

## Statement of Purpose

### Rationale

As an educator of young people, I have always pledged to do my part to educate students in order to make sure that they are connected to the texts in their learning. As a Mexican-American person, I remember growing up in Tucson, Arizona and not once seeing myself in the curriculum of my education. During a planning conversation before the school year began, I expressed my concern that my students are compliant but not passionate in my class. My colleague asked a poignant question, “Do they see themselves come alive when reading?” I knew the answer, but more importantly, I knew the why. I made the decision to integrate more relevant texts in my classroom.

This decision made all the difference. Students instantly connected with the characters in Cristina Henriquez’s *The Book of Unknown Americans*. Furthermore, they identified with them in a way I have never seen. This led to increased engagement in not only the reading, but in their learning experiences as they related to the text. As a Latina, I realize that while I am familiar with my own upbringing, I am not as familiar and educated about life along the border, or life as an immigrant. It is this knowledge that I hope to acquire through participating in the Tales from the Chihuahuan Desert: Borderland Narratives about Identify and Binationalism program.

The use of narrative is such a powerful way for students to not only connect with the content they read, but to also build and reflect on the ideas they are learning and processing. It is only through the telling of our stories that we begin to see the humanity that exists in each us. With the current climate of our country, it always occurs to me that once we learn who each of us is, that we begin to understand why no one issue is “black or white”.

### Outcomes

As a teacher in a large urban school district, I have certain standards that I am required to follow when planning instruction. My students are 90% eligible for free and reduced lunch, are 90% Latino, and has the largest immigrant/refugee population out of my district and the city of Phoenix.

My current assignments and outcomes for this unit are:

1. Increased skill in writing and speaking about all issues, with a focus in narrative and borderlands stories.
2. Increased skill in close reading and analysis of language.
3. An awareness of a broader range of human rights issues within and outside of the students' immediate community.

This success is measures in multiple ways. The major assignments of the unit are:

1. An informational research project and class presentation on an aspect of immigration and Borderland histories.
2. An informational research paper and annotated bibliography
3. A narrative about the student's American dream.
4. An argumentative research paper based on the research project.
5. Discussions in class and school-wide about the Holocaust and Human Rights

### **Collaboration**

By far the best professional development is always from fellow teachers and scholars. My unit this year lacked expertise. The schedule of the Institute will surely contribute to the expertise that I need in this area. Furthermore, the collaboration with fellow participants will bring about the reflection that is so valuable. Like the question from my colleague, I hope to be provoked to challenge what I

already know, be open to admit what I do not know, and be flexible to change what I'm currently doing that is ineffective.

I not only expect to be challenged, but I am also open to the feedback that I can provide to fellow teachers. The collegiality that exists in a scholarly institute is always reciprocal. In having those conversations, the learning takes place as each teacher/student reflects, considers, revises and challenges once more. I bring my own experience as a student of color and a teacher of color to the institute, and understand that each person brings their own stories and experiences. It is through these experiences that I am eager to learn.