**Transforming Teaching & Learning: Applications of Sentipensante To Address Equity, Justice & Inclusion - Part Two: Inspired Teaching Day Spring 2023 Episode 178**

00:00:00 **Laura**

What I'm talking about here is a learning experience that gets students deeply involved, deeply engaged in what they're learning, a learning experience that addresses a student's intellectual development along with social, emotional, and inner life skill development, sentipensante pedagogy.

00:00:23 **Christina**

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

00:00:25 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, and you're listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:00:29 **Christina**

Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak - by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

00:00:46 **Sun**

We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC, from the classroom to completion.

00:00:50 **Speaker 1**

And I know I'm going to achieve my goals and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

00:00:54 **Speaker 2**

She is a Sociology major and she's transferring to Cal Poly, Pomona! Psychology major, English major ...

00:01:00 **Sun**

From transforming part-time into full-time-

00:01:03 **Speaker 1**

I really liked the time that we spent with Julie about how to write a CV and a cover letter.

00:01:10 **Christina**

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

00:01:13 **Speaker 1**

Think of the natural environment around us as a library.

00:01:16 **Christina**

We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC, but most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni and producer of this podcast.

00:01:27 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, Learning Assistance Faculty and Professional Learning Academy Coordinator.

00:01:32 **Christina**

And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:01:34 **Christina**

Today, we are featuring part two of Inspired Teaching Day Spring 2023, a segment taken from the second workshop created and led by Laura Rendon. This time focusing on Laura's methodology called sentipensante pedagogy, or sensing and thinking pedagogy, and how to apply sentipensante to address equity, justice, and inclusion. Keep listening to learn more, enjoy!

00:02:10 **Laura**

So, the second presentation, we're going to deal now with teaching and learning. The first presentation was really understanding the students that we work with, their experiences, their backgrounds, the relationship-centered approach to work with them, their assets. But then we also need to focus now how do we design a teaching and learning environment so that these students can succeed? So, that's the focus of this second presentation.

00:02:37 **Laura**

I have been in the throes of finishing the second edition of sentipensante pedagogy, which should be out by the end of the summer. And as I began to really wrap my head around the work once more, it became clear to me that this is the time that we need a new dream, a new vision of education, a new dream of teaching and learning.

00:03:04 **Laura**

I go back to Don Miguel Ruiz in his book, The Four Agreements who says, "If we can see it is our agreements which rule our life, and we don't like the dream of life, we need to change the agreements."

00:03:19 **Laura**

Basically, what Don Ruiz is saying is, if we can see that there are certain policies and practices that rule our life and we don't like those policies and practices, we need to change them. So, this is what we need to do in teaching and learning, that there are a number of narratives - remember, I talked about some narratives that are entrenched in higher education about students.

00:03:42 **Laura**

For example, the deficit-based narrative, blaming the victim narrative. There are also narratives in teaching and learning that we need to expose and transform.

00:03:53 **Laura**

One of those entrenched narratives is to focus only on intellectual pursuits and rational analysis, only about the mind. And I have to tell you that I'm not against intellectual pursuits, far from it. I want our students to be super, super smart; I want them to know facts, I want them to know content, I want them to compete with anybody in the world, but I also want them to be good human beings.

00:04:21 **Laura**

I want them to be bridge builders, I want them to act with empathy and compassion, I want them to help our world be a better place to live. So, that part of education, that second part is what I would call a more spacious view of learning. Where we focus not only on intellectual pursuits, but also, on the internal experience of students; intellectual, social, emotional, and inner life skill development.

00:04:49 **Laura**

Firmly entrenched is the narrative that goes back all the way to Descartes who said, "I think, therefore I am," which really privileges the mind. That's contrasted to Audre Lorde who says, "I feel, therefore, I can be free." The entrenched narrative is based on an ontology of separation, not relationships that I talked about. It's about detached competitive learning. The teacher up here, the students out there, having them all compete.

00:05:21 **Laura**

In the new narrative that is emerging, it's an ontology of relationships. Remember that book that I just mentioned, that if there's one thing that matters in our lives, it's relationships. So, it's not about an ontology of separation, it's about an ontology of relationships, engaging our students in validating relationship-centered learning experiences. That's part of the new dream on the right-hand side.

00:05:45 **Laura**

There's another narrative that's privileged in higher ed, which is based on a universal view of learning that privilege is Western knowing. It's all about Western literature, Western approaches to learning. The new narrative is a reversal view to work with diverse, interconnected ways of knowing and forms of intelligence. We're not knocking the Western knowing, but we're saying that's not the only thing, we need to consider other forms of knowing and forms of intelligence.

00:06:17 **Laura**

In the entrenched narrative, it overlooks historical traumas connected to poverty, colonialism, genocide, and racism. In the new narrative, the new dream, the new story, it's about engaging students in deep learning experiences which connect them to issues of injustice and inequality, and that foster agency, self-care, critical consciousness, and social activism.

00:06:43 **Laura**

We're not going to work with a race neutral approach, we're going to connect them to issues of injustice and inequality. We're going to help them to look at racial inequities as systemic oppression, all in a way that we take action to solve problems that have been confounding this world for a long, long time.

00:07:04 **Laura**

To work with this new model, this new dream that I've just outlined (and those are just some pieces I'm sure you can add others), we need to consider as faculty, pedagogies of healing, hope, equity and justice. I'm talking about, for example, trauma-informed pedagogy.

00:07:24 **Laura**

My friend Mays Imad, who was at Pima College, she's now at Connecticut College, she's a scientist and she has studied the impact of trauma on learning. And she says, we need to create environments that shift the brain from fear and panic to making people feel safe, validated, connected and empowered.

00:07:48 **Laura**

There's something called healing-centered pedagogy, and my friend and colleague, Anhilla Costa is a proponent of that, it's an arts-based approach. There's culturally sustaining pedagogy from Paris and Alim, there have always been indigenous ways of knowing. There's anti-racist pedagogy that fosters students' critical analysis skills as well as their critical self-reflection.

00:08:12 **Laura**

And then there's something called contemplative pedagogy, it's a deep learning experience that employs contemplative practices.

00:08:20 **Laura**

So, to frame in the new version of sentipensante pedagogy, I've added a new chapter that connects to conocimientos to sentipensante. Gloria Anzaldua, I am sorry that I never met her, she's now deceased. But she is a Tejano, she grew up in South Texas in a very, very, very small ... I've been there, I wouldn't even call it a town. [Speaking foreign language].

00:08:47 **Laura**

You would never believe that somebody who grew up like that raising chickens and pigs would emerge into an iconic feminist leader and intellectual, her work known across the world.

00:09:01 **Laura**

So, what Gloria Anzaldua wrote about was what she called a theory of conocimiento. Conocimiento being a high-level individual growth and enlightenment, walking in the world with knowledge and wisdom, and that's what we want our students to get to, to very high levels of conocimiento.

00:09:23 **Laura**

And to reach conocimiento, she said, we can reach conocimiento via creative arts as we struggle with the things in our lives that teach us. And a lot of those things that teach us are things that create what she calls una rialto, a loss of foundation. These tough things that come into our lives that we're like, "Ah, why is this happening to me?" There're lessons in that, and so we use creative arts to work through those tensions.

00:09:54 **Laura**

And those arts include writing, art-making, dancing, healing, teaching, meditation, spiritual activism, both mental and somatic. She says the body too is a form as well as a sight of creativity. So, as I said earlier, we need to help our students reach these high levels of conocimiento because there are many issues in our society that we do not have the answers.

00:10:23 **Laura**

My generation was charged with addressing these issues and coming up with solutions. My generation did some things, but not enough. The next generation is charged with coming to terms in a much better way than my generation did.

00:10:40 **Laura**

I'm talking about things like systemic racism that have continued for years and years and years. Virus outbreaks, we don't know when the next outbreak will occur but it will occur. Gun violence and school shootings, horrific every day. Every day there's something going on, we've got to stop this.

00:11:01 **Laura**

Immigration, terrorism, religious intolerance, climate change, on and on and on - and I'm sure you can add to this list. We need to graduate students who are not only super smart, but who are going to be able to work with others to arrive at answers to some of the most pressing problems, challenges that our nation and world face.

00:11:27 **Laura**

So, to help students to develop conocimiento, we need to think about other competencies, other abilities besides intellectual abilities such as self-knowledge, such as pluriversality, a term that I came across that I love. It's going beyond either or thinking to embrace both and perspectives, to look at how contradictions play with each other, to create a larger reality. We need to help our students learn how to build community, to reach out to others, to embrace diverse perspectives, to form consensus, and to work toward the common good.

00:12:07 **Laura**

We need to have them develop a critical consciousness to identify an inequity and take action to address it. We need our students to work with empathy, to work with compassion, to work with diversity, to attend to self-care, healing and wellbeing, to work with a sense of connectedness and this relationship-centered approach that the eye is about the we, that our struggles and our pain are intertwined, and to have a sense of meaning and purpose, this deep introspection to reveal the truth of our being.

00:12:39 **Laura**

So, these are very high goals, these are competencies that we don't think about every day, we weren't socialized and trained to think about these competencies. And again, racially minoritized students can do this work. They have these assets, especially the asset of giving back is phenomenal when we do deep learning, they want projects that allow them to give back to the community, that allow them to put their knowledge back into their communities, so they can do this work.

00:13:13 **Laura**

So, here's Sentipensante Pedagogy, the gold cover is what's out there right now, the silver cover is the new addition. There's a forward by my friend and colleague, Dr. Norma Cantu. The image in the middle is the image of etznab. It's a Mayan symbol, and as you can see, it's divided and those divisions show opposites. But the middle is where the opposites connect. I, you, we; land, sky, earth.

00:13:44 **Laura**

Opposites when we examine them reveal a greater reality. And this is a teaching from the Aztec philosophy that I learned about when I studied the teachings of the Aztecs. So, etznab is a Mayan symbol to represent the resolution of duality.

00:14:04 **Laura**

What I present in Sentipensante Pedagogy, it's a form of contemplative pedagogy, it's deep learning, it uses these contemplative practices. It's going to attend to both sensing and thinking processes, it's going to address the whole person, addressing intellectual, social, emotional, and inner life skill development. And it's going to connect the pedagogy to issues of equity, and justice.

00:14:31 **Laura**

To foster the deep learning, we're going to use (and I take this from Gloria Anzaldua's work) what I now call practicas conocimientos. These are used to open the senses so that we get to these higher levels of enlightenment. And the practicals are, for example, periods of silence, the use of music and poetry, the use of arts-based projects, testimonials, art, photography, ritual, et cetera.

00:14:58 **Laura**

So, I want to give you some examples of these practical conocimientos. The first example is from my friend and colleague, Alberto Pulido, who teaches Ethnic Studies at the University of San Diego. He has a beautiful project that he calls the Cahita Project, it's an art-based contemplative tool. He uses this around the time of the Dia de los Muertos, Day of the Dead. He has his students do a box, that's what a cahita is, it's a box

00:15:26 **Laura**

And he asked them to put just artifacts in that box that represent the story of someone who is no longer with them that made an impact on them, and how that impact has helped to shape who they are and their identity. So, I've used Dr. Pulido's, cahita project with my students, many who are going to be or working in the student affairs profession.

00:15:53 **Laura**

And I wanted them to think about themselves as a student affairs practitioner. Not only about working with students out there, but really reflecting on who they are, what talents they brought to the profession, the impact that they wanted to make in the student affairs profession, and how they were going to be working with students, and people that had made an impression on them. How did they get to be where they are today?

00:16:18 **Laura**

So, here, I have a lot of pictures but I want to share just two. This is from my former student , who's now a professor at Salem State University, he's now Dr. Vijay Kanagala. The story of this suitcase is that when I made the assignment, he was like, "What is this? I mean, I don't understand a box ... what do I do?" And one morning he saw this suitcase and he said, "Oh, I'm going to throw this away, it's all torn and dusty, we don't need this anymore."

00:16:48 **Laura**

His mother runs after him and says, "Don't throw that suitcase away." And he goes, "Well, why not?" She says, "Well, you don't understand, that suitcase carried everything that we owned when we moved from India to the United States." At that moment, Vijay understood that that suitcase would be his cahita. And you can see the artifacts that he placed in there, including the shirt that he was wearing when his grandfather passed away.

00:17:17 **Laura**

This other cahita - the students get very creative, by the way, is the scarf that this young lady has wrapped around her waist. It is a tribute to her grandmother who lived in Liberia in the 90s when there was a civil war going on. And the women would wrap their most important belongings in that scarf, knowing that if soldiers were to attack the village, they could run, and in that scarf, they would hold their most valuable possessions. In honor of her grandmother, that is Alicia's cahita.

00:17:51 **Laura**

The students, again, can get very creative, these are some of the cahitas presented in one of my classes. We view the cahiatas in silence for the first few minutes, every cahita is viewed. And then I ask for volunteers to share their cahitas, everything is on a volunteer basis.

00:18:11 **Laura**

I bring my own cahita to class, and I can tell you that by the time that we're done, there's hardly a dry eye because we got to know each other in our stories in a way that would not have happened without this beautiful project, the Cahita Project. I call this the cahita's gallery walk because it's very very artistic in nature.

00:18:26 **Laura**

So, there are many creative ways that faculty can use the cahita's project in their particular discipline. And here's some ways that you can use the cahita's online through photography, through digital storytelling, asking students if they would like to share their cahita's, asking students to write a poem or an essay, et cetera.

00:18:52 **Laura**

Here's another example of what I call sentivinsentes, sensing thinking pedagogy. This is my friend and colleague, Dr. Norma Cantu, she's taught in many places. She's now teaching English at Trinity University here in San Antonio. Her practicas conocimiento include photographs or guided imagery, writing from personal experience, autoethnography.

00:19:15 **Laura**

She, for example, asked students to select a photograph when they were children and to use this photo as their inspiration for writing. So, here is the assignment, step one is to think of a photograph of yourself between the ages of 5 and 12, and this photo can be of only you or with others.

00:19:34 **Laura**

And then she asked students to reflect on these questions, beginning with who took the photo, what was the occasion. And then step three is writing your reflections about these questions. And then on a volunteer basis, share your story with others.

00:19:54 **Laura**

So, as I thought about this assignment, I thought of that photo that I shared earlier of me. I don't know who took that picture, maybe it was my mom, the occasion of my sixth birthday.

00:20:06 **Laura**

We don't have time for the whole story but you get the sense of this beautiful activity that involves the use of photographs. I really like that assignment, I know that the Puente Project uses photographs as well. And we have a sister project here to Puente called Asender, they're also using Dr. Cantu's autoethnography through the use of photographs.

00:20:30 **Laura**

Here's another example of someone that I consider one of my mentors, Dr. Jay Herman Blake. He's now retired, he taught African American studies at Iowa State University. He has a number of what I call practicas conocimientos, these ways to engage students in deep learning. He uses audio narratives, he uses photographs, he uses music, he uses reflection.

00:20:52 **Laura**

And one of the assignments that he makes with his students when he teaches African American studies is to read the book, Without Sanctuary. Some of you may have seen the book, it includes photographs of people who were lynched in the South, it's a book of lynching photography. People used to send, from what I understand, these images, these photographs just as postcards.

00:21:21 **Laura**

When the book came out in 2000, the New York Times reviewed it, and they indicate that the photographs give one a deeper and far sadder understanding of what it has meant to be white and to be black in America and what it still means. So, I went and looked up the book.

00:21:39 **Laura**

And again, what Dr. Blake does is he has the students view the photographs or these horrific photographs of people who have been lynched and they listen to the song, Strange Fruit while they view the photographs. So, you can imagine this sort of deep learning activity where Dr. Blake, they're viewing the photographs while listening to Nina Simone sing Strange Fruit.

00:22:08 **Laura**

It does something to students, something shifts in students. It's not just now reading about the iconic figures and the Civil Rights movement and memorizing historical facts. All of those important, but what's even more important perhaps, is engaging the students in a deeper learning activity that engages the mind and the senses, a sensing thinking approach to teaching and learning.

00:22:35 **Laura**

Another example of sentipensante pedagogy is what I call bearing witness. This involves sites to places where social justice themes are highlighted. And these can include anywhere, I mean, you can think of examples. For example, a visit to the Holocaust Museum, a visit to the U.S. Mexico border, to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, to communities ravaged by fires and droughts, visits to gun violence memorials.

00:23:05 **Laura**

And so, some assignments after those visits could be reflective essays or some kind of arts-based projects, or writing some music or some poetry. So, here's another example of a visit where a social justice theme is highlighted, and this is a trip that I took to Uvalde, Texas.

00:23:27 **Laura**

This is a photograph of Room 112 that one of these children's mother posted on Twitter - these children are no longer with us. And you can see their beautiful faces and the teachers. Visiting that community, you could feel the heaviness of the grief. I went there about two weeks after the shootings, and we have yet to find an answer to doing away with this kind of horrific violence.

00:24:00 **Laura**

So, there are a number of what I would call culturally validating practicas conocimientos that can foster a sentipensante learning experience, all the way from autoethnographies to poetry (and by the way, I wrote a poem after that visit called Look Into Your Eyes) - testimonials, music, art, meditative experiences in nature, periods of silence, journaling, healing circles, et cetera.

00:24:28 **Laura**

We're only limited by our own creativity, and this doesn't have to happen every time the class meets. It can be a special project, it can be a special activity. I mean, it's all up to us in the way that we wish to handle the class.

00:24:44 **Laura**

But what I'm talking about here is a learning experience that gets students deeply involved, deeply engaged in what they're learning, a learning experience that addresses a student's intellectual development along with social, emotional and inner life skill development, sentipensante pedagogy.

00:25:05 **Laura**

I got the term "sentipensante" from when I was at Cal State Long Beach and I was trying to find a name for what these faculty did. I would ask them, "What do you call the teaching and learning approach that you use?" And they say, "Well, we don't have a name for it, this is just the way we teach, this is just what we feel is authentic to us."

00:25:25 **Laura**

And as I was writing my book, a student from UCLA actually came to my office in Long Beach and she introduced me to Eduardo Galeano's book called, The Book of Embraces. And later on, a student from the nation of Colombia, wrote to me and told me that Orlando Fals Borda, who created participatory action research or PAR had actually worked with the fishermen of the Colombian coast. And the fishermen don't have the education that you and I have. Orlando Fals Borda was there to study how they lived, how they survived.

00:26:04 **Laura**

They don't have the education that we have, but they had knowledge. They knew the stars, they knew the moon, they knew the currents, they knew how to survive. They told Fals Borda, somos centipensantes: "We work with our minds and we work with our intuition."

00:26:20 **Laura**

And so, Orlando writes [Speaking in Spanish] - the language that speaks the truth is the language of centipensante, the person who is capable of thinking while feeling and feeling while thinking. That's what we're talking about when we say sentipensante.

00:26:47 **Laura**

And so, here is the passage that Eduardo Galeano presents in his book, The Book of Embraces: "Why does one write if not to put one pieces together. From the moment that we enter school or church education chops us into pieces. It teaches us to divorce soul from body, and mind from heart. The fishermen of the Colombian coast must be learned doctors of ethics and morality where they invented the word "sentipensante," feeling, thinking, to define language that speaks the truth."

00:27:27 **Laura**

So, I hope that with this pedagogy, we can find the language that speaks the truth of learning, that speaks the truth of working with our students. That speaks the truth of how our students are not only students, but real human beings. So, that's what I present in terms of sentipensante pedagogy.

00:27:52 **Christina**

Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast, and don't forget to share your favorite episodes.