

Translating Abya Yala in a Native American Studies Classroom

Cinthya Ammerman, Cal Poly Humboldt

Abstract

This article reflects on the challenges and possibilities of “translating Abya Yala” within a Global North Native American Studies university classroom. Abya Yala, a term used by the Guna people to name the American continent, resists colonial mappings and asserts an Indigenous hemispheric frame that predates and unsettles the categories of “Latin America.” Drawing on classroom experience, this reflection examines how whiteness surfaces through demands for easy comprehension, resistance to discomfort, and pressure to find solutions to the issues discussed in the class. It also outlines pedagogical strategies that unsettle these dynamics. Ultimately, the article argues that the work of translating Abya Yala is not to render Indigenous concepts legible to whiteness, but to disrupt the expectation of legibility itself, creating conditions in which students must reconfigure their own positions within ongoing colonial systems.

Keywords: Abya Yala, whiteness, Native American Studies

Introduction

Abya Yala, a term used by the Guna people to name the Americas, was popularized by Bolivian Aymara leader Takir Mamani and is now commonly used by Indigenous movements, organizations, and scholars to refer to “Latin America.” Abya Yala is home to an estimated 42 million Indigenous people and nearly 1,000 Indigenous nations, languages, and knowledge systems. Yet in my experience, the presence of Indigenous peoples beyond the U.S./Mexico border is widely unacknowledged or poorly understood. I often see these gaps in my undergraduate Native American Studies classrooms, for example when students are surprised to learn that “Native American” also refers to Indigenous peoples outside the United States. I treat this confusion as a teaching opportunity to reveal how U.S. imperial narratives conflate “America” with the United States, erasing other Americas and the Indigenous peoples who inhabit them.

While Ethnic Studies and Native American Studies are largely grounded in a U.S. context, limiting Indigenous study to these borders reproduces the very colonial logics the field seeks to dismantle. Without a hemispheric frame, Indigenous peoples outside the United States are rendered peripheral, and U.S. imperial narratives remain unquestioned even within ostensibly critical curricula. In my course, I ask students not only to learn about Indigenous peoples across Abya Yala, but to recognize how colonial systems sever and obscure relations among deeply connected struggles. Moreover, teaching Abya Yala in white-dominant spaces, where whiteness functions not

only as racial identity but as the cultural lens, raises additional challenges. Teaching about Abya Yala therefore requires confronting how settler-colonial geography, language hierarchies, and disciplinary boundaries shape what counts as knowledge.

By “translating Abya Yala,” I do not refer only to linguistic translation, but also to a broader pedagogical and epistemic process. By translation I mean: the movement of Indigenous concepts across languages; the attempt to render Indigenous epistemologies legible within academic frameworks structured by whiteness; and the reorientation of students’ own relationships to land, knowledge, and the hemispheric histories that connect them to Indigenous struggles across Abya Yala.

Because many Indigenous epistemologies center nonhumans as relatives, translating Abya Yala also requires unsettling the human-centered assumptions in dominant academic knowledge. Teaching Abya Yala in a Global North Native American Studies classroom is not simply about including hemispheric content in the syllabus. It requires confronting the colonial demand that Indigenous knowledges and struggles become easily legible, consumable, and solvable within white-dominant academic frameworks. I argue that a pedagogy of discomfort and witnessing helps students resist the desire for quick resolution and move toward relationality. Across the course, students are asked to move away from colonial habits of separation: self from land, knowledge from responsibility, the United States from the rest of the hemisphere, and humans from nonhumans, and ultimately toward a relational understanding of accountability.

Native American Studies Beyond Colonial Borders

As a starting point, I situate my pedagogy within the field of Native American Studies and the personal experiences that inform my positionality. I came to the U.S. as a mixed-heritage person from the Global South to complete my undergraduate degree in a university on the East Coast, where I struggled to find professors and courses that mirrored my own experiences. Being a person “ni de aquí ni de allá,” [from neither here nor there], has granted me the benefit of being at ease in spaces that traverse binaries and borders. As a graduate student, I found an intellectual home in Native American Studies, where the field’s theories and methodologies enabled me to make sense of, and articulate my lived experiences in Ngulu Mapu (Mapuche territory in so-called southern Chile) and across the hemisphere.

Native American Studies emerged from Indigenous struggles for self-determination in the late 1960s and early 1970s and remains grounded in Native sovereignty, community accountability, and the refusal of extractive knowledge. Yet when the field is confined to U.S. borders, it can reproduce the colonial geographies it seeks to challenge. A hemispheric Native American Studies frame responds to this limitation by foregrounding Indigenous relations, struggles, and knowledges systems across Abya Yala.

As we think about Ethnic Studies expansion in 2026, we should be attentive to how the dispossession of Indigenous peoples in Abya Yala, through corporate plunder and racial capitalism, continues to drive migration northward, making visible the fact that a significant and often overlooked portion of immigrants arriving in the United States are themselves Indigenous to the Americas. In 2007 there were an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 Indigenous people from Oaxaca living in California, a figure that has likely grown substantially since then (Kresge, 2007). This reality

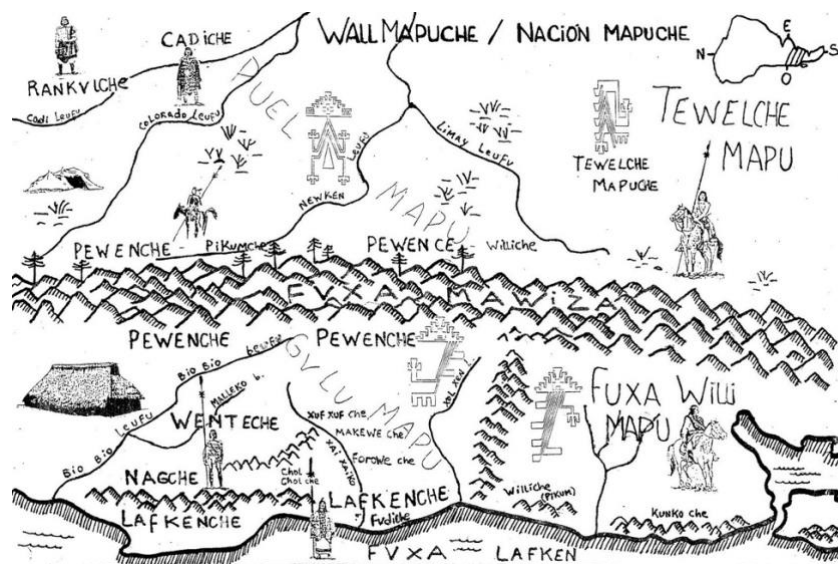
demands an Ethnic Studies framework capable of understanding Indigeneity not as contained within the borders of the United States, but as hemispheric, multilingual, transborder, and shaped by the ongoing violence of settler colonialism and empire.

Indigenous Peoples of the Americas

It is from this disciplinary grounding that I designed “Indigenous Peoples of the Americas,” a course focused on the histories, cultures, political struggles, and knowledge systems of Indigenous peoples across Abya Yala. The course is organized around Indigenous-authored and community-grounded materials such as testimonies, films, and media. When possible, I provide optional Spanish-language texts alongside English-language materials. The assignments, which students have the option to submit in Spanish, include positionality-based reflections, collective discussion, and open-ended creative assignments.

Students often enter the course assuming that “Native American” refers only to Indigenous peoples within the United States. I treat this confusion as a starting point for examining how language, geography, and power uphold imperial borders and colonial ways of seeing. The first module, “Reorientation,” asks students to examine how their understandings of land have been shaped by dominant ideologies. We begin with Indigenous maps and spatial practices, including a Mapuche map oriented with the east at the top, Hopi artistic renderings of land, Australian Aboriginal songlines, and Hawaiian hula as embodied cartography. These examples help students understand that maps are not neutral or objective representations. They express relationships to land, water, movement, memory, and nonhumans. Here we begin to learn that land is not a passive surface on which human activity unfolds, but as an active relation. This is an important early disruption of the human-centered frameworks many students bring into the classroom.

Figure 1. Wall Mapuche/ Mapuche Nation.



Note. From *j...Escucha, winka...!*, by Pablo Mariman Quemenado. Copyright 2006 by LOM ediciones.

We then discuss Indigenous place names, including Abya Yala and Turtle Island, and the histories, stories, and ecological knowledge they carry. Using NativeLand.ca, students identify Indigenous territories to which they are connected and reflect on their own positionality. They often notice that territorial boundaries overlap, which opens discussion about the difference between settler borders and Indigenous relations to place. Whereas settler borders are designed to confine, control, and exclude, Indigenous borders may also function as zones of relation, gathering, and contact.

From there, the course turns to contemporary struggles against extraction, dispossession, state violence, and forced migration. I frame these struggles as attacks on webs of relation among humans and nonhumans. This is important because extractive capitalism depends on translating land and water into property and commodities, while many Indigenous communities defend territory as a living relation. Each unit is anchored by an Indigenous concept or principle relevant to the region of study. For example, during our week on the Andes and the Cochabamba Water War, we discuss the Quechua value of *ayni*, often translated as reciprocity, as a counterpoint to neoliberal extractivism.

The course also examines how U.S. foreign policy and corporate power have contributed to political instability, economic displacement, and environmental devastation throughout the Global South. Students learn that many migrants racialized in the United States as “Latino” or “Hispanic” are Indigenous peoples carrying languages, knowledges, and histories that dominant migration discourse often erases. In this way, the course frames Indigenous migration as central to a hemispheric understanding of colonialism, empire, and survival.

As the imperial boomerang of the United States returns to its point of origin—in the form of ICE raids and control tactics developed in counterinsurgency efforts in places like El Salvador and Guatemala--U.S. citizens are confronted with the same strategies of persecution, criminalization, and dispossession long mobilized against Indigenous peoples in Abya Yala. This is precisely why there is an urgent need to learn from the histories and living movements of those who have been on the front lines against imperial power in the Global South the longest. It is in this context that I teach about Abya Yala and anticolonial movements of the Global South as part of my Native American Studies curriculum.

Engaging Discomfort

While the course often receives positive feedback at the end of the semester, the beginning is always tense. Whiteness surfaces in both explicit and subtle ways, from critiques that the material is “too one-sided,” to refusals to engage with assigned media because reading subtitles is “too difficult.” But the most common way it surfaces is through students pointing out their discomfort because the subject matter is “too negative.” A student shared:

Almost all the information I learn gives me a feeling of sadness, powerlessness, overwhelm, and feelings of immense guilt since I am a white person who's ancestors have harmed native people and have participated in stealing their land. I feel it's important to note also that I have a great respect for Indigenous scholars who have the emotional fortitude to engage with this material regularly. With everything going on in the world "it all" just seems

all so paralyzingly sad. I knew from week two when we discussed Columbus and his raping/kidnapping/human trafficking that I was in for a rough ride.

It is not unusual for students to express paralyzing guilt, sadness, hopelessness, and exhaustion at learning some of the material. Inherent in these responses is a fear of reprisal and of being implicated in systems that oppress others. At the start of the semester, I name these reactions as part of the learning process and encourage students to unpack these feelings in our discussions and weekly reflections. When we discuss particularly challenging topics such as the murder of Indigenous land defenders, I provide tactile materials such as beads, clay, or art supplies to help them process in embodied and creative ways. I also invite a mental health counselor to guide them through various grounding exercises and provide them resources for accessing mental wellness services on campus. Most Ethnic Studies educators do not have additional training as mental health counselors, and our graduate programs do not prepare us to deal with students' affective responses to the material we teach. Over the years I have started incorporating mental health resources into my curriculum to support students in engaging difficult emotions.

After the initial emotional responses, students shift into an urgent desire to find solutions, to translate what they are learning into familiar actions. Sitting with the weight of colonialism and ongoing dispossession is deeply uncomfortable and moving to action can feel like relief. Tema Okun's (1999) work on white supremacy culture identifies urgency to act as one of its defining characteristics, a cultural norm that prioritizes speed and immediate results over the slower, more relational work of deep change.

Tuck and Yang's (2012) call this kind of desire a "settler move to innocence" (p. 9). "Settler moves to innocence" are gestures, including the urgent search for solutions, through which those who benefit from settler structures seek to relieve themselves of the weight of complicity without actually surrendering the material benefits of colonialism. From this perspective, the question of "what can I do?" can be about the student's own need to feel less implicated.

The question of "what can I do?" reflects another feature of white supremacy culture: the tendency to understand problems as individual rather than systemic, and therefore to imagine individual action as the primary site of transformation (Okun, 1999). This stems from a Cartesian logic of separation. In the course, we challenge this separation by foregrounding Indigenous understandings of land defense as spiritual, relational, and collective. For example, through the work of Elicura Chihuailaf who affirms that Mapuche land defense is about kinship, tenderness, and obligation. He teaches us that the struggle for land is bound to "the universe, nature, mother earth. We consider ourselves another part of her. What grateful son or daughter wouldn't rise up when their mother is overwhelmed?" (author's fieldnotes, 2015).

In "A Pedagogy of Discomfort," Megan Boler (1999) argued that perception is affective and political. What students see, refuse to see, or cannot yet see is shaped by emotional investments, fear, habit, and the dominant culture of the historical moment. Her concept of "inscribed habits of (in)attention" names how ignorance is a learned way of attending to the world. Drawing from Minnie Bruce Pratt, she explains that what we have learned not to see is shaped by fear, and that learning to see differently requires a willingness to live with new fears. This is what she calls learning to inhabit a "morally ambiguous self" (p. 182). Rather than leaving students in guilt,

innocence, or detached critique, a pedagogy of discomfort asks them to bear witness to others, and critically examine the relations and conditions that have made their ways of seeing possible.

By asking students to build a tolerance for complexity and ambiguity rather than move too quickly toward resolution, discomfort can become a productive site of inquiry. During the second week of class, we read Gloria Anzaldúa's poem, "To Live in the Borderlands Means You," as an introduction to ambiguity. Her work on borderlands is useful because it helps students understand the feeling of inhabiting a non-binary space. Rather than resolving these binaries, contradictions, and tensions, Anzaldúa's work guides students to understand ambiguity as something they can learn to inhabit.

A goal of the course is to interrupt the expectation that learning comes from easily translated and simplified information, or that it should provide a resolution. This pedagogy reframes learning as an ongoing, collective, and relational process. Through coming to terms with ambiguity, the students' questions change; instead of asking "What can I do?" they begin asking, "What relationships can I build? What relationships am I already part of?"

Whiteness, Empire, and the Limits of Translation

To teach Abya Yala in a U.S. classroom, students should consider not only what they are learning, but from *where* they are learning. Whiteness appears through discomfort, but also as a structure that shapes access to knowledge, mobility and legitimacy. In this context, translation is mediated by students' proximity to empire and by academic frameworks that often require Indigenous and Global South knowledges to become legible through dominant categories.

Proximity to Empire

In the course, we analyze whiteness through Rupa Marya's "pillars of colonialism" framework, which understands colonialism as sustained through capitalism and interlocking forms of supremacy, including white supremacy, human supremacy, and patriarchy. This framework helps students understand whiteness not simply as an individual identity or skin color, but as a colonial structure that organizes access to legitimacy, resources, and power.

Barton's concept of "proximity to whiteness" is useful for naming how some non-Black people of color may gain conditional access to power through education, class status, anti-Blackness, or other forms of alignment with white supremacy. I extend this logic through what I call "proximity to empire." If proximity to whiteness describes uneven access to racialized power within white supremacist structures, proximity to empire describes uneven access to global power through one's location within an imperial nation. U.S.-based students, including students of color who experience racism within the United States, may still occupy a structurally advantaged position in relation to communities in the Global South. This does not diminish racial oppression within U.S. borders, instead, it asks students to understand that one can be marginalized within one structure while also benefiting from another. Naming "proximity to empire" allows students to examine how citizenship, mobility, infrastructure, institutional access, and economic security are shaped by histories of extraction that extend far beyond U.S. borders.

Resisting Intellectual Imperialism

Whiteness also operates epistemically by shaping whose knowledge students are taught to trust, what evidence is considered legitimate, and which histories appear objective. For this reason, part of the work is to help students identify the inherited assumptions that make empire, capitalism, racial hierarchy, and human supremacy appear natural. For myself, whiteness also shows up in the pressure to make Indigenous and Global South knowledges legible through dominant academic, colonial, or English-language categories. Allowing Spanish-language submissions and assigning optional Spanish-language materials is one small attempt to unsettle English-language authority in the classroom, though it does not eliminate the deeper problem of translating Indigenous knowledges through colonial languages. As a white-passing, mixed-ancestry, U.S.-college-educated, cisgender woman I have to regularly slow down to reflect on how my positionality informs what I assign, whose voices I center, and how students are invited to participate.

One challenge in anticolonial teaching is the uncritical use of familiar theoretical frameworks simply because they are legible within the academy. In her critique of imperial research practices, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) reminded us that knowledge production has long been implicated in colonial domination, especially when Indigenous peoples are studied, classified, translated, and interpreted through external frameworks not accountable to their own communities. Concepts such as Indigeneity, sovereignty, citizenship, and settler colonialism do not always translate neatly across the vastly diverse communities of Abya Yala. In regions where Indigenous peoples constitute a large portion of the population, such as the Andes, the binary of settler and Indigenous may be insufficient for understanding how colonial power operates. These dynamics are mediated through specific histories, racial formations, state structures, class relations, and community practices.

The imposition of external frameworks is a form of intellectual imperialism that privileges Global North knowledges as universal while treating others as case studies or supplementary knowledge. This dynamic is not confined to Eurocentric or conservative disciplines. Even those of us committed to liberatory, critical, and anticolonial pedagogies can unknowingly reproduce these hierarchies when we default to northern theories as the primary lens through which southern realities are interpreted. In an effort to translate, the lens of whiteness/empire can distort, reduce, or make invisible.

The most generative frameworks for understanding colonialism and resistance emerge from those who have lived its consequences most intimately. For this reason, Ethnic Studies can do more than just include Global South perspectives as content. We can create curricula grounded in frameworks and pedagogies from communities whose histories and struggles the course engages. I acknowledge, though, that this is not a perfect practice and can slip into appropriation if these frameworks are treated as transferable rather than situated knowledges accountable to specific communities and lands. To interrupt that tendency, the course makes relational accountability part of its pedagogy. This is where bearing witness becomes central to the course. Rather than moving quickly toward repair or resolution, we focus on the slow and intentional practice of accountability that begins with collective witnessing.

Bearing Witness

Another way whiteness shows up is in students' demands to learn more about the "cool things" Indigenous peoples have done throughout history instead of contemporary issues. Some students enroll in the class expecting to explore ancient civilizations, artistic traditions, and pre-invasion achievements, and are frustrated to discover that we spend significant time on contemporary movements and critiques of settler colonialism and imperialism. In these moments, students ask why the course focuses so much on "bad things," echoing a broader critique of Ethnic Studies from predominantly white spaces. These complaints reflect the discomfort that emerges when we are asked to recognize our relationship to systems that we have been taught to see as distant or unrelated to us (Boler, 1999). When I shared these complaints with a colleague in Native American Studies, she responded plainly about the entitlement inherent in such a position: "they don't get to learn all the good things about us without learning all the bad things that were done to us."

It is important here to acknowledge that the barrage of digital information we are exposed to each day can intensify this desire for simple and immediately gratifying forms of knowledge. Students are already processing a constant flood of global opinions and crises that can exceed their social processing capacity and leave them with limited bandwidth for slower, more difficult, relational forms of learning. In a class like this one, where students are being asked to think historically, structurally, and personally at the same time, this overload can make them more likely to reject complexity and seek relief in content that feels simpler, affirming, or comfortable.

However, when students ask to learn about the "cool things," without learning about ongoing dispossession, they are asking for Indigenous life to be translated into something pleasurable and consumable within dominant frameworks of knowledge. In this sense, translation is a form of extraction for the benefit of the spectator. Spectating is a form of selective consumption, which can be a kind of extraction in itself, allowing students to take what they want, without examining their own positionality or relationships.

Witnessing, by contrast, requires a shift in how students understand themselves in relation to others. Generally speaking, witnessing is a significant practice with distinct cultural expressions throughout the world. In "A Pedagogy of Witnessing," Louie et al. (2025) drew from their Dakelh and Métis positionalities to describe it as the practice of listening followed by the responsibility to relay what they have heard to another audience. Through witnessing we affirm that the event and the people involved are important. Stellat'en First Nation Knowledge Keeper, Terry Lynn Luggi, elaborated:

As witnesses, we listen attentively with our minds and our hearts, as affirmation of what we are seeing and hearing as being significant. It is not necessarily incorporated or held only as a way of learning or knowledge but as a way of being, permeating within us [...] People are honored when you witness their life event [...] the stories are compelled to be affirmed, respectfully validated, and held as a responsibility, by every witness there thereafter [...] The power of the truth does not rest in a single person. The power of the truth rests in all of us. (Louie et al., 2025, p. 9)

Luggi's words resonate with other intellectual traditions that understand witnessing as a collective and lived responsibility. In this course, witnessing extends beyond the human, as students are also asked to witness the experience of rivers, forests, mountains, and other nonhumans. Witnessing changes the listener because it does not allow them to remain detached from what has been heard. Boler (1999) explained that "spectating versus witnessing provides a useful tool for learning how positionality shifts and slips in complex, unpredictable, and precarious ways" (p. 187). She described witnessing as the process of "learning to see" whereby "one is challenged to disrupt the oversimplifications of "popular history" (p. 185). This disruption is key to Ethnic Studies because popular history often makes colonial violence appear accidental, finished, or disconnected from the present. Witnessing asks students to move beyond the isolated "I" and toward a collective sense of implication and responsibility. As Boler suggested, collective witnessing requires students to recognize that their emotional responses are not purely individual, but are shaped by histories, institutions, and systems of power.

To be clear, I do want students to learn about the "cool things." I do not want to reproduce what Eve Tuck (2009) called "damage-centered" narratives of Indigenous injury and victimhood. After all, Ethnic Studies is not a study of misery; it is a study of power, survival, refusal, creativity, relationality, and world-making despite colonial and imperial violence. The issue arises when we are asked to teach about the "cool things" detached from the conditions that have attempted to destroy them.

With a foundational understanding of the issues facing Indigenous peoples in Abya Yala, I introduce Land Back victories and Buen Vivir declarations (declarations for "good living"), such as the Sarayaku declaration of Kawsak Sacha. These declarations emerge from Indigenous peoples' ongoing defense of land, water, territory, language, and nonhuman relations. Students are asked to witness not only harm, but also the intellectual and political worlds that Indigenous communities continue to build. Witnessing asks students to remain attentive to the harms of colonialism while also recognizing Indigenous presence, continuance, and futurity.

From Discomfort to Accountable Practice

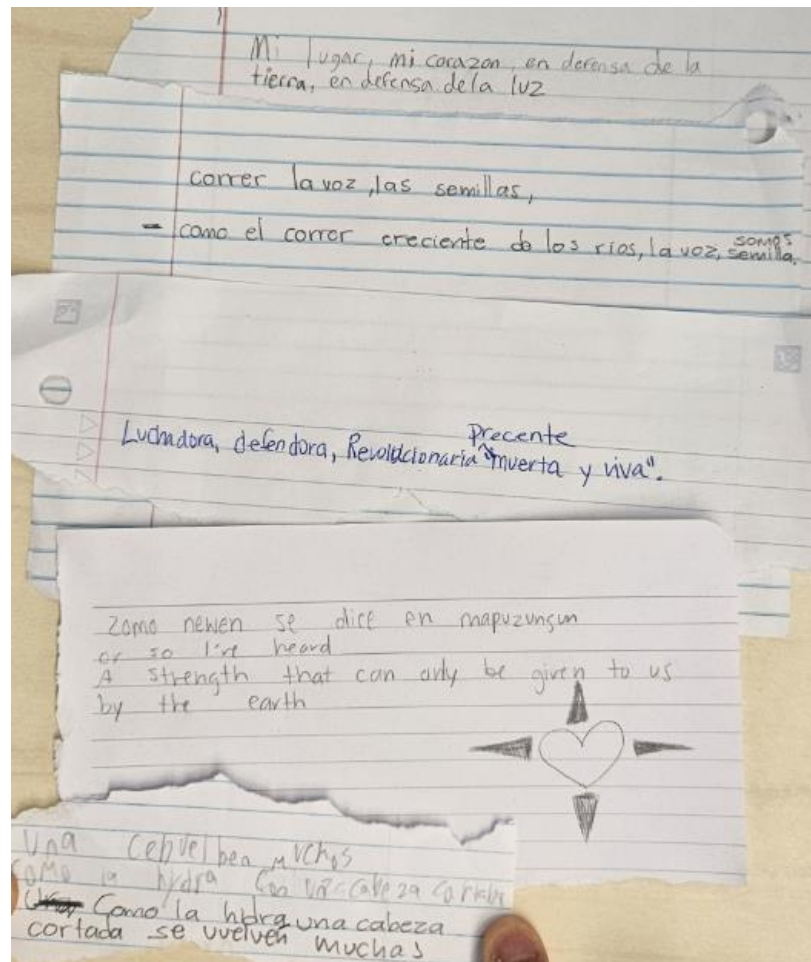
A pedagogy of discomfort ask students to examine the grief, guilt, anger, confusion, defensiveness, contradiction, or uncertainty that arise when their ways of seeing are challenged. Standard academic writing assignments do not provide space for students to process complex emotions, asking them to move too quickly toward crafting a polished argument. While I incorporate weekly written assignments, I also include creative assignments throughout the semester to allow students to slow down, giving them a medium for processing their emotions collectively.

Poetry Collages for Collective Witnessing

In this assignment, students engage witnessing as a collective practice. During the first half of the semester, we learn about corporate exploitation in Central America and the murder of Lenca land defender, Berta Cáceres. Students watch *Berta Didn't Die, She Multiplied*, a short documentary that presents her life, struggle, and ongoing presence through the testimonios of her family and community. Students work in small groups, with each person writing one line of poetry on a scrap of paper, in response to what they witnessed and with reverence for her memory. These lines are then brought together into a collective poetry collage. The collective form of the poem reinforces

that witnessing is not an individual and passive act of observation, it is shared and built through many voices holding fragments of grief, resistance, and remembrance together. Witnessing is an antidote to the colonial logic that “fragments people categorically,” allowing us to find in each other “possible companions in resistance” (Lugones 2003, p. 11). After each group shares their poems, we raise our voices together: “Que viva Berta!”

Figure 2. Poetry Collage.



Note. A poem by a group of students in the Spring 2024 class.

Zine-Making for Engaging Discomfort

For their midterms, I invite a local artist and activist, Chica Masa, to lead a zine-making workshop. She opens the workshop by explaining the significance of zines: they allow for communities to produce, preserve, and circulate their own knowledge, making them powerful tools for political education, collective memory, and social transformation. The zine-making process is flexible and open-ended. The students are asked to pick any topic we covered in class, and elaborate on it through visual art, poetry, or personal narrative. The guest artist provides the tools for zine-making and gives them feedback or suggestions for the visual aspects of their zine. At the end of the class

we circulate the zines and discuss them, building relationships among students while creating space for reflection, dialogue, and collective meaning-making. Working with zines allows them to organize fragmented or partial ideas and emotions into collages and visual imagery, giving students a medium for staying with what they do not yet know how to resolve.

Figure 3. Zine Workshop.



Note. Students in the Spring 2025 class show off their mini zines.

Accountable Practice Final Project

Their final “accountable practice” project asks them to bring what they have witnessed into conversation with their own fields of study. Students create public scholarship they can share beyond the classroom, such as lesson plans, policy briefs, creative projects, research proposals, or community resources, grounded in respect, accuracy, and accountability. For example, a film student developed a documentary proposal rooted in community storytelling practices; a botany student created an infographic on the resurgence of chinampas, a traditional Nahua agricultural method. The emphasis of this assignment, like the rest of the class, is not to achieve a resolution, but to recognize how we are situated within relations to land and to Indigenous struggles across the hemisphere. Across these assignments, I began to notice a shift in how students framed their responses. While at the beginning they often centered on guilt, overwhelm, or the desire to know what action they could take to feel less implicated, later assignments turned towards

understanding their relationality and how their future work might be accountable to Indigenous struggles beyond the classroom. At the end of the semester a student shared:

As a tribal member who has spent much of my life immersed in the stories of my people and the long, painful history of colonization in North America. I thought I had learned all there was to know about Indigenous struggle. But this class opened my eyes to something I didn't expect [...] I asked myself, how could I not have known? I work in a space filled with books on history, on Indigenous identity, on the world. I handle materials every day that cover colonization and environmental issues. And still, these current stories of Indigenous resistance and environmental defense were not reaching me.

This realization is humbling. It shows me how even those of us most connected to Indigenous histories can be isolated from the global picture. It's also a reminder of how colonial systems don't just erase people they erase connections between people.

I am grateful to this class for helping me rebuild those connections. For expanding my understanding of sovereignty, sacred land, and resistance. For introducing me to the courage of Indigenous people protecting the forest and asserting their rights against extractive industries. And for reminding me that this is not just a North American story it is a global one.

I want to share more, and bring this knowledge into my work, into my home, and into the way I think about what it means to be Native in a world where Indigenous peoples everywhere are still fighting to protect what is most sacred.

This student's reflection emphasizes that translating Abya Yala is not only about expanding hemispheric knowledge, but a practice of rebuilding relations that colonial systems have severed.

Conclusion

For our final class module on hemispheric unity, we turn to Pando, fungi, and Emil Keme's "For Abiyala to Live, the Americas Must Die: Toward a Transhemispheric Indigeneity" to consider how relational understandings of land, kinship, and liberation exceed human/nonhuman binaries and colonial borders. Pando, a vast clonal aspen organism connected through an underground root system, and fungi, with their mycelial networks of relation and exchange, help students think beyond individualist and nation-state frameworks. Alongside these materials, we consider what it might mean to position ourselves in relation to Indigenous movements through texts such as the *Ally Bill of Responsibilities* (Gehl, 2012), "Critical Reimagining of the White Settler Relationship to Land" (Maxwell, 2020), and Nikki Sanchez's "Decolonization Is for Everyone" (2019).

This returns to the question that grounds this article: what does it mean to "translate Abya Yala" in a white-dominant classroom? Translation, as I have come to understand it, is not about making Indigenous knowledge easily consumable, fully knowable, or available for mastery. It is an open-ended and discomfiting practice that unsettles the colonial expectation that Indigenous worlds should become legible within white-dominant spaces. Through bearing witness, students are asked to examine the discomfort of confronting imperial violence, the limits of translation, uneven positionalities, and the impossibility of fully knowing across imperial difference. An anticolonial

pedagogy should insist on the limits of comprehension. Some meanings cannot, or should not, be made fully available through translation.

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