a glimpse of thrival. In Vin's case, it was his refusal to let society's anti-Black and anti-queer exclusion jeopardize his sense of being that led to Love's joy. When educators see the victories from their efforts, these victories engender joy. In turn, cementing a joyous living archive from the acts of Black and Indigenous educators.

Implicating Ethnic Studies Pedagogies as Living Archives in Diradicalism

Viewing ethnic studies pedagogies through our dual political activity yields important living archive implications for acts of justice, resistance, and transformation. I shift back to a first-person narrative to demonstrate the implications from my perspectives via Love, Akiea, Rosa, Malcolm, and Serena's knowledge contributions. Scholar-activists, educators, organizers, and students yield acts of justice, resistance, and transformation within the ethnic studies tenets of ancestral (re)connection, collective transgression, and power (re)distribution.

Ancestral (Re)Connection and Our Living Archives

The *Relational Knowledge Co-creation* archive connects to how ethnic studies pedagogists may find ancestral (re)connection when we set up collective learning environments and support structures necessary for students to engage in the critical consumption of oppressive realities. In turn, (re)connecting students, and ourselves, with the resolve of our Black and Indigenous, ancestral gifts

⁴⁸ Vin is a pseudonym to protect identity and confidentiality.

and talents. The living archive's connection to our ancestral gifts and talents stemmed from Malcolm and Akiea's quotes on what they received from knowledge-creation participation. Malcolm demonstrated an emboldened justice-oriented lens as he shared his realization that our relational work bolstered his critiques of white supremacy. In turn, inflaming him to share his reconnection outside of the Collective's discussions. The reconnection, passed to those beyond, is a seminal act of ancestral knowledge exchanges (Stewart, in press). I interpreted Akiea's ancestral connections through her keen acknowledgement of how shifting research paradigms to knowledge co-creation led to liberatory feelings. Akiea's liberatory feelings and connection stemmed from my attempts to return to our Black and Indigenous ways of knowing. The *Relational Knowledge Co-creation* living archive is a story about emboldening Black and Indigenous educator activists' dual educational politics in communal and relational spaces.

Collective Transgression and Our Living Archives

Our joyous living archive extends thousands of Black and Indigenous educators' contributions to transgressive spaces. Zion et al. (2021) explain how ethnic studies pedagogists and youth organizers have continuously been on the frontlines of educational justice movements from fights against xenophobia to the school-to-prison pipeline. The education system continues to do exactly what it was created to do—disadvantage racialized and marginalized students. However, Zion and his co-authors argue that ethnic studies pedagogies and participatory research methods, that move teaching and learning to collective transgression, hold major implications for equitable future-building. Ethnic studies pedagogists, like Love demonstrated above, may embolden Black, Brown, Indigenous, and/or queer students in their refusal. In turn, demonstrating joyous archives with the potential to sustain our collective transgression. The link between emboldened refusal and collective transgression is in the ethnic studies teaching and learning considerations within the classroom and beyond. Our *Black and Indigenous Joy* living archive is a story about how joy may be the fuel needed to sustain our collective transgressions' pursuit of power (re)distribution.

Power (Re)Distribution and Our Living Archives

The final living archives' implication resides in ethnic studies power distribution understandings. Dozono (2022) describes teaching and learning as requiring "constant accountability to power in shaping social conflicts" (p. 419). We found the knowledge co-creation that took place within ethnic studies teaching and learning must center relationality and joy. More pointedly, as we build capacities to redistribute power, via ethnic studies pedagogies, we must be intentional about the collective positionalities juxtaposed to our aims. Educator collectives may pose the following questions on power-hierarchy considerations: (a) What are our stances on how knowledge is created and valued? (b) How are we simultaneously perpetuating and being subjected to oppression? (c) What collective acts in which are we willing to engage? Love, Malcolm, Rosa, Akiea, Serena, and my conversations showed how it was our collective paradigmatic acknowledgements that led to our comfortability in aiming to transfer power to racialized and marginalized communities. Our co-constructed relationality gifted us an insulated space to pursue collective power, be vulnerable in holding each other accountable, and answer the power-hierarchy questions. Our Collective's two living archives extend ethnic studies pedagogies cementing relationships as vital and joy as what may sustain relationality in aims of power (re)distribution.

Conclusion

Ethnic studies pedagogists' activities are dually political. Ethnic studies pedagogists' justice-oriented, resistance, and transformative approaches emerge from their diradicalism in classrooms and beyond. Love, Akiea, Serena, Malcolm, Rosa, and I offer two living archives that I interpreted from our knowledge creation activities and conversations. The two interpreted, living archives, *Relational Knowledge Co-creation* and *Black and Indigenous Joy*, send a clear message to ethnic studies pedagogies' as we continue to build educational justice movements. The message is that we can and will continue our acts of justice, thrival, transgression, and transformation within and beyond our classroom walls. The continuation will center relationships and turn toward joy in our dual educational politics.

State policy actors attempt to thwart our living archives via book bans, gag-orders, distraction, and curricula devaluation. But their oppressive efforts only affirm why we engage in dual political activity. Our living archives transgress oppressive efforts because state policies were never made for us by us. Ethnic studies pedagogists teach us that many of our brilliant African and Indigenous ancestors were answerable to communal knowledge that was beyond the purview of state policy. It is with this legacy that we center relational and joyous archives as we continue to resist and transform toward equitable and just futures.

Scholar-activists, educators, organizers, and students may continue to interpret living archives purposed to illuminate essential considerations in their dual educational politics. Our living archives are nuanced yet collective. They are nuanced through the unique positionality of ethnic studies pedagogists being facilitators, teachers, learners, and policy actors. Living archives are collective at the intersections of our conversational storying and in how we connect, extend, negotiate, and resolve tension across those stories. Love, Akiea, Serena, Malcolm, Rosa, and I, with our living archives not mentioned here, the differently-interpreted archives, and/or not-yet imagined archives, are energized to hear, read, feel, and know how our relationality and joy may be in conversation with those reading this piece—emblematic of living archives' spirited presence beyond written works.

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Re-spiriting Songs and People from Cultural Memory to Now/Future Harmonic Consciousness

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Abstract

Re-spiriting songs and re-spiriting people is a theoretical framework I have practiced and sung into being. As a pedagogy it lives in flux, and as a singer songwriter I understand how songs, like people, are in flux creating themselves in academic spaces. Re-spiriting songs came from necessity since on occasion singing at political events, I did not know political tunes. My roots came from popular love ballads, rock and roll, and American standards, where songs were thematically about love, joy, and getting people to dance. But when songs are contextualized to a space and moment, I found them taking on new meanings. In ephemeral seconds, popular love songs are transformed with critical messages of hope. Uplifted spirits shifted rooms and in turn re-spirited the people. With original songwriting, like storytelling, music and song works in solitude and in collaborative spaces in the classroom as songs are a dynamic critical tool that speak to just about everyone. I have students reflect upon their song/story, and the skills they bring to class that acknowledges their subjectivity. Songs as pedagogy, whether originals or pop tunes, nurture reflexive senses of self in harmonic consciousness and poly-harmonic world-building in collaborative now/future possibilities.

Black Love x Brown Pride" (2020)

Along with "Black Love Brown Pride" I wrote "Dehumanizer" and "Judge Jury and Monster" all in one night, just days after the horrors of that 21st century lynching of George Floyd. In response to members from my brown community who were essentially asking "What about us, what about brown lives?", I understood their perspectives, but remain firm that we are always much stronger together, in coalition with others, while in the face of racialized dominant systems of oppression and repression.

If you're ashamed of burning buildings
Be more ashamed of public lynching
If you're ashamed of broken windows
Be more ashamed of all the broken lives

In White Supremacy
There's no decency
It's a way of being
a hatred for your life
But in solidarity

We find a love
That humanizes our lives

To love and survive with
BLACK LOVE x BROWN PRIDE

If you're ashamed of burning buildings
Be more ashamed of public lynching
If you're ashamed of broken windows
Be more ashamed of all the broken lives

In your complacency
There's no humanity
Just a blinded eye
When people cry
But in solidarity
We find a love
That humanizes our lives

To love and to thrive with
BLACK LOVE x BROWN PRIDE
In solidarity—we find a love
That humanizes our lives

To love and survive with
BLACK LOVE x BROWN PRIDE
Oh humanity—together we can make a change

"Soul Has Body" (2022)

Is the ceremony of being and taking your energy to a place, for a cause, to be in solidarity and in community.

My soul has body
That I bring to this space
My soul had body
That I put on the line
My soul has body
Gonna take its time
To put a heart in the body
And the body don't mind

"Vivid Colors (Song for Pops)" (2021)

My father planted creative seeds in my young imagination when he'd say things like, "You can do that." At the sight of me dancing in front of the tv watching Elvis Presley sing.

I went down
By the river
And closed my eyes
To make my (new) dreams

I (can) see
Those (streams) of vivid colors
That's when I know
My soul speaks to me

When I play with energy
Create what I see
In dreams that come to me
When I close eyes

I wash my hands
In the water
And wave them around
To see what I see

And when I dream
In vivid color
That's when I know
My soul speaks to me

When I play with energy
Create what I see
In dreams that come to me
When I stop the world.....

When I play with energy
Create what I see
In dreams
In dreams that come to me
When I close my eyes.....

When I play with energy
I create what I see
In dreams in dreams in dreams
That come to me
When I concentrate
On you....
In a reverie
When I stop the world

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