

# Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis

ISSN: 2325-1204. Journal homepage: <https://www.iastatedigitalpress.com/jctp/>

---

Volume 9, Issue 1, 2020, Article 4, <https://doi.org/10.31274/jctp.9468>

## Dismantling Gringismo in Education

David Atekpätzin Young, *Calmecaztlán*

Michelle Garcia-Olp, Beloit College

Ceema Samimi, University of Michigan

### Abstract

The ivory tower bastions of white privilege continue to promote an ethos of gringismo despite their platitudes to the contrary. The numbers of Indigenous and Chicano students in post-graduate institutions remain paltry at best. The challenges faced by graduate students hinder their success. The capacity of graduates to institute novel, Indigenous based ideas in the fields of education are systemically discredited in the interest of maintaining a white supremacist hegemony. Publishers of books and journals assure that language and theory which asserts an Indigenous epistemology is silenced and that a white supremacist narrative prevails. This paper introduces viable interventions for dismantling gringismo in education.

### Recommended Citation

Atekpätzin Young, D. Garcia-Olp, M, & Samimi, C.. (2020). Dismantling gringismo in education. *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis* 9(1), Article 4. <https://doi.org/10.31274/jctp.9468>.

### Copyright and Open Access

© 2020 David Atekpätzin Young, Michelle Garcia-Olp, & Ceema Samimi



This article is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial \(CC BY-NC\) 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/), which permits any sharing and adaptation of the article, as long as the original author(s) and source are credited and the article is used for non-commercial purposes.

---

The *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis* is published by the Iowa State University Digital Press (<https://press.lib.iastate.edu>) and the Iowa State University School of Education (<https://www.education.iastate.edu>)

## **Dismantling Gringismo in Education**

David Atekpätzin Young  
*Calmecaztlán*

Michelle Garcia-Olp  
*Beloit College*

Ceema Samimi  
*University of Michigan*

*The ivory tower bastions of white privilege continue to promote an ethos of gringismo despite their platitudes to the contrary. The numbers of Indigenous and Chicano students in post-graduate institutions remain paltry at best. The challenges faced by graduate students hinder their success. The capacity of graduates to institute novel, Indigenous based ideas in the fields of education are systemically discredited in the interest of maintaining a white supremacist hegemony. Publishers of books and journals assure that language and theory which asserts an Indigenous epistemology is silenced and that a white supremacist narrative prevails. This paper introduces viable interventions for dismantling gringismo in education.*

**Keywords:** Education | gringismo | decolonization | tribal critical race theory | Indigenous Liberation Epistemology

*The ability to speak another language (Spanish), for my family, wasn't always seen as an advantage. My mom grew up in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a town with only two economic categories, low-income and high-income. She recalls how it felt to be brown and speak Spanish. Racist ideologies and behaviors from the white higher-class citizens of Santa Fe enacted against the lower-class brown Spanish-speaking residents is still something my mom speaks about presently. My dad also recounts how his family was impacted by racism. He retells the story of his eldest sister (a monolingual Spanish speaker), coming home from school, in tears, because the schools were English-only. This English-only speaking school reached out to my grandparents relaying the message that my aunt could not return until she spoke English. My Grandpa, who completed the sixth grade, wanted his kids to advance further in the educational system. Because of that phone call, my grandparents who spoke both Spanish and English decided to mainly speak English with their seven children. Thus, my parents became more fluent in English and were no longer able to speak Spanish fluently with their grandparents. (Garcia-Olp, 2019)*

### **Challenging Gringismo**

The ivory tower bastions of white privilege continue to promote an ethos of gringismo

despite their platitudes to the contrary.<sup>1</sup> The numbers of Indigenous and Chicano students in post-graduate institutions remain paltry at best. The challenges faced by graduate students hinder their success. The capacity of graduates to institute novel, Indigenous based ideas in the fields of education are systemically discredited in the interest of maintaining a white supremacist hegemony. Publishers of books and journals assure that language and theory which asserts an Indigenous epistemology is silenced and that a white supremacist narrative prevails.

Three Indigenous authors have contributed to this paper to assess how gringismo has impacted their lives related to graduate studies and impeded their capacity to institute new Indigenous approaches in the fields of education, healthcare and social work. This paper asserts that there is an utmost need to dismantle gringismo and the modus operandi of its institutions to initiate a compendious ingress for Indigenous and POC approaches to provision of education, healthcare and social work in the United States. This paper is written from an Indigenous epistemology privileging Indigenous thought, theory and approach to conflict resolution. The approach taken in this paper is threefold: 1) to relate personal experiences with gringismo; 2) to address how the institutions of education regulate and espouse gringismo; and 3) to promote the dismantling of gringismo via an Indigenous lens.

### **Uncovering Gringismo in Education**

In order to sustain white supremacy, white people in power and those that assume to have power, will always take any and every advantage to cripple the efforts of others to create any change to the status quo. Gringos are born, bred and groomed to preserve, protect and promote white supremacy. Gringismo is sustained through the tools of capitalism, christianity, and racism. (Young, 2020). As Brayboy (2005) explains in his first tenet of Tribal Critical Race Theory, “Colonization is endemic (ingrained) into society” (p. 430). Schools in the United States are colonial institutions, and for many Indigenous people, embody the colonial encroachment over knowledge, language, and culture in which Eurocentric knowledge is held as superior. This is also known as colonial education (Smith, 2012). Many Indigenous schooling experiences demonstrate how schools and the U.S. educational system serve to acculturate Indigenous people through the silencing of Indigenous languages, knowledge, and cultures (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; Smith, 2012). Thus, the majority of Americans are educated through a Eurocentric ideology: an ideology where Eurocentric power, entitlement, and history are all imbued “in their legacy of colonizers” (Smith, 2012, p. 7). Cajete (1994) illustrates how the Euro-American view influences U.S. education, “The American society that many Indian students experience is fraught with contradictions, prejudice, hypocrisy, narcissism, and unethical predispositions at all levels, including the schools” (p. 19). Brayboy (2005) examines these Euro-American educational influences on Indigenous students resulting in academic dissonance, discontentment, and separation of Indigenous beliefs and knowledge. Through Brayboy’s (2005) first tenet, the perpetuation of gringismo is revealed. Additionally, Eurocentric ideology, also known as whiteness, is continued and memorialized through education. This paper

---

<sup>1</sup> Gringismo is best term to describe a white, patriarchal, Christian, capitalist hegemony that privileges white males and objectifies all other categorizations of people. It is the best term to succinctly describe all aspects of white supremacy. See, Young, David, “State of Conflict”, Conflict Research Consortium, Working Paper 94-11 February 1994(1); Young, David Atekpatzin. “In Defense of Chicano Indigeneity”, in *Chicanismo, Indigenous Identity and Lateral Violence: A Qualitative Study of Indigenous Identified Individuals in Colorado*, (ProQuest, UMI Dissertation Publishing, 2012).

addresses gringismo and its application in education and cultural genocide. It addresses the question: How can Indigenous people begin to dismantle gringismo in education?

As Vine Deloria, Jr. (1994) explains, “From the beginning of contact with European culture until the present, education has been a major area of conflict and concern” (p.11). Tuck and Yang (2012) describe education as a mechanism of control and “internal colonialism”, where particular techniques of supremacy are applied to “ensure the ascendancy of a nation and its white elite” (p.5). From gringismo and what Bear (2000) calls “jagged worldviews colliding,” the formation of boarding schools interrupted a way of life and knowing sacred to Indigenous people. Brayboy and Maughan (2009) indicate that, “teachers have historically been frontline actors in attempts to assimilate Indigenous peoples” (p. 4). As a result, the concept of erasure and total assimilation contributed to not only genocide but cultural genocide as well. Genocide occurred in the boarding schools through death of Indigenous students (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Meriam & Work, 1928).

Cultural genocide occurred through the removal of Indigenous children from their homes and the silencing of their languages (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Meriam & Work, 1928). As Meriam & Work (1928) describes, “The belief has apparently been that the shortest road to civilization is to take children away from their parents and insofar as possible to stamp out the old Indian life” (p.15). Evident in boarding schools, through the use of oppression, death, abuse, fear, and educational policy, colonization sought to erase and destroy Indigenous peoples’ notion of the world and their identity (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Meriam & Work, 1928).

Dismantling gringismo demands that educators and others working within the school system (K-20) confront racism, false histories and exclusion of Indigenous narratives whenever possible in order to dismantle gringismo. The concepts presented in this paper are intended as intervention strategies for approaching this confrontation. We propose that the model presented will spark not only discussion among practitioners and scholars, but true praxis through action. We are grateful to the Indigenous elders, scholars and mentors who have helped us inform our work. We acknowledge our Indigenous ancestors and Elders who continue to pass along the stories that keep our Indigenous traditions alive despite all that has been lost to gringismo.

### **Gringismo in Our Own Lives**

Michelle (Chicana-Genizara): *I graduated with my PhD in Curriculum and Instruction at a Predominately White Institution (PWI). This process, as a whole, was riddled with gringismo at many different levels. In year one, at this PWI, I found myself completely misaligned with the white scholars and white frameworks presented in many of my classes. In year two, an oil pipeline convention was held at this university in the midst of the No Dakota Access Pipeline Line (NODAPL) movement taking place on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. In year three, I filed a complaint with the Equal Opportunity Office for the continued use of the banned mascot (which is a white male pioneer) at sporting events. Also during this year, I wrote and defended my dissertation. Although the dissertation as a whole is a colonial process, presented and analyzed in the academy, the formatting of the dissertation also was revealed to be colonial in nature. During the formatting process, I was told to remove the acknowledgement of the Indigenous people from my front page.*

Ceema (Kurdish, Cherokee): *I am currently in my fourth year of a doctoral program in social work. I identify as mixed-race with Kurdish and Indigenous-American roots. As a young person, I attended over 30 public schools, was pushed out of high school at the age of 16, and*

*was homeless off and on between the ages of 12 and 20, and all of these factors contributed to my decision to become a social worker. While practicing in the field, I witnessed the results of gringismo-rooted policies that inhibited real change and allowed for social work to “stay in business” through mechanisms such as the nonprofit industrial complex. It wasn’t until attending a PWI for my doctoral education that I began to question social work as a colonial profession and understand its ties to systems of oppression and exploitation of young people. I began to think deeply and critically about my lived experience as a young person who was not supported by the systems I was engaged with, and I continue to interrogate my role as someone who holds identities as both an “insider” credentialed social worker, an academic, and an “outsider” former client, and receiver of services.*

*David Atekpatzin Young, (Apache, Pueblo, Genízaro, Chicano): As an undergraduate, I held a 3.8 GPA. As a graduate student working on a Master’s in Ethnic Studies, I maintained a 4.0 GPA. I am published as a scholar, author, playwright, poet, artist and I have released three CDs of Indigenous music. Despite that, I have been denied acceptance into five Ph.D. graduate programs in five different disciplines for being “less qualified than other candidates.” I am and always have been an activist in the community, I have a reputation for creating effective change where change is needed. For me praxis is not a philosophy but rather the action I incorporate into my activism. Graduate departments have not rejected me because I am not qualified. I have been denied because my political activism runs contrary to the ethos of the ivory towers. Even graduate programs that cater to students of color, and Indigenous students in particular, are complicit in promoting gringismo.*

It is our collective experience that the institutions of education become the gatekeepers for promoting gringismo. From the moment that a brown child<sup>2</sup> enters the U.S. educational system, that child is in every way stripped of his indigeneity, Indigenous history and roots are deprived of any opportunity to thrive as an individual from an Indigenous cosmology. The child is systematically distanced from language, culture, history, family and community. The result is a child that is *desplazado y deslogrado*, an orphaned outcast who has a “disconnected sense of self, dislocated from geographical space (sense of grounding) and dislocated from historicity” (Young, 2012, 133).

### **Methodology: Our Approach**

*My push out from school was not a result of a specific event or moment, it was the cumulative result of experiencing gringismo over and over again. Most of my elementary school years were spent in Oklahoma. In first grade I, along with all other students in my school, was forced to participate in a reenactment of the 1889 Oklahoma Land Run. Students brought toy guns to school, in case there were any Indians who tried to encroach on “our” land. The teacher divided us into settler “families,” provided us with a string to mark off our “territory,” and told us to grab as much land as we could before she called time. I was seven years old. In sixth grade, we gathered every morning for all-school assembly. We sang the National Anthem, the State Song, and then, recited the pledge of allegiance. One day I was caught not placing my hand over my heart. “My mom said I don’t have to,” I explained. I was sent to the principal’s office. In ninth grade, when a*

---

<sup>2</sup> Chicanos are Indigenous people but are often thought of and treated as if they are immigrants on their own land. The use of the term Indigenous in this paper includes Chicanos, Mejianos and those brown-skinned individuals who use myriad terminology to self-define and who are descendants of the Original peoples of this hemisphere.

*white man bombed the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City, and my father was detained as a suspect, a teacher overheard me talking to a friend about it. “We need to all be kept safe” she said. In tenth grade, when I asked for help with an algebra assignment, and the teacher refused, saying I would never understand it and I wasn’t worth her time. These were the incidents that showed me, over and over, that I didn’t belong in school. (Ceema Samimi)*

In order to address the problem of gringismo and cultural genocide in education our research question for this paper asks: How can Indigenous people begin to dismantle gringismo in education? In order to inform our intervention strategies work, we relied on the theoretical concepts of Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005); and Indigenous Liberation Epistemology (Young, 2019; Young 2020). These theoretical concepts set a framework for how we view gringismo in our own lives and in the lives of the youth we work with.

Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) at its foundation can be seen through various traditions, concepts, experiences and beliefs that are millions of years old (Brayboy, 2005). Through TribalCrit, Brayboy conducts an investigation of gringismo as a systemic process deeply rooted in U.S. society. Brayboy defines gringismo as being derived from a European-American belief, rooted in power, with the intent of material gain. It should be noted that, in this paper, material gain refers to the domination over land, resources, and the inhabitants of the land (people and animals) consistent with the principles of capitalism and christianity. One of the ways that colonization has been successful is through the institutions of education as tools for assimilation, oppression and cultural genocide. As Brayboy explains, governmental and educational policies of the United States were constructed with colonialism, white elitism, and material gain in mind. The enactment of these settler colonial policies enabled white settlers to justify their implementation of genocide of Indigenous people (Brayboy, 2005).

Indigenous Liberation Epistemology has as its objective to liberate Indigenous people from the shackles of gringismo. It recognizes that words have power. It is both liberating and empowering to privilege words that have been used in the Chicano Indigenous lexicon for centuries as Indigenous constructs from an Indigenous epistemology. Western scholarship privileges white epistemologies and paradigms. Indigenous scholarship should therefore privilege Indigenous epistemologies, thoughts and beliefs. The psychic impact of words can empower the voice and disempower the listener. In order to liberate the Indigenous mind and psyche from oppressive intention by gringos, white supremacy and their institutions, it is imperative for Indigenous people to use words that disrupt gringismo and assert an Indigenous epistemology. Deconstructing English word choices and introducing Indigenous concepts, words, and philosophy into a narrative disrupts gringismo (Young, 2020).

## **Present Day Colonialism in Education**

Brendtro and Brokenleg (2001) discuss present day colonialism as deficit actions and rhetoric present in the school systems towards children. Deficit actions and rhetoric, for the sake of this paper, are defined as a negative view of a student based on systematic labels as a result of educational policy and practices. Although Brendtro and Brokenleg do not use the term gringismo, viewing students through a deficit lens is a form of colonization. Furthermore, deficit actions and rhetoric are apparent in educational policy, curriculum, instruction, assessment and exclusion. These areas are discussed in further detail below.

**Policy (Federal and State).** Examples of gringismo deficit rhetoric can be seen at the federal and state policy level. For example, at the federal policy level, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 [As Amended Through P.L. 115–64, Enacted September 29, 2017] is titled: TITLE I—IMPROVING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DISADVANTAGED, SEC. 1001. 20 U.S.C. 6301 (Office of the Legislative Counsel, 2017). This policy states that “the purpose of this title is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps” (Section 1001, p. 8). However, the terms “disadvantaged” and “achievement gaps” are deficit terms and can be seen as systemic oppression. For instance, these terms apply deficit rhetoric and blame on students rather than critically looking at the systems that create deficit circumstances. Another example of deficit and non-inclusive rhetoric can be seen at the state level in the Colorado Higher Education state policy. In the 4.00 Higher Education Admission Requirement (HEAR), the use of the word freshmen is seen twice and applied towards the labeling of students (Section 4.00, p. I -F- 4). This term is non-inclusive, gendered and sexist and evident in what Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill (2013) address as the connection between gringismo, heteropatriarchy and heteropaternalism. Heteropatriarchy, according to Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill, are the social structures in which heterosexuality and patriarchy are deemed as common and customary. Heteropaternalism, can be defined as heteropatriarchal arrangements, consisting of privileging the white male as both the center and leader/boss, therefore serving as the reproduction for social structures of state and federal institutions (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill).

**Curriculum.** Present day colonialism can be seen in a white supremacist curriculum where gringismo is at the forefront of curriculum and instruction but never recognized as such, remaining invisible through its silence. Through a gringismo curriculum, gringismo is evident in the scholars, frameworks, and ways of knowing presented, and is introduced as the norm with no detailed explanation as to the chosen curriculum. Rather than scrutinizing what it means to be white or a white teacher, the practice of educational colorblindness is enacted. Educational colorblindness is where race in the classroom becomes invisible, promoting equality (what is good for one is good for all) but not equity and reaffirms gringismo (Allen, 1999; Gordon, 2005; Cervantes-Soon, 2018). A gringismo curriculum, with whiteness at the forefront, is actually a curriculum seeped in deficits that does not recognize Indigenous scholars or Indigenous peoples as knowledge keepers and creators (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Garcia-Olp, 2019; Yosso, 2002). For example, the political nature of curricula is described by Leonardo’s (2003; 2004) Critical Social Theory (CST) and Gutiérrez’s (2017) Political *Conocimiento*. Leonardo (2003; 2004) argues that Critical Social Theory (CST) focuses on communities for whom theory has become a political weapon. Theory and curricula, in this case, as a political weapon is used as a form of oppression where Indigenous culture, language and identity are subverted. Gutiérrez’s (2017) Political *Conocimiento* acknowledges that this type of political knowledge is needed to deconstruct deficit narratives in society regarding students.

Lomawaima and McCarty (2002) describe the deconstruction of identity and culture through the lens of American Indian education stating that the main objective of American Indian education has always been colonization and assimilation of American Indian peoples. San Miguel Jr. and Donato (2010) mention that a consistency of Indigenous education, regarding the curriculum, is the deficiency of academic rigor and its linguistically and culturally subtractive means. In other words, subtractive education uses curriculum to discredit, degrade, and disrupt students’ linguistic and cultural knowledge systems, systematically erasing it from the

curriculum and instruction of the educational system (San Miguel Jr. & Donato, 2010). This systematic flattening of student identity is revealed when a one-dimensional approach to education ignores human complexity, causing damage to students' identity and culture (Garcia-Olp, 2019; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Siteine, 2016). In order to understand a gringismo curriculum and its intent to erase Indigenous identity, it's imperative to first scrutinize colonization and whiteness from a historical perspective.

**Instruction.** The teacher's perspective greatly influences how history is taught and from whose perspective. Every teacher has biases that infect presentation of material. When the teacher privileges gringismo with little to no Indigenous community narratives (Corntassel, 2009), this can be seen as a gringismo curriculum. Hooks (1994) reminds us that if the histories, languages, and cultures of students of color proceed to the forefront of school curriculum, then the white middle class understanding loses exclusivity as the norm by which everyone else is assessed. The norm assures that white scholars, as the gatekeepers of knowledge, perpetuate a gringismo narrative. Lomawaima and McCarty (2006), further explain that a "theory" which situates students as "one-dimensional learners does great damage to the truth of human complexity" (p. 17). The damage to students' human complexity correlates to the damage of identity and culture as well (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). Through this knowing and understanding of governmental and educational policies and practices one can begin to know the causes of assimilation (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). This reveals itself as a strength in that the unmaking of assimilation can occur through the awareness of where it manifests (Smith, 2012). Brayboy's (2005) sixth tenet grounds the belief that gringismo still persists in the educational system today.

**Assessment.** Kitchen, Ridder, and Bolz (2016) address a direct correlation between student assessment performance and student labeling. Their research at a low socioeconomic, diverse public high school revealed that these labels had a tendency to endure. They found that labels inform instructional decisions. In other words, based on labels students were placed in lower level ability groups and classes. Another study by Garcia-Olp, Van Ooyik, Kitchen, (2017) investigated deficit perspectives held by mentor teachers in labeling students by their assessment scores. It was noted that this type of deficit discourse could lead students towards harmful and damaging self-perspectives. The use of deficit labels, such as "Unsat," linked to students who achieve a score of unsatisfactory on assessment performances promotes a non-inclusive educational environment that harmfully impacted the identities of students of color (Kitchen, Ridder, & Bolz, 2016). This type of language, as asserted in Indigenous Liberation Epistemology, is representative in an ongoing system, ingrained in the past and present with the explicit objective of crippling the Indigenous student economically and socially as a full participant of U.S. citizenship.

**Exclusion.** Education in the United States is to be free and compulsory - a promise of equal opportunity and access, and per research by the Pew Charitable Trust, education provides a doorway to upward mobility (Acs, 2011; Haskins, 2009). Indigenous communities, with or without treaty rights, were promised housing, shelter, healthcare and education in exchange for the loss of land. All promises made by the U.S. government and all of its representatives, however, are nothing more than a fraud. Displacement, segregation, class disparities, and other factors have resulted in great inequalities in our public school system that translate to a



diminished quality of life for students as adults. In fact, education policies have not only moved away from supporting an atmosphere of learning, the focus of most school districts for the past twenty years has been on implementing zero tolerance school discipline policies, which have worked to increase the overlap between school and jail for students of color (Kaufman et al., 2001; Skiba & Knesting, 2001).

**Language exclusion.** We can see the legacy of English-only boarding schools in modern policies today. District policies and actions have intentionally prohibited the incorporation of language learning in schools except as an elective in high school. Languages other than English are subdued, degraded, and eliminated from the public school system (San Miguel Jr. & Donato, 2010). History shows evidence of educational language policies and practices not implemented despite the requirement of bilingual laws and policy created. The emergence of English-only legislation is rooted in racism. An example of legislation in the twenty-first century can be seen with the enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Spring (2013) states that under the 2001 law, NCLB, schools began to resegregate during the 21st century. As a result of English being the language of schooling, the idea of equity between cultures and languages was dismissed, resulting in the promotion of a single, white hegemony. These subtractive language policies and practices were contested during the twentieth-century due to the federal Bilingual Education Act of 1968. Between 1968 and 1978 the federal bilingual education act of 1968 authorized the repeal of English-only laws in more than thirty-four states. The backlash to an enforced policy of bilingual education led to an adverse reaction in the 1980s and 1990s when English-only legislation resurfaced and became universal throughout the United States (San Miguel Jr. & Donato, 2010).

### **Dismantling Gringismo in the Educational Arena**

*As a graduate student in an Ethnic Studies department, I had the privilege of choosing a committee chair for my master's thesis who was fluent in Spanish and English. The remainder of my committee were intentionally all faculty of color. In sessions with the chair, we could communicate in both languages, preferring Spanish. My thesis was written in both Spanish and English with the incorporation of concepts in Lakota and Nahuatl. I never had to explain or excuse the color of my skin, my attraction to men or my choice of language because the Ethnic Studies department embraced all elements of my Indigeneity. In fact, I was asked to provide the keynote address for graduation.*  
(David Atekpatzin Young)

Gringismo as the *de facto* practice in schools privileges whiteness and disadvantages Indigenous students. The disregard for students of color means that they have to navigate antagonistic waters wherein they are forced to negotiate their sense-of-self with a relationship to gringismo (Young, 2020). It is therefore imperative for gringismo to be dismantled. Stakeholders can begin dismantling gringismo in the educational arena by incorporating four praxis elements: 1) Respect for the knowledge inherent in student experiences; 2) Provision of a learning milieu that reflects Indigenous epistemologies; 3) Promoting a learning style rooted in reciprocity; and 4) Regarding every student positively and warmly however they might be arrayed.

### **Decolonizing educational spaces**

In order to begin decolonizing educational spaces, educators must begin to create a learning environment that reflects a sense of belonging for Indigenous students. It begins with hiring teachers, administrators, staff who are Brown, and fluent in more than one language. It is a shame that after fifty years of “affirmative action” schools that are ninety-percent Black and Brown have ninety-five percent of their staff and faculty who are white. There is no excuse for the continued racism that only marginally hires people of color and quickly dispatches them as ineffective teachers because they do not submit to the narrative of gringismo. Educational environments are hostile to Brown students, teachers and parents from kindergarten through graduate school. The gatekeepers of gringismo must be removed before any effective change can be made in American school systems full stop.

### **Respecting student experiences**

Recognizing and respecting that each student who walks into the classroom for the first time is arrayed with life experiences that reflect family, community, cultural, linguistic and social elements is the springboard for instilling a sense of belonging. Each student has a relationship to gringismo that ranges from extreme privilege (for white students) to outright violence against students of color. The relationship to gringismo shapes, informs and dictates how the relationship between the Indigenous student and teacher (usually white) and learning will play out. Disregarding the experiences of the student assures that a teacher will never establish enough of a rapport to effectively encourage learning and success. Even teachers of color are complicit in crippling students of color if the teacher has no education about how to inculcate Indigenous students into the learning milieu. Dismantling gringismo means respecting, honoring and incorporating the life experiences of each student into every aspect of the curriculum and milieu such that the student feels a sense of trust and belonging to the learning environment and, by extension, to society.

### **The Milieu**

When a student walks into a classroom for the first time, s/he should see reflected upon the walls and in all of the decor, colors, smells and elements of the classroom a respect for who the student is. There needs to be pictures, quotes, elements, colors that help the student to “feel at home.” The educational environment has typically been void of any aspects of Indigeneity or culture that is both inviting and that encourages learning. Pictures always reflect the white narrative for privileging invasion, colonization and gringismo. Allowances are made for people of color-as-hero when the individual represented was killed by gringos and now fulfils a space of christian martyrdom (Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, Chief Joseph). The typical classroom is immediately patriarchal (even if the teacher is female), sterile, and hostile to students of color generally and to Indigenous students particularly. Graduate schools do not teach diversity, they impose submission to gringismo. It is not likely, then, that teachers have any idea about how to execute a welcoming classroom or curriculum given they have never learned. You cannot teach or exercise what you do not know. It falls upon the teacher to learn what it means to integrate an Indigenous paradigm into the classroom. Expect resistance from white parents, the principal and the school board.

### **Teaching Reciprocity**

Reciprocity is an Indigenous value. It is founded in a respect for our relationship to everyone and everything around us. Respecting our relationship to life requires that we honor life, gifts and that which we receive by returning something in exchange. Teachings from elders or teachers are compensated with a gift of reciprocity. When the Indigenous community comes together to support someone, a give-away is the appropriate reciprocity. If a plant is to be cultivated for food or medicine, an offering is made first along with a prayer. Reciprocity has to do with maintaining healthy relationships with everyone and everything around us. In the *IndigiLogix* after school STEM programming, students were taught to make an offering when collecting pinecones for a teaching on mathematics (Garcia-Olp, Nelson, Hinzo, & Young, 2020). In order to explain spirals, sequences and the Fibonacci sequence, the *IndigiLogix* teachers took their students to observe these spirals and sequences in nature (Garcia-Olp, Nelson, Hinzo, & Young, 2020; Young, 2020; Young, 2017). Examples in nature include pinecones, cauliflower and pineapples. Before the students examined the spirals more closely, a teacher modeled giving bird seed or water back to the earth before the pinecones were collected.

### **Positive Regard for Students**

Every student is a unique individual. The student enters the classroom with unique experiences and talents. There is nothing homogenous about a classroom full of students. There is not a homogenous history, homogenous experience or homogenous level of intelligence. There is not a homogenous language spoken. Force fitting students, especially students of color, into standards that do not apply to them is a form of violence that is consistent with gringismo but contrary to an ethos of educating students. Every teacher has biases. The classroom is not the place for those biases, or outright prejudices to play out. Every student deserves a safe learning environment wherein the classroom, the curriculum, the instruction and the social milieu are inviting. Exhibiting an unconditional regard for each student from the moment they walk through the door is more likely to empower a student to succeed and feel a sense of belonging in the classroom and in society. Students who mistrust and dislike the educational experience rarely succeed economically as adults.

One of the practices I (Michelle) implement into my classroom at the beginning of every year are I-Quilts and “Where I’m From” poems. This helps set the stage for implementing a positive regard for students. Through I-Quilts and “Where I’m From” poems, students are able to share with me and their classmates aspects of their life that are unique to their culture and lived experiences. Activities such as these are important in creating a space where students' unique experiences and talents are celebrated. Below is an example of my “Where I’m From” poem that I model for students.

Where I’m From  
by Dr. Garcia-Olp

I am from frijoles, tortillas, and my *abuelas* kitchen.  
From *arroz con leche* and lots of love.  
I am from ristras, lowriders going *bajito y suavecito*.  
From a sister and brother and the *zia* symbol.  
I am from the Mexica and Native peoples.  
From a loving husband and two loving boys.  
I am from bruised knees and wounded hearts  
From hard working people and family members going off to war.

I am from memories and lost histories.  
From all these junctures,  
I am from and live through *mis antepasados*.

## Place-Based Education

When education includes place-based education (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Shannon & Galle, 2017) and Indigenous knowledge and beliefs, it creates a space for empowerment and traditional knowledge to emerge. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) characterize place-based education as animatedly existing with place. When fused with education, place-based education acknowledges and establishes relationships between the inhabitants (people and other life forms) in the place. Shannon and Galle (2017) explain place-based education as incorporating into the teachings the place we reside in, that which positions us to place. Void of place, we are unable to locate ourselves to a particular source. We feel *deslogrado y desplazado*—orphaned and dislocated upon our homeland (Young, 2012). Place then, is described as a social construction, bound and constructed within time and space, closely tied to sensory experiences (Shannon & Galle, 2017). Place-based education, therefore, can take the shape of land acknowledgements, outdoor classrooms, incorporating Indigenous histories specifically tied to the location and place, to name a few. For example, Garcia-Olp, Nelson, and Saiz, (2019) describe the importance of tying Indigenous knowledge and histories to location and place through their after school *IndigiLogix* programming. Through *IndigiLogix*, *IndigiLogix* group members, Indigenous Elders and community members in Denver, CO work with Indigenous youth to show how Indigenous knowledge has always been mathematics education. Mathematics concepts are tied to Indigenous practices such as bean sorting, hunting, tipi building and drum making.

## Rematriation

Rematriation can be described as the rearrangement of research aims in curriculum studies so that Indigenous people can dispose of deficit stories and theories, and reclaim these narratives as a method of sovereignty and well-being (Tuck, 2011; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013). In many ethnic studies classes, rematriation of curriculum studies is visible as the instructors are often from the same communities and backgrounds. It's important that rematriation moves beyond ethnic studies courses and is integrated in all subject areas. In short, teachers of color need to be hired at every level in education and allowed to instruct in a manner that reflects the population in the classroom. Tuck (2011) suggests the following rematriated aims of curriculum studies:

- uncovering the quiet thoughts and beliefs of a community
- mapping the variety of ideas in a community
- making generational knowledge of elders, youth, parents, warriors, hunters, leaders, gardeners, fishers, teachers, and others available to other generations
- using home languages to express ideas, and to bring new and recovered ideas
- honoring all of our relations by engaging in the flow of knowledge in community in ways that reflect epistemology/cosmology and relationships to land. (p. 36)

We add to Tuck's recommendations by saying that the combination of the above aims need to occur from the community. For instance, if you wish to present Indigenous ways of knowing and being into the curriculum, it is critical to invite Elders of Indigenous communities to teach

Indigenous knowledge from an Indigenous paradigm. The Elders must also be fully compensated at the same monetary rate as the instructor if not more. It is an act of violence to expect the years of experience and learning of an Elder is less valuable than that of a scholar. When schools move away from colonization and assimilation at every level -- from policy, curriculum, instruction, discipline, and assessment -- towards asset-based practices and beliefs, students thrive.

### **Conclusion**

This paper applies the theoretical frameworks of TribalCrit and Indigenous Liberation Epistemology to the context of dismantling practices in education rooted in gringismo. We know that educators at every level can play a key role in ending gringismo. It is essential that an understanding of Indigenous Liberation Epistemology is incorporated into all school systems so that every student is regarded with dignity when their needs are not being met. Instructors, teachers and professors can reevaluate their practice to dismantle gringismo by actively taking Indigenous perspectives into account when designing curriculum and instructing students.

Educators need to shift their norms around policy, curriculum, instruction, and assessment so that Indigenous values and ways of knowing are centered, not dismissed or erased. Dismantling gringismo requires that educators disentangle themselves from a standard of practice that intentionally cripples Indigenous, Chicano and other students of color complicitly by failing to incorporate the practices presented in this paper. No student should ever walk out of a classroom feeling worse about him/herself than before. That is not education, that is oppression. Dismantling gringismo in education is the responsibility of every educator.

### **Author Notes**

*David Atekpatzin Young* is a Spiritual Leader with and historian for the Genízaro Apache Tribe of Colorado. As a life-long activist, he is dedicated to dismantling gringismo and promoting an Indigenous epistemology that empowers Indigenous communities. He holds a Master's in Ethnic Studies, a Bachelor's in Psychology and spent 15 years studying with Indigenous traditional healers. He founded the Calmecaztlán, a school for Indigenous studies. His research interests include Indigenous studies, language revitalization, traditional healing/curanderismo, and Mexicayotl.

*Michelle Garcia-Olp* (Chicana- Genizara) is an assistant professor in the Education and Youth Studies Department (EDYS) at Beloit College and is also an English language development high school teacher. Michelle's expertise is in curriculum design and development, arts-based practices and multilingualism. She has worked with local Colorado community members developing curriculum for the Native American Community Relations and Programs Department at the University of Denver, the American Indian Academy of Denver, the Jeffco Indian Education Department and with local Colorado Elders. Her current research interests include race and identity in curriculum and education as well as Indigenizing the STEM field. Michelle has presented and published in the area of STEM and Indigenous identity. She received the 2019 John Laska Dissertation Award in Curriculum from the American Association for Teaching and Curriculum.

*Ceema Samimi* (Kurdish, Cherokee descent) is completing her Ph.D. in social work from the

University of Denver and has just accepted an assistant professor position at the University of Michigan.

## References

- Acs, G. (2011). Downward mobility from the middle class. *Washington, DC: Pew Charitable Trusts*.  
[https://cdn.mashregnews.ir/files/fa/news/1390/6/20/93052\\_110.pdf](https://cdn.mashregnews.ir/files/fa/news/1390/6/20/93052_110.pdf)
- Allen, R. L. (1999). The Hidden Curriculum of Whiteness: White Teachers, White Territory, and White Community. *Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Research Association* (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 19-23, 1999). <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED434168.pdf>
- Arvin, M., Tuck, E., & Morrill, A. (2013). Decolonizing feminism: Challenging connections between settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy. *Feminist Formations*, 25(1), 8-34. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2013.0006>
- Bear, L. L. (2000). Jagged worldviews colliding. Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision, 77.  
<http://blogs.sd62.bc.ca/danddtech/wp-content/blogs.dir/24/files/2014/02/LittleBear1.pdf>
- Brayboy, B. M. J. (2005). Toward a tribal critical race theory in education. *The Urban Review*, 37(5), 425-446.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-005-0018-y>
- Brayboy, B. M. J., & Maughan, E. (2009). Indigenous knowledges and the story of the bean. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.1.10u6435086352229>
- Brendtro, L., & Brokenleg, M. (2001). *Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for the future*. Solution Tree Press.
- Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education*. Kivaki Press.
- Cervantes-Soon, C. G. (2018). Using a Xicana feminist framework in Bilingual teacher preparation: Toward an anticolonial path. *The Urban Review*, 50(5), 857-888. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-018-0478-5>
- Cornthassel, J. (2009). Indigenous storytelling, truth-telling, and community approaches to reconciliation. *ESC: English Studies in Canada*, 35(1), 137-159. doi:10.1353/esc.0.0163.
- Delgado-Bernal, D. (2002). Critical race theory, LatCrit theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 105-126.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800107>
- Deloria, V. (1994). Foreword. In Cajete (1994), *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education*. Kivaki Press.
- Deloria, V., & Wildcat, D. R. (2001). *Power and place: Indian education in America*. Fulcrum Publishing.
- Garcia-Olp, M. (2019). How colonization impacts identity through the generations: A closer look at historical trauma and education. In H. Kyuchukov (Ed.), *Interculturalism and intercultural education series* (pp. 21-40). LINCOM Academic Publishers.
- Garcia-Olp, M., Van Ooyik, J., Kitchen, R. (2017). Deficit Discourse and Labeling in Elementary Mathematics Classrooms. *Journal of Mathematics Education at Teachers College*, 8(2), 1-8.  
<https://doi.org/10.7916/jmetc.v8i2.590>
- Garcia-Olp, M., Nelson, C., & Saiz, L. (2019). Conceptualizing a Mathematics Curriculum: Indigenous Knowledge has Always Been Mathematics Education. *Educational Studies: A Journal of the American Studies Association*, 0(0), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2019.1680374>
- Garcia-Olp, M., Nelson, C., Hinzo, A., Young, D. A. (October, 2020). Indigenous Epistemologies: Implementing Indigenous Practices and Perceptions to the area of STEM. *Curriculum of Teaching and Dialogue*.
- Gordon, J. (2005). Inadvertent complicity: Colorblindness in teacher education. *Educational Studies*, 38(2), 135-153. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326993es3802\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326993es3802_5)
- Gutiérrez, R. (2017). *Political conocimiento for teaching mathematics: Why teachers need it and how to develop it*. In S. Kastberg, A. M. Tyminski, A. Lischka, & W. Sanchez(Eds.), *Build-ing support for scholarly practices in mathematics methods* (pp. 11-38). In-formation Age.
- Haskins, R., Holzer, H., & Lerman, R. (2009). *Promoting economic mobility by increasing postsecondary education*. Retrieved from  
<https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/97799/PromotingUpwardMobility.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- hooks, B. (1994). Confronting class in the classroom. *The critical pedagogy reader*, 142-150.
- Kaufman, P., Chen, X., Choy, S. P., Peter, K., Ruddy, S. A., Miller, A. K., Fleury, J. K., Chandler, K. A., Plany, M. G., & Rand, M. R. (2001). *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*, National Center for Education Statistics (ED), Washington, DC.; Department of Justice, Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.  
<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002113.pdf>

- Kitchen, R., Ridder, S. A., & Bolz, J. (2016). The legacy continues: “The test” and denying access to a challenging mathematics education for historically marginalized students. *Journal of Mathematics Education at Teachers College*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.7916/jmetc.v7i1.784>
- Leonardo, Z. (2003). *Ideology, discourse, and school reform*. Praeger
- Leonardo, Z. (2004). The color of supremacy: Beyond the discourse of “white privilege”. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 36(2), 137–152. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2004.00057.x>
- Lomawaima, K. T., & McCarty, T. L. (2002). When tribal sovereignty challenges democracy: American Indian education and the democratic ideal. *American Educational Research Journal*, 39(2), 279-305. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312039002279>
- Lomawaima, K. T., & McCarty, T. L. (2006). *“To Remain an Indian”: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*. Teachers College Press.
- Meriam, L., & Work, H. (1928). The Problem of Indian Administration: report of a survey made at the request of honorable Hubert Work, secretary of the interior, and submitted to him, February 21, 1928 (No. 17). Johns Hopkins Press.
- Office of the Legislative Counsel. (2017, October 24). Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 [As Amended Through P.L. 115-64, Enacted September 27, 2017]. Retrieved from <https://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/Elementary%20And%20Secondary%20Education%20Act%20Of%201965.pdf>
- San Miguel Jr, G., & Donato, R. (2010). Latino education in twentieth century America. *Handbook of Latinos and education: Theory, research, and practice*, 157-169.
- Shannon, D., & Galle, J. (2017). Where We Are: Place, Pedagogy, and the Outer Limits. In D. Shannon & J. Galle (Eds.) *Interdisciplinary approaches to pedagogy and place-based education* (pp. 1-8). Springer International Publishing.
- Siteine, A. (2016, April). Research for Public Scholarship, Professional Practice: Educating for Identity via the New Zealand School Curriculum. In American Education Research Association (AERA) 2016 Annual Meeting: Public Scholarship to Educate *Diverse Democracies*. <http://hdl.handle.net/2292/40173>
- Skiba, R. J., & Knesting, K. (2001). Zero tolerance, zero evidence: An analysis of school disciplinary practice. *New directions for youth development*, 2001(92), 17-43. <https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.23320019204>
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Zed Books Ltd.
- Spring, J. (2013). *The American school, a global context: From the Puritans to the Obama administration*. McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Siteine, A. (2016) Recognising ethnic identity in the classroom: A New Zealand study, *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 26(4), 393-407. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2016.1264869>
- Tuck, E. (2011). Rematriating curriculum studies. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 8(1), 34-37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15505170.2011.572521>
- Tuck, E., & Gaztambide-Fernández, R. A. (2013). *Curriculum, replacement, and settler futurity*. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 29(1). <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.995.4538&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. Decolonization: Indigeneity. *Education & Society*, 1(1). <https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/aec/pdfs/Decolonization-is-not-a-metaphor.pdf>
- Yosso, T., J. (2002) Toward a Critical Race Curriculum. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 35(2), 93-107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713845283>
- Young, D. A. (2012). “In Defense of Chicano Indigeneity”, in *Chicanismo, Indigenous Identity and Lateral Violence: A Qualitative Study of Indigenous Identified Individuals in Colorado*, (ProQuest, UMI Dissertation Publishing, 2012).
- Young, D. A. (2019). *An Assessment of the Archeological, Geographical, and Oral and Written Historical Findings Regarding the Presence of the Apache in Boulder, Colorado*. A report for The Funded Research Program of the City of Boulder Open Space & Mountain Parks.
- Young, D. A. (2020). *A Magic Feather: The Science and Theory of Traditional Chicano Healing Practices of Aztlán*. Calmecaztlán.