

**The Schooling Biographies Project:
Re/Writing Our Lives Through
Counter-Storytelling**

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This handbook on decolonizing pedagogies is presented to the Association of Raza Educators, Los Angeles Education and Recruitment Committee in response to a call for curricula.

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INTRODUCTION

This curriculum resource guide is intended for progressive educators who want to develop a better understanding of decolonizing curricula and pedagogy. Walking the reader through a working unit plan, this resource guide brings the knowledge generated in alternative pedagogical spaces together with theoretical insights from the fields of Critical Pedagogy, Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), and Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT).

A feature that distinguishes decolonizing pedagogies from more general critical pedagogical approaches is an explicit conceptual engagement with colonialism and imperialism. Reading and writing within/against colonialism and imperialism requires, in turn, that we unpack these historical processes and challenge their inner logics, unmasking the ways in which they are lived today. The challenge of a decolonizing pedagogy is precisely this: to draw connections between the colonial past and the present; between our lives and the social, historical, and geo-political forces that encircle them, with the goal of self and social transformation.

With this pedagogical challenge in mind, the approach to teaching California History and Writing, the two subjects outlined in this resource guide, begins with a cross-curricular approach to the study of colonialism grounded in students' lived-experiences. Along the way, important aspects of the learning process, such as the development of literacy skills, mastery of writing genres, reading and interpreting difficult historical texts, will be addressed. Although we provide a linear representation of the intersection of these two courses, the guide makes the argument for more complex and nuanced understandings of curriculum design and practice that is contextual and dialogical. The theory and practice of curriculum development has, for too long, been driven by a scientific approach that reduces teaching and learning into a sequence of well designed activities, thus making education a seemingly "neutral", mechanical act. This approach to curriculum development does not account for the dynamic and changing nature of education as a process for self actualization and social transformation. If pedagogy is to remain an ethical-political practice, then the experience of curriculum design and implementation must be viewed as a creative, generative, historical process.

One of the cultural resources borrowed from Black, Chicano/Mexicano, and other historically dominated groups in making sense of present day realities and the colonial past, is counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling is a medium for challenging the dominant/master narratives in our society. For example, one of the most pervasive dominant/master narratives about the causes of the deplorable "drop-out" rates for Black and Latino/a youth in the United States is grounded in a deficit perspective that overtly reduces a complex, historical process into self-blame, lack of parent involvement, or a "culture of poverty." Counter-storytelling thus becomes a vehicle for self empowerment, as students use concepts, readings, and other literacy practices as a mediating artifacts for arriving at a critical, reflexive understanding of the problems encountered in their communities. In this curriculum guide, counter-storytelling is part of the *Schooling Biographies Project: Re/Writing Our Lives Through Counter-Storytelling*, where students unpack their schooling experiences through research, reading, writing, and dialogue.

The authors recognizes the limitations in undertaking to write a decolonizing pedagogical and curricular handbook. Hopefully, readers will push against their own pedagogical practices, decolonize them, and re-invent some of the material presented here in their own teaching contexts. As Freire reminds us, "[Teaching] experiences and practices can be neither exported nor imported...they must be reinvented," (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 132).

Further, a decolonizing pedagogy is but one part of a broader arena that progressive educators must reclaim in their struggle for social justice. Taking the lead of Maori scholar-activist Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a decolonizing pedagogical praxis is situated within the broader processes of political, economic, cultural, and spiritual self-determination.

ON COLONIAL EDUCATION

CHAIRMAIN OMALI YESHITELA



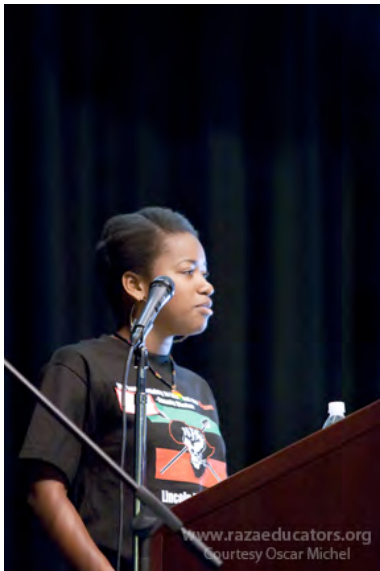
“And the system does that to us. It engages us in ideological warfare; we’ve been unarmed for most of the warfare that has been occurring against us. And so we find ourselves all the time, looking for ways to be approved, to be accepted. And the reality is that for them, the system, for the imperialists, education for them, educating us is a civilizing mission. A civilizing mission! The Whiter you are, the more civilized you are... Of course our responsibility is to take revolutionary ideology to them, to take an understanding of this reality that we live with and why it is that they are oppressed. To allow them to participate, that is our responsibility, to take it to them. So, as educators, it seems to me, we have to massify this whole question of education, to make it a process that the masses themselves are involved in. To stop seeing as the system would have us to see. There are people who are being taught, and that is not just in the school system, as receptacles, empty vessels, into which we pour all the knowledge that they need, which eliminates any significance

that they bring to the question. So you don’t know anything—I don’t know how many people in this room have ever had the experience— I have. Going to school and being taught to be ashamed of my momma and being ashamed of my grandmother and what have you cuz they didn’t talk right. And they didn’t dress like the White folks dressed, what those who were civilizing me taught me what we were supposed to be like. Makes us ashamed of ourselves, so we become our worst enemies and what have you. They don’t have to send anybody to guard us, we guard ourselves. Because this is what their education does to us. So our education must be about liberating ourselves. And to liberate ourselves, we have to attack the system that is responsible for our oppression.”

And the reality is that for them, the system, for the imperialists, education for them, educating us is a civilizing mission. A civilizing mission!

“And the reality is that for them, the system, for the imperialists, education for them, educating us is a civilizing mission. A civilizing mission!”

Omali Yeshitela. Keynote Speech delivered at the 3rd Annual Association of Raza Educators Conference, Los Angeles, California.



ON COLONIAL EDUCATION: A CALL TO EDUCATORS

SAKEENAH SHABAAZ

“We the people of color have been stripped of our native roots and have had them replaced with the colonized beliefs of those who were foolishly driven by greed, money, and the power of false dominance. There is a place where you can be taught about this history of the people and those who came before you, but that education is denied to you. Instead that place is used to keep us mentally chained. It teaches us that we have no part in history. It reminds us that our leaders are dead and gone, and that we should worship those who killed them. We are not given the respect that we deserve as people, and we are told that our ancestors were nothing but slaves and savages. This place that I’m describing is called school, but it is better described as a place of containment where the ideas of the oppressor are freely welcomed and the respect and culture

of the student are swept underneath the blue carpet of the classroom. Because spaces like

this exist, another barrier is put up that will keep us from the liberation of our people and keep us from telling the truth about those who tell lies about us.

Within this institution that we call school there mainly exists the student and the teacher. The education that we as students are forced to receive is a colonial education. This education, especially in history classes, can be proven to perpetuate racism and self-hatred. I'd like to share a quick story about my third period world history class at Lincoln High School. And this is a perfect example of how racism is perpetuated in our education. My teacher and I got into a discussion about the imperialism and colonialism that took place in Africa after the industrial revolution. And after sticking my point about how our African people were doing just fine on the land, and how they were highly developed politically and economically, my teacher, without any remorse, continued by stating that Anglo-Saxons were the dominant race and that they were more advanced than any other race that existed. Stating this as if she were a woman of European descent, she tried to justify the enslavement, rape, torture, and colonization of our African people because they were White. And to top it off, she is an African teacher.

We should be taught a true history, our history! We need to learn about what was taken from us, what is still denied to us, and what is rightfully ours: our land, our culture, traditions, and the power that was rightfully bestowed upon our people.

This is proof that the education that is shoved down our throats is racist and caters to the European race. And what is more blatant, is that most teachers are just as colonized, if not more, than the students they are teaching. How can we build this community that we strive for if the teachers, especially the ones who are teaching us this second, are feeding us the opposite of what we need to make that community a reality. Just as students, teachers need to educate themselves outside of the classroom because they have a responsibility to give us the proper education that we deserve, and they can't do that by completely being bound to the California standards.

The curriculum that is served in the classroom does not coincide with what we need to make that community a reality. We should be taught a true history, our history! We need to learn about what was taken from us, what is still denied to us, and what is rightfully ours: our land, our culture, traditions, and the power that was rightfully bestowed upon our people.

We need you the teachers to help us. We need you to be involved with us on a level that allows us to see you as more than puppets of the institution. The perception of the teacher through a student's eyes should not be one that is black or white. It should be in full color to represent that beauty that a teacher could hold. We need teachers that think outside of the box we call the colonial educational system."

Sakeenah Shabaaz. Keynote Speech delivered at the 3rd Annual Association of Raza Educators Conference, Los Angeles, California.

WHAT ARE DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGIES?¹

INTRODUCTION

The field of Critical Pedagogy has undergone successive transformations. A response to the instrumental, objectivist tradition in education, Critical Pedagogy grew out of the fertilization of radical social theory (the Frankfurt School and a neo-Marxist tradition) and progressive education movements in the United States (John Dewey, Miles Horton, Maxine Greene). Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and later Henry Giroux's *Theory and Resistance in Education* are identified as seminal texts in the field of Critical Pedagogy. More recently, the reassertion of Marxist social analysis has led to the production of key texts such as Paula Allman's *Revolutionary Social Transformation*. These contemporary authors are challenging the field of Critical Pedagogy via social analysis/theory and have been successful in centering the debate on the goals of liberating education. Nevertheless, although they outline the importance of education in revolutionary struggle, a persistent gap remains: social theory and academic dialogues on Critical Pedagogy fail to address *pedagogical practices*—how they are mediated and how they mediate anti-colonial consciousness.

Decolonizing pedagogies represent an expansion and departure from critical pedagogical strands. The following are a set of foundational principals in Critical Pedagogy and critiques from a decolonizing framework:

Foundational Principles:	Critiques of the Field:
✓ "Pedagogy is political."	✓ "Political, to what ends?"
✓ "Reading the word, reading the world."	✓ "Are students and teachers developing and refining anti-colonial literacies?"
✓ "Breaking the oppressor-oppressed relations through democratic forms of participation."	✓ "To what extent is democratic participation in the classroom tied to the broader project of community self-determination?"

Decolonizing pedagogies—distinct from critical, feminist, anti-racist, and humanist pedagogies—begin with the assumption that colonialism and imperialism are central to our oppression. Although other pedagogical approaches can be integrated within the broader framework of de-colonization (see the section "Decolonizing Pedagogies and Anti-Colonial Struggle"), a distinguishing feature of decolonizing pedagogies is their explicit engagement with the question of colonialism at all levels of the pedagogical encounter. As will be discussed in some detail, the California History and Writing curricula interweaves reading and writing against neo/ colonialism(s) with concepts that assist in the understanding of how colonizing discourses and practices are lived today. Similar to Red/Indigenous Pedagogies², Tejada *et al.* (2001) have made a call for this general decolonizing strategy, with its emphasis on the study of colonialism:

¹ This section is an expansion of the ideas presented at the 9th Annual Teachers For Social Justice conference co-presentation with Nikhil Laud titled, "Reflecting on Why We Teach: Towards a Decolonizing Pedagogy and the Development of an Antio-Colonial Consciousness."

² See Sandy Grande's *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought*.

“We contend that developing a critical consciousness of our internal neo-colonial condition and its possible transformation is fundamental to what teachers and students do in decolonizing pedagogical spaces. This requires explicit attention to the history and contemporary manifestations of internal neocolonialism in a manner that clearly explicates their social origin and rejects their historical consequence. It also introduces students to robust theories and conceptual frameworks that provide them the analytic tools to excavate history and examine the present.”

Moreover, a decolonizing *pedagogical* praxis is interwoven with theoretical and cultural models of teaching and learning. Often, critical educators fail to engage in the discussion and debate on the kinds of theoretical and cultural models imbued in education encounters.³ This may be due to the instrumentalist reduction of teaching and learning to psychological, cognitive processes; or to the conflation of curriculum design with learning theory; or to the fact that the seminal authors in the field are not educators themselves, thus discussions of “critical pedagogy” are discussions about social theory/analysis. The praxis of *pedagogy* is thus often overlooked, minimized, or under-theorized.

Questions for Reflecting on One's Pedagogy:

- ✓ What underlying theories of learning inform my teaching?
- ✓ What cultural models inform this theory of learning?
- ✓ How does this theory of learning shape my teaching?
- ✓ How are these cultural models interlocked with the legacies of colonialism?

THE CENTRALITY OF COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM TO OUR OPPRESSION

“A basic premise of our call for a decolonizing pedagogy is that the dominant economic, cultural, political, juridical, and educational arrangements in contemporary ‘American’ society are those of an internal neocolonialism produced by the mutually reinforcing systems of colonial and capitalist domination and exploitation that have organized social relations throughout the history of what today constitutes the United States,” –Tejeda *et al.*, “Toward a Decolonizing Pedagogy: Social Justice Reconsidered.”

DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGIES: A RESPONSE TO COLONIALISM(S)

“For us a decolonizing pedagogy encompasses...an anti-colonial and decolonizing theory and praxis that insists that colonial domination and its ideological frameworks operate and are reproduced in and through the curricular content and design, the instructional practices, the social organization of learning, and the forms of evaluation that inexorably sort and label students into enduring categories of success and failure.” –Tejeda *et al.*, “Toward a Decolonizing Pedagogy: Social Justice Reconsidered.”

³ Some indigenous scholars question the use of the term “pedagogy”, which is derived from the Greek, where the practice of pedagogy in this tradition was undertaken by a slave; the object of pedagogy was the child rearing of the master’s child. Romero, Arce, and Cammarota (2010) have used the terms *Huitzilopochtli* and *Tezclatipoca* as dual processes for what we commonly refer to as “critical pedagogy”.

DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGIES AND ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLE

From the standpoint of the colonized, the goals, processes, and outcomes of decolonizing projects are to be struggled for and placed within the spatial-historical process of *survivance* (Grande, 2004). Colonized peoples and historically dominated groups are caught in the midst of a set of historical contradictions and processes set off by the colonial encounter. Viewed more broadly, decolonizing projects take historical form against the backdrop of colonialism and materialize as part of a broader strategy of community self determination. Using the metaphor of ocean waves, Maori Scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith has developed a useful framework for understanding these broader geo-political and historical forces as currents set off by the waves of colonialism. Thus, *rāza* communities engaged in the processes of decolonization, healing, mobilization, and transformation must view their struggle both spatially and historically.

- How is our work moving within the currents of survival, recovery, and development?
- What does decolonization—political, social, spiritual, and psychological—look like within the current of survival?
- What decolonizing pedagogical projects emerge as part of the strategy for survival?
- How is decolonization transformed within the waves of recovery and development?
- At what point do decolonizing projects become spaces of healing?
- And how do these currents and movements ultimately lead to mobilization and transformation as expressions of community self-determination?

Thus, within a decolonizing framework, questions of *whose* interests and towards *what ends* sometimes precede questions of *how*. The context in which decolonizing pedagogies take form, who undertakes this education, and towards what goals are often more significant in the struggle for self-determination rather than questions of pedagogical mediation and process.



Figure. From Colonialism to Community Self-Determination: Processes and Spaces of Struggle. Adapted from Maori Activist-Scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

HEALING AS A DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGY: FROM VOICING TO NAMING OUR COLONIAL REALITIES

Dialogue

"Dialogue is the encounter between [people], mediated by the world, in order to name the world," (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 2005, p. 88).

"Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it," (Shor & Freire, *A Pedagogy for Liberation*, 1997, p. 98.)

Dialogue as a pedagogical process is part of a long tradition in Critical Pedagogy. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire iterates that dialogue is a particular form of human communication that involves critically reflecting upon the world. Thus, not all communication is dialogical. Moreover, the term dialogue conjures the image of people talking, deliberating, and discussing. Although this is part of the process of dialogue, Freire comments that dialogical mediation happen "not just at the intellectual level, but at the level of action," (Freire, 2005, p. 96).

From a decolonizing framework, dialogue amongst colonized peoples is not a given but something that must be struggled for. Although language is a tool for social reflection, language and thinking must be interrogated and reclaimed. It is a mistake to assume that dialogue takes place among equals or that it represents a "safe space" where people come together. In practice, dialogue is imbued with both violence and love.

Naming

"To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it," (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 76).

"It is not enough for teachers to merely affirm uncritically their students' histories, experiences, and stories. To take student voices at face value is to run the risk of idealizing and romanticizing them. The contradictory and complex histories and stories that give meaning to the lives of students are never innocent and it is important that they be recognized for their contradictions as well as for their possibilities...It is crucial that critical educators do more than allow such stories to be heard. It is equally important for teachers to help students find a language for critically examining the historically and socially constructed forms by which they live. Such a process involves more than 'speaking' one's history and social formation, it also involves engaging collectively with others within a pedagogical framework that helps to reterritorialize and rewrite the complex narratives that make up one's life," (Giroux, 1997, pp. 158-160).

Naming is a process that emerges through dialogue and critical reflection. Given the colonial legacies of violence that encircle the lives of historically dominated communities in the United States, naming involves a complex process of reflection, through the use of historical and sociological concepts, on the ways in which our lives are affected by colonial discourses and practices. In my experience working with migrant and *raza* students from South East urban Los Angeles, the process of naming grows out of one's lived experience and is transformed into a collective process whereby students bring their often contradictory experiences together within a broader framework generated from concepts derived from

social theory/analysis. Such concepts include Colonialism, Capitalism, Patriarchy, Hegemony, Eurocentrism.

Naming often involves naming one's pain. Teaching such concepts as Colonialism, Capitalism, Hegemony, White Supremacy, Eurocentrism, etc. which seem like abstract concepts, when internalized and interwoven with personal experience, are powerful bridges that assist students in naming inter-personal and "horizontal" violence as constituted by macro- and "vertical" forms of State violence. Colonized peoples, precisely because of their subjection and domination, experience violence on so many levels: in family settings, among family members; in the work place, where *raza* communities are exploited daily; in schools, when they encounter school administrators, racist teachers, and schooling as deculturalization; in public spaces, when they are targeted by the police; in the media, through stereotypical and dehumanizing representations. No social space is left untouched by the colonial legacies of violence.

The *Schooling Biographies Project* is composed of a series of pedagogical and experiential exercises that mediate a critical reflection on a particular institution: colonial education. Building from Cultural-Historical approaches to learning, the curriculum serves as a tool for generating contradictions such that students are asked to reflect on their schooling experiences, to make links between their personal biographies and the histories of schools as colonizing institutions.

Naming is not merely an intellectual process. Although students are apprenticed into academic literacies, and although the readings are derived from sociological, anthropological, and political theory, said readings are used as resources for critically reflecting upon and transforming students' understanding of oppression in everyday life, thus equipping students with tools for understanding the way schools and schooling systems operate and shape their lives.

Counter-Storytelling

One of the cultural resources I have borrowed from Black, Chicano/Mexicano, and other historically dominated groups in making sense of our present day realities and the colonial past is counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling is a medium for challenging the dominant/master narratives we hear in our society. For example, one of the most pervasive dominant/master narratives about the causes of the deplorable "drop-out" rates for Black and Latino/a youth in the United States is grounded in a deficit perspective that overtly reduces a complex, historical process into self-blame, lack of parent involvement, or a "culture of poverty." Counter-storytelling thus becomes a vehicle for self empowerment, as students use concepts, readings, and other literacy practices as a mediating artifacts for arriving at a critical, reflexive understanding of the problems encountered in their communities.

How is counter-storytelling mediated and what does it look like? Counter-storytelling is part of the *Schooling Biographies Project: Re/Writing Our Lives Through Counter-Storytelling*, where students unpack their schooling experiences through action-research, reading, writing, and dialogue. Because the institution reflected upon is schooling, students' are asked to critically name and challenge existing dominant/master narratives circulated in popular culture and the broader society as they pertain to education. The curriculum introduces students to the construction of such terms as "Mexicano", "Latino", "Border", "Im/Migrant", "Education", "Schooling", etc. and how these constructions serve to perpetuate cultural, social, and economic systems of domination. In interrogating these terms, we unpack the major logics inherent in these constructions: essentialism, universalism, neutralization, exoticism, Otherness. Of these, we spend significant time reading and understanding the colonial process of Other-ing, how it has served historically to both dehumanize the colonized "Other" and justify colonial expansion, and how we see other-ness today.

Counter-storytelling is mediated through dialogue and is a task-structure for organizing one's thinking in relation to schooling. Moreover, writing is used as a vehicle whereby students are asked to produce a structured biographical account of their schooling experiences based on student-led research.

Students' written biographies are process and product; they are both the outcome of the thinking generated throughout the course/unit and the medium for challenging colonial/master narratives. In practice, students challenge their own ways of thinking and internalization of colonial logics. Finally, students perform their autobiographies. This performance is structured around the *Circulo de Cultura y Comunidad*, where students read their autobiographies out-loud. In my experience, these performances have opened a series of spaces that can be characterized as painful yet personally liberating.

Healing

Healing is the social space interwoven throughout the experience of coming to name one's pain. Wrought by the violence of colonialism, decolonizing pedagogies seek to generate spaces of healing and community, where students can come together in spaces that are seldom experienced in public schools.

In *The Schooling Biographies Project*, students collectively perform their auto/biographies as counter/narratives. Students not only strive to think critically about colonialism and how it is experienced personally in relation to schooling, they speak against this violence and oppression. This speaking against or *naming* generates spaces of self-worth, cultural validation, and a vision of community that involves a love for their peers, families, and broader community.

The development of a political and social consciousness emerges out of this sense of community. Precisely because of colonialism, *raza* students experience personal violence, marginalization, and dehumanization everyday and everywhere. The development of political clarity among urban *raza* youth requires that critical educators work toward the constitution of healing spaces.

THREE MODELS OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, PRACTICE, AND REFLECTION

THE TRADITIONAL, LINEAR MODEL

Ever since the institutionalization of teacher education programs in the United States, which can be traced back to the founding of the colonial state-sponsored Lexington School for teachers in 1823, vying positions have been waged with respect to content and goals of teacher education programs. Cremin (1953) identified two opposing views: one has stressed subject matter development and the other teaching methods as the central aim of teacher education. During the early 1900s vying positions in colleges of education were sharply drawn between a group emphasizing the "study of historical and philosophical movements" that influenced education "principles" coupled with the study of "ends and purposes" of education, versus another group seeking a "scientific and statistical approach to education," (Cremin, 1953, p. 169).

To this day, educators are apprenticed into a complex and often contradictory field, where the enduring tradition of scientificism in curriculum theory and practice is challenged by aesthetic and reflexive models that privilege pedagogy as art and politics, respectively. Whatever gains have been made by critical, feminist, post-structural, anti-racist and other progressive theories of pedagogy and curriculum development, these gains are currently challenged by the neo-conservative and privatizing agenda that seek to deskill teachers and reintroduce a scientific, linear model of curriculum and pedagogy.

THE CONCEPTUAL, THEMATIC ALTERNATIVE

Conceptual or thematic approaches to curriculum development are less rigid than traditional linear models (most starkly manifest in the pervasive seven-step lesson plan structure for creating teaching units). A key distinguishing feature of the conceptual approach to curriculum development is the attempt to bring the series of activities, experiences, and resources into a general theme, usually framed by a set of guiding questions that serve to orient the learning.

Critical traditions in education have embraced thematic approaches to education, engaging students in the inquiry of issues and problems within such themes as Social Justice, Critical Literacy, Colonialism, Human Rights, Race/Class/Gender, Action Research, and Autobiography among others. Most of these themes are approached via cross-curricular methods that transcend disciplinary boundaries. For instance, a teacher might bring key sociological texts within a history class; or writing is used extensively as a mode of researching and reporting within a Chemistry course.

To note, a conceptual / thematic approach is more than a cumulative sequence. For instance, many history teachers say they approach their teaching thematically, and that periods in history such as "Ancient Civilizations" are what constitutes the theme. Or a high school English teacher might argue that her thematic approach is based on writing genres, such as Poetry, The Novel, etc.. In these instances themes are more like topics derived within a particular discipline. A conceptual/thematic approach, on the other hand, involves the construction of learning around a theme that is not discipline-based. The theme is usually grounded in questions around a social problem or issue.

Another aspect of the conceptual/thematic approach to curriculum planning is an attempt to move from linear to more iterative models of teaching, such that planned activities will tentatively change with the unfolding interaction, dialogue, and learning. Congruent with this approach is problem-based education which brings students into the process of curriculum development. In such a classroom, teachers build the skeletal structure for a thematic unit plan, yet allow students to shape the learning by eliciting student identified

problems and introducing learning resources that assist in the identification and solution to community-defined problems.

THE EXPERIENTIAL, DIALOGICAL APPROACH

Designed curricula can be described in various ways, noting the linear unfolding of activities that students engage in or the thematic elements that organize these very activities. For instance, one might list the sets of readings that students encounter in the California History course and corresponding writing tasks:

“Students begin by reading the introductory chapter in Eduardo Galeano’s *The Open Veins of Latin America*, select chapters on colonialism and California history, and contemporary readings from Martha Menchaca’s *The Mexican Outsiders...* In the Writing course, students work through various writing genres, such as Extended Definition, Summary, and Autobiography, and explore these genres through rhetorical analysis of *Enrique’s Journey*.”

I propose here an experiential, dialogical approach to the design and analysis of California History and Writing curricula outlined in this handbook. Linear and thematic representations of curricula cannot do justice to the complex, dynamic, and experiential nature of educational encounters. This approach to education is informed by cultural-historical theories of learning that ask us to re-conceptualize pedagogy as both art (creative activity) and politics. Further, an experiential, dialogical approach places dialogue and experience at the center of the curriculum. The object of learning is not so much driven by the mastery of knowledge. Rather the transformation of knowledge, how students and teachers internalize, process, and reinvent what is learned is prioritized. Nevertheless, by placing experience at the center of learning, I am not suggesting that learning, and education more broadly, be “student-centered”. The object of learning includes students and teachers (who are also caught in the process of conscientization and transformation), but is more than these: the development of a critical social and political consciousness whose praxis is self and social transformation.

From an experiential, dialogical approach to curriculum developments, the curriculum can be characterized as constantly moving from the abstract to the concrete and back again, as students struggle to critically understand their individual lived-experiences in relation to others, and in relation to systems of oppression. This successive movement from the abstract to the concrete and back again is a general pedagogical strategy that generates and activates a series of interesting contradictions.

The mediating artifacts include the readings, guiding questions, presentations, and sets of activities that are introduced at key junctures in the education process. The cumulative knowledge from both the California History and Writing course come together in the *Schooling Biographies Project* in which students are asked to reflect on their schooling experiences using the analytic tools and resources developed in the California History course vis-a-vis a written and performed autobiographical account that is forged during the last week of the unit.

“The starting point for organizing the program content of education or political action must be the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspiration of the people,” (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 2005, p. 95).

CULTURAL-HISTORICAL LEARNING THEORY, KEY CONCEPTS

ORIGINS OF THE CONCEPT OF MEDIATION

“The world in which we live in is humanized, full of material and symbolic objects (signs, knowledge systems) that are culturally constructed, historical in origin and social in content. Since all human actions, including acts of thought, involve the **mediation** of such objects [‘tools and signs’] they are, on this score alone, social in essence,” (Scribner, 1990, p. 92).

The concept of **mediation** has its origins in Marx’s historical-materialism, and was further articulated by Lev Vygotsky in his cultural-historical approach to the formation of consciousness. Mediation describes the historical process that emerges with the separation between human beings and their world. As historical subjects, Marx had argued, we act upon our world, and in so doing both shape our environment and are thus transformed by it:

“Labor is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, **mediates**, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature... He confronts the materials of nature as a force of nature. He sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body, his arms, legs, head and hands, in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs. Through this movement he acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature,” (Marx, *Capital*, I, p. 283).

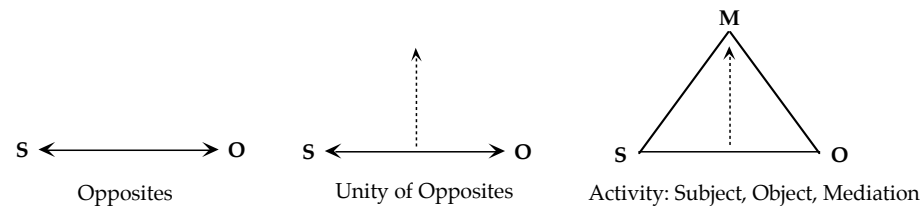
From a historical-materialist perspective, human consciousness develops with the production of culture, i.e. tools and artifacts, and is carried on by its successive transformation, as it is transmitted across individuals and communities. Culture thus includes all human-made artifacts, from speech, literacy, mathematics, to psychological processes, such as mathematical abstraction, formal reasoning, memory, to institutions, such as religion, the legal system, education, and our capitalist economy. All human artifacts have developed over time and are molded by past and present human labor, and not by some divine force or “natural”, unfolding developmental process.

Paulo Freire’s idea of “culture-in-action” is useful in understanding the historical character of education as a process whereby teachers and students are engaged in the co-construction of knowledge. A fundamental premise of the concept of mediation is the idea that we are conscious historical subjects, shaping and being shaped by what we do: “Consciousness is generated through the social practice that we participate in,” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p.47).

The fundamental process that emerges from the opposition between subject and object, between human beings and nature, is mediation. The dialectical unity individual-environment is captured by the concept of *activity*. This has been represented by the Basic Mediation Triangle. Activity without mediation, a subject (S) , or an object (O) is impossible.⁴

⁴ The movement of an insect or a celestial body does not constitute activity because there is no distinction between it and nature: it’s movements is ultimately determined by forces of biology and physics, respectively. Mediation is thus conceived as a definitive quality of human beings.

Figure 1: The Basic Mediation Triangle



THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Education—as opposed to socialization—is a dynamic, historical process arched towards life and human development. Diaz & Flores’s (2001) metaphoric description of the educator as a “socio-historical mediator” is congruent with cultural-historical approaches to learning that define the teacher as someone who works with consciously in the deliberate construction of learning contexts. This view is often at odds with commonly held notions among progressive educators who, translating Paulo Freire’s work, believe that their role is simply to “facilitate” learning through “dialogue”.⁵ Facilitation is seen as a political response to the banking model of education, where teachers impose their knowledge upon students. From a cultural-historical approach to learning, facilitation is one form of mediation, whose effectiveness should be assessed based on concrete learning situations.

To summarize, the view of the educator as facilitator can be misleading, as teachers are ethically and politically called to work actively in the creation of carefully designed activities that lead to learning and development. Moreover, as educators we carry a responsibility to not just learn from our students, but to actively guide them along paths we have traversed. For instance, we carry a responsibility to teach our students the functional and critical literacies we have developed through our own education.

LEARNING AS SOCIAL-HISTORICAL PRAXIS

Cultural-historical theory proposes a radical view of learning as a material, social practice that is rooted in a dialectical view of humans and their social environment. This view of learning challenges dominant perspectives that assume both (a) that learning is an individual act, and (b) that learning is a purely mental or cognitive process. From a cultural-historical perspective, learning is not individual but a collective, social practice. Even the most abstract of cognitive operations, say mathematical reasoning, are not simply “internalized” from the outside-in, they emerge through the cumulative history of the past, and are learned through the mediation of a set of carefully designed learning tasks. Indeed, Vygotsky’s General Genetic Law of human development states:

“Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals.” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 58).

⁵ See Paulo Freire’s discussion on “directivity” in the learning process in *Pedagogy of the City*. Also, see Peter Mayo’s *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education*, pp. 67 – ff. for a thorough discussion on the role of “authority” and interpretation of Freirean education as facilitator and mid-wife.

This cultural-historical approach to learning should not be confused with the pragmatist's "learning by doing" perspective. Although people learn through experience, these consciousness-raising oriented experiences are guided by specific goals, and, one would hope, are intentionally built from the accumulated knowledge of the past. Thus, we are able to learn through the experiences of others, through storytelling, and by observation. These practices, in turn, are not "natural" but are culturally specific, goal oriented, and make sense within the broader context in which they take form.

CULTURAL RESOURCES / MEDIATIONAL MEANS

Cultural-historical approaches see the potential in all cultural knowledge and experience as a resource in the generation of new forms of knowledge. The kinds of teaching strategies that are useful in any given learning context will depend on the goals, where the learning takes place, and who is a part of the learning, etc.. Often, progressive educators gravitate to inclusive theories of learning as a way of acknowledging "diversity" and the different ways in which learning happens. However, we must take caution in reducing the richness of mediational means to the popularized "multiple intelligences" or "learning styles", as these stereotype particular groups of students or they delimit the different array of possibilities in which teachers can move creatively in a given learning context. From a cultural-historical perspective, instead of thinking of learning styles we are apt to think of cultural resources; instead of the individual learner, the community of practice. In formal learning contexts, a well known mediating resource is the **participant task-structure**.

Participant-Task Structures:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| ✓ Modeling | ✓ Facilitation |
| ✓ Scaffolding | ✓ Lecturing |
| ✓ Guided Participation | ✓ Dialogue |
| ✓ Intent Observation | ✓ Problem-Posing |

Finally, we cannot overemphasize cultural mediation in the process of the formation of consciousness. The series of interchanges that are both designed and unplanned are as important as the learning content. Progressive educators have rightly oriented the discussion of education to *what* we teach, but questions of process, i.e. pedagogical mediation, need to be raised along questions of curricular content. Simply "exposing" students to the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, assigning Eduardo Galeano's *The Open Veins of Latin America*, listening to Tupac's Shakur's lyrics, or viewing *Che The Movie*, are insufficient in generating a rich learning experience that mediate political education and clarity in our students. More important is what we do with these mediating artifacts, how we structure activities through lesson-structures, down to the kinds of talk we use to guide the interaction within those activities, and how these are interwoven with the goal of developing a critical social and political consciousness.

CONTRADICTIONS: THE GENESIS OF DEVELOPMENT

“Cultural tools thus are both inherited and transformed by successive generations. Culture is not static; it is formed from the efforts of people working together, using and adapting material and symbolic tools provided by predecessors and in the process creating new ones,” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 51).

“Any psychological process, whether the development of thought or voluntary behavior, is a process undergoing changes right before our eyes,” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 61).

One of the underlying principles of historical-materialism is that historical transformations emerge in and through “contradictions.” The resolution of contradictions or “unity of opposites”, in the Marxist sense, generates new historical forms. Contradictions are found in any given activity. Within formal learning contexts, contradictions emerge between the teacher and student, between teachers’ and students’ cultural worlds, between the individual goals of students and the collective object, etc. Contradictions, in this sense, need not be considered negatively. On the contrary, contradictions are *resources* that we should strive to resolve and sometimes generate. Distancing is a useful spatial metaphor for understanding the generation and resolution of contradictions.

Contradictions that generate new forms of knowledge are either internal (primary contradictions) or external (secondary contradictions) to the education process.

Internal or “primary” contradictions in formal learning contexts:

- ❖ Between teachers’ and students’ cultural worlds. Bridging the distance between teachers’ and students’ cultural worlds is fundamental to learning. Often, students are resistant to learning and find that academic learning is too abstract and detached from their reality.
- ❖ Between teachers and students’ knowledge. Through deliberate mediation and assistance, teachers attempt to close this distance. This is a central, primary contradiction that is characteristic of most learning situations. However, in the process of teaching their students, educators are able to shift and learn from their students through a dynamic interchange and transformation of roles, what Freire termed the new teacher-student and student-teacher in problem-posing education.
- ❖ Between the individual goals of learners and the collective object forged. In all learning contexts, a struggle that teachers find themselves is getting students to “buy in” to their teaching goals. Not all students may agree with the teachers’ goals, or the teacher may not abide with the individual goals of students (or students themselves arrive with very distinct goals). Working to develop a collective understanding of the object of educational settings and balancing this with the negotiating of individual goals that each participant brings into any activity, involves tremendous effort. This is not achieved simply by stating the goals of the lesson or the course: this involves significant on-going meta-articulation and reflection that serves to mediate collective identity and community.
- ❖ Between newly introduced tools and the appropriation of those tools. Newly introduced tools can generate a series of contradictions within any learning situation. A question that cultural-historical learning theorists ask is “*when* is a tool?” That is, when are tools useful? When are they simply external prescriptions? And, most important, how are they transformed from external prescriptions to tools? This last question expresses an explicit premise in cultural-historical approaches to learning: learning is

marked by the appropriation of tools and thus a change in one's participation within a given community and around a given practice.

External or “secondary” contradictions in formal learning contexts:

- ❖ between the object of learning in any given educational setting and “boundary-objects”. Example: The goals of social justice teaching and education goals of state sponsored standardized testing.
- ❖ Between existing practices and “boundary-practices”. Example: learning and work; learning and military; learning and imprisonment.
- ❖ Between the internal goals of a given activity and the goals of an external community member. Example: between the individual goals and collective object of a given classroom and the goals of someone outside the learning context, such as the principal who has developed a renewed school mission statement.

There is yet a third dimension to contradictions—sometimes referred to as ‘contrareities’ because they are not strict contradictions in the traditional sense—that emerge when the historical conditions that have led to the formation of primary / secondary contradictions are brought to the surface. Literacy, for instance, and academic writing in particular, is a tool that is forged throughout the year as students work their way towards its mastery / appropriation. Given the political economy of literacy and academic writing in the United States, who produces it and who gets to have access to it, for historically dominated groups such as Black and Chicano/Mexicano communities, (il)literacy has been used as a tool for colonial domination. What happens when students learn to master academic writing yet at the same time become conscious of the oppressive histories of literacy? That is, what happens when students learn to master academic forms of writing while at the same time writing instruction involves a critical appraisal of colonialism and literacy as a form of dis/empowerment?

“Utilizing certain basic contradictions, we must pose this existential, concrete, present situation to the people as a problem which challenges them and requires a response—not just at the intellectual level, but at the level of action,” (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 2005, pp. 95 – 96).

Finally, I want to argue for dialogue and collective reflection as tools and processes that assist in the deliberate generation of contradictions. Contradictions are always present in any given practice. In attempting to create learning contexts that lead to student learning, mastery of knowledge, and self transformation, it is important to move towards a collective reflection, through dialogue, on the practice-itself. In a previous learning situation working with migrant students, this was achieved by bringing together the mediation of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in particular his chapter on Banking Education, with a general reflection on the program itself, opening a dialogue with the question posed during the third week of the program: “Are we banking?” At this point, Freire’s text shifted from the object of learning to a tool for reflection on the program. The significance with this kind of strategic reflection is the attempt to transform consciousness and the social practice itself, in this case the ways in which we were engaging around texts and teaching. Thus, learning can be viewed more broadly as an individual’s appropriation of cultural tools or her change in participation within a given practice. Learning also goes hand in hand with the development of new cultural practices.

SUMMARY OF CULTURAL-HISTORICAL LEARNING THEORY

- ✓ All learning is culturally mediated, rather than natural or consequential to development.
- ✓ Educators are active historical subjects, rather than passive facilitators of knowledge.
- ✓ Learning is not unintentional, it is goal oriented. Participants, however, may not have “inter-subjective” agreement on the goals of learning.
- ✓ Learning is dynamic and transformative, rather than linear and mechanical: linear models of learning cannot account for the iterative and mutually constitutive nature of the education process.
- ✓ Learning is a historical, social practice, not an individual, cognitive act.
- ✓ The design of curricular activities should be grounded in the student’s cultural universe. Without embracing students’ social worlds, language, and experiences into the process of learning, we make learning a disembodied abstraction.
- ✓ Literacy is a central mediating artifact in the development of students’ critical social and political consciousness.
- ✓ Tensions and contradictions in the learning process, such as when learning doesn’t unfold as we expected, when students are resistant, etc. become *resources* for the expansion of learning and transformation of practices.
- ✓ Transformative learning cannot be dissociated from liberation and humanization.
- ✓ Teaching is thus a creative, ethical and political practice.

Note: The kind of learning and development articulated by cultural-historical learning theory is contradicted by the capitalist-colonial schooling systems that serve to reproduce particular ideologies and whose goal is the deculturalization and dehumanization of students. Nevertheless, as we shall see in the discussion of students’ educational biographies, even this contradiction becomes a resource for both learning and dialoguing about the oppressive nature of schools and our society.

THE SCHOOLING BIOGRAPHIES PROJECT: CALIFORNIA HISTORY, AUTO/BIOGRAPHICAL WRITING AND YOUTH-LED RESEARCH⁶

“The investigation of what I have termed the people’s ‘thematic universe’—the complex of their ‘generative themes’—inaugurates the dialogue of education as the practice of freedom,” (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 2005, p. 96).

“To investigate the generative theme is to investigate people’s thinking about reality and people’s action upon reality, which is their praxis. For precisely this reason, the methodology proposed requires that the investigators and the people (who would normally be considered objects of that investigation) should act as *co-investigators*,” (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 2005, p. 106).

The *Schooling Biographies Project* is a cross-curricular approach that brings together concepts, readings, and skills developed in the Writing and California History courses. Over the course of five weeks, students work towards the production of a written auto/biography, which assignment is introduced during the fourth week.

The auto/biography involves a critical analysis of schools and schooling systems. Using the concepts developed in the California History course, students are asked to explicitly challenge dominant/master narratives of the educational “performance” of Chicano/Mexicano, Black, and other historically colonized groups in the United States.

Studying Up Research on Schools



Menchaca’s *The Mexican Outsiders*, where she outlines the history of school segregation directed against Mexicanos in California, and the documentary *Beyond Brown*, students “study-up” the structural educational inequalities of their neighborhood schools.

In the first phase of student-led action research, students begin with an investigation of their own schooling experiences by way of demographic statistics as they pertain to their high schools. Second, students collectively identify social problems affecting their communities and the role that education plays in relation to these problems.

Grounded in key readings, in particular Joel Spring’s chapter on “Deculturalization and the Claim of Racial and Cultural Superiority by Anglo Americans,” selections from Martha

⁶ The *Schooling Biographies Project: Re/Writing Our Lives Through Counter-Storytelling* grows from my experience teaching in alternative pedagogical spaces, the UCLA Migrant Student Leadership Institute (MSLI) and the TELACU Education Summer Program, both residential programs for high school migrant and urban youth. *The Schooling Biographies Project* outlined in this section is composed of a series of pedagogical, curricular, and experiential mediations that were designed as part of the 2009 TELACU Summer program, although I integrate aspects from the 2005 MSLI, when I, along with other instructors and teaching assistants, first undertook the idea of developing student-led research.

These initial investigations are positioned in response to the Los Angeles Times article, “Nearly Half of Blacks, Latinos Drop Out, School Study Shows.” I ask students to read against the article’s cultural grain by challenge the way such terms as “drop outs” frame and define the problem. This process serves at least two explicit functions. First, students practice reading with a writer’s eye—we revisit Defining and Summarizing writing strategies and how we see these playing out in the Los Angeles Times article. Second, students unpack the dominant/master narrative structures in popular media outlets.

In the California History course, I have designed a parallel situation. Throughout the course students are asked to unpack the ways in which history is written, in whose interests, and for/by whom. This process is mediated by an activity in which students are asked to compare/contrast the historical narratives of Mexican American War and the occupation of Alta California as it is written in three texts: *The Fragmented Dream: Multicultural California*, which is the source of our course readings, an excerpt from *A People’s History of the U.S.*, and a 1937 4th grade California history primer, *The Golden Book of California*. These activities are part of a broader strategy where students are asked to see themselves as critical researchers, journalists, and historians. This involves more than an articulation of this new identity for students: it involves walking students through critically reading against the cultural grain of texts, unpacking master – counter narrative practices, and teaching about the history of media and historical texts.

Online Study-Up Resources:

- ❖ UC/ACCORD College Opportunity Ratio data on California public high schools
- ❖ California Department of Education “drop out” rates and other statistics
- ❖ U.S. Census demographic statistics (poverty rates, health, income, etc.)
- ❖ Other sites generated by students

Outcome/Assignment:

- ❖ Critical Summary Assignment that asks students to summarize a statistic or set of statistics as they relate to their public high school.
- ❖ Students are asked to create analytic summaries that involve interpretation and analysis beyond mere re-telling.

Student Interviews & Educational Biographies



The second phase of the research involves student-led interviews. Often, this is the first time students conduct interviews, therefore Interview question design and interviewing techniques are thoroughly discussed. The first part of the interview protocol is teacher-generated and involves questions on students’ home, community, and educational experiences. Questions on students’ findings with respect to their school’s “drop out”, College Opportunity Ratio, and other relevant statistics are also included. These latter questions are setup so

that students begin engaging in the process of critically articulating their “story behind the numbers”. Because the project asks students to critically reflect on their *schooling* experiences, students are asked to generate themes/social problems within education. Based on these student-identified problems, we collectively work towards generating interview questions for each.

Some Student Generated and Identified Education Problems:

- ❖ State testing
- ❖ Violence in and outside school
- ❖ Peer pressure
- ❖ Student tracking / differential treatment
- ❖ Military recruiters on school campuses
- ❖ Low teacher expectations
- ❖ Having to work and not enough time to study
- ❖ Not enough classes, books, restrooms
- ❖ Not enough teachers / overcrowded classrooms
- ❖ Not enough counselors or mentors
- ❖ Etc.

Outcome/Assignment:

- ❖ Student Interviews Assignment
- ❖ Students interview at least three other peers. Interviews are audio-taped or extensive note-taking is involved. Post interview discussions serve to mediate dialogue on students’ pressing conditions, with connections made to the

Writing and Performing Auto/Biography



The third phase of the investigation brings together the studying-up research on public schools and student interviews where students’ experiences become a central and important site for both generating knowledge and explaining the “story behind the numbers.”

After discussing the kinds of social problems students encounter with colonial education systems, I have designed a space where students can put their thinking together in the form of a written auto/biography. In their writing, students are asked to

make explicit connections with the readings, concepts, and discussions from the California History and Writing courses. The heart of the auto/biography, however, is students’ own research and the knowledge generated through their interviews.

After writing for several days, I meet with each student to answer any specific writing and conceptual questions they may have. In some instances, students ask to clarify specific concepts such as Joel Spring's use of "deculturalization" or "institutional racism", among others. This part of the writing/learning process involves further dialogue around concepts, and has been the most challenging component to address via writing.

The unit plan culminates with the *Circulo de Cultura y Comunidad*, where students read their auto/biographies collectively. In my experience, these spaces are quite empowering. For some, this is the first time students speak out against an injustice; for others, discussions of schooling are interwoven with stories of family and community struggles; yet others speak about hope and their social dreams. Collectively, students enter into a process of self transformation and community solidarity. Although each student's story is unique, the colonial conditions of violence, marginalization, and erasure are common to all. The *Circulo de Cultura y Comunidad* ends with a general understanding of our present conditions and how our lives are connected through a common struggle.⁷

⁷ The pedagogical programs that I have been a part of have one major identifiable limitation. Clearly, students have responded positively to these decolonizing educational experiences. However, how do we further mediate this self-transformation into a process of community self-determination? How can this be achieved when students are inserted back into the colonial education machine? What happens to these students long term and do they become community organizers and activists?

5 WEEK UNIT COURSE OUTLINE

California History Course Outline

- Week 1: Introduction to Critical Historical Analysis, the case of California**
 Readings: "Introduction: 120 Million Children in the Eye of the Hurricane."
 "Deculturalization and the Claim of Racial and Cultural Superiority by Anglo-Americans."
 "California. Origin of the Term and Ethnic Contributions to the Golden State."
 Media: Gallery Walk, Jose Clemente Orozco's muralism
- Week 2: Colonial and Neo-Colonial Era: Settler Societies in California**
 Readings: "The Last Days of Spanish California: Foreign Intruders Alter Local Civilization."
 "Spanish Speaking Foreigners in California: From Mexican War to Statehood."
 Assignment: Historical representation, comparative analysis of "We Take Nothing by Conquest, Thank God!" by Howard Zinn and excerpts from *The Golden Book of California* (1937) primer.
 Film: Excerpts from popular culture, *Cabeza de Vaca* (1991) & *Apocalypto* (2006)
- Week 3: Constructing the "Other": Racial Segregation in California**
 Readings: "The Chinese in California History: An Introduction."
 "Changing Patterns of Settlement and Work: Mexican, Native American and Japanese Labor, 1880 - 1910."
 Assignment: California: A Peoples' History Brochure
- Week 4: Schooling of "Minority" Groups in California**
 Readings: "School Segregation: The Social Reproduction of Inequality, 1870 to 1934."
 Film: *Lemmon Grove*
- Week 5: Re-Writing Our Lives, Re-Writing Our Histories**
 Auto/Biographies Project
 Circulo de Cultura y Comunidad

English Composition Course Outline

- Week 1: Introduction / Becoming Critical Writers, Journalists, and Researchers**
 Reading: Excerpts from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*
 "In Defense of the Word" by Eduardo Galeano
Enrique's Journey, Prologue, Chapter 1 and 2
- Week 2: Writing Strategy #1: Defining**
 Assignment: Extended Definition
 Skills: Figurative Language
 Reading: *Enrique's Journey*, Chapter 3, 4, 5
 Article: "Nearly Half of Blacks, Latinos Drop Out, School Study Shows"
 Film: Excerpts from *Beyond Brown: Pursuing the Promise*
- Week 3: Writing Strategy #2: Summarizing**
 Assignment: Critical Summary
 Skills: Quotation Marks
 Reading: *Enrique's Journey*, Chapter 6 and 7
 Film: *Wetback*
- Week 4: Writing Strategy #3: Counter-Storytelling**
 Assignment: Action-Research (interviews, demographic portrait)
 Skills: Sentence Combining
 Article: "Hundreds of High School Students Protest Teacher Cuts"
 Film: Alternative Media Production of Student Protest
- Week 5: Re-Writing Our Lives, Re-Writing Our Histories**
 Assignment: Auto/Biographies Project
 (Revisions, final drafts, oral presentation)
 Circulo de Cultura y Comunidad

COURSE READER CONTENTS - SELECTIONS


The Course Reader contains California History course readings, select maps of California developed by settlers, “upside” down map of Latin America, and primary artifacts (e.g. Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1st California Constitution, Land Law of 1851, archival photographs and drawings/figures published in mainstream media texts since 1880 that represent Black, Chinese, Filipino, and Mexicano workers and families.

MAPS


“And this is essentially what maps give us, *reality*, a reality that exceeds our vision, the span of our days, a reality we achieve no other way.”
—Denis Wood

“As we know, the map is not an innocent witness in this labor of *occupance*, silently recording what would otherwise take place without it, but a committed participant, as often as not driving the very acts of identifying and naming, bounding and inventing it pretends to no more than observe.” —Denis Wood

Ogilby's English Atlas; Date: 1671



America: Sixe Novi Orbis, Nova Descriptio; Date: 1570



History of California, Time-Line of Major Events

8000 BP	1500	1600	1700
<p>Settlement of the Southern California Coast by Chumash. A village in Glen Avire established to 7,300 BP.</p>	<p>1535 - Hernando Cortes leads a return expedition to La Paz and plants a small colony there. It fails after a couple of years and the settlers return to the mainland.</p>	<p>1540 - Antonio de Mendoza, Viceroy of New Spain, sends a second sea expedition under Hernando de Alarcón up the Gulf of California where they enter the mouth of the Colorado River and become the first Europeans to stand on California soil.</p>	<p>1542 - The Portuguese-born sailor, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, became the first European to explore California, landing at San Diego on September 28. He went on to discover the Catalina Islands, the sites of San Pedro and Santa Monica and the Santa Barbara Channel Islands.</p>
	<p>1575 - Juan de Galez arrives in Mexico as Viceroy General of New Spain. Periodically known as God, Montezuma, or the King of Sweden—he launches an ambitious program of colonizing Alta California, implemented by his emissary, Pedro Jimenez Serra.</p>	<p>1576 - Juan de Fuca, governor of the Californias, led an expedition up the Pacific coast and established a colony and California's first mission on San Diego Bay. He later established a presidio at Monterey, which became the capital of Alta California. For 27 years after the first contact, no European settled in Alta California, the territory of today's state.</p>	<p>1769 - The entrance to San Francisco Bay, La Boca del Puerto (The mouth of the Port) is discovered on November 1 by Sergeant Jose Ortega. San Diego de Alcalá, the first of 21 missions established by Franciscan padres under the leadership of Father Junipero Serra, was founded. The missions extend along a 650-mile trail, the El Camino Real, from</p>

California Constitution, 1876

In 1876, at the height of the anti-Chinese movement, California adopted a new constitution. Its anti-Chinese provisions, largely unenforceable, represent an accurate measure of public feeling.

Article XIX

Section 1. The Legislature shall prescribe all necessary regulations for the protection of the State, and the counties, cities, and towns thereof, from the burdens and evils arising from the presence of aliens, who are or may become vagrants, paupers, mendicants, criminals, or invalids afflicted with contagious or infectious diseases, and from aliens otherwise dangerous or detrimental to the well-being or

Selection 95 from *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to the U.S. Supreme Court*, 1979, p. 631.

12-5 JOSE GARCIA'S IDENTIFICATION CARD, AGE 25, 1955



Rosa Tijero writes:

Jose Garcia, my father, alien labor ID card, taken 12/7/55, prior to coming to California to work in the fields of Salinas, where he toiled for 25 years, providing for his family in Mexico. In 1969, he marched with César Chávez. He retired from the fields in 1985 and lives with his daughter (me) in Napa."

4-9 TREATY OF GUADALUPE HIDALGO, 1848

Mexico surrendered to the United States in February 1848. Under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the U.S. was given possession of half of Mexico, which included much of the Southwest as well as California. The guarantees to Californios of property and equality were not honored.

TREATY OF PEACE, FRIENDSHIP, LIMITS, AND SETTLEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES CONCLUDED AT GUADALUPE HIDALGO, FEBRUARY 2, 1848; RATIFICATION ADVISED BY SENATE, WITH AMENDMENTS, MARCH 10, 1848; RATIFIED BY PRESIDENT, MARCH 16, 1848; RATIFICATIONS EXCHANGED AT QUERETARO, MAY 30, 1848; PROCLAIMED, JULY 4, 1848.

IN THE NAME OF ALMIGHTY GOD

The United States of America and the United Mexican States animated by a sincere desire to put an end to the calamities of the war which unhappily exists between the two Republics and to establish Upon a solid basis relations of peace and friendship, which shall confer reciprocal benefits upon the citizens of both, and assure the concord, harmony, and mutual confidence wherein the two people should live, as good neighbors have for that purpose appointed their respective plenipotentiaries, that is to say: The President of the United States has appointed Nicholas P. Trist, a citizen of the United States, and the President of the Mexican Republic has appointed Don Luis Gonzaga Cuevas, Don Bernardo Couto, and Don Miguel Atristain, citizens of the said Republic; Who, after a reciprocal communication of their respective full powers, have, under the protection of Almighty God, the author of peace, arranged, agreed upon, and signed the following: Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Limits, and Settlement between the United.

GUIDING QUESTIONS – SELECTIONS

Guiding Questions based on weekly readings are used as a way to anchor key concept and ideas developed across the readings. Guiding Questions are not merely assigned as something to complete after a reading. They are tools that assist students with the history readings; Guiding Questions are also used to address key themes across the readings and are used during weekly class discussion.

California History. Guiding Questions. Week 1.

Eduardo Galeano. "Introduction: 120 Million Children in the Eye of the Hurricane."

Guiding Questions

- 1) "Our defeat was always implicit in the victory of others; our wealth has always generated our poverty by nourishing the prosperity of others—the empires and their native overseers. In the colonial and neocolonial alchemy, gold changes into scrap metal and food into poison," (p. 2). What is Eduardo Galeano's main point? What does he mean by "the empires and their native overseers"?
- 2) Eduardo Galeano says that "the human murder by poverty in Latin America is secret; every year without making a sound, three Hiroshima bombs explode over communities that have become accustomed to suffering with clenched teeth," (p. 5). Later, he says, "Poverty is not written in the stars; underdevelopment is not one of God's mysterious designs," (p. 7). What are the causes of poverty in Latin America? In what ways is Galeano's analysis characteristic of the *sociological imagination*?

Key Concepts / Terms

Please identify the following terms and provide a basic definition based on how they are used in the reading. Try to explain each definition in your own words.

- Division of Labor of Nations (p. 1-2)
- Development and Underdevelopment (p. 2 - 3)
- Social Classes (pp. 6 - 7)

"California. Origin of the Term and Ethnic Contributions to the Golden State."

Guiding Questions

- 1) The author argues that Montalvo's *The Exploits of Esplandian*, from where the name "California" was derived, had a tremendous influence on the Spanish colonist population: "Montalvo's book gave the Spanish not only an excuse for conquest but a rationale for its success," (p. 3). How can a book have so much influence over people? Can you think of any examples in modern day society, where texts (books, movies, etc.) influence societies?
- 2) Alta California indigenous peoples were described as "uncivilized," "neophytes," "heathens," and "wretched," among other terms used by Spanish colonists and missionaries. How does this characterization of indigenous peoples position the Spanish colonists? What purpose does it serve to describe people in such terms?

Key Concepts / Terms

Please identify the following terms and provide a basic definition based on how they are used in the reading. Try to explain each definition in your own words.

- *The Exploits of Esplandian*
- Colonialism
- Civilized vs. Uncivilized

California History. Guiding Questions. Week 2.

“The Last Days of Spanish California: Foreign Intruders Alter Local Civilization.”

Guiding Questions

1) “The officers and missionaries were for the most part of pure white blood, but the great majority of the rest were Africans, mulattos, and mestizos,” (p. 36). Describe the social structure of colonial California.

2) We are told that from 1810 to 1820 the settler population doubled in size. There were 930 European settlers and 39 missionaries in California. How was such a small group of settlers able to dominate and subjugate thousands of native people throughout California?

Key Concepts / Terms

Please identify the following terms and provide a basic definition based on how they are used in the reading. Try to explain each definition in your own words.

- *Gente de Razon*
- Pio Pico
- Father Lausen

“Spanish Speaking Foreigners in California: From the Mexican War to Statehood.”

Guiding Questions

1) What were the reasons for United States intervention into Mexican territories (Texas, California)?

2) “California’s unique and distinctive history of ethnic relations took shape during the Mexican War. From the initial thrust of American interest, there was a systematic exclusion of Mexicans and Californios from American economic, political and social institutions...” (p. 63). In what ways do you see these early processes of social apartheid play out in our society today?

Key Concepts / Terms

Please identify the following terms and provide a basic definition based on how they are used in the reading. Try to explain each definition in your own words.

- Manifest Destiny
- Land Law of 1851
- Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo [see Primary Documents in your Reader]

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS – SELECT WRITING PROMPTS

Three key writing strategies are taught over the span of the course: Defining, Summarizing, and Counter-Storytelling. As critical journalists and researchers, I teach students about the political and intentional nature in seemingly simple activities such as defining and summarizing. This is mediated by a careful analysis of existing texts (Sonia Nazario's *Enrique's Journey*), such as Los Angeles Times articles, the production of alternative media narratives, and a series of activities that unpack the political and intentional nature of language in everyday life. Because of the colonial model of education students have negatively experienced writing; defining and summarizing are considered passive and boring activities. The task for the educator is to engage students, to have them critically reflect on the symbolic and material violence in language, with the hope of students appropriating the tools of writers with the goal of re-directing the craft of writing into expressive and liberating tools. The following writing assignments are not "assigned"; it takes extensive work to build a community of writers—I use a variety of approaches in teaching about these forms. Ultimately, students are asked to use these writing strategies in their culminating assignment, the written auto/biography.

English Composition



1st Writing Strategy: Defining

"Clearly, if you've been thinking of definition as a passive or mechanical act—copying words you've looked up in a dictionary or answers from textbooks—you'll need to revise your thinking. Defining is a continuous process, crucial to receptive reading and persuasion. It is fundamental to the critical thinking encouraged in all writing."

"To define something is to look at it more clearly."

"Defining is seldom a matter of understanding an idea in isolation; it is for seeing and understanding relationships."

"Definitions are flexible. They can expand, contract, or shift according to the uses to which they are put. They are not fixed. When we look at complex problems, definitions help to clarify and don't obscure."

DEFINITIONS

SIMPLE (Basic) vs. *EXTENDED* (Critical)

DEFINING STRATEGIES, EXTENDING A SIMPLE

- 1) By illustration (description)
- 2) By comparison (analogy, typology, distinction)
- 3) By including your experience or the experience of others
- 4) Through the use of figurative language

English Composition / Journalistic Writing
Summer Program 2009

Week 2 Writing Assignment EXTENDED DEFINITION

What does it mean to define?

- If we want to define something, we often copy from a dictionary. For example, consider the dictionary definitions of the following words: *émigré*, *immigrant*, *refugee*.
- But **definitions** are more than just quotes from a dictionary. According to Mike Rose, "We speak of something as well defined when we can perceive its boundaries against a background." An **extended** (or **critical**) **definition** allows us to see and understand relationships between the idea that we are trying to define and the world we exist in.
- By choosing to include or omit information we have the power to control what readers see and what they do not see, the power to represent the world in our terms.
- Consider the term *migrant*. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines 'migrant' as "a person who moves from one country, place, or locality to another." What is missing from this definition? Does the basic, dictionary definition explain, for instance, the conditions or reasons why people migrate to other places?
- In chapter 4 of *Enrique's Journey* migrants from Central America are viewed by priest Ignacio Villanueva Arteaga as refugees. "He tells why the Central American migrants felt forced to leave their lands and tells of the dangers and problems they faced along the way...He tells of another refugee: the baby Jesus, whose family had to flee the land of Israel and go to Egypt after an angel told Joseph they were in danger. He leads a prayer and asks God to help migrants safely arrive at their destinations, find work, and be able to return to their countries some day." (Nazario, 2006, p. 107).
- Usually, the term 'immigrant' is distinguished from 'migrant' in the sense that the former term corresponds to people moving across political borders or countries. More recently, the immigrant rights movement has been re-framed as 'migrant' rights movement. Some community organizers argue that people migrating from what is today Mexico to the United States are moving from one region of Mexico to another (i.e. the occupied territories of the North). Therefore, they are not considered 'illegal immigrants' but 'migrants'.
- Defining is a fundamental writing strategy that orients your readers. Depending on the audience, as writer's you sometimes have to define and argue for specific terms.

M. Zavala

English Composition / Journalistic Writing
Writing Assignment, Week 3



What does it mean to summarize?

Step 1: The Numbers...

Step 2: Demographic Summary...

We often think of a summary as a brief statement about the main points of a text. BUT

- ❖ Summary is *not* a passive undertaking calling for accuracy only. In other words, summaries do not just state all of the facts exactly as they happened.
- ❖ Summaries require more than simply re-stating the main points. Summary always involves choices about point of view, interpretation and critique. The process of writing a summary is a process of **interpretation** and **analysis**.
- ❖ What parts of the text do you want to keep and which parts do you want to leave out?

Our collective task: For **step 1** (“The Numbers”), gather pertinent information on your high school and community (where you live). For **step 2** (“Demographic Summary”), you will be asked to summarize demographic data on your school and neighborhood.

M. Zavala
Summer 2009

EDUCATIONAL BIOGRAPHIES: RESEARCH REPORT

You have interviewed at least two students from your class. You have also been analyzing statistics such as the College Opportunity Ratio, high school “dropout” or push-out rates, etc.

What is your story behind these numbers? What challenges and successes have you encountered in your educational career?



To critically reflect on our lives, experiences. However, through are able to make the connection day to day and larger social pro history.

In this paper you are asked to t story. Please consider a social i community and provide a biogr: or social issue means and why i

Please include the following in your research report:

- ❖ A brief introductory narrative of your life.
- ❖ Identify the educational issue or problem you wish to analyze.
- ❖ Include at least one major statistic (see your **Critical Summary Assignment**).
- ❖ As part of your story, include the stories of others (see your **Student Interviews Assignment**).
- ❖ Provide an analysis of the educational issue or problem, as well as your experience and the information you got from the interviews, through the integration of a theme/concept developed in your California History course. Some themes to consider are Colonialism, Racial Segregation, Nativism, Institutional Racism. Please revisit the readings.
- ❖ Provide an **extended definition** of the concept you wish to use.
- ❖ “Education is the practice of freedom,” –bell hooks. Include a closing statement of your **social** dream? What do you want to do with your education?

Due: Thursday, June 25, 2008.

**Length: 5 – 10 pages, typed, double spaced
Presentations, in class, Thursday!**

WRITING SKILLS – SELECT ASSIGNMENTS

Writing skills (figurative language, use of quotations, sentence combining, etc.) are addressed through a series of mini-lessons. All writing skills are developed in the context of students' writing. Skills development among raza students is seldom addressed in narratives

English Composition / Journalistic Writing

Sentence Combining Exercises

Lesson 1. Combine each of the following sets of base sentences in a single longer sentence. Write your combined version below each set. Let your ear be the guide in making these choices.

1. Kobe dribbled past the guard. He made a three sixty degree turn. He made a 3 point shot for the game winner. He is the most valuable player in the NBA.

2. Enrique left Honduras. He was 16 years old when he left Tegucigalpa. He went in search of his mother. He traveled mostly by trains.

3. Bell High School has a "drop out" rate of 68%. Bell High is located predominantly Latino.

4. The College Opportunity Ratio for Fremont High is 100:28:4. Fremont has 5,000 African American students. It only has 8 cou



FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Language that is **not** meant to be interpreted or understood literally is Figurative Language.

Simile - a comparison of two different things or ideas through the use of the words like or as. It is a definitely stated comparison, where the poet says one thing is like another, e.g., The warrior fought like a lion.

Metaphor - a comparison without the use of like or as. The poet states that one thing is another. It is usually a comparison between something that is real or concrete and something that is abstract, e.g., Life is but a dream.

Personification - a kind of metaphor which gives inanimate objects or abstract ideas human characteristics, e.g., The wind cried in the dark.

Hyperbole - a deliberate, extravagant and often outrageous exaggeration. It may be used wither for serious or comic effect, e.g., The shot that was heard round the world.

Understatement (Meiosis) - the opposite of hyperbole. It is a kind of irony which deliberately represents something as much less than it really is, e.g., I could probably manage to survive on a salary of two million dollars per year.

Onomatopoeia (Imitative Harmony) - the use of words in which the sounds seem to resemble the sounds they describe, e.g., hiss, buzz, bang.

Paradox - a statement which contradicts itself. It may seem almost absurd. Although it may seem to be at odds with ordinary experience, it usually turns out to have a coherent meaning, and reveals a truth which is normally hidden, e.g., The more you know, the more you don't know (Socrates)

Oxymoron - form of paradox which combines a pair of contrary terms into a single expression. This combination usually serves the purpose of shocking the reader into awareness, e.g., sweet sorrow, wooden nickel.

Pun - a play on words which are identical or similar in sound but have sharply diverse meanings. Puns may have serious as well as humorous uses, e.g., When Mercutio is bleeding to death in Romeo and Juliet, he says to his friends, "Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man."

OTHER MEDIATED AND MEDIATING RESOURCES

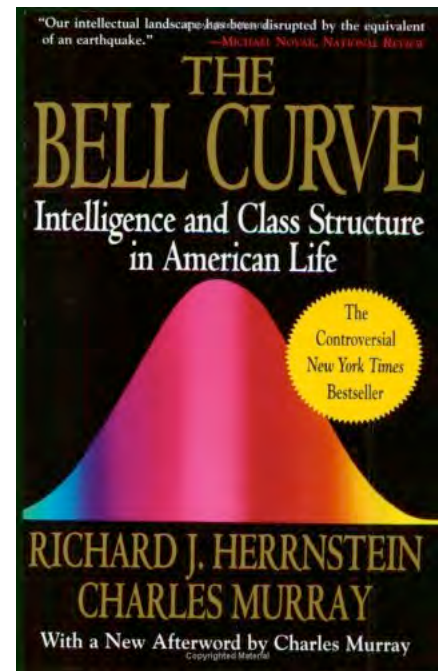
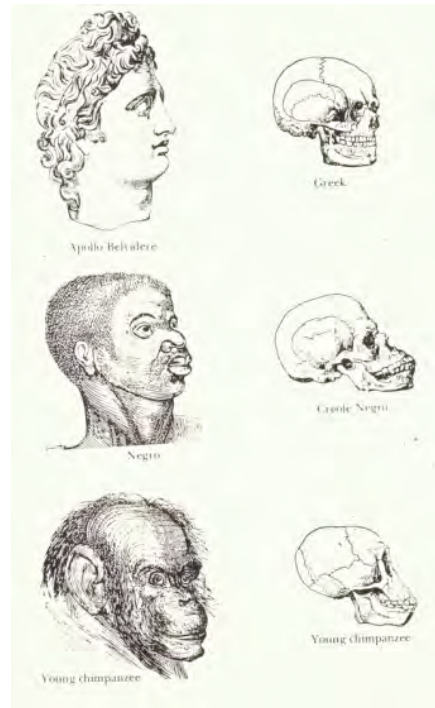
Film, documentaries, speeches, Youtube videos, photographs, primary documents, personal narrative and other structured activities (such as the California History Brochure – A People’s Perspective assignment) are used throughout the course. I have not detailed these within the “script” of the five week unit plan because they are changing and it would be misleading to think of these as sequentially structured rather than dialogically interwoven to the emerging dialogue and learning.



Decolonizing Muralism: Jose Clemente Orozco’s Representation of the Conquest and Modernity



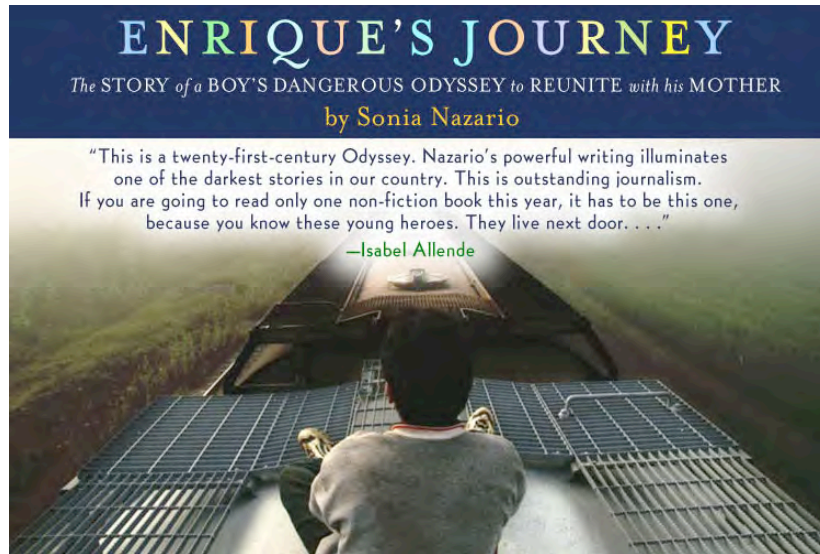
Documentary: *Wetback*



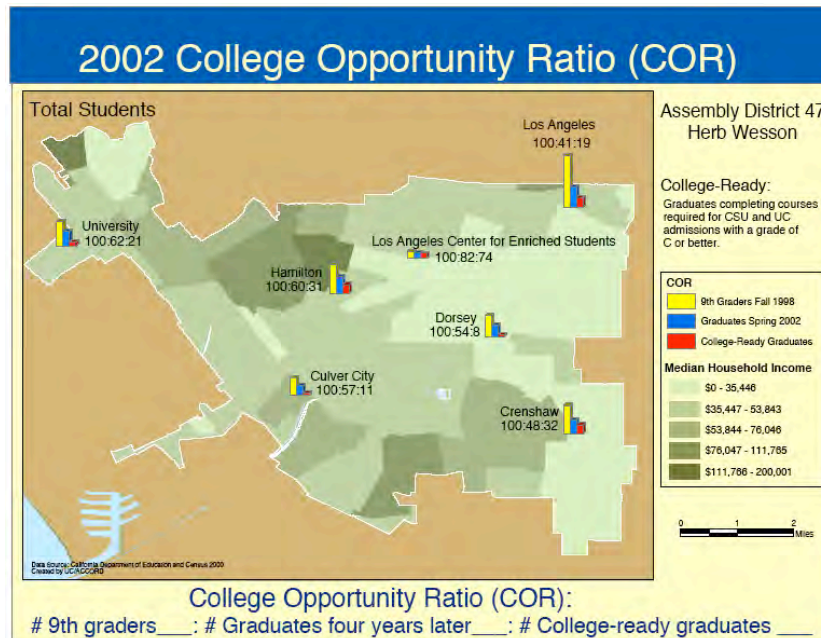
Colonialism and Science as Imperialist Enterprise: Racializing Intelligence Then and Now



Transformational Resistance and Student Activism in Los Angeles



Enrique's Journey is used as a text for both the Writing and California History courses. One of the metaphors I have developed throughout the span of the five week unit is that of Migration, Self-Discovery, and Community Self-Determination.



Statistics and research on community high schools;
 Chicano/a Education Pipeline studies.

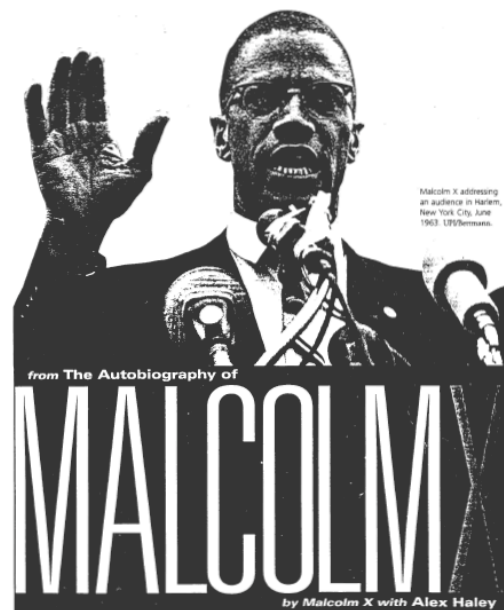
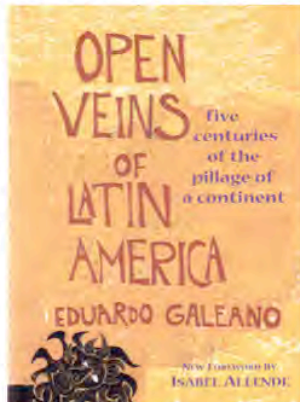
In Defense of the Word

Introduction to the *Open Veins of Latin America*
By Eduardo Galeano

One writes out of a need to communicate and to commune with others, to denounce that which gives pain and to share that which gives happiness. One writes against one's solitude and against the solitude of others. One assumes that literature transmits knowledge and affects the behavior and language of those who read...One writes, in reality, for the people whose luck or misfortune one identifies with — the hungry, the sleepless, the rebels, and the wretched of this earth — and the majority of them are illiterate.

...How can those of us who want to work for a literature that helps to make audible the voice of the voiceless function in the context of this reality? Can we make ourselves heard in the midst of a deaf-mute culture? The small freedom conceded to writers, is it not at times a proof of our failure? How far can we go? Whom can we reach?

...To awaken consciousness, to reveal identity — can literature claim a better function in these times? ...in these lands?



Freedom Writers and Freedom Fighters

Dead Prez – They Schools

Why haven't you learned anything?

Man that school shit is a joke
The same people who control the school system control
The prison system, and the whole social system
Ever since slavery, nawsayin?

[Verse 1]

I went to school with some redneck crackers
Right around the time 3rd Bass dropped the cactus album
But I was readin Malcolm
I changed my name in '89 cleaning parts of my brain
Like a baby nine
I took a history class serious
Front row, every day of the week, 3rd period

Poetry, Hip-Hop as Counter-Narrative