



November 4th, 2024

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing to strongly recommend Jimena Flores Martinez as a student in your Master in Teaching program. I have known Jimena since fall of 2023 when they joined the program I was teaching. This was an inquiry-oriented education program that considered the purposes of education through multidisciplinary lenses. I found Jimena to be to a principled, thoughtful and action oriented human being. They demonstrated capacities to engage an inquiry-oriented stance regarding their own belief systems, to practice cultural humility, and a responsibility to listen and learn from the communities they serve. Below are excerpts from my evaluation that I believe it speak to Jimena's strengths that are important and relevant to both engaging with communities as an educator, and graduate work of a masters program.

... Coming to the program with a deep interest in liberatory and transformative potentials of education, Jimena leaned into opportunities to consider the personal, social, cultural and political meaning of education and actively sought opportunities to learn from a broad range of community-based events and interviews. They consistently engaged in generous, relevant ways through conversations with peers, and practiced constructive leadership; modeling ways to use one's voice and ideas to strengthen the learning opportunities.

One of Jimena's many strengths included her purposeful practice of seeking out sources beyond the syllabus that could further their thinking about the purposes of education through decolonizing, liberatory lenses and models for engaging in ways that acknowledge the dignity of peoples. Jimena sought out opportunities to in community that could further their understanding of the: (i) the Rachel Corrie Foundation; (ii) the Northwest Teaching for Social Justice conference; and a multitude of public forums and speakers, including presentations by: (iii) Xito on ethnic studies; (iv) Ghody Muhammad on Culturally and Historically Responsive Pedagogies; and (vi) a community meeting at a local alternative school about standardized testing. In the midst of current events, Jimena also sought out both texts and organizations that engaged the community in learning and responding. In the winter quarter, Jimena learned about, participated in and volunteered for about 10 hours at Hummingbird Art Studios.

Jimena made meaning from these sources through compelling conceptual and lyrical reflections that outlined tensions, aspirations for and principles of a transformative education. As part of a final synthesis, Jimena created a powerful triptych titled: "Ghosts, memorias, fire, semilla," a multiple media composition of fiber art, collage and sgraffito. Through this work Jimena contemplated the importance of understanding one's relationships and interconnections to identities, marginalizing systems and the potential for change. Jimena spoke of education as "tending to the memory," and wrote: "As much as I am connected to the struggle of those who have been historically marginalized, I am connected to the systems that have perpetuated this, so I make my responsibility, and my labor, and my aspirations, to imagine liberation, and to sow liberation, and to tend to liberation, and to weave it in my actions and praxis." In other writings, Jimena considered the decolonizing and healing potential of education, writing that "education

is knowing ourselves whole. Whole as opposed to fragmented and separate, so when we engage one part of ourselves, we engage our whole being and our whole world. That education should be one that “builds, rather than severing, relationships...” one that “connects us with our communities”, that is “responsive to our needs”, and that helps us understand “how to be responsive.” That “education is about finding learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom, it is letting the worms be our teachers, it is life-sustaining practices.”

Jimena demonstrated good developing skills for curating a research journal that documented multiple sources of knowledge to inform an inquiry, including notes from interviews, community engagements, and annotations of readings. The reading annotations were detailed and showed skill with both summarizing the author’s main points, and reflecting what the ideas illuminated for the inquiry. The interview transcripts showed use of an inductive analysis to surface emergent themes. The journal was organized overall with a table contents and systems for marking key ideas in the entries.

Jimena demonstrated strong capacity to synthesize insights about what’s worth learning and practicing from mentor stories. As part of this work Jimena collaborated to learn the Abolitionist movement and it’s work with the school to prison pipeline. Together they created a set of cards around the following objectives to learn: (i) habits of self-exploration and self-critique combined with a willingness to learn from others; (ii) knowledge of the role that race, and how our racialized identities have shaped these stories and our history, as we strategize to shape our moving forward; (iii) practices of harm repair that make use of dialogue, intro and extrospection; and (iv) practices of trauma informed community participation. Each card clearly described what the significance of the learning objective along with how it looks and sounds when practiced, along with a set of references that informed the card. Overall, the group demonstrated a capacity to develop agreements for their work, develop homework plans in preparation for their work sessions, and demonstrated evidence of dialogue with probing questions to examine and deepen the meaning they were making together.

I feel confident that Jimena will bring a serious and community minded energy to the work and cohort they learn and work with.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Sonja Wiedenhaupt". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'S' and a trailing flourish at the end.

Sonja Wiedenhaupt
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