Chapter 7
Storying Dreaming and Learning

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Abstract We are responsible for dreaming together, learning and teaching with all learners, especially for newcomers including asylum-seeking families, refugees, and immigrants. How do we support the education of children whose families have migrated from all over the world in this era's combined crises? We promote stories as an effective way to honor, understand, and learn from people who have different family histories and different experiences from ourselves. We believe that through storying we can support all children's learning. Through story, our brains and hearts have "license" to work together to make sense. This meaning can be associated with social and emotional aspects of life, with cognitive and knowledge-building learning, or can open spaces for art to express things that languages cannot. Children are experts at combining factual reality and fantasy as they try to make sense of their worlds. I use the metaphor of a circle in which children are the throughlines as we guide each other to "dream together" through storying about the interrelationship of life and learning. And while the work of scholars, activists, and authors, supports the circles like strong spiderwebs, the children's voices make the music of the meaning. In this discussion of theorists, activists, artists, and other adults, children appear and on the scenes as experts in a metaphorical way of hiding and seeking.

DREAMING TOGETHER	SOÑADO JUNTOS
a dream	un sueño
we dream	los soñamos
alone	solos
reality	la realidad
we dream	nos soñamos
together	juntos
	(Alarcón, 2005, p. 29)

We are urgently responsible for dreaming together to make a better world for learning and teaching—especially for our newcomers including asylum-seeking families, refugees, and immigrants. My family and friends know that even in informal gatherings, my "stories" come from learners of all ages and all backgrounds who dream alone and dream together.

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I collect memories seen in the eyes and gestures of a 4-year-old, originally from Mexico, in a recent conversation about moving from one place to another (*We have to wait to move. My mom says we can't move until my dad gets out of jail or he won't know where to find us.).* And a few years ago, in Italy, I met a Nigerian woman who had been trafficked and had escaped from a jail in Libya. After escaping and literally running to the seacoast and jumping into a flimsy rubber boat, she had to swim to the Italian shore when the rubber raft sank (*It's never easy, she told me*). An unaccompanied minor seeking asylum in the UK a decade ago (*The normal people of Sudan are seeking peace*) taught us much through his music. Wherever we live and however we survive, we all participate in the community of educating children.

How do we support the education of children, especially children whose families have migrated from all over the world in this era's combined crises? In spite of divisions and despair, over the years through the wisdom of generations of learners I've met, I see hope when we listen to each other—most often through stories and art. In this book, we promote stories as an effective way to honor, understand, and learn from people who have different family histories and different experiences from ourselves on many levels.

Revisiting our research questions mentioned in Chap. 1 of this book, the two most elaborated upon through data in this chapter are:

- How can we focus on the importance of people telling their own stories (reading the world) in a place where people may be both affirmed and challenged to see how individual stories are connected in communities to larger patterns of domination and resistance in a multicultural, global society?
- How can we place these complicated findings into practical and hopeful programs?

Stories are supported by language, by history, by myths and folk tales, and by imagination. Translation of stories is not always perfect, to be sure, and this is more dire and consequential within contexts of exploitation, colonialism, war, and oppression. Still, there are multiple ways that storying is transformative while also highlighting the joyfulness of the work in its making. As with most transformations, there is a complicated mix of struggle, even trauma, and uncertainty along with the joy.

Whether I am thinking about story in terms of theory, advocacy, policy, or curriculum, my "go to" for exploring practical applications of story in teaching and learning is a combination of children's literature and the arts. Our research clearly is grounded reconceptualizations of postmodern and narrative theoretical influences (Freire, 1985; Gruenewald, 2003; Josselson, 2006; Parnell, 2012; Parnell & Iorio, 2016). Yet, before I begin talking about practical applications, I want to stress the need for everyone to understand the *why* we should and can dream together—even if it does look and seem unusual.

7.1 Guides for Storying: Children, Scholars, Authors, and Activists

So, how do we begin the risk-taking endeavor to be brave about supporting children's learning? In what ways can we learn from and with stories from children and families who have been in situations of migration and all the challenges that bring? In this chapter, I carry on with the idea that through storying we can support children's learning. This can be done in many different ways. Through stories, we make emergent meaning slowly over time. Through story, our brains and hearts have "license" to work together to make sense. This meaning can be associated with social and emotional aspects of life, with cognitive and knowledge-building learning, or can open spaces for art to express things that language cannot. And stories don't require that we categorize and separate the mind from the heart. Stories may be the ultimate methodology for authentic, participatory learning.

Children are often the experts at combining factual reality and a version of fantasy that they contrive as they try to make sense of their worlds (Really, is there a monster under my bed? Really, is Santa Claus Black or White or a woman?). We can support and promote this learning without abandoning standards and more traditional objectives. Two high school teachers interviewed by National Public Radio (Garcia-Navarro, 2021) during the COVID pandemic in the United States were adamant about their decisions to change their guidelines and rubrics to include learning experiences that were truly useful to students' lives. And they were vocal about maintaining the academic rigor of their teaching—even increasing the rigor. Stories can be a useful framework that is inclusive of history and language, cultural priorities, myths, folktales and even some imaginative elaboration. And when stories have personal connections, learners are adamant about excellence and communication of meaning.

Children's author, Mac Barnett, in a TED Talk, quotes Pablo Picasso:

> We all know that Art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth or at least the truth that is given us to understand. The artist must know the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies. (Barnett, 2014)

In terms of relating this thought to his own approach to children's literature, Barnett believes art gives us access to a space between truth and lies that he interprets as wonder. He explains that "It's what Coleridge called the willing suspension of disbelief or poetic faith, for those moments where a story, no matter how strange, has some semblance of the truth, and then you're able to believe it" (Barnett, 2014). He believes, and I concur, that it isn't only children who have this ability. Adults do too and we often get there when we share stories in a variety of ways. Barnett reminds us that when people go to London and they visit Baker Street to see Sherlock Holmes' apartment, even though 221B is just a number that was painted on a building they are between the fuzzy lines of fact and fantasy. We all know the characters in the stories aren't real, but we have real feelings about them and feel like we know them.

Mac Barnett has his own family history to tell. He grew up with a single mother, a nurse, who when he was a child scoured thrift stores, garage sales, and other places

to bring him the picture books and storybooks he devoured. I don't know much about his family story, but I do know that the variety of children and families I have worked with over the years have certainly resonated with his ideas about wonder, joy, puzzles that need solving, and "make believe".

7.2 Children Combining Fantasy, Reality, People, and Other-Than-Humans in Stories

Later in this chapter, we hear from an Anishinabe elementary school teacher who explains the campfire of his family as a circle of belonging when he was a child. Then as an adult and a teacher he extended his campfire of belonging to include children of many cultures, backgrounds, and genders (Wazouko, 1997). The world is a circle, as he sees it, and he reminded us of Black Elk's words:

> You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the power of the world always works in circles, and everything tries to be round…The, wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. (Allen, 1991, p.51)

I see the metaphor of a circle in which children are the throughlines as we guide each other to "dream together" through storying. I know the term throughline has taken on a variety of meanings. I propose to use it in this case as "connection" whether the connection takes the form of a circle, or of multiple straight lines with an intersection point, or even as order in apparent experiential randomness as Lorenz (Gleick, 1987) saw in the Lorenz Butterfly of chaos theory. The interrelationship of life and teaching is a continum that loops around forever. Children can *be* this and *do* this naturally. This makes it difficult to organize the presentation of the data, but this circle of dreaming is based upon trust, interactions, relationships, communication, and love among participants as we have been promoting throughout this book. And while the work of the scholars, activists, authors, and activists support the circles like strong spiderwebs, the children's voices make the music of the meaning. As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, a remarkable scholar, Barad (2014) interweaves stories within different times, and she explains,

> This paper starts out in the middle by going forward to the past-not in order to recount what once was, but by way of re-turning, turning it over and over again, tasting the rich soil from which ideas spring, and opening up again to the uncountable gifts given that still give, to proceed to the place from which we never left/leave. (pp. 168)

This re-turning of children, adult teachers, families, and activists as our guides ties the stories and intentionality of our sharing them together.

7.2.1 Imagination and Re-turning

You won't be surprised to see in my discussion of theorists, activists, artists, and other adults, that children "re-turn" in a metaphorical way of hiding and seeking, to appear and on the scenes as experts. Mac Barnett, children's literature author mentioned above, strives for this wonder as he creates stories for children and he shows us how children can be our guides in this work. In his first book, *Billy Twitters and His Blue Whale Problem* (Barnett, 2009), he told a story about a boy who gets a blue whale as a pet but it almost ruins his life. The boy lives in San Francisco—a very tough city to own a blue whale in. There are a lot of hills, and other challenges. The story is amusing and it was augmented by an ad that offered a free 30-day risk-free trial for a blue whale. The ad said you can just send in a self-addressed stamped envelope and they would send you a whale. And kids did write in.

One letter said, "Dear people, I bet you 10 bucks you won't send me a blue whale. Eliot Gannon (age 6)" (Barnett, 2014). What Eliot and the other children who sent these letters got back was a letter in very small print from a Norwegian law firm—that said that due to a change in customs laws, their whale has been held up in Norway, but the letter finished by saying that the whale would love to hear from you. The whale had a phone number and the children were invited to call and leave the whale a message. And the children received a picture of their whale too. In the TED talk (Barnett, 2014), Barnett showed a picture of Randolph the Whale, that belongs to a boy named Nico who was one of the first children to ever call in. In the TED talk, Barnett played some of Nico's actual voice messages. The first message from Nico said,

> Hello, Randolph, this is Nico. I haven't talked to you for a long time, but I talked to you on Saturday or Sunday, yeah, Saturday or Sunday, so now I'm calling you again to say hello and I wonder what you're doing right now, and I'm going to probably call you again tomorrow or today, so I'll talk to you later. Bye. (Barnett, 2014)

Matt reported that Nico called back that day again. And by the time of the TED talk, Nico had left over 25 messages for Randolph over 4 years. He played one more message from Nico during the TED Talk. This was the Christmas message from Nico.

> Hi, Randolph, sorry I haven't talked to you in a long time. It's just that I've been so busy because school started, as you might not know, probably, since you're a whale, you don't know, and I'm calling you to just say, to wish you a merry Christmas. So have a nice Christmas, and bye-bye, Randolph. Goodbye. (Barnett, 2014)

Is this fantasy giving children some factual opportunities to connect through telephone messaging? I would argue that it does.

When asked about what meaning he hopes those who read his books receive, Barnett (2021) answers,

> What I'm most excited about is what the kid or adult brings to the books themselves. I put my thoughts out as best I can with a story, but it doesn't become art until a child on the

> other end brings their intelligence and experience to make their own interpretation. I want my books to leave plenty of room for kids to come in and figure out what to take from the story. This conversation between the book and reader is what is most exciting to me as a writer and reader myself. (The Windward School, 2021)

Barnett (Manley, 2019) acknowledges that his tutoring experiences were his first hint that kids are smarter, braver readers than adults are. He maintains that "Kids will ask you the real questions." And he goes on to say, "I like books that end with questions, whether it be with a question or implied questions," Mac says. "I don't have any moral that I am interested inscribing on a kid's brain." (Manley, 2019).

This approach is especially important for students and readers who have migration experiences and multiple histories and who use multiple languages. This sounds strange as a way to discuss learning for our children. But, we have guides who through their history and courage show us storying is full of potential. A brief look at some children guiding us with their student teachers supporting them illustrates these ideas. Children combine pretend, imagination, and learning as a part of their schooling. A teacher education student working with 4-year olds in preschool wrote:

> This week at the preschool I was able to observe an example of a collaborative, imaginative story between the teacher and the students. It was during snack time when the children were all sitting at a table together eating. The teacher started by saying, "Let's make up a story. I'll start." She then said, "Once upon a time there was a spooky story…" Eduardo[1] continued by saying, "About ninja turtles and skeletons". Another child, Sophia, said, "The ninja turtles are good". The teacher then said, "And they ate…" Eduardo went on to say, "Milk and pizza!". Another child named Callie added, "And then the skeleton saw cats and dogs". Sophia said, "And they got attacked and then Maleficent came and was looking for treasure." The teacher added, "Maleficent has power and says, "abra ca dabra!" Eduardo finished the story by saying, "Maleficent stole the cats and dog's gold on an island".

The student teacher also noted that this example supported some of her own learning of going back to past teacher guides in her university literacy class.

> I thought this story was interesting to observe because the teacher was able to work together with different children in creating a spooky story. I remember in class we studied Sylvia Ashton Warner's (1986) work with Maori children in New Zealand which found that children were fascinated with and interested in stories that are scary. The children seemed to have really enjoyed it as they created all the different things they thought of, such as ninja turtles and Maleficent.

Throughout the analysis of findings in all categories of our research about storying over the past projects, there have been vivid illustrations of family history, critical perspectives of place, and conocimiento theory (Anzaldúa, 2002), culture, language, and disruption of child development theory (Nelson, 2009) that we had been concurrently studying in university coursework. These theorists guide us to listen to and believe in our children's guides.

Nelson's (2009) research provides alternatives to the traditional developmental theory that focuses on presumed innate abilities and the assumptions of child and adult

[1] All names changed to protect privacy.

forms of cognition and static stages of development. We have discussed Nelson's work throughout this book, and I do so again here intentionally. Her framework offers an account of social, cognitive, and linguistic development in the first 5 years of life. She argues, differently from more traditional child development foundational theory, that children be seen as members of a community of minds, striving not only to make sense, but also to share meanings with others. To reiterate Nelson's (2009) contribution to our work, we note that she describes herself as a contextual functionalist, and she researches meaning-making and memory in children. She stresses that children are "… components of an integrated system…" (p. 186) and she maintains, "…stories bear directly on the problems of different minds, different selves, and different times that are central to the child's emerging understanding of the world…" (p. 172). At the same time, this individual meaning-making is integrated into the contextual world of people, places, and events in children's lives.

Another child guide working with a student teacher in California showed the complexity of Nelson's ideas about stories, meaning making, and children's emerging understanding of their worlds. There are aspects of games, art, children's stories, and some unvoiced trauma. A few years ago, we were guided by Nina, age 5, and her student teacher, Eva. Critical conceptions of Place in terms of lived experiences, family dynamics, situations with a child living in two households, affecting school contexts arose also for Eva, Nina's student teacher. She was preparing a felt storyboard in a kindergarten classroom and she noted that one child, Nina, came in with a perplexed look on her face as she saw that the felt storyboard was being prepared. Then, when it was time for children to come together, Nina chose a spot in the front row and sat there with a curious look on her face.

As Eva began to tell the children who hurried over to watch her that she had two little mice friends that were hiding behind two of the multicolored houses, Nina exclaimed, "I know this game! We used to play it at my old school." Eva then explained the rules to the "game" and the group of children listened intently. The game involved different colored felt houses placed on the felt board and two mice figures that were hidden behind two of the houses. A song about colors often introduces the game, and then children are encouraged to guess which houses the mice are behind. An illustrated storybook follows and includes a story about why the mouse was hiding.

Nina smiled as she sang the accompanying song with the other children and shot her hand in the air to guess what color house the mouse was behind. When it was her turn to guess she chose purple and grinned broadly when she saw that one mouse was behind it. Eva then brought out the book *Mouse Paint* (Walsh, 1995) and Nina blurted out, "I love this book! I have it at Mommy's house". When Eva finished reading the storybook she led a discussion comparing and contrasting the storybook with the felt board game.

Nina scrunched up her nose and shook her head when a boy said that the "Little Mouse" game was not a story. Eva asked Nina if she disagreed and she nodded yes, and remarked, "It (the game/story) shows us how the two little mice are hiding behind two houses and we found out one was in the purple house and one was in

the brown house. It has a beginning, something happens, and then there is an end." Other children nodded their heads in agreement that it is a story and Nina smiled.

The example here documents a complex incident that evolved as Eva, the student teacher, learned more about the family situation of the child, Nina, and how this situation is one that entangles place in terms of a child living in two different family homes with an unpredictable pattern and lack of routine (between her mother's home and her father's home). This was complicated by her transferring to a new school. In the 3 months since school had begun during family-focused activities and storybooks in the class, Nina had never mentioned any family members—this was the first time. And through this story activity, Nina showed interest and confidence interacting with her peers (which hadn't happened earlier in the months since school had begun). The school social worker had mentioned to the kindergarten teacher and the student teacher that the child's family life "is complicated." Eva reported that Nina often seemed disengaged in school, but the story of the mice and the fact that she enthusiastically shared how she loved reading the story at her mother's house was poignant.

Nelson's theory supports our participants, and many families around the world, in transition from a homeland, who proudly carry their roots to a variety of contexts. The contextual worlds of people, places, and events are sometimes a complicated mix of struggle, fear, and pain along with being close with loved ones, new friends, and sometimes places to play. The photojournalists and activists during what has become a world migration tragedy have brought us touching, tragic, beautiful and horrible stories from around the world that began to be recognized internationally about 2015. These activists show children from different countries with different languages playing together as they continue their work of trying to make sense of their worlds in refugee camps.

7.2.2 Re-turning: Teachers' Life Experiences as Children Influencing Them as Teachers

Years ago, in an interview study of activist teachers striving for inclusion of and respect for all children and families, we found that in the construction of narratives of experience, there is a relationship between living a life story and telling a life story. This telling a life story is often done in the language of metaphor. Metaphor often provides the possibility of communicating what cannot be expressed literally. Maxine Greene (1992) taught us that we feel less powerless when we can name and explain. The life metaphors of the teachers who were interviewed seemed to provide a mechanism for "remything." We saw the teachers as involved in midwifing new mythologies through transformations in their classrooms (Rummel & Quintero, 1997). This recreation happened during the experiences of the family histories and the critical reading and thinking the teachers engaged in as children, adults, and professionals. We asked over 50 teachers to participate in this study. To identify

the participants, we used Casey's (1993) concept of teacher as "artisan," implying the possibility of changing the world through work. These teacher–artisans create curricula, which weave their knowledge with the needs and interests of their students. Their commitment to students was part of the fabric of their total lives. In most cases, they created or participated in organizations that influence larger systems of school or society. We included teachers from a wide spectrum of racial, class, and gender backgrounds who teach in a variety of contexts.

The teachers in this interview study (Rummel & Quintero, 1997) talked a lot about how they valued the passing down of stories from their parents and grandparents. One teacher talked about her West Indian grandmother passing on teachings through folk tales. One teacher was the daughter of an educator who read and talked about works of James Baldwin and Richard Wright, but this teacher noted that as a child there were almost no children's books in her childhood with people of color.

An elementary school teacher who is Anishinabe, and who participated in the study, explained to us in an interview:

> Before we start I would like to say that much of the literacy during my youth was done orally. I remember some of the stories. Most of the stories were passed down from grandfather to grandfather. Mostly animal stories, stories of valor, stories of helping each other. … We would gather around a campfire, and the eldest would talk, a lot of times it was the grandmother. We all sat close to the fire nobody talked, not even babies cried. This is where a lot of the learning about my culture took place. (Wazouko in Rummel & Quintero, 1997, 105–112.)

Wazouko has lived experiences showing contrasts. He uses his gift of vision and expresses himself through his work with children. He sees the center of his world as his place at the circle of the campfire. He doesn't dwell on the bad; he tells his story through the art of interacting with the students.

Another of the participants, a middle school teacher and fiction writer in St. Paul, Minnesota, showed us a lively mix of the art of writing, of people-watching, activism, and teaching. This teacher's belief in imagination as a transforming act guided his writing and also fostered his belief in his students.

> I think that part of what you need to do to be a good teacher is to be able to imagine the lives of your students and to respond compassionately to that and through that compassionate response make a decision that they are worthwhile and that they are bringing something to the experience and that you as the teacher have an important role in shaping them. (Rummel & Quintero, 1997, p.59)

Another of the teachers who grew up in a community of farmworkers as a child in Texas, realized:

> We didn't have any heroes to identify with…We had one person, General Zaragoza. The reason that we identify with him is because he was born in an area of south Texas, which is now Goldeanne, and he was the one that won the final battle. The Mexicans didn't want us because we were Chicanos, and the Americans didn't want us because they think we're Mexican. So we made this guy our hero. (Rummel & Quintero, 1997, p.190)

On a different autobiographical note, the same teacher spoke about his family context, which is important to add to our knowledge and perspective about the strengths of families in migrant communities. He explained,

> We were so many. There wasn't a big house, so there wasn't a lot of space. I would read outside. I wasn't the only one. There were two little ones that I read with. We would play school. And I would read inside even though my brothers and sisters would look at me and wonder, "What is he doing?" Well, reading. Or if I had a project to work on for school I would practice a speech or a presentation with them, they couldn't understand. They would laugh…They didn't understand. (Rummel & Quintero, 1997, p. 209)

The same teacher above also told us about his memories of working in the farm fields with his family,

> Everything was very positive. Your father is there; your mother is there, and your brothers and sisters are there too. You are all working together and your father is saying good things all day, every day for a long time. I didn't know at that time, but it was a close family unit. They talk about supporting a family now with two incomes. The migrant families--we were doing that long ago. (Rummel & Quintero, 1997, p. 210)

Another teacher, who was particularly influenced by Maya Angelou offered her opinion in terms of how artists and writers should respond to some political groups.

> The conservative right has decided that artists are apart from the people. That's ridiculous! I mean, at our best, the writer, painter, architect, actor, dancer, folksinger—we *are* the people. We come *out* of the people and remain *in* the people. What we ought to be doing is singing in the parks, talking to children going to gatherings of parents, doing whatever it is we do—dancing, reading poetry, performing—all the time, so that people know, "These artists are my people—you can't kill them, you can't stop them" (Kelley, 1995, p. 23).

7.3 Current Stories Developing at the Border in the United States

Fast forward, to what the American Association of Pediatrics calls the "torture" and "child abuse" (Soboroff, 2020) inflicted upon children separated from their parents in detention centers around the United States during the past 4 years. In 2017, we began to see children in ICE detention centers in the United States drew poignant pictures about themselves and their new friends in cold "cages" and covering themselves with "aluminum foil" blankets.

We realize, and tremble about, the meaning-making terrified children are experiencing. It is useful to revisit this social understanding between the self and others identified by Nelson suggests a third space for education and human interactions and connects directly to the theoretical stance of Gloria Anzaldúa. To reiterate, Anzaldúa's Conocimiento Theory is described as "…an overarching theory of consciousness…all dimensions of life, both inner—mental, emotional, instinctive, imaginal, spiritual, bodily realms—and outer—social, political, lived experiences…" (Hérnandez-Ávila & Anzaldúa, 2010, p. 177). Both Nelson's (2009) approach and

Anzaldúa's theory of conocimiento relate to personal history, meaning-making within the contexts of self, family history, and lived experience. The on-going storying and re-storying in our findings illustrate this.

In Conocimiento theory, Anzaldúa highlights transformative elements of her theories of Mestizo consciousness and la facultad (mental ability). "Like mestizo consciousness, conocimiento represents a non-binary, connectionist mode of thinking; like la facultad, conocimiento often unfolds within oppressive and entails a deepening of perception" (Keating, 2009, p. 320). Durham (2012), a scholar of Anzaldúa's work, maintains, "Anzaldúa's epistemological project requires active participation on many fronts" (p. 183).

Anzaldúa also participated and created children's books about the world of curanderas (healers), la migra (ICE), and children, their friends and their families doing their best to survive. *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del Otro Lado.* Anzaldúa (1995) is a story of fiction that contains many truths that children understand. The two children featured are from different sides of the Rio Grande River. They become friends, negotiate bullies, hide from la migra, learn from a curandera about how to make healing salves from plants. They make sense of their world and reflect transformative elements of conocimiento theory.

In addition, Anzaldúa wrote a children's book based on the folktale about La Llorona, a folktale about a ghost woman that some believe was created to scare young children from not venturing too far from the safety of their homes and caregivers. Anzaldúa reported to have wondered even as a child, whether there was another side to this scary ghost woman. So, she created *Prietita and the Ghost Woman/Prietita y La Llorona,* that tells the story of a young girl who was discovering things and truths in her life that were hidden. She discovered a positive, female, Indian side of La Llorona (Anzaldúa, 1995).

Another artist guide is the late poet Francisco X. Alarcón who explained the experiences of multinational, multilingual learners through his poetry. He was born in Los Angeles, California, and he considered himself "bi-national." His entire life he spent time in both Mexico and the United States with extended family, friends, and colleagues. Songs and stories he heard from his grandmother, as well as experiences he had growing up, inspired his poetry. This chapter opened with one of his last poetry contributions about our "dreaming together" (Alarcón, 2005). He always wrote and presented his poetry in both Spanish and English. This approach to learning, life, loved ones and strife is reflected in participant contributions to much of our research.

From National Public Radio, we learn about new groups of Latinx writers, editors, and literary agents who are providing more storying and art for all of us (del Barco, 2020). One group is Las Musas/The Muses and supports Latina writers with mentorships and webinars. Writer and activist Aida Salazar is one of the founders of Las Musas. Salazar explains,

> We decided to create this collective that would help amplify each other's work, and we didn't want to be pitted against each other. That happens in many publishing houses. They'll say, well, we've got that one Latina author, so therefore, we don't need another. We know that we have to build each other up. We know that there's plenty of room at the table and that, in

> some instances, we're ready to create our very own table if they don't want to invite us. (del Barco, 2020)

Salazar's second book, *Land of the Cranes* (2020), is a poetic account told by a fictional 9-year girl, Betita, writing from a detention center. Salazar wrote the book to protest immigrant roundups, and she created the stories based on her own family's experiences years ago that reflect the tragic situation that persists to this day.

Aida Salazar (2020) ends her heart-wrenching and gloriously hopeful book in a letter to the reader in her own voice. She says,

> Thank you for taking the journey with Betita. May you, like her, search to find light in your darkest hour, or as her Papi says, "find sweetness in your struggle." May you see that as a child, like Betita, you have the power to write, to draw, to speak up against and shut down the forces that seek to make migrants criminals. (p. 245)

Also, to make the previous point about combining poetry, literature, and factual truths, at the end of her Acknowledgements for *Land of the Cranes* (Salazar, 2020, p. 247*)*, Salazar says, "My most heartbroken love for the seven children she knew through journalists and activists…".

> …who lost their young lives while in immigration custody and to the unnamed migrant children who have also died while incarcerated or while crossing the border, to those separated from their parents, to those who have been or remain incarcerated and endure(d) the brutality of that experience. You matter, and I am so sorry. (Salazar, 2020, p. 247).

7.4 Becoming Advocates for Imagination and New Ways of Making Meaning

And going back 400 years in history in the United States and re-turning, we have a capable, brave guide in our present time for our thinking about truth and lies, and story and art as a medium for our understanding and our advocacy. Nikole Hannah-Jones compiles historical stories through The 1619 Project. She guides us back to August of 1619, when the first enslaved Africans landed on American shores. Last year Ms. Hannah-Jones created the project with the New York Times and launched The 1619 Project with the intention of reframing the American narrative around slavery 400 years after that first arrival. In her introductory essay for which she recently won the Pulitzer Prize for commentary, she explained in an interview:

> You know, I relied very heavily on the work of historians for this. This essay was about democracy and the unparalleled role that black Americans have played almost always without getting credit and actually creating the democracy that we have and making those glorious words of the declaration actually true for all Americans. (Shapiro, 2020)

The interviewer asked her to explain how writing the introduction for the project helped her better understand her own family. He asked her about a flag she mentioned that her father flew outside their home when she was a child. She elaborated,

> There's a part in that opening where I say, you know, as a child, you think you know so much when, in fact, you understand so little and that I finally understood why my dad flew this flag that, when I was young, used to deeply embarrass me. And people ask me all the time, well, how - you know, when did you come to that realization? … I truly never really got my father's patriotism until I was immersed for weeks upon weeks reading about black people's really dogged patriotism and dogged belief in a country that has never treated us as full citizens. And thinking about what that meant allowed me, as a 42-year-old woman, to finally understand where my father was coming from, which is kind of miraculous. (A. Shapiro, 2020)

In the collection of essays and literary works observing the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery documents the prevailing narrative taught in schools is that Black Americans' history begins with enslavement and they had contributed little to the founding of this nation. Instead, Hannah-Jones (2019) writes, "it is we who have been the perfecters of this democracy". She guides us to think about how patriotism is actually truly believing in ideals of equality and our responsibility to challenge our country and to be honest about our country. Black Americans certainly can claim "the type of patriotism that has been built through the blood sacrifice of black Americans and so many other marginalized people" (Hannah-Jones, 2019).

Another activist historian guides us through the rich past experiences of African American teachers in an oral history project to influence support for teachers of the present and their students. Derrick Alridge is founder, director, and principal investigator of Teachers in the Movement, an oral history project. Alridge initiated in 2018 a program for supporting teachers' increasing racial, religious, and ethnic inclusion for students from kindergarten to college. In a virtual presentation for Oklahoma State University (2021) titled *Teachers as Intellectuals: Pedagogy, Activism and Freedom,* he introduced the ancient principle of Sankofa. This idea is based on looking back and looking forward. The word Sankofa is from the Akan Tribe in Ghana.

> The literal translation of the word is *"it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind."* The word is derived from the words:

SAN (return),
KO (go),
FA (look, seek and take). The sankofa symbolizes the Akan people's quest for knowledge with the implication that the quest is based on critical examination, and intelligent and patient investigation. (Berea College, n.d.)

Another activist and author guide who is important to this discussion is Dave Eggers. We mentioned his children's book based on the Statue of Liberty, *Her Right Foot* (2017) in Chapter 6. He believes we should remind children (and all of us) that the Statue of Liberty is not a static thing that stood for the country a century ago, but she stands for it now and is walking, is striding out to sea to welcome the next wave of immigrants (Eggers, 2017).

He has another important book for our work with young learners, *What Can a Citizen Do?* (2018). This picture book, illustrated by Shawn Harris, shows that "a kid" is a citizen, a bear is a citizen, and no act of caring and love is too small or insignificant to be important. Eggers is an inspiring literary activist and often focuses

on personal stories in his nonfiction, adult fiction, and children's books. He explains in an interview with the Guardian, "Any time you're cynical about the world, meet a first-generation kid who writes about what she's grateful for." His belief in individual and collective purpose is unwavering. "On this block," he says, "I could introduce you to nine people whose stories would make interesting books … If you're listening, the stories are never-ending." (Laity, 2018).

Our qualitative work presents examples of information about and analysis of stories of children and the teachers and student teachers working with them. Stories of fact and imagination have been shared. As explained earlier, our work in southern California had long valued the dynamics of story–personal stories, imaginary stories, historical stories, and other types of story—that always combined a mosaic of meaning that children were constructing from their lived experiences and from fantasy. Murris (2016) presents a pedagogy that disrupts a "structural and systemic discrimination of children, particularly as knowers …" (p.35). She proposes education practices in which "…all earth dwellers are mutually entangled and always becoming, always intra-acting with everything else….Individuals materialize and come into being through relationships; and so does meaning" (Murris, 2016, p. xi). Children with imaginative expertise are experts at intra-acting.

We are reminded by Thomas Peacock (2002) that we have guides in our spiritual and omnipresent ancestors in our Indigenous histories. He explains that Anishinabe (Ojibwe) people tell many stories about Waynabozho, a half spirit, half human. Waynabozho stories are often used to explain life to young children. Why is it dogs are always sniffing? Why do birch trees have black marks? These and many other questions are answered by Waynabozho stories.

Todd (2016) illustrates, highlights, and brings front and center to the research demands of today, the eons of wisdom passed to us from Indigenous scholars. She reminds us that we unconsciously avoid engaging with contemporary Indigenous scholars and thinkers while we engage instead with decades old ethnographic texts or 200-year-old philosophical tomes. She warns,

> What I am critiquing here then, really, are the silences. It is not that current trends in the discipline of anthropology or the Euroacademy more broadly are wrong. It is that they do not currently live up to the promises they make. I do think many people making claims regarding the promise of current turns in anthropology have very good intentions. However, these cannot always easily translate into long-term structural change. (Todd, 2016).

This is important advice and the work never ends…the good thing is we have the inspiration of artists and activists, and most importantly in the energy and passion of young children. We continue. Yes, we have many guides to listening, to trusting, to being brave.

One of my current guides is wise beyond my own capabilities and understandings. And I am content to read and listen to few pages of *Braiding Sweetgrass* (Kimmerer, 2013) every night and know I will need to listen and read again and again. Kimmerer (2013) says "Skywoman seems to look me in the eye and ask, in return for this gift of a world on Turtle's back, what will I give in return?" (p. 8).

Kimmerer reminds us, as we dream together with immigrants and people we have yet to meet,

> It is good to remember that the original woman was herself an immigrant. She fell a long way from her home in the Skyworld, leaving behind all who knew her and who held her dear. She could never go back. Since 1492, most here are immigrants as well, perhaps arriving on Ellis Island without even knowing that Turtle Island rested beneath their feet. Some of my ancestors are Skywoman's people, and I belong to them. Some of my ancestors were the newer kind of immigrants too: a French fur trader, an Irish carpenter, a Welsh farmer. And here we all are, on Turtle Island, trying to make a home….She (Skywoman) came here with nothing but a handful of seeds and the slimmest of instructions to "use your gifts and dreams for good," the same instructions we all carry. (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 8)

We dream together. And we take wisdom from an Anishinabe woman who advised activists in the Minnesota community where she lived and worked for decades, "I just have to wake up each morning and tell myself that I'm going to do the best I can to make one small change for the better for my people. And I vow not to let society take the sparkle out of my grandchildren's eyes" (Meyers, 1988).

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