About This Lesson

Observe the world through Pedro's lens, a blind, undocumented immigrant, studying to become a social worker. Pedro's story provides a glimpse into the complex reality of being an immigrant and having a disability while navigating school, social services with the desire to support others. Pedro's journey teaches the audience the power of resilience, healing and self-worth as Pedro fights to live a life that is fulfilling and protected, while having limited access and opportunities.

Teaching Tips |
Pedro's Lens and the Struggle to Give Back to the U.S.

Essential Question

- Access to federal social services, employment and higher education is limited for people with disabilities and immigrants. What are some ways to support people with disabilities and immigrants in the absence of structural, or state, support?

Supporting Questions

- Given that the US denies or limits social services to non-citizens, how do non-citizens with illnesses or disabilities receive care or support when needed?
- What similarities are there between being undocumented, having a disability, and being thought of as different?
- What are some reasons that people with disabilities, undocumented immigrants, or queer people may be excluded or overlooked from policies, communities or government structures?
- In what ways have immigrant, queer, and disability communities implemented mutual aid, or care webs, to support one another amidst day-to-day challenges?
- In what ways might the community-rooted practices of care webs inform how state-funded support services meet the needs of their communities?

Historical Thinking Skills

This resource provides students with the opportunity to practice the following historical thinking skills:

- Analyzing Multiple Perspectives
- Interpreting Cause and Effect
- Understanding Diversity of Historical Experience
- Developing Civic Understanding and Engagement

Use the following before, while, and after viewing suggestions for engaging students with this resource and with activities related to this topic.

Lesson Plan Clips

1. Life is Not Over
Timestamp: 11:30-14:53, Runtime: 3min 23 sec

Despite the hidden experience of people with disabilities within the undocumented narrative, Pedro shares the amount of guidance he's received to pursue his education. After failed attempts to find support for vision loss, Pedro encounters an eye doctor that helps him develop skills to live with his disability and learns that life is not over.

2. It's Complicated
Timestamp: Around 31:27-34:26, Runtime: 2 min, 59 sec

While Pedro's mother cooks dinner, she discusses with Pedro the complexities of being an immigrant in the U.S. Pedro's mother highlights the loss of leaving a country and the opportunities available as an immigrant. Pedro challenges her perspective of the 'grateful immigrant' and reminds her that the U.S. government has not helped his experience, but rather individual people.

3. A Helping Hand
Timestamp: 34:55-40:50, Runtime: 6 min, 05 sec
With the support of his professor, Pedro receives a scholarship from the Mexican Consulate to continue with school. Pedro expresses appreciation to his parents and cries with overwhelming gratitude. His father asks that he extend support and a helping hand to others in need, just as he received. His mother reminds him that he is protected. Set and Pedro discuss the guilt and sense of unworthiness that may come from receiving support.

4. The Weight of Depression and Loss
Timestamp: 48:55-55:00, Runtime: 6 min, 05 sec

Pedro's grandmother passed away and he experienced a deep depression after her loss. Pedro turned to running and cycling as a support outlet to stay grounded, focused and to continue moving forward. Set and Pedro discuss the suffocating feeling that comes from being undocumented and thinking about their future. Even though Pedro has a degree and is licensed to practice social work, he cannot work and is stuck in limbo.

5. Love with a Disability
Timestamp: 1:06:44-1:09:42, Runtime: 2min, 58 sec
Flags of profanity at 1:08:39 (the word shit)

Pedro spends time with a friend and speaks about the challenges that come with having a disability and being in a relationship. Pedro comes to understand that his blockage to be in a relationship is internal and part of his own demons and healing process. Pedro expresses that everyone is capable of having a healthy relationship, regardless of having a disability.

6. A Chain of Support
Timestamp: 1:11:33-1:17:50, Runtime: 6 min, 17 sec

A full circle moment comes for Pedro as he is now in a position where he can help others, just as others helped him. Pedro is reminded that his life has value and he is making a difference. In a classroom setting, Pedro teaches the power of resilience and optimism to heal from the trauma of being undocumented. Pedro takes pride and ownership of his responsibility to help others and continue the chain of support.

Before Viewing

1. Invite students to quiet their mind and prepare to imagine. Ask students to list five things they would **not** be able to do if they did not have a social security number.
2. Discuss how people can be denied access to an education, employment, social services, healthcare and voting without a social security number.
3. Ask students to imagine that in addition to being an undocumented immigrant, they also have a disability. Ask students to list five things they would need daily support with, if they had a disability.
4. Discuss how accommodations are not always available for people with disabilities in their daily living, in addition to having limited access to social services, employment and transportation.
5. Who is automatically given the right to have access, be protected and cared for in the U.S.? And why?

While Viewing

Have students watch and listen carefully for key points in the video that help answer questions you pose. If you wish, you can ask students to take notes as they watch. They may watch the video more than once and read the transcript, as needed.

1. What are some of the challenges that Pedro faces as an undocumented immigrant with a disability?
2. There are limited places that offer Pedro support as a blind person. Why do you think services and support is limited for people with a disability? What kind of support would be helpful and meaningful for Pedro?
3. As an undocumented person, Pedro struggles to use his degree and find work after he graduates. What are some of the challenges that undocumented immigrants face when seeking work after earning their degree?
4. What can we learn from Pedro's story about the importance of helping others and fighting for your life?

After Viewing

Review responses to the While Viewing questions above. Then follow up with questions below and discuss as a class.

1. Share the following definitions of "care webs" with students.
    a. Care Webs are an approach to disability through a lens of collective care

b. Care Webs do not rely on paid work, institutional support, government programs, or family supports
c. Collective Care understands that supporting one another can be joyful and that supporting a disabled person is part of being in community with them, rather than an obligation
d. Care Webs often involve multiple people with disabilities mutually showing up for and supporting one another
e. Care Webs are ways to connect to community and call-in reliable support (for daily tasks, washing, bathing, errands, etc.) in a structured way. Often care webs rely on a phone tree, social media group, or text thread to ask for support.
f. Care webs find strength within the community of those who participate and across different disabilities (ex. A wheelchair user may have experience issues to access whereas someone who didn't have mobility challenges can access those spaces as a form of support).

2. Have a discussion about care webs. Why might care webs be necessary? In what ways are care webs useful?
3. Separate students into teams and invite them to use their imagination.
4. Use the following questions to create a Care Web for an undocumented immigrant family, for a person with a disability, or a community member that needs support.

Questions to Ask Yourself as you Start a Care Web

- What is the goal of your care web? Who needs care? What kind?
- Who's in it? What are their roles: caregiver, care receiver, both, admin person, fundraiser?
- How are you resisting the charity model in your work?
- What are best practices that allow the people receiving care to receive care well?
- What are best practices that allow the people offering care to offer care well?
- What physical tools (A van? Scent-free cleanser? A car? A smartphone?) do you need to make the access work? What money or other resources do you need to make it happen?
- How will you celebrate and make it fun?
- How will you build in time off and times when people are sick and you need a plan B?
- What meeting structure do you need to check in, talk through issues, and keep things on track?
- Are you building in ways for disabled folks to offer care, instead of assuming that only able-bodied people are the "care-ers"?
- What's your plan for dealing with conflict when it happens?
- How are you going to document your work? Do you need a place to keep receipts, a log of who does what hours?
- Do you have a plan for checking in and making sure funky dynamics aren't creeping into your care?

Taking It Further

1. Ask students to research what services are available to people with disabilities in their city, county and state. How would their life be different if they had to rely on the social services available to support their daily lives?
    a. Ask students to further analyze if they would qualify for the services available as an undocumented immigrant. How would their life be different if they could or could not access those services?
2. Ask students to make a list of organizations and programs that support people with disabilities and support undocumented and immigrant people.
    a. If none exist, consider creating one to start a chain of support.

Discussion Questions | Pedro's Lens and the Struggle to Give Back to the U.S.

1. Facing 'ugly' things can bring humans closer to intimacy and caring for each other. What are some 'ugly things' the U.S. can face to better care for people with disabilities and undocumented immigrants?
2. What similarities and connections are there between your life challenges and Pedro's experience?
3. In what ways does Pedro's story and existence teach us to learn from and honor the lives of undocumented immigrants and people with disabilities?

More About this Resource

About the Author:
As a social justice advocate, queer and transgender immigrant, Héctor Trinidad Plascencia (they/them, we/us) learned to use storytelling as a pathway towards interpersonal and political transformation. As Executive Director of Plascencia Consulting, Héctor Trinidad created the Social Justice Action model to guide change-makers towards collective liberation--fighting within, without and against systems of oppression and dominance. Héctor Trinidad applies the Social Justice Action model to advocate for transgender, queer and immigrant people from community to capitol.

Sensitive: This resource contains material that may be sensitive for some students. Teachers should exercise discretion in evaluating whether this resource is suitable for their class.