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Unsettling Colonial Structures in Education through Community-Centered Praxis

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Unsettling Colonial Structures in Education through Community- Centered Practice

RESEARCH-IN-BRIEF

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Research in Brief →

"Unsettling colonial structures in education through community centered praxis"



JOURNAL OF CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

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In this manuscript, sustainability education scholar-educators examined Community-Based Experiential Learning (CBEL) as a practice of decolonizing pedagogy.



AN INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHORS

“

We were really excited in a publication that emphasizes centering the Academy as a structure of epistemological dominance. We recognize that it's often easy to assert that dominance in higher education.

We use a lot of tonality in our work and wanted to make sure that the journal that we published with had a similar emphasis and goal.

JCSHESA seemed to embody criticality through it's publishing process.

”



WHY DID YOU CHOOSE OUR JOURNAL FOR YOUR MANUSCRIPT?

“

All of our projects were directly integrated within our work environments as well. So one of the things that we really want to get across with our article is that often times when we have these community based experiential learning projects, it's often this short sighted. I'm going to go in, I'm going to visit this community organization or this partner, and you don't actually take that time to develop relationships.

I connected on a deeper level with Chief Dennis Coker and had really engaging series of conversations with him, and that expanded of how we were taking this manuscript. As I was thinking critically about this space, working with the Lenape diaspora and figuring out all of the ongoing genocide that is currently happening with not only the state of Pennsylvania, but nationally. This caused a questioning of who defines what sovereignty is and how that definition from the the so-called United States impacts what a sovereign nation is, who limits that sovereignty, and who has the authority to claim the knowledge.

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WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES THAT YOU ALL HAVE FACED PUBLISHING CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP?

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We shared three different projects all intended to decolonize, each centered community engagement and the historical land awareness approach. But while each of our projects had some successes, they also ended up having their limitations, which we explore within the article in terms of their actual decolonizing effects. That's the critical point that I want to share. I don't want to underestimate the importance of critical intention, because without that, well, you've got nothing. But critical intention is the arrival point. You don't want to settle into an identity like Critical Scholar. It's not a place to just arrive at. Intention to decolonize does not mean decolonizing. In effect, did the project actually catalyze change? And if it didn't, why not? And what's next? An important part of an identity as a critical scholar for us, is that it needs to be earned, not claimed, and it needs to be earned every time.

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HOW THIS ARTICLE REFLECTS YOUR IDENTITY AS CRITICAL SCHOLARS?

“

This article is for educators and ways to approach community based projects. To think about how we integrate critical and decolonial lenses within our educational framework and our curriculum, and that it's not something that we arrive at with the formula for a decolonized class.

We hope this article portrays that it's a reflective process. It requires continuous humility and self-reflection and also recognizes that activism and scholarship should not be separate.

Scholarship can absolutely contribute to just causes. I think that there just needs to be a lot of intentionality and reflection on how, why, where, who, who is reading it? Where is the accessibility.

”



WHO DO YOU HOPE READS YOUR WRITING AND WHY?

Author Biographies



Dr. Kimberley Greeson (she/they) is core faculty for Prescott College's Sustainability Education doctoral program. As an interdisciplinary educator-scholar, Greeson's work focuses on the politics of

conservation and environmental issues concerning human/nature relationships, environmental and food justice movements, decolonizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies, and critical and emergent qualitative research.



Dr. Steve Sassaman (he/they/ki) is an experiential educator and researcher whose work is centered on enhancing community interdependence and healthy relationships with our more-than-human kin.

Sassaman works at Temple University as the Assistant Director for Recreation, Outdoor Education, & Wellness at the Ambler Campus and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the College of Public Health. Sassaman completed a Ph.D. in Sustainability Education at Prescott College where he continues to learn with the Adventure- and Nature-Based Counseling Program as a field-intensive instructor.



Dr. Katherine Williams, PhD (she/they) is the Professional Development Educator at the University of Pikeville. She completed her PhD in Sustainability Education in 2022, focusing on disruption

of neoliberal and colonial ideologies in undergraduate faculty. She also researches open pedagogy as a means to disrupt hegemony and inequity in higher education. Katherine also holds a Master of Science in Education in Learning Design and Technology and a Master of Arts in Library and Information Science.



Dr. Abby Yost (she/her) is the faculty coordinator of Experiential Education at Prescott College, coordinating graduate programs in environmental education, social justice education, and

decolonizing education projects locally. An educator and activist, her work centers the integration of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies within K-12 Teacher Preparation programs, as part of the larger project to disrupt settler colonial mechanisms within U.S. education systems.

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