Kalonji L.K. Nzinga, Ph.D.

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EDUCATION

2018 Ph.D., Learning Sciences. Northwestern University, Evanston, IL
- Dissertation: The social conscience of rap: What young people learn from hip-hop about everyday ethics (Committee: Douglas Medin, Carol Lee, Eva Lam, and Shirin Vossoughi)

2006 B.A., Human Biology, Stanford University, Stanford, CA

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Cultural Psychology of Learning
Culturally-Legitimate Education
Hip-Hop & Music Arts Education
Socialization of Values & Ethics
Wellness & Community Healing
Race, SES & Learning

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

2020 - Faculty Director, RAP Lab: Laboratory of Ritual Arts & Pedagogy

2019 - Assistant Professor of Learning Sciences & Human Development, School of Education, University of Colorado Boulder

AWARDS

2025 Chancellor's End Zone Innovator Award. University of Colorado Boulder. Chancellor's award recognizing faculty excellence and innovation.

2025 Provost's Faculty Achievement Award. University of Colorado Boulder. Award honoring junior faculty for outstanding publication (*Why Errybody Sayin 'No New Friends'?: The Proverbs of Rap and Why Young People Recite Them*; published in Cognition & Instruction)

2025 CAAAS Faculty Fellowship. Center for African & African American Studies.

2022 Alan C Purves Award for articles with the most significant impact on educational practice. Honorable Mention. *Research in the Teaching of English*.

2017 Charlotte Newcombe Dissertation Fellowship in Religion & Ethics, Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation

PUBLICATIONS

Refereed Journal Articles

2019-present

2024 Nzinga, K., & Meixi. A river with many sources: The third world origins of our theories of learning. *Review of Research in Education, 47*(1), 474–535.

2024 Nzinga, K. Cultural resonances: Between the natural frequencies of hip-hop & the sociopolitical development of youth artivists in Palestine. *Mind, Culture, and Activity,* 31(2), 178-197.

2023 Nzinga, K. Lyrical (Re)citation: Remembering, recycling, and revoicing bars from the rap canon. *Global Hip-Hop Studies, 3*(1), 145–164.

2023 Nzinga, K. Why errybody sayin 'no new friends'?: The proverbs of rap and why young people recite them. *Cognition & Instruction*, *42*(1), 1–25.

2021 Vossoughi, S., Nzinga, K., Berry, A., Irvine, F., Mayorga, C., & Gashaw, M. (2021). Writing as a social act: The feedback relation as a context for political and ethical becoming. *Research in the Teaching of English, 56*(2), 200-222.

Pre-2019

2018 Nzinga, K., & Medin, D. (2018). The moral priorities of rap listeners. *Journal of Cognition & Culture, 18*(3-4), 312-342.

2018 Nzinga, K., Rapp, D., Leatherwood, C., Easterday, M., Rogers, L., Gallagher, N., Medin, D. (2018). Should social scientists be distanced from or engaged with the people they study?. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 115*(45), 11435-11441.

2018 Liu, R., Stamper, J., Davenport, J., Crossley, S., McNamara, D., Nzinga, K., Sherin, B. (2018). Learning linkages: Integrating data streams of multiple modalities and timescales. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 34*(5), 1-11.

Book Chapters

2022 Nzinga, K. (2022). Axiology in learning design: Centering value pluralism in our study of learning environments. *Learning Sciences in Conversation*. New York: Routledge.

Book Reviews

2020 Nzinga, K. (2020). Exploring Fanon's psychopolitical project as a theory of learning. Book Review of "Fanon, education, action: child as method," by Erica Burman. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 27(2), 201–205.

Published Conference Papers

2020 Marin, A., Halle-Erby, K., Bang, M., McDaid-Morgan, N., Guerra, M., Nzinga, K., *, M., Elliott-Groves, E., & Booker, A. (2020). The Power of Storytelling and Storylistening for Human Learning and Becoming. In Gresalfi, M. and Horn, I. S. (Eds.), The Interdisciplinarity of the Learning Sciences, 14th International Conference of the Learning Sciences (ICLS) 2020, Volume 4 (pp. 2199-2206). Nashville, Tennessee: International Society of the Learning Sciences.

2020 Vossoughi, S., Bang, M., McDaid-Morgan, N., Hooper, P., Berry, A., Papak, A., Booker, A., Collins, C., Marin, A., Halle-Erby, K., Agarwal, P., *, M., Cortez, A., Nzinga, K., Tayne, K., & Davis, N. (2020). Deepening Perceptions of Learning: Studying and Designing Ethical Practice With Researchers, Teachers and Learners. In Gresalfi, M. and Horn, I. S. (Eds.), The Interdisciplinarity of the Learning Sciences, 14th International Conference of the Learning Sciences (ICLS) 2020, Volume 1 (pp. 430-437). Nashville, Tennessee: International Society of the Learning Sciences.

2022 Meixi, Marin, A., Nzinga, K., Palomar, M., Elliott, E., Elliott, S., Shield, A. E., Scott, M., Shaw, M. S., Zuniga-Ruiz, S., & Booker, A. (2022). Storytelling and storylistening towards collective learning and relational becoming. In Chinn, C., Tan, E., Chan, C., & Kali, Y. (Eds.), Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of the Learning Sciences - ICLS 2022 (pp. 1707-1714). International Society of the Learning Sciences.

2024 Shaw, M. S., Thakurta, A., Nzinga, K., Palomar, M., O'Neal, S., Williams, A., Blake, A. R., Morales, M., James-Harris, T., Perez, M., Greenberg, D., Barton, A. C., Brown, A., & Jones, S. T. (2024). Re-Mapping Possibilities for Educational Justice through Arts-Based Research Methods: A Cross-Field Poster Session. In Lindgren, R., Asino, T. I., Kyza, E. A., Looi, C. K., Keifert, D. T., & Suárez, E. (Eds.), Proceedings of the 18th International Conference of the Learning Sciences - ICLS 2024 (pp. 2005-2012). International Society of the Learning Sciences.

Manuscripts in Progress

2026 Nzinga, K., Palomar, M.*, O'Neal, S., Cariño, C., Trujillo, K*. They say our critical thinking is criminal thinking: Fugitive wellness within hip-hop learning sanctuaries: **Under Review**.

CREATIVE WORK

Recorded Music

2025 *Leap*. EP. Available on all streaming platforms.

2025 *Hand of Benediction*. EP. Available on all streaming platforms

2023 *Hotep Type Beat*. Solidarity Studios. Full Length LP. Available on all streaming platforms. (External Link)

2022 *Family Separation*. (Spring 2022). Laboratory of Ritual Arts & Pedagogy. Full Length LP.

Performances

2025 *Takin' Up Space II*. RAP Lab. Audiovisual Music Performance with Accompanying Film and AI Generated Art Projected on Panoramic Dome. Sam Lewis (Drums) Jordan Henderson (Bass). Jeremy Mays (Keys). Fiske Planetarium, Boulder, CO.

2025 *If ya soul loves the sun*. Live performance. Mike Wird (Curator), Sam Lewis (Drums) Jordan Henderson (Bass). Jeremy Mays (Keys). Junkyard Social Club, Boulder, CO.

2024 *Sessions Presents Dr. Kalonji.* Gypsy Lab Sessions. Videorecorded Live Performance. Featuring Burroughs (Keys), Jadon Cowell (Bass), and Sam Lewis (Drums) Gypsy House Café, Denver, CO. (External Link)

2024 *Takin' Up Space*. RAP Lab. Audiovisual Music Performance with Accompanying Film and AI Generated Art Projected on Panoramic Dome. Fiske Planetarium, Boulder, CO.

2023 Colorado Black Arts Festival: Joda Village Stage. Performance of Songs from *Hotep Type Beat*. Curator: Donna Mejia. Invited Performance, June 2023.

2022 Shishas & Serenades Artist Showcase. Invited Artist (Aurora, CO), February 2022.

2022 *Pulsing Xquis*. ATLAS Black Box Experimental Studio, CU Boulder. Invited Presenter/ Performer, December 2022.

2021 *Keeping Language Arts on the Low: A Low-Key Rap Verse*. CU Boulder School of Education, Ed Talk. Invited lecture, May 2021. (External Link)

Digital Art

2025 *Guru*. Generative AI Music Visualizer for song recording.

2025 *Leap*. Generative AI Music Visualizer for song recording.

2025 *Hand of Benediction*. Generative AI Music Visualizer for song recording.

SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS & CONFERENCE CONTRIBUTIONS

Refereed Conference Papers & Presentations

2025 Nzinga, K. (June, 2025) *Transformation or transformative-regeneration a healing through soundscape storytelling*. Hip-Hop Ed Conference. (New York, NY). Interactive Workshop.

2025 Nzinga, K. (2025, April*). The RAP Lab: Building Sociotechnical Infrastructures in Community Based Partnership*. American Education Research Association. (Denver, CO). Site Visit. ABC Community Hub at Paris Elementary School Site Visit. (Ed.) Janiece Mackey.

2025 Meixi, Nzinga, K., Caretto, G., Kufeyani, S., Schwedhelm, M., Mujic, E., Mukurazita, E., Wei, Y., Yu, Xun., Takayama, K. (2025, March) *Origin Theories of Learning: Recentering Indigenous*

Strategies of Learning and Life in Comparative and International Education. Comparative and International Education Society. (Chicago, IL). Symposium.

2024 Palomar, M.*, Nzinga, K., O'Neal, S., Williams, A. (2024, April). *Embracing everyday fugitive wellness: Knowledge and transformation in hip-hop learning sanctuaries.* American Educational Research Association. (Philadelphia, PA). Paper Presentation.

2023 Nzinga, K., Palomar, M*. (2023, June). *They say our critical thinking is criminal thinking: Fugitive wellness within hip-hop learning sanctuaries.* International Society of Learning Sciences. (Montreal, Canada). Full Research Paper.

2023 Nzinga, K., O'Neal, S.*, Palomar, M.*, Williams, A.*, Maali, I., Almeida, C., Cariño, C. (2023, April). *A Tour of Solidarity Studios: Underground hip-hop recording studios as sites of youth knowledge production.* American Education Research Association. (Chicago, IL). Off-site Visit.

2023 Nzinga, K., O'Neal, S., Palomar, M.*, Williams, A.*, Cariño, C. (2023, April) *Hip-hop encrypted storytelling within the social protests of high school youth.* American Education Research Association. (Chicago, IL). Paper Presentation.

2023 Nzinga, K., O'Neal, S.*, Palomar, M.*, Williams, A.*, Cariño, C., Lopez, E., Jones, A.*, Zuniga-Ruiz, S*. (2023, April*). Encrypted storytelling in fugitive learning spaces: Disseminating educational research when your pedagogy is secret.* American Education Research Association. (Chicago, IL). Symposium.

2022 Nzinga, K., Palomar, M*. (2022, June). *Wellness Belongs to Us: Reimagining intergenerational knowledge and embodied wisdom through Hip-Hop arts storytelling.* International Society of the Learning Sciences "Storytelling and Storylistening Towards Collective Learning and Relational Becoming" Virtual Session.

2022 Nzinga, K., Palomar, M.*, Williams, A., O'Neal, S*. (2022, April). *Ontology as Knowledge, Culture as Transmission: Assessing Knowledge of Wellness Praxis Within A Hip-Hop Storytelling Intervention.* Presentation at AERA "Spit What You Know"--Critical Notions of Knowing, Showing, and Educational Assessment through Hip Hop", In person (San Diego, CA)

2022 Nzinga, K., Vossoughi, S., Berry, A. (2022, April). *Reimagining the Feedback Relation: Humanizing Student-Teacher and Research Participant-Researcher Feedback Cycles.* AERA Session. Examining Intergenerational Cultures of Collaboration, Resistance, and Social Dreaming in Multimedia Learning Environments. Co-Panelists: Jennifer Higgs, Kris Gutierrez, Arturo Cortez, Sepehr Vakil, Nicole Mirra, Antero Garcia.

2022 American Educational Research Association (2022, April). *Where they see subjects we see theorists: Re-centering our intellectual ancestors & relatives in the canon.* Preconference Session Moderator. Distinguished Panelists: Michael Cole, Carol Lee, Fernanda Liberali, Meixi, Angela Booker, Megan Bang (San Diego, CA)

2021 American Educational Research Association. *Calling Out Fixed Systems through Hip-Hop and Scientific Argumentation.* presentation within symposium: Learning from Learners' Voices: Resistance and Transformative Activism through Liberatory Education, April 2021. Co-authored with Lisette Lopez.

2020 European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction. *It's Rigged!: The Disruption*

that Reverberates When Youth Vocalize That the System is Fixed. presentation within Learners' Voice symposium, July 2021. Co-authored with Lisette Lopez.

2020 International Conference of the Learning Sciences. *Imagining socio-political and ethical horizons of the Learning Sciences* (symposium). Invited Panelist, June 2020. (Distinguished Co-Panelists included Drs. Na'ilah Nasir, Kris Gutierrez, Jennifer Vadeboncoeur, and Pratim Sengupta)

2020 International Conference of the Learning Sciences. *The Power of Storytelling and Storylistening for Human Learning and Becoming, paper presentation*, June 2020. Co-authored with: Marin, A., Halle-Erby, K., Bang, M., McDaid-Morgan, N. and Guerra, M.

2020 International Conference of the Learning Sciences. *Deepening perceptions of learning: Studying and designing ethical practice with researchers, teachers, and learners*. June 2020. Co-authored with: Vossoughi, S., Bang, M., McDaid-Morgan, N., Hooper, P., Berry, A., Papak, A., Booker, A., Collins, C., Marin, A., Halle-Erby, K., Agarwal, P., Cortez, A., Nzinga, K., Tayne, K., & Davis, N.

2019 Association for Moral Education, *Words of Woke-dom: The Moral Discourse of Hip-Hop Engaged Youth on Twitter*, paper presentation, November.

2019 Association for Moral Education, Nzinga, K., Vossoughi, S., & Berry, A. *The Ethics of Crafting Writing Feedback for First Generation-Low Income College Students*, paper presentation, November.

2019 American Educational Research Association, *Writing as the Practice of Freedom: How Feedback Supports the Development of Creative Scholarly Writers*, symposium presentation, April.

2017 Association for Moral Education, *What's Good in the Hood?: How Hip-Hop Culture's Ethics Evolved from the Streets*, symposium presentation, November.

2017 Jean Piaget Society, *What Young People Learn From Rap Music About Everyday Ethics*, paper presentation, June.

2016 Association for Moral Education, *Common Schools, (Un)Common Values: Which Version of Tolerance Will Be Taught in American Schools?*, symposium presentation, December.

2016 Society for Applied Anthropology, *The Flow of Moral Perspectives from Rap Lyrics to the Everyday Discourse of Rap Listeners*, symposium presentation, March.

2016 Society for Cross Cultural Research, *Moral foundations of Hip-Hop Culture: Exploring the flow of Moral Perspectives from Rap Lyrics to the Everyday Discourse of Rap Listeners*, symposium presentation, February.

2015 Social Policy And Research on Cognition and Mathematical Education Conference, research poster, *Reciting, Remixing, and Responding: Hip-Hop Listeners Appropriate Value Laden Discourses From Rap Lyrics*, May.

2015 American Educational Research Association, Annual Conference, *Dropping Knowledge: Exploring How Hip-Hop Enthusiasts Revoice Rap Proverbs*, symposium paper, March.

Invited Presentations & Panels

2026 Inner Circle Nxt Gen Convening. *Speech is a fruit.* Invited Presentation/Performance. Denver, CO. January, 2026.

2026 Chautauqua Community House Series. *Ethics in the Age of AI: An Interactive Panel Discussion.* Invited Speaker. Boulder, CO. January, 2026.

2025 YAASPA Fireside Chat. *Sinners Decoded.* Invited Presentation. Organized by YAASPA & the RAP Lab. Aurora, CO. October, 2025.

2025 Solidarity Studios 10 Year Anniversary. Invited Presentation/Performance, Chicago, IL. September, 2025.

2023 Denver Museum of Contemporary Art, Mixed Taste Summer Lecture Series. *Lyrical (Re)citation: Black vessels, possessed by the verses of OG's.* Invited Presentation/Performance, July 2023.

2023 Center for African & African-American Studies Grand Opening. *RAP Lab Student Hip-Hop Demonstration*. Invited Presentation, February 2023.

2023 National Society of Black Engineers CU Boulder Chapter Power Hour. *Sampling Interactive Digital Audio Workstation Demonstration.* Invited Speaker, February 2023.

2022 Reneé Crown Wellness Center. *Utilizing Podcasting Sociotechnical Systems for Educational Research and Design.* Invited Workshop Presenter, December 2022.

2022 Edmund Gordon Virtual Conference. *Resisting Displacement Through Hip-Hop Pedagogy*. Invited Speaker, UCLA CRESST. November 2022.

2022 Reneé Crown Wellness Center Grand Opening. *Remixing Healing Through Hip-Hop Storytelling.* Invited Facilitator, October 2022.

2022 Art Meets Data Lecture. *The Rhythm & Flow of Theory: Hip-Hop Storytelling as Fugitive Research Method.* Curated by Stephanie Toliver. Invited Speaker, October 2022.

2022 University of Minnesota Guest Lecturer. Course: Culture, Learning and Human Development. *Keeping language arts on the low.* Invited Speaker, April 2022.

2022 Grounded Knowledge Panel, *The Arts as Resistance, Relationship, and Restoration.* Invited Speaker, February 2022.

2022 National Society of Black Engineers CU Boulder Chapter Power Hour. *What's the difference between a language and a dialect?* Invited Speaker, February 2022.

2022 Northwestern University Guest Lecturer. Course: Race & Education. *Why isn't hip-hop taught in school?* Invited Speaker, January 2022.

2022 Virtual Voices. *Honoring the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Importance of Solidarity*. Invited Speaker, Denver Metro Chamber Leadership Foundation. January 2022.

2021 Crown Institute Wellness Workshops. *Hip-Hop Arts as Means to Cultivate Wellness Praxis.* Invited Lecture 4-part Workshop Series. October-December 2021.

2021 Faith in Place Eco-Ambassador Commencement. *Hip-Hop and Youth Environmental Justice Movements*. Invited Lecture. June 2021.

2021 University of Colorado Upward Bound Program. *Relationships between engagement and cultural legitimacy.* Invited Workshop, June 2021.

2021 CU Boulder American Music Research Center Colloquium: *At The Crossroads of Hip-Hop and Education: Reimagining the Corner as Classroom. Moderator*, March 2021. (Panelists: Dr. Bettina Love, Jidenna, Stephen Brackett)

2021 CU Boulder RAP Lab & American Music Research Center. *Hip-Hop in Times of Pandemic and Protest.* Organizer of Panel Series, March 2021.

2020 CU Boulder Office of Academic and Learning Innovation Seminar on Health, Society, and Wellness in COVID-19 Times. *We Can't Breathe: Prefigurative Artivism as a Means of Returning to our Breath*. invited lecture, August 2020.

2020 University of Colorado Pre-College Outreach and Engagement. *The Ethics and Politics of Writing Feedback for First-Generation College Students*. Invited Lecture, June 2020

2020 International Conference of the Learning Sciences. *Imagining socio-political and ethical horizons of the Learning Sciences*. invited talk, June 2020. (Distinguished Panelists: Drs. Na'ilah Nasir, Kris Gutierrez, Jennifer Vadeboncoeur, Miwa Takeuchi, Ananda Marin and Pratim Sengupta)

2018 University of Ghana, Department of Performance Studies, *Only Dead Things are Preserved: Sustaining Culture by Recording, Upholding, and Sampling Traditional Music*, Digital Audio Preservation Workshop. Accra, Ghana. July.

GRANTS

2024-*Present* Design Based Research Partnership Contract with Denver Public Schools. *Partnership with two DPS high schools to design and research learning environments built upon the sociotechnical infrastructure of the hip-hop studio.* Principal Investigator. ($90,000)

2025 Public & Community Engaged Scholarship Outreach Award. The RAP Lab: Hip-Hop Arts Programming with Denver High School Youth of Color. Principle Investigator. (Co-PI Shawn O'Neal). ($24,000)

2023 CU Boulder Outreach Awards. The RAP Lab: Hip-Hop Arts Programming with Denver High School Youth of Color. Principle Investigator. (Co-PI Shawn O'Neal). ($24,000)

2022 School of Education Place-Based Seed Grant. Manual High School Youth Build a Hip-Hop Studio as a Culturally-Legitimate STEAM Learning Task ($22,000)

2021 Renée Crown Wellness Institute Strategic Growth Grant. Lyripeutics Storytelling Project. Principal Investigator ($119,736)

2021 Women in the School of Education (WISE) Grant. Elevating Youth Voice Through Digital Audio Storytelling. Principal Investigator (Co-PI Enrique Lopez). ($10,000)

2020 Renée Crown Wellness Institute Seed Grant. Lyripeutics Storytelling Project. Principal Investigator. ($40,000)

2020 CU Boulder Outreach Awards. Lyripeutics Storytelling Project. Principal Investigator. ($24,000)

SERVICE

2023-	Executive Committee, Center for African and African-American Studies
2023-	Invited Participant, Working Group on Historicizing Methods, Spencer Foundation
2022-2024	Reviewer, Spencer Foundation Small Grants Program
2021-	Faculty Fellow, Renee Crown Wellness Center
2020-2022	Secretary, AERA Cultural Historical SIG
2019-	Reviewer for multiple journals, including: *Mind, Culture, & Activity; Cogition & Instruction; English Teaching: Practice and Critique; Journal of the Learning Sciences*
2019-2020	Curriculum Committee, CU Boulder School of Education
2018	Invited Participant, Working Group on Re-Generating Cultural Historical Activity Theory, Spencer Foundation

TEACHING

Undergraduate Courses

Adolescent Development (EDUC 4112)

Graduate Courses

Psychological Foundations of Education (EDUC 6318)

Human Development in Cultural, Historical & Sociopolitical Context (EDUC 8348)

Seminar in Human Development: The Human Development of Ethical Values (EDUC 8358)