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Notes From The Field

Chasing Rainbows: Finding Our Interwoven Narrative and Voice through Collaborative Auto-ethnographic Poetry

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Abstract

When was the first time you discovered our stories together are important? This notes from the field article documents the author's journey to discovering collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry as a powerful pedagogical tool to decolonizing peace education and human rights education. With the ability to disrupt colonized academic knowledge through counter-narratives and ancestral practices, collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry can be practiced as therapy, inquiry, liberation, and validation that strengthens voices in an authentic way—equipping people with the ability to promote peace and social justice. What started as a class icebreaker grew into a project that brought communities together on the international stage. Through the process of multiple collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry projects, students at a community college came together to jointly construct

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knowledge, research, write, share, and perform together—leading to a process of healing, connection, trust, and action. This article includes the experiences and benefits of collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry, how writing and performing opportunities were implemented, implications for future practice, and a support guide on beginning a collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry performance group.

Keywords: collaborative auto-ethnography, poetry, decolonizing, experiential learning, higher education, student affairs, community college, peace education, human rights education

*The rain roars rapidly
coming down on me*

despite my pleas.

Please!

Let me be free.

What does your story have to do with me?

(Kealoha & Padilla Valencia, 2019)

The Origin of Chasing Rainbows

When was the first time you discovered your narrative is important? For me, it was the summer of 2004. I was curled up on my grandmother's couch, running my finger over the familiar white cranes pattern of the pillows when I heard the front door open. Footsteps came hurriedly up the carpeted stairs. I felt the warmth of my mom's hand on my shoulder. "You need to come with me right now," she whispered in an odd, undefinable tone. Worried, I jumped into the passenger seat of her '95 Windstar van, and we were off.

She drove street to street in the rain, rapidly turning corners, as she ignored the road (and my questions) and looked up. Knowing how much my mom dislikes driving and how obsessed she is with safety, I was starting

to get anxious. What was going on? She suddenly pulled the van over, and pointed up at the gray sky. A rainbow defiantly shown above through the clouds.

“It’s Daddy! Look! He’s sending you a message!”

Before I could process what she had just said, she exclaimed through tears, “the stories passed down to us remind us that rainbows are a sign from our ancestors, our loved ones...I saw it coming and knew you needed to see it. You need to know even though we lost Daddy, he’s still here.”

Mom and I sat silent and teary-eyed looking up, allowing the sound of the tapping rain to wash over us...we had lost Dad to a sudden heart attack just a few days before this. It was my mom’s unforgettable way of finding hope for us.

As the rainbow faded, and we drove away, reality began to swallow me back up. We still didn’t know where we were going to live, how to pay the bills, where any of our documents were, or what life would be like now that he was gone. We found ourselves in our basement after the drive, trying to find some of the paperwork we needed to get through the next few months.

We waded through books on travel, magazines on home improvements, and a pile of résumés that I remember typing up for him. He had worked as a busboy, a mail man, and a valet. I started to feel sick looking at all these places he wanted to go and things he wanted to do and never got to...and then, I saw it. Under a pile of worn tools was a small and rusted drawer. I was relieved to find a folder in the drawer—“IMPORTANT” scribbled across it in my dad’s familiar chicken scratch. I called my mom over. Expecting to see some important legal or business documents, I lost my breath and fell to my knees upon seeing its contents. Dad had saved all of the poems and short stories I had written about our family over the years. *This* is what was important to him. For my dad, it wasn’t what we didn’t have, it is what we *did* have. That day of chasing rainbows made my parents’ message clear: our stories together are important.

An Introduction to Auto-ethnographic Poetry

Over the years, my parents' lesson was tested over and over again; because what I learned in the classroom and at work was so different. I learned that art and storytelling was extra credit or something "fun," not something I actually studied in education. My writing had to be "detached," "serious" and "professional." I had to erase myself and even my mixed-race Japanese American experiences for my writing to be considered "worthy." I played "by the books" and became the first in my family to graduate from college, and even went on to receive a Master's degree in education.

Yet it wasn't until I got into a doctoral program that I learned what a decolonized education really was, and what it could do. The faculty in the University of San Francisco's International and Multicultural Education and Human Rights Education programs reminded me of my family's lessons. The faculty there valued and centered what my family taught me. In every class, no matter what the subject, our professors intentionally created space for us to share our cultural and family history in whatever form we'd like. Resurfaced rhymes and fragmented lines came pouring out of me as the opportunity arose to share. One of my professors came up to me after a class share and said, "Your storytelling is beautiful! I'm going to send you some articles on auto-ethnographic poetry."

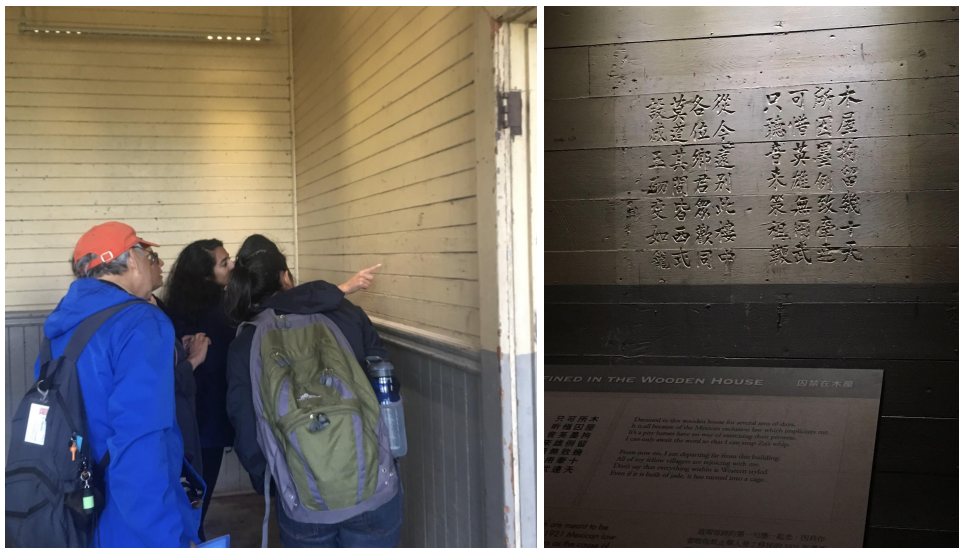
At first I was really intimidated...I just wrote whatever came out..."auto-ethnographic poetry" seemed *fancy*. This was just some fun icebreaker, right? Yet, as I read the articles sent to me, I began to learn how auto-ethnographic poetry is a tool used all around the world to deeply share our cultural story in our own way, our own voice (Kumar, 2011; Camangian, 2008). I also started to see how auto-ethnographic poetry was woven into my own ancestral and cultural roots. Another professor took our class to the Immigration Station at Angel Island,¹ and we could physically feel the

¹ The [Angel Island Immigration Station](#) in San Francisco, California operated from 1910–1940, and processed approximately one million immigrants to the United States. During this time, immigrants carved poetry about their migration into the Angel Island barrack walls. Unlike Ellis Island in New York that was known to welcome immigrants (primarily

poetry our ancestors carved into the walls—using poetry as a place to cry out (hooks, 2012). This experiential learning trip allowed me to see, for the first time, myself in the curriculum. I began to understand poetry *did* belong in the classroom and the community—and so did I.

Figure 1

Angel Island Immigration Station Poetry Carvings



Kealoha, M. (2018). Angel Island poetry carvings and University of San Francisco’s “Pedagogies of Migration” students. [Photographs]

In my exploration, I learned how auto-ethnographic poetry can even be a powerful pedagogical tool to decolonize curriculum and work towards equitable peace and human rights education. The sharing of auto-ethnography is recognized as one of the most powerful vehicles for advocating for global human rights (Schaffer & Smith, 2004; Ilesanmi, 2011).

from Europe), Angel Island served as a “detention facility that unfairly treated immigrants from the global South with prolonged detention and harsh conditions,” often leading to their eventual expulsion from the country based on the racist immigrations laws of the time (Bajaj, 2019, “Immigration Justice,” para. 1).

And the combination of auto-ethnography with poetry is writing without rules, it's healing, and it's accessible (Bline, 2010). It's a way to connect and bridge to ancestral practices, to reclaim histories, and even expose systems of power and privilege (Cruz, 2001). I began to see how auto-ethnographic poetry could also provide a counter-narrative that disrupts colonized academic knowledge (Smith, 1999). I learned how educators even used this type of poetry in their classrooms as an authentic way to promote peace among their students (Roberts, 2005). And as I read queer Black feminist scholar Audre Lorde for the first time, I was moved to see "Poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence, ...our hopes and dreams toward survival, ...change, ...[and] action" (1984, p. 36). I began to realize that auto-ethnographic poetry's method of therapy, inquiry, liberation, and validation strengthens our voice so we are ready to act—and I realized I must act. With an abundance of hurtful dominant narratives trying to invalidate and threaten marginalized communities' lives and stories, action could be taken by sharing counter-narratives together through collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry.

Implementation of Shared Voice Emerges

Because of the faculty mentors in my doctoral program, and their decolonial practices and resources, I regained a part of my life I didn't know I had lost. I knew I had an obligation and opportunity to support my students in the same way. Yet, as a student affairs professional at a community college, how could I use collaborative auto-ethnographic practices in my work?

A majority of the readings I found on poetry were centered around educators' work in the classroom—as a student affairs professional, I didn't have a classroom, designated teaching time, or the ability to assign students graded projects or exams. How could I proceed? My beginning doubts were focused through a deficit lens, both on the impact a student affairs professional could have in this area, and on the extrinsic motivation of students. I was worried students would not want to commit to researching, reading, and writing outside of a mandatory course, with no monetary

compensation or class credit associated with it. However, as soon as I spoke about the possibility of poetry together to the students I advised in the college's leadership development program, many were really intrigued.

In these discussions, students reminded me that our community college students' experiences could especially resonate with auto-ethnographic poetry's purpose. Community colleges were created with the purpose to serve their communities (Gilbert & Heller, 2015). Seen as cost-effective and accessible, along with a 100% acceptance rate, community colleges are seen as a gateway for all the community to receive a higher education (Gilbert & Heller, 2015). And "community colleges were the public institutions of higher education that enrolled (and still enroll) the greatest number of working-class students (of color)" (Ferreira, 2014, p. 119). The California community college system that I work in is also the largest institution of public learning in the world, with 2.5 million students; 6,000-7,000 faculty; and 40,000-50,000 student affairs professionals; with almost half of community college students identifying as first generation college students, 75% of students identifying as people of color, and one in four community college students having come to the United States as immigrants (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2019; Connell, 2008). Although my work as a student affairs professional is outside of the classroom, I had to remember that my role was created to enhance the educational experience through community engagement, and that our community college students' unique and marginalized voices needed to be amplified (American Council on Education Studies, 1937). I had to challenge myself, understanding that student affairs professionals could and should find ways to reimagine our practices, and incorporate human rights education and peace education into our work.

I recognized an opportunity to weave auto-ethnographic poetry practices into the work our team was already doing when I was accepted to speak at the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) annual conference. There would be about 8,000 educators from across the world attending, and our department had just confirmed our first student delegation of five students to attend as participants in the conference. Yet with speakers invited to talk *about* students, could we have the chance to

not speak *for* or *about* students, but *with* them on the international stage? Could we create a collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry piece together to generate awareness and spark action? Checking in with my colleagues at the conference, and my student group, both parties accepted the opportunity of our delegation performing together with excitement. Once we confirmed this joint performance, it was decided by the conference planning committee that our joint delegation would not only perform together—but would open the Student Affairs Speaker Series at the conference.

With a delegation of all Asian and Asian American young women, Hadiya, Sherilyn, Tianna² and I started to scour the internet for research on how to begin. I knew auto-ethnographic poetry was important, but how could we actually write something together? As I saw the incredible work already being done in local schools by educators like [Gerald Reyes](#), and [Patrick Camangian](#), and organizations like [Button Poetry](#), [Kearny Street Workshop](#), or the media company [Write About Now Poetry](#), I began to feel imposter syndrome creep in; I couldn't do this! I wasn't an English teacher, I didn't have a formal class, I wasn't some expert performative poet, and I had no professional experience in writing with my students in this way! Yet in those doubts lay ingrained colonized thought patterns. Did we need a formalized classroom to have permission to do this work? Must I be a professional writer to be deemed worthy to start this work? Was I not centralizing myself in these thoughts and implementation? Did we not already innately know our own personal narratives? This work needed to begin with decolonizing my own thoughts about education. As we dove deeper into our research of how we wanted to begin writing together, a student shared a Youtube video of a collaborative auto-ethnographic poem jointly performed and written by Pages Matam, Elizabeth Acevedo, and G.

² Consent was given by students to use a combination of real names or pseudonyms on a case-by-case basis. We recognize as a group the privilege and disparity in the ability to share our identities and beings. Where some of us have the liberty to give voice and name to our stories, others are unable to be recognized in the same way due to the violence or threats in their lives.

Yamazawa titled "[Unforgettable](#)" (2014). These artists spoke about their experiences in the classroom, sharing lyrical lines and stories through the power of poetry, and our group was immediately inspired. We began to write together with the simple idea, "what would we want an auditorium full of educators to know about the experience of Asian and Asian American women in higher education?"

Hadiya, Sherilyn, Tianna and I began to meet after school; sharing narratives and collaboratively brainstorming about our poem. We shared our personal stories openly and deeply, and human rights themes of freedom, gender equality, immigration, asylum, faith, and the right to education came to the forefront.³ I learned the incredible hardships and triumphs my students experienced before they ever stepped foot onto our college campus and even began to understand how different our Asian and Asian American history education was amongst the four of us. Although the students had volunteered together for almost a year prior to this experience, we each learned something new about our cultural histories and the injustices our families faced. These narratives began to shape my deeper understanding of human rights and peace education, and how that education *is* possible in a student affairs context. Our group began editing our collaborative poem together as equals, and we were inspired to read and send each other Asian American higher education articles, videos on the human rights injustices we spoke about in our individual narratives, and began to find a collective voice for action. After writing and practicing with each other for several months, we took to the stage in Los Angeles. At the end of our collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry performance, we joined hands and walked to the edge of the stage, proclaiming together:

*We dream of the day
we can be seen*

³ As with our names, we recognize that sharing our group's histories and identities would help contextualize backgrounds and challenges. We honor that because some of our group members are in safer situations than others, we choose not to delve into individual member's circumstances.

*in the classroom,
campus,
community,
together....
for our whole selves.*

*Whole history and collaborative action must meet
or true academic achievement is not complete.*

*We need to un-learn the lessons that we are docile.
Understand OUR intersectional leadership is worthwhile.
We need curriculum that covers and doesn't cover up.*

*Teach to reach; academics for action.
Because our work as educators will never be done
until everyone everywhere has freedom.*

(Chan, Kealoha, Kuo, & Ahmed, 2019)

After taking our bow and heading into the dark backstage, we hugged each other with semi-disbelief it was over, laughing and holding each other as some of us wiped away tears. After performing, Hadiya shared that “I never saw myself as somebody who could perform in front of a big group audience. I received so much encouragement and support from friends and even strangers.” Before graduating, Tianna shared “I’m very grateful...it was a very unforgettable experience.” And even a year after the performance, student participant Sherilyn wrote on social media, “now a year later, I’ve had a chance to listen and apply all the skills and wisdom I have learned, and it has honestly been one of the best opportunities.”

After performing, our collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry experiment together snowballed into something we weren’t expecting. A colleague who worked at the conference encouraged our team to keep doing this work, and noted that we should reapply to share this work at an upcoming conference in Portland. More students on our campus were

becoming interested as a video of our performance was shared,⁴ and students began to request formula poetry assignments in our team's bi-annual retreat presentations (Roberts, 2005). We got accepted to perform in Portland, and other students hearing the news began requesting more collaborative art assignments in their classes, clubs on campus were starting poetry open mics, and one of our poetry teams was asked to perform at an annual all-campus faculty training.⁵

Implications for Future Practice

As students, faculty, and staff began to see more and more poetry included on campus, I realized the unique and powerful learning opportunity the collaborative act of writing and sharing auto-ethnographic poetry was. This collective lens to sharing narrative is not new, it was just new to me. The collaborative aspect of auto-ethnographic poetry has been practiced across the world, allowing marginalized groups to come together and gain “self confidence, a collective spirit, a deep respect for one another, and a much sharper vision to live and fight” (Sangtin & Nagar, 2006 p. 3). Unlike writing assignments or projects where members are asked to write and share their own stories as just an individual, the process of writing and reflecting collectively on personal narratives gives our lives new eyes and understanding (Sangtin & Nagar, 2006 p. 61). It also allows us to experience and practice what a united community feels like.

Being involved in the creating, practicing, and deep collaborative sharing with my students over the past years have taught me more about validating and uplifting stories than I thought possible. Collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry truly brings out the importance of a community of cultural wealth practice (Yosso, 2005), allowing me to challenge my own

⁴ Although this video was shared with campus, our group of performers from this iteration have asked that the video remain local, for the continued safety of our performers.

⁵ The faculty training performance was our third iteration of collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry, and within this iteration, students took the lead in organizing poets, meetings, writing, and practices.

privilege as an educator, and to jointly construct knowledge with *everyone* on our campus (Sangtin & Nagar, 2006). It teaches us to deeply listen, and is a practice for an educational debt that is owed (Campbell, 2016). This pedagogical tool also allows participants to have more genuine and honest conversations about injustice and oppression, with less defensiveness due to the nature of delivery (Bell, 2010). This practice also helped me to understand how even as a student affairs professional, I could practice peace education and human rights education in my work. This collaborative practice of poetry and story sharing also allowed me to see myself on a college campus, in the curriculum, and in the community, and gave me the confidence to become a new instructor at our college. This type of work has benefited me greatly, and it can do the same for our students and communities.

Some of the effects students shared from this experience were: the validation of being heard, how powerful their voices could be, and the lasting connection with their fellow writers. Hadiya shared that through this process she learned, “If you have something to say, there will be someone to listen.” Adrian, a poet who performed at a faculty training shared, “I learned from this experience how powerful our voices can be and the impact it makes to those around us. Listening to people’s comments from the crowd, I realized how one piece of art truly can start a conversation and eventually lead to a bigger discussion.” From sharing his experience with faculty, Adrian later gained the confidence to run for Student Body President, and won. Students shared over and over how writing together was both therapeutic and enlightening. Hadiya noted that “after reading my peers’ poetry, I also felt I connected to them on a new level...it was extremely rewarding afterwards.”

Hadiya’s message was a powerful one, because the connections we made helped us realize how much each of us are going through; particularly in a community college setting that serves groups that have traditionally been excluded from higher education. This experience allowed us to see the vastly different histories we each were taught about one other’s cultural communities, and how what we learned in school could put us at odds with each other. We unlearned some of those colonized and imperialized

histories by learning each other's individual narratives, and created a sustainable bond of empathy and connection between each other. And because of our sharing through writing and performance, we each gained knowledge on human rights histories we hadn't learned in a classroom: the colonization of Hong Kong,⁶ the cultural practices of the Uyghur people,⁷ and the connections of farmwork movements and family separation between Japanese American and Latinx agricultural communities.⁸ In the act of researching, writing, and performing our auto-ethnographic poetry aloud in unison, our poetry team felt more connected, trusted, and powerful collectively.

Jasmin, a poet from our second iteration of collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry, shared how this art form could also lead to more avenues of accessible education and action. In an end of the year reflection, Jasmin vocalized that "as a first generation college student, I really appreciate everything we've been through together...my favorite [experience of this academic year] was going to Portland with Michiko and doing collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry, she constantly challenges me to do poetry...it was really memorable to get on stage and do that." Jasmin later went on to perform the collaborative poetry piece about immigration, indigeneity, and family at a California activism camp, sharing with her peers how stories through poetry could invoke change, like curriculum reform.

⁶ Hong Kong was colonized by the United Kingdom for over 150 years, and occupied by Japan for approximately 5 years (Chan, Kealoha, Kuo, & Ahmed, 2019). Hong Kong has its own legal system, internet usage policies, passports, currency, and cultural practices compared to China (Chan, Kealoha, Kuo, & Ahmed, 2019).

⁷ Although there are approximately 9 million Uyghur people who are living predominantly in western China, the regional land is seven times the size of the United Kingdom, and the cultural land is bordered by 8 different countries; few people in the United States know of this culture (Chan, Kealoha, Kuo, & Ahmed, 2019).

⁸ Japanese and LatinX immigrants to California were predominantly farmworkers, and in the 1960s worked together in the farmworker movement (Kealoha & Padilla, 2019). Japanese and LatinX families in the United States also faced similar exclusion and family separation: Japanese Americans through internment in the 1940s, and LatinX families and immigrants in the 2010s (Kealoha & Padilla, 2019).

She has also taken lines from the collaborative auto-ethnographic poem and turned them into art pieces, working with local activists and non-profits to make the stories of peace and injustice more accessible to a wider audience.⁹ Writing and speaking these lines together not only brought us closer together, it made us accomplices in educating and peacemaking:

*Indentured in fields as foreigners,
both our ancestors were told.
Fit the mold.
Speak only English.
...Enunciate...
Don't congregate!*

*Put "American" food on your plate.
Cus to assimilate they must desecrate,
to indoctrinate!*

*We have learned...
there is lineage in our languages.*

*We're not hysterical.
Historical hurt in our hearts.
There's so much outside denial
of our family's arrival...
and their survival.*

(Kealoha & Padilla Valencia, 2019)

As our collaborative groups perform in front of more and more peers and educators, many in the audience are grateful to be challenged and included in seeking action. In hearing students in this way, faculty and staff

⁹ You can check out Jasmin's auto-ethnographic poetry and social justice art at her art page [@princessa_xicana](#).

members shared that this type of story sharing is necessary and invaluable to them. They shared how this fueled them to do their work and teach in a different way. In hearing students share their collective experiences together in an artistic and open format, many listeners told us how just seeing data about students on slides, or seeing students on a standard panel was drastically different, and this type of storytelling had so much more impact, and lasting effect on them. Being able to do this work together has the powerful potential to bring communities closer, find interwoven narratives and a collective voice, bring detailed and lasting awareness of what challenges students are faced with, and opens up the possibilities of including different practices in education.

Recreating Collaborative Auto-ethnographic Poetry

In my journey as a new educational professional, I have exhausted myself in chasing after a colonized notion of what success is; some pot of golden-success measured in ivory towers. Although collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry has been impactful to our collaborative teams and is gaining traction with faculty, many others in the field see our work and comment, “oh, that fun after-school thing where you play on words with students for a short time?” Hearing this can be discouraging. Between all the meetings, extra hat wearing, the tireless schedules, and exhaustion from putting out fires all the time during the regular school day, one might ask themselves, “Why am I trying to do this? Do I really have the time? Is it worth it?”

What I’ve learned by doing this with my students is that we have to make the time. This work is important. Whether you find time in an already planned retreat, in your curriculum, in a staff meeting, or as some new program, collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry heals, connects, can lead to action, and can teach you to listen and trust on a deeper level. And paired with coursework and exploration of peace and human rights, this type of poetry can unveil the affective dimension of how individuals and communities experience violence and can begin to heal from the resultant traumas.

For those who may be interested, below is a timeline breakdown to support you in creating your own alignment with this work:

Figure 1: A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating a Collaborative Auto-Ethnographic Poetry Group

Creating a Collaborative Auto-ethnographic Poetry Group	
Action 1: Identify the Need	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is there a need to share collective narratives? ● Are some voices and experiences being silenced? Whose? ● Is some needed action bubbling up on your campus or in your community? 	
Action 2: Reaching Interested Members	
<p>Reaching out to interested people could occur through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A team of students/people you already interact with in a class/program ● Broad campus/community advertising ● Individually reaching out to people you'd like to work with on a collaborative team for action 	
Action 3: Writing and Editing Collaboratively	
First Meeting	<p><u>Setting the Stage Together</u></p> <p>Why do we want to do this and in this way?</p> <p>What are our joint expectations?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who will our desired audience be? 2. How do we want to share our piece(s)? 3. How will we call each other in on our own privilege and share space as we journey through this? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How do we democratize the space so we are coming together as equals?

	<p>What kind of timeline do we want to set for ourselves?¹⁰ What do we want to share with people and why?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brainstorming Potential Themes <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What do we want this audience to know? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. What human rights violations or celebrations of peace are we sharing? b. What action towards peace and justice do we want people to take? c. How do we want to tell this story? d. What dominant narratives do we want to speak back to?
	<p><i>Homework: Free writing on themes spoken about at first meeting, research on themes</i></p>
<p>Second Meeting</p>	<p><u>Share Free Writing & Collaborative Updating</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share findings and materials on chosen theme¹¹ 2. Share areas where writing was a struggle 3. From Sherron Killingsworth Roberts' work: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. After first sharing your piece aloud, ask yourself: What do I feel? Why do I feel this way? (Roberts, 2005)

¹⁰ In our multiple iterations of practicing collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry together, different timelines were set: a) Team 1 decided on a five month timeline between conception, practice, and performance, b) Team 2 worked off of a four month schedule, and c) Team 3 set themselves at a faster paced three week timeline before performance (this team performed predominantly off of scripts and did not utilize choreography in their performance)

¹¹ We found that having shared research/materials that we could all review together was helpful. This looked different in all three iterations: a) Team 1 shared articles and even dissertation sections like Canlas' ["Leadership Means Moving A Community Forward": Asian American Community College Students And Critical Leadership Praxis](#) (2016), b) Team 2 chose to share their favorite poetry videos and social media posts, c) Team 3 did a focus group with faculty before writing to gain more knowledge on how faculty prepare their classes.

	<p>b. If anyone feels “stuck” on getting writing started, try out formula poems as a basis for writing. Examples of these writing prompts can be found in Robert’s <i>Promoting a Peaceful Classroom through Poetry</i> (2005).</p> <p>4. Analyze what writing, research, and experience matched with others, and potentially if there were things that didn’t align in a major way, why that might be</p> <p>a. Analyze where power and privilege play in these “matchings”</p> <hr/> <p><i>Homework: more free writing, research, and unpacking spurred from what others shared</i></p>
<p>Third Meeting</p>	<p><u>Share Free Writing & Collaborative Updating</u></p> <p>1. Share updated free writing</p> <p>2. From Gerald Reyes’ work, using this peer feedback format was helpful:</p> <p>a. “I liked it when you said___</p> <p>b. I noticed you used ___</p> <p>c. When you said ____, I wondered___</p> <p>d. What do you think?</p> <p>e. What parts do you like?</p> <p>f. What parts do you have concerns about?” (2006, p. 14).</p> <p>3. Discussion and collective decisions on what feels like a story arch.</p> <p>a. Using Reyes’ “ReVision,” come together to organize segments, asking each other, what makes the most sense where? (2006).</p> <hr/> <p><i>Homework: continue edits</i></p>

Fourth Meeting	<p><u>Share Free Writing, Collaborative Updating, and Sharing Voice</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How did our re-writes go? 2. “ReVision” exercise again 3. Who should say which parts with me? Which sections must be said by a single poet? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Which of our stories are braided together? (Sangtin & Nagar, 2006)
<i>Homework: practicing “lines” out loud and getting familiar</i>	
Action 3: Practice, Practice, Practice	
Fifth Meeting	<p><u>Practicing Out Loud Together</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practicing out loud, updating what feels more comfortable as words are shared “off paper”
<i>Homework: Having your “lines” memorized</i>	
Sixth Meeting	<p><u>Practicing Out Loud & Choreography Together</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practicing out loud with choreography 2. What movements do we want where? 3. Where do we move together and separately with intention?
<i>Homework: practicing choreography with lines</i>	
Seventh Meeting	<p><u>Practicing Flow</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practice getting comfortable with the rhythms, memorization, and choreography

	<i>Homework = have memorized choreography and lines by next meeting¹²</i>
Eighth Meeting	<u>Practicing Flow 2.0</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to get comfortable and practice until the collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry feels “ready” 2. Practice in various spaces and get comfortable with any outside noise or a quiet audience
Action 3.5: Experiential Learning Bonus: Trips and Shared Meals	
<p>We can all learn deeply by experiencing something together (Kolb, 2014). This collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry experience is in itself an experiential learning opportunity. If your group is able to add any “trips,” bonus activities such as museum or historical location visits, or shared meals together, our team found these opportunities to be extremely beneficial to both our writing and understanding of each other’s journeys.¹³</p>	

¹² In viewing many poet’s performances, groups chose different approaches to memorization: a) Team 1 was hesitant if we had the time and confidence to memorize everything for the stage. For this group, memorizing not only allowed the team to feel more free and powerful in front of a larger audience, in hearing each other practice together, poets regularly memorized other’s narrative sections. We believe that memorization helped us to remember each other’s human rights struggles when volunteering together outside of our poetry work. b) Team 2 similarly memorized not only their own parts, but each other’s stories as well. That co-memorization of the entire poem supported each other in the practicing process if the other was struggling, and allowed them to perform in different venues spur of the moment in confidence. c) Team 3 had a varied approach, with a short timeline, some students memorized, while others read to feel more confident.

¹³ Our groups were extremely privileged to be able to connect our poetry to extracurricular activities: a) Team 1 visited the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, California together, as well as did a joint trip to a Uyghur cuisine restaurant, a Japanese restaurant, and a Chinese restaurant, where each poet shared cultural practices throughout the meal. b) Team 2 visited the Chicano Research Center in Stockton, California together, as well as shared multiple cultural meals with each other. c) Team 3 also shared multiple

Action 4: Performance

Performing Together

- It's so crucial for the action and validation elements of collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry to have an opportunity to share your piece.
- This could take the form of:
 - Regular Open Mics (Reyes, 2006; Jenkins et al., 2017)
 - Meetings
 - Training
 - Retreats
 - Classes
 - Campus/community event(s)

Action 5: Debrief

To be able to come back together and talk about how the group feels and what they experienced is helpful to unpack and even plan for future action items. At this same debrief meeting, the group could share their desires or concerns with optional other sharing, such as publication.

Action 6: Publication

To broaden the audience and scope of your team's collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry narratives, your team could also decide to publish their work. Making these narratives available to even more people could allow for more awareness, impact, and action (Schaffer & Smith, 2004).

This publication could take the form of a book (Sangtin & Nagar, 2006), academic journal, posts on social media, college/community

meals together, and visited historical locations in San Francisco, California together to speak upon the history of *muralismo* and art for action together.

printed booklet, or in the form of an e-book on websites (Schaffer & Smith, 2004; Kearny Street Workshop, 2020).

Additionally, if you are reading this “Creating Your Own Collaborative Auto-Ethnographic Poetry Group” timeline during COVID19, don’t lose hope! Although COVID 19 may currently restrict us from physically visiting locations together, and many of our schools look very different than they did before this pandemic, with the power of video calling and recording, live document editing capabilities, and the ability to cut and edit videos together, collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry work is still very possible. And as we shelter in place and in power, we see that social movements are evolving, and so too must our educational practices. This work didn’t start during the COVID 19 crisis, however, it can continue to evolve through it as a way for our communities to unpack, bring awareness, heal, demand justice together, and find new ways to explore peace and human rights.

Conclusion

I am still chasing rainbows, and I am not alone. We are chasing our collective narratives: our histories not included in curriculum, our stories not shared on major airwaves, and the possibilities for a liberatory and collective human rights education that can bring sustainable peace between our communities. We are chasing, and we are catching up—together. The decolonized practice of my doctoral program has shown me that we have a range of practices for resistance, and the power to be whole. Through engaging in collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry within our college community, we have learned to eliminate various stereotypes and harmful perceptions we had about each other. We have also learned how we can equip one another with the knowledge of our diverse experiences of freedom, gender equality, immigration, asylum, faith, and right to education. This collaborative education has begun to show us what an enhanced existence within our community could look like. And it has taught us the importance of deeply listening and respecting others;

uplifting one another's narratives, and the power we have for creating change together.

Every year, graduation for our college falls on the anniversary of my mom and I chasing rainbows. Watching our community's students cross the stage reminds me that like a rainbow, we are only physically in each other's lives for this fleeting moment. In this little time we have together, are we truly doing justice for one another? Are we reminding and supporting each other to shine through the darkness, because our life and story is important? I can't imagine a better way to honor my dad's life than celebrating this milestone in my students' lives—knowing what it took for them to get to that stage, and where they want to go. Acknowledging and championing each other's narratives not only reaffirms why we do what we do in education—it reaffirms our own journey. Within human rights and peace education, we must continuously and intentionally create space to come together and share our realities in a deep and authentic way—reaffirming that our stories together are important.

*The rain roars rapidly.
Coming down on us
But in this we trust:
hate ends with us.*

It's the future our descendants deserve.

*We choose bridges,
not a babylon
as others babble hate on and on.*

*Our colors shine together,
despite the rainy weather.
We will rise up with rays,
regain ancestral ways.
Our linking language is love;
together, we'll rise above.*

*We shine bright with all our colors in the rain,
connected through the pain.
Our resistance is a rainbow.*

(Kealoha & Padilla Valencia, 2019)

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