

Democracy's College, Episode 55

Critiquing the 'Critiques for Transformation' Book with
Heather McCambly, Erin Doran, and Sergio Gonzalez



From top left: Erin Doran, Heather McCambly, and Sergio Gonzalez

Sal Nudo: Welcome to the Democracy's College podcast series. This podcast focuses on educational equity, justice, and excellence for all students in the P-20 educational pathways. This podcast is a product of the Office of Community College Research and Leadership, or OCCRL, at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Learn more about OCCRL at occrll.illinois.edu.

Heather McCambly: Hello, everybody. Thanks for joining us on another episode of Democracy's College. My name is Heather McCambly. I'm an assistant professor of higher education at the University of Pittsburgh and also a research affiliate with the Office of Community College Research and Leadership.

This is our fourth podcast episode in conversation with authors featured in the volume *Critiques for Transformation: Reimagining Colleges and Communities for Social Justice*, edited by myself and Dr. Lorenzo Baber.

I'm joined today by Doctora Erin Doran and Dr. Sergio Gonzalez. Dr. Erin Doran is an associate professor at the School of Education at Iowa State University, with a particular focus in community college research. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *Journal of Latinos and Education*, and the *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, among other places. She is the author of the chapter at the center of today's discussion, "Untapped Potential: Ethnic Studies in Community Colleges." Welcome, Erin.

And Dr. Sergio Gonzalez is an assistant professor at the Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership in the School of Education at Duquesne University. He teaches undergraduate- and graduate-level course work in higher education, emphasizing social justice discourses. His interdisciplinary research is informed by women of color feminisms, Chicana/Latina feminisms and Jotería studies within higher education scholarship.

To get us started, I wanted to ask a fun warmup question where you tell one of your secrets. So, I want to ask you: What is your secret, or not so secret, writing procrastination activity?

Erin Doran: Oh, if I'm cleaning my bathrooms, there is a deadline that is looming that I am really, really running away from.

Sergio Gonzalez: Oh my God. I'm in the similar boat. If I'm folding my socks and my chonies, you know that, like, I'm trying to do *everything* but what I need to do. Because you open the drawers and you're like, why is this even color-coded? Because I'm trying to avoid life, aka writing.

Heather McCambly: That's a lot. I thought you were going to go with the makeup brushes.

Sergio Gonzalez: No, because that's, like, relaxing. But when I'm, like, hella stressed out, I'll start folding, like, laundry to the tea.

Heather McCambly: I mean, y'all [procrastinations] are responsible. My version is actually deeply shameful. It's *all* celebrity gossip. I will just, I'll spiral.

Erin Doran: I mean, it's *productive* procrastination. Productive procrastination is still procrastination.

Heather McCambly: True. Well, mine is unproductive procrastination, so there's that.

Erin Doran: You know what, though? So, when I was working on my master's like in a whole other life, I was a scholar who was studying the Holocaust and in the stuff that I would read about genocide, about war and stuff like that, like, *Us* magazine was my haven because it was just something that was necessary for me to turn my brain off that was completely, like, superficial and light and whatever. So like, I *never*, *ever* judge people when they're, like, "I'm into, like, Bravo TV and *People Magazine*, like, go get it.

Heather McCambly: Okay, well, I'm glad we have that in common. It's not just me.

Erin Doran: No.

Heather McCambly: Okay, so now that we've revealed our deepest secrets here, Erin, I wanted to start by inviting you just to share a bit about the origin story of the chapter from the book. So, what drove you to write about ethnic studies in community colleges, and specifically how did that come together for this volume?

Erin Doran: Around 2015, when I was still in Texas – first off, I have a number of friends who teach Mexican American studies, which is what the field is called in Texas, who teach Mexican American studies in community colleges in the San Antonio area in particular. And in 2015, there had been a *really*, really problematic slash racist textbook that had been put forward to the Texas state legislature for adoption for the K-12 curriculum for Mexican, for the high school, actually, I should say, not K-12 but high school curriculum for Mexican American studies. And it had mobilized a lot of ethnic studies instructors and then just folks who maybe aren't nested within an ethnic studies department at their

respective institutions but, like, may teach, like, you know, history or Latino literature or something like that. So within the San Antonio community there was like this grassroots community that had grown of scholar practitioners, teachers of scholars called Somos Mas, or we are more, like, a play on mas on Mexican American studies.

But the thing that was really interesting to me is that the community college students in the area were also mobilized as well to, like, organize caravans to drive to Austin, which is about 75 miles north of where they were in the middle of the summer, to go attend these textbook hearings at the legislature, to go testify and things like that. It was just, for me, like, what is so compelling or provocative about these programs that you've got students who are, like, busy, who are taking time off of work, who are taking time away from their families to, like, go and get really involved in this process, which is usually not as fraught as this particular one was. And so that was what really sparked, like, my intellectual curiosity in it, and what started me getting involved in doing research in this area.

As far as the chapter goes, you know, I know that Lorenzo knew that this was what I was studying. We had a lot of conversations, informally, about it when our offices were next door to each other at Iowa State. And I feel like Lorenzo, having this background of, like, a mother who is a scholar activist, like, someone who has been very passionate about African American studies, knowing some of our foremost black scholars and stuff like that, I think he could understand and appreciate what I was sort of going through as a scholar who was studying my own respective ethnic studies field.

So, he asked me, you know, do you want to contribute a chapter? And I remember the thing that was weighing very heavily on my heart as I was starting to write this chapter was the El Paso shooting had just happened. I was born and raised in El Paso. The Walmart that that happened in is next to a mall that my mom goes to, like, usually every Saturday. I think the thing, actually, that saved my, like, mental health that day was the fact that my mom actually, like, called me first to say, like, this happened, I wasn't there, don't panic.

And so, like, I remember reaching out to Lorenzo and was like, "I think I'm going to talk about El Paso in this chapter." And he was just like, "Do it." And so, for me, that ended up being something that I could sort of process the grief that I was feeling personally and to just also, like, go back to this question of, like, why are we here as educators? Like, why are we here? What are we hoping that we can do for students by delivering the content, the knowledge by sharing the experiences that we do in the classrooms, and what is the ultimate goal?

Of ethnic studies, I think in helping students grapple with, like, who they are, what it means to be a minoritized person in American society, and that's why I think it's like I also tried to draw on, there are community colleges in *every* community across the United States or there's one nearby. So, whether we're talking about poverty or settler colonialism or white supremacy or what have you, there are community colleges that can educate and that can provide students with some sort of space for how to deal with these issues of what they want to think about for themselves regarding these issues. And so that, I think, is the sort of meta narrative of, like, what brought me to this research in the first place, but what also motivated me to write what I wrote in this chapter.

Sergio Gonzalez: Thank you for sharing that. That's, like, really powerful.

So, I read the chapter, and I was like, oh my God. There were so many points that, like, I really resonated with. And I was like, I think that in the future, if you're ever, like, decide to expand on this, which I think you totally could, I would include that as like a vignette, because I think that brought it full circle. Like, reading that and then hearing this, I was like, oh, that makes *so much* sense. That's so powerful. So, thank you for sharing that.

Erin Doran: Yeah, I mean, I think that the question about origin stories for our research is something that we don't ask each other enough. How did you come to the research that you dedicated a lot of time and effort and headspace to and stuff like that. Like, I *love* hearing about people's origin stories.

I came up from a master's program where my mentor always said, like, research is me search; that *all* research is fundamentally research and that you're looking for yourself in some way. Whether or not you realize it at the time, like, your curiosities are taking you down some way that is connected to yourself, your ancestors, like, whatever – some sort of personal story. And so, I do love that question.

Heather McCambly: And it makes me think about, I think what we're grappling with as a field with the idea of what positionality statements are for, too. It's evolving. But I think for me, the ideal positionality statement will help us understand that kind of complex interweaving of the origin of this research in relation to who we are and what we've experienced. You know, rather than the, like, list of identities. It's like what does that have to do with how you came to create what you created? And there's *always* a story behind every single one of these projects we pursue.

And so, Sergio, I wanted to ask or invite you to kind of intersect what you've been thinking about with this chapter with your own work. And specifically, I'm just thinking now and tapping into the vitality of community colleges for this type of teaching and learning and opportunity that ethnic studies brings. And also, I would say, like, an extra resistance to it that we see come up in terms of, like, community colleges are for, like, practical technical training, like, people don't need to be wasting their time on froufrou extra types of learning and what an interesting tension that is, in particular with the type of work that you do.

Sergio Gonzalez: So I love this chapter. I was like highlighting – I color code my highlights and so I was color coding, like, oh, this is, like, for me to explore and even, like, bringing up San Francisco State and, like, how that's where a lot of, like, ethnic studies *really*, like, starting to, like, push out. I was like, yeah, I remember, like, growing up and, like, learning about this, right, but also understanding, like, the social context that I was in the Bay Area because that's where I'm from, and so I had that exposure.

And so, I think a lot about my time working at College Track as I was, like, going through this chapter. And so at College Track I was a college success advisor. And so I worked with students for this nonprofit, which I was a part of. So when I was in high school, they helped me get into college and it was after school. They provided ACT prep, SAT prep. They provided academic advising. Everyone had, like, tutoring and so were able to, like, help with the academics.

And through College Track and the work that I did when I came back home after undergrad, community colleges were like segways to college. It wasn't like it's community college or four-year. That was the bigger spectrum of, like, how education was filtered to students. But we were like, you can take a community college class. And we would often be like, take an ethnic studies course so you can learn

more about yourself and have a deeper understanding of the world that you existed before you go to college. And so we were always using community college courses as a way to actually access courses.

Where I'm from, we were part of, like, the Sequoia Union High School District, right? So, if we didn't have those AP or AS classes, the community college class could count as a course to, like, help us when we were applying to schools, right? It wasn't being used as a, like, "Oh, you're only going to community college?" It was like, your community college can provide you courses and contacts that are going to prepare you for when you do apply and go to college.

It's kind of like beating the system, right? Like, A) you have college courses on your transcript; B) you're improving your GPA because they don't offer this class, so this is a way for you to, like, go above and beyond what resources existed for you to, like, educate yourself. So, like, we used a lot of the community college courses as a way to, like, this is how you are going to learn about yourself through ethnic studies, right? And I think that really impacted, like, me as I show up in education, right? And I would say I'm a scholar activist in the sense that I'm always thinking back to, like, how am I engaging with community and forming community? And I always go back to, like, the communities that I'm from in the Bay Area. Being from the hood, being first-generation, right? Like understanding that poverty was a huge factor into whether or not we did have access to school. And who we were reading; why we were reading such people.

And so, I feel like as someone who is in education as a scholar activist, I have a very interdisciplinary approach because I grabbed from other spaces, aka I grab a lot from ethnic studies. Like, I don't grab from education and say, "Yeah, Qualitative Research Methods 1 taught me." No, it didn't. Like in my academic upbringing, all of my research methods courses were taken in women of color feminist classes, were taken in, like, feminist research theory.

And so I approached my work and, like, my rationale, even the classes I'm teaching here – I'm teaching social justice in higher ed, and every class we have to do a positionality statement. Like, that's part of the course. And we go through it throughout the whole semester. So, they just submitted their first draft and I'm going to provide feedback. And I'm going to ask them to dig deeper. And then they're going to work on it again. And by the end of semester, I'm like, you're going to have a positionality statement that you can take with you and continue to evolve because you know everything's going to change. From the moment right here as a student to when you graduate, a lot of my students are going to be K through 12 educators, and so I want you to critically reflect on your why and what you're doing and who you are in community and conversation with and for.

Heather McCambly: That speaks to part of the writing that Lorenzo and I did in the intro, because we kind of had the opportunity to write the introduction chapter right at the end as this was about to come out. I think we got to do this, finalize that intro into 2021, late 2021. And so we were starting to catch the winds of how bad the political backlash was going to be to all of the renewed energy that went towards, you know, the movement for black lives and other deep social concerns with race and racism.

And we were starting to see, okay, this is how folks are going to mobilize against all of this ground we almost took, we felt like maybe we took as communities. And so, as we were writing, we were thinking about ethnic studies, for example, having a target on its back kind of first and foremost. And as we were writing, really talking about, you know, the folks coming for ethnic studies, the anti-woke movement, folks on the far right, they're not doing this for no reason. They're not actually dumb. They're coming for

ethnic studies and other types of groups and organizations because it matters. And it actually does have impact on people's lives and development.

So, from the beginning, I was super excited about this chapter, Erin, but now it kind of takes on an almost, like, different valence. Last year, we had the Florida governor, Ron DeSantis, laying out in his plan for higher ed, specifically slamming recent incorporations of critical antiracist frameworks as well as ethnic studies in general, saying things like, "Well, the core curriculum must be grounded in actual history. The actual philosophy that has shaped Western civilization." End quote.

So how are you both thinking, kind of anew, about ethnic studies and its role, particularly in community colleges, in light of the backlash we're seeing?

Erin Doran: One thing that I have seen community college instructors, they've been very, very savvy in the ways that they have sort of legitimized ethnic studies. And I do realize that there's a lot of, like, fair criticisms about, like, when you become part of the academy, like, do you lose part of the soul of liberation of resistance and all of that stuff? There's a whole, like, base of literature that's kind of outside the purview of what I'm saying, but, like, I get it.

But I think one of the things that for the community college instructors who have been gracious enough to share their experiences with me, I think that they've gotten very savvy at making sure that they codify these classes into the core curriculum of the state, and they take it not just at the institutional district level; they fought for it at the state level. In Texas, for instance, I mean, they sort of made it so you'd have to change Texas administrative code kind of thing. And I could be wrong. I may not be, like, understanding the legislative process, like, completely correctly, but, like, they have made it so that these courses are easily transferable, and I think what also makes them very hard to erase. It's not something where, like, a governor can just sign something, necessarily, and they would just be gone tomorrow.

I remember being at AERA last year and I was in a session that was very focused on ethnic studies across different time periods and stuff like that. And Pepe Aguilar, he was like, you know, when they say CRT, what they really mean is ethnic studies. It's just people don't necessarily know the difference between them, and they don't know what they're talking about, but that's what they're talking about and there was something about that that just shook me to my core because it was very true, and I think he said it in such a way that, it just, I don't know. It impacted me in a way that I hadn't really thought about before.

I think one of the things about it is there's very little that you could strip away from these programs because oftentimes these are programs that they're running off the backs of faculty who care. These are programs that aren't often organized within their own departments. They might be faculty sort of scattered throughout the campus who are making a commitment to come together to solidify a program so that students have more than one course that they can take. They have made sure that these courses are part of the core curriculum so they fulfill students' gen eds and they can transfer them very easily to four-year institutions if that's the path that their students are on.

And so, like, you know, if you can't take away the money and they can still run these classes and stuff like that, then it becomes, like, what do you have to take away? And in many ways, I feel like these faculty don't have a whole lot that they can lose. They have some of the protections of academic freedom.

I think that these are courses that often fill in places like California. You know, the legislature has codified that as part of the graduation requirements for high school and college, which I think is *incredible* and

would love to see more states that do that. But I don't know. I mean, when you have nothing to lose, like, what can you take away? And I think that you have faculty members who come from an activist background. They are inherently and unapologetically political. They're ready to fight back for students' rights to these programs, to this knowledge. I think there's that but also folks aren't really paying attention to community colleges in this vein. A lot of the time that I sit there and actually say, like, you know, I study ethnic studies programs in community colleges, a normal response that I get is, "Wait, there's ethnic studies programs in community colleges?" So this is also not who anti-CRT groups are thinking of. They're thinking of the UC Berkleys, the UT Austins, the big flagship institutions that are well funded and may have large centers and stuff like that. They're not thinking about their local community college.

Sergio Gonzalez: Which is ironic because, so my best friend right now works at a community college but also works for the Boys & Girls Club [of America] and so gets students into college but also has all these different pathways and building partnerships with community colleges.

So, like, I think of, like, UC Berkeley right now, you mentioned. Berkeley City [College], they have an *amazing*, like, transfer program that we don't hear about. No one hears about that if you go to Berkeley City and you take X, Y, Z, they map it out for you. You take these courses and you're almost guaranteed a transfer into UC Berkeley. And there's so many different kinds of programs like ethnic studies and, like, math and sciences and stuff.

And so, it becomes like this cultural achievement of, like, I'm going to show you, like, these pathways and ways to, like, navigate it so that we can outdo the system and play them at their own game. So, while they're out there attacking or focusing on, like, large research, you know, like, schools and institutions, we're going to come up through another pathway that we've had to create because we've never been able to exist in these spaces, right? And so we've always had to, like, bust the side door open or sneak in through the window and we're doing that. And we're doing that through these programs and, like, the main program that comes to mind is the TAG program. There's so many, like, amazing schools that partner with community colleges and they're, like, if you take these courses, you're like a shoe-in transferring into these schools. They don't advertise it. You never hear about, "Oh, go to Berkeley City College or go to Cañada College and you can, like, transfer over to this school.

But yeah, I think the professors in the community college are kind of like, we're not on your level. Like, we're not playing the same game that y'all are playing at the four-year institutions. We're, like, *in* the community with the students, and we're connecting in a different way, which I think is so powerful and that, like, we could learn so much from them and how they show up and how they show *out* for their students, right?

Like for me, like, I'm always, like, at my core, like, what is my goal, right? Like, what is my reason why? And I see, like, folks like my best friend, Jaime, who's doing stuff where, he's like, "Yeah, we're going to talk about. We're going to break down what this means. What does race look like, right? What does it mean to be poor? How does that intersect when we start thinking about, like, race and ethnicity and like all these other factors, right? And they do it in a way that's, like, how do I get to *you* in your language and in a perspective that's going to make sense to you as opposed to, like, centering white logic. So, I think that's powerful.

Erin Doran: And, Sergio, like, what that makes me think of is, like, actually something that I would say is like the heart. So, there's all this rhetoric about how, like, it's divisive. It's teaching people of color to hate white people and all that. It's not teaching them that; it's teaching them how to understand systems of oppression and how to understand the ways that those have impacted them, and how to start to take those down or what have you.

The few things that I hear that either students say or faculty say that, like, when they are working with Latinx students, these classes help them break down internalized racism, like, a system that has taught them to hate themselves, that there's nothing about being brown that is worth being proud of, and it dismantles that. But then also says, who owns knowledge? Who legitimizes knowledge? Why is that a problem? Here are the messages that history books tell you about black and brown people in the United States and, like, what does that mean? How are they portrayed and, like, how is that bull—?

And then it's about how do you get to these systems of power, these centers of power through education? And then how do you bring other people up with you? How do you uplift your community, your neighborhood, your family, what have you? And so that is *it*. Like, it is *about* power. And who holds the power? And you can understand that to mean, like, knowledge is power, education is power, but also that navigational knowledge is absolute power.

Heather McCambly: I mean, you brought me right back to, I think the first time I took an ethnic studies course as an undergrad was also, like, right when I started in the McNair Program. And I remember just like my head flipping over and over as I suddenly, I could finally see, like, the deficit narrative I was telling about *myself* and about my family in a way of all I could see myself doing was escaping. That wasn't what I was doing, right? I wasn't escaping. I was a product *of*, right, of so many positive things and so much strength that my belief that my abuelita had demonstrated and had done to guarantee our survival and our survivance, right? And before those opportunities, I couldn't *see it* because my entire narrative of the communities I lived in, history, it was sideways because it was told from a completely white perspective.

Sergio Gonzalez: Which again goes back to the power dynamics, right? Like, we've been across the country because we all were socialized in different spaces and places and context. But across the board, right, at the center of it all, is white supremacy, right? And so understanding that, like, we have been othered, and we have been socialized to believe that, like, if we don't exist in a certain way that we don't matter. And that we need to like come up in such a way, right?

Like even in my, like, upbringing I think of, like, I'm first gen, right? So like going through the whole process. Like, I was doing it while I was figuring it out. And so, like, getting, like, my degrees, going through my, like, process, right? Like now, like, as one of, like, the older cousins in my family, like, they're always like, "Oh, talk to Sergio. You want to go to college? Cool. Talk to Sergio." And so, like, the first thing I do is I'm like, "Let's take a community college course in ethnic studies." Take one. I did it with my cousin, like, two years ago, and she was like, "Why?" And I was like, "Because I want you to learn about yourself." Just like take one class and I will have no problem sitting with you on Zoom and, like, we can process, like, what's going on in your class if you feel like you're not getting it. But I really want you to take one class before you go to college.

And now she's at UC Davis and she's, like, thriving and in her, like, element. And I'm like, that's what I was hoping for. Now, it's like, thank you so much because I was like, just take one class in ethnic studies to learn about yourself because I'm sure that your curriculum is not teaching you about yourself.

Erin Doran: You know, when I think about, like, my undergrad or my grad, I mean, I took a number of black history courses. I think what's really interesting is that the department that I came up from, like, I was a history major, but, like, we didn't have any Mexican American or U.S. Latina studies professors in that department at the time. Like one *old*, he was old, historian, like, studied colonial Spain. And then we had a younger assistant professor who studied the history of Mexico, which are distinctly different fields of study.

Like, I didn't know ethnic studies was a thing until I was basically a doctoral student. And I was at a large Hispanic-serving institution that offered this program. But, like, it was just something that I didn't *know* that I could take it.

But I often think about, you know, I was born and raised in El Paso. I have a white father, Mexican American mother and, Heather, to your point, a lot of the things in my family, like, the fact that my mom is bilingual in that she can speak Spanish fluently. She knows that, like, reading and writing are, like, not her strong suits. And my brother and I grew up in an English-only household. But like, those were choices that my family was making to survive. There were very, very specific choices about not wanting children to grow up with accents; about, like, wanting children to be successful later on in life, and that took a very assimilationist approach to the ways that children were raised in my family.

I get that; like, I get that. But I think also, like, life would have probably been a lot less confusing if I had found ethnic studies earlier, because I feel like so much of some of the, like, Chicano studies literature that I found lets me know that, like, people were gaslighting me and telling me that I wasn't, quote-unquote "normal" or that, you know, I wasn't Mexican enough or white enough or, like, that this third space that I always felt like I was existing in, like, was actually legit.

Just nobody validated that for me, and it took a long time for me to be able to claim that. And I think to undo a lot of my own internal confusion, my own internal racism, my own just trying to make sense of all of that. And so, you know, I think part of the reason why I get so passionate about community college and really just, like, undergrads, broadly speaking, in taking these courses is because I just think that there's a lot of content and knowledge that if I had gotten earlier, it just probably would have been super beneficial to me. I got there eventually, but it probably took 10 years later than it needed to.

Heather McCambly: I absolutely resonate with that.

Erin Doran: Sure.

Heather McCambly: Well, I'm going to invite you both to offer kind of any final takeaway you'd like. I was thinking about any final takeaways you have about preserving or protecting these types of sacred spaces for learning, but I want to leave that open. As you think about what that final take away is, I wanted to offer a quote that I wanted to bring into this conversation because it embodies so much of what I'm thinking and feeling right now about ethnic studies. So, it's from Robin D.G. Kelley from *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. He said, "Too often our standards for evaluating social movements pivot around whether or not they succeeded in realizing their visions rather than on the merits or power of the visions themselves. By such a measure of virtually every radical movement failed

because the basic power relations they sought to change remain pretty much intact. And yet, it is precisely these alternative visions and dreams that inspire new generations to struggle for change.”

Erin Doran: I always think of the instructor, who I think I quoted in my chapter at the end, who talked about just the fact that he had attained a Ph.D. and was now teaching in a formal program in a community college for him was a testament to the success of the Chicano movement. The fact that there are more Latinx students going to graduate school, getting master’s degrees, getting Ph.D.’s, and then becoming college instructors themselves.

I think the heart of what I heard in that quote is that 1) I don't think there ever is an end game, right? Sort of the struggle for liberation, like, is there ever an end game? I don't know. I don't think so within the current societal dimensions that we live in. That said, you know, I think that just because progress is slow or progress, you know, ends up looking differently than we originally imagined, it's not a zero-sum game. It's not a win-lose situation. There can be elements of both winning and losing. And I think the fact that ethnic studies is not just something for four-year institutions, it's not just for the most prestigious, most well-resourced institutions is a win.

And I think that as I think about the future of ethnic studies and the kinds of things that I would love to see, I always come back to going to the American Association of Hispanics and Higher Education, the AAHHE Conference. And this is probably five years ago now. And there was a panel discussion with some various administrators, one who was a Chicano who was the dean of a medical school in California. And one of the things that he said was how much he wished that pre-med students would not only major in biology but they would, like, double major or minor in Chicano studies because he felt like the Chicano studies gave *meaning* to what a medical degree could look like and what a medical career could look like for the betterment of communities.

I've sat *many*, many times since I heard that and just thought I would love, *love*, like, if somebody would give me, like, \$3 million in like three years to build a program that was a learning community of, like, pre-med students or engineers or something like that, where they had to take ethnic studies programs as well as their content information. And I would *love* to just see how that would play out for students. And this is not necessarily because, like, I have mixed feelings about STEM education in general, which you know we, like, we can talk about that offline. But, like, to me, like, that would just open up, I think, so much of the creativity and the potential, and I think just demonstrates to folks the power of what ethnic studies could do in just giving that meaning to a profession or to a calling or something like that in a way that maybe nobody else has. So, you know, if anybody's listening from, like, NSF or NEH, someone just wants to throw some money at me, I'll take it.

Sergio Gonzalez: Please [laughs in agreement].

I 100% agree, friend. So, I wrote, like, as I was processing, I wrote that the personal is political, right? And so many people have said it, and I'm, like, specifically thinking about Hames-Garcia, I think it was in, like, 2011 or 2014. I don't know if it was in the dossier Jotería work. But in one of his pieces, he talks about how, like, the personal is political at this point, right? And so, when we are, like, in these spaces, when we're doing the work that we do, like, when I show up here, right, because, you know, I'm at a religious institution, and I talk about Jotería, like, that's who I am, that's how I show up – all of me, right? Like, I'm unapologetic about it, and I was like, are you sure this is what you're looking for, right?

And at the same time, I'm in the same boat where I'm like, I don't know if there is like an endpoint, right? Because I think reflecting just on, like, my academic upbringing and journey and community, like, I remember being, like, I want to do work on Jotería and being told so many times that, like, no; no one's going to be into it. It's not going to go anywhere. I had to go through those moments and those notions and me being, like, I have to stick to what's near and dear to my heart, right? Like this is something that's real, right? I can't sit in just queer theory because it still has, you know, queer theory sits on the axis of power and privilege that doesn't speak to the community that I want to be engaged with and work for.

And I look now and I'm like, look how much it has transcended, right, even in just, like, the last 10 years. And being a part of it, I'm like, I feel hella grateful that, like, I'm a part of this process, but I don't want it to be like, that's it. I want it to be like, cool the nuggets that I got from, like, the dossier that came out, right, in 2014 and from previous works. And I think of, like, Anzaldúa, right, and I think of like Lorde. Those are the people that, like, inspired me.

I learned about them later in life, too, because I went to school in New York and they didn't have ethnic studies per say, right? So, it was just like I was taking courses in other fields, and that's how I was, like, slowly learning. And I was in a similar boat, Erin, where I was learning about Anzaldúa and all these other amazing folks, in, like, my master's and then, like, my Ph.D. And *that's* where I was like, oh, this speaks to me. This is where the personal became political, like, oh, I see myself resembled in this work. Now I'm even more inspired. I'm connecting to people. I'm, like, reaching out and writing with people, right? I'm like nerding out and doing all these things. And to me, I'm like, I'm one piece of this big puzzle.

My goal is that, like, we need to continue to push, like, this work for the way that we show up, right, for, like, positionality. We just show up for it in more and more spaces and we need to continue to push that because if I go to, like, science spaces, they're going to be like, who cares about positionality? It's like, well, I need to know why you're doing this. Not just, like, this is what I'm doing. There has to be a why. And that's going to tie it in, whether you're a fourth-grade student, whether you are getting, like a Ph.D. Like, when you know why, it changes and gives so much more value and meaning to what the hell you're doing.

Erin Doran: You know what, in fairness to the scientists and the engineers: The engineers, in particular, have taught me a lot in the last two years about writing positionality statements and, like, taking them seriously for publication. There are actually some engineering journals that require some pretty thoughtful, intentional positionality, which was a surprise to me, but a pleasant surprise.

Heather McCambly: Well, thank you both. I'm so glad I get to call you friends as well as colleagues. So, thanks again for joining and thanks to our listeners, whoever you may be. Let us know – we're interested – and thanks for listening to OCCRL's Democracy's College podcast. Please look out for the next episode, which will also build on the volume *Critiques for Transformation*, which is now available from Information Age Press or your preferred book vendor.

So, we'll talk to you again later this spring. Thank you. Bye, guys.

Sergio Gonzalez: Bye.

Erin Doran: Bye.