

Letter from the Faculty Director

October 9, 2020

A couple of weeks ago, an elder asked me if I've heard the story of the Sequoias. I told him I had not. He proceeded to share with me that Sequoias live for 3,000 years and that these trees, in particular, like the Redwoods and Oak Trees, are indigenous to California. Yet the Sequoias are especially sacred because Sequoias reproduce when immense amounts of heat—blazing hot temperatures—break open the outer layer of their shells and set the seedlings free.

It's like a baptism by fire.

This particular elder shared with me that there are many ways to look at the fires ravaging through California right now. But don't forget that amidst all of the destruction, forests of Sequoias are being planted and will grow. Building on this wisdom, we sit here in 2020 nestled like seedlings in our homes and inside private spaces, and also growing and changing and getting ready to break open.

Together, we're seeding something within ourselves, like the Sequoias.

We are growing from the soils of this land, conscious of our roots and the legacies that give our work purposeful direction. It is from this place—inside a pandemic—that I've recently taken the helm as the new Faculty Director of the Doctorate in Educational Leadership at CSUS.

I am honored in this moment to introduce Volume 9.1 of The Journal of Transformative Leadership and Policy Studies (JTLPS). This journal is a beacon of thoughtful research, courageous essays, and timely book reviews. It is a gathering place for scholars, policymakers and practitioners—all of whom are committed to leadership that moves us from systems of oppression towards ecosystems of educational equity.

As we move forward, I recognize that we're at a crossroads: one path leads to transformation and the other a return to status quo. I see this critical-historical period as a potential catalyst that can awaken within us a newfound commitment to social change. In the recent article, "The pandemic is a portal," Arundhati Roy (2020) explains: "Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next."¹

Through the portal of our collective possibilities, what do we see and how do we get there?

Years ago, Miles Horton and Paulo Freire (1990) challenged us to "make the road by walking." They implored us to have thoughtful and reflective action, as well as courageous pursuits. Each article in this issue grapples with the "walk" of educational equity.

¹ <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca> (Financial Times, April 3, 2020).

First, we learn from Borunda, Paris, & Grant who illuminate the ways schools and society negate Indigenous roots and perpetuate historical amnesia. With empirical evidence they affirm that this place—now called the United States—was, is, and will always be Brown. The authors provide a detailed analysis of the myriad ways Native Nations created the democratic foundation for this country, including providing a model through the League of the Iroquois. As they trace these milestones, they also explore how white people used fear to develop policies and laws of exclusion that perpetuate the deleterious mythology of white supremacy. Reclaiming the Brown identity of this country shapeshifts the questions that we ask and how we embody racial justice.

This leads us, rather naturally, into a book review of Maisha Winn's (2018) *Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education Through Restorative Justice*. The book was published by Harvard Education Press and offers lessons on restorative justice from inside classrooms and schools. Building on theme of radical healing, in the article, *You Do Belong!*, the next author, Ashford-Hanserd, uses Afrocentric feminist epistemology to examine the salient barriers for Black women in the computer sciences. Her robust qualitative methods created space for each participant to co-construct counter-life herstories. From Ashford-Hanserd's intimate dialogues we shift to systems-change in the article, *The Community College Presidency Demystified: Creating a Pipeline of Latino Leaders*, by Padilla and Martinez. These two authors present robust empirical data on pathways for Latino leaders across the Community College system. While student populations in the community colleges are racially diverse, all too often, both the administrators and faculty are overwhelmingly white. To dismantle these patterns, this article demonstrates the impact of a national, culturally-relevant and transformative leadership program for Latino administrators. Our final piece for this issue, *La Necesidad For More Latina Superintendents*, is an autoethnographic account of Luna's journey navigating the superintendency. In the final pages of the journal, we learn from her story about the ways she became a disruptor throughout her career.

Altogether, these authors create a nuanced tapestry that is revelatory, offering all of us contemplative and innovative ways to read, teach, lead, and live.

Through this issue, we invite you into the portal—the seed—of our collective possibilities. The work of these scholars represents the vast wisdom and everyday walk needed to reimagine schooling. We are paving new pathways; please join us on this journey.

In Community,



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Reference:

Horton, M., Bell, B., Gaventa, J., & Peters, J. M. (1990). *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.