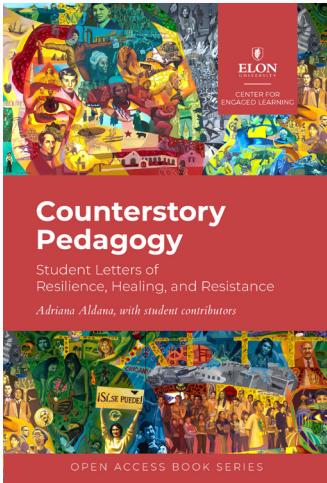


READING GROUP GUIDE



Counterstory Pedagogy

Student Letters of Resilience, Healing, and Resistance

Adriana Aldana, with student contributors

December 2024, Elon University Center for Engaged Learning

Access supplemental resources including additional questions specific to each chapter:
www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org/books/counterstory-pedagogy

FOR DISCUSSION

1. How can educators, social workers, or other professionals use reflective writing and story-telling as tools for critical thinking and advocacy?
2. How can counterstory pedagogy challenge dominant cultural narratives and amplify marginalized voices in education and professional practice?
3. Reflect on the role of personal storytelling in fostering empathy and creating connections between individuals with diverse lived experiences. How can this shape classroom or work-place dynamics?
4. Thinking about the student letters in *Counterstory Pedagogy*:
 - a. How do the themes of resilience, healing, and resistance intersect across the essays?
 - b. Compare and contrast how the letter writers draw on personal experiences to address broader systemic issues. How do these letters inspire you to connect your experiences to your professional goals?
5. How might letter writing or other narrative methods be used to foster resilience, self-awareness, and critical thinking in both educational and professional settings?
6. What are the challenges and benefits of engaging in critical self-reflection about one's positionality and complicity in systems of privilege and oppression?
7. How can educators and helping professionals create learning environments (within and outside the classroom) that balance vulnerability and bravery, allowing individuals to share their stories?



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ABOUT THE BOOK

This book is a testament to the transformative power of counterstory pedagogy, rooted in Critical Race Theory and narrative inquiry, as a tool to challenge dominant cultural narratives and amplify marginalized voices in higher education. Through the integration of epistolary essays or letter writing, the author creates a brave space where students critically engage with systems of oppression while reflecting on their lived experiences and positionality. Combining theoretical insights, practical applications, and heartfelt personal reflections, the book underscores the potential of storytelling to foster critical thinking, empathy, and collaborative learning environments.

It offers educators, helping professionals, and students across disciplines adaptable methods to integrate counterstory pedagogy into their practice, promoting resilience, intersectional analysis of oppression, and social change. The final chapters, including a deeply personal letter of gratitude and a chapter outlining key lessons learned, inspire readers to embrace vulnerability, reflection, and the power of narrative to drive equity and transformation in education.

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The Center for Engaged Learning at Elon University brings together international leaders in higher education to develop and to synthesize rigorous research on central questions about student learning.

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