



I hated history when I was in middle school. I was creative, curious, talkative, and so very Brown compared to my school mates. I was taught straight from the textbook- “read this chapter about how great all these old white colonizers were & answer the questions at the end, don't talk to your neighbors, just memorize these facts and spit them back out.” I didn't study any women. Any Brown or Black folks mentioned were presented as either villains or victims in the white man's story.

It wasn't until college when I realized that I didn't hate history at all, it was my history classes that were so miserable. History is actually awesome. I mean its the world's greatest novela! Filled with chisme, inspiration, blueprints to guide us in building the world around us, and plenty of cautionary tales providing us with opportunities to do better. So, I decided to major in history & art history at UCLA. I wasn't really sure what to do with it, though. I never considered teaching and actually pursued a career as a museum curator at first.

And then came my opportunity to work with kids at a non-profit youth center.

The first kids I ever worked with were mostly Spanish-speaking immigrant kids, tough little barrio girls and shaved headed cholitos, kids facing such heartbreaking poverty and violence and yet they welcomed me into their community with such love and trust. These kids hustled just to survive every day, falling asleep to the sounds of "ghetto birds" and sirens. And in the morning, they made their way into classrooms where many often felt unseen, unmotivated, discarded, & disrespected. I felt so angry for them and so powerless to help. So, when my heart couldn't take another carwash funded funeral of a Brown-skinned teen, I decided to leave & become a teacher. I thought maybe I could create a space in school where kids like them felt welcomed, where they could build valuable skills & learn that their ancestors were architects, rulers, astronomers, and warriors. I hoped that teaching with a social justice lens would help empower youth of color to advocate for themselves and for each other.

It has been 17 years since my first year teaching. I have loved working with middle school youth and have done my best to create the learning space I once envisioned for my youth center kids. I've even coached & supported others to do the same. But time and again, I am reminded that the education system is in fact designed to work against students like mine and teachers who commit to serving them well. The lack of resources, the biased rules and inequitable policies, the racist, revisionist & nationalist state-mandated history curriculum- all of this was created & is upheld with intention. Students like mine aren't meant to "succeed" in this system. Because if they did, if students like mine realized their worth & came into their power, everything would change. For the better. And I am committed to do my part to make sure that happens.

And so, I present to you ESTE Publishing- born of the barrio kids, the underestimated kids, the defiant kids, the Black, Brown, undocumented, poor, queer, trans, goofy, & beautiful kids who have shaped the last two decades of my life. I offer Social Studies & Ethnic Studies services and curriculum centered in students like mine and rooted in racial equity and educational justice. I offer strategies that I have used & refined through years of trial and error, made better by lots of direct & indirect feedback from my students.

I hope whoever reading this is a co-conspirator & potential collaborator and if so, hit me up. We've got some “good trouble” to cause. ❤️

In solidarity,

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