



# **Power Matters: Some Personal Notes for Educators on Restorative and Transformative Justice**

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*Letter to My Nephew  
on the One Hundredth Birthday of Yuri Kochiyama  
and Ninety-Sixth Birthday of el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz (fka Malcolm X)*

Dear Luca:

This wasn't supposed to be an open letter to you. Somehow my fingers, gingerly weighing over these keys, keep returning to you: my bright-eyed baby nephew. Maybe it's your 2 year old and 4 month old little squeals on the other side of the door. Or maybe it's a lingering sense of urgency. When your great auntie Maisha asked me to write a working paper on some reflection questions and a new pedagogical stance I conceptualized for her framework (i.e., Power Matters), which I synthesized from her five powerful pedagogical stances for restorative justice work in education—Future Matters, History Matters, Race Matters, Justice Matters, and Language Matters—I'm sure this is not what she meant. Yet, here we are.

I reflect upon how you, my little laughing and giggling nephew, come from a long lifeway of dedicated teachers and educators. I've thought about how this might very well be the unforgiving path that you choose to go down. I could be wrong. Maybe you'll find meaning for yourself among your loved ones and communities as an artist—I hope you do—but I cannot help but think about how you, too, might find yourself pursuing the art of teaching, learning, and transforming worlds. Your great grandmother, who passed a short few months before you were born, was a public high school biology teacher, for decades. Till the day she passed, you could smell the old books as you walked into her apartment. She started off as just your grandmother's teacher, but became so much more. She adopted her student, your grandmother, after she emancipated herself as a minor. Not because she had to, or it was her responsibility, but because it was the right thing to do. She made us her relative. She felt a deep accountability to all the children who walked into her classroom. When your grandmother asked to stay with her, maybe she said yes because she was tired of saying no. Maybe she saw the decades worth of suffering packed into a few years of your grandmother's young life. When you become a teacher, you may someday be faced with a similar predicament. I have faced some of my own, and those moments define you. Having those few days to nurture her wounds, your grandmother found a way to heal. Your grandmother went out into the world, ever the fighter and movement builder, and became an educator herself—even though she would have never referred to herself as one. And of course you know that your very own mother is a passionate, transformative elementary school teacher.

If you decide that education is your purpose, I don't want you to be defined by how the White world sees education. It's easy to do when teachers are often assigned value based upon how they “manage” their classrooms. But don't be fooled, colonization is concerned with population management. Transformative educators are defined by the courage, vulnerability, and honesty

that they share and make possible among children. They relate and act in reciprocity with all the people, lands, and communities that they are in relation to, from whichever space they find themselves teaching and learning within—because there is no other way to teach, *really* teach. The Department of Education doesn't want you to know that. They're afraid of what has happened when teachers have come to and acted upon that understanding. Paulo Freire didn't leave Brazil because he got tired of living there. And there's a reason why they were terrified of Ericka Huggins and what became the Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School. The FBI ransacked Ericka's classrooms and offices. They did so, because they knew what she and her colleagues set out to do. They knew the power of a committed group of teachers. They knew what happened when teachers started educating with students for the sake of freedom. Not the freedom pledged and chained to the bars and stars, but the freedom of the Zapatistas and Combahee River Collective. This is, in part, why your great auntie Maisha created these pedagogical stances.

When she says, history matters, I think about how I began writing this letter to you on May 6<sup>th</sup>, the day that a forgettable president signed a piece of paper that would be incredibly consequential to your ancestors—and still to you. That document, the so-called *Chinese Exclusion Act*, begins with familiar cursive: *Whereas in the opinion of the Government of the United States the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order . . .* That same ink is audaciously curled and lashed across deeds of sale for human beings, as well as that document that has become a holy document for White men, and a few pieces of paper stained with audacious hypocrisy for all *others*, the Constitution. *But about those dangerous ancestors of yours.*

Those folks who sing the praises of the Constitution, they're also often the ones who continue to make history books that paint your ancestors as just some greedy and long-haired thieves who came hunting for gold. What they don't tell you? Your fourth-great-grandfather, Eli Tia Key, escaped with his life. He only left after the British and French—quite literally—bombed, burned down, and devastated his Indigenous lands. The reason? Your ancestors refused to let their streets continue to flood with opium. And you know what country gave more than a little helping hand: the U.S. After all this destruction, those men waving U.S., French, and British flags over the bloody bodies of your distant relatives weren't satisfied. Because the Indigenous peoples refused to collaborate, their center of commerce in the area would henceforth be controlled and *managed* by the White men from that most Westerly little island off of Europe: this was the British colonization of Hong Kong. Amidst all this devastation, Eli Tia Key fled to the lands of the Pomo peoples—what is now Mendocino, California. When it became safer to return home, from what had only been *California* for a few decades, he left back for his ancestral lands. Three of his four children, born on Pomo lands, would follow him back in the years following. The one remaining son passed away, leaving no child behind. It would be two generations before your grandma Alice Darosa, then living in what became the Portuguese colony of Macao, came back across the Pacific. Likely fleeing violence of her own, she absconded first to Mexico, and then to San Francisco Chinatown with your grandfather Chester; who had been a “paper son” himself.<sup>1</sup> How does that story change how you see yourself, and your ancestors who have simply become one perilous mass of “Chinese” people? History matters.

But why was it safer for your fourth-great grandfather, Eli Tia Key, to return home? Why would three of his four children follow soon after? Race matters. That story is related to the Chinese Exclusion Act, and can be told much more closer to home for you, born with Cantonese heritage on the lands of Tongva peoples, on what was once more widely known as, Yaanga.<sup>2</sup> About 30 minutes, in traffic, from your childhood home, down the 10 and up the 110 freeways, there is a street now known as “Los Angeles Street.” Following the ethnic cleansing of Tongva peoples, this narrow north-south street became known then by Spanish settlers as: *Calle de los N-word*.<sup>3</sup> On many post-1847 maps, it was simply, *N-word Alley*. As you could have guessed, this was the area of the settlement where folks with African and Indigenous heritage were known to stay, many of whom identified as “Mexican,” and spoke Spanish as their first language.<sup>4</sup> Often of surprise to White folks, and much less so to your Black friends and colleagues, this was also where the Cantonese diasporic community lived: those dangerous Chinese. After arriving in California, escaping the devastation of the Opium Wars, a growing number of Chinese peoples labored on the transcontinental railroad. Attempting to evade harsh conditions building the railroads, a number of Chinese peoples began moving to and working within *N-word Alley*. They came alongside Black peoples from the U.S. South, who slowly began to flee the region after legalized emancipation (Note: not freedom). Black and Chinese peoples came to work for and around a series of saloons and small businesses on *N-word Alley*. Lighter-skinned Spanish settlers, and increasingly “Anglos” from the U.S. who were more confidently calling themselves “Whites,” came from around the pueblo to drink and gamble.

In 1871, the tale goes that two rival Chinese gangs—sound familiar?—were at war. As a part of ongoing disputes between the two gangs, the reporting goes that a police officer (“Jesus Bilderrain”) heard gunshots.<sup>5</sup> The officer went to *N-word Alley*, found a Chinese man in the street (“Ah Choy”), and was shot in the shoulder by the gunman he pursued. A rancher came to the police officer’s aid and was killed. On October 24<sup>th</sup>, hearing a rumor that Chinese people were *endangering the good order*, and “killing Whites wholesale,” a mob gathered. Around 500 men, women, and children, mostly folks who called themselves “Whites”—clothing store owners, farmers, butchers, blacksmiths, carpenters, politicians, and saloon owners—surrounded *N-word Alley*. A Chinese woman courageously fired an early shot into the air, enabling some of her Chinese neighbors to get notice and flee. As the mob grew, a small handful of White people, like former school teacher Robert Widney, managed to hide and help a few of their Chinese bredren and sistren. But most Chinese could not escape. The mob began shooting shotguns and rifles. Some of the Chinese took up arms and fired back, but to no avail. The mob began ransacking Chinese homes and businesses, and grabbing Chinese to be hung. Any Chinese they could find. A city councilman was reported attacking a Chinese man with a plank of wood. A woman volunteered her clotheslines for nooses, and was heard screaming out, “Hang them!” Another small boy ran out from a store, “Here’s a rope.” A well respected doctor, Dr. Chien Lee “Gene” Tong, was dragged out. When he said he’d pay \$3,000 and give up his wedding ring, his captors shot him. In the mouth. They cut off his finger. Stole the ring. Dragged his bloody body to makeshift gallows. By the next morning, 16 Chinese men—and a Chinese woman and 14-year old boy—were caught and murdered. The 16 Chinese men, along with the Chinese woman, were left hanging in the street. Lynched.

While now virtually forgotten, erased from (White) history just like the razing of the village of Yaanga in 1847, the horrific mass lynching made the front page of *The New York Times*, and newspapers across the globe. But what I want you to remember most from this horrific scene, is that this wasn't an isolated incident. This was just the one that made the press. Between 1849 and 1902, it's estimated that more than 200 of your Cantonese and Chinese diasporic brethren and sistren were lynched and murdered across California and the Pacific Northwest, and even in the Midwest. In 1880, one of your Cantonese kin was lynched as more than 3,000 White folks "gutt[ed]" Denver's Chinatown.<sup>6</sup> Chinese were rounded up, robbed, and forced out of hundreds of towns across the U.S.—these forced removals were often spurred through violence and murder. Your Cantonese ancestors called this ethnic cleansing *Pai Hua*, "the driven out."<sup>7</sup> You can now make a strong determination about why your fourth-great-grandfather left back to his ancestral lands, along with three of his four children. But did your ancestors ultimately leave for no reason—America must have gotten justice and held all these "bad apples" responsible, right? Isn't that what America does? Isn't that why there's still Chinese people in California today? Just in case you're faced with questions like these from your students, let's further tackle what happened.

After this mass lynching, the U.S. "justice system" went to work.

There were grand juries, investigations, and dramatic court proceedings. Out of the mob of 500, 10 men went on to trial, and 8 men went on to be convicted of manslaughter. Not murder, manslaughter. But it doesn't end there. Less than a year later, the highest court in the land reversed all the convictions on appeal—due to a legal technicality. The Deputy Prosecutor declined to retry the convicted. This was the U.S. justice system's answer to what came to be known as the "Chinese massacre," which remains one of the largest mass lynchings in the history of California. Nearly 10% of the then Chinese residents of Los Angeles were killed, with 10% of the then city's population actively participating.

Was this justice? The White world would like you to go down a familiar set of questions, a criminal punishment rubric, that would invite us to think about the criminal justice system *as* justice: Who was to blame for the mob? Who was to blame for the destruction, injuries, and deaths? Did the investigation accuse all the perpetrators? Did the perpetrators get what they deserved? Did they suffer enough? If not, did the police officers, district attorneys, judges, elected officials, and "bad apples" get fired or appropriately punished? Was the law followed?

Rather than asking these questions, your great auntie Maisha invites us to go down a different path of justice, which visionaries like herself, Angela Davis, and Robin D.G. Kelley have pointed out emerges from collective visions of freedom. Not a freedom to be able to individually do and be whatever you want, but a freedom to do and be the best version of yourself in interdependence and responsibility to all those peoples and things around you, known and unknown. And this freedom does not sprout from Articles of Confederation. Or the Treaty of Westphalia. Or a Bill of Rights. This freedom cannot and has never been created by a small room of "founding fathers," with the authority of guns, bullets, swords, and knives. You should know that the world wasn't always cut into an endless jigsaw of lines denoting who does and does not "own" what. It wasn't always widely believed that freedom was something that happened when

you conquered a piece of land, and declared henceforth, that boundaried piece of land would forget its past, and be only for one people, one language, and one way of existing.<sup>8</sup>

See nephew, my point is that we haven't always had judges, attorneys, and pieces of paper with rules conceptualized by rich White men, to protect the future for their White male offspring, and their evolving ideas of what is right and wrong. I want you to question this order of things. Why has this individualizing vision of freedom, and its systems of justice, almost always started with conquest, enslavement, and genocide of Indigenous and African peoples, involved the massacring, interning, and/or expulsion of migrants who are deemed "not White," and ultimately ended with civil wars, nihilism, and self-destruction? I ask you to consider a collective freedom that calls for a different justice. Collective freedom isn't a government or a nation-state, and justice can be so much more than courts, police forces, and armies. Our understandings of justice, matters.

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Your great auntie Maisha asks us to think about a *transformative* justice that grapples with violence and conflicts in consideration of how racism, classism, sexism, homo/transphobia, monolingualism, nativism, ableism, and other forms of systemic domination, discrimination, and violence make the violence that we see and experience possible. A transformative justice that dares to imagine a world defined by collective freedom, where systemic forms of domination, discrimination, and violence are no longer possible, no longer imaginable. A world where all involved parties have the support to heal and learn how to hold themselves accountable to those they violate and hurt. A world where the priority is finding communities around us who can sustain and guide us as we heal. She challenges us to make institutions around us that value that process, seeing institutions of education as particularly important for maintaining healthy ways of knowing, being, and speaking with each other.

And by institutions, my nephew, I'm talking about those things in the world that don't die and fade away like living things, but things that have to be purposefully built and intentionally dismantled. This is why folks say we live in the "afterlife" of chattel slavery in the U.S. That "peculiar institution" of chattel slavery was never completed and intentionally taken apart (Note: peculiar is a much softer way of saying, depraved and *monstrous*). When you don't address something, it has a way of not only sticking around, but getting worse. While there was a short moment called Reconstruction, where there was an attempt to deconstruct that immoral web of ideas, buildings, and rules around slavery, it's failure to see slavery as connected to what ancestors like Cedric Robinson have called "racial capitalism," was not addressed. Slavery was profitable, and allowed White folks the quickest way to take and accumulate things for themselves—morality be damned. During this time, White men never gave up what they earned from what they stole from Black lives. In fact, they used what they stole to build new ways of profiting. They realized that race was still a great way to organize who deserved to profit, and who deserved to be stolen from and exploited. This was never dealt with. This is the same reason why "Apartheid" in South Africa still hasn't ended, and why Israeli apartheid on the lands of historic Palestine is far from over. I leave it to you, nephew, to join with ongoing movements to tackle the ways these historic systems are persisting into your present, and to change the world to be accountable for these horrific past few centuries.

And related to institutions, when your great auntie Maisha and me say systemic—as in “systemic racism” or “systemic oppressions”—we’re talking about how prisons only makes sense with courts, and how courts only make sense with laws, and how laws only make sense with police stations and armies. All these things are a system. And this is only the beginning of this system that has been named by abolitionists like Mariame Kaba as the “criminal punishment system.” Instead of calling this system by its given name, the “criminal justice system,” Kaba says naming it the criminal punishment system calls attention to how it is defined by the pursuit of punishment for people who are named as criminals, *as* the goal of its justice.

And importantly, my dear nephew, please consider that no matter how many police and court shows tell us that in the current system, the good guys win, and the bad guys lose, this is a myth. Know that who is named a “criminal” often has little to do with what you’ve done to others. In the U.S., being a criminal has much more to do with whether you have been named as looking and sounding like the mythological European settlers who made that colony we live—which easily could have been more accurately named as New Europe. Those who come from Europe and New Europe, America, get to decide who does and does not deserve the benefit of the doubt. Who gets to be the criminal, and in turn the divine and blessed. Race became a helpful tool to morally decide who has to be held accountable, and who does not. To keep it simple, as many of our elders have poignantly and succinctly stated: White is right, and relatedly, might is right. But there are far different ways of living. Let me tell you, whenever you hear “that’s just the way it is,” that really means those in power want “it” to be and stay that way.

We’ll more deeply consider the role of power in a moment, but with these reflections on history, race, and justice, let us return to whether justice was done, now taking a *transformative* perspective on justice. Let’s think about four questions from Mariame Kaba and Shira Hassan that can serve as a guide.<sup>9</sup> Instead of asking, “what suffering does this person deserve?” or “how can this person pay (hurt) for what they did,” Mariame and Shira invite us to ask: 1) who was affected by this behavior?; 2) what needs come from this behavior, and what were the root causes?; 3) what can be done to address these needs and their root causes?; and 4) whose obligation is it to do so?

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Let’s begin with who. There are the families and loved ones of the 19 precious lives taken. We have to think about Chinese residents who lived around them, and the larger city. Crucial to contemplating root causes—while we center the survivors of this mass lynching—we have to think about the police officer and rancher. We have to think about the Black and Indigenous “Mexican” peoples, as well as Black peoples migrating from the U.S. South, living and working beside them in this segregated area of town—some who were reported to have participated—in N-word Alley. We have to reflect upon the violent displacement of Tongva and Native peoples that set the stage for ongoing injustices. We cannot overlook that 10% of the city took part. We have to think about how the pillaging of lands, waters, and animals, for profit, is important to think about what made this massacre possible.

Now to needs. I learned much of how I understand our needs, and how to address them, learning and witnessing the work of your uncle, Remi Sobo. We worked together on the lands of the Muwekma Ohlone peoples, in what your great uncle H. Samy Alim has called the occupied

territories of East Palo Alto. Having prepared for addressing harm and violence as a restorative justice coordinator with Black and Latinx practitioners in Oakland,<sup>10</sup> as well from witnessing his own father's work in Portland,<sup>11</sup> which in turn was informed by Igbo lifeways of teaching, learning, and community accountability, your uncle Remi taught me about four fundamental needs: 1) safety, 2) mental security, 3) love and belonging, and 4) hope and vision.

I've also found it helpful to consider how Seneca scholar and child welfare worker, Terry Cross, grounds these needs in understandings from the Seneca Nation of Indians and more broadly from Indigenous worldviews among differing peoples across what is now Canada and the U.S. He thinks about these four basic needs as interdependent, and as in conversation with each other. Safety is concerned with our "physical" and bodily needs, thinking about whether we have access to "water, food, housing, safety, and security." Terry frames our need for mental security as an issue of "cognitive" well-being. Have we gotten the opportunity to develop and actualize our role and purpose, situated within our communities? Do we have strong self-esteem and confidence in who we are? Then, he thinks about our need for love and belonging, and healthy relationships with family and loved ones, as an issue of "emotional" well-being. And intertwined with these needs, he thinks about our need for hope and vision as "spiritual." And spirituality is word that really helps us describe how we find meaning through connections to the world around us, seen and unseen. The spiritual drive to find our life's purpose is indelibly connected to our physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being.

And if you would let me have a brief relevant segue, nephew, let me acknowledge that I did not reference Maslow. That is deliberate. I'm sure you've heard his name by now. Maslow has come to hold a monopoly on understanding our needs. But Maslow missed what's important here. What Maslow thought about had little to do with how we think about accountability to each other, and what your uncle Remi and Terry have accomplished and aimed for. Maslow's individualizing vision does not think about our well-being like so many peoples across the world have passed down on, like very helpfully here, what our Zulu and Xhosa ancestors have called ubuntu. While living and studying isiZulu within KwaZulu-Natal, I learned about that concept, ubuntu, in connection with an idiom that their freedom fighters have continued to use in their struggles against oppression (read: as I write this letter, like here, the system of apartheid still echoes across their lands, but I hope that's not the case by the time you find this letter): umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu. This directly translates as, a person is a person because we're people. As an idiom it has come to more broadly be understood as expressing: I am because we are.<sup>12</sup> What if we thought about well-being as something we can't find by ourselves—through things like "self-care"—but as only possible with our loved ones, peoples around us, and the larger world? What if our care of ourselves was thought about as something we need to do for our loved ones and those around us, and not just for "me." This collective understanding of well-being is fundamental as we consider our needs following harm and violence.

With these understandings, we can begin to consider needs. We can start with the survivors of this mass lynching, centering the loved ones and families of the 19 precious lives that were taken. The most immediate need is the safety of survivors. What do we know about what started this mass lynching, and were the perpetrators still seeking harm and violence against the survivors? As you may have guessed, all of these events weren't started by senseless and purposeless violence between two Chinese gangs. More than 150 years later, we know enough to



know that. Turns out that a married Cantonese woman, Yut Ho, was kidnapped by members of the Los Angeles branch of a prominent huiguan organization. And you might be asking yourself, what's a huiguan organization?

Just as important background, as Cantonese and Chinese diasporic peoples were escaping to California, they came together to create a series of mutual welfare and support organizations (i.e., "huiguans"). As a part of the Cantonese tradition, huiguans were organized around your place of origin: your ancestral lands. The six most prominent places of origin for Cantonese and Chinese diasporic peoples were around the Pearl River Delta and neighboring lands, and accordingly the six largest huiguan organizations came to be: Kong Chow (i.e., peoples of the Pearl River Delta); Sam Yap (i.e., peoples from the Nanhai, Panyu, Shunde, Sanshui, and Xingyun districts); Sze Yap (i.e., peoples from the Xinhui, Kaiping, Xinning, and Enping districts); Yeong Wo (i.e. peoples from the Heung-shan, Tung-kun, and Tsang-shing districts); Hip Kat/Yan Wo (i.e. peoples from the Bow on, Chak Kai, Tung Gwoon, and Chu Mui districts); and Ning Yeung (i.e., peoples of Taishan). These organizations were designed to provide Cantonese and Chinese diasporic peoples access to food, water, shelter, healthcare, funeral expenses, space to meet loved ones and settle disputes, advocacy in U.S. politics, assistance in finding ways to make a living, and whatever temporary<sup>13</sup> support was needed for their lives abroad.<sup>14</sup> It sounds like these organizations were designed to meet fundamental human needs, pretty amazing, right? While these huiguan organizations were able to do many of these things well, their authority and influence was also constrained and shaped by the surrounding White society. And as organizations made by humans, they weren't perfect.

These organizations gained great influence among Cantonese and Chinese diasporic communities, and with that authority to guide and make possible life, came abuse. It wasn't uncommon that these huiguan organizations would refuse to provide support for travel when debts and membership fees were not paid. When members were behind on their fees, or new migrants refused to pay, they were often not provided services. While there were aspirations that they would be run with "honesty," there were leaders who would take advantage of the hierarchical structure of these organizations, and use their power to personally accumulate money and resources at the expense of their brethren and sistren.<sup>15</sup> The leader of one of these organizations within Los Angeles, Yo Hing, was known for his immorality and abuse of power—and close relationship with powerful White men—hence the kidnapping of Yut Ho.

It's believed that Yo Hing worked with members of own huiguan organization to kidnap Yut Ho, who was the member of another huiguan organization, in order to receive the great compensation he would receive for providing her to another man for marriage, or non-consensually forcing Yut Ho into sex work. At this time, White men didn't want Chinese babies, and Chinese families to grow. They feared the supremacy of White people and their ways of knowing, being, speaking would be challenged in their newly conquered territories.<sup>16</sup> These fears proliferated even as Cantonese and Chinese diasporic peoples during this time period expressed little desire to permanently settle, but to survive long enough to be able to return and thrive in their ancestral homelands—including because of the ongoing destabilization of their homelands by the U.S. White people fabricated a false moral outrage over sex work, racializing and gendering Chinese women as inherently prone to hypersexualization, and in turn Chinese men as abusers, in order to further justify the exclusion and expulsion of Chinese peoples. White society institutionalized

their anxieties, and systemic targeting of Cantonese and Chinese diasporic peoples—particularly women—exponentially expanded through the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

When the kidnapping of Yut Ho took place, the U.S. had for years been gradually enacting policy that made it difficult for Cantonese and Chinese diasporic women and girls to migrate, for men to start families, and all to simply, live.<sup>17</sup> Taxes directly targeted Chinese mining, fishing, laundry businesses, and brothels. A cubic air law and sidewalk ordinance specifically was created to displace Chinese peoples. An ordinance was passed for Chinese men to cut their hair—their hair then emblemized as a symbol of their refusal to abide by White ways of being. A law was passed that denied Chinese men the right to intermarry with White women. San Francisco City officials passed an ordinance “To Suppress Houses of Ill-Fame Within City Limits” in 1854, and disproportionately targeted Chinese and Mexican women working as sex workers. Shortly before the massacre, California passed “An Act to Prevent the Kidnapping and Importation of Mongolian, Chinese, and Japanese Females for Criminal or Demoralizing Purposes,” which effectively halted the migration of Chinese and Asian diasporic women. Under this act, Chinese women had to prove they migrated voluntarily or were of “good character”—which was ultimately up to the perceptions of White male officials, and required no evidence.<sup>18</sup> A few years after the massacre, this strategy of targeting “immoral purposes” to control the Chinese population was enacted into federal law with the Page Law of 1875.<sup>19</sup> The sad irony of this state of affairs was that the specific targeting of Chinese women and girls by the U.S., within a U.S. society where money was needed to survive and prove your worth to building White futures, resulted in abuse. Under these tightening constraints, Cantonese and Chinese diasporic men’s exploitation and patriarchal control of their sistren, for sex and profit, proliferated. This was the context in which Yut Ho was abducted.

When Yut Ho was kidnapped, the leader of her own huiguan organization, a shopkeeper named Sam Yuen, sent for help. He called for warriors from San Francisco,<sup>20</sup> one who was thought to be Yut Ho’s brother, Ah Choy. Upon arriving at N-word Alley, Ah Choy quickly tracked down Yo Hing, and confronted him. Shots were fired. Surviving this encounter and getting away without injuries, Yo Hing made use of his connections to the White men in the city and got Ah Choy arrested.

Yo Hing’s reporting of Ah Choy to the police was an especially dangerous abuse of power during this time. Following growing resentment to Chinese migrants to California, White men were feeling threatened by their ability to work “superhuman” hours for low wages, doing jobs that White men would not do. Chinese migrants had been gradually constrained to cooking, laundry, and jobs related to the welfare of Chinese migrants through law, and intimidation and physical force. They also saw the rising number of Chinese migrants threatening the dominance of the rising number of White settlers from the East, and their ways of knowing, being, speaking, and valuing. Responding to Cantonese peoples using the U.S. court system to hold accountable one of their brethren that had been murdered by a White man (verify), California’s Supreme Court had recently passed a racist law that made it so no Chinese peoples could testify against a White person in court (i.e., *People v. Hall* 4 Cal 399 [1854]). This law had the impact of making it possible that European-descended peoples in the U.S., with claims to being “White,” could do as they pleased to Chinese peoples as they continued settling murdering their way across the lands of the west.

And please note, nephew, that our Chinese ancestors were not alone. This unjust law was only possible through that already colonial system of rules, the Constitution, and by expanding an existing law designed to ensure domination of peoples declared “Black,” “Indian,” and with “one drop” rules, anyone who was perceived as not White. And this was not subtle: “*Held*, that the words, Indian, N\*\*\*o, Black and White, are generic terms, designating race. That, therefore, Chinese and all other peoples not white, are included in the prohibition of being witnesses against Whites.” What this meant is that the colonialism of these settlers was far from invisible. White supremacy was not just known. White supremacy was openly used as justification for theft, and was institutionalized as law. Those European-descended settlers migrating from the Eastern U.S., who called themselves White, could do what they wanted and act with impunity to those peoples they declared as non-White and inferior. This is what your great auntie Maisha means that justice matters are always, already race and history matters.

So once Ah Choy was arrested, his bail was set at a then widely large amount, \$2,000—thanks to Yo Hing and his sway over police. One newspaper headline later had Yo Hing admitting, “Police like money.” When Sam Yeun arrived, ready to post Ah Choy’s bail, the police couldn’t believe that a Chinese shopkeeper could have so much money. They accompanied him to his shop in the Coronel building in N-word Alley. They were surprised to find a hidden trunk with thousands. When the police officers discovered that it was not a rumor, and that Sam Yeun actually did have thousands, word spread. It is now strongly believed that the police officer—Bilderrain—who had declared himself a hero, and doing his job to stop those dangerous Chinese from killing each other, was actually going to rob Sam Yeun. This is not based on hearsay, but evidence that we still have. There were multiple court cases that Bilderrain faced before and after the massacre that alleged that he stole roosters for his own cockfighting operation. Bilderrain was known to have worked with his brother Ygnacio to intimidate and pay off Mexican settlers of Los Angeles to vote for candidates of the Democratic party—who ran on xenophobic and racist platforms. Bilderrain’s account of what happened changed multiple times, on and off the record.

What I want you to note here, nephew, is that this not was an outstanding situation with Bilderrain. He was not just a bad apple. The then leading cop of Los Angeles, Marshal Francis Baker, deputized a group of men from the mob to help deal with the dangerous Chinese. Two police officers nearby, Emil Harris and George Gard, waited on the outskirts and arrested one fleeing Chinese man. But it gets worse. When the mob confronted Emil and George, they gave up the Chinese man and left. Another cop, Celis, and a constable, Richard Kerran, were witnessed joining the mob and shooting at the Chinese trapped in N-word Alley.

What I want you to gather from this, is not that those in charge of safety were all corrupt and needed to be replaced, but that this was and continues to reflect the U.S. criminal punishment system. With rare exceptions, this system continues to provide cops and law enforcement immunity from responsibility for what they do to people who have been declared as not White. This is often even the case in their responsibility to White people who are not rich, disabled, queer and trans, and/or women and girls. Just in our own time, from 2005 to 2015, fewer than 2% of police officers are prosecuted for one of the most severe acts they can do: killing someone.<sup>21</sup> We do not have exact number during the 19th century, but it is believed to have been far worse: which we can see here. None of the police officers and law enforcement officials

received jail time, or punishment, from the criminal punishment system. The criminal punishment system was not designed to prevent or protect anyone who isn't White, or the property that they respectively accumulate as a part of the U.S. system of capitalism: it's estimated that the mob ransacked and stole between \$14,000-\$30,000 in money, gold, and household items from Chinese peoples living and working in N-word Alley. U.S. system of justice protects White lives, money, property, and White claims to stolen land.

So let us get back to needs. We can gather from this whole context surrounding the massacre, that the families and loved ones of the 19 Chinese peoples who were killed likely had no reason to believe that they would be protected from more violence and harm. Whether from the police, or from their own huiguan organizations. While Sam Yeun was known to be more honest, and actively attempted to do something about the kidnapping of Yut Ho, his efforts ultimately failed. Chinese peoples were in danger from Yo Hing's aspirations, and likely felt the opposite of being protected. Multiply marginalized is a descriptor that does little justice to considering how Chinese women and girls received little to no protection, from their own communities, as well as from law enforcement. They were instead heightened targets for exploitation and violence. In the one place where Chinese peoples were finding shelter, in N-word Alley, this incident further substantiated that White people and U.S. officials could enter, steal from them, and kick them out, at any time. There was diminishing hope for additional migrations of supporting family. With the passing of laws and targeted taxes, there were increasing difficulties getting access to food and water. It is not difficult to imagine that the deep loss of the love of their 19 loved ones led not only to trauma, which likely caused depression, anxiety, and mental health crises, but heightened stress as they had to find access to food, water, and shelter that their loved ones were no longer able to contribute in providing. If there were dis/abled peoples and/or children, among their loved ones, there would be deep concern with who would be available to fulfill this care.

Perhaps the most accelerating need, not only for the loved ones of the 19 Chinese peoples who were lynched, would be hope and vision for the future. As a person with Cantonese heritage on the lands of the Tongva peoples, think about how hard it would have been to meaningfully imagine yourself living in the city and the surrounding lands, within any futures, when you were being systematically displaced, excluded, and killed. Already facing foreclosed opportunities to make a living, and being increasingly forced into low compensating and less meaningful jobs, think about what the loss of savings to go and do otherwise could have affected visions for the future—as well as threats to any additional savings for future plans.

While focusing on the survivors, in order to think about a transformative visions of justice, it is important to think about that idiom “hurt people hurt people,” and the police officers and members of the mob who engaged in this mass lynching. It is well documented that in the years after the Civil War, there was a particular crisis of purposes and vision among European settlers in the U.S. They feared for their young settler state, and whether the right to call themselves White was in danger. Their colonial system of liberal democracy and racial capitalism was facing a crisis in maintaining its founding myth and supporting the society that their descendants had created. White peoples from different factions were questioning whether they should continue to depend upon slavery as an institution and larger part of their economic and social system, or whether they should resort to other ways of conquering and controlling non-White peoples and lands to build up futures for their children.

White peoples were thinking about ways to socially and economically rebuild and move forward with a White society that had spent years coming to terms with what exactly it meant to be “White.” Much to the growing discord of the abolitionists and John Browns, who were beginning to question whether being “White” was worth all the suffering that it caused, White ruling elites moved from an era of “Reconstruction” and hope for developing something different, to re-enforcing what the U.S. had already been on the way to fully becoming. White ruling elites, and the desperate White people who believed that they had to fight for the only place and system they had ever known, began spreading the idea that all the disappointment and trials of those years did not have to do with them. It wasn’t their responsibility. It actually had to do with Black, Chinese, “Mexican,” Indigenous, and non-White others who were causing increasing moral discord among White people in U.S. society, as those non-White others disagreed, refused, and rebelled. We have to contemplate how the U.S. system institutionalized all these anxieties, and ways of seeing and being in the world, and how they were carried by police officers and White peoples at the scene. They didn’t steal and kill for no reason. They believed, very wrongfully, that their lives and purpose were at stake. Their role was to lead and manage inferior *others*, eliminate evil *others*, and make sure that the world remained on track to support the proliferation of futures for European-descended peoples, and their developing White ways of fulfilling and deciding upon what they “need” to survive.

So what can be done to address these needs and their root causes, and whose obligation is it to do something about all this? With all the context that I gave above, I won’t spend much time here thinking about the specific ways to fulfill those needs we imagined that those involved could have had. Each of us are the only ones who know what we need to address the violence we’ve experienced, and what we need to do restore our feelings of safety, mental security, love and belonging, and hope and vision. Any real efforts to address needs will do so on the terms of those who experienced violence and harm. However, with all this context, we can think about the larger society, those root causes, and what made all this possible. And very importantly, we can think about power, and how fulfilling justice through a restorative and transformative frame requires an interrogation of power dynamics and relations. This is where we can think more deeply about power matters.

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Not everyone operates from the same position of influence. That is what I want you to focus on when we talk about “power.” Institutions in society give us more and less influence to affect ourselves and others. Those who have the most influence often have the ability to say they will not be responsible for what they have done, and those same folks with all that influence, often have the ability to force those with less influence to be responsible—even when they should not be. At heart, having power means that you are able to do what you want with impunity, without taking responsibility. Any form of restorative justice, and even more meaningful forms of transformative justice requires that those in power be ready to give up power. There is no other way. If those with more influence, power, are not ready to give up their power, then restorative and transformative justice is not possible.

Relatedly, as another important matter of power as we think about addressing needs and their roots causes, is consent. Permission. If survivors do not give permission to think about healing

pathways, we cannot move forward. We have to be ready for the vulnerable and intimate moments needed for transformation. Processes of restorative and transformative justice require that everyone involved enter with their permission, so the process does not become abusive to anyone involved—even those who we have marked as being more responsible for violence and harm. Giving up power is about vulnerably opening yourself up to honestly changing yourself, and be accountable to the harms and violence we have committed, and transforming those institutions and larger systems in society that made that harm and violence possible. When those in power are not ready to give permission, it's a sign that those with less power will have to come together and organize to morally compel those in power to act, and/or take away the institutionally and system-enabled power of those engaging in violence and harm. Power comes from organizing our communities. This happened among Chinese survivors following the mass lynching.

Our ancestors weren't passive "victims." They built the influence to get justice by transforming society. Even after this devastating mass lynching, in 1879, Chinese vegetable sellers and laundry workers came together. When the Workingmen's Party (Read: White Party) convinced the city council to charge \$20 for each wagon that Chinese brought into town, each gave \$2 to a fund to hire a lawyer, and they proceeded to go on strike. No households and hotels would receive fresh food until the racist tax was rescinded. A county judge ruled in their favor, establishing that the tax was "oppressive, partial, unfair and in restraint of trade and therefore void."<sup>22</sup> Following the success of this strike and legal action, which successfully pressured the city council to reduce the tax to \$5, the vegetable sellers and their co-conspirators refused to even pay this revised tax. The mounting weight of the strike caused White housewives to circulate a petition to eliminate the tax. In the meantime, your ancestors continued to organize, planning to build one large laundry cooperative under one roof so they would only have to pay one tax. Your ancestors worked together to create power, and take on the power that sought to take away what they needed to live and survive.

This organizing and resistance to Pai Hua took place across Cantonese and Chinese diasporic communities throughout the West. Chinese workers in Shasta County organized a general strike in the summer of 1883. In Amador County, more than fifty Chinese peoples formed an armed militia for their own protection. In 1893, following directions on red posters pasted by community members in Chinese communities across the U.S., more than 100,000 Chinese peoples refused to wear mandatory photo identity cards mandated by the U.S. government.<sup>23</sup>

But with all this said, we know that many of the aspects of society that made this mass lynching possible, still exist. This is the point of addressing the root causes of all these abuses of power. We know that White descendants, and their co-conspirators, continue to engage in genocidal politics and refuse to be responsible to the violence they have committed and continue to give up. Movements of freedom have continued to sprout up, building power through organizing. They are attempting to eradicate those unjust institutions and wider systems that continue to allow White descendants to maintain their influence, and not be responsible to each other, and all the peoples they have harmed across time.

Our ancestors, freedom fighters and visionaries like James Baldwin remind us that dealing with White supremacy and systemic injustices will ultimately require the complete transformation of

our global society, such that White settlers across the world do not believe that they need to conquer and control non-White peoples and lands to live and build up futures for their own children. It will require finding ways to show White people that they do not need to name and organize all peoples and things around them in order to live within the world. It will require that White people realize that there are other stories of who we are and who we can be, and that those stories are not a threat to their children. Power matters are history, race, and justice matters—and future matters, which I will get to more in a moment.

But briefly, before we move on, I wanted to relatedly celebrate an important day. While I began writing this letter on the anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act, I reflect upon how I was wrote these specific lines on May 19th, the birthdate of Malcolm X and Yuri Kochiyama. Malcolm and Yuri weren't supposed to be friends, peoples who are racialized as Black aren't supposed to struggle together with those racialized as Asian. But they saw that collective freedom required that they struggle for a better world together. Malcolm couldn't be free without Yuri being free, and Yuri couldn't be free without Malcolm being free. White ruling elites, who maintain our current world order, do not want us to understand the great power that we hold when we act in co-conspiracy and see futures where we all thrive: embracing what Savannah Shange and Rosanne Liu have also called thick solidarity, and what Eve Tuck and Yang have referred to as a process of finding our inner angles. Your great auntie Maisha points out how we can take down those institutions and systems that make possible the violence and domination that so many of us experience. While our pains and oppressions are not comparable, and even as we must often prioritize who to fight for based upon who is most in danger at any given moment—we can do more than one thing at a time. And no one deserves to suffer. We have the power to make a world that dramatically reduces suffering and makes it so we all of have our basic needs met, are responsible to our ancestors and children to come, and sees how no problem is just one person's problem. Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu.

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Nephew, we're coming to a close, and now we're getting to the part where I'm going to get real personal with you, really open up and get vulnerable with you about your power. Because I deeply love you. You are a future I have so much faith in, and I know you're going to be powerfully responsible to yourself and the world around you.

When we talk about power, it's linked to language and future matters for you. Your father is still trying to make sense of his experience in California, and how he's sometimes racialized as Mexican, and as White, and sometimes as both, depending on the context—even though he was born and raised in Valencia, Spain. In many ways, his life showcases the problem with thinking about history, race, justice, language, and future matters as separate and unrelated to each other. Your father's situation, as well as your own with Spanish, English and Chinese ancestry, exemplify how the ways the world is organized is not natural. Race is not something you are born with, and race is not something you can escape without abolition and decolonization. Scholars like Barnor Hesse point out that race is much less a thing you can embody, than the practices of “violence, assemblage, subordination, exploitation, and segregation” that have been designed by Europeans to take what is needed to build up their descendants' visions of the world and valorize their ways of knowing, being, speaking, and valuing. As we have established, the trouble is not that there is a permanent evil population of naturally existing White people, but a

system of White supremacy that maintains the myth of the existence of White people through a system of institutions that are rationalized through race. We cannot embody goodness, any more than we can embody evil. However, we are responsible for dismantling and eradicating those institutions that let us dominate, and steal from others, without consequences.

But back to your father's predicaments with varying racialization in California as White and/or Mexican. These confusions are not unique to your father. One of my mentors, Jonathan Rosa, studies how race and language work together to classify and manage populations, and has a book that is helpful in describing how this happens: *Looking like a language, sounding like a race: Raciolinguistic ideologies and the learning of Latinidad*.

In the case of your father, he does not have Indigenous ancestors who were colonized and forced to speak Spanish, but rather his ancestors were the ones who did the colonization. But why is Spanish now a more stigmatized language in the world than English? Peoples in what became Europe have not only sought to organize the world into Europe and non-Europe, but to create a hierarchy of which Europeans get to rule and be the superior peoples of Europe. Europeans have long attempted to dominate each other, and continue to wage battles to do so. The Bosnian genocide in the 1990s reflects just one more recent example. This again, is another big reason why Cedric Robinson puts "racial" in front of capitalism. Capitalism was a racialized system created to manage colonization, but it started with Europeans creating hierarchies of supremacy within Europe. Since Europe's unpredictable rise from what they arrogantly referred to as the Middle Ages, the battle for who got to dominate the world has shifted between peoples who have called themselves Dutch, German, British, French, Italy, Russia, Spanish, and Portuguese. These clashes have often been at the expense of groups of Europeans who have long been the test subjects for colonialism, like the Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Sami, Basque, and Romani peoples.

What is important about these processes for you, nephew, is that these battles for supremacy within the European hierarchy of peoples also played out in the places they were attempting to colonize. While we live on lands that are now occupied by the U.S. settler state that once was controlled by Britain, as we have discussed and you can easily guess through the colonial names that still are on our maps (e.g. Los Angeles), the Tongva peoples were first colonized by the Spanish. The Spanish then lost the territory to those settlers who claimed Spanish heritage and language, but in actuality were often more likely to have Indigenous and African ancestors: Mexicans. And of course we've already talked about how California was conquered by the U.S.

What this meant is that the U.S. began controlling that Mexican population, not only organizing them as separate by the way they looked, but through the language they spoke. Language became key as confusion arose around "Mexicans," who often had enough European-descended Spanish ancestry and ways of knowing, being, and valuing to cause confusion. Much like what the British did to the Irish, and the Spanish did to their own Romani peoples, the U.S. did to its own conquered Mexican population. The White ruling elites who migrated from the U.S. to the conquered Mexican territories did not want to share power: Spanish became a language that represented peoples who were not White *enough*. This less-than-White people who spoke Spanish would not be given full rights to accumulating life, lands, and futures. Even though your father is from Spain, in the context of California, he sounds and looks enough like these colonized "Mexican" peoples that he is not given full rights to being White. He's a colonized



colonizer. This may be the case for you too, nephew, as you speak Spanish with enough fluency to mark you as a potential colonial subject. Language matters.

Does this mean that you're "the same" as your Mexican kin who have varied Spanish, Indigenous, and African ancestries—who your own ancestors conquered? Does this mean that you do not have a responsibility for your Spanish ancestors who either were complicit and/or directly engaged in the colonization of Indigenous peoples, and enslaved African peoples? Does your having Chinese heritage mean that all that is negated? Not at all. On the contrary, you bear full accountability for all of your history, and it will be your lifelong task to answer for all that violence that was committed in your name—with or without your consent. This is what James Baldwin talks about how our struggles for collective freedom are about a growing up, and finding the maturity to take responsibly—a responsibility that so many of your White colleagues and kin refuse to accept. However, all that immaturity and denial will not shield them from *the fire next time*. They sure were reminded in the summer of 2020.

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Applying all of this is not nearly as confusing or difficult as it sounds. At the moment, I'm particularly fond of a chapter by my colleague, Alayna Eagle Shield: *Naǵi uḡkičhopi (calling our spirits back) through language and culture from Očhéthi Sakówiḡ and beyond*. Alayna illuminates how Lakhóta leaders have traditionally made decisions based upon the knowledge and understanding of three generations in the past, the current generation's circumstances, and three generations ahead. Alayna further illuminates how this tradition is thought about next to the Lakhóta worldview of Mitákuye Oyás'iy (i.e., directly translated as "all my relatives"), "Mitákuye Oyás'iy is a way of knowing and a reciprocal relationship to all living beings, spiritually, physically, and energetically, in this world and the spirit world. When we situate ourselves as being in relationship and as being kin to the land, animals, plants, insects, water, spirits, and each other, then we carry a responsibility to care for those beings and pray for those beings. All people should strive to live through the teachings of Mitákuye Oyás'iy, or other related terms in their respective traditions, and take each other as relatives again."<sup>24</sup> I couldn't agree more. This is a great way to think about how you deal with all the complexities that come with thinking about race, justice, and language in the context of our histories and futures.

As you seek to think about embracing transformative justice in your life and classroom, and within whatever educational space you find yourself, I also do not want to deceive you. Transformative visions of justice are often unpopular. But transformative justice is not a popularity contest. Don't let fetishizations of "liberal democracy" fool you into thinking it must not be justice, if most people don't want it. Transformative justice is bound to collective freedom, not consensus. Those in power have a way of finding the ability to repeatedly make use of all their influence to create the "democratic" majorities that they need to keep that power.

At the same time, don't beat yourself up when you are compelled to make compromises because of your capacity and limits. We often have to make compromises, engage in fugitivity, and entangle with peoples, institutions, and things that we would prefer to refuse and abolish. Unfortunately, we are often inescapably intertwined with systems of domination that we cannot find autonomy to act and build on our own terms. Don't be discouraged. Organize with longstanding and emerging movements for collective freedom. Whenever you can, do not

compromise with just surviving, but insist on thriving. And as long as you're pushing yourself to dismantle as many oppressive and cruel institutions as you can, I can be nothing but proud of you.

The pedagogical framework that I've adapted from your great auntie Maisha reflects this fugitivity, with questions designed to move toward yourself and your schooling community toward collective freedom. I conceptualized this framework alongside courageous friends and family like Shena Sanchez, Kai Mathews, and Gabby Corona Valencia, and your great uncle Pedro Noguera. It is designed to help you reflect upon questions with your colleagues that have the power to transform your state-sanctioned school into a socially-just educational institution. Know that this framework was so feared, and so dangerous, that I wasn't able to convince leading county and district offices of education to include it in their work with schools across the state of California. The fact that this framework has only four domains, with five questions each, is reflective of how administrators and teachers expressed would be helpful and manageable for their schools. I made multiple attempts to adapt this framework, keeping in mind their concerns, but it was still not accepted. The White leaders of these offices of education were afraid of the consequences of sharing such questions with powerful administrators, teachers, students, and communities invested in White supremacy. They also knew what these questions could mean for their own power, and livelihood. Luckily, I shared these reflection questions with your great auntie Maisha, and she gave me this space to write this open letter to you.

I look forward to discussing this letter with you, whether you choose to become a teacher or educator who practices transformative justice, or not. Know that I am going to do everything in my power to be around. I am going to do my best to courageously, vulnerably, and honestly mind what I have shared here, which I have learned from so many ancestors and loved ones. I will do my best to practice what I preach, and never stop learning toward and struggling for a world that is worthy of you and our future generations across the globe. I am going to live beautifully and thrive as best as I can, so I set the bar high as you take on the world! I am beyond excited at all that I am going to learn from you, and all that you're going to do to carry on your mother's, father's, families', ancestors', and all of our dreams and work for a better world. I have so much faith in you, and all you're going to accomplish!

With the deepest love,  
Uncle Casey (or how you call me now, "Tio cici!")

## **Pedagogical Framework for Restorative and Transformative Justice in Schooling**

*A fugitive framework adapted by Casey Philip Wong from Maisha Winn's<sup>25</sup> five pedagogical stances for engaging in restorative and transformative justice in schooling*

### **History Matters**

Our school community (students, staff, and families) is committed to learning about the historical contexts that influence the learning of students; considers how power dynamics are rooted in local and regional histories of how people have settled, migrated, experienced violence and discrimination, and worked on the land of the school and surrounding communities.

**HM.1** Staff, students, families and community stakeholders have been provided with opportunities to collaboratively discuss and learn how U.S. society is unjust, and how the school community is approaching the impact of systemic injustices on students and families.

**HM.2** Our school recognizes and values the Indigenous people who are connected to the land of school and the surrounding communities, and acknowledges how the school was made possible by dispossessing the land of Indigenous people through violence, theft, and genocide.

**HM.3** Our school has taken time to learn how students and families came to migrate, settle, and work in the surrounding communities, and acknowledges how this history is connected to colonialism, enslavement, forced displacement, cisheteropatriarchy,<sup>26</sup> and systems of domination.

**HM.4** Our school acknowledges how every academic subject area is taught with knowledge that was developed within an inequitable society, which actively excluded the participation and perspectives of people based upon the communities they came from.

**HM.5** Our school recognizes, sustains and mindfully incorporates the knowledges and ways of knowing, being, speaking, and valuing that students are practicing and developing as a part of their communities.

### **Race and Justice Matters**

Our school community (students, staff, and families) is devoted to regularly considering how racism, classism, sexism, homo/transphobia, ableism, monolingualism, nativism, and interlocking<sup>27</sup> systems of domination, prejudice, and violence impact the school's climate and the learning experiences of students; courageously names and addresses specific injustices (e.g. anti-Blackness, misogynoir, etc.), and prepares students, staff, and families to give up their power and co-conspire<sup>28</sup> with each other to build socially-just classrooms and educational spaces.

**RJM.1** Decisions in our school at the student, classroom, program, and school levels consider how our perceptions of learners are influenced by stereotypes connected to race, class, gender, and other overlapping and intersecting social structures.

**RJM.2** Our school does no harm to the lives of students and actively works to remove barriers that prevent students from learning and accessing educational opportunities.

**RJM.3** Students, families, staff, and community stakeholders are dedicated to learning about and addressing the concerns of the most marginalized in the school, with a concern for the dignity, value, participation, and consent of each member of the school community.

**RJM.4** Our school does not practice justice through punishment, surveillance, exclusion, and practices of disposability, but supports each other to be accountable through restorative justice and collective models of support that recognize how we are mutually responsible to each other within an unjust society.

**RJM.5** Our school acknowledges that the language and frames we use to speak to and about students, especially students from historically marginalized communities, is foundational to building and maintaining healthy relationships.

### **Power Matters**

Our school community (students, staff, and families) addresses how power dynamics are influencing who in the school can make decisions and contribute to the direction of the school; creates opportunities for students and families to offer generative critique and transform the school and the learning experiences of students.

**PM.1** Our school has envisioned and developed meaningful ways for staff, students, families and community stakeholders to challenge, question, and discuss decisions that are made by school leadership which they deem unjust or unfair.

**PM.2** Our school leadership creates opportunities for staff, students, families, and community stakeholders to actively participate in transforming the learning experiences of students.

**PM.3** Our school leadership regularly considers the factors that impact how staff, students and families can take part in activities inside and outside of school, and provides resources and creates opportunities to enable participation.

**PM.4** Our school acknowledges that race, class, gender, and other overlapping and intersecting social structures play implicit and explicit roles in how students are perceived and provided educational opportunities.

**PM.5** Students, families, staff, and community stakeholders regularly reflect upon and acknowledge when they make mistakes and commit harms, and take responsibility by personally addressing their own role, and changing the structures in the school that enabled their actions.

### **Future Matters**

Our school community (students, staff, and families) consistently invites students, families, and staff to reflect upon and prepare to live interdependently, thrive, and be responsible to each other and all peoples and other-than-human kin who have lived, and will come to live on the lands of

the school; structured time is set aside for the school community to plan for and act upon these moments of imagination to begin to enact agentive and socially-just futures.

**FM.1** Our school leadership continually gives up space for students and their families to share what aspects of the school rob them of their right to an education that prepares them for positive and meaningful futures that they have yet to imagine.

**FM.2** Our school regularly provides opportunities for students, families, staff, and community stakeholders to expansively discuss their respective ways of knowing, being, speaking, and valuing that support agentive futures and lives characterized by thriving, and to enact those intergenerational and developing understandings within the school and larger society.

**FM.3** Our school leadership has begun planning for and returning control of the school to students and their families, such that the pedagogies, curricula, practices, and structures are sanctioned by and directly answerable to students and their families.

**FM.4** Our school is dedicated to supporting students in revitalizing what they bring from their respective lifeways that can support the enactment of socially-just futures of education and visions of society, specifically centering peoples who have been exploited and/or enslaved, and strengthening the sovereignty of the Indigenous peoples who have historical relations to the lands of the school.

**FM.5** Our school actively encourages students, families, staff, and community stakeholders to challenge, question, and discuss in what ways visions and plans for the future are (re)creating, (re)enacting systemic injustices, specifically considering the need for the school community to (re)imagine forms of community accountability that address historical and contemporary systems of domination, prejudice, and violence.

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<sup>1</sup> Your grandpa Chester Wong, was actually born Chester Yee Lee, and came over with false documentation as a “paper son” to escape the Japanese invasion of his Indigenous homelands.

<sup>2</sup> While we’re told “Los Angeles” was founded by Spanish settlers as El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles in 1781, the Tongva village of Yaanga sustained until it was forced across what is now the Los Angeles River. It was burned to the ground in 1847 by the then recently formed Los Angeles City Council.

<sup>3</sup> Without having African diasporic heritage, or being racialized as Black, I do not believe that I have the right to say this word, or even spell it out in this letter to you, nephew. I don’t think I have to spell it out for you to know this word. Language matters, and this word continues to hold power in maintaining anti-Blackness and the domination of African diasporic peoples. Relatedly, it’s important for me to mention that I do not believe that we have a right to tell anyone racialized as Black for choosing how they use, and flip this word, for their own purposes.

<sup>4</sup> Robinson, . Race, space, and the evolution of Black Los Angeles. P. 32.

<sup>5</sup> This retelling is particularly indebted to John Johnson Jr.’s article on the massacre, “How Los Angeles Covered Up the Massacre of 17 Chinese,” which was published on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011 in

LA Weekly. This article can be found at: <https://www.laweekly.com/how-los-angeles-covered-up-the-massacre-of-17-chinese/>

<sup>6</sup> Pfaelzer, J. (2008). *Driven out: The forgotten war against Chinese Americans*. University of California Press, p. 52.

<sup>7</sup> Pfaelzer, J. (2008). *Driven out: The forgotten war against Chinese Americans*. University of California Press, p. xv.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, to make people and language into *one* of anything requires a mythology. Why else would it make sense that Portuguese and Spanish languages are more mutually intelligible than Cantonese and Mandarin?

<sup>9</sup> Kaba, M., & Hassan, S. (2019). *Fumbling towards repair: A workbook for community accountability facilitators*. Project Nia and Just Practice, p. 69.

<sup>10</sup> Lands of the Muwekma Ohlone peoples.

<sup>11</sup> “What we now call Portland, [Oregon] and Multnomah County were the traditional lands of the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Tumwater, Tualatin Kalapuya, Wasco, Molalla, Cowlitz and Watlala bands of the Chinook, and many other Tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River. Today, people from these bands have become part of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, as well as the Chinook Nation and Cowlitz Nation in Washington State.” See <https://ljist.com/featured/acknowledging-indigenous-people/>.

<sup>12</sup> And this translation does little to the beauty of this assemblage of words, but know that “ntu” is a word stem belonging to people, and word beginnings like “umu” and “ngu” support changes in meaning. Isn’t that a beautiful? We hear this idiom, with the linked sounds, and you can almost guess that it means something related to connection. Imagine if our learning together spent time realizing the beauty of all the ways we speak, instead of just studying language to make it easier to build up the White world. We’ll get more to language matters, but let’s return to the important matter at hand.

<sup>13</sup> While European settlers would like us all to believe the dangerous myth that humanity is “naturally” prone to come to another place, and conquer and genocide the Indigenous peoples, don’t fall for this mythology, nephew. This is not and has never been our destiny as humans. And this was the case for our early Cantonese ancestors, fleeing the Opium Wars, who saw themselves as guests and travelers to the lands of California and the West Coast, pushed and pulled away from their ancestral lands.

<sup>14</sup> Qin, Y. (2009). *The Diplomacy of Nationalism: The Six Companies and China's Policy Toward Exclusion*. University of Hawaii Press, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Qin, Y. (2009). *The Diplomacy of Nationalism: The Six Companies and China's Policy Toward Exclusion*. University of Hawaii Press, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Scholars like Luibheid have pointed out had less to do with then widely circulating headlines around concerns about “prostitution”—women from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities widely participated in sex work, including larger numbers of White women—and more so to do with concerns about the future of “White lives, cultural forms, and nation” (p. 33).

<sup>17</sup> For more on all these enactments of xenophobia and anti-Chinese sentiment, you can look at Luibheid’s detailed account, which I repeatedly reference and quote here: Luibhéid, E. (2002). *Entry denied: Controlling sexuality at the border*. University of Minnesota Press.

<sup>18</sup> Luibhéid, E. (2002). *Entry denied: Controlling sexuality at the border*. University of Minnesota Press, p. 34.

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<sup>19</sup> In 2020, this logic is particularly haunting, as a White man just shot and murdered 7 Asian women under these guises. This man claimed that the women were sexually tempting him.

<sup>20</sup> Lands of the Muwekma Ohlone peoples.

<sup>21</sup> For more, see: <https://www.vox.com/21497089/derek-chauvin-george-floyd-trial-police-prosecutions-black-lives-matter>.

<sup>22</sup> Pfaelzer, J. (2008). *Driven out: The forgotten war against Chinese Americans*. University of California Press, p. 53.

<sup>23</sup> Pfaelzer, J. (2008). *Driven out: The forgotten war against Chinese Americans*. University of California Press, p. xv.

<sup>24</sup> Eagle Shield, A. () P. 60.

<sup>25</sup> See Winn, M. T. (2018). *Justice on both sides: Transforming education through restorative justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, as well as Winn, M. T., & Winn, L. T. (2021). *Restorative justice in education: Transforming*

<sup>26</sup> For more on cisheteropatriarchy, see: Wong, C. P. (2019). *Pray you catch me: A critical feminist and ethnographic study of love as pedagogy and politics for social justice*. Stanford University.

<sup>27</sup> For more on intersectionality, and its development and origins, see: Wong, C. P. (2021). The wretched of the research: Disenchanted Man2-as-educational researcher and entering the 36th chamber of education research. *Review of Research in Education*, 45(1), 27-66.

<sup>28</sup> For more on co-conspiracy and its development as a concept, see: Wong, C. P. (2021). The wretched of the research: Disenchanted Man2-as-educational researcher and entering the 36th chamber of education research. *Review of Research in Education*, 45(1), 27-66.