Our Philosophy/Approach Statement

"…many students, especially students of color, may not feel at all 'safe' in what appears to be a neutral setting." (bell hooks)

"When someone with the authority of a teacher describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing." (Adrienne Rich)

"Classrooms are social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other." (Cynthia Nelson)

"The oppressed are not 'marginal,' are not people living 'outside' society" (Paulo Freire)

Language learning theory teaches us that learning happens best when it is anchored in students' real, authentic sociocultural experiences. In contrast, second language learning can be impeded when learners have to make convoluted or false connections between the language and their authentic reality. In some cases this results in an elaborate monitoring of what is spoken and thought.

To address this issue educators must focus on the use of inquiry, alongside inclusion, as a basis for curriculum decisions. We believe that teaching and learning are socio-cultural processes that have the potential to reproduce and/or interrupt social inequalities. We believe that teachers and students are socialized and racialized beings whose identities are shaped and negotiated through the process of teaching & learning. Inquiry de-centers the experience of the dominant culture and encourages the exploration of multiple identities. In addition, inquiry allows room for teachers and material developers to not have to be experts on different identities. An inquiry-based curriculum encourages students and teachers to engage in continual discourse on the nature of identity as a social construction.

With this lens of schooling and education, we employ an inquiry-based pedagogical approach that invites students to examine and question dominant conceptions of race, class, sexuality, gender, ableism, etc. As such, the tools and activities presented require a focus on process over product, reflection and collaboration, and a willingness to confront personal and institutional biases. This is a process that calls for an open mindedness to the messiness and non-closure aspects of this work.