

Foreword

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Engaging in Critical Storytelling as a Transnational Immigrant Woman in Academy: (Un)Learning from Our Stories and Lived Experiences

The poems, personal narratives, and visual narratives penned in this edited volume are symbolic of human agency and resilience. These symbolic narratives provide readers additional hope and courage to transcend challenging life experiences into something that is victorious and transformative. These narratives, while authored by different individuals, are shared by all of us as we shuttle between nations, languages, families, races, genders, classes, ethnicities, and alike to renegotiate and (de)/(re)construct our identities and places in ever-changing social worlds. The voices in the chapters challenge the normative structures in order to position themselves as rightfully endowed members of multiple worlds. These voices carry with them refreshing perspectives in articulating what it means to write for publication in academia, and problematize the troubling ideology of who is educated and who has the right to shuttle between Englishes and our native languages.

The voices in these chapters bellow a powerful reminder for me that the very place to educate and transform individuals can be a source of isolation, (self)-marginalization, and powerlessness. I often feel isolated because my own words, voices, and experiences are closeted and do not align with the experiences and voices of the dominant images pervasive in the educational sector. A sense of (self)-marginalization prevails over my critical identity as a transnational, immigrant woman who shuttles between languages, and is compelled to write for the academic community that privileges certain discourses and norms. Equally important is a sense of powerlessness that often comes with not being able to champion the teachers, scholars, and authors from the peripheral contexts. Writing for publication can be so foreign to many of us who desire to tell our stories and share our lived experiences.

My reading of these chapters brought back memories of (1) immigrating to the U.S. in the late 1970s, (2) being in English-only classes from the late 1970s to the 1980s with peers who do not share my language, my culture, and my race, and (3) witnessing my parents working day and night to provide for us to constantly reach for the so-called “American Dream.” I am reliving some of my lived experiences as a transnational woman shuttling between two linguistic and cultural worlds. I am once again called to reflect on how the chapters in

this edited volume triggered similar memories of being and living in this country that is so familiar, yet foreign even after four decades.

In the rest of this introduction, I share a brief summary of each chapter in the *Poems* section. I also reflect on my lived experience with those of the authors' as a way to connect our shared stories of isolation, (self)-marginalization, powerlessness, yet privilege and transformation. In a similar manner, for the *Personal Narratives* section, I share a snapshot of the chapter summaries, then I discuss some emerging themes from the personal narratives and juxtapose my own personal stories in conversation with the themes. My personal stories, or my response to the authored chapters are aligned with Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) concept of temporality, weaving my stories back and forth, shuttling between past and present to inform my future as a transnational immigrant woman in academia. In the final section of this foreword (*Visual Narratives*), I privilege the chapters to speak for themselves and share a brief summary of each chapter. In closing this foreword, I share some critical questions as we continue to raise critical consciousness around finding a place to advance critical storytelling in both our personal and academic lives.

Poems

This section brings together nine (9) chapters of poetry work. I organized the poetry chapters into three thematic areas: (1) naming, erasure, and reclaiming identity, (2) pursuit of "American Dream," education, and professional identity, and (3) crossing borders of self and place. In addition to the grouped summary under each theme, I share my own stories that have been triggered by the authors' poetry rendition.

Critical Storytelling: Naming, Erasure, and Reclaiming Identity

The chapters by Lydiah Kananu Kiramba (Chapter 1) and Gabriel Teodoro Acevedo Velázquez (Chapter 3) are poems that discuss the importance of our native names, that are first bestowed on us at birth. The chapters point out that mispronouncing and shortening the names without consent becomes an unintentional erasure of the individual's ethnic, historical, and personal identities. Moreover, these "erasure" acts are often practiced by those in place of power, "whitewashing" names from diverse backgrounds to make it easier for them to pronounce.

I remember the first day (April 1976) of school in the U.S., all the teachers started to mispronounce my Korean name—Gui Sun "ghi" was botched to "guy," "gee." Of course, my immediate thought without being able to articulate my responses was that my Korean name was indeed difficult for my American teachers to pro-

nounce. I started to resent my parents for giving me such a difficult name. It was only until I got to middle school that I was able to help my teachers correctly pronounce my Korean name, which was on all my school records, and responded to my teachers, “you can call me Gloria!” Even with the act of “righting” my Korean name, I guess I felt ashamed of my Korean name, so I shared with my teachers my English given name. This new English name was given to me by one of my relatives who has been residing in the U.S. for a very long time. Keeping my Christian, Western name, perhaps, could be an act of assimilation or new birth. These chapters have triggered my memories of early school days when my embarrassment and shame surfaced due to others’ mispronouncing of my Korean name. Thirty years later, I came back to the notion of naming and how my identities as a married woman with a biracial son have influenced my decision to keep my maiden last name, but my husband and I decided to provide Aidan with both Korean and Irish last name, not to lose his Korean and Irish heritage.

Critical Storytelling: Pursuit of “American” Dream, Education, and Professional Identity

The chapters by Sharada Krishnamurthy (Chapter 4), Manuel De Jesús Gómez Portillo (Chapter 5), and Ana Bautista (Chapter 6) illustrate the ways in which authors navigated and negotiated different spaces as immigrants fighting for their rights living the life of hope and courage, advocating for their children’s (especially first-generation college attendees in the family) educational pursuit, and finding the paths toward reclaiming professional identity (returning to being a classroom teacher).

While I may not remember much about my need to pursue my dream, education, or even a career since my family and I immigrated to the U.S. in 1976 when I was 8 years old. What I do remember is my parents and my mother’s extended family (who had already settled in the U.S. when we came to the U.S.) working for small restaurants and mechanic shops that were distant from what they used to do in Korea. Their career trajectory shifted dramatically due to the language and cultural barriers. My parents and my aunts/uncles were willing to start fresh, make a living, and live out their “American” dreams to put education first for their young children. The details of my family’s immigrant journey are out of the scope of this Introduction. However, it is important to note that they, too, have navigated and negotiated challenging spaces to find a comfortable place for themselves and their children. Now that I reflect on the stories of Sharada, Manuel, and Ana, my parents sacrificed their lives to give “better” futures to their children.

Critical Storytelling: Crossing Borders of Self and Place

The chapters penned by R. Joseph Rodríguez (Chapter 2), Mauricio Patrón Rivera (Chapter 7), Zurisaray Espinosa (Chapter 8), and Jamie Harris (Chapter 9)

invite readers to promote change and hope in response to a sense of urgency to act quickly but judiciously in a new locale. In that, these chapters document places of being and belonging as authors traverse cultures and languages to remain transnational while physically planted in one locale. In particular, Mauricio points out the places that shape our identity of being and becoming, and the relationships that are formed as a result of being in these places. Zurisaray's Cuban identity had been erased from who she was for a very long time until she mustered up the courage that allowed her to fight the battle to voice her experiences. Jamie's rendition of her favorite Bible verse brings her back to her Trinidadian roots and navigating those cultural practices that have been dormant while living her life as a hyphenated individual, Trinidadian-American.

When I was in high school, I always wondered why my parents were so into Korean dramas, renting 10–15 VHS (video home system) tapes to watch in one sitting. Back in those days, the Korean videos were housed and rented out from large Korean grocery stores (i.e., Lotte, H-Mart, etc). We are living in the U.S., and it's not like we can go and visit whenever we want to, so why bother watching these videos since they would only make my parents sad and homesick. It was only after I was in college that I finally understood their desire to continue watching the Korean dramas. I began watching Korean drama whenever I came home for the summer from college. I got roped into my parents' after-work past time. I came to understand the ways in which I was living in and moving in and out of, shuttling between my Korean home (via Korean drama) and my reality in the U.S. Watching the Korean dramas gave me a sense of emotionally shuttling between Korea and the U.S. Through watching these Korean dramas, I can live in the moment of different characters, troubling events, and places of powerful relationships, and I can forgive my parents for leaving the country where we feel belonged and wanted. While I do not need to visit the Korean grocery store to rent the Korean drama nowadays, I am privileged to continue to watch Korean dramas via Netflix. Echoing Jamie's personal narrative, I can continue to embrace my transnational and transcultural spaces as a hyphenated individual, living both as Korean and naturalized U.S. citizen.

Personal Narratives

In this section, there are 15 chapters. I share a brief summary of each authored chapter, then I discuss the themes emerging from the authors' personal narratives. Following this, I juxtapose my own personal narratives in conversation with the themes: *Being and Belonging in Socially (Dis)Connected Worlds*; *Navigating Challenging yet Empowering Relationships*; and *Advocating for and*

Transforming Self and Others. These themes can travel along a linear timeline, but they can also be iterative and circular, traveling back and forth between present and past to (re)imagine the future.

*Critical Storytelling: Being and Belonging in the Socially
(Dis)Connected Worlds*

Babak Khoshnevisan's "Every Word Is True: An Autoethnography to Unravel My Story" is a powerful rendition of an Iranian finding a niche in the U.S. academic and cultural worlds. The uphill battles throughout the political, war-torn, and cultural challenges brought him more strengths and resilience.

Ethan Tính Trịn's "Quê Hương" is an attempt by the author to illustrate the powerful political act of translating a deep, meaningful word, Quê Hương, into a concept, image, that only a transnational individual can begin to understand. The author's rendition of the translation process is an embodiment of their ever-fluid identities as a hyphenated scholar shuttling between and moving the cultural, linguistic, and academic worlds, and learning that led to "unlearning" of many areas.

Sandy Tadeo's "Pagbabalik: Does It Even Matter?" is an exploration of the author's (like many others like him) (un)fortunate realization regarding his linguistic capital and choices as he shuttles between finding himself in multiple social worlds. The challenges he took to be more fluent and be more accepted in the immigrant spaces provided him with the needed educational affordances.

Luis Javier Pentón Herrera's "My Life's Metamorphosis: Becoming Bilingual" is a narrative of believing in oneself as the author navigated different hills, mountains, and valleys in his immigrant journey—enlisting in the U.S. military, obtaining three Masters degrees, and coming to a full stop with a terminal degree of a Ph.D. Through the author's narrative, we come to understand how our linguistic choices and affordances take us far in life no matter how distant we may be from our heritage and/or additional languages. We always find our way back home.

Gloria Park: *In this part, I have the privilege of reflecting on my process of being, becoming, and belonging in my socially (dis)connected worlds. The powerful stories by these authors have triggered my journey navigating the challenging educational contexts to become a legitimate teacher-scholar and belong in the U.S. academia. Reading the above four chapters brought back some stories that have fueled my desire, commitment, and investment in continuing with my education. There were so many moments when I was ready to give up due to forces that were perceived to be stronger crushing down on me. You see, to these certain individuals, I simply could not be good enough to journey through a terminal degree—Ph.D. In the eyes of those individuals, I simply did not belong in their ver-*

sion of the academic community. However, there were others that saw me through a different set of lens and guided me with powerful words of wisdom. Now that I reflect on this process of being and becoming, both groups of people taught me a great deal about myself as a teacher-scholar, a transnational immigrant woman in academia, and a mother and spouse. Through these groups of individuals who privileged me in certain ways or marginalized in other ways, I found my superhero inner strength to be mentored by trustworthy allies and to keep my enemies closer in order to reach my academic apex.

Critical Storytelling: Navigating Challenging yet Empowering Relationships

Ben Haseen's "Subtle Bangla Traits" is a powerful illustration of three siblings (un)learning of two worlds and how they negotiated their identities betwixt by those identities embraced and assigned by them and others. It is also about how the author's first teacher in the U.S.—Mr. Gutierrez—provided both space and awareness for him to develop as a young immigrant child in the U.S. public school system.

Pablo Montes' "Entre La Tierra Y Los Sueños" chronicles an intergenerational family story of honor, legacy, and knowledge that contradicts the normative discourses often embraced by the U.S.-based ideology of schooling and education. More importantly, the author's narrative is a true rendition of not losing oneself and family legacy as transnationals navigating to find one's dream and hope.

Bashar Al Hariri and Fatmeh Alalawneh's "Lost and Found: A Story of Reclaiming Identities" reminds us once again of the inner power and privilege that comes with upholding and embracing our ever-changing identities to enact changes around social justice and transformation. Their collective stories provide us with evocative space to do more work around diversity, inclusivity, and social justice to look beyond accent and race.

Gloria Park: *In Critical Storytelling: Navigating Challenging yet Empowering Relationships* section, I am reminded of multiple relationships that I have engaged in to be who I am today. There are so many individuals that have mentored me, knocked me down, and cared for me to be who I am today. Just as the personal narratives of Ben, Pablo, Bashar, and Fatmeh reveal, relationships, whether they are perceived as advantageous or not, become a critical medium in navigating difficult landscapes. The fact that my parents and my mother's extended family immigrated to the U.S. starting in the late 1960s to late 1970s was the starting point for how I situated myself in the world around me. My parents, especially my Mom, became a key player in my turbulent journey in the U.S. starting from 1976. You see, she took me out of a safe zone to nurture me, educate, and help me develop into the person I am today. With the help of my husband, I am hopeful that I can

do the same for our son. Similarly, I also see myself as an academic mother to my dissertation advisees as well as those who reach out to me as a trusted mentor. My hope is that I can continue to build an empowering relationship with my dear Son and my academic children now and in the future.

Critical Storytelling: Advocating for and Transforming Self and Others

Jiyoon Lee's "You Had Better Turn off the Fan..." is a rendition of bridging theory and practice—how a specified lived experience using English for the first time in the U.S. educational contexts and what that means for understanding and exploring communicative competence in learning and teaching English as an international language. This incident that occurred in 1999 has become a pedagogical tool for the author and her pre-service teacher education students.

Aracelis Nieves's "Como Una Leona: Shielding My Son from Discrimination at School" is a narrative rendition of one mother's journey as her son's advocate. These discriminations experienced by Diego, the author's son, were both intentional and unintentional ones, and voicing one's insights and experiences is the way to "right" the wrong and raise critical consciousness around those very issues.

May F. Chung's "I Lost My Language but Your Child Doesn't Have to..." explores the author's coming to terms with what it means to be a bilingual and bicultural individual and challenges of losing one's heritage language. Due to her lived experience, she has come to champion immigrant children's journeys in maintaining their heritage languages. Her narrative is close to home for many intergenerational immigrants shuttling between two very different languages and everything that comes with those languages.

Geovanny Vicente Romero's "Giving back When Most in Need" is a narrative of learning and teaching one's heritage (Spanish) and additional (English) languages as a stepping stone into his professional career trajectory. The author's narrative gets at the heart of what many immigrants experience—leaving their lucrative and high-status professions in their home countries and beginning blue-collared work due to linguistic hegemony and lack of choices in the U.S.

Gloria Park: In the section of Critical Storytelling: Advocating for and Transforming Self and Others, I am reminded of the ways in which I came to be a teacher, scholar, mother, spouse, and peer. While these identities are overlapping at times and in conflict with one another, I can confidently state that these identities have (dis)empowered me and others throughout my journey. My lived experience as a transnational immigrant woman has always dictated what I bring into my classroom and how I navigate my teaching space as a critical pedagogue. Simply, myself and my life have been a constant resource in my pedagogy.

Visual Narratives

There are four (4) chapters in this section. I share a brief summary of each chapter. The author(s) of each chapter powerfully weaves in the photos representing the themes.

Visual Storytelling: Weaving the Personal and the Political

Rajwan Alshareefy and Cristina Sánchez-Martín's "Journeying through Transnational Spaces: A Reflexive Account of Praxis and Identity Construction" is a powerful rendition of two teacher-scholars' coming together as a mentor and mentee in academia. Each author weaves a critical image that is at the center of his/her reflexive account. Their narratives depict a path of convergence and divergence where individual identities, while fluid and conflicted, are being challenged by societal level discourses that continue to marginalize and disrupt their individual and political choices. More critically, their narratives champion reflexive processes of coming to know oneself in order to advocate for those in similar, yet different terrains of transnational spaces.

Tairan Qiu's "The Weight of a Name: My Names and Stories across Lands and Time" illustrate autobiographical snapshots accompanied by photos of her development from a toddler to a married woman. These focus on the power that comes with naming in Chinese culture, as it is true in many cultures around the world. While her narrative concludes with a call for those from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to move away from assimilation to the dominant cultures and images, it is critical for all of us to be mindful that not everyone is afforded the choice of navigating between embraced and assigned identities.

Judith Landeros' "Story Weaving: Tejidos de Conocimientos Que Nos Conectan al Territorio" is a powerful rendition of unpacking the hidden curriculum of our educational system. Specifically, her illustration of the narratives coupled with the photos portray the relationship between her maternal figure and the surrounding ecology, namely the plants, the water, and the Land. The author once again reminds us the power that comes with intergenerational, transnational, and translingual stories that are missing in our curriculum that continues to privilege and champion the White privilege and "American Dream" when so much of what is being curricularized in the public education is disconnected to who we are, what we do, and how we live.

Polina Vinogradova's "The Power of Digital Storytelling for English Language Education: A Reflective Essay" weaves together a personally and politically empowered narrative of one's educational journey as she wrestled through challenging terrain of literacy socialization and development to find peace with

digital storytelling as an empowering pedagogical tool for herself and her students. The author situates her work by exposing the political nature of how reading and writing are taught in our educational landscape, and by providing a multimodal focus of learning to read and write, the teachers are provided with a platform to continue to make education inclusive of all.

Critical Storytelling: Moving Forward

It has been both my privilege and honor to read through these chapters. I learned much about the stories and the experiences of each author. I am grateful for this opportunity. I am once again reminded that our work, our voices, and our experiences should not end here with the publication of this edited volume. We must continue to do work in this area as teachers, scholars, teacher-scholars, educators, parents, and administrators alike to move forward to raise critical consciousness around issues of equity and access in our personal and professional lives. I leave you with these questions and I welcome additional questions of pedagogy, scholarship, and policy areas that we need to continue to wrestle with to make this world a better and more inclusive place.

- In what ways can we assist classroom teachers (as well as pre-service teachers) to bring authentic stories into their classrooms, not only in what and how they teach, but also as part of the classroom space?
- How can we re-conceptualize the K-20 curricula to include critical storytelling as a major theme that weaves across all curricula and not just an add-on course or special topic?
- How do we continue to promote the problem posing education that Paulo Freire (1970) envisioned for educators in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*?
- In what ways can the administrators of K-20 educational contexts be more involved in the day-to-day work of classroom teachers?
- How can journal editors continue to nurture, mentor, and work with authors and writers from around the globe, especially those who need direct mentorship of learning to write for publication?

References

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