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EDUC481
Introduction Letter

From the beginning of my university career, I was ready to step into the world of politics and education. At the heart of Washington, my family and community members were a source of inspiration within the Wenatchee Valley. As a family of immigrants from Mexican and Salvadorian backgrounds, I recognized the inequitable ways that we had to navigate institutions like employment, healthcare, and education. Additionally, as a first-generation student, I was navigating the complexities of a colonialist-centered education system that didn't allow me to call out the differences and harms of these institutional actors. However, my family recognized the value of education as a source to pull ourselves out of poverty and to build generational wealth. This support system combined with a decent music education program that centered my culture, left me with a sense of agency within school. At the same time, I was inspired by ideas of intersectionality and feminism that I formally discovered through social media platforms.

My identity and life experiences allowed me to realize the power of education as an institution in empowering or oppressing historically marginalized communities. Both systemically and interpersonally, access to education (a holistic, competent education that is) serves to uncover the inequitable systems that exist in society and in our own communities. For this reason, I am passionate about addressing education inequities through policy and law that can help reshape schools into being spaces of radical imagination, freedom, and love. As schools across the country continue to censor the histories and ideas of various communities, it is apparent how this funnels into other institutions. So far in my internship, I have learned so much about the power of ethnic studies curriculum and pedagogies within schools. Additionally, I have learned that this movement has always been led by young people, people of color, and other

underrepresented people who demand a change in our capitalistic, colonialist schools. I am excited (and a little nervous) in taking on a role that supports this movement as well as collaborating with multiple people who have done this work and those who will join in the future. I am looking forward to using the lessons learned in this course into this internship, future work spaces, and the places that I continue to engage in.

I have had experience in a handful of community organizations beginning in high school. Since living in Seattle, I feel very fortunate to have been welcomed into community spaces that I did not have access to in Central Washington. Whether through tutoring, civic engagement, lobbying efforts, or celebrations of cultural traditions, I have been able to expand my perspective on what it means to have a lively, supportive, loving community. Each space required me to acknowledge my positionality, but more importantly, it allowed me to recognize the small ways that I let the values of White Supremacy rule my thinking or behavior. My experience in these spaces has further reinforced the idea of centering our relationships in genuine care, love, and solidarity with one another. “In lak’ech” has shown up in everyone of these communities and further led me to believe that we are all interconnected, “you are my other me.”

I see this internship as a chance to not only develop my own career and leadership skills, but also as an opportunity to continue engaging with young people from underrepresented backgrounds. I hope to gain some skill with community organizing within the legislature, something that I find quite intimidating actually. I want to continue developing my technical skills like writing (for articles or for legislation), as well as my personal skills like placing boundaries and avoiding burnout. While I am passionate about educational spaces, I have always been inspired by my peers around me and want to uplift others in the way I have been uplifted. I don’t want this internship to be transactional, but rather an on-going effort to work towards a

collective goal (whether bound by the academic standards). With that said, I hope this course is able to hold meaningful conversations about the role that we play in these institutions as we try to be actors of change. Additionally, I would like to learn more about how to place boundaries between our work and self, especially as a lot of work will always have some personal connection.

I hope to use this learning experience back home in Wenatchee, to give back to the community that has given me so much. In whatever way that shows up in the future, I am excited to formally use my education to make changes in the education system and within my community. At this very moment, I am grateful for the ability to be in this space. The idea of celebrating the big and small achievements that will come from this year with my family, friends, and community makes me very proud, motivated, and determined.