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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter with my strongest recommendation that any educational institution which has the opportunity to hire Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia and POOR Magazine -- whether for a single day workshop or a semester-long course -- should prioritize doing so.

I have been teaching undergraduate students for the past 13 years of my career, most recently as a faculty member at UC Berkeley, where I have been teaching courses on Education and Social Change, Art and Activism, and Global Poverty and Practice since 2013. Two years ago, I had the opportunity to co-teach a course with Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia -- this has been the most rewarding teaching experience of my 13 years in the field. While I have consistently received very high student evaluations for my teaching, the course that I co-taught with Ms. Gray-Garcia received an unprecedented level of student praise, in spite of the course being very demanding. I share some of their comments at the end of this letter, as well, even though that is slightly unorthodox, because I believe their experience speaks most directly to the efficacy of Ms. Gray-Garcia's pedagogies and expertise.

The course we taught together was titled Community Reparations and Decolonization, and was supported by a community partnership grant through UC Berkeley's American Cultures Engaged Scholarship (ACES) program. Our course examined systems of domination (white supremacy, settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, capitalism) as well as resistance/liberation movements, while also interrogating the politics of knowledge production. Students were led through cross-class, cross-racial and intergenerational teaching, learning, activism and art-making, with the goals of understanding the (re)creation of inequities and identifying and working towards individual and collective healing and transformation. Ms. Gray-Garcia was a full instructional partner for the course, from co-designing the syllabus and the assignments, to regular lesson planning meetings throughout the semester, to co-teaching every class, to helping to determine the grading process and final grades. It was a joy to work with someone who not only is a charismatic leader, but who also possesses such an enormous wealth of knowledge and experience that she brought to our course design and weekly lessons.

The topics of our course, Community Reparations and Decolonization, required pedagogies of risk-taking, that is, pedagogies that include the development of rigorous analyses but that do not end there. We invited our class into deep study that was also personal, that implicated us, and propelled us into processes of transformation through internal and external struggle, as it would be unethical to attempt to approach these topics only in an intellectual(izing) manner which could create the illusion that these issues exist outside of us. As such, this is work that is intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually demanding and, at times, even painful. I was consistently impressed with Ms. Gray-Garcia's capacity to create space for that pain while also helping students to move through it and become inspired to join in the legacies of social change agents. One of the most powerful and unique components of Ms. Gray-Garcia's teaching is her incredible capacity to combine difficult truth-telling

with humble compassion and committed praxis. The level of change she insists on and models as possible in the world is inspiring, and emphasizes the importance of healing processes and relationship-building in the service of transformational action that increases social justice. Students experience an expansion in their sense of what is possible because Ms. Gray-Garcia's experiences and analyses are not born out of academic study alone, but based in past and present lived experiences of personally struggling with the very topics we are studying. As such, the urgency as well as the nuances of the issues become more palpable to students, and they are invited to become power-conscious partners in creating social change.

We are living in an era in which more and more people are becoming convinced that we cannot continue with business as usual. To achieve the levels of change required as an antidote to the forces of division and dehumanization, we need deep transformations across all of our institutions, including our schools. We must foster understandings of our unavoidable interdependence -- and we must foster the capacities and commitments to transforming the specific nature of that interdependence into one rooted in relations of reciprocity rather than in relations of domination. This is the work that will save our species and our planet. This is the work at which Ms. Gray-Garcia excels.

While I will end here with the voices of some of the students who took our class, as shared anonymously in their course evaluations, I could continue on at great length about the invaluable nature of Ms. Gray-Garcia's work as an educator, and encourage you to contact me with any further questions you may have.

"Even though I am mostly in classes that are geared towards social justice type issues, none of them have been this powerful. Usually dealing in theory/academia, I hardly see the practical day to day implications of the course work. By having Tiny & other teachers from POOR Magazine in class we were able to see, hear, and feel the reality of what we were learning."

"The fact that I was reminded that Euro-centric education is not the only type of education was humbling. I was reminded of how individually and communally we can draw knowledge from each other, how each of us is a scholar, even if in different paths of life."

"Overall I found this class to be the most holistic educational experience I've had. It was more personalized, in that it asked us to locate ourselves within the content."

"I feel like this class was healing in that it showed me that it is possible to have a caring community in an education environment. It also allowed me to dedicate time to situating my experience in a broader context, which was healing because it empowered me to take on the broader societal dynamics that guide my life."

"This course changed my life. I would definitely recommend all Berkeley students to take this class. It could perhaps change all of the Berkeley community."

Sincerely,



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