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Message from the Editors

Praxis and Power in the Intersections of Education

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"It's about intentionality."
—Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer (2003)

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) live in the intersections, particularly in the world of education. Some would describe this positionality as accidental or incidental, but, for many of us, our choice to locate ourselves in the intersections is *intentional*. An intersection can be defined simply as a juncture where two or more paths cross. When the roads of K-12 schooling and higher education converge, we discover glimpses of possibility for improvements in access, retention, and curricular matters. However, dynamics within these crossroads are assumed to be incidental and ad-hoc, leaving them poorly facilitated and under-theorized. But just as borders are historically, socially, politically, and economically constructed with intentions to separate, intersections can also be drawn with deliberate intention to ensure that we interact. In this essay, we suggest that critical educational intersections provide contexts where a multitude of interactions are possible for AAPIs to pursue purposeful work around justice, equity, and self-determination.

Although specific educational intersections may offer opportunities for us to develop libratory praxis, we would be irresponsible to ignore the tensions that exist between interests competing for limited resources. Compartmentalized and dysfunctional educational policies, practices, and dynamics of hegemonic professionalization often compel students and educators to place themselves in either one or the other domains of K-12 and higher education with imagined autonomy from each other. The lack of

P-16 (Pre-school to Bachelors Degree) planning, coordination, and communication has been described as one of the major contributing factors to the lowering of retention rates in post-secondary education (Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio, 2004). This lack of coordination also explains why AAPI students have little access to initiatives, programs, and research projects that connect their K-12 experience with their post-secondary pursuits, while their teachers, professors, counselors, and other educational or community leaders similarly lack bridges between each others' institutions. In our role as guest editors for this third and final education-focused special issue of *AAPI Nexus*, we hope to connect more clearly with the "institutional intersections" between primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, and articulate more fully what we mean conceptually by intersections in education.

Our purpose in exploring these intersections is first to call for a fuller reconceptualization of educational policy, practice, and community in relation to AAPIs, and also to recognize the significant new work that appears in this special issue to demonstrate the richness and potential of the analysis and development of the intersections. Educational intersections are powerful collaborative spaces where people of divergent starting points can dialogue with regard to their personal/professional identities, pedagogy/praxis, and policy/politics/power—to make clearer sense of their worlds and ultimately to transform them.

Personal and Professional Identities

For many years in Ethnic Studies, we have recognized that multiple intersections—particularly between race, class, gender, and sexuality—shape our identities. Within these intersections, we construct multi-dimensional identities as queers of color, women/men of color, youth of color, mixed heritage peoples, among other possibilities. Yet, a critical look at the intersections in education for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders requires that we also disrupt how we position ourselves as either scholars or practitioners, as professors or teachers, as teachers or students, and as members of a campus or a community, so that new identities can emerge.

Many of us who care deeply about the state of education embody these often dialectical and contradictory relationships. Though their synergy offers transformational potential, the conflicting interests inherent in their unequal relational positions typi-

cally go unexamined and unresolved, including for that most hierarchal of relationships in education: the dialectic between student and teacher. Through traditional and anti-dialogic methods—the "banking method" of education described by Freire (1970)—the teacher is dominant over the student. But what if teachers allowed themselves to be taught by their students? How would such a redirected intersection between teacher and student identities redefine the process and content and outcome of education?

As an example of learning from our students about this particular topic, we cite Kyle De Ocera's undergraduate Asian American Studies senior thesis at San Francisco State University (2009) as he puts forth an etymological theorizing of the roots of education:

> *Education* is defined as the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction. . .*Education* comes from the root word *educate*, defined as: to give intellectual, moral, and social instruction. The word *educate* is derived from the word *educe*: to bring out, or develop something latent or potential. It is important to cite these definitions and map its trajectory and its inconsistencies. Though *education* is ultimately rooted in the word *educe*, there is a big delineation between the two. *Education*, in its literal definition, is indicative of a linear progression; the giving and/or receiving of instruction implies that there is something, or someone that bears all knowledge to impart and instruct. . .The mere negation of other moral and social instruction, other forms of intellect from other cultures and diasporas validates the bias of traditional definitions of education, one that has also enabled division, exclusion, and dehumanization.

Building on De Ocera's thesis, we need to commit ourselves to intersecting our identities as teacher-students and student-teachers to return to the roots of education which is to educe, to bring out the humanizing potential in ourselves and our students.

In Glenn Omatsu's description of his personal pedagogy of Ethnic Studies, there is resounding hope for the intersection between teacher-student identities. He describes the five pillars of his pedagogy:

> *1. Learning in the classroom must be linked to community movements. Students learn best by doing, particularly through involvement in grassroots struggles.*

> *2. Knowledge is something to be shared, and any student taking a class in ethnic studies has a responsibility to find ways to share that knowledge with others.*
>
> *3. Every student is a teacher and every teacher is a student. Viewed in this way, the teacher is not so much an authority as a facilitator, or more accurately, a coordinator or organizer in the learning process.*
>
> *4. Knowledge must be used to confront those with power in society. As students and teachers in ethnic studies we have a responsibility not only to study our communities but also to change them.*
>
> *5. Students armed with knowledge from ethnic studies can become agents of social change when they join with community movements.* (Omatsu, 1999, 792)

Pedagogical Partnerships and Praxis

In his editor's introduction in *Amerasia Journal*'s special issue on "Pedagogy, Social Justice, and the State of Asian American Studies," Warren Furumoto calls for Ethnic Studies departments at universities to take an active role in preparing teachers for K-12 schools. He asserts that this is part of "reconnecting education to social justice—equity in the social cultural, racial, and economic realms—and disconnecting education from the reproduction of social inequities" (2003, 3).

The training of K-12 teachers by Ethnic Studies faculty, for example, cannot be reduced to a "how-to" instruction-based stock workshop that teaches teachers how to deal with APIs or students of color. These types of trainings often result in the reproduction of stereotypes and essentialized representations of cultural practices. They also typically fail to provide context-specific analysis or to question the systems that oppress them. This lack of structural critique and localized application makes it difficult for students and sometimes teachers to find relevance and real-life use in what is being taught. Through genuine pedagogical partnerships between schools and college level institutions, new ways of conceptualizing education can be developed.

During an Ethnic Studies teacher retreat at San Francisco State University, Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales (2010) redefined pedagogy and described its major dilemma:

> *Pedagogy is the art of teaching and learning. Pedagogy is a philosophy of education informed by positionalities, ideologies, and stand-*

> *points. It takes into account the critical relationships between the* ***PURPOSE*** *of education, the* ***CONTEXT*** *of education, the* ***CONTENT*** *of what is being taught, and the* ***METHODS*** *of how it is taught. It also includes who is being taught, who is teaching, their relationship to each other, and their relationship to structure and power. . .One of the major problems with pedagogy is that pedagogues who study the theories of pedagogy are oftentimes divorced from the teaching practice, particularly what occurs in public school settings. And teachers sometimes do not see themselves as intellectual contributors to the theoretical frameworks associated with pedagogy. Pedagogy has mistakenly been reduced to teaching method and critical pedagogy is sometimes seen as just theory.*

This praxis-centered definition—informed by intersections between theorizing and teaching practice—opens the door to extensive dialogue through which teacher and pedagogue become one. The training of teachers cannot be unilateral, with the university professor simply instructing the teacher regarding subject-area expertise. Rather, their shared challenge is to determine how best to work together to address the major problems in education, including how to collectively design their Ethnic Studies course(s).

Beyond these K-12-university collaborations that enhance professional pedagogical development, we also recognize other educational intersections such as "community-university" partnerships through service-learning opportunities. Asian American Studies praxis has a long and deep history with service learning and "community work" that dates back to its inception in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Revilla, Mark, and Crim, 2001). This intersection between university and community has been a site of extreme tension and great possibility. Early promises of Asian American Studies to serve the communities worked for some departments, but were abandoned or ignored by others. Although such choices sometimes reflected geographic proximity between an institution and local AAPI communities, these tensions were also rooted in divergent activist versus academic orientations of Asian American Studies departments, faculty, and administrators (Revilla, Mark, and Crim, 2001). In the premiere issue of *AAPI Nexus*, for example, Melany De La Cruz and Loh-Sze Leung (2003) proposed an Asian American service-learning research model to mend the divide between universities and AAPI communities as a way for Asian American Studies to "return to its roots as a social agent in a broader social movement for equality and

justice." Indeed, for some academic departments and programs, including our own, community involvement continues to be central to the transformative mission and intersectional praxis of Asian American Studies.

Policy/Politics/Power

As we were finalizing this special issue of *AAPI Nexus*, two historic policies were instituted with intentions and implications for Ethnic Studies. On May 11, 2010 Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed what many are describing as a law that criminalizes the teaching of Ethnic Studies. The "law bans schools from teaching classes that are designed for students of a particular ethnic group or that promote resentment, ethnic solidarity, or overthrow of the U.S. government." Tom Horne, Arizona's superintendent of public instruction, characterizes Ethnic Studies courses, particularly Chicano Studies, as being "harmful and dysfunctional" and proposes that we teach students to be individuals and not to hate other races. Furthermore, he attacks the teaching of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in Ethnic Studies courses because he feels that it teaches "kids that they are oppressed." Ethnic studies scholars such as Michael Dyson have countered Horne's argument by explaining that the naming of oppression is the first step in eliminating it.

In direct contrast to the events in Arizona, on February 26, 2010, the San Francisco Unified School District unanimously voted on a resolution to support Ethnic Studies in their schools. Four of the seven elected board members identified as Asian Americans, and two served as authors and champions for the Ethnic Studies resolution. This municipal policy supports the implementation of Ethnic Studies courses primarily in secondary schools, though some elementary and middle schools are also discussing possibilities of including Ethnic Studies instruction within heritage pathways and elective courses. Though restricted by severe budget cuts, the board, nevertheless, supported the expansion of Ethnic Studies, given that 90 percent of the students in SFUSD are students of color.

The San Francisco vote demonstrated the impact of mobilizations at the intersections between student activism, grassroots organizing, and support from K-12 educators and university faculty. A coalition of organizations such as Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC), People Organized to Win Employment

Rights (POWER), Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP), Coleman Advocates For Children & Youth: Youth Making A Change, and Homies Organizing the Mission to Empower Youth (HOMEY), San Francisco Freedom School, and the Japanese Americans Citizens League (JACL) met weekly with Ethnic Studies teachers and professors, parents, and service providers to develop strategies to support the Ethnic Studies campaign. They educated their neighborhoods, families, friends, schools, colleges, and each other about the need for Ethnic Studies. On the night of the vote, activists across generations rallied together including founding members of the movement that initiated Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State, together with contemporary youth organizations and SFUSD teachers. The coalition convened two well-attended town hall meetings to discuss the state of education, and, in response to the elimination of summer school due to budget cuts, developed a Summer Solidarity School where the youth are learning about Ethnic Studies and social movements with invited speakers/facilitators such as university faculty, service providers, long-time activists, and community leaders.

At the historic board meeting, the Ethnic Studies resolution was described by Artnelson Concordia, a teacher at Balboa High School, as being part of forty-year struggle that began with the

On February 26, 2010, youth, students, educators, and community organizations mobilized to support ethnic studies at the SFUSD school board meeting.

Photograph by Aldrich Sabac

Third World Strike at San Francisco State University (at that time San Francisco State College), a movement that resulted in the establishment of the College of Ethnic Studies and snowballed into the growth of Ethnic Studies departments, programs, and courses throughout the nation. According to the first mission statement of Asian American Studies in 1969 at San Francisco State University, one of the major goals of the movement was to support the creation of Ethnic Studies courses in college level institutions *and* secondary schools.

Despite the expansion and institutionalization of Ethnic Studies at college campuses, however, the curriculum in most K-12 schools and school districts in the U.S. still lacks Ethnic Studies courses, and their instructional materials continue to reflect dominant stories framed by Eurocentric perspectives. Schools typically offer superficial multicultural practices with activities that tokenize "trivial examples and artifacts of culture" including singing, dancing, and reading folktales that undermine the critical edge of Ethnic Studies if they are not integrated in the lesson plan to pursue "fundamentally different conceptions of knowledge or quests for social justice" (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995). In his most recent essay in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Gary Okihiro (2010) angrily criticizes this invasion of Ethnic Studies by an over-simplified multiculturalism:

> But the greatest threat to the field, it appears to me, arises not from willful racists or inarticulate ethnic-studies scholars, but from liberals who have derailed the field's radical challenges into a celebration of cultural diversity and multiculturalism, or into a transnational project that loses specificity and, some might add, responsibility even as it attempts to grapple with the ideas and realities of the present moment. No longer centrally at stake are the nation-state and its particular history and formations of conquest and extermination, land appropriation and labor exploitation, regimes of inclusion and exclusion, and expansion and imperialism. Deliberately blunted is the political edge of ethnic studies, with its focus on power and demands for a more inclusive and just republic (and university) through a dismantling of hierarchies of race, gender, sexuality, class, and nation.

The ethnic studies curriculum created by SFUSD intentionally addresses the "political edge of ethnic studies." The school board's

vote to pass the ethnic studies resolution was prefaced with three years of intersectional curriculum planning initiated by Pete Hammer from the Academics Professional Development (APD) Office of the SFUSD, with a committee of diverse high school history teachers, such as Kyle Beckham, David Ko, and Aimee Riechel working alongside Asian American Studies faculty Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales to develop a critical and academically rigorous ethnic studies curriculum for ninth graders. Their collaboratively written vision directly intersects with the foundational intentionality of Ethnic Studies:

> Honoring the historical legacy of social movements and mass struggles against injustice including the establishment of ethnic studies programs in public schools and university curricula, this course aims to provide an emancipatory education that will inspire students to critically engage in self-determination and seek social justice for all (SFUSD Ethnic Studies Proposal, 2008).

Although courses have been taught intermittently throughout the school district, Fall 2010 will mark the first official Ethnic Studies pilot. The pilot course will be offered to ninth graders at five high schools out of the twenty-two in the district, with the intention that the curriculum will be further developed and refined for more schools to implement. Ideally, the ninth grade course will also be adapted for upper-division sections and lead to an Ethnic Studies pathway for the SFUSD secondary school curriculum that intersects directly and deeply with continuing opportunities through higher education. Such a process and outcome are only possible, however, if those intersections among people, communities, and movements described above are also sustained.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders engage educationally in a wide range of complex and contradictory ways. In the first two special issues on education published in 2010, *AAPI Nexus* mapped a landscape of change that provides narratives beyond the discussions refuting the "model minority myth" (Museus and Kiang, 2009). The first issue on K-12 education highlighted progress and innovation in curriculum, pedagogy, teaching, while also revealing examples of politics and organizing around educational concerns for AAPIs. In the second special issue, contributors addressed a number of challenges with critical implications for AAPIs' full engagement in high-

er education research, policy, and practice. This third and final issue grew organically from the submissions received for the first two special issues on education. Each of the following four contributions offers conceptual, methodological, or data-based examples of intersections that connect K-12 and higher education.

Beginning with their research article, "How Do Pacific Islanders Fare in U.S. Education?: A Look Inside Washington State Public Schools with a Focus on Samoans," Shirley Hune and Jeomja Yeo provide statewide and district-level data that document various educational disparities with implications for both high school completion and college attendance of Pacific Islanders in Washington. In addition to their statewide portrait of Pacific Islander educational issues, Hune and Yeo include quantitative and qualitative data on Samoans, in particular, from the Seattle school district—further enhancing their disaggregated study's distinctive contribution to the field. Issues faced by Samoan students at home as well as at school directly affect their engagement and achievement in high school and compromise their pursuit of higher education.

Applying a similar mixed-method approach at the local level, sociologist Yang Xiong provides fresh insight regarding K-12 tracking and other barriers to higher education that face Hmong American students in two California school districts. Xiong's article, "State-Mandated Language Classification: A Study of Hmong Students' Access to College-Preparatory Curricula," raises concerns, in particular, regarding how students are classified differentially as English Learners, and how various classifications articulate with divergent curricular trajectories that lead to various points of access to California's highly stratified system of public higher education. Given the relatively low educational and socioeconomic profiles of Hmong Americans and Pacific Islander populations within the AAPI aggregate category, the studies by Xiong and by Hune and Yeo add important insights to the literature overall.

Sharing concerns about high school to college pipelines, sociologist Yingyi Ma draws on the widely-used *National Education Longitudinal Studies: 1988-2000* database to examine the population of Asian American college students who completed undergraduate degrees in science and engineering, in relation to those who declared majors in such fields during their first two years of college and those who, while still in high school, identified such expectations to attend college and major in those fields. Ma's article,

"Model Minority, Model for Whom?: An Investigation of Asian American Students in Science/Engineering," utilizes these three locations along the high school to college degree pipeline as the basis for a multivariate analysis involving Asian Americans, whites, and under-represented minorities of both genders. Although drawing on very different data sources and methods, Ma's reference to the importance of cultural capital (or lack thereof) for Asian American students who choose majors in the science/technology/engineering/math (STEM) fields presents an interesting point of intersection with the analyses offered in the previous two articles.

Finally, Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales, Roderick Daus-Magbual, and Arlene Daus-Magbual's collaborative practioner's essay, "Pin@y Educational Partnerships: A Counter-Pipeline to Create Critical Educators," embodies the intersections and connections between K-12 and higher education by providing an example of how a community "grows their own" educators. Their essay describes an intentionally-constructed pipeline that reaches from kindergarten to doctoral students, and challenges traditional definitions regarding success and the purpose of education.

These contributions illustrate some of the important reasons why an intentional focus on educational intersections is worthwhile. We appreciate the opportunity (and space) provided by *AAPI Nexus* for such work to be disseminated. Although it may be some time before another special issue on educational intersections is solicited, perhaps other forms of intersection should also be recognized as relevant focal points for research and publication. We can easily imagine, for example, a special issue focusing on intersections between early childhood education, adult literacy, and family/community health or on school boards, electoral politics, and immigrant civic participation. We can also easily imagine that our own work—individually and institutionally—might continue to intersect across the domains of research, policy, and practice to better connect our students, colleagues, and communities. Serving together as special issue co-editors has provided us with an initial opportunity. Continuing will require our own intentionality.

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