QUEER AND TRANS STUDENTS OF COLOR: SURVIVAL AND RESISTANCE IN PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

Heidi Qin (Dr. Dolores Delgado Bernal)

As institutions continue to rethink and redefine the praxis and pedagogy of diversity, young queer and trans students of color continue to be left behind. While the intersections of race and gender become increasingly evident, the body of literature centering those at the intersections of being a queer and trans student of color remain stagnant.

Using a combination of testimonios and portraiture methodology, this study focuses on the lived experiences and narratives of queer and trans students of color at the University of Utah. Gathered through a series of in-depth interviews, these narratives shed light on the resiliency and beauty in the lives of queer and trans students of color, illustrating the interconnectedness of our existence.

These narratives were created through a collaborative process between the researcher (Qin) and participants, a creative project involving oral histories, poetry, and musical expression. Manifested as a love letter to our communities, this research reflects the transformative power of self-expression and counter-stories, in addition to highlighting common themes throughout our collective existence. These commonalities speak to larger systemic political institutions, reflecting the mutualistic ways the personal becomes the political.

The data collected throughout this study is instrumental in broadening our understanding of layered identities, as well as our approaches to research. Utilizing a testimonios and portraiture approach allows for creative agency in addition to honoring the strength and vulnerability of the participants. This research approach expands on the avenues for creative resistance by queer and trans scholars of color within higher education, with a firm commitment to our communities and homage to those who have come before us.

The culmination of this project will act as the catalyst for inclusive and progressive praxis and pedagogies, whether in the classroom or student affairs. The data collected will inform the creation of retention and outreach programs specifically for queer and trans students of color. This project represents the locus of past, present and future, as queer and trans students of color share their histories, realities, and dreams.