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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

Pedagogies for Creative Justice: Activism, Digital Media, and Filmmaking

LEAD EDITOR

Lani Cupchoy

CONTENTS

Editor's Forward	1
Lani Cupchoy	
They Buried Us: The 10-Year Unfolding of the Xican@ Pop-Up Book	10
Elias Serna	
Darker Planets, Darker Gazes: Critical Artistic Pedagogies of Black Aesthetics as Black World Making	22
Justin A. Coles	
¡Mi Historia es Importante! Centering Ethnic Studies in the Spanish as a Heritage Language Classroom	34
Nancy Domínguez-Fret	
"Unhobble[ing]" Black Futures through Visual Essay Filmmaking	50
ParKer Bryant	
Podcasting as a Pedagogical Tool to Create Latinx Youth Counterstories	62
Gerardo Mancilla, Anjuli J. Brekke, Luz Rodriguez Camacho	
Analyzing as an Artist! Worksheet and Curriculum	73
Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales	
PLAY: The Real Story of Coatlicue and Her Coatlicue: The Moon, The Sun, and all 400 of Her Stars	76
Jeanette Tizapapalotl Godoy	
(Re)Claiming Our Cuentos	86
Jeanette Godoy	
PHOTOGRAPH: J'Ouvert by Rafael Gómez	88
PHOTOGRAPH: Our Lady of Carmen Celebrations by Rafael Gómez	89

PHOTOGRAPH: Resilient <i>Tamal</i> by Andrea Mercedes Garcia	90
PHOTOGRAPH: Decolonial Home by Andrea Mercedes Garcia	91
PHOTOGRAPH: Cooking <i>Frijoles</i> is a Revolutionary Act by Andrea Mercedes Garcia	92
PHOTOGRAPH: I am My Brotha's Keeper by Fritz Pingol	93
PHOTOGRAPH: Filipinx for Black Power by Fritz Pingol	94
PHOTOGRAPH: Please I Can't Breathe by Fritz Pingol	95
PHOTOGRAPH: <i>Magia y Tradición</i> by Felicia 'Fe' Montes	96
PAINTING: Home is the Place to Dream by Emily Hsiao	97
FILM: Selling One <i>Tamal</i> at a Time by Julio Henriquez	99
FILM: Tango: The Greatest Rock Album Never Heard by Gregory Esparza	100
<i>Rompiendo Silencios</i> : Bridging Spanish Language Arts and Ethnic Studies for Archival Activism	101
Michelle Rendón Ochoa	

Editor's Forward

Lani Cupchoy, California State University, Los Angeles

Welcome to this curated collection, where the intricate intersections of pedagogy, partnership, and transformative praxis converge to illuminate the path towards expanding our understanding of ethnic studies. As the editor of this volume, I invite you to delve into the rich tapestry of insights, reflections, and transformative practices that lie within these pages.

At the heart of our inquiry lies a fundamental question: What does it mean to engage with K-12 schools in partnership, fostering an approach that is not only collaborative but also grounded in grassroots initiatives? How do we navigate the complex terrain of critical consciousness and human identity development, recognizing the unique journey that unfolds for each student?

Central to our dialogue is a rejection of gatekeeping practices that seek to limit the scope and impact of ethnic studies. Instead, we embrace the organic nature of this discipline, recognizing that ethnic studies can also emerge from lived experiences, cultural narratives, and diverse ways of knowing. Through the lens of "*otros saberes*" (other ways of knowing), we challenge patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist knowledge constructions, paving the way for nuanced pedagogies that expand our understanding of how knowledge is developed, taught and processed.

Furthermore, this collection celebrates the transformative potential of art, multimedia, and dialogical approaches within ethnic studies classrooms. By amplifying diverse voices and experiences in spaces that are sometimes less "visibilized," we create spaces for meaningful engagement and expression, nurturing critical consciousness and transformative spaces.

This volume serves as a continuation of a vital conversation, building upon the foundation laid by previous special issues. It highlights the power of action-based research, amplifying the voices and experiences of educators, scholars, and activists working in partnership with K-16. Through activism, digital media, and filmmaking, we bear witness to the transformative potential of collaborative endeavors, where research and praxis converge to inspire change.

Within these pages, you will encounter a rich tapestry of academic research, personal narratives, artistic expressions, and pedagogical reflections—all united by a shared commitment to educational equity and social justice. From deep pedagogical reflections to classroom practices aligned with the spirit of our work, this collection offers insights and inspiration for educators, scholars, and activists alike.

As you navigate this collection, I encourage you to embrace the spirit of inquiry and dialogue, engaging with these diverse perspectives with an open mind and a willingness to experience pedagogies for creative justice in new ways.

Acknowledgements

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated reviewers who generously volunteered their time, expertise, and invaluable insights to ensure the quality and rigor of this special journal issue. Special thanks to Dawn Dennis, Miguel Zavala, James Fabionar, Brian Lozenski, and Sylvia Mendoza for their meticulous review and thoughtful feedback. Your commitment to scholarly excellence and the intellectual integrity of this issue has been instrumental in shaping the content of this collection, enriching its depth and breadth. Your dedication to the peer review process is deeply appreciated and has been integral to the success of this endeavor. Thank you for your invaluable support and collaboration.

Additionally, I am grateful to Jordan Gonzalez and Cynthia Wise for their invaluable support with APA style formatting, attention to detail and commitment to ensuring grammatical accuracy and stylistic consistency. Their expertise and guidance have been instrumental in ensuring that this manuscript adheres to the highest standards of scholarly writing.

Cover Art

Title: J'Ouvert

Photographer: Rafael Gómez

Featured on the cover is "J'Ouvert" by Rafael Gómez, which offers a vivid glimpse into the vibrant energy of the Labor Day Carnival in Brooklyn, New York, also known as the "West Indian Day Parade." The image portrays a student adorned in colorful paint, joyously riding in a grocery cart amidst the revelry of the festivities. At the heart of the celebration are processions, predominantly led by younger community members extending through the night and into the early morning. In many ways, J'Ouvert epitomizes the essence of Caribbean Carnival and culture in New York City, encapsulating the spirit of joy, creativity, and community that defines the event. Gómez's photograph captures a moment of exuberance and camaraderie, inviting viewers to immerse themselves in the vibrant tapestry of cultural expression that permeates the Labor Day Carnival.

Articles

They Buried Seeds: The 10-Year Unfolding of the Xican@ Pop-Up Book
Elias Serna

In "They Buried Seeds: The 10-Year Unfolding of the Xican@ Pop-Up Book," Elias Serna provides a retrospective analysis of the Xican@ Pop-Up Book (XPUB) movement's education activism, pedagogical innovations, and artistic symbolism. Originating as a response to Arizona's 2012 attack on the Mexican American Studies department and subsequent book bans, XPUB boldly asserted its presence with the slogan, "You can ban Chicano books, but they still POP UP!" The movement utilized diverse mediums such as paper engineering, pop-up book manifestos, adaptable curriculum designs, exhibitions, media representation, and lectures to disseminate its message widely. Serna highlights XPUB's deliberate use of allegorical elements, such as the metaphorical "seeds of revolution," which symbolize the movement's commitment to survival, perseverance,

and community building within the context of Ethnic Studies. As the landscape of censorship evolves, with renewed attempts to target critical race theory, The 1619 Project, LGBTQ+ literature, and Ethnic Studies, XPUB remains relevant. Moreover, the article underscores XPUB's contribution to the field of Ethnic Studies and K-12 pedagogy. By embracing a "Liberated Ethnic Studies' framework, XPUB continues to utilize its dynamic arts curriculum as a tool for resistance, cultural affirmation, and the cultivation of Ethnic Studies community. Through its multifaceted approach, XPUB exemplifies the potential for art to serve as a catalyst for social change and educational empowerment within Ethnic Studies pedagogy.

Dark Aesthetics: A Glimpse into Black World Creation **Justin A. Coles**

This article offers a compelling exploration into the realm of Black aesthetics as a means of world-making within the context of ongoing antiblackness. Authored by Justin A. Coles, this work stems from a rigorous qualitative project conducted in 2019 utilizing a Black critical race-grounded methodology. Coles delves into the creative productions of multi-ethnic Black high school students in New York City, crafting an empirically informed photo essay that vividly captures their aesthetic expressions and the construction of Black worlds. Drawing upon the rich visual narratives of the students' artwork, Coles advances the theory of Black Aesthetics in Education, viewing it through the lens of critical artistic resistance. The photo essay serves not only as a documentation of Black youth aesthetics but also as a living testament to the transformative power of Black artistic expression. Coles frames this work as an actionable pedagogical framework, inviting readers to engage with Black Aesthetics in Education as a means of fostering critical consciousness and cultural empowerment.

¡Mi Historia es Importante! Centering Ethnic Studies in the Spanish as a Heritage Language Classroom **Nancy Dominguez-Fret**

In her contribution to the collection, Nancy Dominguez-Fret offers a poignant testimonio intertwined with pedagogical reflections on her journey as a heritage speaker teaching students with similar backgrounds. Drawing from personal experiences, Dominguez-Fret illuminates her path to critical consciousness, shedding light on the challenges inherent in navigating a Eurocentric educational system that often neglects the histories and cultures of marginalized communities, including her own Mexican-American heritage. Through her narrative, Dominguez-Fret unveils the transformative power of reclaiming history, language, and culture, revealing how these elements have profoundly shaped her approach to critically teaching Spanish as a Heritage Language. Her insights serve as a compelling call to action for educators to recognize and honor the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their students, ultimately enriching the pedagogical landscape for a more inclusive learning environment.

'Unhobble[ing]' Black Futures through Visual Essay Filmmaking **ParKer Bryant**

ParKer Bryant presents a groundbreaking exploration of Black youth learners' critical and creative thinking through a visually driven essay project. This article delves into the conceptual framework

of the lesson, aiming to uncover associative assumptions within the imagination of Black youth, trace significant themes and motifs, analyze narrative affect, and examine the impact on their access to critical and creative thought. Central to Bryant's work is the integration of Toni Morrison's concept of "unhobble[ing]" as a praxis within language arts teaching methods, firmly situated within decolonialized, anti-racist, and abolition teaching curricula. Drawing from the intersections of Black feminist thought and socio-cognitive psychology theories, Bryant's conceptual lesson places Black youth learners at the forefront of middle-grade language arts classrooms. It underscores the indispensable role of Black diasporic imagination in shaping and nurturing Black futures, challenging conventional notions of academic English as a neutral platform and exposing its potential as a tool of "imagination interference." This article stands as a vital contribution to the ongoing discourse on inclusive and empowering pedagogical practices within ethnic studies.

Podcasting as a Pedagogical Tool to Create Latinx Youth Counterstories

Gerardo Mancilla, Anjuli J. Brekke and Luz Rodriguez Camacho

The collaborative effort of Gerardo Mancilla, Anjuli J. Brekke, and Luz Rodriguez Camacho unveils the transformative potential of the Summer Podcast Workshop (SPW). Employing podcasting as a pedagogical vehicle, the SPW empowers Latinx youth to construct counterstories that challenge dominant narratives. In this illuminating article, the authors provide insight into the workshop's learning objectives, program themes, and meticulously designed lesson plans. Central to the workshop's ethos is the cultivation of technical podcasting skills among students, enabling them to articulate their lived experiences as Latinx youth with authenticity and agency. The student voices, which resonate throughout the article, converge around three key themes: the acquisition of technical podcasting skills, the fostering of community with peers, and the amplification of lived experiences. Through these themes, the SPW emerges as a beacon of pedagogical innovation, showcasing the profound impact of podcasting in centering the counterstories of Latinx youth. This article stands as a testament to the power of culturally relevant pedagogy in empowering marginalized voices and offers invaluable insights for educators seeking to cultivate inclusive learning environments rooted in equity and social justice.

Oral History and Digital Archiving as an Ethnic Studies Praxis

Michelle Rendón Ochoa

In "Oral History and Digital Archiving as an Ethnic Studies Praxis," Michelle Ochoa offers an insightful exploration into a youth-centered oral history digital archiving project, "*Aquí Estamos*," co-created with high school students in Long Island, New York. This autoethnographic piece delves into the transformative nature of the project, emphasizing its alignment with an ethnic studies curriculum framework. Ochoa advocates for the expansion of oral history archival initiatives that prioritize historically marginalized voices within educational settings. The article provides a practical dimension by offering a comprehensive guide for educators interested in implementing similar projects in their classrooms. Ochoa concludes with a reflective analysis, highlighting the profound experiences and insights gained by both students and her throughout the project's duration. This contribution enriches the collection of ethnic studies K-12 pedagogy works by showcasing a tangible example of how to engage students in meaningful activism and community-centered learning. By centering Latine voices and utilizing digital archiving techniques, Ochoa

demonstrates how educators can empower students to amplify underrepresented narratives and contribute to broader conversations of social justice and historical representation within the classroom.

Analyzing as an Artist **Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales**

Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales introduces a thought-provoking reflection that not only furnishes educators with user-friendly materials but also offers a compelling political narrative. At the heart of this lesson lies a pivotal inquiry: Can activist art serve as a catalyst for the eradication of racism? Central to Tintiangco-Cubales' approach is the introduction of a sample image titled "12 Step Program to Justice," providing a concrete framework for educators to facilitate transformative discussions and actions within their classrooms. Her work seamlessly bridges the realms of teaching practice and advocacy, empowering educators with the necessary tools to cultivate critical consciousness and inspire meaningful social change among their students.

(Re)claiming Our Cuentos **Jeanette Godoy**

"(Re)claiming Our *Cuentos*" by Chicana Jeanette Godoy stands as a powerful testament to community empowerment and cultural resilience. In this innovative work, Godoy reimagines an indigenous tale, transforming it into an engaging play tailored for elementary school students. This endeavor not only serves as a bridge between generations but also as a means of reclaiming and preserving cultural narratives often overlooked in mainstream education. By drawing upon oral traditions and folklore, Godoy revitalizes ancient wisdom for contemporary audiences, infusing it with relevance and accessibility. One of the most remarkable aspects of Godoy's work is its ability to create educational opportunities beyond the confines of traditional textbooks. By bringing these critical narratives to life on stage, she not only captivates young minds but also fosters a deeper understanding of cultural heritage and social justice issues. In doing so, "(Re)claiming Our *Cuentos*" demonstrates the transformative power of creativity and theater in shaping children's perspectives and nurturing empathy and awareness. Moreover, Godoy's emphasis on community engagement underscores the collaborative nature of cultural preservation and education. Through participatory theater practices, she invites students, educators, and families to actively engage with the material, fostering a sense of ownership and pride in their shared heritage. By amplifying voices long silenced and reclaiming cultural narratives, Godoy invites us to imagine a world where every child has the opportunity to see themselves reflected in the stories they hear and the characters they portray. In doing so, she paves the way for a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape, where all *cuentos* are valued and celebrated.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Title: Our Lady of Carmen Celebrations
Photographer: Rafael Gómez

In this photograph captured by Rafael Gómez, we witness the commemoration of The Day of Our Lady of Carmen, known as "*El Día de la Virgen del Carmen*," a revered event celebrated globally by

Catholics and other spiritual communities. In the Dominican Republic, this observance, dedicated to one of the identities of the Virgin Mary, has transformed into a powerful symbol of popular spirituality that extends beyond the boundaries of traditional church settings. Devotees intricately decorate altars, attend masses (*misas*), and engage in lively gatherings filled with music, dance, and delicious cuisine as expressions of reverence for La Virgen. These festivities, rich with multi-generational participation, see the active involvement of younger devotees who contribute in various capacities, including as musicians, underscoring the enduring significance and inclusive nature of this sacred tradition.

Title: Resilient *Tamal*

Photographer: Andrea Mercedes Garcia

Andrea Garcia's photograph captures a profound scene of familial tradition as her children engage in the making of tamales. Rooted in ancient Mesoamerican culture, the tradition of tamale-making holds deep significance, passed down through generations. Garcia's New Mexican heritage infuses her tamales with a unique blend of green hatch and red chile, creating an unforgettable flavor. The meticulous preparation of masa, derived from the revered maize through ancient nixtamalization, pays homage to the sacredness of corn in Mesoamerican culture. Beyond mere culinary preparation, tamale-making is a sacred ritual that binds Latinx families together, echoing ancestral wisdom and resilience. In a world where indigenous traditions are often marginalized, the act of preparing and savoring tamales becomes a powerful assertion of cultural pride and resistance, reaffirming Latinx identity and reclaiming ancestral heritage. Through each bite, one not only tastes the savory flavors but also experiences the rich legacy of resilience, connection, and cultural pride that transcends generations.

Title: Decolonial Home Garden

Photographer: Andrea Mercedes Garcia

In Andrea Garcia's photograph "Decolonial Home Garden," the essence of indigenous identity is manifested through the cultivation of traditional crops within an urban setting. With a profound connection to the land, Garcia and her children have established a home garden that symbolizes decolonization, adaptation, and resilience. Through the cultivation of maize, tomatoes, lettuce, chili peppers, and various herbs, they confront environmental racism and assert control over their well-being in an urban food desert. Viewing gardening as both therapeutic and defiant, the family's garden serves as a bold act of resistance against dependence on large-scale agriculture and fast food. Despite challenges, their garden flourishes, nourishing both body and soul while teaching important lessons of self-sufficiency and resilience to future generations.

Title: Cooking *Frijoles* is a Revolutionary Act

Photographer: Andrea Mercedes Garcia

Andrea Garcia's photograph "Cooking Frijoles is a Revolutionary Act" captures the essence of cultural preservation and resistance through the simple yet profound act of preparing beans. As a culinary link to ancestors, beans symbolize a return to an indigenous and a decolonized diet. Passed down through generations, the recipe for frijoles reflects a rich lineage from Zacatecas and Nuevo Mexico, blending traditional cooking styles from both sides of the family. Through careful

preparation, Garcia's children learn the importance of honoring their heritage and reclaiming beans as a staple of their native diet. Amidst the food deserts of Los Angeles, cooking frijoles becomes an act of anti-colonial resistance, nourishing both body and soul while preserving indigenous food sovereignty. This culinary tradition, passed from one generation to the next, underscores the significance of maintaining cultural identity and connection to the land.

Title: I Am My Brotha's Keeper
Photographer: Fritz Pingol

In the compelling photograph titled "I Am My Brotha's Keeper" by Fritz Pingol, a poignant moment from the heart of the Black Lives Matter movement is immortalized. Captured amidst the streets of Long Beach, California, the image encapsulates a diverse group of students marching together in solidarity. Against the backdrop of societal upheaval and systemic injustice, this powerful photograph serves as a stirring call to action, evoking the timeless concept of brotherhood and collective responsibility. Central to the image is the presence of a participant holding a sign emblazoned with the resolute declaration, "I am My Brotha's Keeper." This poignant message symbolizes a steadfast commitment within the Black community to uplift and support one another in the face of adversity. Furthermore, the photograph serves as a poignant reminder of the historical struggles and enduring resilience within communities of color. From the dark shadows of slavery and segregation to the ongoing battles against police brutality and institutionalized racism, the image resonates with the deep-rooted legacy of resistance and perseverance within the Black liberation movement. Through the lens of Pingol's camera, this photograph becomes a testament to the unwavering spirit of solidarity and the tireless pursuit of justice within marginalized communities.

Title: Filipinx for Black Power
Photographer: Fritz Pingol

Captured during a protest rally in Long Beach, California, Fritz Pingol's "Filipinx for Black Power" photo signifies a pivotal moment of solidarity between Filipinx and Black communities. It depicts Filipinx students standing alongside their Black peers, wielding signs in a powerful display of unity against racial oppression. Reflecting the ethos of the Black Power movement, this gesture underscores themes of self-determination and collective action. Both communities, steeped in histories of colonization and systemic racism, find common ground in their struggles for liberation. For Filipinx individuals, shaped by the legacies of colonialism and imperialism, this solidarity represents a shared understanding of the impacts of racism and the necessity of collective resistance.

Title: Please I Can't Breathe
Photographer: Fritz Pingol

Set against the backdrop of Downtown Long Beach, California, during the protests ignited by the tragic murder of George Floyd in 2020, this photograph captures a poignant moment. By amplifying these voices and experiences, the photograph challenges viewers to confront their complicity in perpetuating inequality and prompts critical reflection and action. "Please I can't

Breathe" emerges as a catalyst for societal introspection, underscoring the ongoing struggle for racial justice and the necessity of universal solidarity.

Title: *Magia y Tradición*

Photographer: Felicia 'Fe' Montes

In the heart of Mexico City's Dia de los Muertos parade, photographer Felicia Montes captures the essence of magic and tradition. Through her lens, we witness celebration woven with memory, methodology, and movement. The image portrays a young Mexican girl adorned in traditional attire, embodying her culture with every step she takes. Standing beside a towering replica of a Mexican doll, she gazes confidently into the camera, a living embodiment of the pedagogies of creative justice. In her presence, we see the convergence of prayer, poetry, performance, protest, and public art, all intertwined in a celebration of culture, community, and collective consciousness. This photograph becomes an ethnic studies classroom in flesh, teaching lessons of color and culture, prayer and performance, style and spirituality. It encapsulates the *magia y tradición* that defines the Day of the Dead.

Art

Title: Home is the Place to Dream

Artist: Emily Hsiao

Emily Hsiao's art piece serves as a nostalgic reflection on her upbringing in Wellington Heights, East Los Angeles. Set within the frame of her living room, adorned with Chicano/a/x art and family heirlooms, the painting transforms her home into a dollhouse, symbolizing the interconnectedness of her environment. Hsiao captures the energy flowing from the streets into her home, where she feels watched yet connected to her community. Through vivid imagery, she portrays familiar scenes: a boy helping his blind mother, the raspado vendor busy with schoolchildren, and neighbors from her childhood. Among them are representations of herself and her best friend, Laura, evoking memories of innocence and friendship. By removing the ceiling, Hsiao metaphorically emphasizes the limitless possibilities within her safe haven, where dreams can flourish amidst the constant change of the city.

Film

Title: Selling one Tamal at a Time

Filmmaker: Julio Henriquez

Julio Henriquez's film *Selling one Tamal at a Time* presents the compelling story of his mother Carmen, a Salvadoran street vendor in 1990s Los Angeles. Against the backdrop of a bustling urban landscape, Carmen's resilience shines through as she navigates the complexities of street vending with determination rooted in her Salvadoran heritage. Her journey, fraught with challenges yet filled with opportunities, serves as a powerful narrative for K-12 ethnic studies pedagogy. By highlighting Carmen's experiences, the film provides a valuable lens through which students can explore themes of immigration, economic empowerment, and cultural resilience. It invites discussions on the contributions of immigrant communities to American society.

Title: *Tango: The Greatest Rock Album Never Heard*
Filmmaker: Gregory Esparza

Gregory Esparza's *Tango: The Greatest Rock Album Never Heard* delves into the overlooked legacy of Chicano rock musicians, highlighting the systemic barriers they faced within the music industry. The film critiques the industry's failure to recognize and promote Chicana/o talent, resulting in the underrepresentation of their music. Despite the undeniable contributions of Chicano musicians to American rock 'n' roll, their voices often went unheard, depriving audiences of their unique artistry. This narrative resonates deeply with Chicana/o/x studies, as it sheds light on the erasure of Chicano cultural contributions and the impact of systemic discrimination on artistic expression. By uncovering the story of *Tango*, Esparza invites reflection on the broader socio-cultural dynamics that shape the representation and recognition of Chicane identity within mainstream narratives. Through this lens, film emerges as a critical pedagogical tool for reclaiming stories within academic discourse and beyond.

Cover Art: J'Ouvert

Rafael Gómez, California State University, Los Angeles

Description:

The image depicts a student whose body is covered in paint while being pushed around in a grocery cart (September 3rd, 2018). During Labor Day Weekend, Brooklyn, New York hosts the Labor Day Carnival, also known as the "West Indian Day Parade." The Brooklyn Carnival draws more than two million people, mainly from the West Indian and Caribbean communities in New York City and beyond. Central to the festivity is the J'Ouvert ("Break of Day") processions, which are composed chiefly of younger community members. J'Ouvert, which



goes through the night and early morning, is best known for its uncouth revelry, manifested in the creative spirit—yet low cost—of the costumes on display. In so many ways, J'Ouvert is the essence of the Caribbean Carnival and culture in New York City.

They Buried Seeds: The 10-Year Unfolding of the Xican@ Pop-Up Book

Elias Serna, Santa Monica College

Abstract

This article looks back at a decade to evaluate the education activism, pedagogy, and arts allegories of the Xican@ Pop-Up Book (XPUB) movement. In 2012, the XPUB responded to Arizona's attack on the Mexican American Studies department—and the accompanying book ban—by proclaiming, “You can ban Chicano books, but they still POP UP!” Through explorations in paper engineering, pop-up book manifestos, curriculum versatility, exhibitions, media imagery, and lectures, XPUB spread its message widely. Consciously employing presence effects and allegories—like the revolutionary “seeds”—XPUB contributed conceptually and visually to an Ethnic Studies movement and its vision of survival, perseverance, and building. Ten years later and book banning is back as Republicans target critical race theory, *The 1619 Project*, LGBTQ+ young adult literature and Ethnic Studies broadly. Via a “Liberated Ethnic Studies,” the XPUB re-enlists its dynamic arts curriculum in service of resistance, cultural affirmation, and building Ethnic Studies community.

Keywords: Ethnic Studies, Chicana/o/x Studies, book bans/ censorship, activism, allegory, presence effects, paper engineering (pop-up books).

Look at Us, We Were Building

A little over a decade ago, Arizona Republican legislators attacked and destroyed the remarkable Mexican American Studies Department (MAS) of the Tucson Unified School District. Animating their instruction with Indigenous and Mesoamerican teachings, Chicana/o/x Studies, critical race theory, and employing Freirean and critical pedagogy methods, the department had turned education outcomes around. The MAS department essentially *inverted* the achievement gap (MAS student test scores were higher than those of White students in the district) and energized student learning and activism. This was enough to catch the attention of Arizona conservatives who launched a political assault on the program.

The political tempest over Chicana/o Studies in Arizona drew the attention of education activists nationally, eventually leading to a movement for spreading Ethnic Studies throughout California and the nation. While supporting the lawsuit MAS teachers brought against the state of Arizona, Chican@ educators in Southern California formed alliances with the embattled Tucson community—“*the Eagles and the Seagulls*” (Serna, 2013). Influenced by earlier Zapatista principles, a campaign to “Save Ethnic Studies” evolved into a movement to “Spread Ethnic Studies.” The Xican@ Pop-Up Book (XPUB) movement emerged from this activism, contributing artistic production, messaging, manifestos, happenings, curriculum and allegorical visions of Ethnic

Studies futures. This article revisits and evaluates some of these contributions and conjurings and connects past lessons to current book bans across the country suggesting ways to turn crisis into opportunity.

When Arizona passed HB-2281 in 2011, essentially outlawing Chicana/o Studies, Tucson teachers, the community, and students organized protests which kept MAS alive; in April, students took over a packed school board meeting, chained themselves to the council chambers and proclaimed “When your education is under attack—What do you do? Fight Back!” Footage of the protest went viral. Finally, after the state threatened to defund Tucson schools, the district officially dismantled the program in January of 2012. Students were enlisted to remove MAS books and put them in boxes marked “banned books” that were shelved by administrators. Students walked out of schools, but the damage was done (Biggers, 2012).

In this political maelstrom, the Xican@ Pop-Up Book emerged as an art protest curriculum, proclaiming, “You can ban Chicano books, but they will still pop up!” Like our counterpart in Texas—the *Librotraficante*—our performative protest allegory called for the return of the Mexican American Studies department while it helped raise funds and awareness for the teachers’ racial animus lawsuit (which was eventually won in 2017). Alongside groups like Raza Studies Now, AMAE, Ethnic Studies Now, Peoples Ed Movement, Pico Youth & Family Center, the Association of Raza Educators (ARE), XITO, NACCS, Chicana/o Studies departments, and Liberated Ethnic Studies, a movement developed to raise consciousness about Ethnic Studies and helped propel campaigns to spread Ethnic Studies to schools and colleges in California and beyond.



Note: On the left Chicano books banned in Arizona, 2012. On the right: Raza Studies Now banner (by Raul Gonzalez), American Indian Movement at Mission High School, San Francisco, 2014. Photo by author.

Xican@ Time: Nurturing a Quincentennial Consciousness

Today’s attempts to ban books about critical race theory, Black Studies, and LGBTQ+ youth literature has recent and ancient roots. The politics of current book bans are directly linked to the right-wing attack on Chicano Studies in Arizona a decade ago, and are argued on the basis of Eurocentric patriotism, morality, homophobia, and conspiracy, having great effect in states dominated by conservatives. Book banning on this hemisphere, however, began with Christian book burning 500 years ago in 1530, when the Inquisition arrived on these shores. The motives

are eerily similar. As 2019 approached, XPUB produced its 2nd manifesto, “El Pop-Up Vuh,” which included an essay preparing readers for the coming quincentenary of Europe’s arrival on the Mesoamerican mainland, with a pop-up of Tenochtitlan on the last page. Like during the Columbus quincentennial of 1992, our aim was to promote connection to and recovery of Indigenous Mesoamerican knowledge and critical thinking around Europe’s colonizing invasion of Mexico and the Americas. In short, we sought to incite a quincentennial consciousness.

In 1530, when the first bishop of Mexico, Juan de Zumaraga, set the torch to the sacred libraries at Texcoco across the lake from the plundered Tenochtitlan, the Aztec island city, natives understood the message. The Indigenous audience was stunned according to accounts. This destruction of knowledge erasing their legacy was a prerequisite to settler colonialism’s violent, genocidal subjugation of Native peoples. It was physical, psychological, and civilizational violence. Grosfoguel (2013) calls this destruction of knowledge an *epistemicide*, a requisite counterpart to genocides committed during colonization, as well as a basis to asserting white supremacy ideologically.

“The most powerful weapon in the hand of the oppressor, is the mind of the oppressed,” stated Steven Biko a South African activist in a 1971 speech (“Steve Biko calls for Black Consciousness,” 2018). Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2021) points out that settler colonialism’s goal of controlling land, labor, and resources was always accompanied by genocide, erasure, and an ideological project of white supremacy.

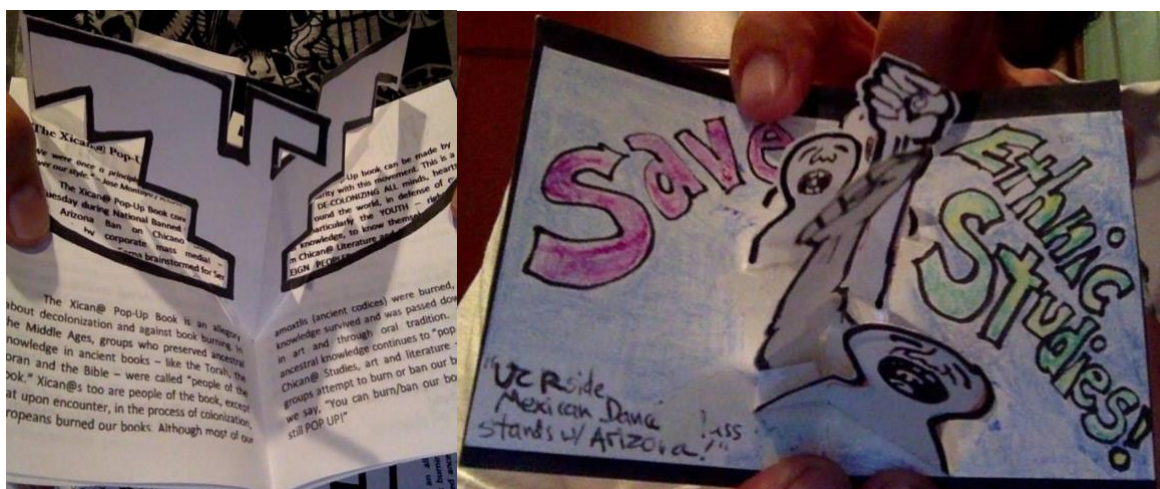
This was the *auto da fe*—“acts of faith”—the Inquisition’s public ceremonies performing the stamping out of non-Christian texts and rituals. Arabs, Jews, and women knew this well on the Iberian Peninsula. In the Americas, the “sword opened the way for the cross” (Ruiz, 1992, p. 124) establishing European supremacy over the newly subjugated urban Indians of Mesoamerica. Soon large numbers of enslaved Africans were forcibly brought to the Americas as demand for labor grew. Grosfoguel (2013) argues that these four epistemicides of the long 16th century – of Arabs/Jews, women, Africans, and Native Americans – established an empirical and intellectual white supremacy globally.

During Arizona’s attack on Chicana/o Studies a decade ago, University of Arizona Mexican American Studies professor Roberto “Dr. Cintli” Rodriguez compared the book banning of Chicana/o literature to the colonial book burning five centuries before, particularly Fray Diego de Landa’s book burning of Maya codices at Mani, Yucatan in 1562. The Eurocentric colonizers were back, and they were here to erase us again. And again, we resisted.

Before passing into the spirit realm last year, Dr. Cintli had proposed and helped popularize valuable organizational tropes and indigenous concepts to the movement to defend Chican@ Studies such as: Maiz knowledge (that ancient knowledge and mythology traditions were tied to civilizational corn cultivation); that history would record the Chicano Movement as an Indigenous rebellion; creation in destruction; and how the Indigenous humanity debate of 1524 was relevant today (we continue to be institutionally dehumanized). During the MAS struggle, he proposed that the racist policies against Mexicans in Arizona were an attack on our bodies (SB 1070, Indigenous racial profiling) and on our minds (HB 2281), and that these politics were akin to civilizational warfare not unlike the colonization of Mesoamerica 500 years prior.

In recent years, Dr. Cintli established a “Xican@ Embassy” on grounds adjacent to the ancient urban center at Teotihuacan, envisioning it as a sort of pilgrimage destination for Chican@s, Latinxs, and other Native Americans in the U.S. reconnecting to their Indigenous heritage and worldview. The Xican@ Pop-Up Book collaborated on a virtual talk held there during the 500-year anniversary of European arrival and invasion at Tenochtitlan, the Aztec island capital during 1519-1521. The XPUB had earlier issued its 2nd manifesto, titled “El Pop-Up Vuh,” reminiscent of the ancient Maya creation story. El Pop-Up Vuh contained a polemical message reminding readers of what Omi and Winant (2015) named “perhaps the greatest racial formation project” (p. 114). The last page featured a pop-up of Tenochtitlan’s Templo Mayor, a pyramid rising from the island in the lake, a reminder that the quincentennial of colonial invasion (1519-1521) was an opportunity to rebuild Indigenous identity, reclaim legacies and retrieve Indigenous technologies. We aimed to complement and deepen *El Plan de Santa Barbara’s* (Chicano Coordinating Council on Higher Education, 1969) call for “historical consciousness” with a quincentennial consciousness and incite a critical atmosphere through a decolonial awareness not unlike the early 1990’s.

During 2018 in my Cal State Dominguez Hills Chican@/Latinx Culture class, students read David Carrasco’s *The Aztecs* (2011) and Graciela Limón’s *Song of the Hummingbird* (1996) and created pop-up books, excavating Mesoamerican urban planning, structures on the island city, or taking a closer look at themes or scenes from Limon’s novel. When Armando Lawrence of the Compadres Network came to our class as a guest speaker, he revealed that through dreams and ancestral research across borders, he believed he was a likely descendant of an Aztec noble, a character in Limon’s novel. We had essentially excavated the island city, and now before our eyes a living relative of Aztec history was speaking to us. After class students prompted a class picture. These are what Gumbrecht (2004) calls presence effects (when literature or art go beyond meaning), high impact memorable learning experiences, moments which can transform a student’s consciousness.



Note: Xican@ Pop-Up Book Manifesto, 2013. An anti-book ban pop-up by Xican@ Pop-Up Book (design by author), 2014.

Conjuring the Future: Prophecies & Presence Effects in the *Plan de Santa Pop-Up*

The unprecedented wave of book bans nationally has precursors in the decade-old movement to defend Ethnic Studies in Arizona, and reminds us that education access and racial justice takes organization and struggle. The attack on the successful Chicana/o Studies program in Tucson was more widely understood when the concept of a “book ban” of Chicano books spread nationally. Educators, students, and community responded with *Raza Studies Now* conferences, *Librotraficante* (to “smuggle” criminalized books back into Arizona schools), *Xican@ pop-up books*, and other happenings. In 2014, Raza Studies Now collectively authored and issued *El Plan de Los Angeles*, calling for a widespread movement in California and nationally to develop Ethnic Studies instruction in high schools.

Then the *Ethnic Studies Now* campaign re-invigorated a push for a culturally relevant curriculum, passing an Ethnic Studies graduation requirement in districts, then taking the proposal to the state legislature. Chicana/o books returned to popularity, and interest in the field rejuvenated Ethnic Studies. The ideas planted by the fledgling movement were sprouting.

By now, XPUB issued its 3rd most ambitious manifesto, a 5-page, 10-Point plan titled “*El Plan de Santa Pop-Up*,” reminiscent of the *Black Panther 10-Point Plan* (1966) and *El Plan de Santa Barbara* (Chicano Coordinating Council on Higher Education. (1969). The 3rd manifesto—hand-made pop-up multiples created from an original design—called for the regeneration of Xican@ Indigenous identity, quincennial consciousness, the return of MAS to Arizona, Black and Brown Unity, local demands for justice for UC Riverside’s ballet folklórico, and a call for Raza and Ethnic Studies in all high schools.

In his text *Production of Presence* (2004), Gumbrecht challenges the preeminence of interpretation and meaning in literary studies and proposes a stronger acknowledgement of what he calls “presence culture,” the dimension of literature, art, or culture that invokes material or visceral responses from our senses or bodies. The sensation of opening a pop-up book, for instance, delivers the sensation that the reader has witnessed a kind of “happening”—that out of nothing, *something* made itself happen. In the Spring of 2014, the XPUB collaborated with Animo South LA instructor Ron Espiritu and his African American & Chicano/Latinx Studies students. We introduced the pop-up book allegory as an art protest against the attacks on Ethnic Studies and instructed them on the 90-degree pop up technique. Their assignment was to create pop-up books to accompany their “hidden histories” research assignment, lifting up stories of solidarity and resistance struggles by people of color commonly left out of the standard curriculum.

We purposely orchestrated a hyperbolic “pitch” for the class, to inspire students to really put an effort into the pop-up book designs, assuring them that we had a movement going, that “the stage was set,” the opportune moment would come, and that perhaps, if we did all the right moves, our masterpieces would be so amazing and transformative that *thousands* if not *millions* of people would be reached, their minds and souls transformed.

After several visits to the class, the pop-up projects took shape beautifully, structurally uplifting the stories of the Filipino-Mexican alliance during the 1965 UFW Grape Strike, the Black Panthers

and the Brown Berets, Emma Tenayuca and the Pecan Strike, the Birmingham Children's March, etc. Around the time the books were completed, a National Public Radio (NPR) reporter from Maria Hinojosa's show "*Latino USA*" called me looking for high school Ethnic Studies educators. I connected her to Ron. An interview was followed with a classroom visit by an NPR photographer. In a few weeks NPR's *Latino USA* broadcast the story nationally¹. Suddenly, the pop-up book masterpieces had a national audience, reaching thousands, perhaps a million. The word spread. A "happening" had happened.



Note: On the left: Lack of Ethnic Studies in California Schools, Valerie Hamilton (2014, June 20). <https://www.latinousa.org/tag/ethnic-studies/> On the right: Photo by author, El Plan de Santa Pop-Up (2015).

They Tried to Bury Us, But We Were Seeds

During this time, the Xican@/Mesoamerican concept of the seed re-emerged and began to circulate widely. My own earliest reference was reading an Ernesto Cardenal poem, then later the UCLA Xinachtli program in early 2000s, offering tutoring and mentorship to high school students. In the film *Precious Knowledge* (Palos, 2012), teacher Jose Gonzales eloquently explains how Chicano Studies critical thinking is "a seed" that grows in the mind of a young person, shaping future cultural dignity and actions.

My Chican@/Latinx literature classes frequently read a version of the seed metaphor in Ernesto Cardenal's elegiac 1954 poem to an early martyr of the Sandinista revolution, his "*Epitafio para la tumba de Adolfo Báez Bone*." It was a Guevarean leitmotif of Central American revolutionary perseverance and tenacity; "you can kill the revolutionary, but you can't kill the revolution" (p. 104). The poem concisely describes the disappearance and likely execution of Báez Bone after a failed coup attempt of dictator Somoza. Wherever his body is not buried, he is resurrected. The poem ends by proclaiming "they thought they buried you, and what they did was to bury a seed."

¹ <https://www.npr.org/2014/06/20/324005304/lacking-latino-studies>

Several of my students re-created the theme in pop-up books. As the poem and symbol spread in movement circles, some on social media wrongly attributed the allegory to a Greek poet in the 1970's. Dr. Cintli believed the original concept came from the grandmothers in the ancient *Popol Vuh*; the Lords of Xibalba threw the bones of the defeated Hero Twins into the river only for them to resurrect later to vanquish the arrogant lords (Rodriguez, 2023).

In 2014, the National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME) conference was held in San Francisco dedicated to the MAS struggle, and a large group assembled at Mission High School to hear speakers, including the final keynote speech by Larry Lopez, representing the Tucson teachers suing the state. He explained the case, conditions in Arizona, and envisioned a victory in the spreading of Ethnic Studies. He ended his speech saying, "They thought they buried us, but what they did was they buried seeds."

Regardless of the origin, the metaphor sprouted into an allegory of the tenacious regeneration of Ethnic Studies. They thought they buried Chicano Studies in Arizona, but they spread seeds for Ethnic Studies throughout the United States.

The buried seeds metaphor became a synecdoche of the spreading Ethnic studies activism rooted in the Arizona MAS struggle, seemingly dispersed by the winds of protest. In Atlanta, Georgia, DACA activists taking over a street held up a similar sign. Mexican students spray-painted the slogan on walls after the cartel-allied government military disappeared and reportedly assassinated 43 students in 2014. Medical students for Black Lives Matter held up the slogan. As Ethnic Studies classes and graduation requirements grew throughout the state, the prophetic allegory began to manifest.

In 2021, after much controversy and ongoing struggle over defining Ethnic Studies curriculum, Governor Gavin Newsom signed the Medina Bill (CA AB2820), guaranteeing that all California high school students take an Ethnic Studies course starting in 2029, providing young adults with a critical cultural literacy and systemic awareness of the state and nation's complicated history with race.



Note. Cartoon upper left: Ethnic Studies: 2281 by Lalo Alcaraz (2014). Used by permission. Pop-up books by Chicano/Latino Studies students (2016). California State University Long Beach.

Art Fights Back: Allegories of Regeneration

Allegory works like a capsule of principles and ideology, emitting revelatory sensations upon interpretation. Literary allegory has roots in priesthoods worldwide, as during a Catholic mass when the priest follows the liturgy with the homily, interpreting the symbolic “Jesus stories” for the audience, making meaningful connections to the present. Those attending the mass are intended to experience a feeling of awe in the sermon, a sensation of wonder upon hearing the ancient book’s relevance to the moment. Ancient Mesoamericans also tied allegory and its characters to a cosmological narrative. Unique expressions of allegory emerged during the Tucson struggle.

Following Mesoamerican tradition, Tucson MAS teachers in their innovative efforts to re-purpose public schooling employed their own pedagogical allegory through their central methodology titled the Xican@ Paradigm, illustrated with the 5 suns imagery within the Aztec Calendar. The teachers described the educational process moving through 4 stages, guided by 4 energies: self-reflection (Tezcatlipoca, “the smoking mirror”), precious knowledge (Quetzalcoatl, “the feathered serpent”), the will to act (Huitzilopochtli, “hummingbird on the left”), and transformation (Xipe Totec, “the flayed skin god”).

Cartoonist Lalo Alcaraz produced several hard-hitting satirical political cartoons depicting the racist policies of Arizona, in particular his representation of the book ban with allusion to witch trials and colonial-era book burning. His image depicts a book tied to a stake upon a pyre set atop the map of Arizona. The book however features an Indigenous face, possibly a woman, whose anthropomorphic scale resembles a person tied to the stake. The layered image evokes Grosfoguel’s (2013) work—tying the medieval execution of women during the Salem Witch Trials to earlier epistemicides of Indigenous knowledge by Spaniards – and Dr. Cintli’s (2023) comparison of Arizona’s book bans to colonial book burning.

One of the most marvelous literary allegories composed during this period came from rhetoric scholar Aja Martinez, herself a former student of the Tucson Mexican American Studies classes. Her Allegory on Arizona titled “Critical Race Theory Counterstory as Allegory: A Rhetorical Trope to Raise Awareness About Arizona’s Ban on Ethnic Studies” (2013) took cues from foundational critical race theory scholar Derrick Bell and reflected on the historical consciousness called for in *El Plan de Santa Barbara*. Through composite characters—based on political figures, statistical data, cultural archetypes, or personal experience—Martinez eloquently composes a futuristic tale of Rosette Benitez, a talented first generation Mexican American fully invested in assimilation and the American Dream. Dismissive of her more political *Chicana* cousin Alejandra, Rosette moves along successfully through U.S. institutions of learning and science, ultimately bioengineering the formula for immortality. When right wing politicians from her home state hijack the invention, they devise a quota system based on “history” – only those who have made the nation great, whose ancestors have contributed to society and who uphold the values of the Protestant nation will be administered the “immortality treatment.” Rosette, realizing too late how important Mexican American history is now, cannot recall learning a single topic of Mexican American achievements or contributions to the nation. Regretting her incapacity, she recalls news reports of the lawsuit by Chican@ teachers fighting for the right to teach the histories and literatures of Chican@s.

If immortality stands for nationalist scientific success, then the wretched pay for it with their shortened/belittled lives. Immortality may stand for the racially illusive (and exclusive) status of the American Dream. When the mom teases Rosette that immortality science is “*puras tonterias*” (foolishness), the metanarrative moment reveals the fiction as a game, but one that deploys CRT counterstory’s “destructive aspect” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, pp. 49-50) deconstructing the racial myths of U.S. benevolence, exceptionalism, assimilation’s promise, and inferiority complexes. When Rosette buries her face in her hands saying, “What have I done?” the dialectical irony of assimilation, its Chicano contradiction—captured eloquently in the opening lines of Corky’s “I am Joaquin”—is front and center. Rosette exists now “in the grasp of American social neurosis, sterilization of the soul and a full stomach,” (Gonzales 1967, p. 3) having won the economic battle, she has lost the struggle of cultural survival.

In the end, Rosette’s academic over achievements are troubled by her loss of community. The allegory functions internally on readers. Like Martinez’ futuristic allegory, or Alcaraz’ historical illustrative allusions, the Xican@ Pop-Up Book created symbolic stories from investigations past and present, vigilant against systemic racism and ***envisioning a Xican@ futurity***.

Seeds Sprouting, Movement Building

Another of the powers of the pop-up book curriculum is that it remains relevant. Conservative efforts to control the nation’s narrative and censor Ethnic Studies continue, now on a national scale. The Xican@ Pop-Up Book continues to develop lessons for this struggle.

During the Trump presidency, conservatives took aim at critical race theory, wrongly framing it as ideological “victimology” and in other misinformed terms. At the end of his term the Trump’s administration proposed the *1776 Project* to contest the widely circulating, Pulitzer prize-winning *The 1619 Project*², a public pedagogy journalism initiative on the 400th anniversary of the beginning of slavery in the U.S. Soon after, Florida Republicans (led by presidential candidate Ron DeSantis), not to be outdone, censored the African American Studies high school AP course, removing literature by Angela Davis, Robin Kelley, Ruth Gilmore, and Black Lives Matter. Florida and Texas led other red states in book bans targeting Ethnic Studies and LGBTQ+ young adult literature, labeling the latter “obscene.”

Even in California, censorship and hijacking have been ongoing. Starting in 2019, the California Legislative Jewish Caucus led an attack on the Ethnic Studies model curriculum, effectively removing and slandering the authors as “anti-Semitic” on the basis of an Arab American Studies lesson featuring a song about Palestinian resistance in Israel. The Jewish Caucus essentially moved to remove Arab Studies, Palestine, and lessons on settler colonialism. The authors pushed back, removed their names from the model curriculum’s document and formed the autonomous *Liberated Ethnic Studies*. Since then, state officials have moved on with a watered-down curriculum, and discouraged school districts from engaging *Liberated Ethnic Studies* curriculums.

Zionist and right-wing conservative groups like the Deborah Project have used the courts to attack Ethnic Studies. A lawsuit by conservatives in San Diego prompted the California Department of

² <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>

Education to remove *In La Kesh* (based on a Luis Valdez poem on Maya philosophy) claiming it was tied to Aztec sacrifice rituals; they also removed the “Ashé” affirmation based on Yoruba traditions (Arce & Montaña, 2022). Conservatives tied to the Deborah Project filed frivolous “anti-Semitism” lawsuits against *Liberated Ethnic Studies* Chicana and Filipina leaders for teaching about Israel’s settler colonialism project in Palestine (this was prior to the October 7, 2023, Hamas assault and ensuing and ongoing—as of this writing—genocide in Gaza). The death toll in Gaza—reaching 36,000 Palestinians killed in nine months—calls the anti-Semitism argument into question³.

In this context, the Xican@ Pop-Up Book launched a campaign to enlist itself in current struggles and dialogues against book bans and censorship of Ethnic Studies. In October 2023, during Banned Books Week, XPUB held lectures, panels, and book displays at Cal State University Channel Islands, San Jose State University and UC Berkeley. The XPUB rose in support of the Tampa 5, five female members of University of South Florida’s Students for a Democratic Society, arrested for defending the Queer Studies and diversity programs, Ethnic Studies and the right of students to protest in Florida. In the Spring of 2024, XPUB joined a panel on book bans sponsored by the National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies Conference (NACCS), which also plans to write an *amicus brief* in support PEN America’s lawsuit against book banning in Florida.

Today, self-determination, the role of students, and historical consciousness matter. The Xican@ Pop-Up Book lessons continue to “analyze/confront/and intellectually dismantle historical and institutionalized forms of racism and settler colonialism” as stated in the UC Ethnic Studies Faculty Council letter (9/8/2023). My CSUCI students and I looked at *Gender Queer: A Memoir* (Kobabe, 2019), a book at the top of book bans, discussing the importance of representation, identification, exposure and empathy. We questioned the basis of conservative fears. As with *The 1619 Project*, some popularly held beliefs about our country, sexuality, and race are socially constructed narratives, that if challenged cause what Frantz Fanon (1952) called cognitive dissonance—the violent disbelief and psychic disruption caused by a challenge to a deeply held belief. We considered how most LGBTQ+ individuals do *not* say, “I was perfectly straight my entire life... UNTIL I READ THIS BOOK!” No—that doesn’t happen.

The book plays a role in a young person’s identification. One sees oneself—finally!—in a book, and is made to feel more connected, given representation, depth, given a voice, perhaps guided or enlightened, through the narrative. Or it helps a reader develop empathy for another’s unique experience; a young person sees another for the first time. A book can be a mirror—In Lak’ech—or a new idea to question.

The Xican@ Pop-Up Book participated in the conjuring of Ethnic Studies today. We helped build Ethnic Studies and the movement taught us lessons. It is ours, or it doesn’t exist. It is ours because we don’t ask permission. And self-determination for us Chicanas/os/x is not written by someone else. Culturally relevant curriculum is not enough. Self-determination in Ethnic Studies content and pedagogy must continue developing critical thinking skills and a historical consciousness, which is what engaged students in Tucson. It is what engages students in Ethnic Studies classes, alongside

³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-airstrike-rafah-kills-12-palestinians-gaza-medics-say-2024-05-30/>

the building of communities *that are down* for the people. A Bay Area abolitionist educator stated it best: “No history, no self. Know history, know self.”

Let freedom read. May the *Fuerza* be with us!



Note: Top left: Tenochtitlan pop-up by Angelica Smith, CSU Dominguez Hills student, Fall 2018. Top right: El Plan de Santa Pop-Up, 2015. Bottom: Flyer for Xican@ Pop-Up Book 10-year anniversary lecture, King Library, San Jose State University, Fall 2023.

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Darker Planets, Darker Gazes: Critical Artistic Pedagogies of Black Aesthetics as Black World Making

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Abstract

Informed by a critical qualitative project I conducted during the summer of 2019 using Black critical race-grounded methodology, where the methodological social location was a socially and community-engaged out-of-school space for multi-ethnic Black high school youth in New York City, I construct an empirically-informed photo essay of students' Black aesthetic productions and their assemblages of Black world creation—amid ongoing antiblackness. Through presentation and analysis of the art-based photos that embody Black youth aesthetics and/as Black world making, I further the theory development of Black Aesthetics in Education through an overarching lens of critical artistic resistance. I frame my photo essay, which takes the form of a living artistic storying, as an embodiment of Black Aesthetics in Education as an actionable, pedagogical framework.

Keywords: Black aesthetics, art-based research, antiblackness, youth

i've left Earth in search of darker planets, a solar system revolving too near a black hole...i've left Earth to find a place where my kin can be safe, where black people ain't but people the same color as the good, wet earth, until that means something, until then i bid you well, i bid you war, i bid you our lives to gamble with no more (Smith, 2017, n.p.).

I often think about leaving Earth. Arriving at this decision always stems from the same line of thought: I consider the ways Black people across time and space have been socially constructed as a problem people, who exist outside of white colonial notions of humanity. I specifically have spent a considerable amount of time thinking through the ways humanity is defined against Black people (Walcott, 2014). Moreover, I think about how Black people's suffering under the hands of white settler/colonial paradigms and structures has become part and parcel to society's functioning. In these moments of reflective thought, I question the underside of modernity that has made Blackness "naturally malignant," "naturally violent," "naturally unbelievable," "naturally less-than-human," and "naturally dysselected" (McKittrick, 2014, p. 17). As an educational researcher working with Black youth and a former teacher to Black youth, I am familiar with the ways the suffering Black children experience in the United States of America's (US) schools, is the

suffering our society acknowledges the least (Dumas, 2014). Black suffering, which is the result of the violent tools and technologies of antiblackness, becomes largely accepted as normal social practice that people expect and accept overtime.

Antiblackness is a pillar of white supremacy (Smith, 2012) and represents the endemic socio-structural regime that has constructed Black people as inferior to other humans—sustained through a myriad of oppressive systems (e.g., segregated schooling, housing discrimination, predatory financial debt systems, policing, the prison industrial complex, and healthcare inequalities). White supremacy requires Blackness to be permanently associated with absence and whiteness to be permanently associated with abundance (Farley, 2021). Such violence (and structural and ideological arrangements of violence) against Black people on settler colonial and slave marked lands functions as a face of oppression (Young, 2000); structuring the everyday social realities of Black and non-Black people. I understand settler colonialism as “a political and economic system that uses coordinated actions across state level agencies to conquer, expropriate, and occupy Indigenous lands” (Montgomery, 2022, p. 476). Understanding how earthly land, and US land in particular, limits the possibilities of Black humanity and seeks to delegitimize Black world creation, I seek to explore how the cultural aesthetics of Blackness work to counter Black dehumanization and cultivate Black worldmaking.

Networking Art, Aesthetics, and Consciousness for Critical Artistic Resistance

Within teaching and learning processes in US classrooms, antiblackness is captured through the ways pedagogical actions (practices of teaching and theories/ideologies that inform such teaching) are entrenched in the marginalization of Blackness (Coles, 2016). Anti-Black pedagogical actions or inactions facilitate the traumatizing and retraumatizing of Black children (Sharpe, 2016), which seeks to invisibilize Black youth genius (Coles, 2021). I use the phrasing of Black genius as an affirmation of “black self-determination and consistently opposing imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy” (hooks, 2000, p. 131). Grounded in a stance of (Black) desire-based research (Coles, 2023a; Tuck, 2009), I explore the ways Black youth aesthetics (as birthed through a Black, darker gaze) resist the totality of whiteness (Taylor, 2016) world inhabitation through the assembling of Blackly worlds (Coles, 2023b). I see my use of aesthetics as a foundation of critical artistic resistance, which I define as leveraging art and cultural aesthetics in one’s life to live through and beyond oppressive social regimes.

I specifically think with critical artistic resistance through a Black arts lens, where Black art houses black consciousness that “acts as resistance to the colonizer-white supremacy” (Awan, 2021, p. 2). I conceptualize critical artistic resistance with Black youth understanding that art created by Black people “functions to provide anti-racist discourse to denounce the dominant rhetoric of white supremacy” and antiblackness (Awan, 2021, p. 3). Muhammad and Gonzalez’s (2016) orientation to artistic resistance as a means toward “building identity, agency, and activism” is useful here (p. 443). As Muhammad and Gonzalez (2016) share: identity is multiply-constituted and is constructed through our social contexts; agency reveals itself through a re/definition of self and dismantling of structures of power; and activism represents actions toward social change, whether silent or loud. In this essay, the ways Black youth document their lives via critical artistic practices, as embodied Black aesthetics, functions as resistance to the antiblackness that works to dis/organize their social realities in schools and society.

The Pedagogical Possibilities of Black Aesthetics: An Ethnic Studies Note

Ethnic Studies was birthed out of desire and necessity. Historically marginalized peoples and communities of color were having their histories and voices silenced and erased; warping our realities of how we all come to know the formation/s of the U.S. and the world. The communities whose lives were rendered non-impactful to the flow and development of our social milieu, decided that there would need to be a curricular intervention to disrupt the whitewashing of our past and present histories, and our future histories. I put forth Black aesthetics as an important theoretical *and* pedagogical tool that should be taken up in the field of Ethnic Studies to serve as a corrective to the anti-Black narratives that have been told in classrooms. I do not offer Black aesthetics as *the* corrective tool to disrupt anti-Black schooling practices, but I offer it as one tool that can work in tandem with other critical practices. Black aesthetics is grounded in a looking inward to Blackness to celebrate and be guided by the Black gaze—a (re)humanizing orientation that centers the rich existence of Black humanness. Working to learn from the critical artistic productions of Black youth as disruptors to denials of Black humanness,

I image Black aesthetics as a visual and sensual form of a Black cultural ideology rooted toward racial uplift...Thus, Black aesthetics is about how we leverage epistemologies of Blackness to center, cultivate, and extend a Black ethos that refuses the subjectivities of anti-Black systems and ideologies that work to delimit Blackness and the Black experience. (Coles, 2024).

As a theory to think about Black youth's worldmaking capacities, I am not simply thinking about aesthetics as a philosophy for beauty and art, but more so as "a tool, or rather an embodied state, of being and knowing and creativity that works to demonstrate a love of and for Blackness" (Coles, 2024, p. 137). When revisiting the student artistic productions that shape this text, my goal was to think about how the data individually and collectively refused antiblackness, loved Blackness, and chartered new Black futures through an explicitly darker, Black gaze. I am specifically guided by the five conceptual frames of Black aesthetics in education (Coles, 2024) that set the foundation for my pedagogical framing:

Understanding sociopolitical racial realities and contexts: Awareness about the historicity of national and global socio-political, racially oppressive regimes.

Resisting anti-Black educational practices: Struggling against white, anti-Black powers of dominance.

Utilizing Black cultural referents in curricula: Using educational materials that explicitly name and reference Black culture.

Centering a Black gaze: Centering Black culture (and Black onto-epistemologies) as a worthy lens to see and move through the world.

Empowering students with Black joy and celebration: Creating onto-epistemological ruptures into white supremacist logic that birth celebration.

A Darker Pedagogy: Black Aesthetics in the Educational lives of Black Urban Youth

Informed by a multi-week, qualitative youth research project I conducted during the summer of 2019, I construct an empirically informed essay of students' Black aesthetic productions and their

assemblages of Black worldmaking. My project, Literacy Inspiring Transformation across New York City (L.I.T. City), was guided by a Black critical race-grounded methodology, which took place in an out-of-school space for multi-ethnic, Black high school youth. I organized the youth's literacy explorations around five curricular themes: *Blackness and antiblackness*; *identity and Black youth agency*; *Blackness in our schools, redaction and refusal for humanization*; and *leaning into Blackness as humanization*. Using artistic data, I network creative works of art and text developed by the participants (e.g., drawings, paintings, and photos of written text) to detail the pedagogical practices that undergirded data collection to demonstrate the utility of a Black aesthetics framework within Ethnic studies pedagogies. In the next section, I share student artifacts from several participants including: Lee, a Black (American/Cameroonian) girl; Divine, a Black (Trinidadian) girl; Tatiana, a Black (American/Puerto Rican) girl; Shayla, a Black (Bajan/Jamaican) girl; and Terrence, a Black (Trinidadian) boy.

Understanding Sociopolitical Racial Realities and Contexts

In L.I.T. City while exploring the curricular theme *Redaction and Refusal for Humanization*, we read the article “*When the Media Treats White Suspects and Killers Better Than Black Victims*” (Wing, 2014). A major reality we studied in this theme was that antiblackness results in Black people experiencing an innumerable amount of violence against their personhood that results in dehumanization. Our study of anti-Black violence is connected to the Black aesthetic theoretical frame *Understanding Sociopolitical Racial Realities and Contexts*. In order to counter and disrupt anti-Black processes, Black youth have to possess an awareness of antiblackness and the ways it has and will operationalize in their lives. To bring this cycle of dehumanization to light as it plays out in our current social moment, the students and I turned to the ways unarmed Black youth who are murdered by police or vigilante citizens experience further violence after their death via the ways the story of their lives is told. It has been well documented of the ways Black victims are dehumanized through the media in attempts to make it seem that they were responsible for their own death (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). After reading the initial article and hearing students' interest in thinking more about media portrayals of Black youth, I introduced another article (U.S. News, 2012) to the group that focused on Trayvon Martin (a Black teen who is often referred to as a major catalyst for the Black Lives Matter movement), “Trayvon Martin was suspended three times from school.” After reading the U. S. News (2012) article, I taught a mini lesson on Black redactions and Black annotations (Sharpe, 2016).

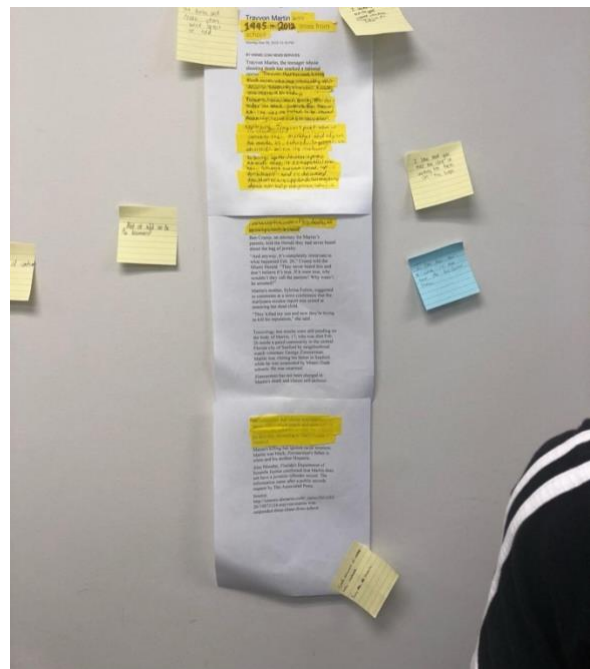


Figure 1: Trayvon Martin News Article, Lee's Annotation and Redaction Activity

The **pedagogical use** of Black redactions and annotations is that students can alter text for more humanizing aims through covering text and images that seems harmful, adding new information, and re-storying (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016) or repurposing information already present. As Sharpe (2016) explains, “Black annotation and Black redaction are ways to make Black life visible, if only momentarily” (p. 123). The **pedagogical question** driving this activity was: What humanizing narratives about Blackness are revealed through acts of redaction and annotation?

In Figures 1 and 2, we see Lee’s (a Black girl participant) Black redaction and annotation to the article discussing Trayvon Martin’s school suspension record. Trayvon was murdered, and in an attempt to make the actions of the vigilante citizen who shot him justified, the media began sharing anecdotes about him that would seek to discredit his humanness or goodness—and in this case seek to discredit his right to live. In Figure 2, we can see the ways Lee engaged in Black redaction and annotation for refusal by immediately covering up the majority of the title with yellow tape (all students were given tape and pens and markers), changing it to Trayvon Martin 1995-2012. In Figure 1, we can see the ways Lee re-storied most of the article, which demonstrates a clear understanding of US sociopolitical racial realities and contexts, while also refusing such a reality to construct a more humanizing narrative for the Black subject. In order to meaningfully critique the racialized organization of society, students must have an understanding of the ways race and racism (and antiblackness in particular) function in their daily lives.

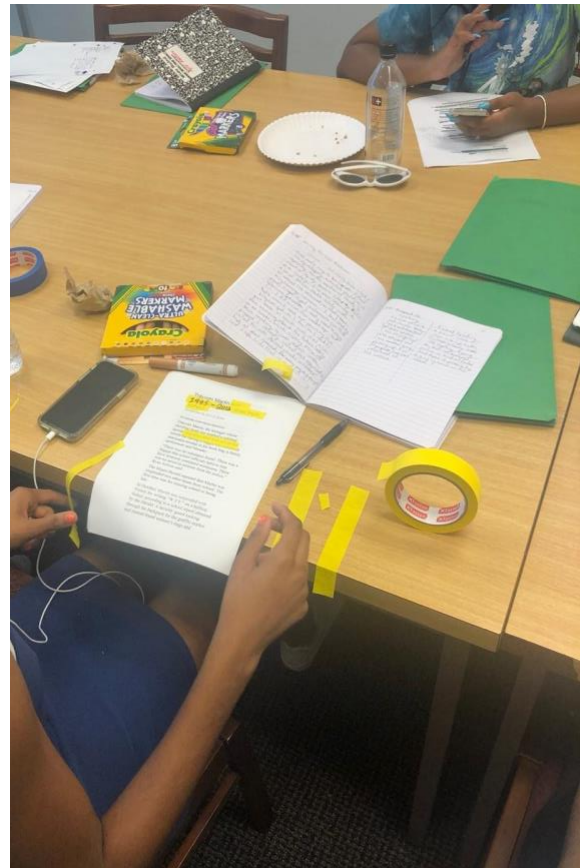
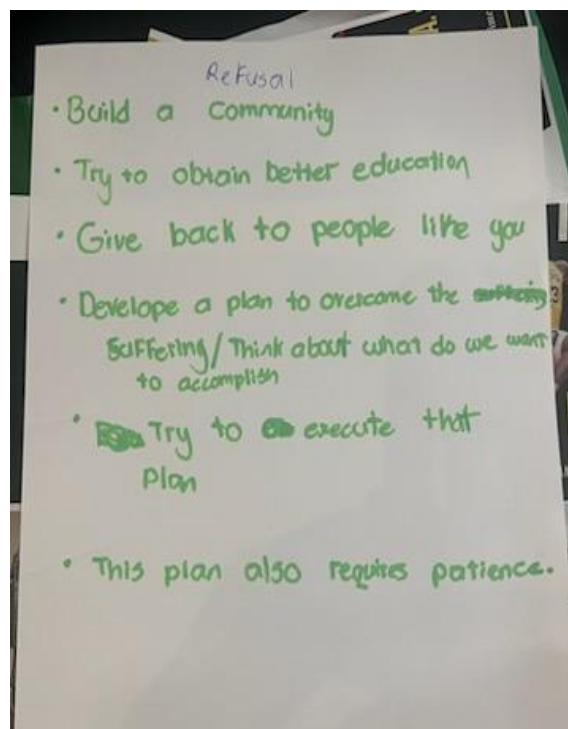


Figure 2: Trayvon Martin News Article, Lee’s Annotation and Redaction Activity Process

Resisting anti-Black Educational Practices

While covering the curricular theme *Blackness in Our Schools*, the students and I spent a significant amount of time exploring perspectives on Black education in the U.S. In discussions and activities related to schooling, we often used the U.S. Department of Education (2016) Office for Civil Rights, 2014 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) snapshots as a starting point. The CRDC data snapshots were an invaluable pedagogical resource for students to extend their knowledge about Black people’s narrative experiences in schools with numerical data, which provided students with a macro-level visual of the ways antiblackness functions across the nation’s educational landscape. On one occasion, students began to discuss the ways schooling can often feel like a trap, characterized by them never feeling like they can reach a level of success that is not unrestricted by antiblackness. To help the students further process their thoughts, I introduced Malcolm London’s (2013) TED Talk, “High School Training Ground,” which discusses the struggles and

opportunity barriers London (a Black boy from Chicago) and his peers face in an educational system that seems as if it is designed for Black students to fail. After watching the video, I posed the **pedagogical question**: How can Black students refuse antiblackness in schooling practices in ways that better cultivate Black youth success? Such a question and responses to the question are connected to the Black aesthetic theoretical frame *Resisting Anti-Black Educational Practices*. To respond to the question, I provided each student with a blank piece of paper and gave them the option to create a plan or process for uplifting Blackness in schools as a way to counter antiblackness. The **pedagogical use** of this activity is that it gave students space and time to reflect on their unique schooling experiences, while linking that experience to a history of Black schooling in the US, prompting them to assert agency over how they might create better conditions.



In Figure 3, we see Divine's bullet point list about the various ways she believes Black youth can engage in resisting anti-Black educational practices. Even more compelling in this list is the ways it goes beyond schooling, to think about how Black youth can engage in resisting in broader terms. Divine demonstrates her knowing that she cannot separate her life in terms of school and society, but that her resistance in one sector has to also be carried in all sectors of her life. For instance, Divine names getting a better education as essential for countering the violence miseducation can enact on Black students, but she also discusses community building and reflecting on future accomplishments. Through Divine, we can come to understand that resisting antiblackness in schools is a matter of resisting antiblackness everywhere.

Figure 3: Refusing Black Suffering Activity 1

Utilizing Black Cultural Referents in Curricula

Under the curricular theme *Blackness in Our Schools*, I also had the students read Michael Dumas'(2016) article, "*Things Are Gonna Get Easier: Refusing Schooling as a Site of Black Suffering.*" In addition to learning about the myriad ways Black people engage in resistance to antiblackness in schools and society throughout time and space, I wanted to ensure that students were aware of the ways Black education is more than an experience of resisting violence. The goal was not to erase anti-Black violence, but rather to give students space to think of the ways Black people have and continue to create educational lives that sustain and nurture their Blackness despite external oppressive regimes. To help us think about Black culture through asset-based frames, I engaged the students in a mini-lesson around culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012). Additionally, I had the students discuss schooling and classroom conditions they have experienced that made them feel affirmed and uplifted as it

relates to their Black identity. To bring their reflections to life, in conjunction with their dreams and desires of Black-centric classroom space, I had each student visualize their ideal school or classroom. The **pedagogical use** of this activity was that it cultivated student agency and it allowed them to take inventory of their current schooling conditions (that may or may not be culturally relevant or sustaining) and create their ideal educational space. The **pedagogical question** I posed to each student was: What does a school or classroom look like that values Black life?

In Figure 4, we see Tatiana's depiction of a classroom that values Black life, from her perspective. The pedagogical connection in this activity is directly related to the Black aesthetic theoretical frame of *Utilizing Black Cultural Referents in Curriculum*. Throughout history, Black people have been policed for their hairstyles. Most recently, Darryl George, a Black boy who is a student at Barbers Hill High School in Mont Belvieu, Texas (Duster, 2023) was suspended for his hairstyle (locs). Darryl and his mother filed a federal lawsuit, which claims "Darryl's protections under the federal Civil Rights Act are being violated because the dress code policy disproportionately affects Black male students" (Holpuch, 2023). Darryl's suspension demonstrates the ways Black bodies are literally removed from school spaces when they do not adhere to aesthetic standards rooted in whiteness, which are anti-Black by design. Thus, Tatiana drawing Black kids with varying textured hairstyles as the central image in her classroom reveals the ways that cultural referents are not simply curricular materials (e.g., textbooks), but also the ways we make room for Black people to show up physically unrestricted in Black cultural styles. In the top right corner of Tatiana's drawing, there is a quote from Nelson Mandela, which reads: Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Along the top and bottom of the chalkboard, there are individual posters spelling out the alphabet. Some letter and word combinations in the drawing include: A for Afro, C for Cabral (Almícar), J for Jazz, and U for Us. Tatiana's Black aesthetic production shines light into the possibilities of what a classroom that values Black knowledge and Black people may look and feel like.



Figure 4: Black Dream School Drawing

Centering a Black Gaze

Identity and Black Youth Agency was a theme that really allowed the students to see themselves more clearly throughout L.I.T. City as a lot of discussions and activities under this theme started with reflections of self. A core **pedagogical question** I asked students was: How do you see your Black self in the world currently and what do you imagine for your Black self in the future? Particularly given the focus on youth agency, I wanted to provide space in the curriculum for students to think through ways they can enact disruption to antiblackness on an individual level, without waiting for large scale structural changes to occur. To spark discussion around agency, I introduced an online article to student's written by Hannah L. Drake, "Do Not Move Off The

Sidewalk Challenge: Holding Your Space in A White World. Drake (2018) uses the article to document instances where Black people, herself included, have prioritized white interests over theirs by accommodating white people in terms of space access (e.g., a Black person moving off a sidewalk if a white person is coming in their direction). The overall premise is for Black people to become “cognizant of how they navigate throughout spaces making accommodations for white people and white people having an expectation that Black people or people of color must navigate their bodies to allow White people access in spaces” (Drake, 2018, n.p.). After we read the article out-loud together, I gave students a moment to write down any thoughts or questions the article raised for them, making sure they link these jottings to the larger concepts we were exploring throughout the project. After a group discussion, I then gave the students a variety of art supplies and prompted them to develop an artistic creation that embodied their response to the article along lines of Black agency. The **pedagogical use** of this activity is that it made students confront the ways they may be complicit in antiblackness or be deferential to antiblackness by the ways they navigate space, including their schools. Moreover, it allowed them to engage in a new visioning of self that was rooted in them holding and demanding space in an anti-Black social context.

In Shayla’s painting, which was in response to our Black youth agency activity, we see a Black girl (herself) with flowy natural hair, a multi-colored stripe shirt that reads “New Black,” and jeans. The components of the painting that stand out to me the most are the blindfold covering the face of the girl and the two fingers being held up in a peace sign formation. Much of the project consisted of students learning how antiblackness is erected and sustained through countless racialized, anti-Black stock stories and anecdotes that have shaped the ways all people engage Blackness as inferior (including the ways Black people can internalize antiblackness). While blindfolds often represent not being able to see, I interpret Shayla’s use of a



Figure 5: New Black Painting (Front)

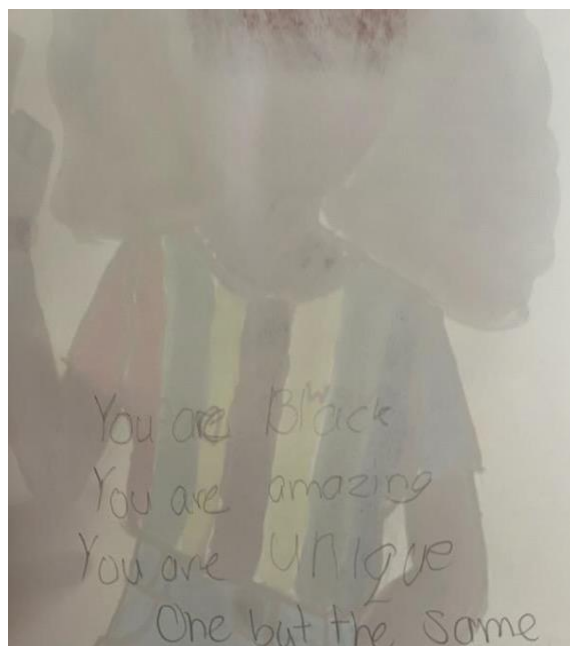


Figure 6: New Black Painting (Back)

blindfold as a refusal to see the world from exterior, anti-Black gazes and a turning inward to her own knowledge about herself and the world that represent her agency to create life on her own terms. This activity and Shayla's work is connected to the Black aesthetic theoretical frame *Centering a Black Gaze*. This becomes even more evident in Figure 6 (the back of the Figure 5 drawing), due to being able to see Shayla's written words: You are Black / You are amazing / You are unique / one but the same. Through these words, Shayla expresses her agency by providing herself and those who view this piece with an affirmation about the beauty of Blackness. The peace sign in Figure 5, which is used colloquially to represent a leaving or turning away from something, further signals the ways Shayla might be abandoning or turning her back on external gazes of whiteness and antiblackness. Shayla leverages her Black gaze to navigate the world around her.

Empowering Students with Black Joy and Celebration

At the end of each week with the students, I made sure that we revisited the theme *Leaning into Blackness as Humanization*. The goal in making this the theme a weekly ending point was to always ground students in the reality that Black people's humanity matters, despite the various ways we read and discussed how antiblackness works to render Black humanity as an impossibility. In discussing the Black experience in the US and the world under racialized regimes, the goal is not to only focus on suffering or only focus on joy. To truly capture the complexity of Black life means that all facets of Black life must be studied, because in tandem they both work to propel Black people into future methods of possibility. To orient students to the multiple dynamics of Black life, we listened to Lift Every Voice and Sing, also known as the Black National Anthem. After we collectively listened to the song, I had the students read the song independently and engage in an analysis of the lyrics; keeping the concept of Black humanization in mind. The **pedagogical use** of analyzing a Black text (which is an embodiment of a Black aesthetic) such as this was to allow students space to grasp the violent realities enacted upon Black people while also understanding how such violence is not totalizing. Black people continue to live full joyous lives in the face of wanton and gratuitous anti-Black oppression.

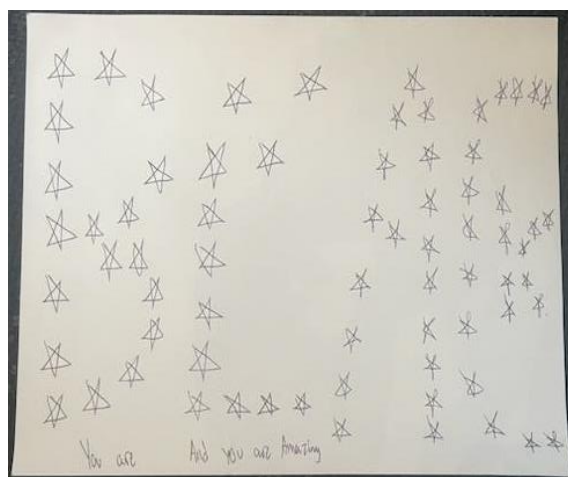


Figure 7: BLACK written in Stars – You are BLACK and You are Amazing

When we were done analyzing the song and discussing our various thoughts, I asked the students to create a response using whatever art medium they desired. Specifically, I asked them to create something that represents the way they think of Black joy amid ongoing Black suffering. In Figure 7, we see Terrence's drawing, which uses stars to spell out the word Black (the K being in the C). The stars seem very fitting given that the students just read the Black National Anthem, a Black-specific rendering of the US National Anthem—which discusses the stars and stripes in the US flags. In a way, Terrence's stars represent a spectacular celebration of Blackness. I view the stars as a sort of fireworks celebration, where with each boom the fireworks move into formation to

spell out Black. At the bottom of the image Terrence has written the words: You are [Black] / And You are Amazing. This activity connects to the Black aesthetic theoretical frame *Empowering Students with Black Joy and Celebration* through the ways it orients students to see the joy present in Black life, while still being aware of the oppressive realities that seek to destroy Black joy and celebration.

Conclusion

Like Danez Smith (2017) shares in his poem, *dear white america*, excerpted in the epigraph I use to open this essay, I want to inhabit a world where Black people “ain’t but people,” which is counter to a world where Black people are seen as nonhuman or superhuman (Coles, 2023c). A new physical earth would be ideal: A darker planet that orbited in a completely new solar system and cosmic plane where there was no language for words like settler, antiblackness, or white supremacy. However, while I imagine a new physical atmosphere, what do Black people do in the “meantime in between time” (ross, 2019)? That is, how do Black people work to mitigate Black suffering in the present, while still strategizing for more liberatory future tenses and grammars of life and worldmaking? My use of Black cultural aesthetics as a method to leave Earth, both imaginatively and practically via pedagogy in classrooms, is driven by the need to disrupt anti-Black processes that dehumanize Black people, specifically (antiblackness). All people are dehumanized by existing in a social context where antiblackness is endemic. I offer Black aesthetics as a critical pedagogical tool to counter antiblackness violence as it manifests in our nation’s schools and society.

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¡Mi Historia es Importante!

Centering Ethnic Studies in the Spanish as a Heritage Language Classroom

Nancy Domínguez-Fret, Northern Illinois University

Abstract

This chapter will provide my testimonio and a pedagogical reflection of my journey as a heritage speaker teaching heritage speaking students like me. I will start by sharing my testimonio of coming to critical consciousnesses which helped me identify that I experienced a Eurocentric education that excluded my history and that of my Mexican American community across the educational pipeline. I will share how I reclaimed my history, language, and culture and how these experiences directly inform my Spanish as a Heritage Language teaching practice.

Mi Testimonio: My Journey to Becoming a Heritage Spanish Educator

My name is Nancy Domínguez-Fret. I am an assistant professor of applied Spanish linguistics in Illinois and the proud daughter of two Mexican immigrants from Jalisco México. As a heritage speaker of Spanish, I grew up speaking Spanish at home and learned English in elementary school. My parents left Mexico in search of economic stability and sacrificed their educational dreams for my siblings and I to have the educational opportunities they did not have access to in their homeland. As a first-generation college student who grew up in a lower-income household, when I think about inheritance, I do not think about financial assets. Instead, I think about the linguistic and cultural inheritance my parents have gifted me. Despite deficit-based narratives of bilingualism and the pressure to assimilate to US linguistic and cultural norms during the early 1990s, my parents decided to pass on their native language and cultural practices onto my siblings and me. This linguistic and cultural inheritance is now being shared with my own children, nieces, and nephews, and with the hundreds of heritage speaking students I have taught this last decade as a high school teacher and now as a college professor.

I would love to say that the US K-12 education system played a key role in the maintenance of my heritage language and culture; but this would be a false narrative. My bilingualism and biculturalism are the product of my parent's labor of love. Despite having access to my heritage language and Mexican culture throughout my childhood, it was not until my undergraduate years that I began to read literature that mirrored my lived experiences as a US Latina. Coming across the field of Ethnic Studies was a healing experience and has helped shaped me into the educator I am today. In this reflective piece, I will share my *testimonio*, focusing on how my language and cultural

educational experiences across the educational pipeline have influenced my teaching practices. I will narrate my journey to understanding the critical importance of placing Ethnic Studies at the forefront of the Spanish Heritage Language (SHL) classroom. I will also share a unit I designed for the SHL classroom that centers the Chicano Movement.

Del Barrio al Doctorado: K-12 Language Educational Experiences

I grew up in La Villita, a predominantly Mexican *barrio* in the Southwest side of Chicago. In La Villita, my heritage language and culture were valued, and this harvested a sense of confidence and *orgullo* in my cultural and linguistic roots. During elementary school, I was enrolled in a Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program until the end of 4th grade. TBE programs are the most numerous bilingual education programs in the US education system (Freeman, 2004). Although academic content is taught in both Spanish and English, students typically participate in TBE programs for two-three years and are then placed in a monolingual English classroom. The goal of TBE programs is to transition to English-Only instruction, often not providing opportunities for the maintenance and development of biliteracy skills in both English and Spanish (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018). Despite living in La Villita, after I exited this TBE program, I hardly saw my heritage language, culture or history represented in the school curriculum. I navigated life in two different worlds; one at school where I only spoke in English and Spanish with my parents and community members after the school, when I exited the school doors.

As I reflect on my K-12 education, I am now aware that I was socialized into a Eurocentric education that excluded the history of struggle, advocacy, and resistance of US Latino/x and other minoritized communities in our required coursework. I vividly remember sitting in social studies class learning about the Civil Rights Movement in elementary school and asking myself the following questions: Were there any Mexicans living in the US during the Civil Rights Movement? When did the first Mexican arrive to the US? Did we join the *lucha* to end segregation in US public schools? Sadly, I was too timid to ask my teacher these critical questions. Although I appreciated learning about this movement, I felt disconnected from this portrayal of history because I did not see my community as part of the movement demanding an end to segregation, despite the Mendez v. Westminster educational segregation of Mexican children case that preceded and became a foundation for the historic landmark case Brown v. Board of Education. The literature I was required to read during my K-12 education, undergraduate and graduate schooling, did not truly reflect my lived experiences. These experiences with culturally irrelevant literature, led me to become disinterested in literature and history classes and to classify myself as a “bad” reader. It was not until my early twenties that I realized I was not the problem; I loved to read, I just had not been provided with the opportunity to engage with literature and history written by individuals that looked like me and sounded like me.

Because of the love for Spanish my parents instilled in me, I decided to become a high school Spanish teacher. During my preservice teaching program, I decided to take a Latino Studies course as an elective because these courses were not required in my program. This course opened my eyes to a line of literature I could relate to. I read books, articles and watched films that centered the history of the Mexican American War and the aftermath of this war. These resources facilitated my understanding that the border crossed us, not the other way around. Through this class, I began to reclaim my cultural pride, but unfortunately my exploration of this rich history was paused for

a few years because both my Spanish preservice program and MA in Spanish Applied Linguistics program required and centered Eurocentric literature courses. To obtain my degrees, I had to enroll in literature courses where I read books like *Don Quijote de la Mancha* and *La Regenta*, which were irrelevant to the US Latino/x experience. Because my programs were so focused on Eurocentric literary works, they often disregarded requiring literature relevant to US Latino/x students' lives, like *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* by Gloria Anzaldúa.

What are Spanish as Heritage Language Classes?

After completing my MA degree, I began to teach high school Spanish as a Heritage Language (SHL) in Illinois. SHL courses are designed specifically for heritage speakers. In these courses, students can further develop their Spanish language skills in an academic setting. It's important to note that it is not typically until high school and/or college that heritages speakers, (sometimes) can enroll in SHL courses. Although many US Latina/o/x students, move through elementary school with minimal to no opportunities to continue developing their heritage language in an academic setting, when they enroll in SHL classes, they are often expected to abide by "standard" Spanish language norms. Instead of perceiving their Spanish varieties as an asset, heritage speakers' Spanish language skills are often positioned as a deficit and in need of repair. In my own lived experiences enrolled in college-level Spanish coursework, I was often told that *haiga*, *fuistes* and *parking* did not exist, and this created a sense of shame and linguistic insecurity. In my own dissertation research, where I collected the testimonios of heritage speakers who became SHL educators, findings revealed that (1) all participants experienced or witnessed linguistic discrimination in their Spanish college-level courses (2) all participants shared that they were not required to take an Ethnic Studies course as part of their program literature requirements. Similarly, most participants shared that the literature courses that were required in their programs were not reflective of their lived experiences (Domínguez-Fret, 2023).

In the recent decades, SHL scholars and pedagogues have advocated for the evolution of SHL classes from the eradication approach, that aims to replace students' Spanish home language practices, to a critical approach that centers the language and cultural funds of knowledge of heritage speaking students. Although SHL scholars' theoretical and practical efforts have pushed the SHL field to be grounded in social justice, not much attention has been placed on the intersections of Ethnic Studies and SHL curricula. When I began teaching SHL in 2013, I realized how disconnected the curriculum and program goals were from my students' lived experiences, cultural histories, and their identities. As a SHL educator coming from the same background as my students, I realized that my SHL classroom needed to provide them the opportunity to learn about the history of US Latino/x communities and that my curriculum should mirror and affirm their identities. The SHL field is quite disconnected from its beginnings. We must not forget that the implementation of these courses was rooted in the Chicano/a and Puerto Rican Movements of the 1960s (Aparicio, 1997). Heritage speakers have the right to know this history, their own history.

So, How Did I Learn My Own History? My Journey Exploring the Field of Ethnic Studies

My first step to ensure my SHL class centered my students' lived experiences was to conduct research and explore the field of Ethnic Studies. At this point, I took ownership and responsibility

of reclaiming my own history and culturally sustaining literature; I knew academia was not going to facilitate this process. I began to ask my Latina femtors for reading recommendations and I embarked on a journey where I dedicated an entire summer to exploring what the field of Ethnic Studies was and to reading culturally sustaining literature. I created my own reading list and until this day, I continue to add on to this list. Immersing myself in Chicano/a/x literature and exploring this field guided me to gain the following knowledge:

- The fight for social and racial justice in the 1960s and early 1970s was present through different movements that took place across the country enacted by different minoritized communities. These movements aimed to address social inequalities and demanded an end to systemic racism in different societal sectors and were often led by minoritized students.
- The establishment of the first Ethnic Studies department in the late 1960s was a product of collective revolutionary work led by the *Third World Liberation Front* (TWLF) coalition. This coalition was made up of Black, Chicana/o/a/x and other minoritized student groups in different university campuses across California. These students demanded a shift in the college admissions process and desired to have access to classes that reflected their backgrounds and lived experiences, taught by faculty of Color. Students fought for these causes by organizing strikes, protests, and rallies.
- High school students organized and participated in protests to demand better educational opportunities. For example, in California, students in Berkeley High School advocated for the implementation of an African American Studies department, which they were granted and is still going strong today (Rojas, 2007).
- In 1968, students from Garfield, Lincoln, Belmont, Roosevelt, and Wilson high schools participated in the Chicana/o Blowouts/Walkouts in East Los Angeles. These students were protesting the unequal treatment of Chicana/o/x students in the Los Angeles Unified School District high schools. Students demanded the implementation of a curriculum that was inclusive of Chicano/x history, language, and culture (de los Ríos, López, & Morrell, 2015).
- These movements at the college and high school levels led to the implementation of Ethnic/Chicano Studies courses across California universities and high schools, but also in universities and high schools across the US.
- Larry Itliong, César Chávez, and Dolores Huerta's fight for fair labor pay for migrant farm workers and their activism (although not perfect), for example, the Delano Grape Strike, led to the creation of the United Farm Workers (UFW), a union that continues to fight for the rights of migrant farm workers.

Gaining this knowledge made me proud of being a Chicana. This newly acquired knowledge facilitated my understanding that there is power in community activism. Not only did I want to learn more about this field, but I also wanted to share this history with my students. Reflecting on my own lived experiences, I became critically aware that my SHL class might be the only opportunity my heritage speaking students might have to explore this history and to read literature

that represents their lived experiences. I wanted my students to explore how until today, our community continues to fight against systems of oppression rooted in racism. This is evident in protests and social movements going on today that not only involve but are led by youth of Color. For example, the recent student led walkouts across the US in demand of a ceasefire in Gaza.

The Academic Benefits of Ethnic Studies Courses

In engaging with literature on the benefits of Ethnic Studies courses, I came across a line of research that documents that Ethnic Studies courses are identity affirming and provide academic benefits for minoritized students. In her literature review of Ethnic Studies programs in the US, Sleeter (2011) provided empirical evidence that students enrolled in Ethnic Studies courses:

- experience increased engagement, when the literature they engage with is written by authors that reflect their racial/ethnic backgrounds
- demonstrate enhanced literacy skills, higher academic achievement, and hold more positive attitudes towards learning.
Students gain a sense of self-agency.

In their analysis of administrative data from the Tucson Unified School District (2008-2011), Cabrera et al.'s (2014) study explored if there was a relationship between students who completed Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes and the successful passing of the Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) standardized test and successful high school completion rates. Their results indicated that students who completed MAS classes:

- had an increased likelihood of passing the AIMS standardized test and graduating from high school
- outperformed non-MAS students, in passing the AIMS standardized test and high school completion, despite having significantly lower GPAs in 9th and 10th grade and lower AIMS scores in 10th grade
- MAS courses provided an opportunity for students often wrongfully labeled "struggling" students, to engage in academically challenging and culturally sustaining courses that facilitated their academic achievement

As an SHL educator, it was eye-opening to learn about the academic benefits of Ethnic Studies courses. But it was equally important to become aware that at the core of Ethnic Studies courses is to create historical connections with events presently taking place and students' ethnic identities, with the end goal of encouraging US Latino/a/x students to visualize a better future for themselves and their communities (Stepheson, 2021). Through this research journey, I learned that the goal of Ethnic/Chicano Studies courses is to create a space where the voices and histories of BIPOC students are elevated and are the core of the curriculum. Through these courses, students can become critically conscious of educational as well as social inequities that directly impact their communities. This new *conocimiento* then prepares them to become actively involved in their *comunidades* and become advocates for systematic change. In Illinois, Ethnic Studies courses are

not required across the educational pipeline. Therefore, the SHL classroom is a great place to start to engage students in a curriculum that draws from the tenets of Ethnic Studies. In many SHL programs, the histories and lived experiences of racialized students remain at the margins, because of the hyperfocus on grammar and Eurocentric literature. The SHL classroom is the perfect place for the inclusion of Ethnic/Chicano Studies which can potentially motivate students to enroll, and possibly even demand access to Ethnic Studies courses.

The Chicano Movement: Unit for Spanish Heritage Language Classes

Through my exploration of the Ethnic Studies field, I came across the Chicano Movement. As I immersed myself in learning about this movement, I learned about the 1968 Chicano Walkouts. This history facilitated my understanding that other Chicano students fought and protested for me to have access to SHL classes as a high school and undergraduate student. I learned that our ancestors used to receive corporal punishment for speaking Spanish in school settings. I was able to contextualize that the reason why some US Latina/o/x parents decided not to pass on their native language to their children was to protect them from the racism and linguistic discrimination they themselves had to endure across the educational pipeline. Gaining this critical consciousness guided me to design a unit where I teach about this history in Spanish to my SHL students.

I designed this unit in 2013 when I was as a high school teacher and have continued to update it. I now teach it in my college-level SHL course. I hold this unit close to my heart as crafting this unit has been a labor of love; I see this unit as my opportunity to share history that I wish I would have learned about when I was my students' age. It is important to note that although SHL classes are promoted as a tool to reclaim or further develop a heritage language, these classes continue to perpetuate Eurocentric narratives for US Latina/o/x students and often exclude students' histories. One of the obstacles I endured as I planned this unit centering the Chicano Movement, was that most resources available to explore this movement are in English. At first, I was hesitant to include English resources in an SHL unit because this is something that we are often discouraged to do as SHL educators. However, after much reflection, I decided to use English resources and embrace the beauty in allowing my students to draw on their entire linguistic repertoire to explore their own histories. Therefore, some resources included in this unit are in English, but the conversations students engaged in were in the language of their stories.

In our class we discuss that some of the possible reasons why many of the Chicano Movement resources available are primarily in English could be because the authors might not feel comfortable writing in Spanish due to their limited opportunities to develop their heritage language in an academic setting, heritage language loss or simply because they desired to reach a wider audience. It is important to acknowledge and respect the decisions authors, producers, poets etc. have made with respect to the resources they produce, but this should not stop SHL educators from including these products as sources of knowledge in their SHL classrooms. the next section, I will share an outline of the unit.

Unit Title:	The Chicano Movement/El Movimiento Chicano
Theme:	US Latina/o/x Civil Rights Movements
Essential Questions:	¿Qué es un movimiento social? <i>What is a social movement?</i> ¿Por qué algunas comunidades organizan movimientos sociales? <i>Why do some communities organize social movements?</i>
Focus Questions:	¿Qué injusticias sociales motivaron a diferentes grupos minorizados a formar parte del Movimiento Chicano durante los años 60? <i>What social injustices motivated different minoritized groups to participate in the Chicano Movement of the 1960s?</i> ¿Como son las protestas, los boicots y las huelgas son una representación de activismo social? <i>How are protests, boycotts, and strikes a form of social activism?</i> ¿Cuáles fueron los logros del Movimiento Chicano? <i>What were the outcomes of the Chicano Movement?</i>
Metas de aprendizaje/ Learning Goals:	Puedo identificar eventos históricos que documentan la participación de las comunidades latinas en la lucha en contra de la segregación en las escuelas públicas de los Estados Unidos <i>I can identify historical events that document the involvement of U.S. Latino/x communities in the fight against segregation in US public schools</i> Puedo describir eventos importantes que ocurrieron durante el Movimiento Chicano y que fueron liderados por diversos grupos de activistas <i>I can identify and describe important events that took place during the Chicano Movement led by different activist groups</i> Puedo dialogar sobre algunos de los logros del Movimiento Chicano <i>I can describe some of the outcomes of the Chicano Movement</i> Puedo hacer conexiones entre movimientos sociales del pasado y del presente que impactan las vidas de las comunidades latinas que residen en los Estados Unidos <i>I can make connections between past and current social movements that directly impact the lives of U.S. Latina/o/x communities</i> Puedo escribir un cuento corto sobre un movimiento social contemporáneo, un activista de mi comunidad o un evento histórico importante que ocurrió en mi comunidad. <i>I can write a short story about a contemporary social movement, an activist in my community or an important historical event that took place in my community.</i>
Social Justice Standards:	Justicia 12 JU.9-12.12 Puedo reconocer, describir y distinguir la injusticia en los diferentes niveles de la sociedad.
English	Justice 12 JU.9-12.12 I can recognize, describe and distinguish unfairness and injustice at different levels of society.
Spanish	

	Justice 13 JU.9-12.13 I can explain the short and long-term impact of biased words and behaviors and unjust practices, laws and institutions that limit the rights and freedoms of people based on their identity groups. <i>Justice 13 JU.9-12.13 I can explain the short and long-term impact of biased words and behaviors and unjust practices, laws and institutions that limit the rights and freedoms of people based on their identity groups.</i> Acción 20 AC.9-12.20 Trabajaré en conjunto con personas de diversos orígenes y grupos para planificar y llevar a cabo acciones colectivas contra la exclusión, el prejuicio y la discriminación, y llevaremos nuestras acciones a cabo con creatividad y tras haber reflexionado para poder lograr nuestros objetivos. <i>Action 20 AC.9-12.20 I will join with diverse people to plan and carry out collective action against exclusion, prejudice and discrimination, and we will be thoughtful and creative in our actions in order to achieve our goals.</i>
Vocabulario/ Vocabulary	1. Los pizcadores 2. Piquete 3. La huelga 4. El sindicato 5. La peregrinación 6. La agricultura 7. Los pesticidas 8. La cosecha 9. El boicot 10. Los derechos del trabajador 11. La discriminación racial 12. La segregación 13. La igualdad social 14. La equidad social 15. El activista 16. Las protestas pacíficas 17. Las tasas de graduación 18. Los derechos civiles
Semana 1 Week 1	<u>Week theme/tema de la semana:</u> Why does our history matter? What intersections are present in the fight for social justice across different minoritized communities in the US? <u>Week description/descripción de la semana:</u> I start this unit with a bellringer, asking students to write a few bullet points summarizing what was going on in the world and in the U.S. during the 50s and 60s. This bell-ringer activity serves as a tool to activate students' prior knowledge. <u>Some questions I ask are:</u> ¿Qué eventos históricos ocurrieron en los Estados Unidos durante los años 50 y 60? ¿Qué individuos o que grupos minorizados estuvieron involucrados en el movimiento de los derechos civiles en los años 50 hasta los 70?

	¿Cómo crees que eran las condiciones laborales de los trabajadores del campo durante estas décadas? ¿Cómo crees que se percibía el bilingüismo durante estas décadas? After we answer these questions as a class, we briefly review the 14th amendment and reflect on whether this amendment led to the equal treatment of all US citizens. I then show my students the following images:  Some of my students had never seen these images, which facilitated our discussion of the racial discrimination Mexicans and other minoritized communities have historically endured in the US. We then split into small groups and each group is assigned to read one of the following children's books written in Spanish. The goal of this activity is for students to explore court cases and/or historical events that involved US Latino/x communities and that were relevant to the Civil Rights Movement. • 1931- Alvarez v. Lemon Grove School District- <u><i>Todos Iguales / All Equal by Christy Hale</i></u> • 1947- Mendez v. Westminster School district <u><i>Separados No Somos Iguales de Duncan Tonatiuh</i></u> (See appendix for additional resources) • 1954- Brown v. Board of Education (See appendix for resources) • Ruby Bridges- <u><i>La historia de Ruby Bridges by Robert Coles, BBC article</i></u> (See appendix for additional resources) Each group creates a short 5-minute presentation summarizing the main points in the book they were assigned, and they present it to the class. Students who are in the audience are required to complete a timeline using the historical events students are presenting about. We use this timeline during the rest of the unit and students continue filling it out as we discuss additional important events. Learning about these landmark events facilitate my students' understanding of the intersections of the lived experiences of Black and US Latino/x communities across time. For example, students explore how US Latino/x communities were not only residing in the US even before the Civil Rights movement, but they were also actively pushing back against segregation in US public schools and helped pave the way for the historic Brown vs. Board of Education case in 1954.
Semana 2 y 3	<u>Week theme/tema de la semana:</u> What does it mean to be Chicano? What was the Farmworkers Movement?
Week 2 and 3	<u>Week description/descripción de la semana:</u> We started this week by discussing the different theories behind the origin of the term Chicano (Resource: <i>El Término chicano/o</i>).

	Students completed a KWL chart about the Chicano Movement, where they were asked the following questions: What do I know about the Chicano Movement? What do I want to learn about the Chicano Movement? And What did I learn about the Chicano Movement? (note: this last question was answered at the end of the unit). We then read about the four components of the Chicano Movement (Spanish resource titled <i>Movimiento Chicano in Educando el Cambio</i>.) In our class, we primarily focused on exploring two components of the Chicano Movement: The Farm Worker's Movement and the 1968 East LA School Walkouts. To explore the Farm Worker's Movement, students watched the documentary, <i>Chicano the struggle in the fields</i>. They completed a summary of the documentary, and we had a classroom discussion about the content/history discussed in the documentary. Some topics we discussed in class were farmworkers: - Daily and annual salary - Life expectancy - Educational opportunities for themselves and their children - Labor conditions - Living conditions Students worked in small groups to zoom into important individuals or events discussed in the documentary. Each group had class time to conduct research and then presented their findings to the rest of the class. Some of the individuals and events mentioned in the documentary that students furthered researched were: - 1965 Delano Grape Strike (Resources: <i>La Huelga de Delano</i>, <i>La Causa</i>, <i>La Huelga de Delano</i>, <i>La Huelga de Delano: a 50 años</i>). - César Chávez (Resources: <i>Biografía de César Chávez</i>, <i>¿Quién fue César Chávez y Por Qué es Importante en E.E.U.U.?</i>). - Dolores Huerta (Resources: <i>Biografía de Dolores Huerta</i>, <i>Dolores Huerta</i>, <i>Preguntas frecuentes sobre Dolores Huerta</i>). - March from Delano to San Francisco (Resources: <i>Recordando la Histórica Peregrinación de 1966</i>, <i>El plan de Delano</i>, <i>La Voz Del Campesino</i>). - The United Farm Workers Union (Resources: <i>César Chávez y La Unión de Campesinos</i>, <i>UFW</i>, <i>Victorias del UFW</i>, <i>UFW Strikes</i>, <i>Boycotts</i>, and <i>Farm Worker Actions 1965-1975 - Mapping American Social Movements</i>). After these presentations, students are asked to work in small groups to write a short story summarizing the Farm Workers Movement. Students are asked to write their story keeping in mind their audience are 2nd and 3rd graders. After these presentations, we read an excerpt of <i>Cajas de Cartón</i> written by Francisco Jiménez. This provided an opportunity for students to visualize how the struggles in the fields also impacted the farmworkers' children. We discussed how this movement helped improve the conditions of farmworkers today, but there is still much work to be done to better not only the salary and working conditions of farmworkers, but also the lives and educational opportunities for their children. A resource that can be used to continue reflecting on this topic and how it continues to impact this community today is the documented titled <i>La Cosecha/The Harvest</i>.
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	Some questions we discussed this week were: 1. <i>¿Crees que valió la pena la lucha por los derechos de los trabajadores agrícolas en las décadas de los 60 y 70? Explica tu respuesta.</i> 2. <i>¿Cuáles fueron algunas de las victorias del sindicato United Farm Workers (UFW)?</i> 3. <i>Explica por qué los hijos de los trabajadores agrícolas tienen menos acceso a una educación justa.</i> As a class, we also explored the <i>UFW Strikes, Boycotts, and Farm Worker Actions 1965-1975 - Mapping American Social Movements</i> resource, which allowed students to visualize the impact of the farmworkers movement and see that it was something occurring nationwide, even in Chicago.
Semana 4 y 5 Week 4 and 5	<u>Week theme/tema de la semana:</u> What was the Chicano Movement? Why did US Latina/o/x students participate in protests and Walk-Outs in the 1960s? <u>Week description/descripción de la semana:</u> I start this week by asking students to answer the following question individually: <i>¿Cómo crees que era la vida de los estudiantes chicanos durante la década de 1960?</i> After engaging in a conversation about this topic, we begin to watch the movie <i>Walkout</i> (during 2-3 class periods) which documents the 1968 East LA high school student-led walkouts. I divide the movie into 2-3 class periods and engage students in written and speaking reflections about the events discussed in the film. Some topics we discuss are: 1. <i>Las condiciones en las escuelas de Los Ángeles durante la década de 1960</i> 2. <i>El activismo de Sal Castro, Paula Crisóstomo y Carlos Muñoz</i> 3. <i>El bajo índice de graduación de los estudiantes latinos</i> 4. <i>El castigo corporal por hablar español en las escuelas</i> 5. <i>La falta de maestros latinos en las escuelas</i> 6. <i>La falta de clases de literatura e historia Chicana</i> 7. <i>Las tácticas que usaron los estudiantes para luchar por sus derechos</i> 8. <i>Las intersecciones entre el Movimiento Chicano y la lucha por los derechos civiles de las comunidades minorizadas</i> 9. <i>La presencia y el apoyo de los padres en los Walkouts</i> After watching the movie, as a class, we read an article titled <i>Educación en Coachella</i> and watch 3 videos which document the <i>testimonios</i> of Ramona, Socorro, and Yolanda, who experienced and/or witnessed racial and linguistic discrimination in Coachella, California during the mid 1970s. We then discuss how continuous collective activism can promote change in our local communities. We discuss how corporal punishment, for example, is illegal in the US. But we also discuss how students continue to experience linguistic discrimination in US schools (see appendix for resources on this topic). For homework, students are asked to google other cases of linguistic discrimination that occurred in Illinois or other surrounding states. The following day, we discuss what actions we can engage in to fight against linguistic discrimination in US public schools. We then reflect on the ways in which the Chicano Movement continues to be alive today through student activism. As a class, we participate in a gallery walk, where students view images and read parts of the article titled <i>50 años después de los 'East LA Walkouts', la lucha</i>

	<i>de los estudiantes latinos por la equidad educativa en Los Ángeles continúa.</i> For homework, students are asked to write a short story summarizing the East LA Walkouts. Students are asked to write their story keeping in mind their audience are 2nd and 3rd graders. During this last week of the unit, we also explore: - The social and academic benefits of Ethnic Studies courses, Ethnic Studies course availability across the US, states that have legislation regarding Ethnic Studies and MEChA earlier Chicano student organizations active between 1967-2012 , and the impact of community activism in the fight for immigration rights (See appendix for resources). - Student activism present at Northern Illinois University. As a class, we visit the Latino Resource Center, and a staff member shares the history behind the center, specifically sharing how the center exists today because of the activism of Latino students. Students are also asked to read additional resources to further explore the history of student activism at NIU. Students then work in small groups to decide in what ways they can become activists at NIU or in our local communities.
Proyecto de la Unidad End of Unit Project	For the end of our unit project, students are asked to write a children's story documenting a historical event, the life of an activist, or movement that is important for US Latino/x communities. As a class, we talk about starting with small actions of activism and sharing important stories with elementary school children is activism. Students engage in the process of writing short stories for students who traditionally do not have access to this history until much later in their academic journeys. Here is a description of the project in Spanish. This year students' books were read by elementary and high school students in Illinois.
Additional Resources	<u>Week 1 Resources:</u> <u><i>Todos Iguales / All Equal by Christy Hale</i></u> <u><i>Separados No Somos Iguales de Duncan Tonatiuh</i>, Article</u> (teacher resource) 1954- Brown v. Board of Education, Article (teacher resource), Spanish video (Micros Jurídicos #9 Brown vs. Board of Education. Fin de la Segregación Racial) La historia de Ruby Bridges by Robert Coles, BBC article <u>Week 2 and 3 Resources:</u> El Término chicano/o). KWL chart Educando el Cambio Chicano the struggle in the fields La Huelga de Delano, La Causa, La Huelga de Delano, La huelga de Delano: a 50 años) Biografía de César Chávez, ¿Quién fue César Chávez y por qué es importante en EE.UU? Biografía de Dolores Huerta, Dolores Huerta, Preguntas frecuentes sobre Dolores Huerta). Recordando la histórica peregrinación de 1966, El plan de Delano, La voz del campesino) César Chávez y La Unión de Campesinos, UFW, Victorias del UFW, UFW Strikes, Boycotts, and Farm Worker Actions 1965-1975 - Mapping American Social Movements)

	<u>Cajas de Cartón</u> <u>La Cosecha/The Harvest.</u> <u>UFW Strikes, Boycotts, and Farm Worker Actions 1965-1975 - Mapping American Social Movements resource,</u> <u>Week 4 and 5 Resources:</u> <u>Walkout Movie Handout</u> <u>La presencia y el apoyo de los padres en los Walkouts</u> <u>Educación en Coachella</u> <u>Linguistic Discrimination in schools today: (resources: 2023, 2023, 2014)</u> <u>50 años después de los 'East LA Walkouts', la lucha de los estudiantes latinos por la equidad educativa en Los Ángeles continúa</u> <u>file:///Ethnic Studies Legislation/ State Scan</u> <u>Ethnic studies courses across the United States</u> <u>MEChA and Chicano Student Organizations 1967-2012</u> <u>Immigrant Rights Protests -- Spring 2006</u> <u>Additional resources:</u> <u>Reading list</u> <u>Chicano! Taking Back the Schools.</u> <u>Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.</u> Video. NLCC Educational Media, 1996. <u>https://centroparchive.hunter.cuny.edu/poster_series/images/brief_history_P_IV_poster.pdf</u> <u>https://www.aarp.org/espanol/politica/historia/info-2014/movimiento-chicano-mexico-fotos.html#:~:text=POL%C3%8DTICA,a%C3%B1os%20de%20activismo</u> <u>https://depts.washington.edu/moves/brown_beret_map.shtml#:~:text=In%20the%20barrios%20of%20Los,%2C%20job%2C%20and%20housing%20equality.</u> <u>https://www.california-mexicocenter.org/mujeres-chicanas-y-su-participacion-en-el-movimiento-de-trabajadores-agricolas/</u> <u>https://elpais.com/america/sociedad/art-now/2022-05-25/this-is-for-la-raza-50-anos-de-arte-chicano.html</u> <u>https://www.um.es/tonosdigital/znum28/secciones/tintero-5--literatura_chicana.htm</u> <u>La historia de los Young Lords, de pandilla a movimiento político</u>
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Conclusion

As an interdisciplinary scholar, writing a unit centered in a field that I had to explore on my own was a difficult task. However, as a US Latina SHL educator, I felt that it was part of my responsibility and activism as a scholar to provide my students with access to curriculum that documents the legacy of US Latino/x resistance against racial and linguistic discrimination. As a heritage speaker myself, I always felt that SHL curricula often excluded US Latino/x history and literature and centered Eurocentric history and literature that is often not relatable or identity affirming for our SHL students. Although this unit is not perfect, I hope it serves as a tool for other SHL educators to continue or begin to ensure their SHL curriculum is informed by the field of Ethnic Studies and explores issues of race, language, and immigration status among other important topics. I did want to add that my focus was on the Chicano Movement because most of my students are Mexican American. If your student demographics are different, I would highly encourage you to ensure you center your students' stories. Our students need to know that others before us put their lives on the line to ensure we had access to courses where our heritage language was taught. Although many things still need to change in our society, the activism of the students during the Chicano Movement paved the way for us to have more linguistic and racial freedom. We must find ways to ensure this history surpasses our SHL classroom and gets to the ears and hands of our community nationwide. I will end with a letter I wrote and share with my SHL students during our first class:

Dear Heritage, Spanish Students,

My hope is that this class teaches you more than how to speak what some call "proper Spanish," "formal Spanish" or "*castellano*."

My hope is that you understand that the way you speak Spanish is not wrong, it's perfectly correct and it makes you the unique person that you are.

My hope is that in my class you continue to explore your cultural *raíces* and that you understand that you belong *y que eres* ENOUGH.

My hope is that *nuestra clase* is centered around U.S. Latino/x history and literature that probably never made it to your school's curriculum because you had to learn *mentiras sobre Cristóbal Colón*.

My hope is that if you feel that your *español* is "horrible," "a shame," or "not good enough," that you understand that your Spanish insecurities are a result of the systemic racism in this country.

My hope is that you understand that some of you were robbed of your heritage language for the simple fact that our language was not deemed important enough.

My hope is that you understand that the simple fact that this class is being offered, *es* progress, it's a gift, *es una oportunidad*. *Algunos de nuestros antepasados fueron golpeados* for using their native tongue.

My hope is that you understand that the way you feel about your Spanish is not your parent's fault. See, they were told English was good enough. A common message from teachers to parents was (and in some places continues to be):

"*Señora*, your daughter will never make it in this country if you don't stop speaking Spanish to her at home. English only, por favor."

My hope is that you understand that this class *es una oportunidad de enamorarte de tu idioma de herencia, de tu cultura, de tu gente y de tu comunidad.*

My hope is that you get angry enough to want to maintain your heritage language *y así pasarlo de generación a generación* because that's your linguistic right.

My hope is that you understand that NOW being bilingual is an asset and a commodity, but to you, it's way more than that. *El español es tu familia, tu comida, tu música, tus emociones, tu identidad.*

My hope is that you are so empowered that when others tell you "Speak in English we are in America" you respond "Listen, *como dice* Anzaldúa you can't tame a wild tongue!"

Con amor,

Su profesora de español

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“Unhobble[ing]” Black Futures through Visual Essay Filmmaking

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“...the map to a new world is in the imagination, in what we see in our third eyes rather than in the desolation that surrounds us.” – Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*

“Conversations about Black Language are ultimately conversations about Black humanity. It’s that critical.” – Geneva Smitherman, *Black Idiom*

Abstract

This article explores a conceptual lesson project exploring Black youth learners’ critical, creative thinking through a visual essay project. The aims of this lesson are to identify associative assumptions within Black youth learners’ imagination, to unveil and/or trace salient and significant themes and motifs, to examine the narrative effect, and to investigate the influence on Black youths’ access to critical, creative thinking. Foregrounding Toni Morrison’s (1992) concept of “unhobbl[ing]” as a praxis useful in language arts teaching methods situated in decolonized, anti-racist, and abolition teaching curricula. This project takes up critical language awareness, critical literacy, and Anti-Racist Linguistic Pedagogy to address the consequences of “an inflicted language,” in relationship to Black youth, Black education praxis, and Black futures. Academic English language is the site of interrogation as a technology of illiteracy, that I posit as “imagination interference.” Conjoining Black feminist thought and socio-cognitive psychology theories, this conceptual lesson centers Black youth learners in middle grade language arts classrooms and insists that Black diasporic imagination is indispensable to cultivating Black futures.

Keywords: Critical literacy, critical thinking, creative thinking, project-based learning, imagination, Black youth learners, STEM literacy, academic language, interdisciplinary

Introduction

How do we get to the future imagined in Black studies and Afrofuturistic literature, and what skills are necessary for the journey? How do we look closer at intergenerational educational practices of marginalized groups in the U.S. and societies similar in structure and functions to inform our questions?

Emphasized by international organizations that assemble transnational economic and governance policies, 21st-century emerging literacies should focus on developing or increasing the applicability of innovative thinking, critical decision-making, and capacity for uncertainty.

“Ability to communicate, share, and use the information to solve complex problems, in being able to adapt and innovate in response to new demands, changing circumstances, and heightened degrees of uncertainty, in being able to marshal and expand the power of technology to create new knowledge, and in expanding human capacity and productivity” (Binkley et al., 2012, p. 17).

These skills are also indispensable to the creation of loving, decolonized, and equitable worlds with strong sustainability possibilities. For that reason, as we enter an era of constant and continuous emergence of advanced technologies that reduce human intervention in manual, technical, and specialized processes, our current cyclical, antiquated, always back-to-basics compulsory schooling and its denial, and witness of the under-preparing of the United States’ youth population places everyone’s future at risk. In such an economy of increased decline in occupations where functional literacy is a valued asset to gain access to resources, educators must remain diligent and creative in not only demanding equitable schooling conditions and curricula, but without fancy, design stentorian attention for the educative methods necessary for collective needs, welfare, and insight into the advanced cognitive development of our youth.

Critical Literacy

Critical language and literacy scholars have directed our attention to anti-Black mechanisms at play in literacy practices and pedagogical approaches at varying levels in U.S. schools. Scholars such as Toni Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston, Audre Lorde, June Jordan, James Baldwin, Geneva Smitherman, Jacqueline Jones Royster, and H. S. Alim examination and critique of “spoken and written language, culture, education, and social and political marginalization of minoritized ethnic groups” (Byrd et al., p. vi) greatly influenced and laid the way for the critical pivot to view “literacy as social practice” (Street, 1995, p. 24). Critical literacy research expanded the concept of literacy beyond the ability to read and to write to examine notions of power in discourse within school settings. The framework of critical literacy is located within New Literacy Studies (NLS), which are rooted in theories mainstreamed by Brian V. Street (1995), that situated literacy within socio-cultural dynamics. Yet, despite the corpus of critical scholarship making plain the challenges faced by culturally and linguistically rich students subjected to mainstreamed K-12 literacy standards, politicized research, and curriculum development are steadfast in maintaining limited epistemologies while tapering in the ongoing interrogation of a coded language and its implications for the futures required of our living. These limitations are exasperated in contexts of cultural and social evolution in conjunction with technological merger deeply embedded in our everyday existence. The political polarization in the U. S. has reignited antebellum-like agendas focused on censorship, outdated proficiency measures, and civic obedience with an evangelical crusade towards suppression. Costly and counterintuitive to the brilliant research of anti-racist education scholars, many U.S. teacher preparation/certification programs replicate the production of such supremacist and color-blind ideologies, because “the training of most English teachers has concentrated on the appreciation and analysis of literature, rather than on an understanding of the

nature of language" ("Students' right to their own language position statement" (SRTOL), (1974, n.p.).

Language of Schools

Many shifts occur when defining academic English language, however, consistent across language, linguistic, and literacy scholarship, academic English language is "described as a register that contains lexical, grammatical, and interpersonal skills specific to school that all students must master to be successful" (Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 9). In addition, Baker-Bell confirms in their work that the academic English language is indeed a site of interrogation for anti-Black schooling practices. English as a subject in primary grades is structured for the attainment and possession of a command of the language spoken in the country. Once a student moves to secondary schooling, English/Language Arts as a content becomes the teaching of perspective, ideologies, and ways to decode and language the world that are standard to U. S. customs and values. Academic English language research spanning across multiple content areas is an abstract, yet odd tapestry illuminating arguments that affix at power and access, or the lack thereof. Thus, within this conceptual lesson project, following the tradition of Black education, language, literacy, and linguistic scholarship, Black language is prioritized as a distinct, complex, and beautiful technology. Intentional centering of Black language speaks to my positionality that influences my assumptions, research, composition, and dissemination of interpretations.

Tracing the genealogy of African American Vernacular English scholarship (AAVE), the ingenuity of Black scholars proffered critical frameworks to analyze systems of education, illuminating profound political connections that favor destructive inequities. A rich collection of this research explicitly call-out de facto anti-Black rituals and routines in U.S. schooling practices, especially instruction via language arts curricula. Toni Morrison found fault in instructional practices used in societies like the U.S.:

"It's terrible to think that a child with five different present tenses comes to school to be faced with those books that are less than his own language. And then to be told things about his language, which is him, that are sometimes permanently damaging." (as cited in LeClair, 1981, pp. 123-124)

Academic standardization of a language that has looted cultures, evacuated Indigenous and diasporic ontologies, and shackled temporality in western linear epistemology subverts cognitive activities rooted in mother tongues that speaks beyond the English cosmologies embedded in the non-official language. As the Black community continued in the struggle for liberation in the 1950s and '60s, activists, community members, and families spoke against the injustices via schooling and the schoolbooks used in the instruction of Black youth. Many involved in the movement for civil rights stated, "textbooks didn't represent minorities," therefore, Morrison, having temporarily moved back to Ohio after educating at Howard University, took the position as a book editor at L. W. Singer, a division of Random House in Syracuse, New York. "Silence and evasion have historically ruled literary discourse. Evasion has fostered another, substitute language in which the issues are encoded, foreclosing open debate (Morrison, 1992, p. 9).

However, the “achievement gap” narrative and the policies of intervention that systemically target marginalized students insist on this oversight of disruptive distortions caused by the teaching and learning methods within American schools. John Baugh (2017) asserts, “ill-conceived investigation... has spawned misguided efforts to close the presumptive word gap while simultaneously ignoring other root cases for educational disparities” (p. 40). Root causes are the ways Black Americans are cognitively positioned through various modes of “schooling,” including punishment and correction, to view themselves, their ancestral contributions to world-making, and their current genius abilities and capabilities. Academic language and literacy research confirmed, “more children fail or quit school because they cannot handle academic language than because they cannot decode...” (Gee, 1992 p. 62). Thus, observing the gatekeeping, property-holding, ostracizing, school-to-prisons mechanisms in academic language, Black youth learners navigate codes of power deployed without ceasing to educatively displace them. However, striving for Black liberation through education, as “an act of love” (hooks, 1994), and the “cultivating of genius” (Muhammad & Love, 2020) remain the purpose of Black educators. This project addresses academic language and its active role in reinforcing oppressive structures its proficiency gloats to dismantle. Irrespective of its assumed value, when Black students are forced to operationalize the “language of schooling” (Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 9); “it not only causes mandatory acculturation but imposes a thought pattern” (Ivanič & Simpson, 1992, p. 156) that we understand to be counterproductive to Black youth cognition. For this article, cognition refers to the dynamic processes of memory and imagination, happening simultaneously (Morrison, 1992).

Under what conditions do Black cognition become vulnerable to nation-state sanitization, thus deleterious? Cynthia Dillard's (2012) scholarship summoned the restoration of cultural memories, to recall and remember to bring about (re)new ways of knowing. Studies, theories, and practices of remembrance can inform the recognition and transformation of Black self-actualization & identities; “through developing critical consciousness, a radical and mobilizing new awareness to knowledge and knowledge production” (Dei, 2012, p. 110). Therefore, this conceptual lesson aims to rediscover ways diasporic memories and imagination are recharged and optimized for critical thinking, mobility, and utilization. In this effort we must soberly consider forgetting as a mode of state violence within Black communities; in particular, historical memory, and trauma that is shared.

Black Youth Learners and Schooling

Entanglements of language, literacy, and power mapped by Collins and Blot (2003) confirmed through historical analysis, “the purpose of schooling... emphasized the need for public obedience rather than public participation” (p. 77). To mute, assimilate, and subjugate Indigenous, African, and Black Americans through deceptive narratives explicitly and implicitly encoded in the language of schooling were solutions European-Americans deemed necessary to convert the ‘savage’. Power and privilege situated academic English language and its sentry of ‘proper’ and/or ‘standard’ in the hands of what would be known as the middle-class citizen. Language, in all its beauty and awe, became dis-rated to establish deep socio-racial division among groups of people; to communicate with one another morphed into a procedural understanding based solely on a lexical, grammatical, and syntactical dialect of eurocentric beliefs. June Jordan (2003/2009) emphasized, “if we collaborate with the powerful then our language will lose its currency as a means to tell the truth in order to change the truth” (p. 222). Woefully, notions of power and subjugation were

embedded and disseminated through education reforms such as common and charity schools (Collins & Blot, 2003), Anti-literacy laws (Pritchard, 2017), Rockefeller's General Education Board (GEB) (Fleming & Saslaw, 1992), and the many other agendas targeting specific "poor" communities, mostly Black Americans to "not encourag[e] academics for these children... to teach students not to be philosophers, men of science, lawyers, doctors, or politicians but to meet the "lowly" needs of rural life (Fleming & Saslaw, 1992, p. 20).

Harriet Jacobs (1861/2001) recalled in her book, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, "When I was six years old, my mother died; and then, for the first time, I learned, by the talk around me, that I was a slave" (p. 2). There is an eerie likeness between Jacobs's recollection and the timeline of schooling in U. S. education systems. For most, at the age of six years old, children enter their formal years of education, and it is also the time many Black, young, eager, and alive children experience their first lessons of being Black in America. An incongruous juncture where Black community traditions of getting a good education via schools', the functions of schooling, and the lessons of servitude connect to nation-state agendas.

The Special Issue of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in the fall of 1974 stated, "Reading difficulties may be a result of... interference from the emotional bias of the material... In short, reading is so complicated a process that it provides temptations to people who want to offer easy explanations and solutions" (SRTOL, 1974, p. 10). I draw connections between critical language awareness, linguistics, and cognitive psychology theories to bring forth the concept of 'imagination interference', resisting siloed and disciplined theories of Black youths' experience in U.S. schooling contexts. Bridging interference in language discourse through a theory of forgetting that suggests, "inaccessibility of otherwise available information is that the act of recalling some information produces decrements in the recall of other similar information at a later time" (Roediger, 1974, p. 261) in an effort to offer an inquiry of critical examination. Therefore, positioning imagination as an advanced and necessary literacy, and drawing more attention to be closely with its ways of knowing, and the possibilities of cultivation in decolonized, anti-racist, and abolitionist education environments.

As of 2021, 49.4 million students attend public schools, and of that, 7.4 million are Black students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Although education's statistical narrative is unreliable and the site of rhetorical Black death, what is certain are the possibilities millions of Black youths are experiencing a dilemma that remains under-recognized in our education policies, praxis, and research. In the 30 years of administration, NAEP reports indicate that Black/African American children have never reached above 18% proficiency in reading and language arts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022, p. 5). The concern and impetus remain in the systemic fallacies that veil who the data is informing because as Smitherman (2017) noted "more money has been spent on the same remedies that have not worked well in the past." (p. 501), and yet the corporate investors continue to profit off the "illiteracy problem" of Black youth.

What is revealed when we examine the deep structures "meaning.... depends on social attitudes, and cultural norms (SRTOL, 1974); "the raw material used to construct our sentences and phrases; it is the actual source of meaning" (Smitherman, 2017) of academic English language and place the concept within larger socio-political contexts? More specifically, what ideas and perspectives are conveyed through complex grammatical structures that only render certain students' "solutions"

by internalizing division and negation as means of “success?” Smitherman (2017) educated us about Carl Bereiter, and his misread of Black language noting “the absence of the concept of negation, i.e., the word not does not appear in the Black pre-schoolers,” (p. 502) commencing “deficient” interventions for Black youth. However, June Jordan (1988) explained,

“Our language devolves from a culture that abhors all abstraction, or anything tending to obscure or delete the fact of the human being who is here and now/the truth of the person who is speaking or listening. And every sentence assumes the living and active participation of at least two human beings, the speaker and the listener” (p. 367).

Ebony Rose (2019) pointed out, the process is to both extract the various languages, knowledges, and cultural systems of these populations, and then to destroy these artifacts, as if they never existed. Academic language is a continual attack on Indigenous knowledge. This is done in history and literature textbooks (p. 33).

Therefore, academic English language is a plausible site of interrogation for consequential schooling outcomes for Black youth, as Toni Morrison expressed, “He may never know the etymology of Africanisms in his language, not even know that ‘hip’ is a real word or that ‘the dozens’ meant something. This is a really cruel fallout of racism” (as cited in LeClair, 1981, p. 124).

If we can now see academic English language to be a construct of governance, a product of settler colonialism operating as a foundation and pillar for policy implementation, curriculum design, and pedagogical approach, (not to exclude citizenship and basic human rights) academic English language proximity to whiteness as property connects with Baldwin’s (Baldwin & Peck, 2017) position in the film documentary, *I Am Not Your Negro*, noting that whiteness is simply a metaphor for power. Academic English language can no longer disguise itself as a tool for attaining freedom. What is clear is that the academic English language is a coded system used to measure, configure, categorize, and marginalize, and is ostensibly snarled to the socio-political agendas that exalt labor over love, production over holistic wellness, and war over peace. Therefore, the construct of academic English language within a society that benefits from “a citizenry which will simply obey the rules” (Baldwin, 2008, p. 679) is the crux of literacy attainment, and, “Not too many people wanted to grant that maybe schools really are political institutions teaching power to the powerful and something unpalatable and self-destructive to the weak” (Jordan, 2003/ 2009, p. 218).

The focus on academic English language and its impact on Black cognition is situated in middle-grade Language Arts classrooms due to my experience as a language arts teacher in Florida, Texas, and Georgia, and my knowledge of the possibilities and limitations of English Language Arts (ELA) curricula in U.S. public schools. During my fourteen years as a classroom teacher, I agree with Smitherman (1973) when they stated, “[Black language] BL speaking students. They are already bi-dialectal. They use different forms of speech when talking to different people. Sometimes consciously, more often intuitively, they take cognizance of the situational context and style-shift accordingly” (p. 775), therefore how is it that American educational institutions and networks still memorialize their lore about Black literacy capabilities, which is “faulty, invalid, imprecise, spurious, specious, and just plain full of shit” (Smitherman, 2017, p. 502)? And more to the point, how can

we, justice-oriented educators engender educative spaces for Black youth where creative and linguistic justice praxis attend to the cognitive consequences of the ongoing literacy war?

Thus, I present a conceptual lesson project as an entry point to exploring Black cognition in the present-day educational context and to expand the research and inform policies to center Black, critical and creative literacy practices. This project is grounded in concepts of “unhobble” as praxis and creative method for interference release; guided by Toni Morrison’s awareness, “in a wholly racialized society, there is no escape from racially inflected language and the work of the writers do to hobble the imagination from the demands of that language is complicated, interesting and definitive,” (Morrison, 1992, p. 12-13) “I am keenly aware of the fact that I write in a wholly racialized society that can and does hobble the imagination,” “excavating the credibility of the sources of the imagination; not the nature of the imagination” (Morrison 1995, p. 93); “I wanted my imagination as unencumbered as possible and as responsible as possible” (Morrison, 2019, n.p).

Conceptual Lesson Project

This conceptual lesson project builds upon an assignment completed in African American Rhetoric, taught by Dr. Kevin Browne at Syracuse University, which explored creative interpretations of the importance of African American rhetoric. Analyzing the composition process of the visual essay, different questions emerged regarding my imaginative output. These questions sought clarity of my choices, and to one, notice, and two, investigate the constraints hobbling my imagination, even within an artistic expression centering Black (re)memory, defined in this conceptual lesson design as a revisit and exploration of what is and can be remembered, or previously known; told. The results from the reflexive inquiry practice led me to create another visual essay utilizing what I learned from the first project. Key components I observed while making the second visual essay were an intentional awareness of imagination output, related to, yet different from meta-cognition in the degree of criticality; a meta-level critical discourse analysis, elucidating other possibilities; and the responsibility of critical imagination. Currently, I use these observations as guiding posts, not categories of measurement, potentially grounding principles.

Through imposed and un/conscious silences, Black youth learners experience a distinct “weathering” (Cogburn, 2019) when schooled via “structural, political, and representational aspects of violence” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244). Toni Morrison (1993) made clear in their Nobel Prize for Literature Lecture that we should not take language lightly because, “Oppressive language does more than represent violence, it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge, it limits knowledge.” Therefore, this conceptual lesson project binds academic English language as a metonymy for oppressive language and makes visible how Black imagination grounded in an authentic, critical exploration of memory (diasporic) can be cared for and developed through the process of project-based learning, in the form of a virtual essay that challenges the gatekeeping and harm done by academic English language.

Anticipated Outcome

Using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Proficiency level descriptors to assess students’ ability to locate and interpret varying scales of information and its sources, to analyze diverse ranges of texts and contexts, and imagine/innovate solutions and resources for

current and future dispositions of self and community creates alternative framing and baselines for Black youth literacy capabilities and practice. Furthermore, as an inquiry-based model sustainable through a multi-unit and multimodal instruction, we can steer ourselves through to answer the question, how does critical thinking pivot when Black youth are the source of knowledge and voice in their language arts instruction? Critical creative thinking is a cognitive ability necessary for cultivating equitable and just futures. In its entirety, this conceptual lesson project possesses the potential to bring together community members, educators, and researchers to discuss the significance and plan the development of imagination as a critical literacy for Black youth and Black futures.

Method/Praxis

Lesson Project Title: Critical Imagination & Context Analysis

Broader Context Question: How can imagination support my critical thinking abilities?

Table 1. Sample Learning Goals that Integrate Middle Grade New York State Standards for ELA, English Language Development

- *(Reading informational (RI) or literary texts (RL))*

Activity: Students develop critical, creative awareness of narrative composition and its process
Critical Thinking Concepts: Recurring Themes, Sequencing, Context, Logic & Reasoning
Critical Imagination & Context Analysis

Reading & Analyzing (Creative, Critical Thinking)

New York State Standards fused with Computational and Design Language Connections

Computational Language	Literary Design Thinking
Input	Write (recreate) narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, relevant descriptive details, and clear sequencing.
Decomposition	Determine one or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; summarize a text. (RI&RL)
Pattern Recognition/Representation	Cite textual evidence to strongly support an analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences. (RI&RL)
Abstraction / Generalization	Conduct research to answer questions, including self-generated questions, drawing on multiple sources, and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate. Generate additional related questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
Evaluation and Logic	Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear [articulation].

Students are to make a 5–7-minute short film illustrating a contextualized theme (*e.g. learning, living, becoming, discovery/wonder*)

This project-based learning activity is designed to align at the end of a mix-genre literary analysis (fiction & non-fiction) unit

Materials:	A journal/notebook; stock video clips/access to a royal-free content website, or content owned by students; ear/headphones for editing; any video/photo editing software (there are many free/low-cost options available).
Helpful Guidelines:	- Align the overall theme to the broader topic of the unit. - Establish a subject(s) of focus for the project. - Review and provide reference of literary elements and concepts. - Distinguish types of dialogue - Revisit and provide reference to types of scene sequences to be included: - Simple, Compound, Complex, and Compound-complex; Poetry
Proposed Timeline	3-4 Weeks: Visual Essay Composition (4-5 day/week)
Projected Directions/Sessions:	Session One: Students select and arrange their video footage in folders. (Thematic categorizing) Session Two: Students continue to select video footage and add sound effects, clips, and music. (Symbolism, motifs, signs) Session Three: Students are to begin their pre-production storyboard: A Day of planning and playing. (distinct patterns and representation) Session Four- Seven: Students are to spend concentrated time crafting their visual essay. Session Eight: Students are to write a reflection about their experience crafting their essay; conversations with the creator. (Generalizations and abstractions) Session Nine-Ten: Students are to analyze their visual essay using the critical imagination reflexive practice guideposts. (Evaluation and logic) Session Eleven - Fourteen: Whole class film viewing, analysis, and dialogue. (dissemination, collective inquiry, and expression)

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Podcasting as a Pedagogical Tool to Create Latinx Youth Counterstories

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Abstract

The Summer Podcast Workshop (SPW) used podcasting as a pedagogical tool to have Latinx youth create counterstories. The learning objectives, program themes, and lesson plans are shared in this article. In the workshop, students learned technical podcasting skills to articulate their lived experiences as Latinx youth. Students reflected on the politics of storytelling and listening throughout the workshop. The student voices focused on three themes including (1) learning the technical skills of podcasting, (2) building community with their peers, and (3) centering their lived experiences. The workshop demonstrates that podcasting can be a powerful pedagogical tool in centering the counterstories of Latinx youth through the production process and sharing of their stories.

Keywords: Latinx youth, podcasting, storytelling, and summer programs

Introduction

With a grant from United Way of Dane County, the Friends of Sánchez Scholars (FoSS) Board of Directors established the Summer Podcast Workshop (SPW) as an opportunity to teach Latinx youth about podcasting and to share their voices. Gerardo Mancilla is on the Board of Directors for FoSS and helped coordinate the summer program. He has a podcasting background as the host of the *Educators and Immigration* podcast. Anjuli Brekke developed and taught the workshops. Her interest in audio storytelling began during her graduate work in Seattle. As part of her dissertation, she led several podcasting workshops with community members of all ages discussing experiences of racism and strategies for resistance. As an Assistant Professor at University of Wisconsin-Parkside, she teaches a community-based learning course in podcasting. She has been honored to listen to hundreds of stories and help give community members the tools to record, edit, and share their voices (Brekke, 2021; Brekke et al., 2021). Luz Rodriguez Camacho was a participant in the program.

Podcasting as a Pedagogical Tool

Given that the students in the SPW program were all Latinx, we used LatCrit to guide the program's development and focus. LatCrit scholars contextualize the lived experiences of Latinx participants

by providing a multidimensional lens that incorporates language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Yosso, 2006). One important aspect of LatCrit is the creation of counterstories that center the narratives of marginalized communities (Delgado, 1989). Yosso (2006) argues that counterstories can help build community among those at the margins and can challenge the perceived wisdom of those in society's center. Mancilla's (2018) study demonstrates how Latinx youth counterstories can validate their lived experiences and share their knowledge.

Numerous scholars have documented the potential of digital media to offer marginalized communities a means of counter-storytelling. Alemán and Alemán (2016) focus on critical race media projects as a means to create counter-storytelling spaces for Latinx students. They explore how the production process of these projects "Cultivate the voices of resistance and reclamation in the Latina/o communities" (p. 289). Additionally, Becerra and Cárvanes (2023) discuss their podcast which focuses on *pláticas* for first-generation, queer Latinxs in academia. They explain how the process of creating their podcast allowed them to build a counterspace—a pocket of resistance that centers queer and Latinx identities. Vrikki and Malik (2019) similarly argue that podcasts are an "emergent space" for marginalized communities "to mobilize as a counterpublic against the grain of dominant racialized representations and narratives produced by mainstream media" (p. 274). Heise and Hassan (2023) provided an example of how resettled refugee youth created the *Now You Hear Us* podcast as a counter-storytelling practice to include their voices and stories as they experienced the conflict-to-peace spectrum.

Podcasting can be used as a pedagogical tool to facilitate counter-storytelling among Latinx students and to create a counter-space in the production process. Benmayor (2012) explains how digital *testimonios* can be used to create these counter-storytelling spaces: "We understood our stories to be *testimonios* because they were the result of an oral process of telling, recording, and bearing witness to each other's life stories" (p. 507). They further explain that digital *testimonios* differentiate themselves within digital storytelling in that they tie the personal to the collective and involve a collaborative process of production and creation. Through creating their digital narratives, students in Benmayor's Latina Life Stories project learned cultural knowledge, theorized about their own lived experiences, and collectively discussed their new contextualized and historized understanding. This project gave students the tools to "tell their truths and be heard" (p. 521). Similarly, through the SPW project, our students worked collaboratively to create counterstories through their podcasts that spoke to their embodied knowledge and how their experiences reverberated through their wider communities.

Program Learning Objectives

The SPW took place during the 2022 summer. Ten Sánchez Scholars participated in the four-week hybrid program. The FoSS board worked with the Madison Public Library's Bubbler program to secure meeting space and equipment for the program. The Bubbler is a maker space program from the library to engage youth in learning opportunities through creating, making, designing, and exploring arts (Bubbler, 2023). The goal of the workshop was for each participant to interview someone, edit their interview, and create a podcast from the interview. Similar to the work Benmayor (2012) did with the Latina Life Stories, we encouraged students to draw connections between how their lived experiences and those of their potential interview partners might speak

to wider themes of identity and challenges faced by their communities. Conversations and *pláticas* took place throughout the process. Knecht and Aviña (2023) define *pláticas* as conversations that are “informal, vulnerable, and based on a sense of confianza (confidence), trust (respeto), and personalismo (mutual holistic sharing) between the researcher and the contributors” (p. 94). A strength of the SPW program was the trust that was built among the students and between the students and their mentors through this informal sharing. This trust gave participants confidence in articulating their narratives and developing technical skills. The process of recording, editing, and sharing personal narratives can be daunting. Crafting personal podcasts among trusted friends and mentors enabled the Sánchez Scholars students to explore topics they may otherwise have shied away from, such as the mental health impacts of the pandemic on their communities or the challenges faced by undocumented students applying for college.

Although students discussed challenges facing their community in their podcasts, we could have incorporated a greater focus on helping students envision pathways for change through their podcasts. Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) projects provide students with a framework to enact liberatory change (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Tintiangco-Cubales et al. further explain that “YPAR provides students the opportunity to use their education and lived experiences to address problems in their school and community” (p. 115). In the process, both students and teachers respond to community needs. Additionally, Benmayor (2012) also mentions that “strong testimonios... ‘write back’ to difficult experiences that are common to Latin@ youth and ‘write for’ their peers and younger generations” (p. 515). Although students were encouraged to make connections between their lived experiences and wider issues faced by their communities, we could have engaged the students in a more explicit discussion regarding how their podcasts might also address modes of resistance.

The SPW project sought to provide spaces for students to learn about and enact counter-storytelling through the process of making a podcast. As such, the SPW program had two sets of Learning Objectives:

Podcasting Skills Learning Objectives:

- Understand storytelling basics
- Build community connections through researching and interviewing friends, mentors, and loved ones
- Learn the essentials of quality sound and podcast production and design
- Edit, mix, and export original podcasts

Cultural Identity Learning Objectives:

- Focus on students’ bilingual and bicultural identity
- Focus on identity, language, and heritage through stories
- Integrate family and community members into the projects

Program Themes

Luz and another student presented their *testimonio* about their participation in the program at a conference. As we reflected on what they had shared, we identified three common themes. The first theme was related to the technical skills of learning a podcast. The second theme focused on

building community among the scholars. The final theme related to issues impacting the Latinx community and identity.

Theme 1: Learning Technical Podcasting Skills

- Students had limited previous knowledge of podcasts and podcasting.
- Students emphasized transferable podcasting skills they developed through the workshop (interviewing, editing, and speaking skills).
- Students learned about the maker space at the public library which had many technology resources including a sound booth for recording music and software for editing sound and video.
- In selecting an interview partner for their podcasts, students emphasized the importance of choosing peers who had similar intersectional identities to discuss sensitive topics.

Theme 2: Building Community Among the Sánchez Scholars

- The workshop provided a space to build community among the Sánchez Scholars members.
- Students were in different schools and grades. The workshop provided a space for them to share advice about school and educational resources.
- Hearing others' stories made them more comfortable in sharing their own stories.
- Post-covid reconnecting opportunity (focusing on being physically with each other and learning together).
- The workshop facilitated open and organic conversation with friends.

Theme 3: Issues impacting the Latinx community and Identity

- Some students interviewed family members and were able to learn more about their family's history.
- Topics focused on daily challenges and experiences of students (e.g. COVID-19, mental health); The struggles of undocumented youth; and first-generation college experiences and transitioning to college.
- Students discussed the importance of connecting with people in their community whom they chose to interview.
- The workshop provided a space to conduct and create a podcast in Spanish.

Lesson Plans

Nine lesson plans were developed for the program. Lesson 1 focused on welcoming the students and introductions. Then, Lessons 2 and 3 focused on storytelling basics. Lessons 4 and 5 focused on interviewing methods. Lessons 6, 7, and 8 focused on the editing process. Finally, Lesson 9 focused on sharing the final projects. The following section will outline each of the lesson plans.

Lesson 1: Community Building & Introductions

The first lesson focused on an introduction to the SPW. Due to COVID, the scholars had not worked together much so they were also getting to know each other.

Procedures:

- Step 1: Ask students about their favorite Podcast. This allows for a conversation about podcasts and what they know. Students may also mention additional platforms that they use (YouTube, TikTok, and Stitcher). Students can discuss what information they receive from these platforms.
- Step 2: Icebreaker 1: If you could have any superpower, what superpower would you have and why? Discuss the podcast episode "[*Portrait Of: Gabby Rivera*](#)" which discusses Rivera's creation of a queer Latina superhero for Marvel Comics. Icebreaker 2: What are important issues you see within your community? How would you cover this issue in a podcast?
- Step 3: Discuss the workshop and learning objectives.
- Step 4: Have students brainstorm who they could interview for their podcast and why.

Lesson 2: What is Storytelling

This lesson provides background information about storytelling and podcasting. In order to align with Ethnic Studies Pedagogy, this lesson should also include information on how storytelling has been used by communities of color. Zavala (2018) explains that Ethnic Studies (1) challenges the historical neglect of communities of color and (2) reclaims students' cultural identities. Providing a grounding in Ethnic Studies is needed for students to understand how oppressed peoples have used storytelling as a form of resistance.

Procedures:

- Step 1: Discuss what is a podcast and provide historical information on podcasting, radio, and broadcasting. For ideas, draw from [*Tools for Podcasting*](#) Chapter 1
- Step 2: Discuss how storytelling broadly and podcasting in particular have been used by Latinx communities as a form of resistance. Discuss how the podcast industry as a whole still centers whiteness and needs to become more culturally and linguistically diverse.
- Step 3: Discuss various podcast formats. Provide students with a podcast template. Students can modify it as needed.
- Recommended model for students: Start with a "hook" (between 30 seconds to one minute) to grab the audience's attention. Then, the middle segment has the interview or information that is being shared (suggested length of 10-20 minutes). Lastly, there is a conclusion (30 seconds to one minute) where the host can summarize the main points from the episode and reiterate the importance of the program.

Lesson 3: Interviews, Storytelling and Counter-storytelling

This lesson introduces students to the concept of counter-storytelling. As mentioned earlier, counterstories are one aspect of both LatCrit and Ethnic Studies Pedagogies. Zavala (2018) explains that "a pedagogy is futile if it does not center colonized peoples' survival and recovery, and if it doesn't create spaces for students to critically reframe their lives in ways that counter the neocolonial situations that limits their rehumanization" (p. 53). LatCrit and Critical Race Theory (CRT) acknowledge the historical and contemporary realities of race, racism, and white privilege (Yosso, 2006) and serve as a tool to deconstruct whiteness, privilege, and oppression. Yosso (2005)

further explains that *testimonios* and counter-storytelling can be tools to further unpack people's lived experience through a CRT lens.

Delgado (1989) used the term counter-storytelling to describe how people tell stories and experiences of communities that are usually marginalized. Zavala (2018) further explains that "counter-storytelling is a medium for challenging the dominant/master narrative in our society" (p. 62). In the process, students can counter the deficit thinking and challenge dominant narratives and critically reflect and analyze issues impacting their communities. This necessitates providing culturally relevant curriculum and helping students draw connections between theories and their lived experiences. Zavala stresses the importance of healing as part of decolonizing pedagogies. Through the collective and collaborative process of counter-storytelling, students enact spaces of healing that validate their lived experiences. This lesson provides students with a theoretical framework to understand counter-storytelling and concrete examples of this theory in practice. It explores whose stories are currently missing from the media, and why representation matters.

This lesson also addresses intended audiences and who students feel comfortable entrusting with their stories. The tensions of digital storytelling regarding issues of privacy and control over youth narratives in online spaces are important to explore. Digital storytelling, especially for minoritized youth, runs the risk of reaching unintended audiences. This point is critical in thinking about the limits of digital storytelling: under what circumstances of circulation can marginalized youth feel empowered to expose their personal stories? For digital storytelling to be a form of empowerment, the needs of represented communities must be centered throughout the processes of production and dissemination. By the end of the lesson, students will pitch a story idea, brainstorm multiple potential interview subjects, and consider their intended audience.

Procedures:

- Step 1: Have students discuss issues in their community. Define counter-storytelling for students and ask them to consider why it is important to hear stories from the lived experiences and truths of marginalized communities.
- Step 2: Play a story from the [StoryCorps Historias online archive](#)
- Step 3: Using this archive, focus the discussion on Latinx stories and when/how students have seen/heard Latinx stories.
- Step 4: Have students brainstorm potential interview partners.
- Step 5: Have students discuss the intended audience for their podcasts and how it will shape their podcast. Discuss students' comfort with sharing their stories within the workshop and/or online. Emphasize that students are not required to share their completed podcasts.

Lesson 4: Interviewing techniques

In this lesson, students will learn how to set up a pre-interview, interview best practices, where to conduct an interview, and the technology available to them. Also, check in with students about their potential interview subject and if they have contacted them to set up an interview.

Procedures:

- Step 1: Start by checking in with the students. Ask who they would like to interview and if they have contacted them. Discuss setting a date for a pre-interview. Have them brainstorm a backup plan if their intended interview subject falls through.
- Step 2: Discuss available technology for recording including microphones, headphones, and recording devices. Cell phone technology provides students with easy-to-use recording equipment that may lessen some of their interview anxiety. Provide students with an overview of available tech resources they could use for future projects. Draw from Chapter three in *Tools for Podcasting* to give this overview.
- Step 3: Discuss recording tips. First, focus on the recording space and sound. Have students find a small space with deadening materials (like carpets, drapes, and foam boards) to prevent reverb. Avoid recording in places with hard surfaces. Set the recorder up about six inches from the interviewee's mouth. Place on a stand or stack of books to reduce handling noise. Always record a backup on a secondary device. Students should also set their smartphones to airplane mode so that they are not interrupted during the recording.
- Step 4: Teach students how to use their voice recording application on their phone. Have students practice recording on their phones.
- Step 5: Have students think about what they would like to get out of the interview. Who do they want to interview and what aspect of that person's narrative do they want to highlight?
- Step 6: Focus on the art of interviewing. Students listen actively and pivot the conversation if needed. Start the interview with easy questions to ease into the conversation. They should end with "big picture" questions to highlight why the interview is important.
- Step 7: Discuss interviewing best practices. Have students send their interview questions ahead of the interview and arrive early to the interview to set up the technology. They should also have a backup recording device. After the interview, they should follow up and thank the interviewee for their time.

Lesson 5: Asking Questions and Interviewing Practice

This lesson focuses on giving students practice coming up with compelling interview questions and practice conducting interviews.

Procedures:

- Step 1: Go over the process of asking open-ended questions. The questions can focus on stories and events. The questions can also highlight the interviewee's feelings and emotional context. The interviewer can begin by sharing their own lived experience. The interviewer should avoid asking multiple questions packed into one.
- Step 2: Listen to *How Maria Hinojosa Learned To Fluff Her Feathers* and discuss what they noticed.
- Step 3: Have the students work in pairs to consider what kind of story they would like to focus on in their interview questions.
- Step 4: Go over the three-act structure in storytelling. Act 1 focuses on setting the scene. Student questions should orient the audience to their topic and their interviewee. Act 2 focuses on flushing out the vivid details of the interviewee's story. Have students consider how to ask questions that will allow for vivid storytelling. Lastly, Act 3 focuses on wrapping up the story. Have students consider the larger "why" questions to provide a conclusion

for the audience. The students need to know that the interview may not have a clear ending as the interviewee is telling their story.

- Step 5: Have students practice interviewing each other with their phones. Give them time to come up with three interview questions and time to conduct the interviews. Give them an optional prompt to focus on in their practice interviews, such as “Tell me about a mentor who has made a big impact on your life.”
- Step 6: Debrief the practice and answer questions that may come up. Have students reflect on interviewing challenges and successful strategies.

Lesson 6: Introduction to the Editing Process

This lesson introduces students to sound editing software, including how editing impacts podcast listening. Students will listen to podcasts and discuss the audio used. Students should finish recording their podcast interviews by lesson 7.

Procedures:

- Step 1: Begin by showing more examples of podcasts. The [Historias archive](#) has several podcast clips to choose from. [The Latino Underground](#) offers additional examples of counterstories. As you play podcasts, have students focus on the structure of the podcast and how it is edited.
- Step 2: Discuss the students’ first impressions of the story.
- Step 3: Inquire about the technical aspects of the podcast (e.g. vocal tics like umms and silences). Discuss how these affect the listening experience.
- Step 4: Introduce [Adobe Audition](#) as the editing tool that the students will use for the program. Give students a basic tutorial on how to use the program. Adobe Audition was selected because it was available at the public library for free. There is also free editing software available such as [Audacity](#) that might be a better fit for your students.
- Step 5: Homework: Have students interview somebody before the next class.

Lesson 7: Editing an Intro and Outro

Students will work on their intros and outros. They should bring their recorded interviews.

Procedures:

- Step 1: Check in on how students are doing with their interviews. Ideally, they should have recorded their interviews by this time. If students need more time, they can use this class to record their interviews with a peer.
- Step 2: For the students who have completed their interviews, focus on writing an introduction and outro for their podcast. This will include writing a few sentences about their vision for their podcast.
- Step 3: Have students record their introduction and outro for their podcasts.
- Step 4: Have students import their interviews, introductions, and outros to the editing software. They will add music in the next lesson.
- Step 5: Have students listen to their interview recordings and decide what parts of their recordings they would like to use for their podcast.

Lesson 8: Editing and Finalizing Your Story

Students will add music to their podcasts and polish it.

Procedures:

- Step 1: Discuss royalty-free music and why it's important to use it. The website [Free Music Archive](#) can be used to have students find royalty-free music.
- Step 2: Have students explore the website and select music for their podcast. Have students download the file and then upload it in Audition.
- Step 3: Students will need time to edit their interview, their introduction, and their music.
- Step 4: Check in with students to see how they are doing with their editing, and offer help and advice as needed.
- Step 5: Ask if they would like to share parts of their podcast for the next lesson. Some students may not feel comfortable sharing their podcast episodes yet.
- Step 6: Homework: Ask students to continue editing their podcasts to be ready to share by the next lesson if they choose.

Lesson 9: Listening Session Party

The goal is to have students share their podcasts during this final session, but some may not feel comfortable doing so. Students in our workshop had intimate conversations with family members and friends and those conversations were not always meant for public-facing audiences. The ethical question of what gets produced and shared with others is one that took place throughout the workshop. Have students reflect on their intended audience and the impact they want to make with their podcasts. Students can keep the interview between the two individuals or choose to share that conversation within the podcast workshop and/or online.

Procedures:

- Step 1: Before the lesson, ask students to email you their podcasts to share during the Listening Session Party. This allows you to prepare enough time for all the podcasts that are willing to be shared, and time for students to reflect on the process of creating their stories.
- Step 2: For students who do not feel comfortable sharing their podcasts, offer them the opportunity to share their experience with the program and space to reflect on the process of creating their podcasts.
- Step 3: Allow all participants to share as much as they feel comfortable.
- Step 4: Discuss resources and future opportunities for them to continue developing their podcasting skills.

Lesson 10: Sharing the Experience with the Larger Public

General information about the project and the learning that occurred was shared publicly on the FoSS (2022) website. With their consent, we also shared pictures of the students that were taken during the program. The authors, two students, and two coordinators presented this program at the International Conference on Education and Justice. Additionally, Mancilla and Rodriguez

Camacho (2023) also shared about the program on the *Education for Sustainable Democracy* podcast. In this way, the lessons learned from the program were shared publicly while also respecting the participants' desire to control their own narratives.

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ANALYZING AS AN ARTivist! Worksheet and Curriculum

Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales, San Francisco State University

"I have a social responsibility for my painting, to try to make our world a little better" - Pacita Abad (1946-2004)

Ethnic Studies activist art is rooted in the purpose of personal and collective liberation. Art has been part of Ethnic Studies since the beginning. From Indigenous art to political posters and picket signs, to films and dance, art has been integral to the movement. The following is a way to analyze through the lens of being and becoming an ARTivist. An activist is one that creates activist art and/or one who is inspired by activist art.

Step 1: Consider the following compelling Ethnic Studies question: **Does activist art have the power to eradicate racism?**

Step 2: Choose relevant ETHNIC STUDIES activist art of any form/genre. (We encourage comparing historical and contemporary art.)

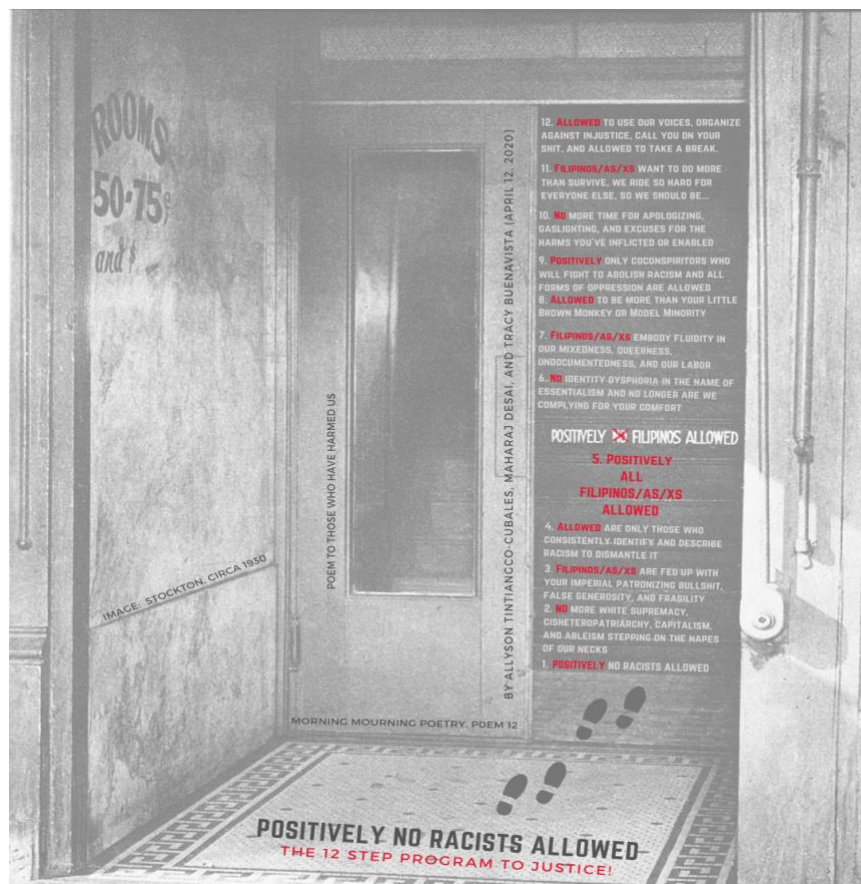
Step 3: Use A.R.T. Method to analyze the art. (You can also use this method to create art.)

ANALYZING AS AN ARTivist!	INITIAL REACTIONS	IMAGES (this can be changed to movement or any art element)	TEXT (this can be changed to any art element)	TECHNIQUE
ANALYZE The Problem: <i>What do you see? Who is represented in this art?</i> <i>What is the art saying? What is the problem that the art aims to address? Who has the power? What oppressive systems are in place?</i>				

REFLECT On Relevance: <i>How does it make you feel? How is this art relevant or connected to your life?</i>				
TRANSFORM: <i>What does this art inspire you to do? Is this art transformative? What is its impact or potential influence? How does this art influence the kind of art you may want to create?</i>				

After using A.R.T. method, answer the following the compelling question:

Does activist art have the power to eradicate racism?



Biography

Dr. Tintiangco-Cubales was born and raised on Ohlone land with parents who were immigrants from the Philippines—womb (Batangas) and seed (Tarlac). She is a distinguished professor in the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University. Since 2000, she's been teaching Asian American Studies focusing on Filipina/x/o (American) Studies. She is also an affiliated faculty member in Educational Leadership. She is currently the director of curriculum for UCLA's Foundations and Futures: Asian American and Pacific Islander Multimedia Textbook. In 2024, she was honored with the Wang Family Award, one of the most prestigious honors faculty can receive in the California State University (CSU) system for her teaching, service, and scholarship. Also, in 2024, she became an American Educational Research Association Fellow. She was also featured in this year's Asian Women Are Strong event. Recently she also got word that she is being honored with the Association of Asian American Studies Mentorship award.

She has mentored hundreds of critical undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students who are now teaching and working in schools, colleges, and community organizations across the nation. Prior to her position at SFSU, she did her undergraduate work at UC Berkeley in Ethnic Studies and received her Ph.D. from UCLA in Education. In 2001, she founded Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP), a "*barangay*" that provides Ethnic Studies courses and curriculum, develops radical educators, and creates resources for Filipina/x/o communities and similarly marginalized people. She has worked with many educators, schools, and school districts throughout the nation to co-develop curriculum and frameworks that center pedagogies rooted in Ethnic Studies, social justice, wellness, activism, praxis, solidarity, and humanization. She is also the co-founder and director of Community Responsive Education (CRE), a national firm that supports the development of responsive, equitable, and justice-driven educators. Dr. Tintiangco-Cubales is also a producer for *Larry the Musical* and the *Art of Work Film*, both premiering in 2024. She is the author of many books, articles, and essays focused on the applications of critical pedagogy, the Ethnic Studies curriculum, Motherscholarship, and Pinayism. She has also served as an editor for several anthologies and journals such as *At 40: Asian American Studies*, the *Journal of Asian American Studies*, *Asian American and Pacific Islander Nexus*, and co-editor for the Sage *Encyclopedia of Filipina/x/o American Studies*. Allyson is a loving partner to Val Tintiangco-Cubales, a phenomenal teacher and leader, and the mother of Mahalaya, a prolific dancer and artist.

The REAL Story of COATLICUE and Her Children: The Moon, The Sun, and all 400 of Her Stars

Jeanette TIZAPAPALOTL Godoy

SETTING: On a hill in Coatepec, México

TIME: Before the year CE-ACATL, 1519 AD

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

COATLICUE {coh-ah-TLEE-coeh}: Mother Earth; loving mom; well-grounded

COYOLXAUHQI {coh-yohl-SHAU-kee}: MEXICA (Aztec) Energy of the Moon;
teenager; thinks SHE knows best

HUITZIL {wee-TSEE-l}: hummingbird; sneaky; mischievous

HUITZILOPOCHTLI {wee-tsee-loh-POCH-tlee}: MEXICA (Aztec) Energy of the Sun;
teenager; only speaks Spanish; thinks HE knows best

OMECIHUATL {oh- meh-SEE-wah-tl}: MEXICA (Aztec) Energy of Creation;
grandmother; silly

OMETECUHTLI {oh- meh-teh-COO-tlee}: MEXICA (Aztec) Energy of Creation;
grandfather; funny

ENSEMBLE OF 400 STARS: chorus; loyal to COYOLXAUHQI

Playwright's Notes

This play is to be performed with **dignity** and **respect**, as if in ceremony. The characters, which to many can be considered gods and goddesses, represent energies that are venerated still 'til this day by many indigenous people of Anahuac. In addition, the languages and vernacular dialects used in this play: Nahuatl, Spanish, English, and Spanglish should be embraced and pronounced correctly without stereotypical accents. It should also be noted

that all elements of this play including dances, songs, props, masks, puppets, drums, and regalia should be as close to the original ones used in Mexico (Aztec) ceremonies. Lastly, all participating in this play should most importantly, **have fun!**

MEANING AND PRONUNCIATION KEY for NAHUATL WORDS:

CE-ACATL {Ce}-{ah-CAH-tl}: year 1-Reed; year Hernan Cortez entered Mexico

CHIMALLI {ch-ee-ma-LEE}: shield

CIHUATL {sEE-wa-t}: woman

COATLICUE {coh-ah-TLEE-cooeh}: Mother Earth

COYOLXAUHQUI {coh-yohl-SHAU-kee}: MEXICA (Aztec) Energy of the Moon

CUEITL {cu-EE-tl}: skirt

HUEHUETEOTL {weh-weh-teh-otl}: drum

HUITZIL {wee-TSEE-l}: hummingbird

HUITZILOPOCHTLI {wee-tsee-loh-POCH-tlee}: MEXICA (Aztec) Energy of the Sun

MEXICA {meh-SHEE-ka}: Aztecs

MICTLAN {mEEk-lawn}: MEXICA (Aztec) underworld

OLLIN {o-LEEN}: movement

OMECIHUATL {oh- meh-SEE-wah-tl}: MEXICA (Aztec) Energy of Creation; "Lady of Duality"

OMETECUHTLI {oh- meh-teh-COO-tlee}: MEXICA (Aztec) Energy of Creation; "Lord of Duality"

OMETEOTL {oh- meh-TEO-tl}: MEXICA (Aztec) Energy of Duality

POPOXCOMITL {po-po-sh-co-MEE-tl}: MEXICA ceremonial incense burner

TEOTLACHCO {teotlah-CH-co}: place where the MEXICA (Aztec) game of soccer is played

TONANTZIN {toh-nahn'-SEEN}: Mother Earth; COATLICUE

TLACHCO {tlah-CH-co}: MEXICA (Aztec) game of soccer

SCENE 1: CE

(Opening Ceremony- A POPOXCOMITL sits center stage lit with the incense of tree sap or *copal* burning. The HUEHUETEOTL and conch shell will begin to sound to the beat of the acknowledgement of the 6 directions: east, west, south, north, Father Sky, Mother Earth. Each will prompt a different character to enter. OMECIHUATL and OMETECUHTLI walk on stage last)

OMECIHUATL: According to our MEXICA ancestors, earth was considered the mother that gives sustenance to all of humanity...

ENSEMBLE OF 400 STARS: *Madre Tierra*
Fertility
Harmony
Protection
Amor
TONANZIN
Purity
Mother Earth
Naturaleza
Inspiration
Balance
COATLICUE

(COATLICUE walks on stage with a broom sweeping)

OMETECUHTLI: ...she gives life, nurtures and expects nothing in return other than respect. HOWEVER, when DISRESPECTED, especially from her own children, has to restore balance by ANY MEANS NECESSARY.

OMECIHUATL: One morning on the hill of Coatepec, Mexico COATLICUE decided to sweep the front porch of her home. When suddenly, HUITZIL, a hummingbird, circled her head and began to flirt with her...

HUITZIL: Do you like my feathers?

COATLICUE: ¿Qué?
HUITZIL: Do you like my feathers?

COATLICUE: Ay, I'm sorry, *pero* I'm really busy right now and-

HUITZIL: You mean not even a little bit

(COATLICUE blushes)

COATLICUE: ¡AY! FINE! I like your feathers. Now *compermisito*, but I have to finish sweeping because I am celebrating a very special day for my daughter COYOLXAUHQUI. She became a CIHUATL today!

(HUITZIL being sneaky)

HUITZIL: A young woman huh?

COATLICUE: Yes, a CIHUATL. She is now able to bring me lots of *nietos*, if you know what I mean.

HUITZIL: **(Mischievously)** Ahhhh, you mean she can bring you grandchildren!

COATLICUE: ¡AY! *SIN VERGUENZA*, *Orale*, get out of here!

HUITZIL: Ok, Ok, how about I leave her a present?

COATLICUE: What kind of present?

HUITZIL: Some of my beautiful feathers of course! But, do not forget to give them to her before nightfall, as they have VERY SPECIAL POWERS.

COATLICUE: What kind of SPECIAL POWERS?

HUITZIL: Just make sure to give them to her. And whatever you do, DO NOT PUT THEM IN YOUR CUEITL!

(HUITZIL flies away)

COATLICUE: WAIT! ¡*ESPERA!* What kind of special powers? But I don't have anywhere else to put them! Ay, OH WELL, *¡pues ni modo!*

OMECIHUATL: COATLICUE continued sweeping until the sun went down and forgot about what HUITZIL told her NOT to do. Nightfall approached and COATLICUE put the feathers close to her heart and in her CUEITL for safe keeping.

(As COATLICUE continues sweeping, COYOLXAUHQUI walks up to COATLICUE in a fit of rage)

COYOLXAUHQUI: MOOOOOOOM!!!! WHAT IN MICTLAN IS HAPPENING TO ME! My womb feels as if a thousand snakes are living inside of me!

COATLICUE: Now, now *mija*, you are a CIHUATL now and have the power to give life.

COYOLXAUHQUI: Yeah well, I don't want to give life.

COATLICUE: ¡QUE! What about my *nietos*? I deserve to have grandchildren!

COYOLXAUHQUI: UGH! but I'm only 4.53 billion years old and I have my whole life ahead of me

(COATLICUE suddenly feels VERY sick. The HUEHUETEOTL sounds.)

COYOLXAUHQUI: What's wrong Mom?

COATLICUE: I don't know I-

(COATLICUE begins to throw up. The HUEHUETEOTL sounds.)

COYOLXAUHQUI: Mom, are you ok?

COATLICUE: Yes *mija*, it must have been the *tamal* and the *atole* I had this morning. Didn't settle well with my stomach, I guess.

(COATLICUE slowly begins to grow a big belly. The HUEHUETEOTL sounds.)

COYOLXAUHQUI: MOM! Your stomach! What's happening to you

OMETECUHTLI: COATLICUE continued to drastically transform in front of her daughter, and in a state of shock had a sudden epiphany of her morning conversation with HUITZIL.

(HUITZIL off stage)

HUITZIL: And whatever you do, DO NOT PUT THEM IN YOUR CUEITL!

COATLICUE: **(In suspense)** Ay, *no puede ser*. IT CAN'T BE! I CAN'T BE-

COYOLXAUHQUI: You can't be what Mom...

(COATLICUE removes her hands from her womb and exposes herself as if ready to give birth)

COYOLXAUHQUI: MOTHER! (In astonishment) OHHHHHHH, are you pregnant? How did this happen? (Beat) Oh, I'm gonna tell!

(COYOLXAUHQUI runs off to tell her 400 brothers)

COATLICUE: Wait *mija*! (to COYOLXAUHQUI)

OMECIHUATL: COATLICUE looked down at her womb and realized that she was about to give birth. HUITZILOPOCHTLI began to speak to her from within.

(HUITZILOPOCHTLI off stage)

HUITZILOPOCHTLI: *No temas madre, yo sé lo que tengo que hacer.*

COATLICUE: I do not fear what is to come, *mijo*, I just hope you will do what is right.

(The MEXICA *Danza* of CHICHIMECA sounds)

SCENE 2: OME

(COYOLXAUHQUI returns with the ENSEMBLE OF 400 STARS behind her as if in a stand-off against COATLICUE)

COYOLXAUHQUI: Brothers! SEE, I told you. Our mother has been unfaithful to Father Sky and now she must be punished!

ENSEMBLE OF 400 STARS: Who has done this to her?
¿Quién le ha hecho esto?
¡No puede ser!
It can't be true!
Why did you do it mother?
¿Mamá, por qué lo hiciste?
It can't be!
¡No puede ser!
Let's punish her!
¡Vamos!

(COYOLXAUHQUI and the ENSEMBLE OF 400 STARS charge towards COATLICUE and HUITZILOPOCHTLI comes between them ready to fight and protect his mother)

HUITZILOPOCHTLI: *¡NO!*

- COYOLXAUHQUI: Who are you?
- HUITZILOPOCHTLI: *(In an exaggerated presumptuous tone) Yo soy HUITZILOPOCHTLI, la energía del sol y el MEJOR guerrero en cualquier batalla.*
- COYOLXAUHQUI: HA! You say you are the energy of the sun and the best warrior in any battle? **(Laughs)** WELL YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE! I am the Warrior COYOLXAUHQUI, the Energy of the Moon and these are my 400 brothers, the Stars, and what our mother has done is wrong, and therefore must be PUNISHED!
- OMETECUHTLI: HUITZILOPOCHTLI and COYOLXAUHQUI, began to chase each other around COATLICUE. When suddenly, COATLICUE got upset that she created an earthquake so strong that both HUITZILOPOCHTLI and COYOLXAUHQUI couldn't keep their balance and fell to the ground
- COATLICUE: ¡BASTA YA! Stop it, both of you! **(Takes a deep breath)** You will have to resolve this like the creators of life.
- COYOLXAUHQUI: How?
- HUITZILOPOCHTLI: *¿Cómo?*
- COATLICUE: Well, with a good and honest game of TLACHCO.
- COYOLXAUHQUI: WHAT! With a game of soccer!? Are you kidding me?
- HUITZILOPOCHTLI: *¿Con un juego de fútbol? ¡No manches!*
- COATLICUE: *¡Si! HUITZILOPOCHTLI, if you win the game, you will be able to rule the sky whenever you want. COYOLXAUHQUI, if you win the game, you and your *hermanos* may punish me and rule the sky whenever you want. HOWEVER, if either of you cheat, I will decide who will rule the sky. ¿De acuerdo?*
- (HUITZILOPOCHTLI and COYOLXAUHQUI look at each other for a few seconds and then look at COATLICUE.)**
- COYOLXAUHQUI: OK, I'm down with that.
- HUITZILOPOCHTLI: *De acuerdo.*

SCENE 3: YEI

(In a TEOTLACHCO - Soccer Stadium. OMECIHUATL and OMETECUHTLI are now the announcers of the game)

OMETECUHTLI: Welcome ladies and gentlemen to this evening's COATLICUE Cup! Where the winner of this game of TLACHCO will get to RULE THE SKY! Yes, you heard correctly ladies and gentlemen, RULE THE SKY. HOWEVER, if there is any form of foul play from either of the teams, they will be DISQUALIFIED and have no choice as to when to rule the sky. I am your announcer for this evening, and without further adieu, LET THE COATLICUE CUP BEGIN!

ENSEMBLE OF 400 STARS: YAAAY!!!

HUITZIL: BOOO!!! BOOO!!! HEY! Do you like my feathers? **(Goes around the audience offering his feathers)**

COATLICUE: Ok you two, what's it gonna be, águila o sol? **(Throws coin in the air)**

COYOLXAUHQUI: EAGLE!

HUITZILOPOCHTLI: ¡SOL!

(HUITZILOPOCHTLI distracts both COYOLXAUHQUI and COATLICUE by gesturing up to the sky switching the coin's position when it lands. HUITZILOPOCHTLI now has the ball. He cheers.)

ENSEMBLE OF 400 STARS: BOOO!!!

OMECIHUATL: The ball is on the field Ladies and Gentlemen and HUITZILOPOCHTLI has it. WAIT! COYOLXAUHQUI takes it from him. This is getting exciting Ladies and Gentlemen. She is showing her moves. She goes left, she goes right, WAIT, HUITZILOPOCHTLI gets close and takes it back from her.

ENSEMBLE OF 400 STARS: BOOO!!!

HUITZIL: YAAAY!!!

OMETECUHTLI: HUITZILOPOCHTLI has the ball. He's getting closer to the gol, **wait**, COYOLXAUHQUI is catching up to him and, **wait**, HUITZILOPOCHTLI is going for the kick, **wait**,

COYOLXAUHQUI is running in front of him and **WAIT** HUITZILOPOCHTLI has just kicked COYOLXAUHQUI's head instead of the ball and it's, it's, it's OUTTA HERE!!!!

ENSEMBLE OF 400 STARS: BOO!!!

HUITZIL: YAAAY!!!

OMETECUHTLI AND OMECIHUATL: ¡¡¡GOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOLLLLLLLLL!!!

Ladies and gentlemen, HUITZILOPOCHTLI has won the COATLICUE Cup!

ENSEMBLE OF 400 STARS: NOOOOOOOO!!!!

HUITZIL: I'm outta here!!!! (Goes to hide)

(HUITZILOPOCHTLI walks up to COATLICUE raising his hand as if expecting a high-five and she refuses)

COATLICUE: What have you done? You have tricked and humiliated your *hermana*. That was not a fair game.

HUITZILOPOCHTLI: *Ay Mamá, pero te dije que yo iba a saber lo que tenía que hacer. (In a cocky tone)*

COATLICUE: I know you told me what you thought you needed to do, but I was hoping that you were going to make the RIGHT decision, and you DIDN'T.

HUITZILOPOCHTLI: *Pero te iban a lastimar-*

COATLICUE: No! They were not going to hurt me. Understand that you cannot be a true WARRIOR without your sister the Moon and your Brothers the Stars. You need one another to create balance.

HUITZILOPOCHTLI: Pero-

COATLICUE: PERO NOTHING! (scolding HUITZILOPOCHTLI) Now, you will only be able to rule the sky for only half of the day. Now go apologize to your *hermana*-

HUITZILOPOCHTLI: Pero-

COATLICUE: -AND because of what you did to your sister, she will now have to stay up there and rule the night's sky.

HUITZILOPOCHTLI: *Pero-*

COATLICUE: -AND as punishment, everyday COYOLXAUHQUI and your brothers will chase you and try to catch you!

HUITZILOPOCHTLI: *¡QUE!*

COATLICUE: Now go! *¡ÁNDALE!*

HUITZILOPOCHTLI: *Si Mamá.*

COATLICUE: AND AS FOR YOU, HUITZIL, because of your sneakiness, I summon you to eternal life where your wings will not rest until you learn how to be a TRUE WARRIOR and be a better example for your son.

(HUITZIL flies away)

OMECIHUATL: And so it is said, in the spirit of OMETEOTL, that the Moon and the Stars rule the sky in the night, and the Sun in the day. At night COYOLXAUHQUI and her 400 Brothers chase HUITZILOPOCHTLI across the sky, and when daylight surges, HUITZILOPOCHTLI rests and shines bright

(COATLICUE again creates another earthquake. The HUEHUETEOTL sounds)

OMETECUHTLI: AND when COYOLXAUHQUI and her 400 brothers get too close, COATLICUE creates an earthquake to distract the two siblings from fighting and restores balance.

(ALL CHARACTERS create a circle and begin to dance the MEXICA Danza of OLLIN in unison)

FIN/The End/OMETEOTL

(Re)claiming Our Cuentos

Author: Jeanette Godoy

When I was 9 years old, I took a trip to Autlan, Jalisco, hometown of my father, and also of the famous guitarist Carlos Santana. He took me on a trip via horseback to a town nearby called *Villa de Purificación* where I met my Great Grandmother for the first time. I remember her white hair, long braids, and perfectly wrinkled face and hands. But most importantly, what I remember the most, was when she spoke to me in funny words that I did not understand, with every other word in Spanish. As an adult, I later learned that the funny words she spoke were in NAHUATL, an Indigenous language spoken by over 1.5 million people in Mexico. What I did not understand was why my Father or anyone else on that side of the family never told me or even attempted to speak it themselves. My parents separated soon after and I never saw my Great Grandmother again.

Well into my adulthood, I made an effort to relearn the language through the teachings of elders, Danza MEXICA (Aztec Dance), genetic memory, and even taught at a school where the language was part of the curriculum. Thereafter, when I started my MFA in the Theater Acting program at UCLA, as part of the interdisciplinary component of Playwriting, I was tasked to write a play, which I had never done before.



I decided to adapt a MEXICA oral tradition story to explain uncomfortable topics that my parents had a hard time talking about to me throughout the different stages of my life such as: menstrual cycles, pregnancy, predators, affairs, separation, and death. I wrote it in English, Spanish, Spanglish, and NAHUATL for that little tri-lingual Brown Indigenous Xicana that grew up in Inglewood, visited her maternal Abuelita every summer in Mexico City, and whose paternal lineage comes from one of the first Indigenous people of Jalisco. Lastly, I wrote it so that other Brown Girls could also feel that ancestral pride, relearn their native languages and embrace their Beautiful Brown skin. That is how my play, *The REAL Story of COATLICUE, And Her Children: The Moon, The Sun and All 400 of Her Stars*, was born.

The play made its world premiere at the Francis Ford Coppola One-Act Theater Festival at UCLA in 2014, where it was second runner up before getting produced. And in May of 2023, was presented at The Neighborhood Theatre Collective's Kid's Program - Community Cuentos, which was a free outdoor event at the Sunset Triangle Plaza featuring three plays performed by students from Los Angeles Unified School District's Micheltorena Elementary School in Silver Lake, California. The school itself lives in the heart of one of the communities that has struggled the hardest with gentrification in Los Angeles, yet according to the U.S. News and World Report, 66.8% of their students are of color, primarily Raza⁴. In the recruitment process, efforts were made

⁴ <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/california/micheltorena-street-elementary-245417>

to reach out to each classroom, as well as their afterschool program. And when auditions came about, only ONE Brown girl came to audition. Her name was Alegria Carrillo, a fourth grader. During her audition, she was very shy and soft-spoken, yet, when she began to say the Spanish, Spanglish, and NAHUATL words during the read-through, began to feel more comfortable and confident. She was cast in the lead role as COATLICUE, Mother Earth in the play, and at times, during the rehearsal process witnessed her resistance to take space or be the center of attention. When speaking with Algeria's mother Cynthia, I came to learn that she was in another well-known acting school, at the time, and was using the craft as a tool to build her self-esteem and discover her potential as a young Actress. However, she mentioned there was one thing missing in her training, the sense of cultural pride.

The day of the performance, the Sunset Triangle Plaza was hot and full of blankets, parasols and folding chairs. However, there were not too many Brown faces in the audience, with the exception of Alegria's family, *Señoras* and *Señores* walking to their jobs or Raza peeking from the back of the nearby Hipster restaurants. I witnessed Alegria nervous and soft spoken, yet excited to perform because her Dad was going to see her act. And finally, during showtime, shined bright throughout the performance. She mastered her lines, stage directions, props, and costume changes impeccably. Most importantly what Alegria demonstrated was the opportunity for a Beautiful Brown Girl to shine on stage in a lead role, speak different languages and take up space so that another Brown Girl watching in the audience can aspire to do the same.

Title: J'Ouvert [Cover Photo]

Photographer: Rafael Gómez

Description:

The image depicts a student whose body is covered in paint while being pushed around in a grocery cart (September 3rd, 2018). During Labor Day Weekend, Brooklyn, New York hosts the Labor Day Carnival, also known as the "West Indian Day Parade." The Brooklyn Carnival draws more than two million people, mainly from the West Indian and Caribbean communities in New York City and beyond. Central to the festivity is the J'Ouvert ("Break of Day") processions, which are composed chiefly of younger community members. J'Ouvert, which goes through the night and early morning, is best known for its uncouth revelry, manifested in the creative spirit—yet low cost—of the costumes on display. In so many ways, J'Ouvert is the essence of the Caribbean Carnival and culture in New York City.



Title: Our Lady of Carmen Celebrations

Photographer: Rafael Gómez

Description:

El Día de la Virgen del Carmen ("Day of Our Lady of Carmen") is celebrated worldwide by Catholics and other spiritual communities. In the Dominican Republic, the celebration, which honors one of the Virgin Mary's identities, has become a powerful symbol of popular spirituality accessible in and out of the church's walls. Devotees decorate altars and hold *misas* (masses) and fiestas with music, dance, and food to honor La Virgen. The celebrations are often multi-generational and include the participation of younger devotees who contribute in different capacities, including as musicians.



Biography:

Rafael Gómez is a visual ethnographer, photographer, and educator working in Latin America and the Caribbean. His work centers around different celebratory ritual practices of the African Diaspora. Throughout the past ten years, Gómez has been documenting the Rara/Gagá celebrations in various locales in the Dominican Republic, focusing on the issues historically marginalized communities face as they seek to maintain their traditions. His current work examines celebrations of public joy by Black communities of the African Diaspora. Gómez is also a lecturer in the Pan-African and Latin American Studies Departments at California State University, Los Angeles.

Title: Resilient *Tamal*

Photographer: Andrea Mercedes Garcia

Description:

This photograph captures the scene of my children engaged in the process of making *tamales*. I began this tradition in my own home six years ago and now make all the *tamales*, with assembly help from my family. *Tamales*, that delightful, steamed deliciousness, wrapped and prepared as a gift for *Noche Buena*, possess a rich heritage deeply rooted in ancient Mesoamerican culture. Originating as a culinary tradition among the Aztec and Mayan civilizations, these savory delights were ingeniously crafted by wrapping a flavorful filling of *frijoles*, cheese, meat, or vegetables infused with zesty *chile* in a softened corn husk. My family roots on my mother's side are New Mexican. Our Hatch green and red *chile* create a unique and undeniable *sazón* that makes my *tamales* unforgettable. The corn husk not only imparts its distinctive shape but also serves as a vessel, preserving the essence of the filling within. At the heart of each *tamale* lies a core ingredient: *masa*, a corn dough meticulously prepared through the ancient nixtamalization process. This technique, involving soaking corn kernels in pickling lime, not only enhances the flavor and nutritional value but also pays homage to the reverence held for maize in Mesoamerican culture. Maize, revered as sacred for millennia, holds a central place in the spiritual and culinary traditions of Mexico, embodying the sustenance and wisdom bestowed by the earth mother. For Latinx families, the making of *tamales* transcends mere culinary preparation; it is a sacred ritual that binds generations together in a shared labor of love. It is an annual tradition that echoes ancestral wisdom and resilience, as each generation honors the heritage passed down through the ages. From the gathering of ingredients to the rhythmic assembly line of filling, wrapping, and steaming, the process of *tamale*-making is imbued with warmth, laughter, and cherished memories. *Tamales* represent more than just a delicious meal; they are a testament to resilience, cultural identity, and decolonial cooking. In a world where Indigenous traditions are often marginalized, the act of preparing and savoring *tamales* becomes an assertion of cultural pride and resistance. It is a reaffirmation of Latinx identity, a celebration of Indigenous wisdom, and a reclaiming of ancestral heritage. *Tamales* embody the spirit of Latinx culture, serving as a tangible link to the past while nourishing both body and soul. With each bite, one tastes the savory flavors and the decolonial legacy of resilience, connection, and cultural pride that transcends generations.



Title: Decolonial Home Garden

Photographer: Andrea Mercedes Garcia

Description:

As an integral aspect of Indigenous identity, food is deeply intertwined with place, specifically the land from which the essential ingredients for life originate. To preserve our traditional Indigenous foodways from México, my children and I established a home garden. We cultivate crops such as *maíz*, *tomates*, various types of *lechuga*, an array of chile peppers, and numerous herbs like *yerba buena* and *romero*. Our garden symbolizes decolonization, Indigenous adaptation, and resilience within an urban food desert, where access to healthy food is limited. Our decolonial home garden serves as a means for our family to confront environmental racism and take proactive measures toward our well-being. Cultivating gardens is a bold act of resistance. We view gardening as therapeutic and as a form of defiance, particularly within inner-city environments. We began our *jardín* during COVID and our *precioso vegetales y hierbas* continue to flourish. We speak affirmations of *cariño* to our *plantitas*, because I teach my children



not only the sun and water gods are needed for them to grow. By tending to our garden, we assert control over our health and reject dependence on large-scale agriculture and fast food.

Title: Cooking *Frijoles* is a Revolutionary Act

Photographer: Andrea Mercedes Garcia

Description:

A gentle simmering pot of *frijolitos*, wonderfully uncomplicated, reminiscent of my *abuelita's* cooking style. Our predecessors understood the importance of advocating for a return to fresh, wholesome foods. For Latinx and Indigenous communities, beans represent a culinary link to our ancestors. Embracing a decolonized diet means adopting the traditional food choices of our forebears for both our well-being and the health of our planet. In this image, *frijoles* are lovingly prepared by my children, following recipes handed down through generations, originating from my grandmother, passed to my mother, then to me, and now imparted to my offspring. I infused my *suegra's* style of making *frijoles* along with my mother's to give my children both sides of their lineage, *de Zacatecas y Nuevo Mexico*. My daughter carefully sifts through each *frijol* picking out the stones. Preparing a pot of *frijolitos* serves as an act of anti-colonial resistance within the food deserts of Los Angeles. Our family reclaims *frijoles* as a staple of our native diet, nourishing our bodies and contributing to our communal health. The choice of what, how, and where to eat becomes a revolutionary gesture as we stay connected to our Indigenous heritage. *Frijoles* can take on various forms—*charro*, refried, or cooked in the pot. I take pride in imparting this skill to my children, who will one day pass it on to their children, underscoring the significance of Indigenous food sovereignty.



Biography:

Andrea Mercedes Garcia is currently pursuing her Master's degree in Chicanx Latinx studies at California State University, Los Angeles. Actively engaged in her community, she holds the esteemed roles of Social Services Commissioner and President of the Norwalk La Mirada School District PTA, all while proudly embracing her identity as a devoted mother. Additionally, Andrea runs her own small business, offering *pláticas* and spiritual cleansing services to her clientele. Beyond her professional and community endeavors, Andrea is deeply committed to reclaiming her proud Mescalero Apache roots, tracing her ancestry to New Mexico. In both her academic pursuits and social work, she remains steadfast in her mission to decolonize and honor her Indigenous heritage, forging a path of empowerment and cultural resurgence.

Title: I Am My Brotha's Keeper

Photographer: Fritz Pingol

Description:

The photograph titled "*I Am My Brotha's Keeper*" encapsulates a profound moment within the Black Lives Matter movement, immortalizing a gathering of diverse students as they marched in solidarity through the streets of Long Beach, California. Against the backdrop of social unrest and systemic injustice, this image serves as a rallying cry, invoking the timeless concept of brotherhood and collective responsibility. At its core, the photograph symbolizes the unwavering commitment of the Black community to its members' well-being and advancement. By holding a sign bearing the powerful message "*I am My Brotha's Keeper*," the individual affirms dedication to uplifting and supporting one another in the face of adversity. Furthermore, the image serves as a reminder of the historical roots of racial oppression and the enduring legacy of struggle and resistance within communities of color. From the injustices of slavery and segregation to the ongoing fight against police brutality and institutionalized racism, the Black liberation movement has been a continuous thread woven throughout American history.



Title: Filipinxs for Black Power

Photographer: Fritz Pingol

Description:

Taken at a protest rally in Long Beach, California, the "*Filipinxs for Black Power*" photograph encapsulates a powerful moment in the history of solidarity and coalition-building between Filipinx and Black communities. The photograph features Filipinx students standing in solidarity with their Black counterparts, raising signs in a symbol of unity and resistance. This gesture reflects the influence of the Black Power movement, which emphasized self-determination, pride, and collective action in the fight against racial oppression. Both Filipinx and Black communities have endured centuries of colonization, exploitation, and systemic racism, shaping their experiences and struggles for liberation. For Filipinx individuals, the legacy of colonialism and imperialism in the Philippines has had profound effects on their identity and activism. Many Filipinx immigrants and their descendants have faced discrimination, economic exploitation, and cultural erasure in the United States. Their solidarity with the Black Power movement reflects a shared understanding of the impacts of racism and the importance of collective resistance.



Title: Please I Can't Breathe

Photographer: Fritz Pingol

Description:

The photograph captures a moment in downtown Long Beach, California amidst the protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd in 2020. We see a student holding a sign bearing the words *"Please I can't Breathe,"* echoing the final desperate pleas of George Floyd as he was mercilessly suffocated by a police officer. This haunting message serves as a rallying cry, symbolizing the suffocating grip of systemic racism and police brutality on Black lives. The image highlights the importance of bearing witness to the suffering and resilience of marginalized communities. By amplifying the voices and experiences of those most impacted by oppression, the photograph challenges viewers to confront their own complicity in perpetuating systems of inequality. *"Please I can't Breathe"* becomes a catalyst for critical reflection and action. It calls upon us to acknowledge the pervasive nature of racism and to actively work towards dismantling the structures that uphold it. Ultimately, the photograph serves as a testament to the power of protest and collective action in effecting social change. It is a reminder that the struggle for racial justice is ongoing and that it requires the active participation and solidarity of all who seek to create a more just and equitable society.



Biography:

Fritz Pingol is a multi-talented Filipino-American photographer with roots in Yonkers, New York, but a strong connection to Long Beach, California, where he spent his formative years. Immersed in the vibrant world of Hip-Hop culture and music from a young age, Pingol honed his skills as a DJ and producer, channeling his experiences into his photography. Growing up in an environment marked by urban challenges such as gang violence, Pingol's lens captures the raw essence of the streets. His photographs reflect the dynamic energy and cultural richness of his surroundings, offering a unique perspective shaped by his personal experiences. Pingol's portfolio extends beyond still images, as he has also documented live events and concerts across the United States. His ability to blend technical expertise with a deep understanding of community and culture enables him to capture the soul of his subjects, whether they're musicians on stage or scenes from the streets.

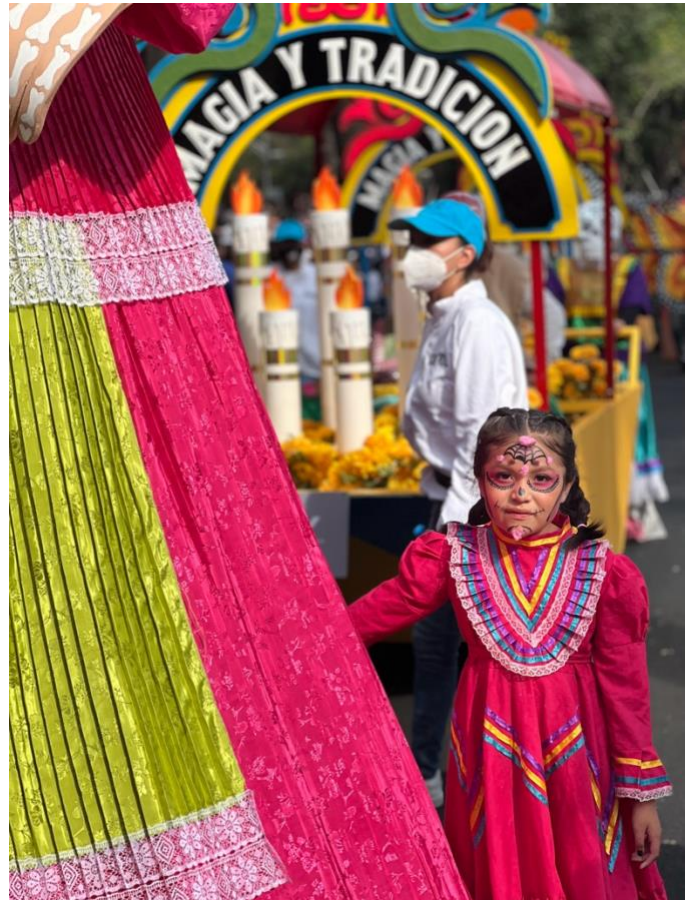
Title: *Magia y Tradición*

Photographer: Felicia 'Fe' Montes

Description: Magic and tradition are key to the memory, methodology, and movement of the celebration of Day of the Dead. It is a day of culture, community, and collective consciousness. The ultimate example of pedagogies of creative justice bringing prayer, poetry, performance, protest, and public art together. This photo, taken at Mexico City's *Día de los Muertos* parade, features a Mexican girl carrying her culture in her clothing - draping her body in dance and Day of the Dead traditions. The girl looks straight into the camera and stands next to a huge replica of a Mexican doll in similar clothing. She is an ethnic studies classroom in the flesh teaching about color and culture, prayer and performance, style and spirituality...*magia y tradición*.

Biography:

Felicia 'Fe' Montes (M.A./M.F.A.) is a Xicana Indigenous holistic activist, femcee, designer, poet, professor, public scholar, and practitioner of the healing arts from East Los Angeles. She is the co-founder and director of Mujeres de Maiz, In Lak Ech, Botanica del Barrio and El MERCADO y Mas and an assistant professor in Chicanx/Latinx arts and social practice at Cal State University Long Beach. She has published in the books *Fleshing the Spirit*, *Voices from the Ancestors*, and *MeXicana Fashions* and is the co-editor of the book *Mujeres de Maiz en Movimiento: Spiritual Activism, Healing Justice and Feminist Praxis* (University of Arizona Press, 2024) www.FeliciaMontes.com



Title: Home is the Place to Dream

Artist: Emily Hsiao



Description:

My home is located in Wellington Heights, East Los Angeles. I have always felt that it was the main lens I saw the world through. The frame of the picture is my living room. My mom decorated the walls with Chicano/a/x art, antiques, and pieces passed down from my grandpa Frank. In the painting, I eliminated the wall facing the street in order to make my house appear like a doll house. This was to express my feelings towards energy. I always felt like the energy outside was constantly flowing into my house, as though we were all one entity. I also always felt watched by people, mainly because I was always watching them. The outside world consisted of a few constants depicted here, despite the unrelenting change the city has gone through over the years. Across the street, on beautiful sunny days, there was always a boy smoking weed. I never had the chance to actually get to know him; he lived 3 houses down, his mom was legally blind, and I always saw him help her walk across the street. He liked his solitude, so he used the elementary school

stairs as his home away from home, a safe place to dream. The *raspado* man/woman (it depends on the day) is always busy when the kids get out of school. The people in line are all based on real people as well. The mother used to be my neighbor, and with her are her three kids, Stephanie, David, and Oscar. They were all my friends when I was a kid, but I haven't spoken to or seen them in a very long time. The two little girls standing next to them are me and my best friend Laura. We first met at the elementary school across the street. Every once and a while I see two little girls holding hands, getting *raspados*, giggling and dancing. They remind me of a time when everything was perfect, and I didn't even know it. They continue the cycle of friendship, love, joy and naivety. There isn't a ceiling in my home, it is a little cliché, but I wanted to literally say "the sky's the limit." My home was always my safe place to dream.

Biography:

Emily Hsiao, a freshman at Cal State Los Angeles, identifies as Chicana-Taiwanese and is pursuing a major in music performance with a specialization in the saxophone. Raised on First Street in East LA, Emily has been honing her saxophone skills since the age of 10. She received formal training at the Colburn School through the Herbert Zipper scholarship.

Title: Selling one *Tamal* at a Time

Filmmaker: Julio Henriquez

Description:

In the bustling streets of Los Angeles during the vibrant era of the 1990s, *Salvadoreña* Carmen Alicia Henriquez stood as a resilient figure, navigating the intricate web of urban life as a street vendor. With unwavering determination and a spirit fueled by her Salvadoran heritage, she embarked on a journey fraught with challenges yet brimming with opportunities.

Biography:

Julio Henriquez's journey is deeply rooted in the tumultuous history of his Central American heritage. Born to parents who fled the civil unrest in El Salvador during the 1990s, Julio's formative years were shaped by the vibrant yet challenging landscape of street vending. Currently enrolled as a Master's student at California State University, Los Angeles, within the Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies Department, Julio's academic pursuits are fueled by his desire to shed light on the often-overlooked experiences of street vendors. Through his storytelling, Julio brings attention to the socio-economic dynamics that shape urban life and celebrates the resilience of those who navigate its challenges.



Video Link: <https://tinyurl.com/film-selling-one-tamal>

Title: Tango: The Greatest Rock Album Never Heard

Filmmaker: Gregory Esparza

When:

1972-1974

What is it about:

Rock 'n' roll we never heard, because the music industry generationally mishandled Chicana/o music talent. This is a critique of the music industry toward Chicanas/os while remembering and celebrating great American rock 'n' roll made by Chicanas/os. As Tango was denied a chance at a long career, their invisible outcome echoed for generations with the youth who never had a chance to see them yet had dreams about a life in music.

Why:

Tango, by their lack of exposure and representation, was just one of many groups that could have modeled a way for potential Chicana/o/x music makers to see and dream what could be possible. Seeing bands that look like you, do help marginalized music makers to dream their possibility.

Note:

In the case of "we," the film includes Mark Guerrero and bandmates John Valenzuela and Ernie Hernandez doing the remembering of Tango, as I analyze and report. When I asked Mark why this film is important to him, he said that he didn't want anybody forgetting about the music and the band. Mark's latest music project will be a release of his entire body of music called *Rockin' in the Shadow*.

Biography:

Gregory Esparza is a faculty lecturer at Cal State Los Angeles in Chicana/o Latina/o Studies. He earned his Master's degree at Cal State LA in Chicana/o Latina/o Studies in 2023 and two bachelor's degrees at UCLA 2020 in History and Chicana/o Studies. He is an Emeriti Associate Fellow (2022-2023), singer songwriter, short story writer, poet and former lead vocalist with Thee Midnitters and Cannibal and the Headhunters; two legendary groups from the Eastside 1960s and the writer and director of *Tango: The Greatest Rock Album Never Heard*.

Video Link: <https://tinyurl.com/film-tango>



***Rompiendo Silencios:* Bridging Spanish Language Arts and Ethnic Studies for Archival Activism**

Michelle Rendón Ochoa, City University of New York

Abstract

This autoethnography explores the transformative potential of *Aquí Estamos*, a community-based digital archive project co-created with high school students. In this project, we disrupted archival silences in our local community archives and amplified Latine testimonios. As a critical language educator, I argue Spanish language arts curricula must be grounded in ethnic studies principles to empower Latine youth fully. I discuss how community-based digital archives and oral history methods align with ethnic studies frameworks and can serve as activism tools in the community. Subsequently, I provide the historical context that motivated the creation of this project, highlighting the power of co-creating community-based archives that center historically marginalized communities in the classroom. I then offer insight for practitioners, sharing a comprehensive guide for educators to implement similar projects in their classrooms. Finally, I reflect on *Aquí Estamos's* profound impact on student learning and my understanding of community-based archives as tools for activism within the classroom and beyond.

Keywords: community digital archives, digital activism, ethnic studies, Latine youth, Long Island, oral history, secondary education, Spanish language arts, suburban schooling

My lived experiences as a first-generation Colombian-American growing up in a predominantly Latine suburb in Long Island inform my thinking on liberatory education. While I had firsthand experiences with socioeconomic oppression and discrimination, I was never afforded the chance to critically examine the systems that have historically marginalized communities of color, including my own. Ironically, these traumatic, disempowering schooling experiences—feeling invisible in a curriculum that ignored my culture—influenced my motives for returning to my alma mater as an educator. I felt a sense of responsibility and passion for co-constructing liberatory educational spaces with young people in my community. When I reflect on returning home to Long Island to serve as an educator, I recognize how much this



decision was rooted in my love and accountability to the immigrant community in my hometown. Schooling made me question the richness of my borderlands identity (Anzaldúa, 1987). Yet, *mi gente*, *inmigrantes*, and *hijos de inmigrantes* in my community helped me feel pride in the wealth of our culture.

“Matriarch” photo was taken circa 1996 in our apartment, Long Island, N.Y.

In this special photograph, my cousin and I are loving up on our Granny, Elsy. I love how the sunflower is placed over her. She was our radiant woman. Our pillar. Our matriarch.

Granny was known in our community as a respected elder who was *una madre en este país* for many other migrant women. Her passing in May 2022 was a testament to her legacy and motivated this work. *Inmigrantes* are the backbone of our community and deserve to be legitimized as knowledge holders within curricula.

In recent decades, the Latine immigrant community has seen a significant surge in growth within Long Island's already segregated towns. My hometown on the South Shore, a mere 22 miles from Manhattan, has demographically shifted into a Latine immigrant enclave. It's where my mother settled in the early 90s, and it continues to be a destination for newcomers, predominantly hailing from the Dominican Republic and Central America. Being an educator at my alma mater, working alongside students with whom I culturally and linguistically connect and whose identities I feel passionate about empowering has been an extremely gratifying experience. However, as a critical educator, I witness today the persistence of the same inequities I faced 20 years earlier and, with a newfound awareness, the systemic inequities that perpetuate the marginalization of racially and linguistically minoritized students. My cultural intuition (Delgado-Bernal, 1998) and a deep love for my community guide my work as a critical pedagogue and scholar. Recognizing the power of education to empower and liberate, I design learning experiences that cultivate critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) and pride in students' historically marginalized identities. To achieve this, I integrate ethnic studies pedagogical approaches into my praxis, empowering students to analyze and challenge systems of oppression.

Mi Pedagogía es Mi Protesta: Integrating Ethnic Studies into the Spanish Language Arts Curriculum

In the United States, an oppressive schooling system deeply entrenched in historically white supremacist and capitalist structures continually harms racially and linguistically marginalized students. This system prioritizes social efficiency at the expense of a child's psychological well-being, individuality, and cultural identity (Kliebard, 2004; Tyack, 1974). Despite today's ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity in K-12 classrooms, educational institutions remain unwelcoming environments for students of color (Love, 2019). The absence of a curriculum that resonates with their experiences is one element that disconnects historically marginalized youth from educational institutions (hooks, 1994). Moreover, student disengagement often stems from being viewed as passive recipients rather than active participants in the learning process (Freire, 1970).

In the United States, curricula frequently confine students to a singular, white-centered perspective and a colonial worldview (de los Ríos, 2020). Ethnic studies counter one-sided Eurocentric curricula and pedagogical approaches by centering the histories and perspectives of historically marginalized communities, allowing students to critically analyze systemic inequality and be knowledge producers and change agents in their communities (Okiihiro, 2016). My

introduction to Ethnic Studies occurred through the documentary *Precious Knowledge* (Palos, 2011), which focuses on students' experiences in the Mexican American Studies Program at Tucson High School. As a first-generation Latina growing up in the United States, I immediately connected with the Tucson youth's journey, recognizing similarities between my schooling experiences and those of my students. Ethnic studies scholars have exhibited the significance of creating learning environments where students can critically examine the prevalence of whiteness (de los Ríos, 2020), engage in a thoughtful exploration of their true histories (Cuahtin et al., 2019), and the importance of developing curriculum that empowers students to actively engage in the creation of knowledge, thereby addressing epistemic injustice (Barrales, 2023).

Determined to start an ethnic studies course at my alma mater, I was disappointed when the school administration deemed it "too political." Bureaucratic challenges and political complexities within the school district made it extremely difficult to create an Ethnic Studies course in a public school on Long Island. However, I was committed to reclaiming the academic space that made me question the richness of my linguistic and cultural wealth by transforming it into one co-created with youth in my community and their identities at the center. I viewed my pedagogy as a means to protest the white-washed curriculums still in place from when I was a high school student that centered on Eurocentric literature from Spain and harmful standard language ideologies (Mena & Garcia, 2020). Taking matters into my own hands, I redesigned the Spanish Language Arts course curriculum that connected critical language awareness and ethnic studies principles with two objectives: to deconstruct dominant language ideologies and to deepen a critical understanding of Latine experiences and histories.

As a first-generation Spanish Language Arts educator, I'm deeply connected to the Latine community where I grew up and have the privilege of serving Latine immigrant-origin youth. The Spanish Language Arts course is for Latine students whose home language is Spanish. While some students are immigrant youth who have received most of their formal education in Spanish, others are heritage speakers raised in a Spanish-speaking household in the United States and received most of their formal education in English. My classes encompass diverse Latine ethnic backgrounds, mainly from the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. Students range from recent to first-generation immigrants, and a few are second-generation. What makes the Spanish Language Arts class particularly special is the shared Latine identity within the United States that binds us together and our diverse connections to the Spanish language. This diversity within our linguistic journey is a testament that Latinidad is not a singular, monolithic identity. Instead, it thrives within distinct experiences and backgrounds, rendering it nuanced and complex.

It is important to acknowledge that Latine students in the United States have varying comfort levels, literacy, and verbal skills in Spanish. Further, they have authentic language practices, such as translanguaging, that go beyond school-constructed classes titled Spanish for first language and heritage speakers (Garcia, 2019). Translanguaging empowers Latine bilingual youth to draw on their entire repertoire of communicative tools, including words, symbols, gestures, and actions, to construct meaning grounded in their lived experiences (Otheguy et al., 2015). Traditional schooling systems have perpetuated a harmful disconnect, forcing Latine youth to compartmentalize their English and Spanish skills. This marginalizes their full linguistic capabilities and ignores the richness of their multilingual identities. Traditional language instruction silences the voices and hinders the academic success of multilingual students (Garcia, 2019). Recognizing the power of language as a

tool for either liberation or oppression, language educators must integrate translanguaging into the curriculum to empower linguistically minoritized students with rich linguistic repertoires fully.

Gloria Anzaldúa's essay, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," is a cornerstone text in my Spanish Language Arts curriculum. The text's exploration of the intertwined nature of language and identity resonates deeply with the lived experiences of my Latine immigrant-origin students. Anzaldúa's powerful assertion, "Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity – I am my language" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 26) exemplifies this connection, aligning with the work of other scholars who argue against the artificial separation of language, race, and identity (Amezcuca & Sánchez-Muñoz, 2024; Rosa & Flores, 2017). While providing learning experiences for Latine youth in their home language is important, it is not enough. Latine youth deserve a critical curriculum that acknowledges the deep connection between language and identity.

One way to achieve this is by integrating principles of ethnic studies and critical language awareness. Critical language awareness is a pedagogical approach beyond understanding how language functions. It empowers learners to analyze how language reflects and reinforces social hierarchies, power dynamics, and societal beliefs (Leeman & Serafini, 2016). By integrating critical language awareness and ethnic studies pedagogies, students can deconstruct harmful language ideologies while developing social awareness, ethnic pride, and community engagement (Amezcuca & Sánchez-Muñoz, 2024). Despite the substantial benefits of connecting both disciplines, a critical gap exists between the rich body of ethnic studies scholarship and traditional approaches to Spanish as a first and heritage language instruction. The current separation of Spanish language instruction from ethnic studies perpetuates a harmful disconnect that further marginalizes ethnically and linguistically minoritized students by silencing their cultural heritages and undermining their linguistic identities (Aponte, 2024).

I have observed this troubling pedagogical disconnect in my decade of experience as a language educator. Spanish courses for Latine students lack integration of ethnic studies, while ethnic studies courses are rarely offered in Spanish. This disconnect presents a missed opportunity to fully empower Latine students and equip them with critical tools to challenge marginalization. Determined to bridge this critical gap, I design a Spanish curriculum that goes beyond mere language instruction. I work towards designing learning experiences that foster critical consciousness around language, culture, and history while centering identities in the classroom. To achieve this, we delve into diverse texts and movements. We read and analyze Black, Queer, Indigenous, and feminist literature, poetry, and art from Latino America. We study social movements such as the Chicano student walkouts and the Young Lords in New York City. We also explore the history and knowledge of Latin America's Black diaspora and indigenous communities. Further, I work towards crafting experiential learning projects that engage students with our local Latine community. By combining critical language awareness and ethnic studies pedagogies, I aim to empower students as agents of social change within their communities and beyond.

***!Aquí Estamos!* Community-Based Digital Archiving as Digital Activism**

This section will discuss the roots and process of a community-based digital archival project grounded in ethnic studies and critical language awareness principles. In collaboration with my students, we launched a place-based bilingual digital archive titled *Aquí Estamos*, amplifying Latine voices in our hometown to disrupt archival silences and resist the erasure of Latine history and

contributions to our community. For this project, students conducted oral histories with Latine community residents. They created a multimodal video merging photographs and audio from the interview to house in a digital archive accessible to the community. The digital archive will be publicly available to local students, educators, and community members in collaboration with the local library. This project is designed to be an ongoing community effort, collecting stories over time to create a resource with which members can always connect. In conceiving this project, my motivation was to provide students with an authentic, empowering learning experience rooted in their cultural intuition (Delgado-Bernal, 1998), entire linguistic repertoire, creativity, and digital skills to produce public-facing knowledge that advocates for the visibility of our community in the suburbs of Long Island.

Before diving into *Aquí Estamos*, I want to give *mi querida amiga*, my sis, ethnic studies teacher and scholar Wendy Barrales (2023), her *flores*. She founded the Women of Color Archive (WOCA), to which her students contributed by preserving the experiences of important matriarchs of color in their lives. Their beautiful and powerful work can be seen at www.wocarchive.com. The Women of Color Archive exemplifies how educators can legitimize local community knowledge and testimonios in the classroom, disrupting traditional forms of teaching and learning. With Doctora Barrales' femtorship and guidance, I could implement and co-create a digital archive with my high school students.

Community-based digital archiving and oral history are liberatory pedagogical and research methods. Traditional archival practices have historically upheld systems of white supremacy, excluding marginalized communities and their histories. However, community archives created and maintained by historically marginalized communities can serve as tools of liberation and social change (Caswell, 2012). Community-based archives embody the phrase *for us, by us*, empowering communities to document their histories on their terms, democratizing traditional Western archival practices.

As a critical educator, I saw co-creating a community-based digital archive and engaging students in oral history work as a powerful tool for building solidarity and empowerment within and beyond our classroom. I framed the project as a way to preserve testimonios in our community. As a social justice practice, oral history aims to amplify often silenced counter-narratives excluded from mainstream records (Augusto et al., 2022; Poole, 2020). Critical oral history methods challenge dominant narratives and empower interviewees to center their stories (Augusto et al., 2022). Testimonios, a narrative approach rooted in Latin American social movements (Delgado-Bernal, 1998), involve individuals sharing personal experiences that reflect broader collective struggles. Through *Aquí Estamos*, students conducted oral histories, centering and documenting these testimonios from our community members. This digital archive ensures community testimonios are preserved for future generations while empowering students as producers of historical knowledge, affirming our community as valuable knowledge holders.

The co-creation of public-facing digital archives in the classroom aligns with the core goals of ethnic studies: Access, Relevance, and Community (ARC). According to ethnic studies scholarship, the ARC of ethnic studies challenges traditional power structures in education, shaping students' critical engagement with their learning (Tintiango-Cubales, 2012). Designing learning experiences grounded in the ARC of ethnic studies ensures that students of color have **access** to a quality education in which the curriculum is **relevant** to their lived experiences by centering their histories,

challenges, and contributions. It also connects students to their **communities**, fostering critical consciousness and engagement that can lead to activism and advocacy for positive change (Tintiango-Cubales et al., 2014). Creating community-based archives in the classroom allows students to critically analyze and produce local history often not centered on curricula. Further, it creates a learning experience that centers community knowledge and counternarratives not legitimized in traditional curricula. It also serves as activism and advocacy as students collectively work to disrupt archival silences and resist the erasure of historically marginalized community knowledge and contributions.

My experiences with our traditional community archives, where our stories were absent, ignited the passion and urgency behind *Aquí Estamos*. This project directly confronts this historical erasure by empowering students to analyze local history critically, conduct oral history interviews with Latine community members, and co-create a multimodal digital archive. Through this process, students transform from passive learners to active history-makers, ensuring their stories and experiences are documented and preserved. *Aquí Estamos* is not just an archive; it's a reclamation of agency and a powerful act of resistance against historical silencing. By amplifying Latine testimonios, this project dismantles the invisibility imposed by traditional archives and challenges the systems perpetuating marginalization. We use community-based digital archiving as activism, disrupting traditional archival methods and boldly declaring **¡Aquí Estamos! - We are here** and resist the historical erasure of Latine stories and contributions within our community.

Las Raíces: Project Historical Context

As a scholar-activist, I aim to challenge the stereotypical view of suburbs as idyllic, conflict-free havens and instead shed light on the realities faced by Black and Brown communities. The monolithic framings of suburban schooling (white, middle-class) have encouraged education researchers to focus on issues in urban contexts, overlooking the inequities racially and linguistically minoritized youth experience in the suburbs (Diamond & Poxey, 2020). It is worth noting that nearly half of Black and Brown youth are growing up in the suburbs of the United States, surpassing urban settings in numbers; yet suburban stereotypes and one-dimensional portrayals erase the rich cultural diversity and the lived experiences of many historically marginalized youth impacted by inequities (Lewis-McCoy, 2014). My interest in amplifying suburban schooling scholarship led me to a research endeavor that birthed *Aquí Estamos*.

Early in my PhD journey, a research paper on my alma mater's late 1960s student-led demonstrations and racial tensions sparked my interest. Eager to delve into the local archives, I was met with a stark reality: a one-sided narrative devoid of Black voices. This archival silence ignited a sense of something missing. Trusting my intuition, I embarked on a new path – seeking out community elders who were high school students during that era. Through powerful oral histories, a previously undocumented history of injustice unfolded: housing discrimination, forced displacement, a shuttered Black school, police brutality, and segregated education. Unearthing this silenced past left me deeply troubled. As a lifelong resident, why was I unaware? Why wasn't this history taught? The lack of these narratives in my education led me to question: *What impact would these stories have had on me if I had known them sooner?*

The realization of this silenced history within the place I call home left me feeling deceived. The passion and frustration that accompanied lifting the veil of silence fueled the creation of *Aquí*

Estamos. The deafening silence in the local archives was not merely an oversight; it was a reminder of the ongoing project of erasing historically marginalized voices. This archival violence exposed a deep-seated imbalance: a community overflowing with Latine heritage, diversity, and experiences yet absent from its documented history. The silence became a call to action. *Why are the narratives of our immigrant families, the backbone of our community, absent? What is happening now within our community that will not be documented for our future generations to learn from? How can I contribute to preserving the valuable histories and testimonios de mi gente? How can I include young people in my community in this work?*

As a young student in Long Island, I was keenly aware of the visible segregation among towns and school districts. Still, I was unaware of the historical reasons behind it. My hometown stood out as one of the few predominantly Black and Brown districts on the island, surrounded by notably white towns. Historians studying suburbanization have documented how white racism, discriminatory governmental housing policies, and real estate covenants played a role in shaping Long Island's segregation (Wiese, 2004). This process is connected to the post-World War II era, marked by demographic shifts in New York City as African Americans and Puerto Ricans migrated into the city. Encouraged by the GI Bill and mortgage programs, white residents fled to whiter suburban commuter towns on Long Island. From the 1940s to the 1960s, as more people migrated from New York City, housing discrimination and redlining tactics aimed at keeping Black families away from white residential areas became increasingly common in real estate practices. It's important to recognize that established Black communities on the island were adversely affected by post-World War II suburbanization and urban renewal projects that displaced Black families from their homes. The historical discriminatory housing policies and pattern of white flight continue to influence the present-day segregation seen in towns and school districts on Long Island. Today, Long Island is acknowledged as one of the most segregated suburbs in the United States, with its 124 school districts serving as a reflection of the legacy of discriminatory housing policies and racism.

When designing the curriculum to create *Aquí Estamos*, it was essential for students to reflect and learn about the critical history that has shaped the place they call home and their schools. My own experience growing up unaware of the historical roots of segregation in Long Island highlights the need for accessible and inclusive local history education. *Aquí Estamos* aims to break this cycle by empowering students to become researchers, storytellers, and agents of change, fostering understanding and dismantling the legacies of racism and discrimination in our communities.

Teaching Critical History & Centering Testimonios

Exploring the critical history of a place will expose information omitted in traditional, white-centered narratives—a key principle within Ethnic Studies—thus fostering engagement as students connect their learning to their realities. As students delved into our town's history and politics influencing our schools, there were many “ah-ha” moments as students connected newfound knowledge to their own experiences. Students specifically homed in on the negative perceptions surrounding our town and school, especially compared to the more affluent, predominantly white communities in our vicinity. They delved into discussions about the quality of education, available resources, and the alienation experienced by our immigrant Spanish-speaking families within the school community. Student-athletes echoed similar encounters of discrimination when facing opposing teams. Exploring our history triggered crucial conversations that facilitated the

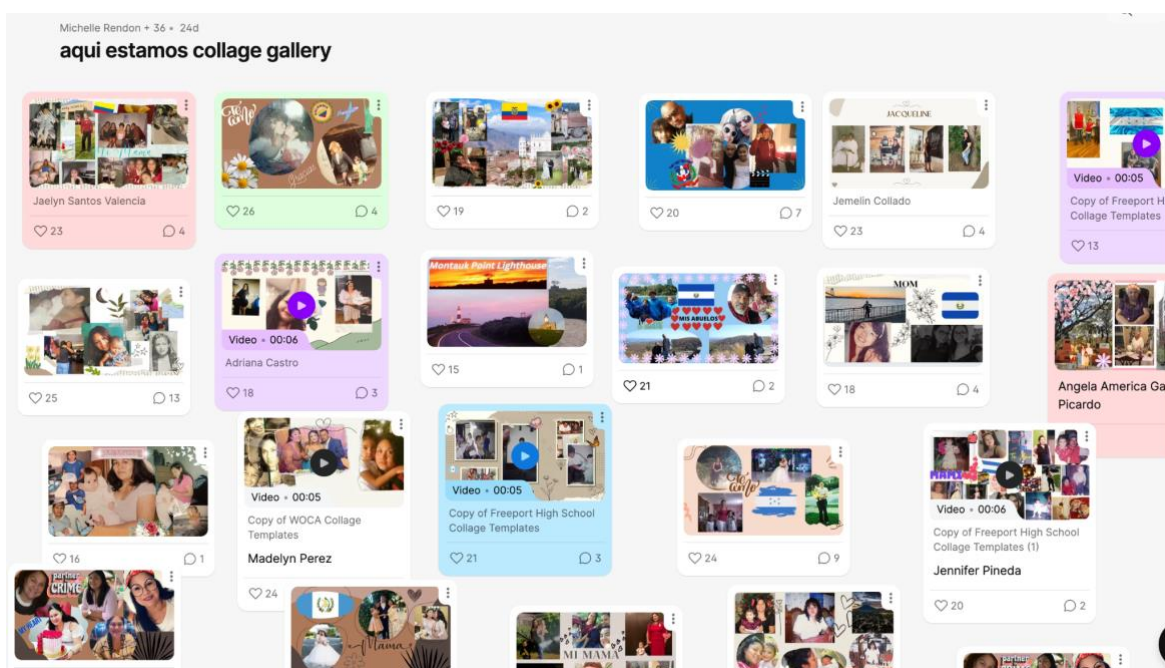
development of critical consciousness. Much like my own experience, this revelation served as a catalyst, fueling students' desire to delve deeper into learning.

Equally significant was allowing my students to delve into our local community's digital archives. In this exploration, I encouraged them to consider what they saw and what was absent, who was represented and who was not. Further, what messages were the archives conveying? During this exercise, students made notable observations such as:

1. Despite our town's demographics being over 50% Latine and our school having over 70% Latine students, there was a glaring absence of Latine history. For instance, information about the first Latinx business, the first Latinx graduate from our high school, and the arrival of the first Latinx family in our town was absent.
2. Available archival material was not in Spanish. Students recognized this as an access issue, expressing concern that our families, integral to the community's history, would be unable to navigate the archives without English proficiency.

We discussed archival erasure and how archives can shape our community's history. Therefore, students embraced the idea of reclaiming our power by creating a community-based archive accessible to our Spanish-speaking community where we could preserve *las memorias e historias de nuestra gente*. Drawing from my experience with the oral history project that centered on the counter-narratives of the Black community in our town during the late '60s, I encouraged students to think about visuals like photos and videos they may have and people in our Latine community whose stories they would like to uplift.

Teaching critical local history and discussing digital archives as activism motivated students to take ownership of our archival project. They actively sought to create something for our community that could uplift Latine testimonios and counter-narratives that would be accessible to future generations. Through this project, we aimed to preserve photos, *recuerdos y homenajes a nuestra comunidad* as a tribute to our community, honoring the people and places that shaped our life experiences. We named our digital archive "*Aquí Estamos*," which translates to "We are Here." We chose this phrase because it represents our commitment to resisting the erasure of the Latine diaspora in Long Island. I invite fellow educators who are thinking about incorporating digital archival projects into their curriculum to explore local history through a critical lens and share that history with students. Creating a digital archival project with a critical purpose will motivate and empower students throughout the learning experience. *Aquí Estamos* is an example of how educators can empower students to actively participate in shaping and sharing their communities' critical histories.



During one of our sessions, Dra. Barrales visited our classroom and taught students about the Women of Color Archive. Students engaged in an arts-based archiving workshop in which they honored a Latine resident in our community. We archived the collages in a Padlet.

Preserving Community Stories: A Guide for Oral History and Digital Archiving Projects

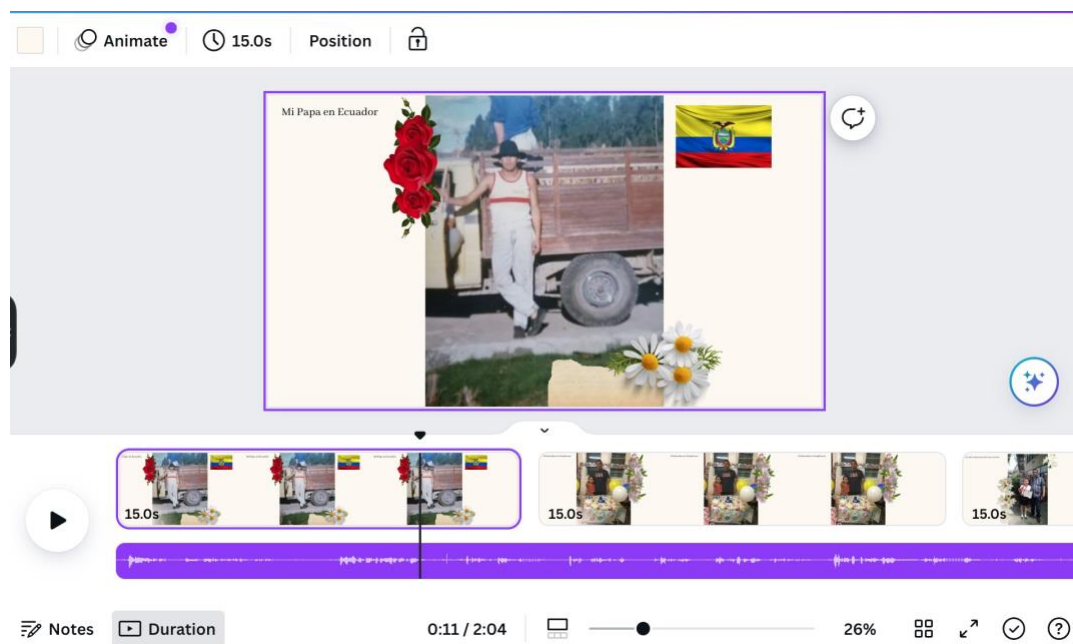
In this section, I will share insights from creating *Aquí Estamos* and provide a framework to help educators incorporate oral history and digital archiving into their curriculum. The following table provides a guide for educators wanting to incorporate oral history and digital media in the classroom. The objectives, guiding questions, and activities can be adapted to serve your learning goals and students best.

Objective	Guiding Questions	Activities
Identify people in our Latine community students would like to interview.	Who would you like to talk to about their life and experiences as a Latine on Long Island? Whose story do you want to amplify and preserve? Why?	Consider the parameters you may want to give students as they consider at least three possible interviewees. For example, I asked my students to think about people who were Latinx, at least 15 years older than them, residents of Long Island, and whom they were deeply interested in speaking to. Have students create a list and reflect on why they chose those three candidates.
Explore “good” questions and interviewing skills. Create a list of tips for interviewing and a bank of	What makes an interview successful? What are good interview questions?	Look at oral history project examples with students. I used StoryCorps and the Women of Color Archive as a reference. Together, analyze the type of questions being used and good interviewing skills. Create a list of tips for good interviews and a list of

questions students can use as a reference.	How do you interview someone? What do you want to know about your interviewee's life?	questions students may want to include in their interviews. For example, my students identified that questions should be open-ended; therefore, we avoided yes or no questions in our bank of questions. Additionally, we spoke about making the interviewee feel seen by keeping eye contact and being fully present. Collectively, we created a list of tips for interviews. There are plenty of resources online that you can explore together as well. We also collectively created a bank of questions to pick from.
Practice interviewing and deep listening.	How do we practice listening? How does it feel to interview someone? How does it feel to be interviewed?	Before students conduct their official oral history interviews, have them practice with each other in class and reflect on the process. How did it feel to listen to your classmate? What went well? What needed to be improved? What will they keep in mind when interviewing their chosen storyteller?
Learn and understand the concept of consent and ethics in this work.	What is consent? Why is consent required for this project?	If you plan on making the oral history projects public, getting consent from students and interviewees is necessary. This is a great moment to have discussions around consent and digital ethics. For example, in our classroom, we discussed digital citizenship, which is the responsible, safe, and ethical use of technology. We also discussed ethics in creating a public-facing archive in which we are centering histories of historically marginalized communities. I explained to students that they must obtain consent from their chosen storyteller to make the project public to others. As a class, you can look at consent form samples and make your own. If you collaborate with a local archive or library, they will likely have a consent form you can share with students. You can also reach out to me via email, and I will be happy to share the one we used. A great resource for us was Voice of Witness. You can explore their site here: https://voiceofwitness.org/about/
Organize and Conduct Interview	When and where will you meet your chosen storyteller?	Students should set a time and place to interview. Remind students to show up ready with consent form and digital device. Most of my students used

	What device will you use to record your interview? Do you have consent to record and share their story? Which questions are you bringing to the interview with you?	their cell phones to record the interview. Beforehand, we made sure to practice using the recording app and how to transfer the audio into their laptops. We also went over how to discuss the consent form with interviewees. Further, we revisited interview and listening skills tips. Finally, students prepared a document with the questions they would bring to the interview. Students selected around 5-7 questions from the question bank we created. We aimed for the interview to be at least 20 minutes long. In groups, students shared the questions they selected and discussed why they chose them.
Reflect and Discuss Interviews	What did we learn? What are we taking away from this experience?	Once students conducted their interviews, we engaged in a reflexive writing exercise. Provide students with prompts such as: How did the interview go? How did you feel during and after? What was your favorite moment during the interview? Which moments in the interview would you like to revisit? Why? Is there anything that you now want to know more about? Have students share their reflections aloud and have conversations around those reflections.

Creatively Digitizing Testimonios



Screenshot from editing process of "La Vida de Mi Padre" by Raschel

After reflecting on and discussing the students' interviews, we brainstormed about developing creative multimodal representations of the stories. Because the interviews ranged from 20-45 minutes, we thought about ways to make the content more digestible and accessible to our intended audience, our community. We decided to create 2 -3 min videos combining audio clips of favorite moments from the interview and photographs shared by the interviewee. To create the short video, students learned how to edit audio on Audacity, a free software for recording and editing audio, and use Canva, a graphic design platform with free online video editing. I first learned how to use both digital platforms to teach students how to navigate them. Once students became familiar with these tools, they took ownership of their creative process, and I provided guidance. Editing the content allowed students to re-listen and revisit the interview numerous times, heightening thoughtfulness and care throughout the creative process. Digitizing the testimonios allowed students to be creative and intentional in honoring their interviewees.

When students finalized their creative digital testimonios, we shared them in class, and they were assigned to share them with their interviewees. In class, we collectively listened to mothers, fathers, grandparents, older siblings, and other relatives share their struggles and triumphs, bringing up many emotions - pride, anger, and joy. We identified common themes of sacrifice, resilience, courage, injustice, gratitude, love, and grief within the stories. It was beautiful and powerful to listen and reflect on the experiences our loved ones shared. Students shared their projects with their interviewees and returned to class to share their reactions. Many students shared how these interviews and the digital videos made their chosen storyteller feel important and like they mattered. I am currently working on organizing a community exhibition event where students, interviewees, and other guests can gather, engage with the digital testimonios, and celebrate our collective history.

Amplifying Las Voces de La Comunidad

Before engaging students in this project, I knew I wanted to house their projects in a digital space our community could access. Through my studies in technology in pedagogy, I became familiar with Omeka, a free, flexible, and open-source web-publishing platform for displaying libraries, museums, archives, and scholarly collections. However, as a class, we discussed how this website had its limitations on accessibility and design. Finally, we agreed that sharing content through Instagram would be easier for us and our community to access on their phones. Therefore, we created an Instagram account (@aqui_estamos516) where we would share our work and invite community members to share *fotos y recuerdos* that we could post on our account. This way, it could genuinely be a community-based digital archive. We also agreed to ask our interviewees for verbal and written consent to share their stories before we posted them on a social media platform.

Collaborating with local libraries or museums can amplify the impact of digital archival projects. They can serve as community partners with resources available to expand and uplift your students' work. The local library manages our community's digital archives. Therefore, I approached the archivist to share our project, and she was happy to support and collaborate with us. My students' work will be included in the local community and New York State archives, making it publicly available to local students, educators, and community members. We plan to share our work through community exhibitions publicly, collaborate with district educators to grow the project, and develop curriculum resources for future use by librarians and educators.

Closing Thoughts: Student & Pedagogical Reflections

In my 10 years of teaching, this project has highlighted the importance and power of centering the local community in the curriculum. Centering and connecting with voices in our community was truly a transformative experience for my students and me. When the project culminated at the end of the year, students shared their thoughts on engaging with oral history work, digital design, and media.

Below are a few student reflections and perspectives.

"I really enjoyed working on this project because I learned so much about my father as he shared his story. I'm really glad that I have a recording of this interview because he spoke about moments we never talked about before like his journey migrating to this country. I am glad I will always have it with me to share with other family members. It was also really fun to create a video honoring his story and sharing it with my classmates. I recommend this project to other students because it taught me to value our stories and to value what our community has been through."

"At first, I was skeptical about the project because I never interviewed anyone, and it just felt like a lot of work. After the interview I was more motivated to keep working on it because my mother's story was really powerful, and I wanted to make a really nice video about her. She sacrificed so much to give us a better life. I learned a lot about her, and it got us closer. I also really liked learning how to edit sound and make a video with pictures and audio. I recommend this project to anyone because you really learn a lot and it's different from what we usually do in school."

"My favorite part about the project was learning about Long Island's history because we never talk about that in school. It was really interesting to learn about laws that created segregation in the towns here because although it was a long time ago, we still see it. I think we should learn more about our own history in school. I recommend this project to other students in our community because they will learn so much and get to honor someone by preserving their story for other generations to come."

Aquí Estamos empowered students and allowed them to be history-makers, producing public knowledge that will shape our community's history. Community-based digital archival projects that center and empower historically marginalized voices allow students to engage with digital activism as they resist the erasure of their communities. Through this project, students filled archival gaps within our hometown's traditional records. This project allowed our local community to be centered in our curriculum as valuable knowledge holders and students as knowledge producers.

As a critical language educator aware of the inseparable connection between language and identity, I believe that Spanish as a home language course must be taught beyond language instruction. To fully empower Latine youth, I argue that Spanish curriculums must include principles of ethnic studies. Although I was initially not trained in Ethnic Studies, I was able to subvert my classroom space and develop a curriculum grounded in critical language awareness and ethnic studies that allows students to deconstruct harmful language ideologies while centering historically marginalized communities. This language classroom transformed into a space where students could analyze the power structures inherent in language and develop their voices to

advocate for social justice within their community. By infusing the Spanish language arts curriculum with the ARC of ethnic studies—access, relevance, community—educators foster students' critical consciousness around language, culture, and history while centering identities in the classroom.

Aquí Estamos is an example of a meaningful project in the language classroom that implements Ethnic Studies principles. Through this project, we identified the absence of Latine voices in our local community archives. We disrupted this archival silence by co-creating a bilingual community-based digital archive to amplify and reshape community counternarratives, *los testimonios de nuestra comunidad*. Students actively thought about the critical history of the place they call home, learned about oral history methodology as a social justice practice, used their full linguistic repertoire, and creatively designed a multimodal video to honor *testimonios en nuestra comunidad* that will be shared on a public-facing digital repository. The project positions the community as a vital source of knowledge and history, disrupting traditional dominant narratives. Through this process, I observed the development of critical consciousness, digital literacy, and communication skills and increased ethnic pride. Students were engaged in a meaningful learning experience that was relevant to their lived experiences and advocated for their community.

This approach to language instruction demonstrates the profound potential of an ethnic studies framework to transform language classrooms into spaces of empowerment, critical inquiry, and social justice. Language educators committed to equity in the language classroom must embrace this transformative potential. By providing students with the tools to challenge dominant narratives, centering historically marginalized voices, critically examining language ideologies, and connecting learning to lived experiences, we equip them to become agents of positive change. This approach cultivates a generation of students ready to challenge oppressive systems and create a more just future.

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