

OUR SEEDS OF CHANGE



A Guide for Liberatory Education Using Plática, Feminist Youth Engagement, and Ethnic Studies

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OUR STORY

Our story is rooted in an educational environment intended to nourish young people's agency for liberatory education. This internationally recognized pedagogy for youth civic engagement, Public Achievement (PA), is adapted from the citizenship and freedom schools of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's in the United States.

In PA, we engage youth in YPAR (Youth Led Participatory Action Research), to research and take action on issues of injustice. Adults partners raise critical consciousness and honor youth-led agency, while youth identities and experiences fuel justice oriented action.

Youth met once a week for an hour on Fridays during a college-prep course. Students self-selected into small teams based on shared interests such as mental health, immigrant rights, or Ethnic Studies. Teams are paired with undergraduate coaches who learn through an university course. Teaching Assistants, who were previously coaches, helped train new coaches and guide teams. Adult program faculty and staff taught undergraduates twice a week and guided programming in K-12 schools weekly. Youth participated year after year throughout their entire secondary education, and many continued participating in their college careers.

Across each school year students develop a "why" for their selected issues, engage in community based research, develop a vision for social change, and take public action. Through these cycles we remember that through the process, not a project, we will always learn the most.¹

OUR STORY

“Freedom Schools”, community based sites of liberatory learning during the Civil Rights movement, guided everyday people to participate in change and transformation. Their blueprint inspired the PA model, which nourished roots of our modern day Freedom School.



Our Freedom School grew from PA into a new collective named Youth-Led Ethnic Studies for Colorado (YES4CO). Here we tell our story of youth who envisioned, advocated for, and co-created their school and communities first ever Ethnic Studies courses and programming.



The zine highlights our contemporary work to nourish youth voices and co-create liberatory education through the use of plática, feminist youth engagement, and Ethnic Studies.

We continue to plant, nourish and grow our seeds of change that carry our collective dreams of more free, loving, and just futures.

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WHO ARE WE? THE EMBODIMENT OF FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

Our team experiments with the method of “plática” (see page 14) to chat with past, present, and future versions of ourselves.

We make space for all versions of ourselves in this work— from the teens and twenty-somethings who participated in and led liberatory education work as students, to the women and humans whose careers, families, dreams, and joy are rooted in this community.

We use plática in these conversations with self to reflect, create knowledge, and share our wisdom from decades of feminist youth civic engagement work.

What consejos/advice would you give to your past and future self as you navigate creating change? What lessons might our past selves share into the future?

ADRIANA

As I reflect on the early stages of this Ethnic Studies dream, one of the consejos that I would give to my college age self, is to trust in the power of the community. During my undergraduate career, I often allowed fear to overshadow hope, which at times led to feeling powerless when challenging Eurocentric systems.

As a young professional, I would remind anyone engaged in this or similar kind of work to hold close one of my mom's most frequent consejos: "Hay que agarrar el toro por los cuernos," meaning to face challenges, in this case the systems you may be rebuilding, head-on and without hesitation.

The consejo that I give to my future self is to keep leading with hope rather than fear. To trust in community, and always remember that our identities are not barriers, but rather our greatest sources of strength and courage.

Adriana first started Public Achievement as a 9th grade student in the program. However, she was introduced to the Ethnic Studies Team during her third year of college, when she was a Teaching Assistant (TA) for the program. Her commitment to educational equity, uniting communities, and creating inclusive learning environments led her to double major in Community Engagement and Ethnic Studies. Adriana served as a coach, TA, and a staff member for YES400.

CHARLA

Charla Agnoletti started in PA as a youth leader at 17, took the model alongside Ethnic Studies pedagogy into her k-12 classroom for 6 years, further developed the model as a university faculty program director for 9 years, and now focuses her PhD studies and research nourishing youth agency and liberatory education practices. She co-founded and co-led YES4CO alongside youth she'd been working with for almost a decade. From youth recipient and leader to adult-partner, Charla has spent her lifetime learning to embody intergenerational feminist youth civic engagement

Charla, age 37 (present): This is what a feminist looks like.

Charla, age 17 (past): Is this what a feminist looks like? Who is she? I know I'm supposed to be her. I'm scared to say I am her.

Charla, 77 (future): Your ancestors planted feminist seeds in you and your entire lineage. You nourish those seeds. From them grow feminists of all ages, genders, cultures, and races. Together, across time and space, you bloom feminist futures.

Charla, age 37 (present): Black, Chicana, and Queer feminisms embody what a feminist looks like & how he/she/they lead revolutions of the heart.

Charla, age 17 (past): Well behaved women rarely make history. I want to make history too. Your heart is a muscle as big as your fist, keep loving, keep fighting.

Charla, age 27 (past): Cultivating consciousness, dismantling white feminism, and understanding my lens as a cis-gender white woman paves a feminist path.

Charla, age 37 (present): Say her name. Sandra Bland. Breonna Taylor. Women, Life, Freedom. Me too. Ni una más. Missing, murdered and Indigenous Women. Black Trans Lives Matter. Los derechos de las mujeres importan. Protect women and girls. From Free Tibet to Free Palestine, this is what a feminist looks like.

Charla, age 27 (past): I have to fight so these systems are better for all women.

Charla, age 37 (present): Your mind-body-spirit are the most important tools for justice. Nourish them deeply. Motherhood cracked open your heart, more room to love. Let your feminine wisdom and revolutionary love guide your head-heart-and hands to birth new, freer, more just, and feminist worlds.

Charla, age 27 (past): We honor Black women, our movement ancestors. Honor our roots so we can grow. "We are the ones we have been waiting for"- Dorothy Cotton.

Charla, 77 (future): The world needs our tenderness now, then, again, always. You are what a feminist looks like and give so many the courage to embody the same. You are becoming the movement ancestors now too. Keep nourishing you. Keep nourishing the youth.

I return from work bleary-eyed. Restless. Fulfilled from a day communing with beloved plants, haunted by the violent histories of these lands, angered by news of hatred and fear and ill-placed blame. I cannot help feeling despair at a world that we continue to abuse, and a society that doesn't seem to care.

DANI

But what would little Dani have to say?

She was playing on taiko drums made from old tomato cans, glue, and newspapers. Her elders told her that they had to pack their whole lives, communities, up in a suitcase. Why did they have to leave, when they did nothing wrong?, she wondered. She made a list of everything she would have brought with her, scratching the surface of the fear and indignity of that mass incarceration, coming to terms with the unfairness of it all. They eased her fears by teaching her to make teriyaki hot dogs and spam musubi, nourished by the warm rice and sweet, sticky sauces of culinary creations adapting and fusing.

‘What you do, you do for me! Kodomo no tame ni.
For the sake of the children -
all that were, that are, and that are yet to be!’

子供のために

Little Dani found joy in painting furoshiki with Grandma, making ceramics with Robin, cooking Ozoni in the kitchen of the Buddhist temple. We must embody the joys too. The cultural and communal connection is sustenance for the sometimes grueling and always necessary work of understanding the atrocities of this wonderful and horrible country.

To little Dani, I reassure you that we find our place in this world, one seed, one plant, one fire at a time. We have embraced the betweenness of the hyphenated identities, living outside the boxes outlined for us. To future Dani, remember to queer what it means to be in this world. To push for systemic change and hold steadfast amidst systems that resist these ways of being, and to embrace rest as resistance, gathering as radical, and community as essential.

Remember that change looks like many things. Many hands are working, tending to seedlings that will take precious time to emerge. But change takes time. Remember to be patient, to eat, sleep, move, and breathe. Change takes time.

Jordan “Dani” Lee’s first foray into ethnic studies happened in the first grade at Chibi no Gakko, a Japanese American heritage camp in Denver, CO. Throughout college, she explored issues in environmental, health, and social leadership through youth empowerment and leadership development. She joined Public Achievement in her junior year, working alongside students to advocate for racial justice through ethnic studies education. Today, she works to return wildland fire to the landscape and care for healing floral communities.

Yamileth was first introduced to Ethnic Studies the summer before her senior year of high school during a summer program on the university campus. In this program, the English teacher's curriculum was rooted in Black Queer Feminist Pedagogy. This class deeply resonated with her and was the inspiration for her pursuing Ethnic Studies as her college major. While in undergrad, Yamileth joined Public Achievement, serving as a coach and teaching assistant for four years. Her commitment to youth organizing then continued through Youth-led Ethnic Studies for Colorado (YES4CO).

To My Past Self:

You have always carried the weight and quiet feeling that there was something missing. There was an empty space where your history should be. Your ancestor's stories are unrecorded and lost and you did not know where to find them. Hearing the histories in class of people who shared your identities, those who not only resisted but survived and created change was transformative. You began showing up not only for others but also for yourself and for that, I am so proud. Now that I am older, I can reflect to see you were teaching me lessons even when you did not realize you were.

- Not having the answer and not knowing where to start is okay
- There are many ways to be a part of a movement. Remember to always be your authentic self
- Healing is part of this work. Make space for joy, rest, and be in community

To My Future Self:

Rest, love, and joy are forms of resistance not distractions. These are needed for our survival and to remember what we are fighting for. In a world that is constantly changing and at times seemingly negative, remember to reach for the younger versions of us. The versions who felt pure joy and did not feel the weight of the world. Let those versions remind you that you are allowed to feel happiness as you create change. You are allowed to rest. You are allowed to love and be loved. You are allowed to know and protect your boundaries.

As you continue this work, be intentional. Allow your actions to reflect your values and never forget who you are. You are a powerful Latina.

What is Plática?



In our feminist youth civic engagement work we use pláticas to reflect together, nourish community, co-create knowledge, and dream.

Plática is a feminist cultural practice rooted in many of our homes and communities for generations. Pláticas are informal conversations, or chats, that often occur around a kitchen table or a front porch where we talk about life, check-in, share advice and life lessons, and make meaning of the world around us. Theorizing, or making meaning about something in life, is something we have done in our families and communities since forever.

Pláticas, therefore, are a method, or a way, that we can build knowledge and make meaning together about the world around us.

Plática allows us to connect, be vulnerable, affirm our identities and experiences, heal, resist and create new worlds through our lived experiences, emotions, hopes and dreams.

To learn more about pláticas as Chicana/Latina Feminist theory and research method see our citations ^{2,3,4}



PRACTICE

Use our plática questions and outline to chat with others, or like us, your past-present-future selves, to reflect on your own feminist civic engagement

a) What do you visualize or see as the key elements that helped bridge our work from school to community? From the world as it into the world as it can be?

b) What did you/we have to navigate to “take up space”? What wisdom can our past selves remind us of now?

c) What consejos (advice) would you give to your past and future selves as you navigate creating change? What lessons might our past selves share into the future?

d) What does feminism mean to you (past self, current self, future self)? How does your feminism shape your civic engagement work?



What is Feminist Youth Engagement to Us?

Pláticas, rooted in Chicana Feminist Theory, fostered a space for youth to reflect on their identities.

These community pláticas encouraged youth to understand their lived experiences as knowledge.⁶



In addition, Feminist Youth Engagement inspired participating youth to make sense of the world by reflecting on their schooling experience, ultimately fostering healing, community care, and mobilization.



Grassroots-Community Education in the Civil Rights Movement⁷

Acts of individual and community resistance often take the limelight in Civil Rights History, but what about the educators who taught, planned, and led these actions behind the scenes?

Grassroots education developed by and for Black Americans in the South helped expand voter registration & rights and provided a framework for community education.

These schools gave historical and cultural context to students' embodied knowledge of discrimination and equipped them with tools for creating revolutionary change. They also created a community of co-collaborators, dreaming and planning for better futures.

Timeline⁸

- 1932: Myles Horton establishes the Highlander Folk School, teaching labor rights to Appalachian laborers.
- 1950s: Septima Clark & Esau Jenkins develop a citizenship curricula that is learner-centered.
- 1961: The TN gov't shuts down the Highlander Folk School. The SCLC develops the Citizenship Education Program (CEP) with Septima Clark and Dorothy Cotton.
- 1964: During the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer, SNCC develops the Freedom Schools.



Literacy means liberation!

-Septima Clark, seated to the right of Rosa Parks at a Highlander Folk School in 1955

Teachings of The Highlander Folk School, Citizenship Education Program, and Freedom Schools⁹

The Foliage: Citizen as a Verb

To be a citizen is to have an attitude of action. Through a participatory pedagogy that centered learner's embodied experiences

they were guided to focus on (a) the lessons of their collective experiences, and (b) their agency. What could they do to act upon injustice?

They equipped students with nonviolent organizing tactics, training activists like Rosa Parks and key organizers in the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Gardeners: Grassroots Educators

Educators like Septima Clark, Dorothy Cotton, Esau Jenkins, Ella Baker, Andrew Young, and so many others worked for decades to provide transformative education.

Roots: Literacy¹⁰

The ability to read and write empowers us to understand our rights and fight for them. The citizenship schools themselves were a legacy of clandestine schools that sought to empower enslaved Africans through literacy.

Fruits: Liberated Students

Students built networks, became teachers, and brought the ideas and tools they learned back to their communities. The CEP, for example, inspired the Freedom Schools during the Mississippi Freedom Summer, educating hundreds of Black Mississippians. The model these programs created continue to inspire activists and educators today.

Water & Sunlight: Plática

Though they didn't use this word, these schools all partook in plática, co-creating knowledge through conversation and community. They centered embodied experiences, drew connections between community and self, and developed networks of action. Community building through sharing meals, playing games, and making music were as important as the literacy and constitutional lessons.

Seeds and Sprouts

We see our work as the lineage of seeds planted and tended to by Septima Clark, Dorothy Cotton, the SCLC, SNCC, and all the educators and learners of these grassroots education schools through:

- Action-oriented civic engagement rooted in education
- Student-focused pedagogy, connecting oneself to community interests

Our Ethnic Studies Freedom School
Chapter 1
Seeds

The youth [redacted] made [redacted] Ethnic Studies [redacted]
[redacted] 8th graders. [redacted]
[redacted] name [redacted]
the world as it is [redacted] imagine [redacted]
as it should be. [redacted] racist
school [redacted] vs [redacted] culturally affirming
curriculum [redacted]
common vision. seeds planted by activists [redacted]
[redacted] migrated [redacted]
[redacted] --they too wanted Ethnic
Studies. [redacted] youth created a video
[redacted] and [redacted] a petition to the
district. “ [redacted]
[redacted] implement [redacted] Ethnic Studies [redacted]
[redacted]”. They
requested [redacted]
[redacted] teach all sides of history. [redacted]
[redacted] teachers [redacted] signed [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] silence by the district.

“When we first started pushing for an Ethnic Studies class back in eighth grade, we didn’t realize how hard it would be. We had a clear vision: we wanted BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color) students to feel seen in the curriculum. The program gave us a space to organize and build our ideas”. -Isaiah¹

WE The Students

Want

Ethnic Studies

[change.org](https://www.change.org)

The World As It Is vs. The
World As It Should Be

PRACTICE

This activity helps us activate our imagination to dream of better worlds, free from oppression. It also helps us name the injustices that shape harm we or our community experience and wish to heal and transform.

For the world as it is, we often tap into our anger and take time to hold our hearts so we can feel and name the pain and unfairness we see and experience in the world. What makes you angry? Where can you name harm? List what you know is not right about the world we live in.

For the world as it should be, we often tap into our hopes and dreams. We must have courage to dream. Take time to close your eyes, or go within, and visualize a better world. Who is there? What are they doing? What does it look like? Make a list of what you wish the world, your community, or school was like.

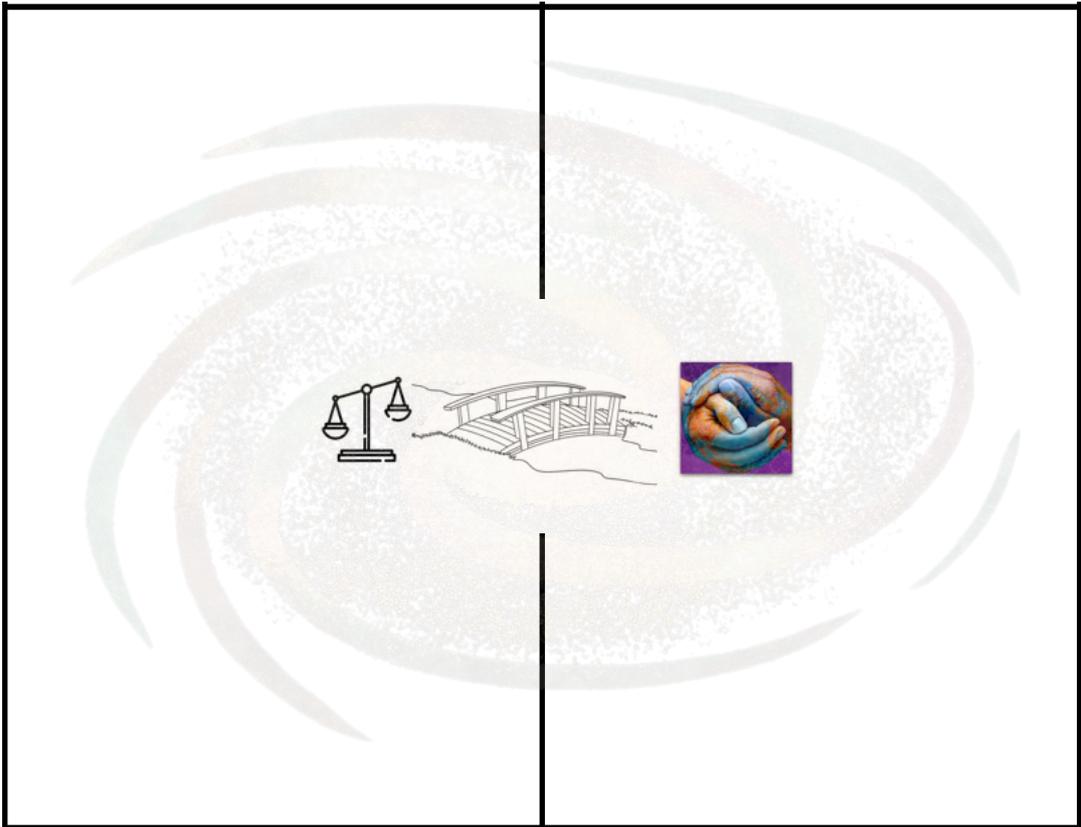
Finally, we remember that WE are the bridge between those worlds. We can draw a bridge and list steps we can take towards building the world as it should be. We make the road by walking one small step at a time.





World as it is...

World as it should be...



Steps to take to build the bridge...

Our Ethnic Studies Freedom School
Chapter 2
Soil

██████████ two ██████████ years

██████████ no ██████████

Ethnic Studies ██████████. ██████████

a feeling of defeat ██████████

██████████ a Teach-In on ██████████

Ethnic Studies. ██████████ to ██████████

engage ██████████ our “why” for social justice;

██████████ and ground our

civic engagement ██████████

██████████ transformed ██████████ through ██████████ hope ██████████

she witnessed ██████████ BIPOC figures ██████████ resist ██████████,

flourish ██████████, and change ██████████ systems. ██████████

██████████ “Precious Knowledge”, ██████████ film ██████████

██████████ motivated to organize ██████████

██████████ they would ██████████

██████████ start a class of their own.

“Ethnic Studies is more than a class, it is a way of viewing and experiencing the world. It is a way of pushing ourselves to cultivate a world that remembers the stories of those that came before us and making a better tomorrow for those that will come after. It feels like the warm embrace of my grandmother intertwined with her wisdom and her joy. Ethnic Studies is liberatory” -Yamileth¹

The Movement for Ethnic Studies

Ethnic studies has necessarily been a multi-issue movement, building solidarity across disciplines and movement groups. It is a tool for affirming our lived experiences, understanding the systems and historical factors that created these experiences, and compels us to ask what can be done about the current moment. Ethnic studies itself wouldn't exist without the organizing done by a coalition called the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), connecting ethnic minorities in the U.S. to global struggles against western imperialism.

Led by the Black Student Union and supported by the Mexican American Student Confederation, the Native American Student Alliance, the Asian American Politics Alliance, and other groups, the TWLF led a five-month strike at San Francisco State University and a three-month protest at UC Berkeley in 1968.¹¹ Like students today, demonstrators wanted an education relevant to the history of this nation that goes overlooked, ignored, and sanitized in traditional classrooms. And they wanted these classes taught by professors who looked like them and shared cultural and historical experiences with their communities.

The list of demands included:¹²

- The creation of the Third World College, made up of professors and faculty of color, teaching a more representatively diverse student body on African American, Latinx, Native American, and Asian and Pacific Islander studies.
- Self-determination in curriculum, hiring of faculty, and admittance of students, to ensure proportional representation throughout the university structure.

Their work resulted in the Department of Ethnic Studies, inspiring movements for ethnic studies at universities across the nation. While not all the demands of the Black Student Union were met, the TWLF has had lasting impacts creating systemic changes in higher education with countless ripple effects.

KEY MOMENTS IN THE ETHNIC STUDIES MOVEMENT

LA Walkouts - Spring 1968



Third World Liberation Front - Fall 1968



SFSU Ethnic Studies - 1969



RUSD - 2014



TUSD Raza Studies & HB2281 - 2011



What is Ethnic Studies?



Ethnic studies:
liberatory education.
More than curriculum -
a philosophy, a verb.
A call to action based on
What we learn about the past,
experience in the present,
dream for the future.

We learn about our lineage:
the changemakers before us
who tended roots that ground us,
planted seeds that nurture us,
bloomed flowers that inspire us.

This lineage of social change is not
unsullied.
Divine feminine power
silenced,
erased,
forgotten.
The sustenance of movements,
the building blocks of change,
Education and community care-
discarded and forgotten.
Favoring what is palatable
(and oversimplified).

We resist this legacy.
Sprouting from seeds sowed
with tender care,
weathering storms of intersectional
discrimination,
fruiting and flowering in the face of
overlapping adversities.

Let the history of
The guides
The teachers,
The caregivers,
The speakers,
The storytellers,
The farmers,
The academics,
The strikers,
and the writers,
and so many more
be the ancestral guides
we call upon in our
work.



PRACTICE

Identifying and understanding how our own identities affect how we move through the world, both in privilege and oppression, help us tap into our values and our power. Here are some prompts for thinking about our identities and experiences.

We would often do this as a group activity, encouraging reflection and conversation.

We would post the different identity categories around the classroom, and ask students questions. Then, students would go to the identity that most resonated with them.



Our Ethnic Studies Freedom School

Chapter 3

Roots

seven high school juniors
envision and implement
Ethnic Studies
co-designed
approved
piloted their senior year.

lived experience
shapes the
learning environment

transformative
pedagogy

supported
agency
dreaming
bonds

our collective *whys*.

all people of color
similar
identities and experiences

This relational foundation
created liberatory education



I remember the dreaming that took place in every one of our meetings. These dreams were of a culturally accurate curriculum, of reading works by authors whose identities reflected those of the students.

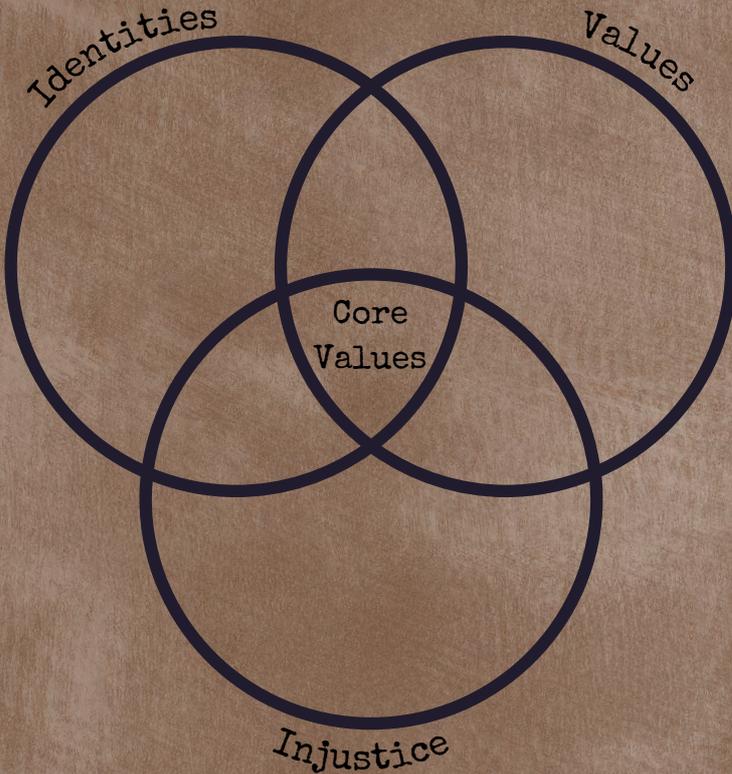
Our team's purpose was to to create spaces where everybody could unapologetically be themselves. It was compelling to see high school students use their voice and visualization to call upon their school district to have a more inclusive curriculum.”

Adriana¹



PRACTICE

Self-interest is the idea that we are most invested in and most knowledgeable of those issues that we have a personal stakes in. Here is an exercise for understanding your self-interest and how it can manifest in public ways, working to make change.



If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive.

-Audre Lorde

IDENTITIES

What identities are central to your being?

VALUES

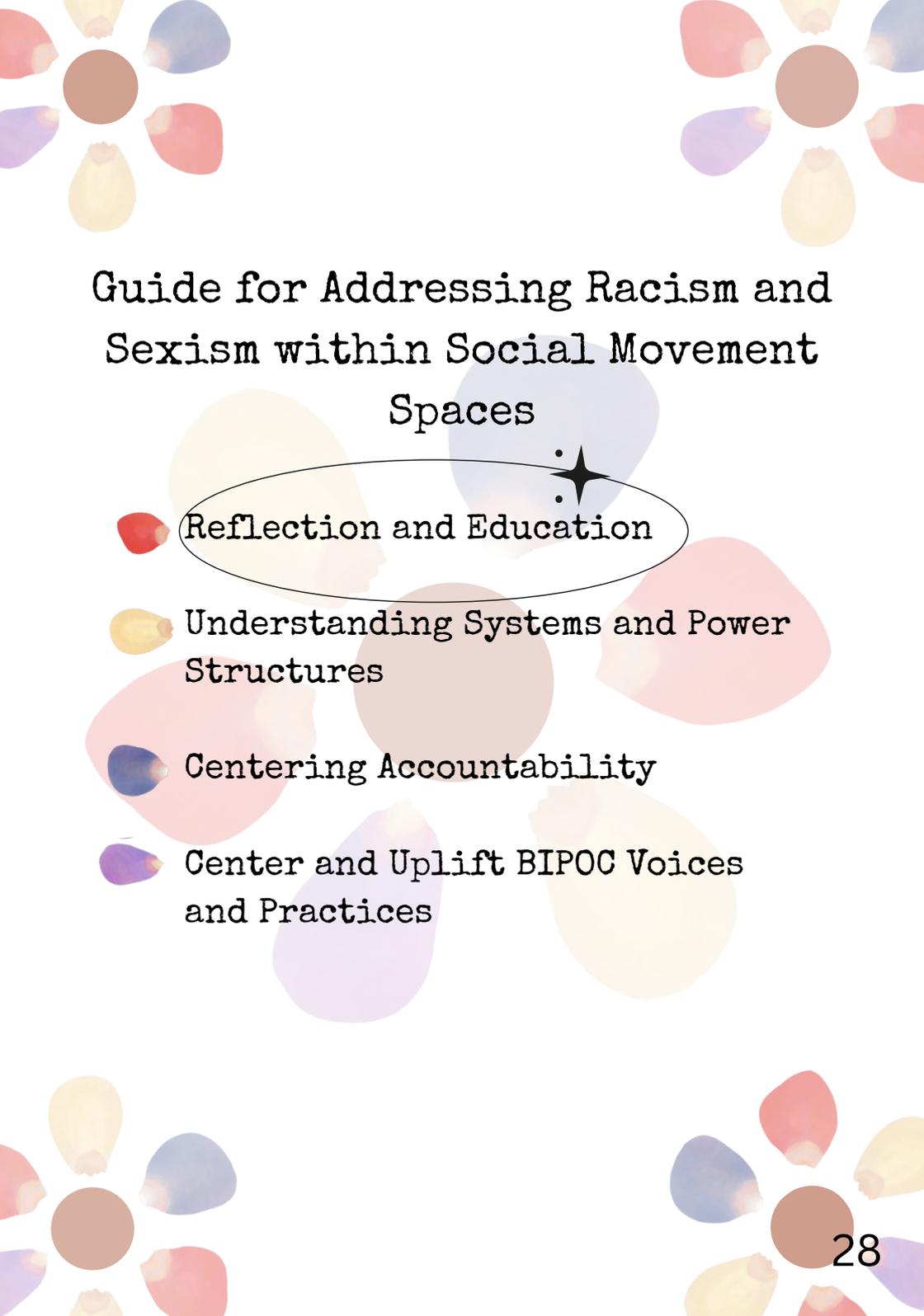
What morals guide how you navigate and engage with the world?

INJUSTICE

Think of times you have learned about, witnessed, or experienced violations of your values or identities.

CORE VALUES

What are you willing to fight for?



Guide for Addressing Racism and Sexism within Social Movement Spaces



Reflection and Education

Understanding Systems and Power Structures

Centering Accountability

Center and Uplift BIPOC Voices and Practices

Reflection and Education

Reflection

Reflection is foundational for any movement committed to liberation and justice. It is a personal and collective act which pushes us to face contradictions, reimagine relationships, and build consciousness around harm.

Reflection is rooted in many liberatory traditions:

- Queer Pedagogy which challenges normativity and invites us to question power structures, fixed identities, and the binary¹⁵
- Chicana Feminist Pedagogy which uses testimonio and concimiento to show that history is personal and combines storytelling to work through identity and healing^{16,17}
- Transformative Learning Theory used by bell hooks where learning is a process and tool used for transformation using critical reflection¹⁸

Education

Our movement was grounded in our shared knowledge- both lived and learned. From the beginning, we were committed to learning from and with one another, honoring everyone's identities and finding new ways to liberate the collective. In the early organizing stages, we incorporated mini teach-ins that normalized political conversations about white supremacy, patriarchy, and anti-Blackness.

Intersectionality was the foundation for our conversations in our understanding of the interconnectedness of all struggles.¹⁹

Our Ethnic Studies Freedom School
Chapter 4 pt 1
Extraction

_____ surprise with
_____ a straightforward “yes”.
_____ off putting _____
_____ felt like _____ work across
_____ years was _____ negated; this _____
was “too easy” _____ we
continued preparing for a public facing event
_____ a student panel _____ about _____
_____ Ethnic Studies and our vision _____

_____ local news _____ is called _____

_____ local
journalists _____ in our program spaces _____
pictures _____ articles _____
_____ beautiful blossoms _____ we _____
breathe in _____.

We are still uneasy.

Group of BIPOC students works to create Ethnic Studies class

School of Education

From fertile soil: co-creating a youth-led ethnic studies curriculum



like knowing like where you're from is like really important and it's just like, I

Students help make their dream of an ethnic studies class a reality

Creating an inclusive curriculum

Daily Camera

students advocate for ethnic studies

The student-led initiative stemmed from discussions with undergraduate coaches and staffers through Public Achievement or PA, a youth civic engagement and community organizing program that each year

9NEWS 



PRACTICE

Reflection is a tool that needs to be used at both the individual and collective level to create change.

Set a one-minute timer for each question and write down what comes to mind.

Question 1: How are social justice movements a contradiction if they have aspects of racism and sexism?

Tip: Reflect on your own lived experiences. What have you seen or experienced?

Question 2: What identities have shaped me the most?

Think: Why do I feel that way? How have systems of oppression played a role in my life?

Materials:

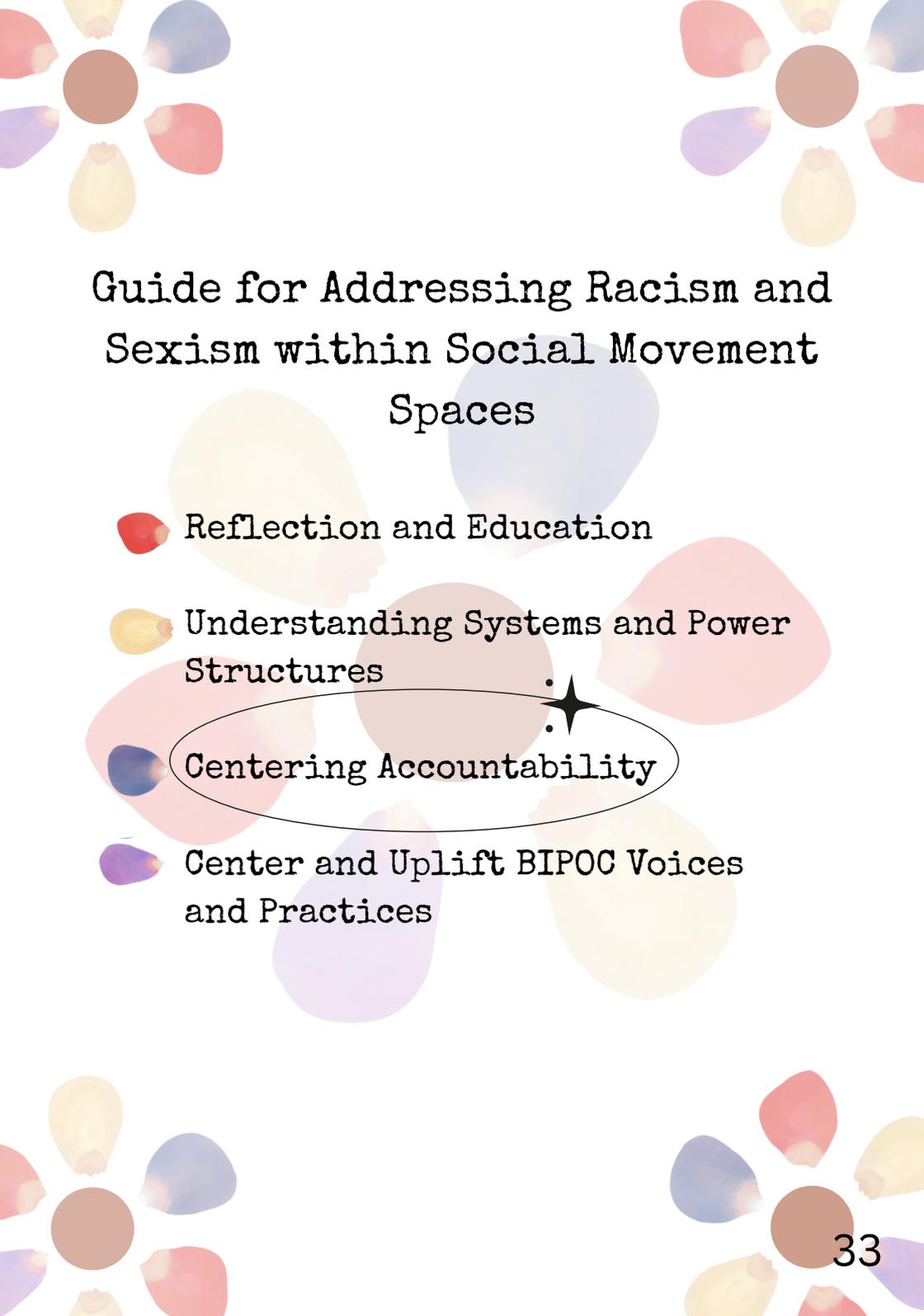
- paper
- pencil
- timer



Education

Think about what identities have shaped you the most from the reflection activity. Each person in the group will learn about an event, issue, or cultural practice that they connect with. This can be related to an identity, your community, or an experience you have had. After learning more about the topic, create an artifact to share the wisdom with the group.





Guide for Addressing Racism and Sexism within Social Movement Spaces

 Reflection and Education

 Understanding Systems and Power Structures

 Centering Accountability

 Center and Uplift BIPOC Voices and Practices

Centering Accountability

Set Community Agreements

Work together to create a shared community agreement grounded in the liberation of all people. This agreement should be revisited and treated as a living document.

Restorative Justice Training²⁰

Restorative justice practices help hold people accountable in humanizing ways. All people within the movement should be trained and the practice should be implemented if harm has been done.

Feedback

Develop multiple ways to check in. Our group used surveys and personal check-ins to better understand everyone's experience and needs.

Our Ethnic Studies Freedom School
Chapter 4 pt 2
Extraction

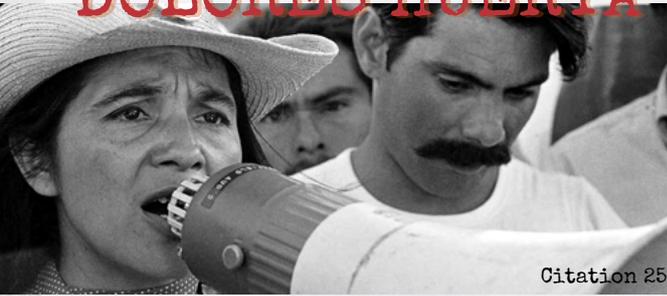
██████████ seniors in high school;
six years from the start of this story. ██████████
██████████ take the Ethnic Studies course they
fought for and co-designed ██████████
██████████ painful
roadblocks. ██████████
“no”-- ██████████ students would not
co-teach, evaluate, or document the course.
Youth ██████████ “recipients” ██████████
██████████ teacher would deliver
██████████ student feedback
██████████ deemed unnecessary. ██████████
██████████ no mention ██████████ about ██████████ students
██████████ creating the Ethnic
Studies course ██████████
██████████ different ideas of how we
wanted ██████████ to feel. A ██████████ lesson for
organizers ██████████ “change creates tension, and
tension creates change”. ██████████
██████████ embraced our wins ██████████
██████████ stayed committed ██████████
██████████; hope guided ██████████ our
true vision of Ethnic Studies.

“I felt so proud that we made it happen. Something we dreamed about for years was real. It was powerful to know future students would learn in a way we didn’t have. However, just having the class wasn’t enough — it mattered who was teaching it and how it was taught.”¹

(Isaiah)



DOLORES HUERTA



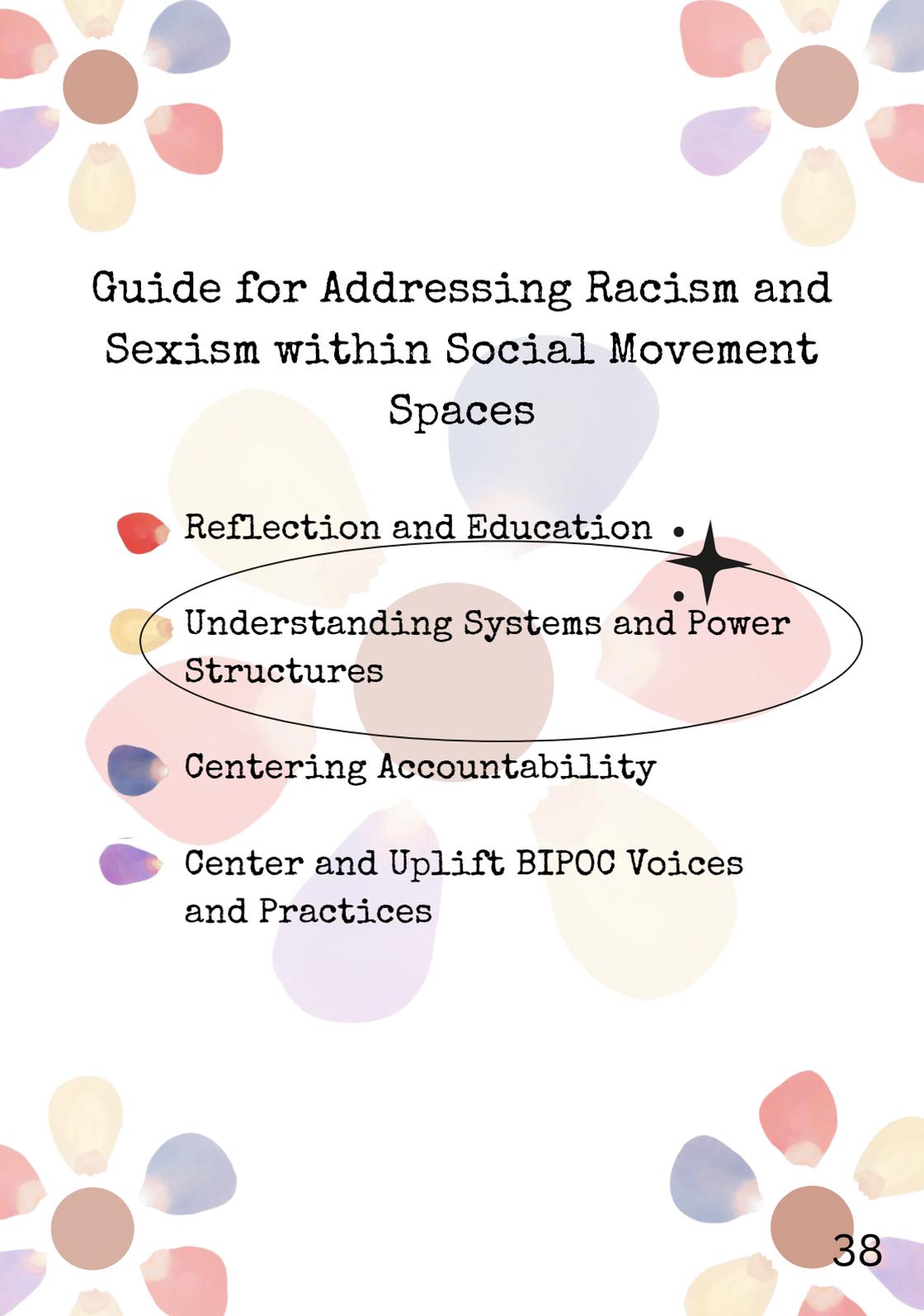
Citation 25

Dolores Huerta's strength in advocating for laborers, immigrants and women in spite of sexist pushback shows the strength in grounding in one's own dignity.

She started as a teacher, where she worked with students in Stockton, CA. These students were the children of farm laborers, and she saw hungry and critically undervalued students in her classroom.²¹ She decided that she could do more work by advocating outside the classroom.

She co-founded the Stockton chapter of the Community Service Organization, before collaborating with Cesar Chávez to found the National Farmer Workers' Association, later to become the United Farm Workers. They organized with Larry Itliong, a Filipino farmworker and laborer.²² The solidarity between Braceros and Manongs, Mexican and Filipino farm laborers, and many other migrant labor groups, was key in achieving common goals, like mobilizing the support needed for efforts like the Delano grape strike. Her organizing in these movements paved the way for the Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975, which gave Californian laborers the right to unionize for better work and pay conditions.²³

She faced significant sexism within the labor movement, with many arguing that she was neglecting her motherly duties and discounting her contributions.²⁴ Sexism came at her from outside the movement- but also from within. She actively challenged those who doubted her, directly replying to sexist comments at organizing meetings. She also collaborated with feminist advocates like Gloria Steinem, letting her anger fuel her work towards better labor and social equality.



Guide for Addressing Racism and Sexism within Social Movement Spaces

- Reflection and Education •
- Understanding Systems and Power Structures •
- Centering Accountability
- Center and Uplift BIPOC Voices and Practices

UNDERSTANDING SYSTEMS AND POWER STRUCTURES

To create liberatory movements, we must recognize that systems of oppression and unequal power structures do not only exist outside of organizing spaces. These systems can show up within movements and within relationships.

Decenter whiteness- think about the ways whiteness shows up, how can you dismantle these structures?

- whose culture is represented?
- what language is represented?

Reimagine Leadership Structures- we are conditioned to exist within a top-down power/leadership structure, but what would leadership look like if it was different?

- Rotate roles
- how are decisions made?

Make Room for other ways of Knowing- listen and learn from other cultural practices

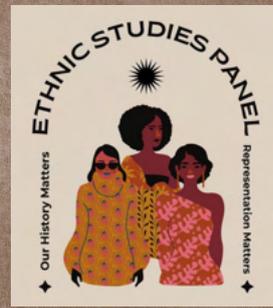
- Rest as an act of Resistance
- Ancestral Wisdom from Black, Indigenous, and Queer Communities



Our Ethnic Studies Freedom School
Chapter 5
Blossoming

students filled a [REDACTED] conference hall [REDACTED]
district officials [REDACTED] educators [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] this time [REDACTED] to learn
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] powerful storytelling
advocating for Ethnic Studies [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] one moment [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] stands in our collective memory. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] asked [REDACTED] advice for adults [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] to support the youth. [REDACTED]
emotion [REDACTED] deep breath [REDACTED]
restraint and grace. [REDACTED] voice was
piercingly clear. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] frustration [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] "where are the adults [REDACTED]
who will do the work alongside us?". [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] this should be *their* job to advocate for
Ethnic Studies: youth of color should not [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] fix issues that [REDACTED]
professionals should be leading. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] authentic adult partnerships [REDACTED] disrupt [REDACTED]
exploitation of youth [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] we designed our own Ethnic Studies.

STATE OF ETHNIC STUDIES PANEL



¿ESTAS INTERESADO EN APRENDER SOBRE LA
CLASE DE ESTUDIOS ETNICOS CREADA POR LOS
ESTUDIANTES?

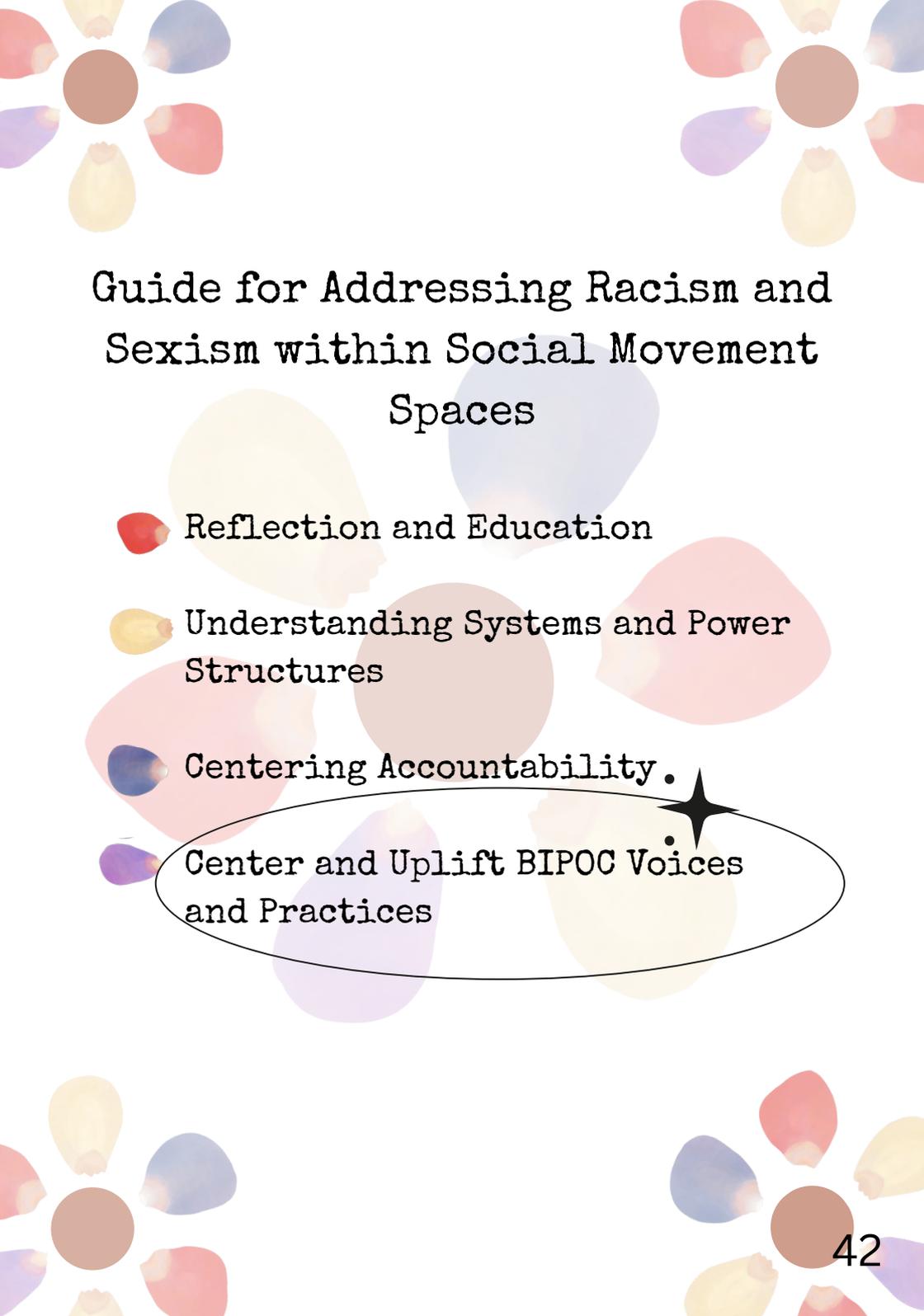
“...adults in the district did not change: they disappeared after that night and to our knowledge have not made public stances, formed committees, or done any work to continue these student’s advocacy for Ethnic Studies. Still, Isaiah’s voice, to us, embodied educational liberation; he showed us how to be more free. The creation of something even more free is exactly what happened next.”¹

What We Want the Ethnic Studies Classroom to Look Like | Cómo Queremos que se Ve el Salón de Clases de Estudios Étnicos

The way the classroom looks is just as important as what we’re learning. The environment should represent all cultures as the course does itself. We want students, staff, and the community to feel comfortable and valued in the classroom.

La forma en que se ve el salón de clases es tan importante como lo que estamos aprendiendo. El entorno debe ser uno que representa todas las culturas como lo hace el curso en sí mismo. Queremos que los estudiantes, el personal y la comunidad se sientan cómodos y valorados en el salón





Guide for Addressing Racism and Sexism within Social Movement Spaces

● Reflection and Education

● Understanding Systems and Power Structures

● Centering Accountability.

● Center and Uplift BIPOC Voices and Practices

Center and Uplift BIPOC Voices and Practices

Counter Storytelling- this practice challenges false dominant and whitewashed narratives. This practice centers BIPOC people and validates their lived truth.

Disrupting Performativity- be authentic within the movement.

- Call people in when actions seem performative and inauthentic
- are we practicing our values?
- do we have a culture of integrity?

Community Care- everyone's well-being is important and care is needed in liberatory movements. To avoid burnout, we must care for one another

- normalize frequent check-ins
- cultivate a safe space to ask for and receive support
- incorporate food, rest, and joy

Yuri Kochiyama's activism acted as a bridge between Asian American and other ethnic liberation movements, spanning from the east to west coast. Her fight for liberation for all is rooted in her family's incarceration during World War II.

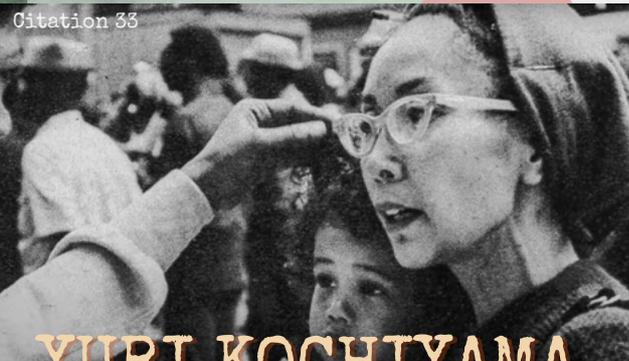
During World War II, Yuri was among the 120,000 Japanese Americans incarcerated by the U.S. government.²⁸ After World War II, she moved to Harlem, New York, where she hosted community gatherings at their house. These events included speakers like Malcolm X, whose talks at the Kochiyama residence inspired her to join his Liberation School and the Organization of Afro-American Unity.²⁹

Her advocacy drew connections between the oppressions faced by many groups in the United States. She supported the movement for Puerto Rican Independence, advocating against U.S. imperialism by occupying the Statue of Liberty.³⁰ She and her husband, Bill, testified and demonstrated in support of reparations for Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II. This work inspired her advocacy for reparations for the descendents of enslaved Americans as well.³¹

In the 1990s and early 2000s, she spoke out against Islamophobia throughout the 1990s and 2000s, in response to international conflicts with Muslim countries. She saw the similarities in blaming all Muslims for events like 9/11, with blaming all Japanese during World War II.³²

Yuri drew connections between different injustices of racially motivated incarceration. These values guided her to advocate for all people, creating bridges between movements.

Citation 33



YURI KOCHIYAMA

Our Ethnic Studies Freedom School

Chapter 6

Propagating

piloting [REDACTED] the course as seniors [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] approached with a grant [REDACTED] extend their work
[REDACTED] the next iteration [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] educational liberation work [REDACTED] envisioned a community
based program [REDACTED] provide Ethnic Studies [REDACTED] to
[REDACTED] students who did not have access [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] our Freedom School, [REDACTED] a series of
Teach-Ins, [REDACTED] train [REDACTED] youth to advocate
dreams of the youth come to life [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] work beyond the school setting [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] —it was
[REDACTED] Our Ethnic Studies Freedom School [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] in the basement of a library [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] we packed the
room with youth [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] We created our own museum [REDACTED] lined the walls with
archives [REDACTED] activists [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] dignity
[REDACTED] students of color (see [REDACTED]). [REDACTED]
history [REDACTED] seeing themselves [REDACTED] a larger
movement. [REDACTED] our constellation.



“we tied ourselves to other movements for Ethnic Studies across time and space and by the end of our first Teach-In we realized that we were fulfilling the original demands of those student activists from several decades ago”. -

Adriana¹



In February 2024, we hosted an Ethnic Studies Teach-in focused on seeds of change, engaging youth leaders to reflect on the progress and impact of our ethnic studies work and imagine freedom dreams for what we have yet to cultivate.

This is a poem inspired by that plática.

platicando about freedom dreams

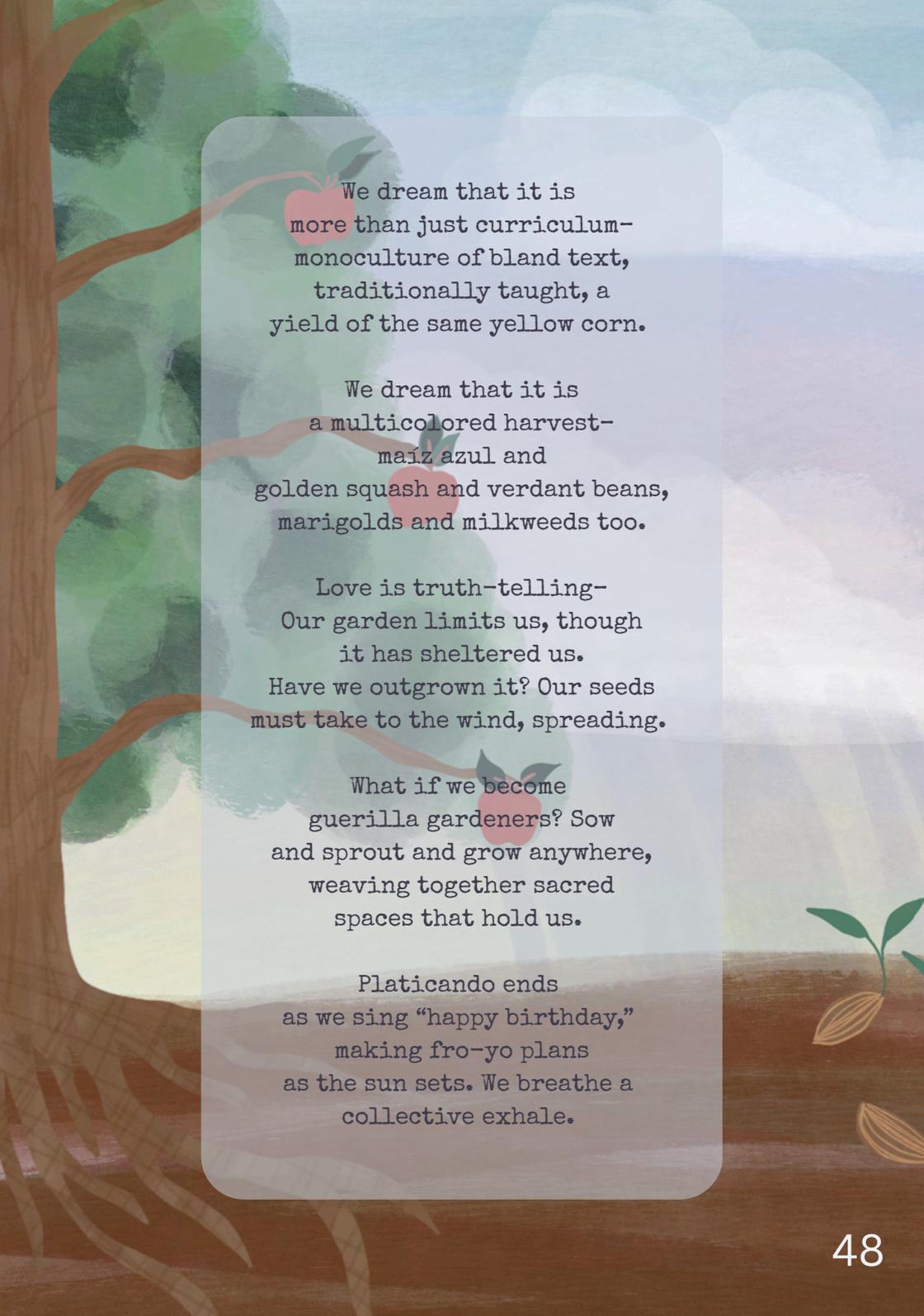
We gather to dream.
Papers rustle, markers scratch.
We whisper, shuffle.
Then, radiant laughter. The
baby coos. And watches.

A teach-in, outside
the classroom walls: a blossom
years in the making
of tending, watering, weeding—
a breathtaking bloom.

What seeds have we sown?
What are the roots that ground us?
Who tends to these seeds?
We sketch our gardens, prepping
to platicar, make knowledge.

New germinations?
Little sprouts join the movement,
rising towards the light.
Tended by loving mentors,
inspired by ancestors.

What has sustained us?
Our roots (radical love) hold
us through the storm. Then
light (truth) can shine down on us,
illuminating freedom dreams.



We dream that it is
more than just curriculum-
monoculture of bland text,
traditionally taught, a
yield of the same yellow corn.

We dream that it is
a multicolored harvest-
maiz azul and
golden squash and verdant beans,
marigolds and milkweeds too.

Love is truth-telling-
Our garden limits us, though
it has sheltered us.
Have we outgrown it? Our seeds
must take to the wind, spreading.

What if we become
guerilla gardeners? Sow
and sprout and grow anywhere,
weaving together sacred
spaces that hold us.

Platicando ends
as we sing “happy birthday,”
making fro-yo plans
as the sun sets. We breathe a
collective exhale.

Our Ethnic Studies Freedom School: Chapter 7: Current Season

Resistance

breath passed down
the stories
the fire
refuse to be erased

both eyes
on the
future

warmth
shared in community
joy is resistance

love letters
to our comunidad

speaking truth

our hopes
dreams
silence
moved
our
voices

"no"
struggle
this time,
revolutionary

rise
in courage,
clarity
echo
with purpose,
remind us
we never
gave up

We
heal
for
someone
for the first time

a legacy we were
making
liberation
for those who
came before,
and those still on their way
we are not alone
we rise
together

PRACTICE:

Taking Inventory of Your Seeds of Change

What are the beautiful blooms of our work?

What fruit will they yield?

Who is in our foliage? Who can support our movement/

What water and sunlight nourish our movement?
What outside resources can we call upon?

Who are the gardeners and caretakers? What support do they (we) need?

What are the roots that ground us? What nutrients do we need to tend to our movement?

What seeds have we grown from?

What seeds do we want to sow?

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