Through the Pandemic Portal:
Turning to Community to Cultivate a Relational Paradigm of Leadership

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Abstract

The global pandemic opened a portal for a different paradigm of educational leadership to emerge. Reaching beyond critique of the conventional, color-evasive leadership research and practice, we share how our leadership of a systems-focused preparation program turned to ancestral knowledges, relationality, and cultural practices embedded in Indigenous, Black and other communities of color to lead possible transformative futures with the youth and families owed a profound educational debt. The program shift enabled the practitioner leadership students to take up their leadership as a humanizing, liberatory practice that works toward familial relations with their students and families. We frame this journey "through the portal" and share excerpts from the public pedagogy of two students as they build from their own experiences as Black leaders who do not simply resist or fight unjust systems, but who also dream and live justice with young people and their families through education.

Through the Pandemic Portal: Turning to Community to Cultivate a Relational Paradigm of Leadership

Ann M. Ishimaru & Anthony Craig

On the surface, the Leadership for Learning (L4L) EdD program might be the last place you would expect as a site for reimagining white normative hierarchical power and systems in education and leadership. Housed in a research-intensive state institution of higher education (that prospered, like other universities, due to colonization, land theft, and enslavement) and structured in an executive leadership format, the L4L program prepares potential superintendents and other systems-focused leaders to take on influential positions in districts as well as regional and state educational agencies across Washington. Although L4L has long prided itself on continuous improvement and rigorous use of research to shape the knowledge, capacities, and practices of systems leaders, the program largely drew from the conventional body of research on leadership. In recent years, through the prompting of equity- and justice-minded students and faculty members, the program has been questioning the dominant assumptions about what and whose knowledge, practices, and outcomes matter for leadership and education.

In the context of COVID-19, the racial reckonings catalyzed by the killing of George Floyd, remote learning, and deep sociopolitical divides, and amid apocalyptic smoke from fires borne of global climate change, our tried-and-true standard curriculum offered few ways forward for addressing the realities our leaders were facing on the ground. These crises were manifestations of centuries of racial oppression and settler colonialism that the pandemic—and sometimes the institutional responses themselves—was exacerbating. The moment forced us, as the director and lead research faculty of the program, to contend with some deeply unsettling questions: How *does* a university-based preparation program support leaders to manage urgent crises in a way that disrupts the injustices that continue to accumulate a profound education debt to Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and other intersectionally minoritized students (Ladson-Billings, 2006)? How *should* we prepare leaders for a system that needs to be fundamentally dismantled and re-engineered? And how might we take up such a daunting task from within a higher education system that, itself, constitutes a colonizing, heteropatriarchal, racist system?

Rather than working to fit the dominant research and white-normative practices of administrative management to the complexities of leading amid cascading historical inequities, we looked instead to the knowledge and practices of learning, well-being, dignity, and leadership that have existed since time immemorial (Smith, 2021). We sought to learn with and from Indigenous and ancestral knowledges,

the land, nondominant cultural practices, and the collective intellectual bounty of critical leaders and scholars, as well as that of our practitioner students (Khalifa, 2018; Simpson, 2014). Indigenous communities have long turned to stories as a way of theorizing about the world, our relations, and ourselves, as they embody deep understandings (e.g., epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies) about the nature of knowing and being, as well as how we should be in relation to each other, to other beings and land, and to the past, present, and future (Archibald, 2008; Bang et al., 2016).

Recognizing this, we invited students to engage in storywork-as-theory from these territories (Brayboy, 2005). Anthony invited his cousin, a Lushootseed language teacher, and her young daughter to share *Lifting the Sky,* a traditional Coast Salish story, with the leadership cohort. Because Indigenous theory in the form of story so often gets flattened into anthropological artifact or colonized as knowledge to own, we worked with students to situate the story as a source of wisdom that changes over time, that must be held and engaged by each listener, that requires relationality and collectivity in the sense-making and holding, and that becomes most powerful when we bring our full selves to the process. As explained by the Lushootseed Department of the Tulalip Tribes of Washington, *syəhub,* the Lushootseed word for story, is an oral tradition, a form of teaching and knowledge-sharing, and more:

> As we are taught, the *syəhub* is a cumulative unwritten tradition, not any one realization of it. It is also a cloud of possibilities with a particular but unstable center around a group of potentialities remembered and forgotten, realized and unrealized, constantly changing, known only fragmentarily by any one person or any one tribe or at any one time. It is a gyre of motifs, rhetorical strategies, characters, plots, teachings, commentary, names, formulas, places, histories, customs, songs, specialized knowledge, and much else. (Lushootseed Department website, Tulalip Tribes of Washington)

We introduced this story with some trepidation, knowing both the dangers of distortion that have generally accompanied such efforts as well as the possibilities of reinscribing colonization in the sharing of such deep theory with outsiders. However, this story is one that tribal communities have been intentional about sharing, an effort Anthony's own family has long been part of. Moreover, the "potentialities" of the learning and leadership we sought to engender, in tandem with the sheer weight of the manifesting moment, compelled us to move beyond fear as an organizing principle for our pedagogy. In the story, the sky is very low, and people are not able to walk upright because the sky presses down on them all. This became a fitting starting point for grappling with the oppressive weight of multiple pandemics, accumulating injustices, and an extended present wrought with so many devastating emotions.

As Indigenous storywork unfolds, the listeners and learners bring their own experiences, histories, and relations into the sense-making; our students' own experiences became texts that we "read" through the storywork to construct humanizing and relational leadership for the present. We invited our students to become fully themselves as leaders, not simply administrators with formal titles in a faceless hierarchical bureaucracy, but children and grandchildren of elders and ancestors who shaped dreams of us, parents and aunties, teachers and learners, holders of both trauma and joy (Cajete, 2016; hooks, 1991). In doing so, we began to reckon with deep histories of settler colonialism, anti-Black racism, patriarchy, heterosexism, anti-Asian, anti-immigrant, and intersectional oppressions that shape not only the past but our ongoing present (Bell, 1980; Dumas, 2016; Patel, 2019; Wolfe, 2006). But we also remembered that communities of color have found ways to learn, grow, and thrive despite these dynamics for generations.

In *Lifting the Sky,* the people realized they needed a single word to use so they could lift together and push the sky up; that word was *yəhaẇ*. We asked our students to imagine and lead into futurities for themselves, their children, their students, and their communities; not the standardized outcomes and meritocratic escape dictated by formal educational systems, but dreams of freedom, of solidarities, and of collective thriving (Kelley, 2002; Love, 2019; Vizenor, 2008). These freedom dreams became our *yəhaẇ* as we struggled to work through complex, sometimes incommensurable, theories of change to realize those dreams (Tuck & Yang, 2018). Together, we began to cultivate a different paradigm of leadership.

As Arundhati Roy (2020) explained so powerfully, pandemics have historically been gateways that forced humans to break with the past and step into a new future. This pandemic, she argues, is no different, and the stakes have never been higher regarding the dangers of returning to "normality." With the support

of our students and the demands of the moment, we labored to step through the portal to imagine new possibilities for leading change in education (Roy, 2020). As an Indigenous Yakama man and a Japanese American woman, we recognized the dangers of enabling leadership premised on community, justice, and solidarity within a predominantly white institution (PWI). And yet, we also knew that we could not default to the individualistic, colonizing conception of leadership that has upheld the status quo for so long. Once we began to realize that stepping through the portal was our only path forward given the realities leaders were facing and our charge of cultivating their growth and learning, we also saw that we had centuries of community wisdom to learn from, a crew of powerful critical scholars and theorists at our back, and the brilliance of our own students to grow and build with.

The curricular, pedagogical, and ontological shifts we took up in our teaching and curriculum are ongoing and will be the focus of future writing, but the reflections and leadership practice of the cohort of leaders who stepped through the portal with us continue to light the way. They stand as a testament to the ongoing work of realizing leadership as a humanizing practice that both reckons with the deep harm wrought by systemic oppressions in schools and embodies Black, Indigenous, and other nondominant familial relations of repair and care even as we all struggle to lead within fundamentally unjust systems. We share excerpts from the leadership blogs written by two of the students in the cohort that graduated last spring, Dr. Constance Daw and Dr. William Jackson. Both are young Black principals in urban districts who were already equity-centered leaders when they began the program, but they first shared these snapshots of their leadership as part of a series of blogs created by the cohort as a means of acting collectively to lead a broader conversation among their peers and across the field of education. We share these two because they illustrate so powerfully the move to draw from community wisdom and futurities, even amid ongoing trauma and anti-Blackness, to realize a relational paradigm of leadership in everyday practice.

Some Skin Folk are Kinfolk: Seeking Survivance Together in Public Education and COVID-19 Pandemic

Constance Daw

I'm going to tell you a story.

This is a story about a family, a principal, and a school.

This is the story of a Black family navigating the unwieldy public education system.

This is the story of an African American family in Western Washington seeking to thrive despite many layers of systemic racism and COVID-19 and the leader partnering with them along the way.

I first met Wanda[1] at a local restaurant. Slender with long box braids and tan-brown skin, she was serving with a smile though she was tired, overworked, and underpaid. It was a joyous surprise to meet her again at Back to School Night during my first few days as principal of her children's elementary school. Seeing her gave me a strong feeling of responsibility as I felt our community connection through experience.

She gathered her three sons and pressed through the crowd toward me. Her eyes—hopeful yet guarded—appraised my brown skin, my voluminous textured hair, my wide, crinkly-eyed smile. Searching for care and commitment, she looked for my soul to give her sons a chance. Wanda introduced me to her boys, even the oldest son who had moved on to middle school. She said to them, "This is your new principal. She's going to look after you." And then to me, with a trembling yet clear voice "Aren't you?" To which I replied, "Yes, ma'am. I'll make sure your sons are well here." We held each other's gaze and I silently promised to partner with her in navigating this school that had held hardship for this family.

Wanda is a spiritual warrior. And so am I.

I had seen her youngest son on my first visit to the school. He was standing in the hallway noisily crying. He had no words for the teacher who stepped in the hallway to speak to him and offer him a granola bar. When his chuffing tears continued unabated, the teacher re-entered the classroom and left him in

the hallway. I wondered what could have possibly happened to cause this child to be so dysregulated. When I inquired of a staff member passing by, I was told that he regularly expressed himself this way. This third grader was regularly scream-crying in the hallway. So, when did he get to learn? I learned that this student is medically fragile and is severely impacted cognitively and physically when his blood sugar drops.

I prayed for that child. I could not let him go in my spirit.

Wanda was asking me if I would uphold the system that had her son despondent, dishonored, and alone in a hallway. She hoped for better from me, a young, Black woman with kind eyes, a member of her community, an advocate. I couldn't let her down. I had to change the school.

So, I took action. I centered critical race theory in my leadership practice, modeling and expecting culturally responsive pedagogy in classrooms and throughout the campus. I shifted family engagement practices to elevate the status of students, parents, and community members in the school, even to the point of asking stakeholders at all levels to be key decision-makers for our school's strategic plan and operations. I prioritized a "whole-child" ethos that changed systems, everything from PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports) to MTSS (multi-tiered system of supports), from to recess to discipline practices. Through intentional moves that required staff to act with justice, engage with families as colleagues, and honor the efforts of students, community members, and themselves, I was told that the school was changing. Staff members said it, sometimes with smiles and sometimes with frowns, but when Wanda said it—with gravity and tears—I wept. But this education system reaches and snatches far beyond one school.

Wanda met with me one day to talk through an incident involving staff members, that happened to her eldest son in his middle school lunchroom. Her voice quaked as she asked me, "Is this what's supposed to happen?" "No," I responded, "but it often happens." During that conversation, Wanda shared with me that she is pursuing a career in education, "because I need to know what's really happening from the inside."

A few months later, her youngest son was denied his preferred meal in our cafeteria. The child came to my office, swiping angry tears from his eyes, and struggled to articulate his concern. "I can't eat this," he said, pointing to the turkey sandwich, apple, and soy milk on his Styrofoam tray. After speaking with the nutrition services operators, the child was still not given his preferred meal. I called Wanda. "I'm on my way," she said. What is it about food that is a sticking point for so many of us? Why is food used to control, punish, manipulate, or oppress? Why wasn't this sensitive child treated with gentleness?

Frustrated child.

Frustrated parent.

Frustrated principal.

There is a particular pressure experienced by school leaders to support the system, uphold the patriarchy and white supremacist hegemony, to maintain the prevailing logic that upholds a hierarchy that puts a disabled Black boy and his mother near the bottom of systemic regard. Add to that the pressure of being a young, Black, woman leader. A person who, without the title, would not fare well on that same hierarchy. How do I get the support of the staff when I take the side of the students and families, when I thwart the order that has guided decisions in this space?

I had to have a frank discussion with myself. I reminded myself why I am in my position in the first place. I reminded myself that people have prayed for me to be strong and courageous. I reminded myself that I made a promise to this family and to this community that I would support their children's well-being. I reminded myself that my responsibility is to lead my staff to their own generational well-being, even if they don't yet know what that looks like in the context of equity and justice. These are my people.

When our school closed because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Wanda was the first parent to reach out to me. It was four weeks into quarantine and Wanda's sons were thriving. She wrote:

> Our family has done a great deal of conversations surrounding the remote learning experience for students currently and we are considering maintaining this for both boys moving forward in the next school year. Could you direct me to the Washington State online schooling resource so I can get them ready for this transition? I want to make sure they will be continuing to the 5th grade and so forth.
>
> I will be privileged to assist them with assignments. I've witnessed tremendous growth since the remote learning has started. They are more focused and willing to do the assignments without frustration.

I learned from Wanda and many other parents of color that they were unwilling to send their children to school to battle the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racism. These parents did not trust that a school system that would not give their child food would keep him safe from a life-threatening disease.

As a member of the school system, I felt ashamed and deeply humbled. There is no "enough" in the efforts toward educational equity. I had done a lot, but I had not yet done enough to allow this dedicated and critical parent to confidently leave her sons in the hands of my public school system.

As an advocate within the community, I felt gratified and deeply humbled. This dedicated and critical parent trusted me to help her navigate other waters of the public school system for the benefit of her sons. I have proven myself to be kinfolk.

So, I helped her and other parents understand their homeschooling options.

And my staffing model fluctuated due to enrollment changes.

I can accept the challenges of this system when I remember what I believe. I believe that the purpose of the public school system is to ensure generational well-being. If that means a family chooses to homeschool so the children can learn in a fully affirming environment, it is my purpose and responsibility to support that effort.

Wanda asked me if I would love her children. Loving them may mean letting them go today and persistently, determinedly shifting this public school system one day at a time so that it knows how to support and educate their family. Our lives are entwined in community and in futurity. That is what it means to be kin.

Equity-focused leadership is not race-neutral, nor is it race-determined. I share this story to provide a model that can be followed no matter the race of the leader or the community that leader serves. Equity-focused leadership requires that we are embedded in our communities and understand that the well-being of the least-advantaged is the well-being of the community as a whole. It is relational and honest. It requires that leaders engage ethically and transparently, even when their choices are unpopular. Equity-focused leadership is a grind, not a trend. Hiring a leader of color doesn't make the leadership equity focused.

I share this story so you can add to this work of generational well-being.

We have nothing to lose but our chains.

And may all the little children who are finna change the world say, "Ashe and Amen."

Black Futurity: From Probability to Possibility

William Jackson

> *Dear James: I have begun this letter five times and torn it up five times. I keep seeing your face, which is also the face of your father and my brother. Like him, you are tough, dark, vulnerable, moody—with a very definite tendency to sound truculent because you want no one to think you are soft.*
>
> *—James Baldwin*

"Good morning, gentlemen. How was our weekend?"

I always greet my mentees with terms such as, 'gentlemen', 'brothas', or 'Kings' to affirm their beauty and brilliance. When I ask, "How was our weekend?" I am seeking to center the collective identity we carry. Any success is "our" success, any failure is, thus, "our" failure. This collective identity, or sense of belonging, is something I have been creating for years in our Black male affinity mentorship.

This day I wanted to check in on our collective mental capacity. I began with, "How is our minds?" and I received the "I'm straight," "solid," and "coo." But one answer stood out to me, "I'm keeping it a buck, all of this isn't coo. I'm not doing well, Mr. Jackson. This past weekend was heavy…"

I knew exactly what he was referring to. There was a loss in our Brotherhood. A former member of our mentorship was shot and killed over the weekend. I asked our freshmen to hang tight, because we would not be focusing on them this morning. But I wanted them to feel what we were going to be experiencing: collective love and grief.

"Freshmen, I love you. Today, I am holding space for the seniors. We need to grieve our loss. See, we lost one of our Brothers in mentorship, and we have to hurt today. Let's check back in tomorrow, where we will share story." "We," "us," and "share story" all represent healthy approaches to working through pain, conflict, and building a healthy community. In this space, many shared their fear of being Black, living in the community, and not knowing when their time might be.

"Man, I am honestly at a loss of words, I am hurting right now being in this space, to be honest with you. How are y'all feeling?" I asked.

"I don't know, it hurts man. I really don't know what to say. I was just with him last week," one expressed.

"You know, he was a real one. He was turning things around, Mr. Jackson, working and trying to get things together," another replied.

"I know. I know. Check this, though. Let's hurt today, and let's continue to share this hurt. Just know I love you all, and I am blessed to be here with you. Let's plan how we will honor him," I expressed.

We shared our hurt, I checked in more personally with them, offering other resources for them that can help them grieve through this. But what they wanted was to be vulnerable, to be sad, to be human.

When I became assistant principal at an urban high school in 2016, I developed a deep bond with our Black students, and primarily our Black boys. As AP, many of my responsibilities surrounded discipline and supervision, and so early on, I observed and participated in the disproportionate discipline of our Black students. I took this personally. As a Black leader, I questioned why we were not developing deep relationships, bonds, and connections with our Black students. Since they were entering and exiting my office at such a high rate, I had an opportunity to meet their families, learn about their joys, their fears, what excites them, and even learn about their dreams. I then observed that disproportionate discipline was impacting African American students all throughout our district, region, state, and nation, impacting their sense of belonging, sense of self, and sense of academic identity. This hurt me, and I needed to do something about it.

While building bonds with our Black students in my office, I realized the methods for so called "safe schools" are very unsafe for our African American students, who are adultified and expected early on to

abide by rules, and oftentimes put in positions to be forced to apologize to those who harmed them in order to access learning, after much learning has been lost. One gross example of this is that upon re-entry from suspension, students, primarily Black students, have to sign behavior contracts as a strategy for intervention and so called "restoration." In fact, we have effectively created an unsafe environment for them to operate in, by first removing them from the learning environment, and then mandating their conduct for how they should re-enter. This guarantees that they will have lost their sense of belonging, academic identity, and feeling of connection to any meaningful relationship in school (Warren et al., 2022).

I took it personal that we would allow this all to occur. I noticed that others took it personal as well, just differently. I observed that many Black students are pushed out of the school, with zero tolerance hallway policies, zero tolerance behaviors between classes, zero tolerance classroom policies, all disguised as school safety. This law-and-order style forces students, and primarily Black students, further out, where they tend to drop out of school, and no longer exist as the school's problem. In my supervisory role, I found our most brilliant minds on the fringes.

This senior group has been with me for three years. All of them, at one point or another, had a series of run-ins with me, and I bonded with them and their families through these run-ins. Family meetings, re-entry conferences, or re-engagement meetings all served as opportunities to connect. But this wasn't enough. I became so fed up with seeing them in my office and losing learning that I created a mentorship and brought all of them in. Our school has a mentorship period, so I made sure to prioritize creating a mentorship period for myself, and placed the lowest academic performing, highest disciplined, and lowest attending students at the high school in my mentorship. The original goal was to create a space to focus on restoration, and community, but it became much more than that. They began making demands for how their learning should be, what they expected from their teachers, how they felt in the school, why they skipped class, and what pressures in life they experienced. In one distinct example, one student, who has straight As, with a disciplinary history, expressed to me, "I skip US history because it does not celebrate my Eritrean identity. I don't care for that credit." This pushed me to shift my approach to teaching and learning, by really focusing on how we are centering our student voices in our decision making. Primarily, how are we centering our Black student voices in our decision making?

Certain days, we shut everything down to check in on feelings around music, sports, politics, work, finances, with our check-ins always surrounding feelings, "How are y'all doing? But really, how are you doing, King?" I would check in during hallway walks, I would see them during classroom observations, give them a pound, and check in on what they were learning, how they were pushing their learning, and what questions they were asking their teachers. This type of bonding was life-giving for me, as it helped our Kings develop their identity, while also strengthening their voice and capacity to analyze and interpret the structure that surrounds them.

> *Identity work for Black students must be done in critique of, and alongside efforts to change, structural practices that perpetuate racist violence and oppression … This foundational premise—that the problem does not reside in the Black students or with their decisions—must be made with unrelenting clarity, especially when the world so deafeningly says otherwise.*
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> *—Givens et al., 2018*

When I became the principal, I decided to keep my mentorship with this group of seniors and open it up to a group of freshmen. When the coronavirus pandemic began, we went to virtual learning, so I had to prioritize time to share love, care, and compassion in a remote setting. This was pretty simple to do with my group of seniors, and a bit challenging with the freshmen. In connecting with the freshmen, I reached out to our feeder middle schools and asked for a list of the highest referred and lowest academically performing Black boys who were enrolling at the high school. I then called their parents and guardians, asked about their learning experiences, and then shared that I have a mentorship with all Black boys focused on identity development, empowerment, and creating a sense of belonging and self. All the families shared worry about entering high school online, fears and concerns about how they had been treated in the past, and then excitement knowing they had a safe space to begin each day.

Every day I open our mentorship up with, "Watch your mind, body, and spirit. Make sure to get some fresh air. Spend time with your family," and every day I leave with, "We gotta guard our minds, guard our bodies, and guard our spirits. I love you. Peace, Kings." – honoring our collective identity in this space.

Since our seniors have developed agency, leadership, and have a strong sense of their own identity, I have focused on them mentoring our freshmen: teaching our seniors to shepherd the freshmen, as I shepherd them. As an example, when teaching about stepping into one's own identity and holding space, I sometimes open with, "What's the word, King" to my seniors, where they drop knowledge to the freshmen about learning, the system, school, and how to navigate it. As the freshmen watch me lead the seniors, they are happy and feel safe being led by the seniors.

"Man, y'all brothas need to make sure you are in class, because then you can come back and let them know what isn't working for you. If you aren't in class, you can't let them know what doesn't work for you," a gem by one of my seniors.

"Man, I learned a little later. Don't waste your time though," a senior lets one of the freshmen know.

"What should we do if we don't like how we are being responded to in class?" a freshman asks.

"Have you talked to the teacher about this?" a senior responds.

"Nah, I haven't. Shouldn't they know?" the freshman replies.

"Yea, but if you don't let them know, they will treat you any way. You gotta let them know what works for you, fam," the senior replies.

From Probabilities to Possibilities

Growing up, I was raised to be aware of my probabilities. The probability that I, as a Black man, would be shot and killed, or the probability that I, a Black man, would end up in jail, all before reaching adulthood. However, in this mentorship, I take a different stance. I have the opportunity to cast a whole new vision for our next generation. I am committed to teaching our Black youth to be excited about their possibilities.

Postlude

Ann Ishimaru & Anthony Craig

The pandemics are not over, and the sky continues to weigh down our young people, communities, and leaders. But we have continued to walk through the pandemic portal to grow the leadership of our students towards the *yəhaw̓* of more liberatory futures, even as we grapple with new tensions and questions in that journey. For instance, our new cohort is composed predominantly of leaders of color, particularly women, with deep lived experiences of navigating racist systems even as they have sought to realize learning environments of dignity for their students. They bring whole worlds of community, relations, and ancestral knowledges to a predominantly white institutional space—but also damage and hurt from those systems. How do we help them heal and grow their leadership in the here-and-now as they encounter intransigent systems bent on reverting to the harmful status quo, or even on eliminating whole histories, experiences, and lifeworlds? How do we help justice-focused educators move beyond critiquing and calling out the system to doing the hard, simultaneous work of building with their students and families toward an otherwise? How might white educational leadership students with less first-hand experience of inequity build their muscle to live with and learn from the unfamiliar discomfort of not having their culture, norms, and understandings of the world centered in education? How do we support cisgender, heterosexual students and nondisabled leaders in reckoning with leading systems at the intersection of not only racism and settler colonialism but also patriarchy, heteronormativity, transphobia, and ableism (among others)? How do we help all these different leaders (and ourselves) *unlearn* the colonizing assumptions, logics, and leadership practices that persist in *all* of us who have been socialized, employed, and rewarded by these systems? How do we lead in ways that are truly answerable (as Leigh Patel would say) to young people, communities, lands, beings, knowledge, and learning? We don't have the answers, but we know we are not alone in the learning journey.

We see this growing collective of leadership stepping into a longer arc of history that extends far beyond the four walls of a given school, district, or system and beyond the formal role of superintendent or director. We join histories of Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Asian American and Pasifika brilliance and thriving despite colonizing trauma and institutionalized oppression. We live into a present of humanizing relations amidst

complex and contradictory systems. We dream and lead toward more beautiful and "solidarious" futures. Even now, these leaders are walking through the pandemic portal with their students, families, and communities, as Roy says, "ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it."

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Endnotes

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