

**Transcript for Season One, Episode Six:  
Thinking/Feeling: Sentipensante Pedagogy and Educating for Wholeness**

**Nana Osei-Kofi 00:08**

Welcome to Transforming the College Classroom. This is a podcast for anyone who is interested in taking up teaching and learning in higher education from a social justice informed perspective in ways that are centered on a deep commitment to teaching all students. My name is Nana Osei-Kofi. I'm Director of the Difference, Power, and Discrimination program at Oregon State University. And I'm also Associate Professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

**Kali Furman 00:34**

I'm Kali Furman, I'm a postdoctoral scholar with the Difference, Power, and Discrimination Program.

**Bradley Boovy 00:39**

And I'm Bradley Boovy, associate professor in the School of Language, Culture, and Society at Oregon State. And co-facilitator with Nana of the DPD Summer Academy, where we work with faculty who are developing and teaching DPD courses.

We're recording this at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon, located within the traditional homelands of the Mary's River or Amphinefu Band of Kalapuya. Following the Willamette Valley Treaty of 1855 Kalapuya people were forcibly removed to reservations in Western Oregon. Today living descendants of these people are a part of the Confederated tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated tribes of the Siletz Indians.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 01:16**

Hi, this is Nana, and I'm here today with Kali. Our guests today are Dr. Erich Pitcher and Charlene Martinez. Charlene and Erich, why don't you tell us a little bit about yourselves and introduce yourself to our listeners?

**Charlene Martinez 01:30**

Well, thanks for having us. This is Charlene Martinez. I identify as a Taiwanese Colombian American daughter of immigrants, a mother three, and I've been working in the field as a scholar practitioner in student affairs for about 20 years.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 01:44**

All good things. Erich.

**Erich Pitcher 01:47**

Yeah. Thank you so much for having us. Really great to be in community with everybody today. My name is Erich Pitcher and I use they and he pronouns. And to just sort of as an entry into who am I, I'm a community member; I'm learning how to move through this world a bit more authentically. I'm a plant parent. I'm a fur baby caregiver. I have a lot of degrees in Higher Education, in Student Affairs and Policy Analysis, and then I did my undergrad at a tiny liberal arts institution that radicalized me, Antioch College, and my career has spanned the higher education sectors and the nonprofit sectors. And I'm still teaching occasionally for OSU and right now I'm working full time at the Oregon Food Bank on a racial justice team, and we're doing equity work together and it's been really great. So, delighted to be with everybody today.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 02:26**

Wonderful. So exciting to hear from you.

**Kali Furman 02:28**

Yes, we're so happy to have you on the podcast today. And we're wondering if we could start by just having you tell us a little bit about your work together broadly, as well as about your chapter for this book project specifically.

**Charlene Martinez 02:39**

So, Erich and I had the good fortune of working together at Oregon State University in the Diversity and Cultural Engagement department. At the time, I was serving a program called Integrated Learning for Social Change, and our work dovetailed in many different ways.

Erich served in some of our assessment and communications role for the department, but I would say that our work together more broadly met at the intersections of cultural organizing, narrative change, narrative justice, and a friendship. I think more than anything else, I valued our relationship and how we came together and how we came together when we were falling apart as well. And I think that the book chapter was inspired by all the ways in which we came together, both professionally, but also personally. Erich, what would you say about how we came together and how the book project emerged?

**Erich Pitcher 03:30**

Same. That's literally what I had in my notes to say. I was serving as a Associate Director of Research and Communications at Diversity and Cultural Engagement, and I had the good

fortune of having run into Charlene, and having shared an office wall, and being in good community with one another during a time of pretty significant transition in both of our lives and then also within the nation, so this is back in well, 2016, 2017.

And so, the world felt a bit different than it does now. We partnered on a bunch of different kinds of cool stuff, and I definitely would describe a lot of that stuff as cultural organizing projects. We were doing some research work around multiracial identities. I think of us as like two people who were kind of agitating each other towards our better versions of ourselves and inviting our higher selves into the world. So, I think of us as having the kind of relationship that asks a lot of you actually. To show up authentically, to be deeply held by each other's love, both for ourselves, but also for our love that's oriented towards one another.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 04:29**

Such a meaningful relationship. I have a question about your chapter that I want to ask, but before I do, so I heard you speak Charlene about narrative justice, and I thought that might be something that our listeners would want to hear more about. So tell us what is narrative justice?

**Charlene Martinez 04:46**

Yeah, and I don't know if I am an expert on narrative, there's a project called A Narrative Initiative that I really, I love their resources, but what it makes me think about is just the ways in which our stories can help shift culture and related to our chapter and related to Dr. Rendón's work in sentipensante, the ways that we can show up and our fullness in our full humanity. The way women of color feminisms has inspired me to do is to try and bring forth all that I am, my history, my experiences, the tough parts, the more free liberatory parts. If I can bring myself more fully into these spaces and inspire others to do the same, then together, we can change culture more meaningfully with our fuller selves.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 05:35**

Thank you for that. Thank you for that. Yeah. So you mentioned sentipensante pedagogy. And so, for our listeners I will just offer the title of your chapter. It's titled "From Here to There: Educating for Wholeness". And one of the things that you talk about is sentipensante pedagogy as a framework to achieve wholeness and social justice education and actually, also much more broadly, you really are speaking to it in relation to higher education as a whole. So say a little bit about what sentipensante pedagogy is and how it functions in ways that help us achieve wholeness.

**Charlene Martinez 06:13**

Yeah. I'll just kick it off by saying that I'm not an expert necessarily in Dr. Rendón's work. And she really built out the sentipensante pedagogy, but something that I think is really beautiful

and connected to my own cultural heritage and identity is that she uses the word, that actually originated from coastal Columbian fishermen, who created this word senti and pensante, so to feel and to think, right. And combined it in their observations of what it means to exist in the world. And the person who brought it back from those Coastal Colombians, his name is Eduardo Galeano. And so, I think it's so profound, especially coming from a culture or two cultures, a Colombian and Taiwanese culture that really demanded and asked, in my parents' immigration to assimilate, to cut off pieces of themselves to exist in this world. So, at its roots, sentipensante offers an anecdote to white supremacy culture, the ways in which we're asked to cut pieces of ourselves off.

And Sentipensante offers an opportunity for inside the classroom, inside these educational structures and institutions, to reorient ourselves to humanity, to integrity, to a liberatory kind of frameworks, which means inviting in ability to be whole in wherever it is that we go.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 07:43**

Thank you. Erich, do you want to add to that in anyway?

**Erich Pitcher 07:46**

I'd love to. So of course, defining the term, I think sentipensante, the loose translation is thinking sensing, or sort of that connection, but actually something in the translation is lost, right? Because it would be something like 'think sensing' probably is a more accurate translation. And so, this is the power of language, right? That there is a term here that loosely translates, but doesn't fully capture the concept and the cultural meaning of it.

And for me, that feels actually a bit metaphorical to think about what needs to happen in our classroom spaces, so that we might start to feel whole in those spaces. That we need to be thinking quite differently about how we move in those spaces in order for those spaces to be more transformative. We might use an academic definition of it's culturally validating. It's a deep learning experience. It addresses a balance between our intellectual, social, emotional selves, but more than anything, I think that what sentipensante asks us to do is to be whole beings and to try to meet other whole beings where they are on their journeys.

And to think of our students, our co-learners, our co-teachers as not just heads walking around on sticks that we're going to be shaping, but actually embodied physical, social, and spiritual beings. And so much of how we're taught to teach in higher education, if we receive any instruction on how to teach in higher ed at all, is well, you got to deliver those content and make sure you've assessed it and you've got a good learning outcome. And this is a pedagogy that asks for us to think beyond those logics and those kinds of tangible metrics that we might try to apply to learning. And so, part of what I think it asks us to do is to think differently about our role as teacher-learners, as learner-teachers in the space together.

I think the other piece I'd lift up is, there's a certain kind of risk in bringing your full self to the classroom. Because if you're anything like me, there are parts of you that when revealed are utterly unattractive, and then there are parts of you that are wonderful and beautiful and deserve to be uplifted and faced. And so, part of what I think we need to be thinking about with this pedagogical practice is some of the deep personal work to be utterly okay with the parts of you that are not so beautiful. That maybe don't always show you in the best light; past mistakes, old ways of thinking, white supremacist ways of thinking that are still in inside of us. And I think the other piece that I want to just sort of uplift a bit is the emotional work that sentipensante invites into our lives.

So if we see students as whole beings, as people with feelings, those feelings are going to show up and we've got to be really ready to hold those feelings. And as Charlene knows, this has been a journey for me. It's not an easy road for me. I don't show up always in the most vulnerable and emotion centered space. And so, part of what the challenge for me in this pedagogical practice of sentipensante is to tap into the parts of me that white supremacy culture says shouldn't exist – vulnerability, emotions, tenderness – and to bring those into the learning spaces that I find myself in.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 10:39**

Thank you so much. I want to hear so much more about how this actually happens and some of your experiences with engaging with others around this. I do have a little bit of a side question, I guess, but it's still related. Erich, you mentioned learning outcomes, and the typical way in which we go about those and what that leaves out essentially. I'm just curious because of what we're talking about, if you have any thoughts on just learning outcomes as a concept, or as something that we engage with a lot in higher ed these days. Is it useful? Is it meaningful? Does it have a place or not at all? Just, just curious.

**Erich Pitcher 11:23**

I love this question, and I got to think about it. My initial reaction is, I've been trained to say yes, of course, learning outcomes have a place because it helps us to design learning experiences. It helps us to chart a student's progress. But I think if we think about learning outcomes as students will have an increased understanding of theories or ways of explaining the world or whatever it is that might be kind of the transmission of knowledge, that's a kind of learning outcome.

But what if our learning outcome was to identify the spaces where I still need to heal. So, that's a learning outcome because it's identifying the spaces that you still need to heal, right? It can be measured in a certain kind of way in the sense that you could produce evidence of your learning about those things, but that's not the kind of learning outcome we typically see on a class syllabus in a higher education context. Right?

And so, I think part of what we need to do is leverage the language that the academy is infatuated with and then repurpose it for the ends that we need to see in the world. That we know are guided by our values, by our cultural traditions, and by the communities that we wish to hold at the center of our work.

So, yes and. Learning outcomes perhaps have a place, and we need to rethink how we talk about learning outcomes. And perhaps the other thing we need to think about is that the learning doesn't stop just because the student evaluation of teaching has occurred. I think about some of the lessons that were handed to me through my mentors and teachers over the many years. I probably wasn't even really ready to receive some of that information and it took a long time to get to a place, to be ready to receive some of that information.

So to think about learning outcomes as like, okay, it happens in these 10 weeks or these 15 weeks is probably not accurate because we're going to return to those same issues. I'm going to return to what does it mean to be in a space of teaching and learning? What does it mean to ask good questions? Any of the kinds of things that we might be trying to teach students, we're going to have to continue to iterate on those and begin to deepen in our own understanding of them.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 13:17**

Thank you. Love that, fabulous.

**Kali Furman 13:21**

I'm wondering if you both can share some examples from your work where you've put these pedagogical approaches into practice. One of the things that I so appreciate about working with both Charlene and Erich is how your work spans so many different areas and really resists a kind of siloing between things that happen in student affairs and things that happen in the classroom, and really sort of broadening what we think about learning and where learning occurs. And so, I would just love to hear a little bit more about how you put this into practice in different areas and what you've learned from those experiences.

**Charlene Martinez 13:49**

Yeah, I am so appreciative, Erich, of you bringing in mentors and teachers into this conversation because everything I've learned about *sentipensante*, even before I learned about the word, I learned the essence of that from my teachers. So teachers like Thich Nhat Hanh, and teachers like Paul Spickard, and Diane Fujino, and Maria Nieto Senour. These individuals who really shaped what I thought could be possible in the classroom and helped me find myself early, early.

So, in undergrad learning how the arts could be a really great facilitator for understanding my identity better through Kip Fulbeck, who I mentioned in the chapter and so on and so forth.

And I mention them because I feel like there's a lineage to everything that I'm about to share in terms of my practice. Lineage being the way in which I've come to find myself as an educator, I realize that the best ways of teaching in dialogic kind of projects have been through curiosity, self-reflectiveness, like reflective kind of thinking, containers that support contemplative mind practices, sometimes meditation, or just embodiment.

So very specifically, there's a couple of practices that we mentioned in the chapter where it's become part of the fabric, one of the things I have in my toolbox. So, story circles being one of those things where I learned from the US Department of Arts and Culture that comes from cultural organizing and particularly SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Commission in the south, where in order to make change, again, narrative change, in order to make change, folks were invited, specifically Black folks to come together to talk about conditions in their community that they wanted to change.

And from them and their stories that then were collected by the people themselves, they then turned those stories into different interventions. So, action art pieces, theater pieces, different kinds of ways of teaching folks the actual real lived experiences of minoritized and marginalized communities. So, the piece around having learning outcomes that are oriented toward wholeness, so having sentipensante learning outcomes, I think are really super important.

So, if you have a classroom and you want to have a discussion about belonging, what are the ways that you can facilitate those practices? For me, it has been the process of story circles, where people are sitting in a circle, or sometimes now on zoom, but sitting in a space where they're given very particular prompt around belonging and not belonging. And they're able to tell their actual stories, their lived stories, and everyone having the same amount of time to be able to share these stories. And these kinds of activities I think are so incredibly profound because it gets to the root of things like empathy, and really seeing each other across lines of difference. And folks are really able to then consider what then humility might look like or another perspective, or really thinking about their own lived experiences and histories.

And so, what I've come to learn from these experiences though, is that it's not rocket science, but you have to be really willing to do your own work around vulnerability. I cannot set up a container and facilitate a container in which I have not done the exercises or the practice myself. So, I take that word practitioner to heart. I cannot expect a group of folks to share a story that I myself have not thought about, or I myself have not done work around.

And so, there is a saying, right, like everything is sort of interconnected or connected. I think in that way about the process of sentipensante pedagogy, that if I, as an educator, I'm unwilling to be vulnerable or unwilling to understand what emotions are underneath what I'm actually thinking about then I'm not doing the work myself. And so, there very much is a walking the talk around sentipensante pedagogy that I have come to learn and embrace as tough as those emotions might be sometimes.

**Kali Furman 17:53**

Thank you. Those are such powerful examples and stories. Erich, would you like to share?

**Erich Pitcher 17:58**

Of course. Similar to Charlene, I have a lineage with the work, and I really can trace it back probably most concretely to Riyadh Shahjahan and Trixie Smith, who I met as a doc student when I was at Michigan State, who both invited me to be an embodied learner, who invited me to be a contemplative learner, who invited me to sit in silence and to really do the deep inner emotional work that one needs to do in order to show up well in teaching and learning spaces.

I think about a project that I did for Trixie's class, where we needed to bring food that was part of our cultural tradition, and then talk a little bit about that food, and I'm a white person. And so, the food that came to mind was my mom used to always make these like salami rollups with cream cheese. And I was like, kind of embarrassed to be like, "This is the food that I'm going to bring," but we would sit in this embodied practice and eating together, sharing space together, and telling stories about the food.

I think that was probably the first time that I had ever shared this tradition with anyone and it felt scary and risky. And it also was this moment of like, "I'm sharing parts of my history with you" and that feels out of the norm of what's typically expected of me. So when I think about that lineage, part of what I also think about is like, gosh, I think I might have been a sentipensante practitioner before I actually had the name and the book. And it was in Riyadh's class that I read the book actually, and started to think like, oh my goodness, I think this is the thing I have been longing for and have seen little moments and glimmers of, but have longed for. And if I've longed for it, then that means there's other people who want to.

So, when I think about very concrete strategies, things that I've done that I think really align with this perspective, of course, the use of story circles and storytelling practices broadly, I also think about the ways in which I ask students to bring their creative minds to the work.

So a great example of this is in a Student Development Theory course, we will make drawings of particular theories to help us think about and sense, what is this theory really about. If I were to put myself into this theory, what would it mean? And maybe this theory has no relevance to my life and that's okay too. And I think in a classroom where we say this thing might not be relevant, instead of saying this thing is universal and will apply to you, it opens up the possibility that it might not align and it might align in some ways but not fully.

So, I think about that. I also think about our use of mindfulness practices. So, most often I think about this, especially with my doctoral students, who I have taught in a hybrid education format. So, they're doing a lot of learning online, but then we're face to face for two sessions through the term. And I will always do some kind of mindfulness practice with them. Many of them are very full adults. They're forties or 50 years old, and have big jobs and busy lives. And

so many of their reflections on doing something like a simple mindfulness, just we're going to sit here for two minutes in a darkened room, we're just going to sit with silence, we're going to get rooted into the earth, the profound transformation that something that small could have on a person who has a busy, full life, is amazing.

I also think about the ways that I've done some of that work in informal education spaces, so I love to do a body scan meditation for folks. It can be such a grounding experience. I've had the opportunity to do that inside a prison, at Oregon State Penitentiary, and to be able to sort of hold a group in that moment of mindfulness, of quiet, of silence, and of rest, particularly in the chaotic environment that prisons are, I think speaks to the power of the pedagogy. Now, it would be helpful if the academic year aligned with the cycles of nature a bit better, but it does not. And so, it's often a bit challenging to get students outside, but I think that oftentimes in the spring we might go outside or we might say, "Okay, we're going to just break for 15. Everybody should go outside. Go find a tree friend. Go be with that tree friend for a bit, and we'll see you back here in a little while."

So, a bit of time in nature, spending time with our natural environment, and the wisdom and teachings of plants that can happen that have really very little to do with anything I did, but actually is just built into our environment by living in the world. I think about just one other kind of concrete example is I taught a History of Higher Education course. And I asked students to sit in a circle with me and we would share our stories about higher education or history in higher education. And because in a story circle you often lead, so the person who's holding the circle will lead, or you'll have a designated lead storyteller who's going to model for the group the depth of type of story that we're going to tell, the kinds of things that get unearthed for students in that, in their own personal histories in higher education, can be really profound.

And we can also see the ways in which higher ed has harmed folks, even though folks are deeply committed because they're all having their career in higher education, you can see the harm that's been done, the doubt that has been planted, the worries, the imposter syndrome, and sitting with the story and being held by the group while we tell our stories can help be a bit of an antidote to some of those things that are happening for folks.

And I think one of the ways I have observed sentipensante happen and it's one of the most powerful learning experiences I ever had, was I came into Riyad's class, it was a Teaching and Learning in Curriculum course, and he asked us to go and look at the river. We were in a classroom that overlooks the Red Cedar River. I don't know that I ever looked at the river the same again, after that experience. And we are just sitting in silence, looking at the river and the river was moving so fast. It was springtime, all the snow had melted, it was a beautiful, gorgeous day. The campus was just a buzz with activity and the stillness and the calm that came about to me indicated that this is the kind of pedagogical practice that we need to see in higher ed. So, those are a couple examples.

**Kali Furman 23:42**

Thank you so much for sharing those. You both offer so many rich stories and examples and ideas for all of us about how we can apply this.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 23:50**

Absolutely. So what I'm sitting with here, what I'm thinking about is, if I am a faculty member or a Student Affairs practitioner that has never engaged in these ways, but in hearing what you're sharing and having read your chapter, I really, really want to work in this way. I want to try and make that shift, that transition. What advice can you offer me? What suggestions do you have around how I might start to go about doing this work?

**Charlene Martinez 24:24**

I have been thinking a lot about what the pandemic has taught me, and what the pandemic has taught others and this notion of care, self-care, care for others, care for the community. My first piece of advice is how can we slow down enough to really listen to our own bodies? What our bodies are actually communicating with us about what we need. And how might I create the conditions for others around me to be able to slow down as well?

And in that slowing down, I think that there's answers there. There's ways to get curious, right? The curiosity of like, well, what could a five-minute grounding at the beginning of class actually do for myself? And then how might that create this energy or this exchange with students? And how might that communicate what I value so that learning, good learning can happen?

And I think this notion of like seeing people in their full humanity means first tuning into your own about what you might need and then creating the conditions for people to show up more fully. The other piece that I'm thinking about is this notion of acknowledgement of history and harm wherever we go. That even if we don't know the history of a place or a history of our own self sometimes, that there are ways to acknowledge the harm that has been caused or things that have transpired that one needs to heal from.

And then just assume that everyone has history and healing to attend to in all directions. And how might that inform instruction in a class? What might you need to do? Let's say to talk about devastation and tragedy around the world, right? If you're going to talk about something that's really difficult, what might we need to do to set ourselves up as a primer to be able to have these harder kinds of conversations? And that is that attention to this emotional intelligence piece of like getting really clear about what I'm scared about, or what I'm fearful about, what I'm angry about, so that I can show up in the best way possible for my students. So slowing down, figuring how to integrate the wisdom around care, and then this acknowledgement of history and harm and what are the conditions I can create, what interventions can I create to be able to have difficult conversations or opportunities for radical imagination, things like that.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 26:50**

Thank you. Erich?

**Erich Pitcher 26:54**

Similar to Charlene, of course, I'm thinking a lot about care, and I'm thinking a lot about connection and community. So we've been living through a time of isolation, of a lot of fear and misinformation, and we have a shared collective trauma that is living through a pandemic. And whether that was your first big traumatic event or the 50th traumatic event in your life, whenever a big event, a traumatic event, an event that has caused the kind of destruction that the pandemic has, we have healing work to do.

We have healing work to do as individuals. We have healing work to do within our own cultural groups, and we've got healing work to do at the community level. So, part of what I think about is around actually expectations. So, I was invited to teach during the pandemic and I thought, "Oh, my goodness, how can I possibly ask students to submit a needs assessment assignment in the middle of a pandemic?" This is probably the least important thing for them to do. The most important thing is to try to survive right now, and hopefully thrive in the ways that we can when we're experiencing a high level of stress. And what I ultimately came to was the need for a more compassionate syllabus. So, instead of having very rigid expectations about due dates and rigid expectations around when you should do this, that, and the other, I needed to soften around all of that because that's really what the moment needed.

And I think building from what Charlene was talking about, when there's stuff going on in the world, we've got to get our stuff out, our anger, our frustration, our grief, our loss, all of those things, so we can show up a bit better and set the conditions for students to be successful in whatever way they defined success for themselves. So I think that was probably the first term where I did not think at all about is this course sufficiently rigorous? Am I offering a graduate level experience for these students? Mostly, I just hoped that they weren't going to get sick, and that their loved ones weren't going to get sick, and that they'd make it to the end of the term with me. And that's what matters more than did they hit the mark of the rubric? Did they align perfectly with the assignment description?

I needed to see them as humans living very complicated and challenging lives at this time. And so, I think some of it is a rethinking of what do we need to do? Now, I think another hope that I have for folks who engage with the chapter and who are hearing us today are taking a realistic appraisal about whether or not this is for you and having full permission to say, "That sounds terrifying. I don't want to be vulnerable. I don't want to unpack my stuff. I'd rather leave it on the shelf. It's much more comfortable. I like it this way."

It might not be for everyone. And so, I think being honest with yourself about that is so useful. So if we haven't done our inner work, if we haven't storied our own lives, this pedagogical approach, if not attended to with a great deal of care can actually be more damaging. So, if I ask

students to show up extremely vulnerably and I show up guarded and dismissive and I never show emotion, how long will students want to be vulnerable with me? Probably not very long, right? They're going to notice that power differential and my wielding of that power differential, immediately. And so, they'll start to shut down too, if they even open up at all. And so, if I'm not willing to give as much as I'm asking someone else to give, then I shouldn't do this.

And I also think it's okay to say, "At this time, this isn't right for me," and come back at another time. And say, "Now I think it is time." So, I think about it as like preparing our vessels to engage in the work. And part of what I would invite folks to do is to think about how you might prepare your vessel and prepare the container that is our classroom. So, I'm the vessel, the classroom is our container, our learning space is the container. And how do we prepare both of those things in order to be really fertile and rich ground for the work of this pedagogical practice to come to life?

**Nana Osei-Kofi 30:35**

Thank you. Thank you. I'm thinking about the vessel analogy and this question really tied to the question of vulnerability, I feel like in these types of conversations, somebody will always ask about the relationship around sort of vulnerability to power, and who can be vulnerable when, where, and how, and in what ways?

So, if we think about it as a vessel, can a particular type of vessel function in all waters or how should we think about what capacity we have to do this work in relation to context, in relation to time, in relation to space, in relation to self? And you've said some of this, which I appreciate the piece around, just being really honest with ourselves and maybe saying not now, but is there anything else there that you would want to share around how we might think about, really coming back to this question of vulnerability and power, which really is about how we're located, how we're situated, our positionality in society and how that informs this work?

**Erich Pitcher 31:45**

I love this. Good questions. So risk is not evenly distributed across our society and our risks are not evenly distributed across the academy, and some risks are worth taking and others aren't. And part of what I think about is as a white person, as a sometimes masculine presenting person, there's a level of comfort and safety that I can have as the authority in the classroom. And so, if I show up vulnerable, that might be unexpected, but it's probably not going to ping on people's assumptions about my intelligence or my qualifications, or my ability to teach the content or any of the other kinds of assumptions that might get flung at a person who has a different embodiment than my own.

So, I think folks who live in multiply minoritized bodies have very acute sense of how to be safe when there is danger and risk, how to manage that risk, and how to respond to folks when they're coming at us, and potentially putting us in some danger. Whether that is spiritual

danger, psychological danger, emotional danger, physical danger, we're attuned to these because this is how we have survived and kept ourselves alive and upright.

And part of what I would invite folks to do is to lean into that intuition. And that's actually part of what sentipensante asks us to do. Is to be intuitively moving through the world. And so if it feels too dangerous, if it feels like, "How am I going to explain this to the tenure review committee? How would I explain this to my dean?" If that risk feels too great, I get that. That makes sense to me. And so, we all have to do our own kind of risk analysis. And I would go to a trusted colleague to say like, "Hey, I'm thinking about tinkering with my classroom a little bit and trying some of this stuff. What do you think about that?" And really honoring the wisdom of the folks who've come before who do this work.

But I also think the context matters, right? So, if I show up extremely vulnerable in a research methods class, I think that's a bit different than if I show up pretty vulnerably in a student identity development course that we're talking about identity. It's expected that we're going to be talking about some sensitive, personal, deeply held beliefs about ourselves and the world. It's not to say that we don't need to have vulnerability in our research methods courses. It's that it feels a bit less in place and more out of place, but research is vulnerable work, and if we're not willing to be vulnerable and we're just treating it quite distantly, I'm not sure that we're doing ourselves any favor. And I don't know whether that's moving us in the direction I think we all wish to be moving in.

So, I think the question about power differentials and embodiment is really an important one for folks to grapple with. And multiple minoritized bodies have not exactly received the warmest welcome in higher education. And so, this feels like just one more thing that makes a person feel like they're not quite in the academy, belonging to the academy, a part of the academy, but if we aren't willing to take some risks in our lives, if we're not willing to lean a little bit into vulnerability, at least in my experience, and I'll speak particularly as a white person, as a queer and trans person, part of what being more vulnerable in the world has done is unlock some stuff for me.

It has made it possible for me to have more connection in my life. It has made me feel more rooted and connected to who I am. And so, there's possibility too. So, yes. There's risk and there's some possibilities. Those things, those possibilities, those good things that can come into the world as a result of being more vulnerable are worth going after. Even if it's like, "Gosh, I don't know how this will show up in my review, or how will students receive this, or will I be seen as the illegitimate professor or something like that?" And I think we each need to decide, and at the community level we need to decide, and we also need to have institutional practices that norm showing up as whole beings. So that then the risk isn't put so much on bodies that have become hypervisible and also simultaneously invisible.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 35:25**

Thank you, Charlene, it looks like you might want to jump in on this question as well?

**Charlene Martinez 35:30**

Sure. I mean, I can. I don't have to, but Erich really me doing a lot of hard reflecting right now on just compassionate boundaries, right? For ourselves and for our students and doing the personal work that needs to be done to be able to move the needle a little bit, make change in these different ways. So, it's making me think about the ways that I've been able to do this over time.

And I will say that without communities of practice, without comrades, or colleagues who are also engaged in this kind of self-study and practitioner-based change work, I don't think I would've been able to do this either. And so, at the end of the day, sentipensante to me is a practice. And first, I have to realize where it lives in my body and assess the risks I'm willing to take for differing contexts and differing outcomes.

And it doesn't always work. Sometimes it doesn't go as well as I think it will. And sometimes, things transpire that surprise me, but I also know that the depth of transformation in students and in myself and in communities that is possible when I've taken the risk, and five years later didn't realize that that one conversation, that one assignment that integrated sentipensante more in some way, really revolutionized somebody's life, changed a whole community because they had a moment that they felt seen, accepted, understood, and that's the power of the practice.

So, it scares me sometimes. And at the same time, I use those feelings, the fears, sometimes the sadness, and I'm trying to figure out how to compost it, process it, so that it can be generative, continue to be generative. And that's hard, but I wouldn't be able to do it without communities of practice. As Audre Lorde says, "Without community, there's no liberation." So I just have to remember that I'm not alone on this journey and neither are you.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 37:39**

Thank you. And you have us thinking about a lot here.

**Kali Furman 37:43**

Yes. Thank you both so much for coming and having this conversation with us today. You've offered so many powerful stories and frameworks and just things for us all to think about for ourselves as well as for our communities that we engage with in lots of different ways. So thank you both so much for joining us today, Charlene and Erich,

**Charlene Martinez 38:01**

Thanks for having us.

**Kali Furman 38:03**

It was our pleasure. And on our next episode, we'll be speaking with Dr. Marta Maldonado about her chapter "Reflections on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Labor in the Latinx Studies Classroom." Join us then!

**Bradley Boovy 38:16**

We'd like to thank Orange Media Network and their podcast director Jen Dirstine.

**Kali Furman 38:20**

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**Nana Osei-Kofi 38:33**

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