

# Taiwana Shambley

Fiction Writer, Teaching Artist, Youth Worker

*Working at the intersection of social justice & the literary arts to empower young people who are BIPOC, queer & trans, disabled.*

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## Statement of Teaching Philosophy

The purpose of education is to empower students to be active agents in their world, communities, families, and personal lives. As educators, we ought to help students realize their own brilliance, the specific critical perspective and set of skills and interests that they and only they can offer the world. To fulfill this moral obligation is to help build a more ethical and liberatory society.

I fulfill our moral obligation in my teaching through my curricular design skills, which scaffolds student learning by contextualizing units, weeks, and daily lessons within the course's larger objectives and final projects. I also use teaching methods such as Tier 1 Restorative Justice Circles, skill-based instruction, relationship-based positive reinforcement, student knowledge gathering and collaboration, call and response, large and small group discussions, one on one tutoring, socratic method, guided work time that often replaces homework, and a quality and effort-based grading policy that takes each individual student's learning style and academic journey into account. Furthermore, in accordance with a principle from Black Feminist Thought, my mindset is to always center students in the margins as when those in the margins do well, we all do well. Specifically, I center youth from communities that are queer and transgender, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and targets of the carceral system.

Lastly, I determine my success as a teacher with direct testimonials from students. In my last few weeks at PiM Arts High School in Jan. 2024, students shared that "The way you teach stuff, you make it make so much sense"; "Thank you for believing in me"; "You are pretty much the only teacher who has actually put this

much effort into my success. thank you for making me not hate english as much as normal"; and "Thank you for being a safe space and kind person to be around. You make me feel loved in a way other teachers can't compare to. Stay lit!" I honor my students by regrounding myself in their testimonies when I feel lost or that I have gone astray, and holding myself accountable to the principles of Black Radical Tradition and culturally responsive teaching.