

GRAND CHALLENGES and OPPORTUNITIES

REIMAGINING SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACIES

PART 2

Shaping Stories for Authentic Connection Across Differences

Stories, histories, and the texts we draw on every day can either keep us in patterns that diminish life or help us grow into more connected and life-giving ways of being together. In this session, we'll explore how approaches grounded in local context, community relationships, and lived experience can reshape what—and who—counts in civic life.

We'll focus on the practice of choosing what to carry forward and what to release—an act of care for ourselves, our communities, and our shared future. This is about making space for stories behind our policies, curriculum, and evaluation tools that foster trust, belonging, and shared responsibility - even when we engage across differences that feel polarized.

Together, we'll reframe learning as more than the transfer of information. It's an ongoing negotiation of meaning, power, and identity—one that calls us to both honor personal and community histories and thoughtfully question the forces that have shaped them.

MODERATOR



Briana Hinga

Professor of Clinical Education,
USC Rossier School of Education

PANELISTS



Kenzo Bergeron

Assistant Head of School for Academic
Programs, Equity and Belonging,
Village School



Jenifer Crawford

Professor of Clinical Education,
USC Rossier School of Education



José Miguel Paez

Assistant Professor, Department of
Social Work, California State University,
Northridge



José Miguel Paez (he/him)

- Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, California State University, Northridge.
- MSW from USC in 2001, with an emphasis on families and children.
- EdD from CSUN in 2020.

ANCHORING OURSELVES IN GRATITUDE



Kw'amkw'um S'uli
"Strengthening Our Spirit"
By Joe Wilson

<https://www.facebook.com/Sxwaset>

Sharing stories of gratitude

In pairs/trios, share a story of a time where someone helped you to overcome something you were struggling with.

Take a moment to greet your partner, connect, and then share. Each person should take about 3 minutes to share.

GRAND CHALLENGES ^{and}
OPPORTUNITIES

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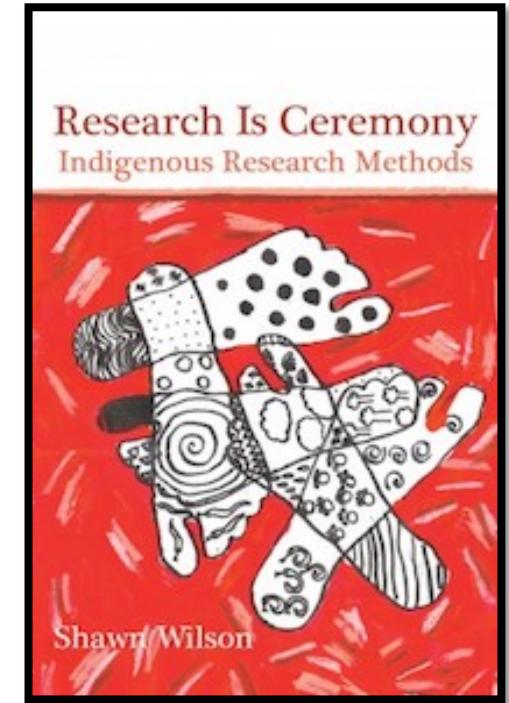
REIMAGINING SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACIES

RELATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY



Shawn Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree)

“a process of systematically bringing relationships into consciousness and becoming accountable with, for, and to them”
(Wilson, 2013, p. 314).



POLITICS OF CARE



Johanna Hedva

“The most anti-capitalist protest is to care for another and to care for yourself.
To take on the historically feminized and therefore invisible practice of nursing, nurturing, caring.
To take seriously each other’s vulnerability and fragility and precarity, and to support it, honor it, empower it.
To protect each other, to enact and practice community.
A radical kinship, an interdependent sociality, a politics of care.”



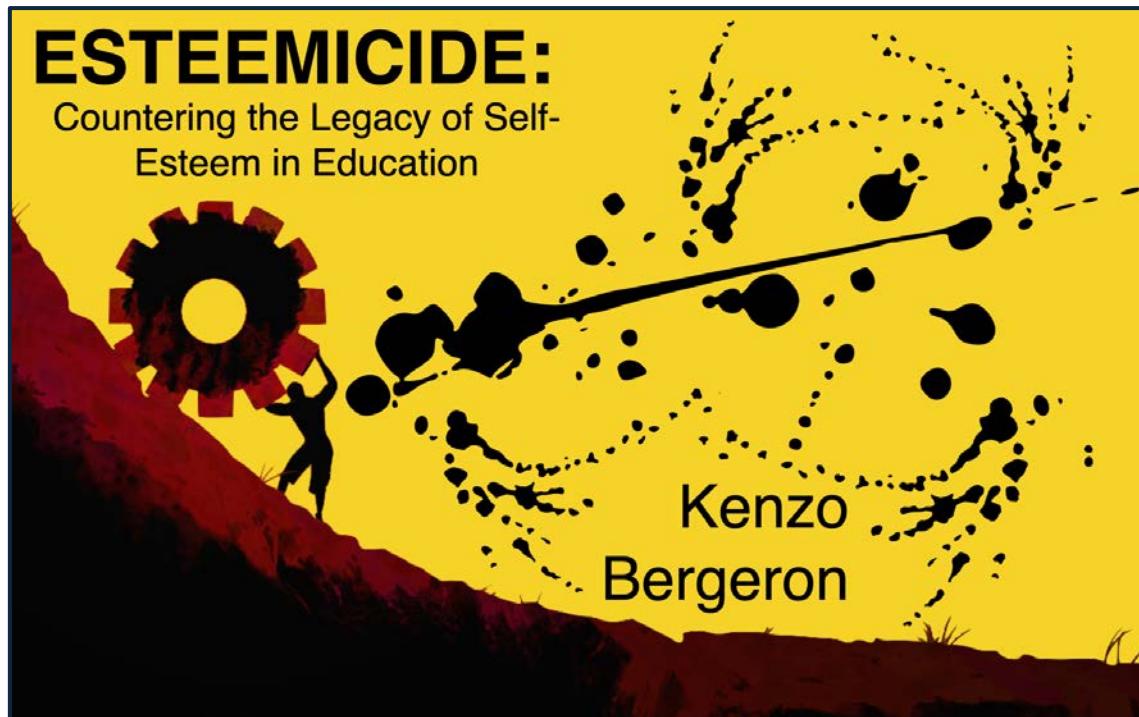


Kenzo Bergeron EdD '16

- Assistant Head of School for Academic Programs, Equity and Belonging
- Director of Teaching and Learning
- Math Specialist
- 5th Grade Classroom Teacher
- Life Skills/Mysteries Facilitator
- Author, *Challenging the Cult of Self-Esteem in Education: Education, Psychology, and the Subaltern Self*, 2017
- 23 years in Independent Schools

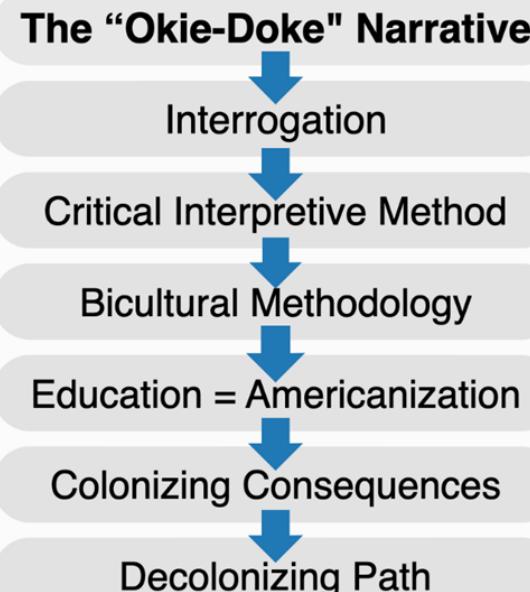
The Meaning of Titles

- Shaping Stories for Authentic Connection Across Differences.
- Labor as the state of one's soul.
- “The power of talking it out across difference” or “The having-hard-conversations industrial complex.”



Reimagining Sustainable Democracies

- What do we carry forward and what do we release?
- What is learning?



- The study deconstructs the historical, political, and philosophical foundations of the use of the term self-esteem in education; and, by doing so, illustrate the limitations of the concept especially for working class students of color.
- Concludes with a summary of critical pedagogical principles of self-determination and social empowerment, which offers educators a more socially just perspective of subaltern lives.

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REIMAGINING SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACIES



Jenifer Crawford PhD

- Professor of Clinical Education at USC Rossier.
- Focus: Critical multilingual pedagogy, translanguaging, and democracy in language education for minoritized and transnational students.
- Taught English and bilingual education in California, Mexico, and Brazil.
- Advances democratic practice through the Democracy Project, union organizing, Academic Senate leadership, and binational collaborations.
- Lives in L.A. with her partner and three children.

Faculty in Mexico and the U.S. negotiating democracy under constraint

- “Dos principios: el humanismo y la del aprendizaje social o en comunidad. Tienen un plan transformador y de participación social... Está en el plan, pero falta trabajarlos con los académicos.”
 - [*“Two principles: humanism and social or community-based learning. They have a transformative plan aimed at social participation... It is in the plan, but we still need to work on it with the academics.”*]
- “Entonces el discurso de los derechos humanos de la sustentabilidad... es discurso escrito porque parece que en los hechos... no se da para ciertas licenciaturas...” “...A fuerza, había que meterlos.”
 - [*“So the discourse about human rights and sustainability... is written discourse, because it seems that in practice... it doesn't show up in certain degree programs...” “...They had to be put in, whether we liked it or not.”*]

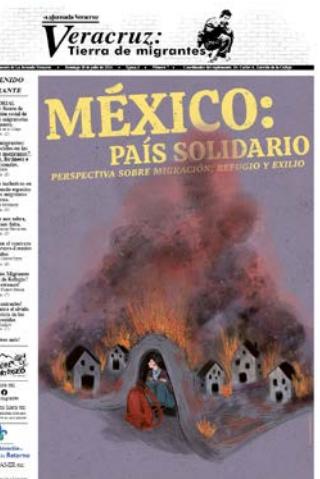
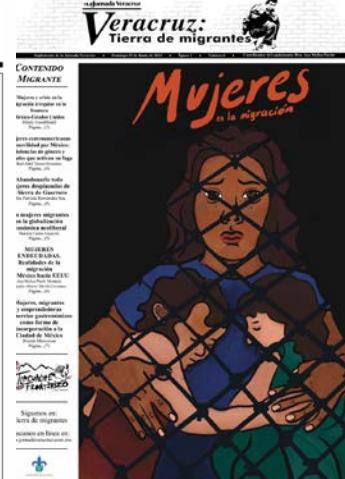
- “We are expected to teach democracy but denied the freedom to practice it.”
- “Civic education is weaponized now.”
- “They record our classes to check for political content.”
- “With the DEI ban, the university quickly. Basically erased any signs of it. So they chose to, you know, scrape all of the websites of use of those words? Some faculty, members said, well. this has been my life's work. How do I represent? You know, my professional identity...”





Returned migrant students and faculty co-creating belonging

- “Cuando llegué, me sentí como que no encajaba... pero en los talleres de PAMIR me di cuenta de que hay otros como yo, que nuestras historias también cuentan.”
 - [“When I arrived, I felt like I didn’t fit in... but in the PAMIR workshops I realized there are others like me, that our stories also matter.”]
- “Somos migrantes, pero también somos estudiantes universitarios. No somos invisibles.”
 - [“We are migrants, but we are also university students. We are not invisible.”]
- “La comunidad migrante está construyendo este espacio con nosotros, no es algo que les damos, es algo que hacemos juntos.”
 - [“The migrant community is building this space with us; it’s not something we give them, it’s something we create together.”]
- “Me siento preparada para enseñarles... porque también yo viví fuera y sé lo que cuesta adaptarse.”
 - [“I feel prepared to teach them... because I also lived abroad and I know how hard it is to adapt.”]
- “La diversidad es una oportunidad, no un problema.”
 - [“Diversity is an opportunity, not a problem.”]



Civic Action in Secondary Schools in California & New Mexico

What students are saying...

Inq



I felt good about the thoughts we shared. It gives me ideas to make the community better

I learned that the democracy project is basically power of the people, which is a way of governing which depends on the will of the people,

I learned how government works and how to talk and work with others.

I did learn a lot of things and it was a great way to understand how democratic systems and that made me feel really good

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I learned that I can be organized and present a topic to a live audience

Fentanyl test strips being available at local smoke shops

test strips at Coachella.

attention to this public issue

844.909.4889



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- Teachers “reported high levels of student engagement, with one teacher noting that the modules ‘added so much depth to our final quarter, and I loved seeing my students slowly start to care more about the injustices currently going on in our world.’”
- Another teacher highlighted “the importance of data in the curriculum and how she ‘would see her students learning how to think about data and how to use it to put evidence behind their views.’”
- “When students see their own experiences reflected in the issues we address, they realize that their voices matter—they can be agents of change in their own communities.”

THANK YOU FOR COMING!

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SAVE THE DATE  for Spring 2026

February 26 - Part 3

March 24 - Part 4

