



**SACRAMENTO
STATE**

California State University, Sacramento
College of Education • Doctorate in Educational Leadership
6000 J Street • Eureka Hall 318 • Sacramento, CA 95819-6079

March 11, 2023

Dear Hiring Committee,

It is my pleasure to submit my application to serve as the interim and inaugural Sr. Associate Vice President of Sacramento State Placer Center. The center's mission to develop a seamless system of support for transfer students is groundbreaking and I am poised to lead this effort. If I am selected for this position, I will implement a strategic direction for the center that connects innovation, community-engagement, and regional development.

As a campus administrator and scholar, my work focuses on access, equity, and diversity. I hold a Doctorate in Administration, Planning, and Social Policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and I currently serve as the Faculty Director for the Doctorate in Educational Leadership. My areas of expertise make me uniquely qualified to support the Placer Center and in the subsequent sections, I provide examples of my regional network, capacity building strategies, and astute political acumen.

Context

As seasoned scholar, I understand the urgent need to improve P-20 educational opportunities in California and beyond. For over twenty years, I have worked with school districts, businesses, community colleges, and universities throughout the Sacramento region. I have met with countless leaders who are eager to reimagine education, but often lack the space to create something new.

It is here that the Placer Center comes into full view.

Our university aims to be *The People's University*. We are the 4th most diverse university in the west and ranked among the top ten "transformative colleges" in the country. As a beacon of success, Sacramento State continues to demonstrate that first-generation college students can excel and exceed expectation. While there is always room for improvement, I am proud of what we are accomplishing. Building on this trajectory, I firmly believe that a new model for higher education is on the horizon, and the Placer Center can serve as its seed.

Leading with Justice

At Sacramento State, I have discovered a home for my community-engaged scholarship and administrative talents. I am a relational leader that tries to work at the speed of trust and respect. To be transparent, I'm also very task-driven and "meet to move" so that tangible steps embody the educational justice we seek.

In a relatively short amount of time (2020-present), I've made notable improvements to the EDD program: quadrupling our applications; adding an education foundations course; redesigning the qualifying exam; dismantling our use of the GRE¹; developing a new vision and mission connected to the anti-racist campus plan; and I successfully hired two new tenure-track faculty: Dr. Elizabeth Morgan and Dr. Sheeva Sabati.² I was also instrumental in improving our office systems and business

¹ On September 15, 2020 (after being on the job for less than a month), I sent an email to the Office of the Chancellor delineating my rationale for suspension. We were the first doctoral program in the CSU to stop using the GRE for admissions.

² We yielded 174 applicants from across the country, and got 2 extraordinary hires.

culture (e.g., new budget tracking system, workload tracking system, and implementing weekly staff meetings).

As an example of my ability to build community, I launched the *Leading with Justice* national speaker series in 2020. At these virtual lunch-and-learns, we had over 2,900 participants. This innovative convening brought national scholars into conversation with our local academic community and graduate students. To ensure our success and sustainability, I was able leverage \$20,000 dollars in sponsorships, strategically facilitating institutional connections between Sac State, SMUD, the Sacramento Kings, Sierra Health Foundation, UC Davis, Fresno State, and Sacramento Area Youth Speaks: [Link](#).



I am a steadfast solutionary.

When I was at UC Davis, I founded and directed the Office of Research and Policy for Equity. For twelve years (2008-2020), I grew this unit from an idea into a complex and robust model of university-community-school partnerships. Without consistent base budget resources, I raised over \$9 million dollars in research grants, fee-for-service contracts, and corporate sponsorships. This allowed me to hire staff, incubate solutions in the field, and replicate models across multiple systems.

One of our flagship events was the statewide Equity Summit and annual Social Justice Awards gala. Although I am no longer at UC Davis, these events continue. This attests to my ability to develop strong teams that can advance the work beyond me. It also demonstrates the power of long-lasting networks that grow to be larger than the academy.

Whether I am providing visionary leadership, leveraging resources, or developing new partnerships, my work revolves around programmatic cohesion, purposeful alignment and genuine belonging. Although a number of projects in my current portfolio are university-based, I consider myself a community-engaged scholar and pragmatic optimist.

Educational Equity

As a prime example of my ability to link the work of K-12 and post-secondary education, I developed a robust critical literacy program, called Sacramento Area Youth Speaks (SAYS), that engages elementary, middle, and high school students to become the authors of their own lives and agents of change. Since its inception in 2008, SAYS has worked with over 10,000 students and teachers in the Sacramento region. Students in SAYS have shown a 48% increase in attendance and a 17% decrease in suspensions, expulsions, and detentions. 81% of participants are the first in their families to attend college and 12% are the first in their families to graduate from high school. Notwithstanding these generational barriers, the longitudinal data is promising: 90% of SAYS students who make it into college are graduating in five years or less (Watson, 2019; 2018; 2017; 2016; 2013).

Throughout my career, I have learned that healthy educational ecosystem exposes systemic barriers, asks the hard data questions, and incubates possible answers. Different kinds of solutions can, and should, exist simultaneously, but they need to be pushing in the same direction. The north star is equity.

So, what is equity?

Over the years, I have sought out an adequate definition for this common term. I have heard, “equity is the process; equality is the outcome.” This is true in many respects, but equality can denote sameness, which is not the goal. In my work, I am guided by the notion that equity is the quest and realization of justice on multiple levels: institutionally, interpersonally, individually, and internally. Equity starts with autobiography, but it is not as simple as one’s own story. Equity demands, by its very definition, that we courageously name and challenge prejudice and oppression. Along this journey, there is no one outside the circle. There is no enemy, except that of division and despair. Equity is a call-to-arms. Arms that reach out, hold on to one another, and do not let go.

300-Acres of Innovation

The Placer Center already has a vital mission, but the key is operationalizing our goals with strategic direction. To accomplish this, I will develop purposeful partnerships that leverage prosperity for generations to come.

I envision a new kind of campus that is interdisciplinary, guided by equitable policies and practices, and leverages workforce development for marginalized populations. In *Just Mercy*, Stevenson (2014) makes the distinction that the opposite of poverty is not wealth; it is justice. According to my research, the opposite of racism is not equality; it is empowerment. Empowerment is an educational tool that releases us from the entrapment of social reproduction.

To address local disparities, it is vital to thoughtfully engage communities with respect and collaboration. The tools of engaged-scholarship are founded on the recognition that people who live and work inside an area of study have the right to be part of the process of defining problems, mobilizing assets and strengths, and examining the interventions.

At the Placer Center, we can impact regional development, create sustainable environmental land stewardship, and forge life-changing economic pathways. This is our collective legacy. To use the gravitas of institutions to shape opportunities that leave the world better than we inherited it. We can do this.

Dream Work

When paired together, the words “dream” and “work” encapsulate something new and spectacular, existing at the intersection of who we are and where we want to be. Horizons hold the rising and setting of the sun. Horizons hold time, symbolizing intersections between imagination and reality, theory and practice. The horizon is a meeting place between sky and earth, between past ancestry and future possibility.

I am inspired by the Placer Center. We have the potential to actualize systems change for social justice by embodying courageous leadership—connecting our words to our deeds and our hearts to our feet. Such a commitment fosters a necessary bridge between critical theories and empowering practices.

It would be my honor and privilege to help Sacramento State grow a holistic model of interdisciplinary ingenuity and innovation. We have the potential to further become *The People’s University*.



In closing, I am inspired by the ancient adage: *If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.* This saying relates to my management style and daily work ethic that is grounded in empathy, integrity, and accountability. I value consistent, open communication to advance strategic goals, and I support and foster a collaborative work culture. While I have surely received individual accolades for my achievements, it is the harmonious unification of people that provides the greatest pathway to extraordinary results.

At the Sacramento State Placer Center, may we celebrate the world in our village by reclaiming a higher education that not only studies intellectually, but serves publicly.

Looking Forward,

Contact Information:

Dr. Vajra Watson

Faculty Director & Associate Professor
Doctorate in Educational Leadership
College of Education
California State University, Sacramento
6000 J Street, Eureka Hall 318A
Sacramento, CA 95819-6079

Author of: *Learning to Liberate: Community-Based Solutions to Education* (Routledge, 2012), *Transformative Schooling: Towards Racial Equity in Education* (Routledge, 2018), *The Soul of Learning: rituals of awakening, magnetic pedagogy and living justice* (Routledge, 2022) and *Faith Made Flesh: The Black Child Legacy Campaign for Transformative Justice and Healthy Futures* (Cornell University Press, 2023).

E: v.watson@csus.edu

Listed References from Cover Letter:

Stevenson, S. (2014). *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. NY: Spiegel & Grau.

Watson, V. (2019). "Embodied Justice: We are the Divine Text." In *The Whole Person: Lectio Divina as Transformative Practice in Teaching and Learning*. Editors: Jane Dalton and Maureen Hall. Rowman & Littlefield.

Watson, V. (2018). "#schoolismyhustle: A youth movement to transform education." In *Lift Us Up! Don't Push Us Out! Voices from the Frontlines of the Educational Justice Movement*. Editors: Mark Warren and David Goodman. Boston: Beacon Press.

Watson, V. (2017). "Life as Primary Text: English Classrooms as Sites for Soulful Learning." Invited submission for *The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning*, an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Watson, V. (2016). "Literacy is a Civil Write: The Art, Science and Soul of Transformative Classrooms." In Papa, R., Eadens, D. M., & Eadens, D. M. (Eds), *Social Justice Instruction: Empowerment on the Chalkboard*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing. (Book Series on Education, Equity and the Economy)

Watson, V. (2013). "Censoring Freedom: Community-Based Professional Development and the Politics of Profanity." In *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 46:3, 387-410.

DR. VAJRA M. WATSON

CURRICULUM VITAE

Areas of Specialization: As a scholar, my work focuses on access, equity, and belonging. I support racial justice as a daily practice inside classrooms (micro-level) as well as at the institutional level (macro-structural). I purposefully aim to disrupt and dismantle narratives of underachievement and inequality by uncovering how to make school systems (P-20) socially just, democratic sanctuaries of revitalization and community empowerment. I strive and am deeply committed to use research in service of social change.

Demonstrated Leadership Skills: I am a transformative educational leader who seamlessly connects theory to practice, and consistently aligns people and institutions to move systems towards equity. Throughout my career, I have a proven track record of leveraging solutions, operationalizing goals, and serving as a collaborative, team-building manager.

Contact Information:

Dr. Vajra Watson
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Doctorate in Educational Leadership
Sacramento State | College of Education
6000 J Street, Eureka Hall, 318A
v.watson@csus.edu
www.csus.edu/edd

CAMPUS LEADERSHIP

2020-present Faculty Director

Doctorate in Educational Leadership
College of Education, CSU-Sacramento

- Successfully increased the program's ranking to #2 EDD in the nation: [Link](#)
- Successfully quadrupled the number of admissions applications
- Developed *Leading with Justice* speaker series: [Link](#)
- Developed *Pay-It-Forward* Scholarship Campaign for EDD students
- Recruited and calibrated EDD Advisory Board of regional stakeholders: [Link](#)
- Increased diversity of EDD cohorts, particularly for African American & Native students
- Manage and direct program quality and adherence to accreditation standards
- Strategic program development & oversight
- Exemplary time management and organizational skills
- Collaboratively developed a new EDD vision & mission statement
- Fiscal oversight & budget management
- Strategic course & program revisions
- Lead admissions process, including directing new process for utilizing Cal State Apply
- Construct course scheduling for each cohort
- Direct activities of & supervise 2 staff positions
- Participate in statewide EDD Director's group and host meetings
- Facilitate monthly faculty meetings and develop agenda items, timeline, & goals
- Year-round support of the EDD Alumni Connection
- Year-round support of the DELSA EDD Student Group
- While serving as the Faculty Director, filled temporary role as the Graduate Coordinator (2020-2021; 2022-2023)
- While serving as the Faculty Director, filled temporary role as the Associate Director (2022-2023)

- 2008–2020 **UC Davis Director of Research and Policy for Equity**
University of California, Davis
<http://equity.ucdavis.edu>
- Developed and built a research center focused on educational equity and campus-community-school partnerships
 - Raised and managed an annual budget of over \$2 million dollars in research grants and program contracts.
 - Supervised 10 staff
 - Created and led the statewide annual Equity Summit: <https://equity.ucdavis.edu/equity-summit>
 - Developed and maintained active P-20 partnerships throughout the Sacramento Capital Region
 - Founded and directed a pathway for "high-risk" youth into higher education through Sacramento Area Youth Speaks (SAYS): www.says.ucdavis.edu
 - Served on the UC Office of the President's P-20 council
 - Provided ongoing culturally responsive professional development to various school districts
- 2008-2020 **Founder and Director**
Sacramento Area Youth Speaks (SAYS)
<http://says.ucdavis.edu>
- 2010-2020 **Founder and Organizer**
UC Davis Annual Social Justice Awards: [Video](#)

EDUCATION

- 2001–2008** **Harvard University, Graduate School of Education**
Doctorate in Administration, Planning, and Social Policy with a focus on Communities and Schools
- Dissertation: *Risking Change: Portraits of Four Community-Based Educators Successfully Reaching and Teaching so-called "High-Risk" Youth*, June 2008.
- Committee Members: Pedro Noguera, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, and Mark Warren
- 2001–2002** **Harvard University, Graduate School of Education**
Ed.M. in Learning and Teaching
- 2000–2001** **Harvard University, Graduate School of Education**
Ed.M. in International Education
- 1996–1999** **University of California, Berkeley, College of Letters and Science**
B.A. in Political Science/International Relations and Education
Dean's Honors List, Summa cum laude
- Undergraduate Honors Thesis: *Holistic Human Rights: Using a Critical Multicultural Approach to Human Rights Education in Secondary Schools*
- 1999** **Michigan State University, Department of Linguistics, African Studies Center**
Summer Intensive Language Study (Amharic)
- 1997–1998** **Meiji Gakuin University, Department of Economics, Yokohama, Japan**
Study abroad for partial fulfillment of B.A. degree

- 1997 **University of the West Indies, School of Education, Cave Hill, Barbados**
Study abroad for partial fulfillment of B.A. degree
- 1992–1996 **Berkeley High School**
Valedictorian
- 1994–1995 **Berkeley High School-Yurok Exchange Program (one semester)**
Studied with Yurok First Nation on the Klamath River

PUBLICATIONS

Books

Winn, L. & **Watson, V.**, Winn, M. (Ed.) (in press). *Faith Made Flesh: Every Black Child Deserves a Legacy*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Below are my 6 chapters in *Faith Made Flesh*:

- **Opening:** A Citywide Recentering of Black Life
- **Chapter 12:** Methodology Matters: The Power of Portraiture
- **Chapter 13:** People Power: Councilmember Phil Serna
- **Chapter 17:** Revolutionary Relations: Jackie Rose
- **Chapter 21:** Transformative Justice Community: Insights and Implications (co-authored with Lawrence “Torry” Winn)
- **Chapter 22:** A Re-Opening: Futures Forward

Keator, M. & **Watson, V.** (2022). *The Soul of Learning: rituals of awakening, magnetic pedagogy, and living justice*. New York: Routledge.

Watson, V. (2018). *Transformative Schooling: Towards Racial Equity in Education*. New York: Routledge.

Book Review:

- *Transformative Schooling* reviewed by Hall, M. (2019). *Journal of Transformative Education*, Vol. 17(3) 287-291.

Watson, V. (2012). *Learning to Liberate: Community-Based Solutions to the Crisis in Urban Education*. New York: Routledge (Michael Apple Series, Critical Social Thought).

Book Reviews:

- *Learning to Liberate* reviewed by Rosa, R. (2014) in *Education Review*, 17(1). <http://www.edrev.info/essays/v17n1.pdf>
- *Learning to Liberate* reviewed by Becker, S. (2013) in *Contemporary Sociology* 42 (4): 628-530.
- *Learning to Liberate* reviewed by Pezone, M. (2012) in *Open Journal Systems-Great Ideas*: <http://ojs.great-ideas.org/index.php/ENC/article/viewFile/901/988>

Articles, Book Chapters, and Reports

Ononuju, I., De Vera, S. & **Watson, V.** (in press). “Living Hip Hop: The Community-based Organization as a Space for Educational Liberation.” In the *Bloomsbury Handbook of Hip Hop Pedagogy*. Editors: Lauren Kelly & Daren Graves. London: Bloomsbury Publishing House.

- Ononuju, I., **Watson, V.** & De Vera, S. (in press). "Educational Resistance." In the *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Social Justice in Education*. Editors: Maisha Winn & Torry Winn. London: Bloomsbury Publishing House.
- Watson, V.**, Ononuju, I., de Vera, S., & Kier, A. (August, 2022). *Equity-In-Motion: An Evaluation of the SAYS Partnership with San Juan Unified School District*. A report prepared for the Equity and Student Achievement Department, San Juan Unified School District, Carmichael, CA. [Report](#)
- Leslie, A., **Watson, V.**, Borunda, R., Bosworth, K., and Grant, T. (2021). "Towards abolition: Undoing the colonized curriculum." In *Journal of Curriculum Studies Research* 3 (1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.46303/jcsr.2021.5>
- Winn, L.T., **Watson, V.**, & Winn, M.T., (2020). *Transformative Justice Community: A Countywide Evaluation of the Black Child Legacy Campaign*. Prepared for Sacramento's Steering Committee on Reduction of African American Child Death, Sacramento, CA. [Report](#)
- Hope, J. and **Watson, V.** (2020). "Hood Civics: Intergenerational Healing and the Quest for Educational Justice for/with Black Girl Activists." In *Black Girl Civics: Expanding and Navigating the Boundaries of Civic Engagement*. Editors: Ginnie Logan & Janiece Mackey. North Carolina: Information Age Press.
- Watson, V.** (2020). "What is a world without whiteness?" In *Medium* open source. <https://medium.com/@vajrawatson>. June 1, 2020.
- Wenbourne Hendrick, B. and **Watson, V.** (2020). "Leading with Justice: Afterword and Next Steps." *Journal of Transformative Leadership & Policy Studies*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.36851/jtlps.v9i1.2474>
- Watson, V.** (2019). "Embodied Justice: We are the Divine Text." In *The Whole Person: Lectio Divina as Transformative Practice in Teaching and Learning*. Editors: Jane Dalton and Maureen Hall. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Watson, V.** (2019). "Liberating Methodologies: Reclaiming Research as a Site for Radical Inquiry and Transformation." In *Community-Based Participatory Research: Testimonios from Chicana/o Studies*. Editor: Natalia Deeb-Sossa. The University of Arizona Press.
- Oliver, K., Hall, M. P., Dalton, J., Jones, L. F., **Watson, V.**, Hoyser, C. & Santavicca, N. (2019), "Drawing out the soul: Contemporary arts integration." In *International Journal of Education Through Art*, 15:2, pp. 165–81, doi: 10.1386/eta.15.2.165_1
- Chatmon, C. and **Watson, V.** (2018). "Decolonizing School Systems: Racial Justice, Radical Healing, and Educational Equity inside Oakland Unified School District," *Voices in Urban Education*, 48. Online access, https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/emj309/vue48/02-VUE_48_Chatmon_0.pdf
- Watson, V.** (2018). "Cultural Keepers as Movement Makers: Towards the Alignment of Artists, Activists, and Academics." *Public: A Journal of Imagining America*. Volume 5, Issue 1. Online Journal, <http://public.imaginingamerica.org/blog/article/cultural-keepers-as-movement-makers-towards-the-alignment-of-artists-activists-and-academics/>.

- Watson, V.** (2018). “#schoolismyhustle: A youth movement to transform education.” In *Lift Us Up! Don't Push Us Out! Voices from the Frontlines of the Educational Justice Movement*. Editors: Mark Warren and David Goodman. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Watson, V.** (2018). “Artistic Resistance: Creating a Transformative Teaching Praxis Through Hip-Hop.” In *Hawai'i Review*. <http://hawaiiireview.org/hr-educational-materials/2018/2/16/dr-vajra-watson-artistic-resistance-creating-a-transformative-teaching-praxis-through-hip-hop>
- Watson, V.** (2017). “Life as Primary Text: English Classrooms as Sites for Soulful Learning.” Invited submission for *The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning*, an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English.
- Watson, V.** (2016). “Literacy is a Civil Write: The Art, Science and Soul of Transformative Classrooms.” In Papa, R., Eadens, D. M., & Eadens, D. M. (Eds), *Social Justice Instruction: Empowerment on the Chalkboard*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing. (Book Series on Education, Equity and the Economy)
- Watson, V.** (2014). *The Black Sonrise: Oakland Unified School District's Commitment to Address and Eliminate Institutionalized Racism*. Final evaluation report submitted to Oakland Unified School District's Office of African American Male Achievement. <http://www.ousd.org/Page/12267>
- Watson, V.** (2013). “Censoring Freedom: Community-Based Professional Development and the Politics of Profanity.” In *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 46:3, 387-410.
- Watson, V.** (2008). *Risking Change: Portraits of Four Community-Based Educators Successfully Reaching and Teaching “High-Risk” Youth*. Dissertation, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA.
- Watson, V.** (2004). *It's bigger than hip-hop: Rappers educating educators about the purpose of school*. Qualifying Paper, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA.
- Watson, V.** (2003). “Reflections on the Juvenile In-justice System.” *Community Justice Network for Youth* newsletter.
- Watson, V.** (1999). “Lighthouse in Starvation.” In *We are the ones we have been Waiting for*, J. Jordan (Ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.

EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH GRANTS & PROJECTS

- Warren, M. (Principal Investigator) with **Watson, V.** (Co-PI). Spencer Foundation, Research-Practice Partnership: *Intersectional Organizing: Strategies for Cross-issue Solidarity in Educational and Social Justice Movements*. **\$374,467.00**. Funded October, 2021.
- Watson, V.** (Principal Investigator). *Evaluation of Community-School Partnerships in San Juan Unified School District*. **\$30,000**. Funded September, 2021.
- Watson, V.** (Sponsorships). Launched national *Leading with Justice Speaker Series*. Secured **\$17,500** in sponsorships. (2020 & 2021). <https://www.csus.edu/college/education/doctorate-educational-leadership/leading-with-justice/leading-with-justice.html>

Watson, V. (Principal Investigator) and Leslie, A. (Co-PI). Spencer Foundation, The Racial Equity Special Research Grant: *Eroding White Supremacy: Undoing the Colonizer's Curriculum through a Humanist Approach to Social Studies*. \$75,000. (Submitted in June, 2021 and denied).

Watson, V. (Principal Investigator). Federal housing grant to examine drop-out prevention strategies. \$50,000. (2018-2020).

Watson, V. (Principal Investigator with Co-PI, Maisha Winn and Lawrence Winn). Seed funding from Provost Hexter to support the *Quarter at Aggie Square*. \$25,000. (2019-2020).

Watson, V. (Principal Investigator). Awarded by the *City of Sacramento Office of Violence Prevention*. \$250,000. (2015-2019).

Watson, V. (Principal Investigator). Awarded by the *Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission*. \$210,000. (2017-2019).

Watson, V. (Principal Investigator). Research grant to examine statewide academic retention program (Umoja) that supports African American community college students to/through higher education. \$40,000. (2016-2018).

Watson, V. (Principal Investigator) with Co-PI, Maisha Winn and Lawrence Winn. Mixed-methods evaluation of *The Black Child Legacy Campaign*, a city-wide violence prevention initiative in Sacramento, CA. \$110,000. (2017-2019).

Watson, V. (Principal Investigator). *Sacramento City Unified School District* contract for programming in after-school programs throughout the district. \$750,000. (2009-2018).

Watson, V. (Principal Investigator). *Twin Rivers Unified School District* contract for professional development and classroom residencies. \$120,000. (2009-2015).

Watson, V. (Principal Investigator). Awarded funding from *Youth Speaks, Inc.* to participate in the National Brave New Voices Network Initiative. Grant supports building a sustainable field of literary arts organizations. \$300,000. (2014-2017).

Watson, V. (Principal Investigator). *Yolo County Office of Education* contract for programming in juvenile hall. \$65,000. (2015-2017).

Watson, V. (Principal Investigator). Awarded to *SAYS* by *AT&T*. \$100,000. (2016-2017).

Watson, V. (Principal Investigator) with Christopher Thaiss (Co-PI). *California Postsecondary Education Commission Improving Teacher Quality* grant. A culturally responsive professional development and research program for middle and high school teachers in a high-poverty district. \$1,000,000. (2010-2014).

UNIVERSITY TEACHING & K12 EXPERIENCE

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 2020-present | California State University, Sacramento <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>EDD 600: Transformative Leadership</i> |
| 2016-2020 | University of California, Davis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Mic Check: Race, Place, and Power within and Beyond the Ivory Tower</i> ▪ <i>Scholar Activism: the more you know, the more you owe</i> |

- *Decolonizing Methodologies: the art, science, and soul of portraiture*
 - *Racial Justice: schooling and educational equity*
- 2005–2008 Project Pipeline, California Alternative Credential Program, Alameda, CA
 - *Foundations of Teaching as a Profession*
 - *Evaluation and Assessment*
- 2004–2007 Department of Teacher Education
University of San Francisco School of Education, San Francisco, CA
 - *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*
 - *Learning and Teaching*
- 2003–2004 Director of Environmental Prevention Training and Youth Development Programs
Youth Leadership Institute, San Francisco, CA
- 2001–2003 Teaching Assistant for Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot
Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA
 - *Sociology of Education*
- 2001–2003 Research Assistant for Pedro Noguera
Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA
 - *Pathways to Success*, an examination of student aspirations and achievement within small schools.
- 2001–2002 Teaching Assistant for Pedro Noguera
Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA
 - *Urban Education*
- 2000–2002 Project Coordinator
Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA
 - *Youth Empowerment Project (YEP)*, a CD project in which young people used hip-hop to voice their perceptions about Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School.
- 1999–2000 Dean of Curriculum and Instruction
Making Waves, Ross, CA
 - *Academic literacy specialist*
- 1996–1999 Teacher
Berkeley High School, Berkeley, CA
 - *Ethnic Studies and World History*
- 1996–1999 Student Participatory Action Research Coordinator
UC Berkeley Graduate School of Education, Berkeley, CA
 - *The Diversity Project*, a study to examine educational equity at Berkeley High School. Findings were later published in the book, *Unfinished Business* (Noguera & Wing, 2006).

KEYNOTES, GUEST LECTURES, & PEER-REVIEWED PRESENTATIONS

- Watson, V.**, Bland, D., & Hill, P. (October, 2022). Research Presentation: “Rituals of Repair: Poetry as Public Pedagogy” at the *Imagining America: Artists + Scholars in Public Life Annual Conference* at Tulane University. New Orleans, Louisiana. <https://imaginingamerica.org>
- Warren, M., **Watson, V.**, Muhammad, L., Stitch, J. (October, 2022). Research Presentation: “Willful Defiance: Activist Scholarship as a Tool for Movement Building” at the *URBAN Research and Action National Network Conference* sponsored by the Institute for Social Transformation. University of California, Santa Cruz. <https://transform.ucsc.edu/all-in-conference-agenda/>
- Watson, V.** (September, 2022). Keynote Address for the *People’s Think Tank*. “Intersectional Organizing: An Exploration of Research as Relational, Spiritual, and Intentional.” National Convening via zoom. <http://peoplesthinktank.us>
- Watson, V.** (August, 2022). Keynote Speaker for the *Peer and Academic Resource Center*. Pacific Suite, University Union, Sacramento State University.
- Watson, V.** (July, 2022). Workshop facilitator at the statewide *Leaders for Social Justice* summit at Estate Farms. Sacramento, CA.
- Watson, V.** (June, 2022). Keynote Speaker at the *11th Annual UC Davis Equity Summit*. “An Invitation to the Future of Education.” Davis, CA.
- Watson, V.** (June, 2022). Guest Lecture in doctoral course: *Race and Whiteness in US Schools and Society* at Northern Arizona University, College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership.
- Watson, V.** (May, 2022). Keynote Speaker for *Transformative Conversations: Promoting Equity and Inclusion in Education and Beyond* at California State University, Stanislaus.
- Watson, V.** (April, 2022). Keynote Speaker for launch of *Sacramento Valley College Corps*. Davis. CA.
- Watson, V.** (April, 2022). *Successfully engaging graduate students in research projects*. ERI Scholar Skill-Building Workshop for the College of Education. Panel with Dr. Sue Hobbs, Shuan de Vera (EDD Graduate Student) and Angelina Kier (EDD Graduate Student).
- Watson, V.**, Ononuju, I., & De Vera, S. (April, 2022). Symposium for the Critical Educators for Social Justice SIG: “Justice as Pedagogy: Community-Based Organizations Connect Learning and Liberation.” AERA Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.
- De Vera, S., **Watson, V.** & Baldrige, B. (April, 2022). Presidential Session on “Educational Resistance: Fugitive Pedagogy and Community-Based Educators as Freedom Fighters.” AERA Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.
- Watson, V.** (February, 2022). *Liberation in Praxis: Whiteness, Accountability, & Shifting from Ally to Co-Conspiratorship*. Co-Presenter with Dr. Andrea Terry. Sacramento State Convocation. February 14, 2022.
- Watson, V.** (February, 2022). Guest Lecture in *EDD 605: Qualitative Methods* (Professor Frank Adamson) on *Portraiture and Humanizing Research Methods* at Sacramento State University.

- Watson, V. (January, 2022).** Keynote Speaker at American River College. *Living Your Legacy: Being, Becoming, and Belonging at ARC*. Sacramento, CA.
- Watson, V., Cooksy, L., Montgomery-Block, K., Winn, T. (2021).** “Implementing and Evaluating a Campaign to Reduce Disparities and Transform Communities” at the *Six Annual International Conference on the Center for Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment*. September 30, 2021.
- Watson, V. (2021).** *The Personal, Professional, and Political Landscape of Social Work*. Guest Lecture for Social Work 102: Cross Cultural Theory and Practice. Sacramento State University. September 7, 2021.
- Watson, V. (2021).** *Transformative Schooling*. Guest Lecture for AAS 130: African American Education. UC Davis. June 3, 2021.
- Watson, V. (2021).** *Community-based methodologies and scholar activism*. Guest Lecture for CHI 241: Community-Based Participatory Research. University of California, Davis. April 27, 2021.
- Watson, V. (2021).** *Portraiture: An Exploration*. Keynote Address for the University of Pittsburgh School of Education’s Shifting Power Community-University Collaborative. April 12, 2021.
- Watson, V. (2021).** *A talk to white teachers: Moving from white fragility to white accountability in education*. Community lecture for Elite Public Schools in Vallejo, CA. March 12, 2021.
- Leslie, A, **Watson, V.**, Borunda, R., Grant, T., Bosworth, K. (2021). *Towards Abolition: Undoing the Colonized Curriculum* [Symposium] California Teachers Association 2021, Equity & Human Rights Conference. February 26, 2021.
- Watson, V. (2021).** *An Exploration into Qualitative Inquiries*. Guest Lecture for EDD 605: Qualitative Methods. Sacramento State University. February 19, 2021.
- Watson, V., Cooksy, L., Montgomery-Block, K., Winn, T. (2021).** Research Presentation: *Building a Legacy for Black Children through Community Transformation* at the 6th International CREA Conference. September 30, 2021. <https://crea.education.illinois.edu/conferences/sixth-international-conference>
- Watson, V. (2021).** Presidential Session Panelist: “From the Margins to the Center: Interrogating the Precarity and Possibility of Community-based Youth Work in Challenging Times” at the 2021 AERA Virtual Annual Meeting.
- Watson, V. (2021).** Discussant for the Paper Session titled, “Curriculum, Community, and Inter/disciplinarity: Dismantling Dominant Curricular Approaches” at the 2021 AERA Virtual Annual Meeting.
- Watson, V. (2021).** Chair for the panel titled, “Barriers and Possibilities: Moving Toward Justice in Teacher Education” at the 2021 AERA Virtual Annual Meeting.
- Watson, V. (2021).** Discussant for the Paper Session titled, “Unearthing Graduate Student Experiences Across Multiple Educational Contexts” at the 2021 AERA Virtual Annual Meeting.
- Watson, V. (2021).** Chair for the Symposium titled, “Pedagogies of Re: Toward a Decolonial, Emancipatory Framework of Educational Leadership” at the 2021 AERA Virtual Annual Meeting.

- Watson, V.** (2021). Discussant for the Roundtable Session titled, “Rich Global Perspectives on Peace Education” at the 2021 AERA Virtual Annual Meeting.
- Watson, V.** (2021). Chair for the Roundtable Session titled, “Lived Experiences and Exceptional Futures” at the 2021 AERA Virtual Annual Meeting.
- Watson, V.** (2021). Discussant for the Roundtable Session titled, “Roots, Religion, and Paradoxes: Race in Education” at the 2021 AERA Virtual Annual Meeting.
- Watson, V.** (2021). Discussant for the Paper Session titled, “Teachers as Leaders in School Improvement” at the 2021 AERA Virtual Annual Meeting.
- Watson, V.** (2021). Discussant for the Symposium titled, “Exploring Carcerality in the Pre-K–20 Pipeline” at the 2021 AERA Virtual Annual Meeting.
- Watson, V.** (2021). Discussant for the Roundtable Session titled, “Developing Critical Consciousness in Turbulent Times: Challenges and Possibilities for Academic Success for Black Youth” at the 2021 AERA Virtual Annual Meeting.
- Watson, V.** (2021). Discussant for the Paper Session titled, “Let’s Talk About Race in Leadership: Challenging White Supremacy, Racism, Antiracism, Othering, and Marginalization” at the 2021 AERA Virtual Annual Meeting.
- Watson, V.** (2021) *An Exploration into Qualitative Methods*. Guest Lecture for EDD 605 with Professor Frank Adamson. Sacramento State University. February 19, 2021.
- Watson, V.** (2021) *What is a world without whiteness* for the Diversity Matters Speaker Series at Touro University. Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoelaGpg2Lk&feature=youtu.be>
- Watson, V.** (2021) *Quality Qualitative Research Matters* at Cal State East Bay. Lecture Series.
- Watson, V.** (2020) *Living Justice: Reflections on Scholar Activism* [Symposium]. AERA Annual Meeting San Francisco, CA <http://tinyurl.com/slde4dp>
- Watson, V.** (2020) *The Black Child Legacy Campaign* [Symposium]. AERA Annual Meeting San Francisco, CA <http://tinyurl.com/wqorqrk>
- Watson, V.** (2020) *Scholar Activism: To Make the Road by Walking* [Roundtable Session]. AERA Annual Meeting San Francisco, CA <http://tinyurl.com/wn72ctd>
- Hope, J. K. & **Watson, V. M.** (2020) *Intergenerational Healing and the Quest for Educational Justice for/With Black Girl Activists* [Symposium]. AERA Annual Meeting San Francisco, CA <http://tinyurl.com/vny9a57>
- Hope, J. K., **Watson, V. M.**, Hill, P. & Bland, D. (2020). *Hood Civics: Intergenerational Healing and the Quest for Educational Justice for/With Black Girl Activists* [Paper Session]. AERA Annual Meeting San Francisco, CA <http://tinyurl.com/u9hdh6q>
- Montgomery, K., Rose, J., **Watson, V. M.** & Winn, L. T. (2020) *Black Legacy Campaign: A Transformative Justice Community* [Invited Speaker Session]. AERA Annual Meeting San Francisco, CA <http://tinyurl.com/rv5ux8h>

- Watson, V.** (2019). *Leveraging Collaborative Strength to Develop District Racial Equity Leadership*, Session at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, Canada.
- Watson, V.** (2019). *Artivism as Holistic Praxis*, Symposium for the Holistic Education SIG at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, Canada.
- Watson, V.** (2019). Featured Research Talk: *Community-based Scholarship: Reimagining Higher Education in the Lives of Young People*. UC Office of the President, Oakland, CA.
- Watson, V.** (2019). Featured Book Panel: *Lift Us Up! Don't Push Us Out! Voices from the Frontlines of the Educational Justice Movement*. The University of Utah.
- Watson, V.** (2019). Featured Book Session: *Transformative Schooling: Towards Racial Equity in Education*. 25th Anniversary Multicultural Education Conference, California State University, Sacramento.
- Watson, V.** (2019). Featured Lecture. *Radical Pursuits: Towards Systems Change for Social Justice*. University of California, Santa Barbara (co-sponsored by the Departments of Sociology and Education).
- Watson, V.** (2019). Featured Book Panel: *Lift Us Up! Don't Push Us Out! Voices from the Frontlines of the Educational Justice Movement*. University of California, Berkeley.
- Watson, V.** (2019). Featured Lecture. *Transformative Schooling: Racial Justice and Educational Equity in the 21st Century*. University of California, Los Angeles (sponsored by the School of Education).
- Watson, V.** (2019). Featured Lecture. *The 3 Keys of Social Transformation*. University of California, Merced (sponsored by the Office of the Vice Chancellor & Provost).
- Watson, V.** (2018). Keynote Speaker. *Towards Educational Equity*. Power of I Conference, Elk Grove Unified School District. Sacramento, CA.
- Watson, V.** (2018). *Liberating Methodologies: Reclaiming Research as a Site for Radical Inquiry and Transformation*. Research presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, New York.
- Watson, V.** (2018). *Transforming School from the Outside-In: Families and Communities as School Activists*. Chair and discussant at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, New York.
- Watson, V.** (2018). *Perspectives on Urban Student-Driven Pedagogy*. Chair and discussant at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, New York.
- Watson, V.** (2018). *International Approaches to Teacher Education Program Reform*. Chair and discussant at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, New York.
- Watson, V.** (2018). *School is my Hustle: A youth movement to transform education*. Symposium at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, New York.
- Watson, V.** (2017). Keynote Speaker. *Power, Privilege, and Pedagogy*. 2nd Annual Building a Resilient Yolo Summit. Woodland, CA.

- Watson, V.** (2017). Research Presentation. *Transforming Schooling in the P-20 Educational System*. The Aoki Center for Critical Race and Nation Studies, UC Davis School of Law. Davis, CA.
- Watson, V.** (2017). Keynote Speaker. *Write to Heal: Addressing Intergenerational Trauma with Critical Literacy and Social Justice*. National Parent-Teacher Conference. Sacramento, CA.
- Watson, V.** (2017). *Counternarratives/Testimonios/Mestizaje Epistemologies*. Chair and discussant at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Antonio, TX.
- Watson, V.** (2017). *Expanding Educational Opportunities for Black and Latino Male Students: Lessons From Four Urban School Districts*. Symposium at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Antonio, TX.
- Watson, V.** (2017). *mythologies of white supremacy*. Symposium at the National Council of Teachers of English, St. Louis, MO.
- Watson, V.** (2017). *Deep Living: The Art, Science, and Soul of Transformative Classrooms*. Symposium at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Antonio, TX.
- Watson, V.** (2017). *Strategies and Outcomes of Grassroots Organizing*. Discussant at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Antonio, TX.
- Watson, V.** (2017). *Artistic Resistance: Creating a Transformative Teaching Praxis Through Hip-Hop*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Antonio, TX.
- Watson, V.** (2016). Featured Speaker as a *Changemaker Fellow*. TEDx Sacramento.
- Watson, V.** (2016). Keynote Speaker. *Literacy is a Civil Write: Teaching Tools For Social Resistance Within And Beyond The Walls Of Schools* at the English Learner Leadership Conference. Sonoma County Office of Education, CA.
- Watson, V.** (2015). Keynote Speaker. *The Pedagogy Of Our Lives: Teaching Tools For Social Resistance Within And Beyond The Walls Of Schools* at the Transformative Researchers and Educators for Democracy Conference. University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth.
- Watson, V.** (2015). Research Presentation. *The Black Sonrise: Oakland Unified School District's Commitment to Address and Eliminate Institutionalized Racism*. African American & African Studies Program (AAAS) Brown Bag Lecture Series. University of California, Davis.
- Watson, V.** (2015). Keynote Address. *Education for Liberation* at the 16th Annual Transfer Conference at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA.
- Watson, V.** (2012). Research Presentation. *Results from an Innovative Literacy Program in Urban Special Education Support Classes*. Council for Exceptional Children Convention. Denver, CO.
- Watson, V.** (2011). Keynote Address. *Grassroots Empowerment for the Next Generation: Moving Marginalized Youth to the Center of Community Change*. UC Merced's Community Engagement Conference: Community Engagement and Scholarship. UC Merced, Merced, CA.

Watson, V. (2011). Keynote Address. *Building Community for Educational Improvements*. Stockton Unified School District Honoring Educators Forum for Teachers, Administrators, and Staff. Stockton, CA.

Watson, V. (2011). *Grassroots pedagogy: Community-based classrooms for social change*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Watson, V. (2010). Invited Research Symposium. *Gangstas, Gunshots, and Grades: Effectively Responding to "Present" Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Today's Urban Youth*. San Francisco General Hospital in partnership with the University of California, San Francisco. San Francisco, CA.

INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE

Contributions to Sacramento State from 2020-present

- **Faculty Representative:** *Campuswide Committee on Diversity and Equity (CODE)*, 2021-2023
- **Faculty Representative:** *Campuswide Sac State Scholars*, 2020-2022
- **Faculty Representative,** *COE Strategic Planning Accountability and Resources (SPAR)*, 2020-present
- **Faculty Representative,** *CSLA Advisory Group*, Sacramento County Office of Education (2021-2022)
- **Active Member,** *COE Dean's Advisory Council (DAC)*, 2020-present
- **Active Member,** *CSUS Center of Race, Immigration, and Social Justice*, 2021-present
- **Active Member,** *Multicultural Education Conference Planning Committee*, 2022-present
- **Active Member,** *COE Developing Anti-racist Pedagogies, Practices, and Systems FLC*, 2020-2021
- **Active Member,** *Campuswide Antiracism and Inclusive Campus Plan group on Antiracism Learning and Literacy*, 2020-2021
- **Search Committee Chair:** Chaired EDD search for a scholar who focuses on Anti-Racist Leadership Policy and Practices (2 hires secured), 2020-2021
- **Search Committee Member:** Hiring Committee for PPA search for a Public Administration or Public Policy scholar with Expertise in Social and Racial Equity, 2021-2022
- **Launched** *Leading with Justice Speaker Series*, <https://www.csus.edu/college/education/doctorate-educational-leadership/leading-with-justice/leading-with-justice.html> (2020-2022)
- **Lead Sponsor:** *We Still Here*. Film-Screening and workshop with filmmakers and community members from Puerto Rico at the Hinde Auditorium, Sacramento State, March 2, 2022

Service to Graduate Students at Sacramento State

- Dissertation Chair, Shaun de Vera. **Access to Anti-Racist Computing Education for BIPOC Youth: A Case Study in Two Urban California School Districts**. (Expected Graduation June of 2023).
- Dissertation Chair, Haley Myers Dillon. **Justice for Moms in College: Examining Factors that Influence Student-Parents Degree Completion Timelines**. (Expected Graduation June of 2023).
- Dissertation Chair, Angelina Kier. **Children of la Malinche: Portraits of Latinx Students and Educators' Linguistic Experiences in an Urban School District**. (Expected Graduation June of 2023).
- Dissertation Committee Member, Freddy Castro, (Chair: Sheeva Sabati). **Stories from the Exodus: Why Teachers of Color Keep Leaving the Profession**. (Expected Graduation June of 2023).
- Dissertation Committee Member, Crystal Sims. (Chair: Dale Allender). **Examining How the COVID-19 Pandemic Influenced Self-Efficacy and Professional Identity Development of Educators in Higher Education**. (Expected Graduation June of 2023).
- Dissertation Committee Member, Gabriela Ballesteros. (Chair: Dale Allender). **We Work Uphill: First Generation Latina Womxn Resisting the Academy**. (Graduated June of 2022).
- Dissertation Committee Member, Wicondra Stovall. (Chair, Sarah Jouganatos). **Yes, It's For Us: An Examination Of Othermothering As A Framework For Cultural Brokering For African American Students And Families**. (Graduated June of 2022).

- Dissertation Committee Member, Amber Bradley. (Chair, Dale Allender). **Liberation through Abolition: An analysis of the reallocation of police funds in Three California Public School Districts.** *Winner of the Outstanding Dissertation Award.* (Graduated June of 2022).
- Dissertation Chair, Khanh Ngoc Dinh. **Racial Diversity Leadership Index: A model for Employee Retention.** *Winner of the Outstanding Dissertation Award.* (Graduated June of 2021).
- Dissertation Chair, Lisa Ziska-Marchand. **Portraits of White Women Managers Reflecting Upon Racism, Classism, and Equity in Higher Education.** (Graduated June of 2021).
- Dissertation Chair, Bena Arao. **Invisible Labor: examining the black staff engagement with the institution's budgeting ecosystem.** (Graduated June of 2021).
- Faculty Advisor, *Ongoing.* **Each faculty member is assigned a core group of doctoral students to support in their first year.** To date, I have mentored: Jaimeson Daley, Alana Althaus, Jerel McGiffert, Bethany Davis, and Asianya Jones.

Service to Graduate Students at Other Institutions

- Dissertation Committee Member, Yolanda Jimenez. **A Phenomenological Study of the experiences of Emerging Bilingual Students.** (Graduated June of 2022—San Jose State University)
- Dissertation Committee Member, Alicia Herrera. **Compounded Whiteness: White Teacher Antiracist Ideological Commitment Development in Predominantly White Elementary Schools.** (Graduated August of 2021—University of California, Davis).
- Dissertation Committee Member, Victor Smalls. **Anti-Black Personas in School and Hip-Hop Studies.** (Graduated June of 2021—CSU, East Bay).
- Dissertation Committee Member, Trevor Auldridge Reveles. **Oppositional and Affirmational Hope in the Education of Urban Boys of Color: Enhancing Self-Determination, Overstanding Trauma, and Community Commitment.** (Graduated June of 2021—UC Santa Barbara)
- Honors Thesis Chair, Thuy Vi Nguyen. **Cultivating Identities in a Place Called Home: Intersectional, Everchanging Identities Of Vietnamese American Youth In Culturally Sustaining Spaces.** (Graduated June of 2020—University of California, Davis)
- Dissertation Committee Member, Jennifer DeBarros. **Remembering Malcolm: The Culture of Memory, Police Shootings & Public Pedagogy.** (Graduated June of 2019—University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth)
- Dissertation Committee Member, Lorraine Wilkins. **Counter-narratives from outside the hood: case studies of African American students' schooling experiences in suburbia.** (Graduated June of 2017—University of California, Davis)
- Dissertation Committee Member, Ijeoma Ononuju. **Living blind, dreaming in color: social malignancy and African American male health and achievement.** (Graduated in June of 2016—University of California, Davis)
- Dissertation Committee Member, Kenya Mitchell. **Beyond the writing process: using explicit, trans-textual pedagogies to improve diverse undergraduate students' writing skills.** (Graduated in June of 2016—University of California, Davis)
- Dissertation Committee Member, Mari Gray. **The role of school resource officers in the school-to-prison pipeline.** (Graduated in June of 2016—University of California, Davis)
- Dissertation Committee Member, Sophia Gonfiotti. **An examination of the racial and ethnic identity formation of Chinese children adopted into white families.** (Graduated in June of 2015—University of California, Davis)
- Dissertation Committee Member, Kristen Coates. **Quantitative study of social emotional learning practices at a high-poverty high-achieving urban middle school.** (Graduated in June of 2014—University of California, Davis)
- Dissertation Committee Member, Michelle Seijas. **The Systemic Devaluation of Latino Students in a Rural Setting.** (Graduated in June of 2014—University of California, Davis)

Service to the Discipline

- **AERA Chair:** *The Committee on Excellence in Media Reporting on Education* (2022-2024)
- **Book Review and Back Cover Endorsement:** *Reauthoring Savage Inequalities*, Edited by Lori D. Patton, Ishwanzya D. Rivers, Raquel L. Farmer-Hinton, and Joi D. Lewis. (SUNY Press, 2022)
- **Book Review and Back Cover Endorsement:** *Liberation Pedagogy: Elijah Muhammad and the Art of Soul Crafting* by Abul Pitre. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022)
- **Book Review:** *Fighting the Good Fight: Narrative of the African American Principalship*. By: Isaac Carrier and Aaron Griffen. (Word & Deed Publishing Incorporated, 2022)
- **Editorial Board Member:** *Journal of Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* (2022-present)
- **Editorial Board Member:** *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research* (2013-2022)
- **Proposal Reviewer** for the *American Educational Research Association* (2011-present)
 - AERA Reviewer for the following SIGS:
 - Social Context of Education
 - School/University Collaborative Research
 - Grassroots Community and Youth Organizing for Education Reform
 - Research Focus on Black Education
 - Critical Educators for Social Justice
 - Spirituality and Education
 - Leadership for Social Justice
- **Proposal Reviewer:** Research Presentation Proposals, UC Davis Equity Summit (2010-2020)
- **Reviewer** for *Equity and Excellence in Education* (2012; 2019)
- **Reviewer** for *Berkeley Review of Education* (2014)
- **Reviewer** for *Journal of Juvenile Justice* (2014)
- **Book Reviewer:** *Teaching to Change the World* by Jeannie Oakes & Martin Lipton (McGraw-Hill, 2005)
- **Proposal Reviewer:** Research Presentation Proposals, Harvard University Student Research Conference (2000-2002)

COMMUNITY SERVICE

- **Expert Witness**, *High profile civil rights case*, Law Office of Steve Whitworth (2022)
- **Expert Witness**, *AB 2598*, Legislation on Restorative Justice Practices (2022)
- **Founder and Board Member**, *UC Davis Sacramento Area Youth Speaks* (2008-present)
- **Board President**, *United Playaz*, San Francisco, CA (2011-present)
- **Board Co-Chair**, *Kingmakers of Oakland* (2018-present)
- **Board Member**, *The People's Think Tank*, (2018-present)
- **Founding Board Member**, *Elite Charter School System* in Vallejo, CA (2018-present)
- **Board Member**, *Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning* with the National Council of Teachers of English (2016-2022)
- **Board Member**, *The Urban Education Justice Project*, (2016-2022)
- **Board Member**, *Fathers and Families of San Joaquin Valley*, Stockton, CA (2013-2020)
- **Chair**, African American Students into Higher Education (AASHE), Yolo County Office of Education Task Force (2014-2016)
- **Advisory Member**, Social Justice Education Coalition, UC Davis Graduate and Faculty group (2013-2017)
- **Co-Chair**, *Grassroots Community and Youth Organizing SIG / American Educational Research Association* (2011-2013)
- **Education Advisor**, *Youth Speaks, Inc.*, San Francisco, CA (2008-2011)
- **Co-Founder and Board Member**, *The Urban Root Community Center*, Berkeley, CA (1995-1999)

AWARDS

Professional Awards

- *Woman of the Year Award* from the United States Congress (2019)
- *Woman of Inspiration Award* from the Sacramento Kings (2019)
- *Early Career Award*, UC Davis, (2013) <http://www.ucdavis.edu/one/stories/staff/watson.html>
- *40 Under 40 Award* for exemplary achievement in the region, Sacramento Business Journal (2011)
- *Diversity and Principals of Community Soaring to New Heights Individual Achievement Award* from the UC Davis Chancellor's Office (2011)

Academic Awards and Distinctions

- The California Educational Research Association's *Annual Research Award* (2019)
- American Educational Research Association *Social Justice Leadership Award* (2018)
- American Educational Research Association *Social Impact Award* (2016)
- *Postdoctoral Research Fellowship*, Center for Regional Change at UC Davis (2008, declined)
- Harvard Graduate School of Education Recognition for *Outstanding Commitment to Students* for coordinating multicultural activities (2000–2001)
- Phi Beta Kappa, UC Berkeley (1996–1999)
- Dean's Honors List, UC Berkeley (1996–1999)
- Golden Key Honor Society, UC Berkeley (1996–1999)

Academic Scholarships

- Harvard Graduate School of Education award and funding for highly-ranked doctoral student (2002–2004)
- Harvard Graduate School of Education merit-based scholarship for academic potential and achievement (2001)
- Multicultural Alliance of Teachers Education Award (2000)
- AmeriCorps Education Award and Scholarship Recipient (1999–2000)
- National Security Education Program Grant Recipient (1999)
- Alumni Scholarship for Outstanding Leadership, UC Berkeley (1998–1999)
- Fullwood Academic Scholarship, UC Berkeley (1996–1999)

MEDIA COVERAGE

CSUS News Features:

- “EDD Hires faculty that focus on Anti-Racist Leadership.” Sacramento State Newsroom: <https://www.csus.edu/news/newsroom/stories/2021/8/antiracist-edd-faculty.html>.
- “Study shows how partnering with communities, using key resources improves Black children's lives.” Sacramento State Newsroom: <https://www.csus.edu/news/newsroom/stories/2021/2/bclc-study-results.html>.
 - CSUS Reported Article Audience Reach: **301,879** (as of Feb. 25, 2021)

National Features:

- Featured in the feature-length documentary, *Rigged*. This documentary examines how the higher education system grows the disparity between rich and poor and thereby undermines the future of American Democracy. <https://riggeddocumentary.com/index.html>

- National Media Attention for my report, *The Black Sonrise: Oakland Unified School District's Commitment to Address and Eliminate Institutionalized Racism*:
 - **New York Times**, *Courses in Manhood for African-American Boys* by Patricia Brown: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/07/education/edlife/in-oakland-building-boys-into-men.html?_r=0
 - **Huffington Post Live Webcam** with Marc Lamont Hill: <http://huff.lv/17HxRGq>
 - **Essence Magazine**: <http://m.essence.com/2015/02/17/oakland-schools-tackle-racism-get-results>
 - **Huffington Post Article**: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/17/oakland-manhood-development-program_n_6665806.html
 - **Diverse Issues in Higher Education**: <http://diverseeducation.com/article/69243/>
 - **Atlantic Black Star**: <http://atlantablackstar.com/2015/02/19/oakland-schools-taking-simple-effective-approach-helping-black-male-students-excel/>

- 2015 Featured commentator on Rachel Dolezal case for HLN: <http://www.hlnv.com/video/2015/06/17/watch-rachel-dolezal-cultural-thief>

- 2015 SAYS featured on KTVN in Reno: <http://www.ktvn.com/story/28154407/washoe-area-youth-speaks-program>

- 2014 “They Didn’t Like School. School Didn’t Like Them, Until Something Incredible Stepped Right In.” *Upworthy* feature on SAYS. <http://www.upworthy.com/they-didnt-like-school-school-didnt-like-them-until-something-incredible-stepped-right-in?c=apstream>

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- Abolitionist Teaching Network
- American Educational Research Association (AERA)
- Education for Liberation National Network
- Imagining America: Scholars and Artists in Public Life
- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
- Teachers for Social Justice
- The People’s Think Tank
- University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA)
- Urban Research-Based Action Network (URBAN)

Instructions for diversity statement: *Diversity Statement: Sac State holds diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in its core values. Please share how you would implement DEI in this position, and how these values have impacted your past work experiences.*

Educational Equity: Diversity Statement **Dr. Vajra M. Watson**

On January 13, 2023, I organized a regional panel and convening of DEI leaders from three major institutions: Sacramento State, SMUD, and the Sacramento King's NBA team. The focus was on Reverend Martin Luther King's vision of transformative leadership and lessons learned for systems change. The conversation was generative and the networking was substantial. As an example, I received the following email after the event:

“Thank you so much for the opportunity to serve on the MLK Transformative Leadership Panel. It was the highlight of my week. I am now getting a lot of folks who want to network with Sac State around our DEIBJ efforts and AICP framework. Both Sac City Unified and SMUD have reached out to me to partner. If it were not for this opportunity, I would not have made these connections so easily.”

As demonstrated through the above interactions, institutional innovations are often the byproduct of sharing space and building community. Over the years, I have learned that any system constructed from the hands of human beings can be reimagined and improved. This means our agency and actions matter.

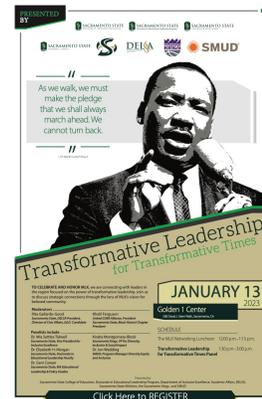
As the inaugural Sr. Associate Vice President of Sacramento State Placer Center, I will develop sustainable partnerships to deliver a new model for higher education that advances educational equity and the social, cultural, and economic well-being of the region.

The solution is in the ties that bind us, the land that connects us, and the future that is calling us forward.

I am a solution-oriented leader and an award-winning scholar. While my professional accolades and academic training are highly competitive, it is my upbringing that inspires my work. There are some attributes and values that are hard to train, aspects of our identity that are integral to our walk in the world.

We all have pivotal stepping stones which, brought together, comprise the journey of our lives. For me, a significant number of these moments took place at school. In the first grade, my father became enraged that Mrs. Slider tried to claim that Christopher Columbus “discovered” a land that was fully inhabited and civilized. I remember him explaining to me that my teacher was an ignorant liar. This same teacher then told me I was slow and might be held back because I could not read. I learned to sound out letters just to spite her and everything she stood for.

In the seventh grade when my friends were doing I-Search papers in social studies class about dolphins and other topics I found obscure, I was desperate to know, *why does racism exist?* I remember going to the Berkeley Public Library on a quest and the librarian handed me an array of books, from Gandhi's memoir to James Banks' *Multiethnic Education*. At this stage, I continued to examine racism as a phenomenon of marginalization (the colonized), without a critical understanding of the ways it interlocks with privilege (the colonizer).



Although I benefited from structural racism as a white person, I did not see it.

Then, in the ninth grade, a life-altering moment changed my course. In 1992, I was in the first de-tracked English class at Berkeley High School. My teacher was a gay white male in his late forties who reveled in European literature and the canon. When Mr. B would insist on the inherent value of Eurocentric texts, my classmate, Lance X, would grunt and speak things under his breath about the insidiousness of the readings. One day, Lance was absent. And on that particular day, a white student, Eva, took it upon herself to raise her hand right in the middle of the lesson to broadcast the following question: “What’s wrong with *that* boy who sits over there?” With a sour expression spewed across her face, she pointed at Lance’s empty chair. I found her indignation rather appalling and I assumed the teacher would quickly curtail the conversation. But that is not what happened. For the rest of the class period, everyone was talking recklessly about Lance. Mr. B was fueling the discussion with his own hurtful comments; he also called on students who were ridiculing Lance because he was in the Nation of Islam. Mr. B was quick to call on me the second my hand went up to speak. “What I will not do,” I chimed, “is talk about someone behind their back. How dare you disrespect someone who is not present to defend himself? You’re all weak for that, especially you, Mr. B! I’m outta here!” I got up and walked out.

From that moment onward, I changed my schedule around and enrolled in the Black Studies and Xicanx Studies Departments. At that time, Berkeley High School had the only such departments in the nation. All of my A-G courses (except math and science) were fulfilled inside the walls of these spaces.

I entered these classrooms with a little trepidation and a lot of curiosity; I devoured the readings, did all my homework, and was determined to learn. In my Xicanx literature class, like all my classes that semester, I was the only white student. This, however, did not stop me from owning the space and filling the classroom with my voice and presence. Mr. Melgoza would ask a question and like a rocket, my hand would shoot into the air. It was a pattern—one that I was completely unaware of at that time. One day, Mr. Melgoza asked me if I spoke Spanish. I told him I did not. The next day and for the rest of the school year, all of our readings and class discussions would be in Spanish. Mr. Melgoza called on me to read a passage from the text. I was reluctant, but he encouraged me to make the effort. It was extremely painful; I incorrectly sounded out words and some of the students laughed at me. When Mr. Melgoza asked us to discuss a topic, I was made speechless.

Many things transpired in that space that fundamentally shaped my experience with my self, my skin, and the world around me. In my silence, I began to learn what it means to be white. I began to see that even before my birth, I was bred to embody my race and own space. Mr. Melgoza showed this to me when he shifted the power dynamic. I watched as my classmates literally came alive; the classroom finally belonged to them. I had assumed they did not know the answers or care about the texts we were reading; I soon discovered that was not the issue. The root cause, in many respects, was my bravado. While whiteness was making me invincible in school it was making others invisible.

These realizations led me into the following school year with a bit more common sense, self-awareness, and collective consciousness. I offer this glimpse into my education because it shapes the way I understand and respond to diversity and inclusion. From my experience, social justice does not just live in our heads, but also in our hearts—and most definitely in our hands and feet. In other words, it is not merely what is conceived that is revolutionary, but what is achieved.

I firmly believe that a new model for higher education is on the horizon, and the Placer Center can serve as its seed. We are poised to grow a holistic model of ingenuity and innovation for generations to come.