

Personal Statement: Magen Rodriguez

I sat cross-legged on the floor sorting through my dust-covered books and papers preparing boxes for the U-Haul truck to move into my first owned home. The countless essays, articles, reflections and journals I accumulated were piled on top of the many silenced conversations I had participated in over the years. An essay from my senior year of high school caught my attention and the words read, “Globalization is changing our world. It is reshaping how we teach, learn, and understand ourselves and our urban spaces.” It then dawned on me, a lesson Professor Jack Tchen shared at the end of our *Dangerous and Intermingled: Subaltern NY* course- everything in this world and throughout history is connected. It’s up to you to find those nodes of connection and grow your webs. This lesson transformed me to see the world through different lenses. Perspective influences all actions and policies. It is with this framework that I plant my nodes throughout the journey of life. My nodes guide me to reimagine pedagogy and my power within innovative and equitable education.

Dating back to my childhood and my early nodal experiences, most of my time was spent observing, imagining and writing in my journals with powerful Puerto Rican women by my side. My mother protected me from the violence and pain of poverty in New York City and instilled in me that education was my means to rise above adversity and to access platforms of expression. As a teenager, I became part of Scenarios USA and for over ten years my voice extended into new nodes of networking and self-awareness. Much of the programming I participated in and organized promoted leadership, advocacy, and the success of young students through dialogue, creative expression, and developmental support. These experiences influenced my communication style and helped me learn to effectively work with youth and various stakeholders. Before this experience, I worked within teams and for the first time, I collaborated between departments experiencing how leadership is a joint effort and not an individualistic task.

My academic curiosity led me to plant new nodes in higher education as I attended New York University (NYU) as a fully-funded scholar of the Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Programs. Having attended NYU for undergraduate and graduate studies, I observed different international cultures and educational systems. My world of education expanded from journeying the world with wide-eyes to engaging in different communities by unpacking the legacies of dictatorship in Buenos Aires, to painting schools in Accra, to compiling data for domestic violence victims for a non-governmental organization, to teaching at various schools in a cooperative education model. While pursuing academic studies at NYU, I sought opportunities to engage in a range of career industries that included journalism, film, corporate business, international relations, academia, and non-profit business. These experiences gave me insight into different workspaces and guide my professional decisions to be purposeful and pragmatic.

Expanding my personal web of work and experiences around the globe, I learned how essential language is for communication and survival. I chose to specialize in Language Education in the public school system because historically schools were not meeting the language needs of students to access culture, understanding, or communicative skills. I am a progressive educator for urban public school students and an advocate for these marginalized communities. Working at Brooklyn Collaborative Studies, I constantly seek new pedagogical practices and experiment with my students and colleagues through inquiry and action. I use improvement-science methods to pause myself and my colleagues in our planning and teaching. I challenge us to consider what works and what we need to work on. In developing professional development, I intersect content, theory, and practice extending nodes of dialogue into relevant, reflective, and transformative opportunities for equity and solidarity. I regularly engage in conversations with the Department of Education and various teacher fellowships that create

spaces for critical awareness and progressive pedagogy. In efforts to advance equitable education, my web entangles these teaching practices with educational policy and social justice.

Through my world-wide web of work and learning, I have developed a particular value for dialogue. As I reflect on my professional journey, dialogues have the power to help people understand themselves and the world around them. Key to peer intervisitations, I believe dialogues activate integral change and progressive movement within creative and communicative fabrics. Anchoring deeper into my web of education and research, I completed my graduate program in Educational Leadership where my passion for educational equity and critical theory yearned for innovative threads not addressed in standards-based frameworks. I noted that critical threads of systemic disparities in student and teacher performance needed to be unpacked and cultivated in explicit ways in schools, districts and other institutions. Through doctoral studies with the Urban Education Leaders Program at Teachers College, where research and practice intermingle, I wish to design and implement systems of structured dialogue to consider and develop metacognitive awareness of critical race theories and socio-political contexts in urban institutions. Through teacher performance and structured peer intervisitation systems, I seek to address and engage dialogues at the epicenter of impact where the nodes of education and communication collide. I intend to influence urban school systems and consult different industries to meet at the nodes of theory and practice to inform effective and equitable learning. This learning is designed to transform not only practices but communication and impact. As all professional spaces meet in dialogue, new structures for collective accountability and peer intervisitation allow for transformation in one's self and in a community. Connecting all of the nodes of experience, work and learning, I would love to continue this mission as a leader, researcher, professor, and educator.