The background features a light beige color with several decorative elements: a large yellow shape in the top left, a series of orange diagonal lines in the top right, a yellow shape in the bottom right, and dark brown wavy lines on the left side. The text is centered in a dark brown, serif font.

# Commitment to Liberation and the Ethnic Studies Lens

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## **PRE-WORK**

Make a copy of this slide deck  
so you can type directly on it!

## **PRE-WORK:**

**Complete slides 1 - 13 by  
Tuesday, August 11th**

To become critically conscious of and committed to combating the systemic oppression present in our classrooms, schools, and world, we want you to begin by reflecting on your own experiences. As our mentor Mackenzie King put it, "We can't work toward liberation for the system/others if we can't first imagine it for ourselves (no matter your positionality)."

Essential Question:

**If I were to reimagine my school experiences using the ethnic studies lens, what would my education have looked like? How can we use this lens as educators in order to design classrooms or learning environments that center empowerment and self-liberation?**

# Meet your facilitators!



## **Ana De Almeida Amaral** **HTHCV Ethnic Studies Founder & Teacher** **Stanford University 2023**

My work in anti-racist teaching began as a 10th grader when I co-founded and taught an Ethnic Studies course at High Tech High Chula Vista. My role within this work has evolved over the past four years, but most recently I have been dedicated to teacher education. I have trained hundreds of educators throughout the country on the theory and practice of anti-racist teaching, culturally responsive pedagogy, and on integrating Ethnic Studies in every subject.

## **A time I felt like liberation and empowerment were centered in my education was...**

in my **relationship** with my 11th grade Humanities teacher. Mackenzie was the first educator to **validate my lived experience** with the racism and colonized structures I was seeing in our school. She **trusted** my perspective on what our students needed and gave me the platform to advocate for anti-racist teaching with administrators and faculty.

## **A time I felt like liberation and empowerment were NOT centered in my education was...**

When I took a history class in my first quarter at Stanford. Although the class focused on "A People's History of the US" the **class structures** that were used made it feel like we were often **debating the humanity** and truth of people of color. I believe every text should be read with a critical eye, but as one of few POC in this class, the structures used did not take into consideration that the narratives that were being debated were ones that **my community lived through**. This class made me feel like **parts of my identity were on trial** in a harmful and traumatic way.

# Meet your facilitators!



## **Izadora (Iza) Amaris Lopez McGawley** **HTHCV Ethnic Studies Founder & Teacher** **UC Santa Cruz 2023, Honors Scholar**

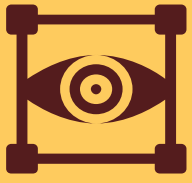
Hi y'all! I'm Iza a sophomore at UCSC double majoring in Community Studies and Ethnic Studies. I'm also an alumna of High Tech High Chula Vista. I am one of 3 founders of the first ethnic studies program at High Tech High. Because of this faculty-approved program and the notoriety it gained, I've spent over a year now designing and facilitating professional development for K-12 educators, administrators, and all those that are--or should be- invested in using education as a tool for liberation. I've also worked with the National Equity Project, spoken at the Gates Foundation, and more!

### **A time I felt like liberation and empowerment were centered in my education was...**

When I was a freshman, my teacher, Sara Islas, led an amazing project where the **curriculum** was centered around the Industrial Revolution. She pushed us to **think critically** about this history as we explored its role in shaping the world we live in and **the struggles we face** in our community. We were pushed to **ask questions** about what our society could look like if this history were different or if we were to play a role in changing things today. This fundamentally changed the way I view the world and I still see this project as a major turning point in my becoming who I am now. Although this project didn't explicitly talk about race or identity as much as I would have liked, I felt connected to and sustained by my **relationship** with this teacher because she **reflected my cultural background** and grew up in the same community as us.

### **A time I felt like liberation and empowerment were NOT centered in my education was...**

In my Senior year, I had to participate in a project that focused on designing/engineering physical spaces (parks, eating areas, etc.) in different San Diego communities. This project had a lot of potential to be liberating and empowering, it even used a process called "human-centered design". Unfortunately, for the location and architect I was assigned to work with, I had to design a cafe in a community already experiencing gentrification and displacement because of outsiders, like us, feeling entitled to "develop" their neighborhood. I was experiencing gentrification in my own community too and could empathize with locals, but was still put in the position to do the same to their community. All of the examples of architecture that we were given in class came from places like Denmark or Japan, meanwhile the community we were designing for was predominantly working class Mexican, Black, and Filipino/Pacific Islander. It was extremely disempowering to see that systems of oppression were not considered in the creation of our project and that our work ended up reinforcing this harm on the community.



# The Ethnic Studies Lens

## **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:**

If I were to reimagine my school experiences using the ethnic studies lens, what would my education have looked like? How can we use this lens as educators in order to design classrooms or learning environments that center empowerment and self-liberation?

## **WHAT:**

The ethnic studies lens is a way of looking at the world that centers empowerment, solidarity, and agency. In the context of education, the ethnic studies lens calls us to be critical of the ways that **school relationships, classroom structures, school structures/policies, and curriculum** are all connected to systemic oppression in and outside the classroom. It also calls us to play a part in dismantling and transforming those systems in order to foster liberating learning environments for a new generation of changemakers.

## **THE GOAL:**

Our goal is to develop and use the ethnic studies lens to scrutinize the role and liberatory potential of every part of the school/student experience. The ethnic studies lens equips us with the analytical tools we need to refine our practice, locate and disrupt oppression, create empowering and liberating learning environments, and understand the crucial role that teachers play in shaping the world at large.



# How do we develop the Ethnic Studies Lens?

**We use these questions to think critically about systems of oppression in the community we serve and in our classrooms. Constantly asking ourselves and each other these questions about every aspect of schooling will allow us to develop a critical ethnic studies lens :**

- Who makes up the students & community I serve? What is their positionality?
- Historically, what role has this [classroom structure/ school structure/relationship/piece of curriculum] played in the lives of the students & community I serve? Today?
- How can this promote your students' strengths and uplift their identities? How can it respond to the needs of your students & their community?
- How can this push students to think critically about themselves & their world, while providing them with the motivation & tools to make it better?

**In this workshop you'll chose one of these categories to inquire more deeply about using the ethnic studies lens:**

- School relationships** -- (i.e. "discipline", authority vs mutual respect, who has ownership over the space, how/how well teachers & students know each other, trust)
- Classroom structures** -- (i.e. lecture/discussion/how information is shared, benchmarks/testing, student voice, value of the written word, ownership of knowledge)
- School structures/policies** -- (i.e. roles of power, discipline, budgeting)
- Curriculum** -- (i.e. reading material, guiding project themes, research prompts, discussion questions, content)

# What does an empowering and self-liberating space look like?



Katherine, 9th grade  
Ethnic Studies student

Elena, 10th grade  
Ethnic Studies student



Use these videos, and your own experiences, to begin drafting a definition for what an empowering and self-liberatory space looks like:





# Journal

Think back to a time where you felt like empowerment and liberation were centered in your education. Why did you feel empowered? Was it a school relationship, classroom structure, school structure, or piece of curriculum that made you feel this way?

Notes:

# Journal

Think back to a time where you felt like liberation was **not** centered in a school relationship, classroom structure, school structure, or piece of curriculum. What did it look like? What did it feel like? (It could have felt normal or invisible.)

Notes:



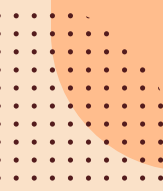
# We are going to reflect deeply on your experience with education that did not center liberation

Which category does the memory you reflected on fall into?

- School relationship** -- (i.e. "discipline", authority vs mutual respect, who has ownership over the space, how/how well teachers & students know each other, trust)
- Classroom structure** -- (i.e. lecture/discussion/how information is shared, benchmarks/testing, student voice, value of the written word, ownership of knowledge)
- School structure/policy** -- (i.e. roles of power, discipline, budgeting)
- Curriculum** -- (i.e. reading material, guiding project themes, research prompts, discussion questions, content)

How was this disempowering experience connected to systems of injustice (white supremacy, cis-hetero patriarchy, economic oppression, etc.)?

Notes:



# Think back to the community...

Who was I? Who made up the students in my class & the community I was in? What were the identities of students in my class and community?

Notes:

What was the positionality of those identity groups in my community? What was the positionality of my community within a larger context of power, privilege, oppression, and intersectionality?

Notes:

# Think back to the community...

What were our existing strengths? How were we already powerful?

Notes:

What struggles & inequities did we face (inside and outside the classroom)? What were our needs?

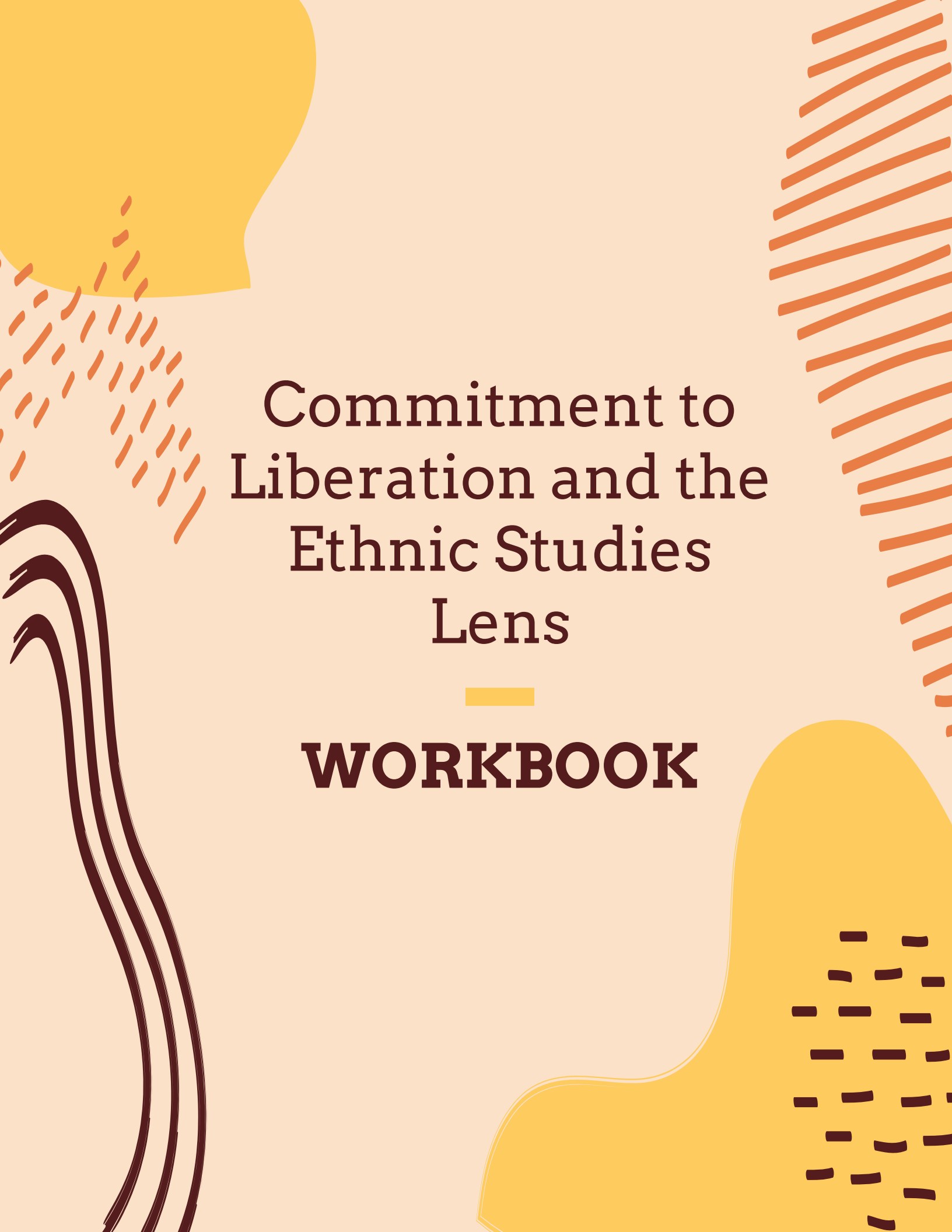
**Positionality is key here:** Did your community need justice? Did your community need space for joy, community, and affirmation of their lived experiences? Did your community need to understand their privilege and their role as co-conspirator?

Notes:



**THANK YOU FOR  
COMPLETING THE  
PRE-WORK**

We will complete the  
rest on this workbook in  
our workshop on  
Tuesday



Commitment to  
Liberation and the  
Ethnic Studies  
Lens

—  
**WORKBOOK**

# Journal

## What are your takeaways from the advisory dialogical interviews earlier today?

### In case you forgot, here were the questions:

1. What were your schooling experiences like growing up?
  - a. First, who were you and what did you love? What brought you joy?
  - b. Next, consider positionality: Where did you see power, privilege, white supremacy and marginalization in your schooling?
2. Who made up the students in my class & the community I was in? What were our strengths and our needs?
3. Think back to a time where you felt like empowerment and liberation were centered in your education. Why did you feel empowered? Was it a school relationship, classroom structure, school structure, or piece of curriculum that made you feel this way?
4. Think back to a time where you felt like liberation was NOT centered in a school relationship, classroom structure, school structure, or piece of curriculum. What did it look like? What did it feel like?
  - a. How was this disempowering experience connected to systems of injustice (white supremacy, cis-hetero patriarchy, economic oppression, etc.)? (Connect to Q1)
5. Think about your experience of school in the grade/subject that you will be teaching this upcoming year. What do you think your younger self wants you to remember? How/when do you still see this younger self in you today?





# Breakout Room Protocol

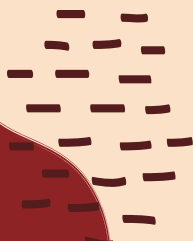
## 1 min each: Check in

- Introduce yourself! (Name/position/pronouns)
- What is something that has brought you joy recently?!
- Pick a timekeeper

## 2 min: Read agreements

- **Think about positionality:** Some of you will discover that you did not experience oppression in school or life. Some of you can see the ways that it impacted you very clearly. It is important that we are always conscious of the ways that power, privilege, and injustice have shaped our experiences. Make sure you are also conscious of your positionality in the context of your group. Understand that no matter your positionality, you have a role in dismantling oppression.
- **Center liberation and responsibility not blame, guilt, or fragility:** This reflection should center our moral and professional responsibility to use our classrooms to combat the systemic injustice our institution perpetuates. This is a growth and action oriented process. Know your priorities.
- **Share the air:** When looking at our space through the ethnic studies lens, sharing the air means amplifying voices that have been silenced within both our society and breakout group in order to create a truly equitable conversation. Who is talking in your group? Who isn't? Why?

Notes:

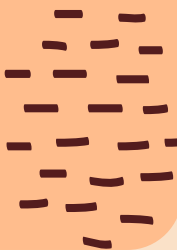


# Breakout Room Protocol

**About 30 min: Go around and answer the reflection questions. You have already begun to answer these in your pre-work. Make sure everyone has shared before moving on to each new questions:**

- 1 minute each: Think back to your experience as a student. Who made up the students in my class & the community I was in? What was our positionality?
- 1 minute each: Think back to a time where you felt like liberation was **not** centered in your education. Was it a school relationship, classroom structure, school structure, or piece of curriculum. What did it look like? What did it feel like? (It could have felt normal or invisible)
- 2 minutes each: Historically, has this [classroom structure/school structure/relationship/piece of curriculum] contributed to either marginalization or liberation in your community? Give context.
- 2 minutes each: How could this [aspect of schooling] have promoted our strengths and uplifted our identities?
- 2 minutes each: How could this [aspect of schooling] have responded to our struggles and needs? How could it have disrupted oppression and supported liberation?
- 2 minutes each: How could this [aspect of schooling] have pushed us to think critically about our world while pushing us to make it better?

Notes:



# Breakout Room Protocol

**5 min: Reflect with your group and jot down takeaways**

- What are the main things you want to consider when designing learning spaces using the ethnic studies lens?

**20 seconds each: Go around and give a quick appreciation for someone in the group! <3**

Takeaways & Notes:

Appreciation:

# Journal

**How would I be different today if I had been taught through the ethnic studies lens:**

# Commitment Writing

**What are the central qualities and components of liberating education that you can gather from your own K-12 reflection? How can you synthesize these takeaways into some affirmative statements for yourself as an educator moving forward? Feel free to take out some paper and draw/map this out however you need!**

## EXAMPLE 1

My students experiences are just as valuable at the texts that we read. My students deserve to feel safe and celebrated in our space. I commit to honoring and centering the lived experiences of my students and their communities in our work.

- Ana, based off my  
"Meet your facilitators" reflection

## EXAMPLE 2

My students are powerful agents of change in their communities and in the world.

I commit to guiding them toward self-liberation by always reflecting their identities in the classroom, by uplifting marginalized voices, and by listening closely.

- Iza, based off my  
"Meet your facilitators" reflection

# Your Commitment

**What are the central qualities and components of liberating education that you can gather from your own K-12 reflection? How can you synthesize these takeaways into some affirmative statements for yourself as an educator moving forward? Feel free to take out some paper and draw/map this out however you need!**