



# Nurturing Roses through a Humanizing Pedagogy while Building Agency through the Cracks of Internalized Oppression

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## Introduction

As mentioned by Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade's in *Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing Roses in Concrete*, urban youth's tenacity and resistance through complex trauma should influence educators to teach "in ways that connect the moral outrage of young people to actions that relieve the underserved suffering in their communities" (p. 182). There are three different types of hope: Material, Socratic and Audacious Hope. All three are needed in order to provide students and teachers with the proper tools to analyze their lives and nurture themselves through the cracks of oppression. I aim to empower my students to view themselves as seeds of transformative justice by valuing their strengths and flaws.

A lot of my students don't see themselves represented within school and don't find the material being taught at school relevant to their lives. This often leads them struggling to assimilate into an academic setting and believing that the only way to succeed is to assimilate into White America (del Carmen, p.123). My students demonstrate very low self-esteem through internalizing what others think of them, living the effects of their past decisions and not receiving enough affirmations. They are quick to blame themselves for where they are in life and are not equipped with the correct terms to identify their oppressions and stressors. During this past semester my students have come a long way from desiring tough love to accepting my caring and humanizing pedagogy.

The limited amount of research on effective pedagogy used throughout continuation schools is yet reflective of the institutional oppression my students have faced. Delgado Bernal argues that the exclusion of knowledge from Latino and Chicano communities gives students the wrong message that Chicana "students are inferior and not agents of knowledge" (Bernal, p. 112). By providing students with the opportunities to share each others' counter stories I hope to encourage students to "develop tools and strategies for daily survival in an educational system that often excludes and silences them" (Bernal, p. 113).

## Research Question

How can opportunities for counter-storytelling increase students' agency and participation within the classroom?

## Methods

**Context:** Washington High is known as the second chance our students receive yet it's policing builds on to the internalized stigma of how continuation students are supposed to behave. With most odds against my students, I find it crucial to encourage them to have critical hope. The study is put in practice throughout five periods at a continuation high school. The students' age ranges from fourteen to twenty years of age. The focus group will be the last period of the day which consists of twenty-five male and five female students. There are six different academic subjects within each period thus making it necessary to combine lessons through a interdisciplinary lens. The course of the study ran for a total of six weeks.

### Data Collection:

Method	Details
Observations	Teacher Reflections
	Class Participation, Interviewing
Data Collection	Attendance, enrollment
	Counter storytelling
	Presenting
Informal Conversations	After school platicas
	Unstructured interviews

## Findings

### Agency

- Helping young people see and recognize their own agency (as the first step to building)

"I'm glad I did this assignment because it gave me a sense that I'm not the only one struggling, and if someone as beautiful and resilient as my classmate can still be here trying to graduate and be fully dedicated to her education, I know I can do it too."  
- Esmeralda I.

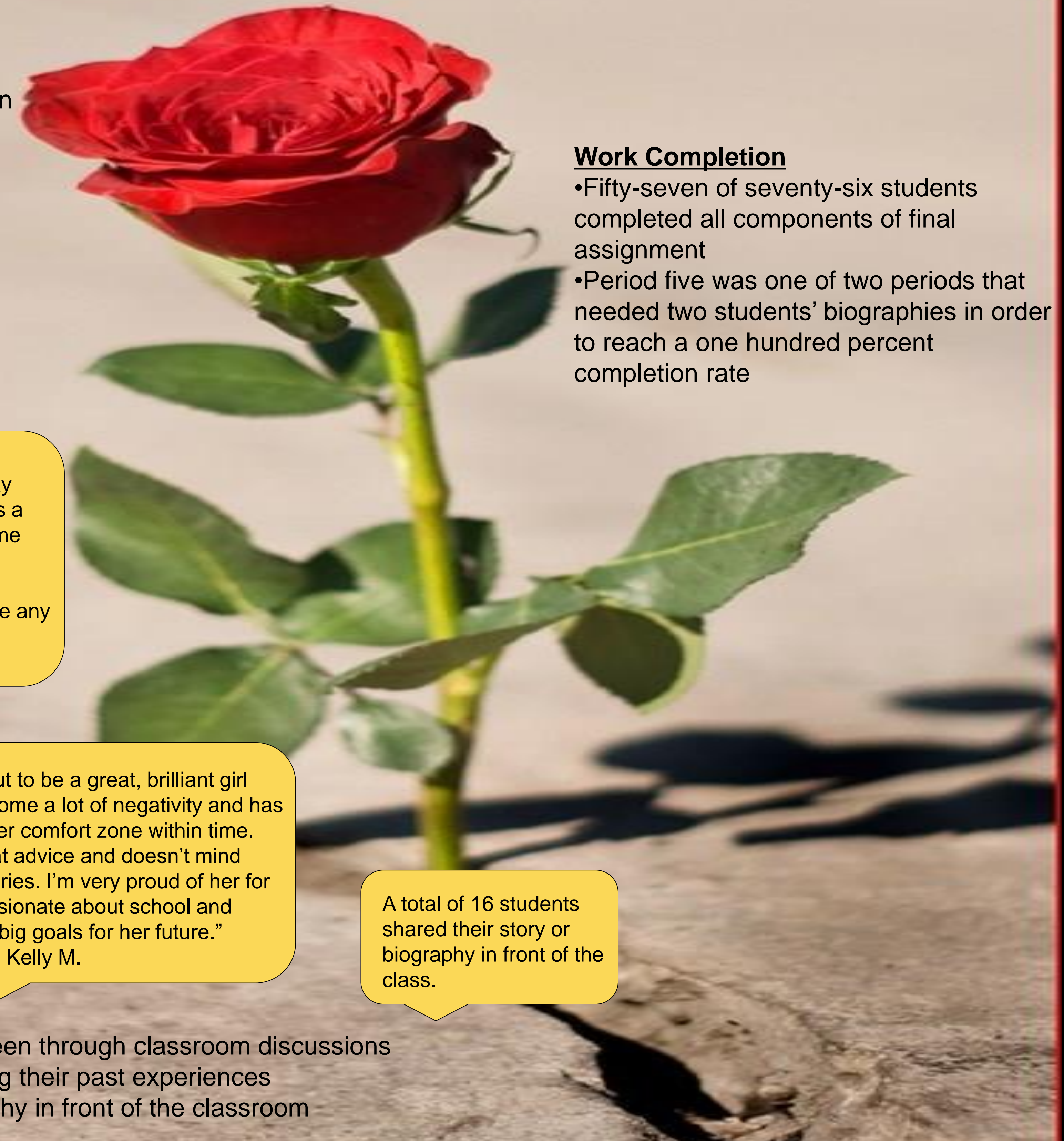
"I really admire that about her because it takes so much out of a person to act okay when so much is happening. I think she's a very strong person. This project helped me learn so much about a person and how everyone copes with things differently. I learned that that everyone can overcome any obstacles that life throws their way."  
- Ashley C.

"Buddha has reflected on who he was in the beginning of his high school career versus who he is now. He has acknowledged how far he has come, from not surrounding himself with certain people, such as negative influencers, to having the mentality of completing high school."  
- John S.

"Ceci turned out to be a great, brilliant girl who has overcome a lot of negativity and has gotten out of her comfort zone within time. She gives great advice and doesn't mind sharing her stories. I'm very proud of her for now being passionate about school and having a lot of big goals for her future."  
- Kelly M.

### Participation

- Increase in participation as seen through classroom discussions
- Interviewed partners regarding their past experiences
- Students shared their biography in front of the classroom



### Work Completion

- Fifty-seven of seventy-six students completed all components of final assignment
- Period five was one of two periods that needed two students' biographies in order to reach a one hundred percent completion rate

A total of 16 students shared their story or biography in front of the class.

## Implications

I am, I can, I belong  
We are, We can, We belong

Who am I? cards  
One thing I like about myself is \_\_\_\_.  
I am proud of myself for \_\_\_\_.  
I feel powerful when \_\_\_\_.

- High Expectations
- Empathize
- Earn respect and trust

- Loving spaces are necessary for counter storytelling

- How we see students impacts how they see themselves

Mental Health  
First Aid course

- If we are going to ask students to tell their stories, which are sometimes traumatic, we must be prepared with mental health supports and resources

"Miss it would be harder to write about myself. I feel comfortable with Emily writing about me."

## References

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