Summary Statement of the Studies and/or Research:

“If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow” (John Dewey). We exist in a society where we mass-produce education, embedded in Eurocentric standards, hegemonic discourse and limited room for alternate perspectives. Through this ‘one size fits all’ model, we fail to value the individual and the unique abilities and histories that they embody. Although subject to change once pursuing a Masters in International Education, I would like to focus my research on the decolonization of education through Culturally Relative and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP). I seek to explore a student-centered approach that highlights unique cultural strengths and teaches tolerance through authentic conversations.

Studying Dr. Gloria Ladson Billings’ theory of culturally relevant pedagogy alongside my realm of experience in anti-racist and de-colonial work within an academic institution provides a unique perspective that I am intrigued to develop at the post-graduate level. Researching the experiences of students from marginalized backgrounds, I hope to pose a question along the lines of what impact CRRP has on the individuals' sense of belonging and identity and its significance beyond improved academic performance. Considering paradigms of international development, I look towards holistic approaches to education such as CAMFED’s (Campaign for Female Education) My Better World Curriculum, which allows students to tap into their insecurities, positionalities and intersecting identities to build skills relating to self-esteem, respect and solidarity. Examining various existing models across diverse communities in the Global North and the Global South can provide a comparative analysis of decolonial approaches.

As I begin to explore this field, I look to literature such as Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Teaching Like Our Students' Lives Matter by Sheryl V. Taylor and Donna M. Sobel to help me understand how CRRP acts beyond an academic tool but is de facto a catalyst for systematic change and individual agency. In terms of methodology, as a spoken word artist, seeing the arts as an opportunity for education and empowerment are key components that I hope to keep relevant in my research by considering an arts-based qualitative research method. If given the opportunity to conduct a case study and work with a group of students from marginalized backgrounds, I would be drawn to collecting and analyzing data in the form of various art mediums, ensuring that the research method presented is accessible and youth-friendly. Intending to decolonize education, my research must be conducted in a manner that embraces indigenous and alternate ways of knowing and learning.

A lack of CRRP in our education systems confines students to a single story; one that erases and manipulates the identities present. In this, we lose the untapped human potential within each student. Hence the importance of building trust, hope and resilience in students to combat the stereotypes and limitations that are constantly being reproduced.

I once met an educator that asked his student "Why do you matter?” And their response was, "I don't yet, that's why I'm trying so hard." This mindset is the reality of countless students. We are raised in a system that doesn't value the individual, nor the unique identities and talents present. My vested interest in the education system lies in not just in decolonizing institutions and curriculum but decolonizing the mind. I wish to pursue a career in which I can foster educational environments that are for and by people of marginalized backgrounds. Ensuring the standards of equity, diversity, and inclusion while incorporating cultural relativism. I hope to be able to influence educational policies and programs at the community, institutional and governmental levels and I aim to challenge how we learn, engage and empower our students.