

TEACHING TOLERANCE

ISSUE 65 | FALL 2020
TOLERANCE.ORG

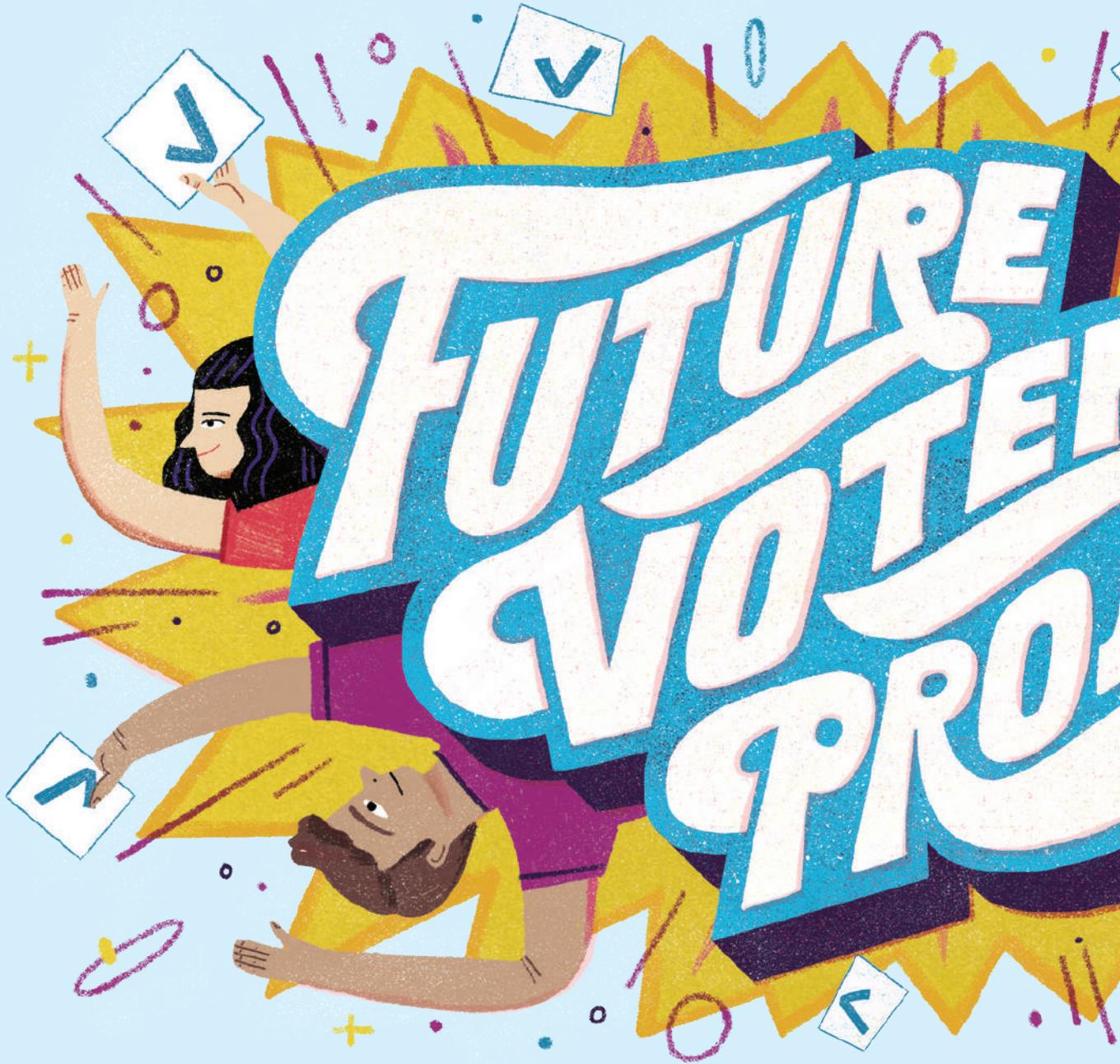
Democracy in Action

The right to vote. The right to an education. The right to life and liberation. Students and educators are at the forefront of these fights—and they always have been.



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ACHING TOLERANCE



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hing the 2020 election.

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- TT's Student Text Library, with classroom-ready texts for you to read and explore with students.
- A new voter suppression lesson bank with TT-recommended resources and lesson plans for teaching about voting by mail, voter ID laws, the history of voting rights and more.

Resources for Teaching the 2020 Election

- "Teach This" discussion guides to help you lead conversations with students about current events as they unfold during this unprecedented election season.
- PD resources with recommendations for managing partisanship, supporting student dialogue and remaining nonpartisan—without remaining silent about what matters.



TEACHING TOLERANCE

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on the cover

Educators, students and our communities play critical roles in determining the future of our diverse democracy—and the moment to embrace that is now.

ILLUSTRATION BY KRISTEN URODA



LISTEN TO THIS! ▶
Sounds Like Hate is a new podcast from the Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Project that explores hate and how to fight it—including hate in schools.
soundslikehate.org



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We're proud to introduce the extraordinary recipients of the 2020 Teaching Tolerance Award for Excellence in Teaching.



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TEACHING TOLERANCE

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THE MISSION OF TEACHING TOLERANCE IS TO HELP TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS EDUCATE CHILDREN AND YOUTH TO BE ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN A DIVERSE DEMOCRACY.



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Perspectives

“The truth is that we have to work together to save ourselves politically, save ourselves spiritually and save ourselves physically.”

— THE REVEREND C.T. VIVIAN



MOST DAYS I SAY I'M OK. The truth is I'm now struggling to do my work from home—even as I recognize the extreme privilege of doing so—while I support my fourth grader in her virtual schoolwork. I'm concerned about the health of my parents and grandparents, whom I haven't seen all year. The quality of my sleep has been all over the map. And the news cycle is a dumpster fire.

As Dr. Neal A. Lester wrote for Teaching Tolerance this summer, “I am not OK, and I am not alone in not being OK.”

I know you're not OK when you've been forced to return to a school building while fearing for your safety and that of your family, your students, your colleagues and all their families. I know you're not OK when you have to figure out how to get work done and help your own children with their virtual assignments—or worry about them while you go off to work and send them to school or daycare. I know you're not OK when you've made the gut-wrenching decision to resign for one of these reasons and more.

In 2020, I think most of us are struggling to say we're OK when COVID-19 continues to tear through our nation, disproportionately ravaging BIPOC communities. So many of us struggle to say we're OK when police continue to senselessly kill unarmed Black people—and when our relatives or coworkers refuse to utter something that should go without saying: Black Lives Matter.

It's hard to be OK when, in a physical or virtual school setting, white educators don't recognize that the racist confrontations that make videos go viral each week play out against Black students every day. As TT Staff

Writer Coshandra Dillard writes in “The Weaponization of Whiteness in Schools,” that pattern, which starts with entitlement and ends with fragility, is commonplace and takes the entire school community to end.

It's hard to be OK when, as a young person, you realize that people in positions of power deliberately put barriers in place to keep you from voting, especially if you're Black or Latinx. Yet, as School-based Programs and Grants Manager Jey Ehrenhalt writes in “Uplifting the Student Vote,” educators can play an important role in fighting this status quo.

Part of that work must involve teaching an accurate history of our civil rights struggles, including organizations and people who have fought injustice. In “We Still Haven't Learned From This,” TT Senior Writer Cory Collins details the work of educators introducing the undertaught history of Japanese American incarceration and the stories of those who pushed for justice. And in this issue's excerpt of *Understanding and Teaching the Civil Rights Movement*, journalist, educator and former SNCC organizer Charles E. Cobb Jr. explains what an accurate

history of our civil rights struggles, specifically voting rights, might entail. Our Future Voters Project can help you with this work, too.

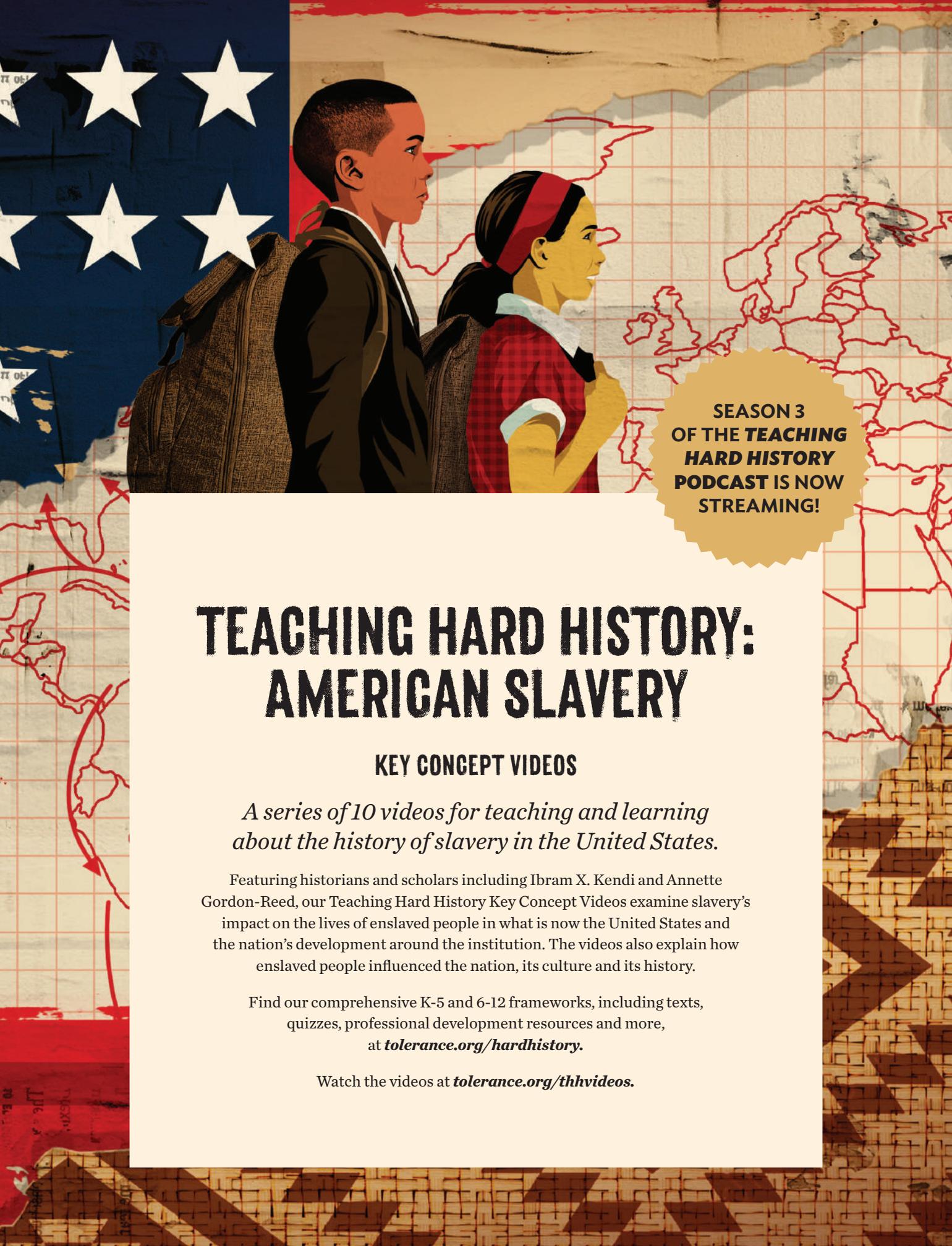
People all over are working to flip one unjust status quo after another, and we at TT are heartened by this work. As Collins writes in “School as Sanctuary,” schools and districts around the nation are working to ensure that they remain safe spaces for undocumented students. This feature explains how your school and district can do the same.

We're encouraged by the work of educators like Tiffany Jewell, author of *This Book Is Anti-Racist*, who graciously shared with us the inspiration behind this book for young people and her hope that every school commits to anti-racism.

And we're inspired by the five winners of our 2020 Award for Excellence in Teaching, who are using their classrooms to teach the significance of loving oneself, being in community and speaking up against injustice. TT Editorial Assistant Anya Malley explains how they're doing this creative and critical work from elementary through high school and from English class to chemistry class.

I think we can say collectively that we're not OK. Our nation and our world are not OK. But so many of us are working on it. TT is here to support you in the work of righting persistent wrongs and backing your students as they do the same. As you read this issue, I hope you feel that support and are moved to take action in your community.

—Monita K. Bell,
TT Managing Editor



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Watch the videos at tolerance.org/thhvideos.

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ILLUSTRATION BY KEITH NEGLEY

Reader Reactions

In our Spring 2020 issue, Stephanie P. Jones, Ph.D., wrote about the racial trauma of curriculum violence—and how to avoid it. To read “Ending Curriculum Violence,” visit t-t.site/curriculum-violence.

The article in the Spring 2020 issue of [*Teaching Tolerance*] about Curriculum Violence sums up so much of what I’ve been trying to focus on this year. Education about curriculum violence and how to avoid it should be a requirement of every teacher education program in the nation.

—@MSBRAXTONTWEETS
VIA TWITTER

THIS is why I advocate for culturally proficient instruction. I know what “curriculum violence” feels like. For moments in my childhood, I was a recipient of it. Be the change.

—@KENDRACASTELOW
VIA TWITTER

Teaching Tolerance depends on your support and critical feedback to improve our work. We love hearing from you! Please let us know what you think by emailing editor@tolerance.org or reaching out via Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Thank you, [*Teaching Tolerance*], for providing valued resources day in & day out, even in times of greatest challenge. Pls know we are thinking about YOUR well-being as well & sending big love your way.

—@SBSDHEALTHY
VIA TWITTER

Thank you for posting this. As the days/weeks pass by, we need to consider our students and their families (& teachers/staff), the trauma they face alongside T & L.

—@RACHELEABEL
VIA TWITTER

Teachers & librarians who noticed & are concerned about the rise of anti-Asian racism & xenophobia: [*Let’s Talk!*] is a great resource for talking about race & racism in the classroom. It’s worth reading & preparing for when we return.

—@ANNAKIMI
VIA TWITTER

THE TROUBLE WITH TOLERANCE

Please rethink using the word “tolerance.” Do you realize that it implies tolerating the other? It implies that the other is lesser than you? In its use you are

saying we must TOLERATE the differences in others like we tolerate a troubled child or like we tolerate a troublesome aunt who has a different perspective. ... PLEASE change the word “tolerance” to a more positive (and not offensive, especially to POC) word like RESPECT or APPRECIATION. ...

—NOL K
MARTÍN-TUNGPALAN
VIA DIRECT MESSAGE ON TWITTER

Editor’s note: We appreciate the critiques of our name and want to be clear that our staff agrees that “tolerance”



Educators who are white must dig in beyond simply examining the interactions with students. We also need to examine our adult relationships. We need to think about who is in a position of authority. We need to think about how we can dismantle racism. This is not a problem for the educators who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color. This is us. This article from the spring 2020 issue of [Teaching Tolerance] was written thoughtfully by Clarice Brazas (@cbrazas) and Charlie McGeehan (@cmgeehiii). They talked to and listened to educators of color to hear the stories of the relationships among colleagues. They've been doing the work toward racial justice in schools for years. If we haven't listened yet, it's time now. #blacklivesmatterinschools

—@AFRIDAYPERSPECTIVE
VIA INSTAGRAM ON "WHAT WHITE COLLEAGUES NEED TO UNDERSTAND"



is insufficient. Our program has grown significantly since its founding in 1991, and the name "Teaching Tolerance" does not adequately describe the work we do, nor does it reflect the work we believe is necessary to create schools where all children and young people can thrive. Last year, we did a great deal of work toward changing our name. We paused that work to ensure it aligned with the long-term strategy of TT and

our parent organization, the SPLC, but we have resumed the process. Currently, we are searching for a new TT director, and we look forward to seeing this name change through. We are grateful to our community for taking the time to outline the limits of our current name so clearly and thoughtfully.

LOVE FOR TT'S GRANTS PROGRAM

This grant is invaluable for schools who want to explore justice, and wouldn't otherwise have the funding. Thank you for funding these projects, and for the wealth of resources you curate online to assist with them!

—MORGAN MOORE
VIA EMAIL

Learn more about our Educator Grants program and apply now at tolerance.org/grants.

"YOU CAN TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS"

I just finished reading Cory Collins article on White Privilege. It really opened my eyes to what exactly [is] meant by White Privilege.

... Thanks to Mr. Collins article I better understand how I have been helped to be where I am now by my race. His article also helped me with suggestions on how to help in the future and knowing that I have been aided by my race is much more important than the guilt I feel by others not having same opportunities. Please pass on my thanks to Mr. Collins. His article has

proven you CAN teach an old dog new tricks.

—KEN HART
VIA EMAIL

IMAGES MATTER

I wish that the wheelchair enabled student in your graphic was not on the end but in the middle of the group. I feel like a leftover when I need to position my chair like that.

—@DIANEDEVINE18
VIA TWITTER ON "LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!" ILLUSTRATION



HERE 🙌 FOR 🙌 THIS 🙌
—@TEACH_FINN
VIA INSTAGRAM ON "ONE WORLD: KAY ULANDAY BARRETT"

A DISCUSSION ON "WHAT WHITE COLLEAGUES NEED TO UNDERSTAND"

"Definition of white supremacy // noun the belief that white people

are superior to those of all other races, especially the black race, and should therefore dominate society. From Oxford"

As a person who's fought against white supremism for over 20 years, I find the irresponsible use of this phrase in the article to describe white privilege perceptual shortcomings offensive. I've been on the front lines against them. They're scary to the point of frothing at the mouth with their hate. I suggest using language and phrases not associated with extremist terrorist groups to describe your [colleagues]. Thank you.

—KIMER V
VIA TEACHING TOLERANCE MAGAZINE ONLINE

Kimer, are you white? I ask because white supremacy is not just overt and blatant hatred. Much of it is subtle and embedded and that seems to be something that many white people consistently and constantly overlook and refuse to acknowledge. THAT is offensive. Microaggressions are offensive. Subtle white supremacy is still white supremacy.

— THUNDERDOME
VIA TEACHING TOLERANCE MAGAZINE ONLINE

Yes! Oh, happy day 🌞🥰 I just received my Teaching Tolerance Spring 2020 issue. Love this magazine. Lots of great articles that encourage and empower educators to disrupt educational spaces to provide an environment where ALL students are welcomed and accepted! #teachingtolerance #inclusion

—@EMILYFRANESL
VIA TWITTER

Ask Teaching Tolerance



Q I'm concerned that all of our professional learning this year is going to be focused on test prep and how to make up for lost time. How can I help my principal understand that this might not be the best focus for us?

We are all navigating challenging times. Before students are expected to focus on and meet academic goals, it's imperative that educators and schools ensure that all students feel safe and valued. With that in mind, propose a meeting with your administration that multiple stakeholders—including educators, students and caregivers—can join. Outline your concerns and offer possible solutions. One such solution might be a process to gather more information and help finalize a professional learning plan centered on prioritizing students' safety and well-being. This process could entail forming a group to engage

families and students to learn what they need, what concerns they have, what they want out of the school year and how they want to be supported. The data collected from this group, along with feedback from other educators, could then be used to create a proposal for a professional learning plan that addresses multiple areas of concern. A collaborative process will help everyone agree on the year's professional learning goals and feel confident their needs will be met.

The coronavirus has severely limited my students' ability to see how they can get involved in our democratic process

during this election season. How can I help them understand that they still have a voice?

During this challenging time, students can still find ways to engage in our diverse democracy. First, explicitly teach about the history of voting rights, polarization and voter suppression. These topics are always an important part of civics education, but students may better see their role in this history when they learn how current voter suppression efforts are targeting young people. "Uplifting the Student Vote," later in this issue, explains these efforts in more depth. For classroom resources on these topics, Teaching

Tolerance's Future Voters Project is a great place to start. ([Learn more at tolerance.org/voting.](https://www.tolerance.org/voting)) Next, be sure to look beyond the presidential race. Have students research local and state elections to learn what kinds of decisions these officeholders make and how these decisions affect them, your school and your community. Finally, task your students to do something with all their new knowledge. They can design a multifaceted virtual campaign that educates their community about what they learned, what the issues are and where and how to vote. They can also organize against voter suppression by supporting voter registration drives (online or through school). This approach will help students realize that their role in our democracy doesn't have to be diminished, even during this difficult time.

ASK TEACHING TOLERANCE!

Need the kind of advice and expertise only Teaching Tolerance can provide? Email us at editor@tolerance.org with "Ask TT" in the subject line.

DID YOU KNOW?

Only 6-7 percent of people are asked to register to vote in school.

— The Pew Charitable Trusts



ARTICLE 4.27.20 // RACE & ETHNICITY, RELIGION, CLASS

Rethinking Family Engagement During School Closures

BY RACHAEL MAHMOOD

As educators, we often strive to find ways to increase family involvement in our classrooms. Research confirms that family involvement positively impacts students' academic experiences. And in this moment of crisis, especially, engaging our students means engaging their families: Including caretakers is one way to support our students from a distance.

But what should that inclusion look like? What do we mean, exactly, by *family involvement*?

... The need to broaden definitions of family involvement would be necessary at any time. But during this crisis, questioning the assumptions educators make about family involvement—and how those assumptions shape what we expect from caregivers—is more important than ever.

And a reader replied...

Great article about family engagement during COVID from @DrRMahmood. She addresses common assumptions folx can have about students and their caregivers ... and gives encouragement for how to engage families. Thx for this @Tolerance.org.

READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE:

t-t.site/family-engagement

ARTICLE SPOTLIGHT

Search for these headlines at tolerance.org.



Speaking Up Against Racism Around the New Coronavirus
BY COSHANDRA DILLARD



Teaching as Activism, Teaching as Care
BY JAMILAH PITTS



Supporting LGBTQ Students During Social Distancing
WITH THE TREVOR PROJECT



Supporting Students With Learning Disabilities During School Closures
WITH THE CALIFORNIA COLLABORATIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

DID YOU KNOW?

Voter turnout in 2018 was higher than 2014 turnout across the board, but the greatest increase was in voters aged 18-29.

– The U.S. Census Bureau

Bria Wright teaches second grade at Hortons Creek Elementary School in Cary, North Carolina.



I Teach for Black Girls Like Me

Every teacher has a moment that solidifies their calling into teaching. Mine happened in seventh grade, and it involved a stapler. To most, a stapler is just a tool to gather papers. Staplers are used to bind objects together but not forever. You can always remove a staple, but the holes are permanent. To me, a stapler represents my “why.”

I had a teacher, Ms. A., who I did not get along with. I was outgoing and liked to have a good time. She saw this as disrespectful and probably lacking manners. She saw my Blackness and my Black girl magic as a threat to her classroom management.

Come in class quietly, no loud talking, no joking, sit down, do your work. All of

her expectations were rooted in compliance. I will assume that she did not recognize this form of discipline was extremely oppressive and rooted in racism. And at the time, I didn’t recognize this as racism. Not quite. But I knew it wasn’t fair, and it definitely was not just.

Ms. A. tried to silence me with office referrals, steps into the hall to “talk,” with phone calls home and lots of microaggressions to tell little seventh-grade me that my Blackness was not welcome in her classroom. She tried so hard to bind me to her expectations.

Then one day, it happened. After a back and forth, she took a stapler and threw it at me. A grown woman threw a stapler at a seventh grader, causing

classroom trauma that still, to this day, I cannot make sense of.

It took me years to crawl out of the dark space that she put me into and recognize that outgoing Black girls do have a place in the math classroom. And that is precisely why I teach.

In *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, scholar Zaretta Hammond wrote that “authentic engagement begins with remembering that we are wired to connect with one another.” My students are wired to connect to one another, and I entered this profession because I want to create the connections that Ms. A. did not.

At my school, we believe that together is better. We believe that

SHARE YOUR STORY

What motivates you to get up each morning and serve students in our nation’s schools? We want to hear from you. Send your 600-word submission for the “Why I Teach” column to submissions@tolerance.org.

relationships matter and relationships take work. Attending extracurricular events, having lunch bunches, creating opportunities for students to lead morning meeting and closing circle, sharing student work on my walls—I am intentional about co-creating a classroom space that is safe, positive and affirming for all students.

I believe in the power of developing and nurturing meaningful connections with my students. This is why I begin the school year with a “multicultural self” map activity. I want students to be able to identify parts of their identities that are valuable to them and feel proud of them. We hang up these maps in the classroom to show off the beauty in all of our identities coming together to learn.

This school year, I had the honor of being named teacher of the year for my school. I was asked to create a portfolio for our district. I wanted my students to be the center of this work, so I gave them a camera and told them to talk about how I make them feel. One of my kiddos mentioned in her video clip that what she enjoys most about our class is that we can have real conversations about real things such as racism and social justice.

When I heard this, I immediately started crying. I felt my “why” come full circle, from facing racism as a student to now being able to have open and honest conversations with my students about racism. Who would’ve thought that the little Black girl who had the stapler thrown at her in seventh grade would turn around and be leading a classroom, freeing myself and my students by creating a classroom space where our authentic selves are welcome?

This is why I teach. I teach for the little Black girls who are told their voices don’t matter. I teach for the little Black girls who have their voices misread as attitude and not confidence and passion. I teach for the little Black girl who had a stapler thrown at her and continues to have microaggressions thrown her way. I teach for the little Black girls who feel as though they aren’t good enough.

Because, I want to tell them, because, sweet girls, you are. You are more than enough. The world needs you to sprinkle your Black girl magic any- and everywhere you go. Don’t let anyone bind you to their low expectations or stereotypes. Don’t let anything stop you from sharing your magic with the world.



ARTICLE 6.16.20 // RACE & ETHNICITY, RIGHTS & ACTIVISM

“No, I Am Not OK.” Thanks for Asking.

BY DR. NEAL A. LESTER

This moment’s unrest is not just about George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, Tamir Rice, Oscar Grant, Kathryn Johnston, Alberta Spruill or Botham Jean. It is about 400 years of tragic moments like these since the first Africans were forcibly brought to this country. This moment is about the reality of Black American identities in this country, a clamoring to declare our own humanity. ...

So, no, I am not OK. If you are paying attention to what’s happening in this country, and when you know our American and world history regarding our inhumanity to each other based on race—and all other systemic -isms that oppress and dehumanize—how can anyone be OK?

How can anyone be OK when people are pushed to the edge from decades of having their humanity denied? How can anyone in the United States with their humanity—their empathy, respect, integrity and compassion—intact be OK with racial violence in what we call the U.S. since the colonial era?



And a reader replied...

If anyone is asking us (Black folk) are we OK, send them this link. “To ask that question right now ... comes off as potentially insensitive.” Tolerance.org and Dr. Neal A. Lester thank you for this article.

READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE:

t-t.site/not-ok

Understanding the Why

As a STEM integration transformation coach, Maribel Valdez Gonzalez spends her time supporting educators as they work to create project-based learning cultures. The goal of this collaboration, she explains, is “to achieve educational justice for all students, especially Black and brown students.”

Teaching Tolerance sat down with Gonzalez to learn more about project-based learning, anti-racist teaching and transforming educational approaches to students and communities.

Can you tell us a little about the work you do now? What does being a STEM integration transformation coach look like?

I work directly with administrators and teachers ... to collaboratively create a culture of learning that facilitates the critical consciousness of our community. I lead professional development around interdisciplinary, project-based learning with a grounding focus of developing healthy, anti-racist teaching identities.

And in this work, how do you build on your experience as a former classroom teacher?

I taught at Armando Leal Middle School in San Antonio, Texas. I became a teacher because I wanted to become the person I needed when I was in school: an educator who is transparent about the impact of systems of power on communities of color. I addressed bullying in schools for what it is: racism, classism, homophobia, shadeism [or colorism], etc., and wove it into the curriculum. ... I learned how to facilitate



Maribel Valdez Gonzalez is a STEM integration transformation coach with Technology Access Foundation in Seattle, Washington.

discussion on issues that impact students in a way that allowed students to draw their own conclusions.

As a teacher, hidden traumas from my own K-12 experience would surface. I began to interrogate standardized expectations to ensure I was approaching my craft with a decolonized lens. Today, as I work with teachers, I ask them to become aware of how they have been conditioned as former students and how that informs how they teach.

Creating awareness around what they have learned to tolerate and relearning how we relate to children and child-like characteristics is a way to heal—and support learners from various cultural backgrounds.

How do you see project-based learning interrupting that conditioning of “what [educators] have learned to tolerate”?

Project-based learning [is] grounded in reflection. ... Youth can explore

Student Reads

Our free, online, searchable Student Text Library is packed with classroom-ready texts for K-12 educators. Each is aligned with TT's topics and our social justice domains and accompanied by a set of text-dependent questions. Here are a few of our favorites for starting a conversation with your students about democracy in action.

Freedom Riders (K-2)

This story introduces younger students to the Freedom Riders who fought segregation in the U.S. South, refusing to back down from their belief in equality even in the face of violent backlash.

t-t.site/freedom-riders

Registering to Vote (3-5)

This text and its accompanying audio were recorded for StoryCorps, a non-profit oral history organization. In it, Theresa Burroughs tells her daughter about the barriers designed to prevent her from registering to vote years ago.

t-t.site/registering-vote

Fannie Lou Hamer's Testimony (6-8)

This text and its accompanying video present an excerpt of Hamer's testimony before the Credentials Committee at the 1964 Democratic Convention. In it, she describes the white supremacist terror intended to prevent Black people from registering or voting.

t-t.site/hamer-testimony

Patience Is a Dirty and Nasty Word (9-12)

This text is an uncensored draft of the speech John Lewis wrote for the 1963 March on Washington. In it, Lewis calls for a nonviolent revolution to secure true democracy for all.

t-t.site/patience

solutions to problems that are relevant to their lives through a design process that allows space for reflection about what works, what doesn't work and why.

For me, in my vision of liberatory education, students understand why we're doing something. Many times teachers fall into the trap of, *I don't want to give these instructions over and over again, so pay attention!* They ask their students, "What are the instructions for this?" rather than, "Why are we doing this? How is this connected to my community? How is this connected to my life right now?"

It's that transparency of purpose [that's key]. It's not effective if we're not transparent about systems of oppression. That has to be part of the conversation that teachers have with students.

Is there anything you've learned in this work that you wish more educators understood?

We all love the students and communities we serve. Love is what drives our work. To ensure we are serving every single student, we must ground instruction through the process of learning by providing explicit opportunities for youth to reflect on their learning. This is not how most of us learned in our own experiences. This requires a significant shift in mindsets about what teaching can be like.

Do you have any suggestions for fellow educators that they can bring

to a back-to-school season unlike any we've experienced before?

This is the time to really think deeply about, "How can I radically shift from that testing culture?" and [ask ourselves], "How do I internalize that testing culture?" ... What we need to do is have a radical shift of thinking — "I am going to accept my students as they are and help them get to the next level." In this era of continuous distance learning, we must use this opportunity to shift our understanding of what success looks and feels like.

Create authentic learning experiences for your students! ... This is an equitable way for students to meet standards and promote inquiry. These experiences create meaningful relevancy and nurture various strengths and skills.

I love witnessing the power of a pedagogical shift away from traditional educational models to one that is radically inclusive to every kind of learner. [When that happens], students are excited about the work they are doing because they can show up as their most authentic selves, and the work is grounded in their lives. While this transformation is a journey, the shift is immediately visible when teachers are focused on the process, not the end result.

Learn more about
Technology Access Foundation
at techaccess.org

FREE STUFF!

These web resources support and supplement social justice education—at no cost!

An interactive, web-based exploration, *Selma Online* uses clips from Ava DuVernay's *Selma* to help students better understand the struggle for voting rights in the United States. It also includes a teaching guide.

selmaonline.org

Learning Together, a resource from the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, includes guidance and resources for K-12 educators to support student learning about AAPI experiences, identity, and history.

smithsonianapa.org/learn

Stanford University's Civic Online Reasoning curriculum includes lesson plans and assessments. It is designed to help students build "the ability to effectively search for, evaluate and verify social and political information online."

cor.stanford.edu

My School Votes, a program of the nonprofit When We All Vote, offers recommendations for best practices and clear guidance for educators leading voter-registration efforts in their schools and communities.

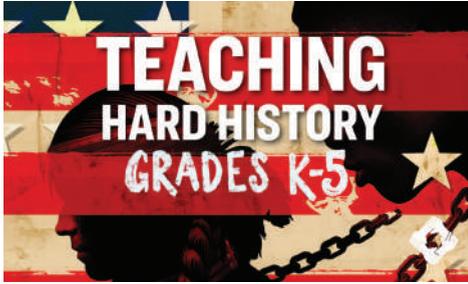
whenweallvote.org/schools



Teaching Tolerance Webinars Are Available On Demand!

During the 2019–2020 school year, Teaching Tolerance produced four webinars about a range of topics, from advice for tackling the hard or hidden histories too rarely taught in schools to recommendations for supporting student mental health through an intersectional lens.

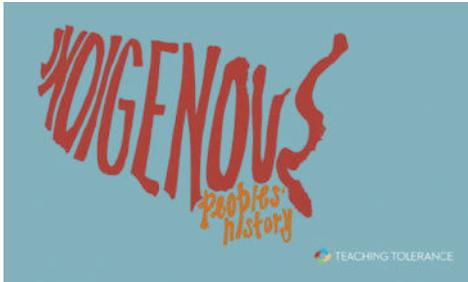
More than 3,000 educators joined us live for these webinars, but you can view them at your convenience on demand. Check out what you might have missed last year, and build up your knowledge for the year to come!



Teaching Hard History in Grades K-5

Join us for a deep dive into our Teaching Hard History framework for grades K-5! Participants will learn how our elementary framework centers the stories of enslaved people to teach the history of American slavery in a way that is both age-appropriate and accessible. They will also gain strategies for teaching about topics like freedom, race, enslavement and resistance while avoiding common pitfalls.

t-t.site/thh-k5



Indigenous Peoples' History

Cohosted by experts from the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, this webinar delves into the ways American history instruction often fails to acknowledge—and contributes to—the erasure of Indigenous stories and perspectives. In this webinar, you'll learn about critical historical events, as well as cultural and societal contributions of Indigenous peoples past and present. You will also examine common misconceptions and stereotypes and gain resources for teaching a more complete history.

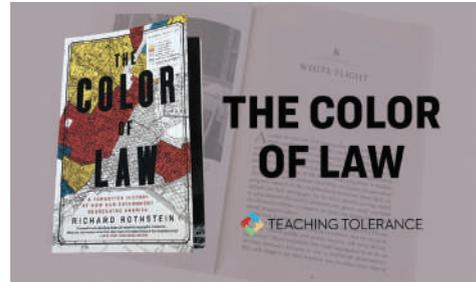
t-t.site/indigenous-history



The Color of Law

Inspired by and including excerpts from Richard Rothstein’s *New York Times* bestselling book *The Color of Law*, this webinar explores the role of U.S. segregation in everything from housing to employment to wealth accumulation—and the policies that made it all happen. Join us as we discuss the deliberate governmental practices that created opportunities for white Americans and excluded others. Tune in to learn why the “bootstraps theory” doesn’t hold up and gain some useful tools for your classroom practice.

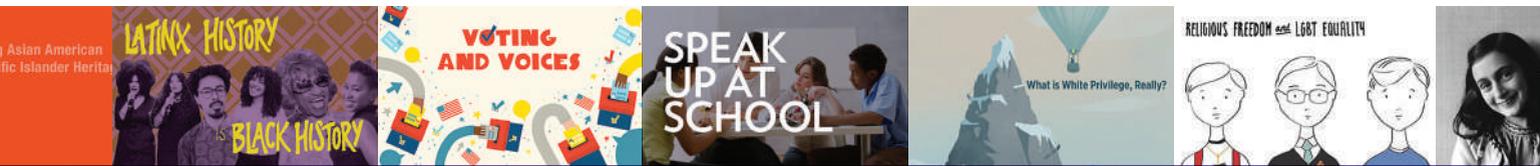
t-t.site/the-color-of-law



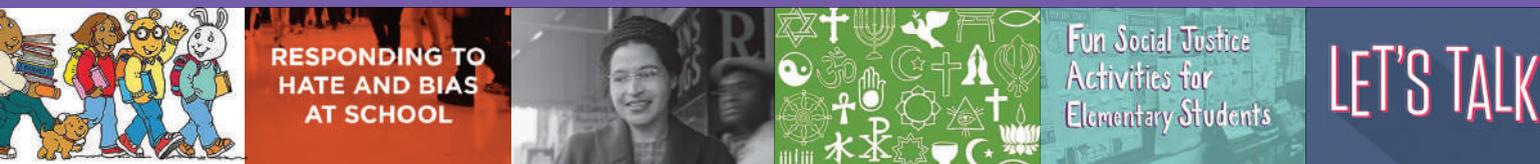
Student Mental Health Matters

Cohosted by Dr. Charles Barrett, chair of the Multicultural Affairs Committee of the National Association of School Psychologists, this webinar focuses on challenges students face regarding mental health, including how those challenges can vary depending on their intersecting identities. We also share examples of what schools and districts are doing to address these challenges. Watch this webinar on demand to learn about tools and strategies for your own classroom and school community.

t-t.site/mental-health-matters



Check out these and other webinars from previous years at tolerance.org!



Bibi



RECOMMENDED
FOR GRADES

6-12

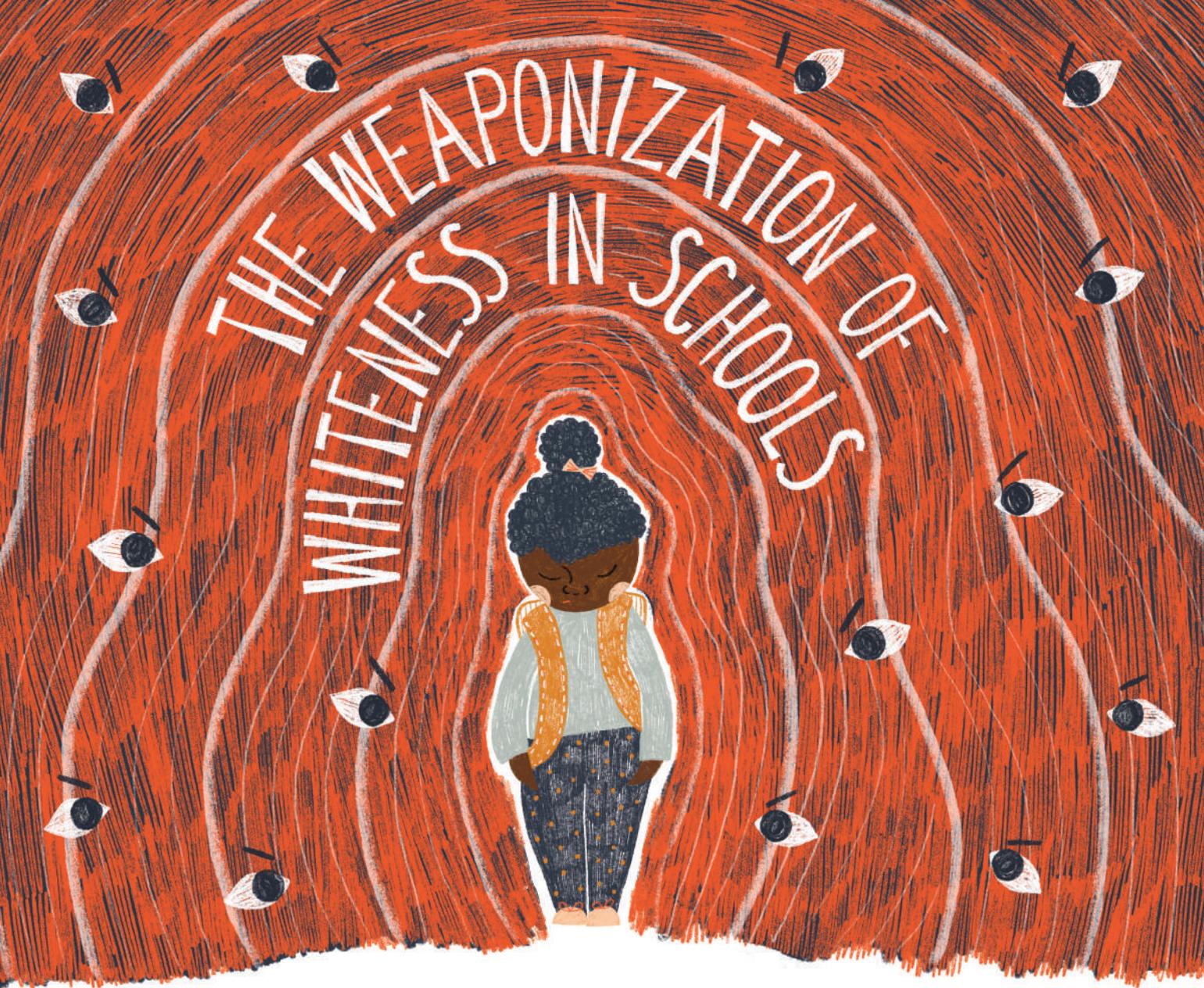
BIBI

A FILM BY VICTOR DUEÑAS

LESSONS FOR GRADES
6-12 AVAILABLE

Our new streaming classroom film, *Bibi*, tells the story of Ben, a gay Latinx man, and his complicated relationship with his father and his home. The 18-minute film can inspire critical conversations about identity, culture, family, communication and belonging.

AVAILABLE FOR STREAMING ONLY AT [TOLERANCE.ORG/BIBI](https://tolerance.org/bibi)



It's time to recognize and stop the pattern.

BY **COSHANDRA DILLARD** ILLUSTRATION BY **MEENAL PATEL**

THE EVENTS OF A TROUBLING SUMMER have reminded us all about the importance of affirming Black Lives Matter in schools. But acknowledging Black students and celebrating their culture isn't enough. Anti-racist educators are pushing their schools to respond not through vague statements or gestures but with actionable steps toward dismantling systems that harm Black students. As a first step, educators must examine how whiteness operates—and is weaponized—in schools.

In late May, on the day news broke of George Floyd's murder, a different video was receiving widespread national attention. In it, a white New

York City woman calls 911 on a Black man as the two stand, yards apart, in a secluded section of Central Park.

The man, Christian Cooper, had insisted that she put a leash on her dog, per posted rules. The woman responded with aggression. And, understanding how minor disputes have led to Black people's deaths, the man had begun recording the interaction.

"Unfortunately, we live in an era with things like Ahmaud Arbery, where Black men are seen as targets," Cooper said in a CNN interview. "This woman thought she could exploit that to her advantage,



and I wasn't having it." He had good reason to be concerned.

"I'm going to tell them there's an African American man threatening my life," she says.

In the video, the woman's tone goes from calm to frightened in a matter of seconds. She mentions twice to the 911 dispatcher that an "African American man" is threatening her and her dog. Her voice turns panicky.

"Please send the cops immediately!"

UNPACKING THE PATTERN

Typically, the weaponization of whiteness happens this way: There is a demonstrated sense of entitlement, anger and a need for retaliation, feigned fear and, finally, white fragility.

It's easy to recognize this pattern when it's caught on video. We can observe for ourselves racial slurs, exaggerated fear and the privilege of whiteness forcefully taking up space. But when we publicly shame white people caught on video or demand severe penalties for their transgressions, we are

individualizing racism rather than seeing how it can easily manifest in any white person because of how whiteness works in our society.

White supremacist or anti-Black attitudes don't belong to only one ideology, one political party or one particular geographical location. These attitudes exist across different regions, socio-economic classes, income levels, education groups and political affiliations. Since both anti-Blackness and white supremacy are baked into our country's foundation, they often play out in our daily lives.

.....
 "Calling the police ... actually puts the safety of our Black and Latinx students at risk."

And just as all white people have the ability to weaponize their whiteness, all Black people can be harmed by it. Black students aren't exempt. Weaponizing whiteness happens in schools every day.

ENTITLEMENT TO POWER AND CHALLENGES TO AUTHORITY

Educators recognize when their authority is being tested and sometimes react in counterproductive ways.

"To me, [the weaponization of whiteness in schools]

describes the way that minor issues—like a student coming to class late or cutting class—end up spiraling into more serious disciplinary issues that can have dire consequences for students," explains Charlie McGeehan. A humanities teacher and founding member of Building Anti-Racist White Educators, McGeehan works with predominantly Black and Latinx students in his Philadelphia high school. As a white man, he says, the weaponization of whiteness is something he is consciously fighting in his own practice.

"I have to actively resist the urge to maintain power or control in my classroom, and especially to resist the anger that can bubble up in me when that control is called into question," he says. "I actively work against these impulses in my practice—but even after years of doing this, it still takes work."

Studies show that when educators perceive challenges to their power, they disproportionately view Black students as the source. In 2016, research from the Yale Child Study Center determined that, as early as preschool, educators tend to police Black students' responses to their authority. They perceive Black students as exhibiting more "challenging behavior"—including "willful defiance," "insubordination" and "disrespect"—than their non-Black peers.

In part, this may be due to the "adultification" of Black children, the well-established tendency for non-Black people to assume Black children are older than they actually are. Black

boys, in particular, are seen as four and five years older than they are, according to a 2014 article published by the American Psychological Association.

In 2017, research from Georgetown Law's Center on Poverty and Inequality confirmed that Black girls are also viewed as older than they are, and they are less protected and are punished more severely in school than white girls. Two years later, the Center expanded on their work, synthesizing their findings and providing firsthand accounts from Black girls and women. One key takeaway was that adultification bias led to "harsher treatment and higher standards for Black girls in schools."

Their 2019 report includes firsthand accounts from Black girls and young women who participated in a focus group about their interactions with educators.

"Like, most times when you try to, like, defend yourself, they see how you're talking back," one person recounts. "And then, they'll be like, 'There's consequences.' And they'll be like, 'Oh, so they get a detention; get a suspension.' They always feel like you're talking back, but you're really not. You're just trying to defend, like get your side across."

These assumptions about age and maturity have real, severe consequences. Speaking with TT in 2019, David Johns, an educator and executive director of the National Black Justice Coalition, noted that, too often, Black children aren't allowed to just be children.

"It's incredibly important for parents, family members and educators to protect the ability for our babies just to be babies—to laugh, to make mistakes, to color outside of the lines, to create things with blocks that don't make sense to those of us who have forgotten how to dream," Johns says. "Too often we snatch them from Black kids in ways that are unfair and undeserved."

ANGER AND RETALIATION

In viral videos, when a Black person challenges a white person's sense of authority, the white person sometimes becomes physically aggressive. Similar responses happen in schools. We've described numerous times in our monthly "Hate at School" reports when educators reacted violently against Black students who challenge their authority. Whether they pulled students' hair or called the police, it always led to more harm for the student.

When a white person calls the police on a Black person for no rational reason, they display a sense of entitlement. The caller signals that they belong in that space and the Black person does not—and they have the authority to police that person. Throughout the spring and summer months, there was no shortage of these spectacles caught on video.

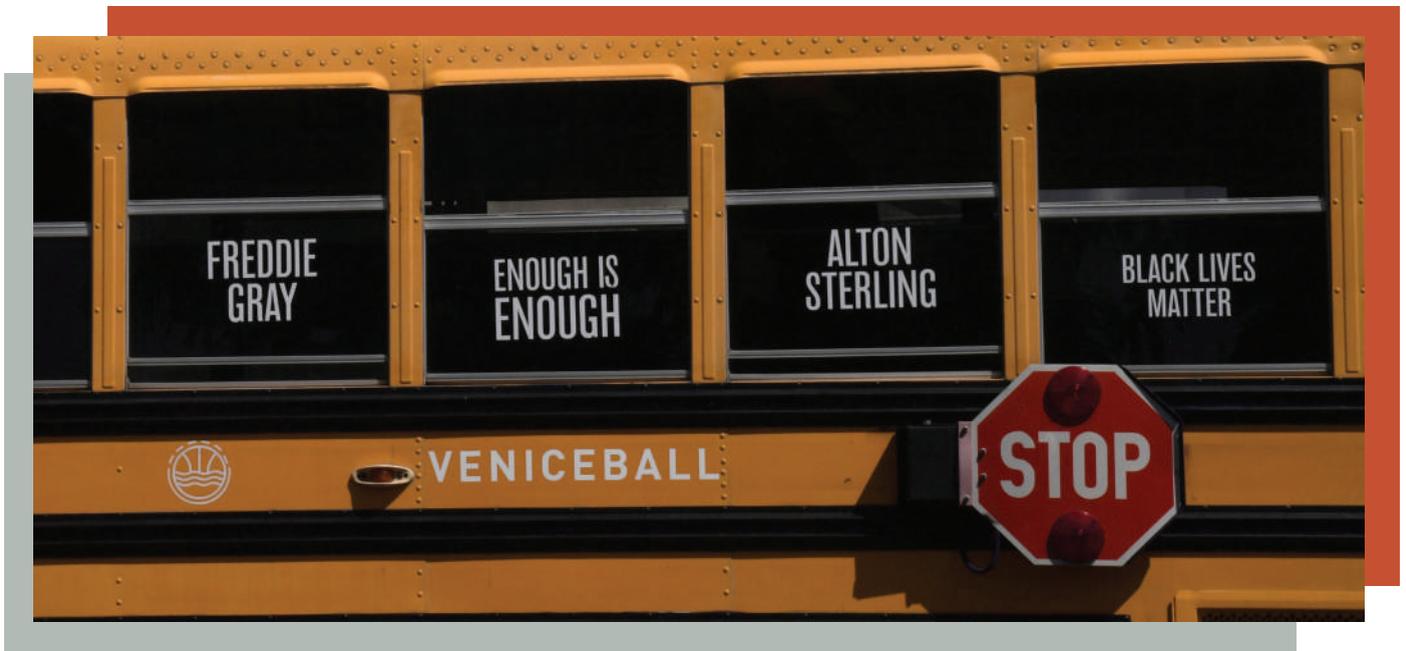
We saw white people manufacturing distress to justify calling the police on Black people doing benign things such as working out at a gym, sitting on a park bench or relaxing at a hotel pool.

Similar responses happen in schools. We've long known that Black and Latinx students are more likely to receive official disciplinary action—and harsher action—than their white peers.

"I have witnessed students being penalized for dress code violations, 'getting an attitude' with a teacher, fighting, arriving late too many times and 'seeming high on something,'" says Alicia Oglesby, a Black high school counselor and co-author of *Interrupting Racism: Equity and Social Justice in School Counseling*.

"These practices were typical at a majority Black public charter school where I've





This summer's Black Lives Matter protests included calls for removing police officers from schools.

worked,” she explains. “These same behaviors occurred at a majority white private school where I’ve worked, but no suspension was given; different school, different rules, but it is not coincidental that a majority white school is not given such harsh consequences.”

One common way educators retaliate against Black students is by calling a school resource officer to their classroom. Educators surely know that there is a possibility the situation could escalate quickly—we’ve seen it happen too many times. But data shows this response may be more pervasive than we’d like to think. While Black students made up 15.4 percent of students during the 2015-2016 school year, they made up 31 percent of referrals to law enforcement, according to the most current data from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, released in 2018.

Oglesby says that enlisting the help of police or other authority figures instead of addressing issues of distrust, poor classroom culture or negative relationships is a “lazy aggression.”

“I think [calling in a school resource officer] completely undermines the relationship between an educator and students,” McGeehan agrees. “I am also realizing more and more that calling the police, even when they are ‘school police,’ actually puts the safety of our Black and Latinx students at risk, rather than protecting them.”

THE ROLE OF FEAR AND WHITE FRAGILITY

It’s imperative that white female educators, especially, recognize this pattern and actively work with Black students so that they react more thoughtfully to issues that come up.

“The white female teachers who are effective in collaborating with Black students are

not fearful of Black people and are willing to listen to, hear and problem-solve with Black students,” Oglesby says. “The white female teachers who are effective do not view SROs as a necessary intervention for any reason.”

Her focus on female teachers isn’t incidental—the impact of calling the police is amplified by the intersections of race and gender. The viral Central Park video shows how: Viewers quickly commented that the woman’s behavior was reminiscent of the Jim Crow-era rhetoric white women used when they made unsubstantiated accusations against Black men, often leading to lynchings.

A central tenet of white supremacy—then and now—is that white women must be protected from danger, real or imagined, often with violence. So we can’t ignore the fact that white women dominate the field of education. They make

up more than 60 percent of U.S. public school teachers.

When white women educators call SROs and say they are afraid of their Black students, they are recreating the dynamics that were used as excuses for racial terror.

One white female principal in Houston showed she understood this very well in a discussion with three staff members about a Black student with special needs who often ran from class. “We won’t chase him,” she reportedly said. “We will call the police and tell them he has a gun so they can come faster.”

When white women educators call the police on Black students for arbitrary reasons, they are calling up that history of racial terror, whether or not they intend to cause harm. The intent doesn’t matter.

“The role of intention is insignificant in student discipline, particularly when it does not match the impact on the student’s life,” Oglesby explains.

While many white educators want to believe that race plays no role in their interactions with students, Oglesby notes that “when a white teacher can say she doesn’t see race when she sends students to discipline, she is exempting herself from being held accountable for her racist behaviors.”

When white educators refuse to admit or understand their role in weaponizing whiteness, when they insist that they didn’t mean any harm or re-center themselves as victims, they don’t just prevent a reparation of the harm that’s occurred. They inflict further damage.

“I’ve witnessed white women state that they felt afraid of a black male student,” Oglesby recounts. “I’ve seen white female teachers leave a classroom visibly upset because ‘students were picking on her,’ even though she failed to build trusting relationships with those students,” she says. “In each of these situations, students served in-school suspensions for getting angry and calling the teachers out.”

In the Philadelphia education blog *Philly’s 7th Ward*, Black teachers recounted how white female teachers in particular use tears to gain sympathy or further assert their power. One explained: “When white women cry, there is a villain somewhere in the white imagination. History has viewed white women as prized possessions to be protected, so their tears have represented danger, terror and death for Black people.”

REPEATING HISTORY, LASTING IMPACT

Black people may not be surprised by the centuries-old tactic of weaponizing whiteness, but that doesn’t make it less traumatizing. White people may assume that someone who hasn’t committed a crime shouldn’t worry when the police are called on them, but that assumption ignores history and an insidious system that hands out justice disproportionately.

Police interactions that lead to loss of life for Black people—regardless of whether a crime happened—are well documented. We know that

•••••

“A constant barrage of harm creates both physical and mental health issues for Black students. They’re trying to survive in systems that weren’t designed for them to succeed.”

ALICIA OGLESBY



the weaponization of whiteness has historically led to the deaths of people like Emmett Till and residents of places like Rosewood, Florida.

Fast forward more than 60 years after Emmett Till, and we're still seeing how the weaponization of whiteness and policing work in tandem against Black people of all ages.

Black students are heavily policed in schools, from their hair and dress to their language and behavior. Early in life, they experience surveillance in the same way Black adults do: They are followed, profiled, searched and assumed to be menaces. There are metal detectors and sometimes excessive force when police do get involved.

When white educators weaponize whiteness to affirm their authority, they can change the trajectory of a Black child's life. Data shows that Black students are disproportionately pushed into the school-to-prison pipeline. An *Education Week* analysis found that Black students in 43 states and the District of Columbia were more likely than other students to be arrested while at school.

And during a pandemic, shuffling Black people into police custody—when Black people are disproportionately dying from COVID-19—is a sure way to inflict harm.

"I wish we could realize that equity is a journey that never ends, and that being humble and having humility is key," says Amy Melik, a white ELL teacher and coordinator from Wisconsin. "We need to be



honest with ourselves and at the building level when looking at our data."

STOPPING THE PATTERN

Educators must recognize and stop this pattern. Dismantling a culture of punitive justice and over-policing at schools requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. It means doing some internal work first—confronting biases and actively working against them.

In his reflection, McGeehan centers the impact of his choices on students. "While my intent has always been to make my classroom the best learning space possible for my students, I realize that I too often try to do that by exerting control," he says. "In exerting control, and then getting angry when students don't do what I say, I realize that I am actually undermining the safety of my learning space."

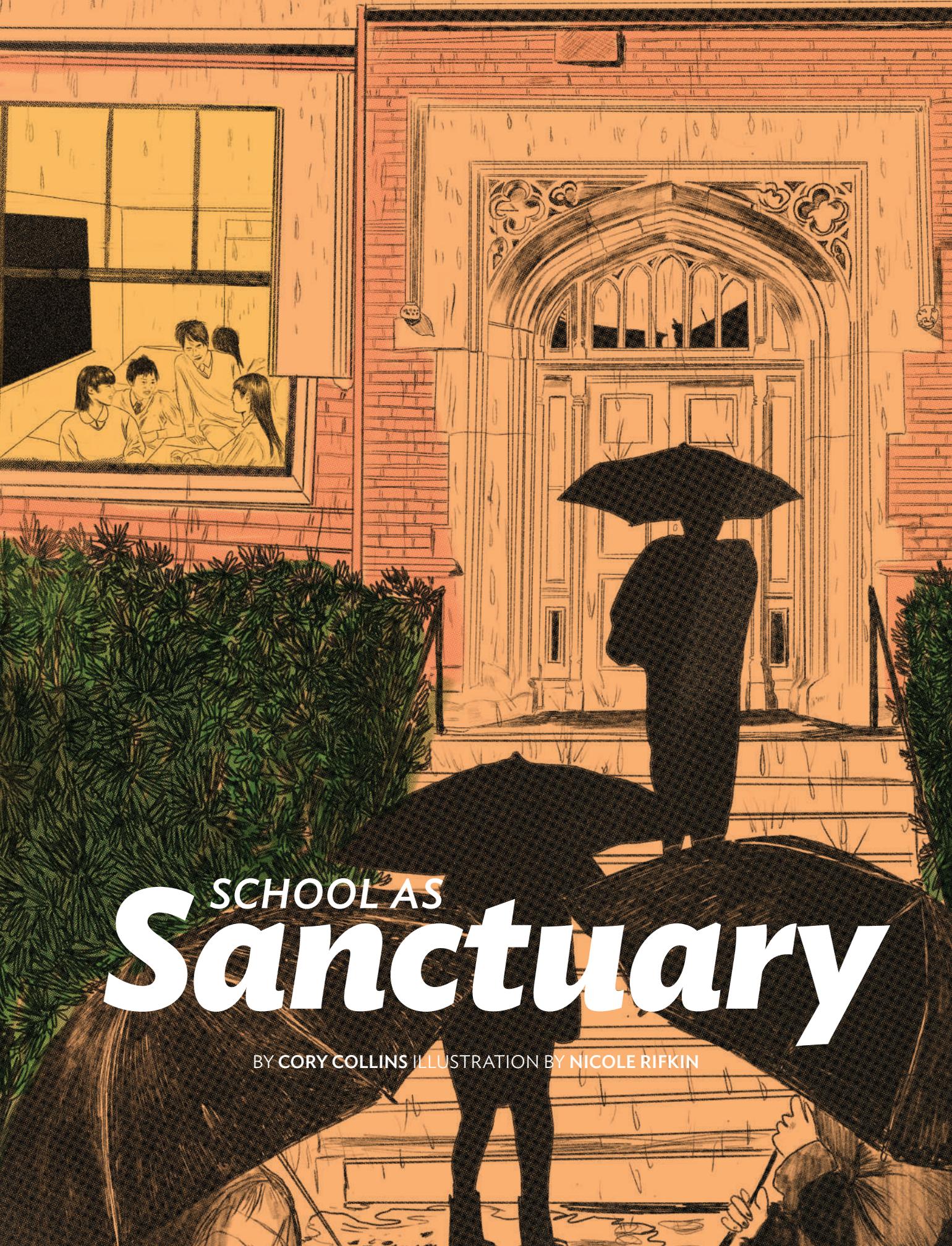
Oglesby agrees. "Students' needs are first and foremost, and from that vantage point educators are tasked to configure their wants," she says. "When students, who are children behaving as children do, are off task or causing me a

disruption, my initial response is to adjust how I'm facilitating that student or the larger class. In real time, I'm assessing that student's needs because they precede mine. My lesson is never more important than that of the students' need for education. The classroom and school experience allows for education to happen."

Students at Melik's school have petitioned for systemic change, which includes numerous demands of their school. Staff are working to create equity-focused professional practice goals related to students' demands. Meanwhile in Philadelphia, the Philly Student Union has been doing powerful work to stop the criminalization of Black students and pushing for police-free schools there. They've hosted marches and organized petitions over the years to elevate their messages.

But we should not forget that the onus is still on educators to do this heavy lift. It's critical that educators reach out to other educators in a school community to urge them to do the same. As a collective, educators can realize their power to challenge the status quo. They can push school board members, superintendents and other school leaders to help shift school culture to an environment free from weaponized whiteness, police intimidation and trauma. ♦

Dillard is the staff writer for Teaching Tolerance. Additional editorial support was provided by Senior Editor Julia Delacroix.



SCHOOL AS
Sanctuary

BY CORY COLLINS ILLUSTRATION BY NICOLE RIFKIN

The sanctuary school movement is fighting xenophobic policies to support immigrant and refugee students and families.

IN SAN LEANDRO, CALIFORNIA, history haunts. The fog that rolls over the yachts and golf courses on the coast disappears into the same air that held the smoke and screams for justice from this summer’s protests.

The suburb has a legacy of exclusion. After World War II, covenants kept property owners from selling space to people of color—especially Black people from nearby Oakland. San Leandro was built, in many ways, to keep people out.

Dr. Sonal Patel felt the weight of that history when she talked to Black families about their experiences with racism as they lived and worked in the surrounding communities. She felt that weight acutely after the September 11th attacks. A kindergarten teacher at the time, she listened as Sikh and Muslim families expressed to her that they felt unwelcome in the city.

“I’m not sure we want to live in the community,” she remembers them telling her. “We’re having a hard time walking to school.” During this time, Patel says, many Sikh and Muslim families left the school community and left San Leandro altogether.

Back then, the district lacked concrete plans to address these families’ concerns. Today, Patel serves as the assistant superintendent of educational services for the San Leandro Unified School District. She looks back on these experiences as teachable moments—and as turning points.

“We have made a really concerted effort to really outreach and ensure that our school district is conscious of the history and legacy of what’s happened,” she says, citing the

long-unaddressed need for anti-racist policies and the consequences of not having proactive plans in place immediately following 9/11.

In 2016, when xenophobia once again threatened to unmoor entire communities, students from San Leandro High School’s Social Justice Academy made a presentation to the school board. They didn’t want history to repeat itself.

They wanted to be a sanctuary school—and a sanctuary district.

What is a Sanctuary School?

Like sanctuary cities, sanctuary schools are not firmly rooted in a single, legal definition. Instead, the “sanctuary school” label broadly signals a commitment to protecting undocumented students and their families from federal immigration enforcement, especially in school spaces.

This is necessary, in part, because the barrier between Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers and school campuses is razor-thin. The only thing keeping ICE from entering schools is an internal policy—ICE’s “Sensitive Locations Memorandum” from 2011. The memo also lists churches, funeral homes and hospitals as sensitive locations where arrests won’t be made.

But in Pennsylvania this past March, a man from Honduras was detained inside a hospital and taken into ICE custody. For many undocumented people, it was a terrifying reminder that the memo may not protect them, even in their most vulnerable moments. Someone seeking life-saving care could be separated

from their family—so why not someone taking their child to school? Why not someone walking to homeroom?

“Everything that we’ve seen from this administration leads us to believe that we ought not be surprised about what they do,” says Paul Chavez, the director of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s immigrant justice work in Florida. He says it’s important for schools and districts to draw a line in the sand with comprehensive sanctuary policies.

After all, public schools have a legal obligation to enroll undocumented students and remove barriers to equitable education. Sanctuary schools take this responsibility and add to it a recognition that equal access to education cannot happen in a space in which students from immigrant families feel unsafe.

According to Immigrants Rising, a nonprofit advocating for institutional and policy change, sanctuary schools uphold that promise of safety by, at the least, refusing to share student information with federal immigration authorities; restricting those authorities’ access to campuses; keeping school officers from serving as resources to those authorities; and providing supports that serve undocumented students and students with undocumented family members.

These core qualities of sanctuary schools parallel a long history of local resistance.

A Call to Action

The modern U.S. sanctuary movement is most often traced back to the 1980s, when synagogues, churches, campuses

and entire cities offered refuge to people fleeing civil war in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala—a rebuke of Reagan-era intervention in the region and immigration policies denying refugees “asylee” status.

The movement regained steam more than 20 years later. As refugees once again arrived in the United States from Central America in large numbers, the Obama administration drastically increased immigration enforcement, at one point surpassing 400,000 deportations in a single year.

Against a backdrop of mass deportation and raids by ICE, schools saw students traumatized and families afraid to send their kids to class. Districts in Albuquerque, Los Angeles and San Francisco passed sanctuary resolutions and policies in response.

Upon the election of President Trump—whose campaign rhetoric had included promises to close the southern border, increase ICE enforcement and ban immigration from Muslim-majority countries—those fears multiplied. By late 2016, calls to address them head-on had become urgent.

“Kids were not coming to school. There was a huge drop in November. And then you had kids coming to school crying,” says Roseann Torres, a second-term member of the school board in Oakland Unified School District (OUSD).

At that time, OUSD already had a sanctuary policy in place. It had been instituted after a 2008 incident when an ICE officer allegedly escorted a student’s mother to a school campus before detaining her. But threats of increased ICE enforcement resurfaced

Policy Checklist

How is your school supporting undocumented students and families?

🕒 **Enrollment** What information must be provided for students to enroll? How is your school or district ensuring you’re not requiring students or families to disclose their citizenship status?

🕒 **Student Services** What information must be provided for students to access extracurricular or support services? Check up on athletics policies, 504 and IDEA enrollment, free and reduced lunch enrollment, transportation policies, resources for students experiencing food insecurity or homelessness, and more.

🕒 **Family Resources** How are translation services managed by your school or district? Who is responsible for ensuring all information is available in all home languages? What community resources are available to families—including connections to pro-bono legal supports, “Know Your Rights” clinics, and food and health care support for undocumented families? Where is this information available?

🕒 **Discipline** Under what circumstances may law enforcement interact with students on your campus? Who serves as point of contact for law enforcement? Who ensures FERPA guidelines are followed?

Put this story into action with our toolkit!

Visit tolerance.org/tool/sanctuary.

that community trauma, Torres says, and in the aftermath of Trump's election, "everybody went into panic mode."

It became clear that they needed to dust the old policy off and address its actionability. In December of 2016, with the support of fellow representative Shanthi Gonzalez, Torres introduced a new sanctuary resolution.

The resolution's language affirmed students' right to education and all school services regardless of immigration status. It also encouraged improved history curricula and engagement with current events, partnerships with community-based and legal aid organizations, policies that protected students and their personal

data from ICE, and training for staff to see these promises through.

The resolution passed. It was among the first of a post-2016 wave across the United States.

The following month, President Trump issued executive orders attempting to mandate cooperation between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities. In the 100 days after he signed those orders, more than 41,000 people were arrested for civil immigration offenses.

Students—and schools—immediately felt the devastating repercussions. In February 2017, a raid in Las Cruces, New Mexico, resulted in a 60 percent increase in student absences.

Cities like Miami, Des Moines, Portland and Milwaukee created or revised sanctuary school resolutions to tighten protections for undocumented students and families.

California led the way. By September of 2017, 118 of the state's school districts had declared themselves "safe havens" or sanctuaries. Oakland was one of those districts. So was San Leandro.

In the aftermath of the 2016 election, as anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant rhetoric and executive orders descended from the highest office in the land, the San Leandro community had wanted to know where their schools stood—and if they'd be protected. Spurred by student activists and a proactive school board, Dr. Sonal Patel and others got to work.

"Schools by design aren't necessarily safe havens," Patel says. "You have to actually, actively make them so."

More Than a Resolution

In Oakland, some community members were initially wary of the district's revamped resolution. Some wanted language explicitly stating that immigration officers would not be allowed on campuses. A student director on the school board pushed the adults to move beyond symbolic gestures, and many in the community wanted to know how the language on the page would translate into action.

"Anything that is just words, but isn't followed up with real action, is what leads to distrust," explains Nicole Knight.

The executive director of the district's English Language Learner and Multilingual Achievement Department, Knight created the Sanctuary Task Force, which brought people together from across OUSD to enact actionable policies.



“That’s what we felt like we were charged to do and what was needed in our community,” Knight says.

In San Leandro, as well, district leaders emphasized the need for a policy that would operationalize the promise of safety. A strong resolution had passed, but words weren’t enough.

“Policy work is really important,” Patel says. “But when we changed all of those policies, it would not have changed a single day-to-day interaction between folks on our campuses unless we actually took every policy and had an implementation plan.”

School- and district-level actions

After the 2016 election, Roseann Torres remembers feeling an immediate shift in Oakland.

“The teachers became social workers and immigration attorneys overnight,” she says, “and they didn’t know immigration law.”

In answer, the sanctuary task force created an “ICE protocol”—a series of steps staff could follow in the event of ICE activity at or near their schools. With input from family liaisons, the task force identified five scenarios school staff members needed to be ready for. Three involved what to do if ICE showed up on physical property with a warrant, a subpoena or no documentation. The other two were more common scenarios: What to do if a caregiver or student reported a family member had been detained or if educators learned ICE was in the area or had conducted raids in the community.

Knight is among the Oakland educators who facilitated thousands of staff-level trainings surrounding the policy and protocol. Trainings equip staff with an understanding of their rights and students’ rights and with processes and resources for

supporting families. These include contacts for legal aid and automatic calls to families in the event of local ICE activity during drop-off or pick-up times.

“We’ve been able to intervene in those ways and provide very real, concrete support, equipping our sites with the resources and the partnerships they need,” Knight says.

Here are some steps districts and schools can take at the community level:

- ➔ Find allies and partners.
- ➔ Create a resource list, and keep it in the office and online.
- ➔ Hold “Know Your Rights” sessions and community trainings.
- ➔ Work with families to develop emergency plans.

For more resources and recommendations, check out the toolkit for this story at tolerance.org/tool/sanctuary.

She recalls a student’s mother who came to school upset because her husband had been detained by ICE at 8:00 a.m. The school’s principal and staff followed the protocol, offering emotional support and getting in touch with appropriate contacts. The district was able to deploy legal support immediately. With help from the Immigrant Family Defense Fund, the father obtained representation and was released on bond by 2:30 p.m. Two years later, he’s still with his family.

In San Leandro, the district faced some community pushback for explicitly naming immigrant, Muslim and

Latinx communities in their policies and recommended practices. But Patel defends the specificity.

“We have stories of people in our community being separated from their parents, their uncles, their grandparents, their kids,” she says. “And so we have to attend to the current political and social reality. ... Those are the communities that are feeling this distress right now and are being targeted.”

To directly counter the hateful rhetoric dividing the country and the community, those crafting the policies combed the curriculum and school calendar for anti-Muslim practices and scrutinized enrollment policies to ensure they were inclusive of immigrant families. Implementation and training sessions helped staff and leadership understand what problematic policies and curricula look like—and how to dismantle them.

Patel emphasizes the importance of including all staff members in trainings. She describes her district’s efforts as a “work in progress” and notes that implementation requires not only school leaders and educators but also custodians, crossing guards, front office staff, mental health professionals and after-school program workers.

“There are so many people who wrap around a student,” she explains. They all should be equipped with the ability to support students and families.

From field trips to visitor policies to menus, thoughtful changes in San Leandro schools have created safer, more inclusive spaces. Patel says she now sees Muslim students who feel comfortable coming to school in hijab or traditional clothing, who feel safe to ask for what they need to observe Ramadan, practice prayer or eat. She sees Muslim family members taking positions of leadership in the school community.

It's a stark difference from 2001. But these changes didn't happen just because San Leandro named itself a safe haven—or even as a result of training multiple stakeholders within the school buildings. Progress required bringing those outside the school on board.

Community-level Actions

Patel stresses the importance of involving families—and the rest of the community—from the beginning. A policy replicated from somewhere else, she says, cannot address the lived experiences of the students and families a school district serves.

“It shouldn't be that you read an article in *Teaching Tolerance* and then you go, ‘I want to do that. I want to rinse, repeat,’” Patel says. “It should cause you to say, ‘Huh, I wonder who's keeping their kids home in our school

district. I wonder who's not eating free lunch or accessing free mental health counseling or not feeling seen and heard in my school district. I wonder who's feeling like they have to keep most of their identity at home.’ ...

“It should cause you to ask those questions and not come from a place as if you already know.”

In Oakland, the Sanctuary Task Force solicited input from families, local unions and local nonprofit workers. Nicole Knight says community meetings ultimately led to community activities, including “Know Your Rights” sessions, training in ICE protocol for those outside the schools, and film screenings and panels that addressed current events impacting immigrant families.

“The point of that is really the longer-term work of building cross-racial and cross-cultural alliances and

solidarity so that we're really building a community and spaces where people have the tools and the resources and the knowledge to stand up for themselves and their community,” Knight explains.

Those alliances also include a network of pro-bono legal resources, mental health professionals and community advocates the district can contact. Having these networks in place is invaluable during a crisis when educators need to help secure legal representation, temporary caretakers and trauma-informed care for students whose family members have been detained.

Creating Small Sanctuaries

Not all educators will have the same access to institutional support and expansive community resources as those in Oakland and San Leandro.

Protections for undocumented students have long been encoded in U.S. law.

The most significant of these is the Supreme Court ruling in *Plyler v. Doe*. After the state of Texas passed a law defunding K-12 education for undocumented students, the Tyler Independent School District created a policy to charge undocumented families tuition fees for public education. In 1977, four families sued the district, claiming that the policy was unconstitutional. James Plyler, Tyler ISD's superintendent, was named the defendant.

The case made it to the Supreme Court. In 1982, the court ruled that denying public education based on citizenship status was a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. Enrollment in public schools could not be denied because students were undocumented.

Even before *Plyler*, however, two landmark moments in 1974 paved the way for recognizing undocumented students' right to public education. In *Lau v. Nichols*, the court affirmed

that English language learners had a right to resources providing equitable access to education. And the Equal Educational Opportunities Act passed by Congress that year declared “that all children enrolled in public schools are entitled to equal educational opportunity without regard to race, color, sex or national origin.”

In addition to ensuring enrollment, schools also have legal standing for refusing to share students' personal information without a signed warrant from a judge. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires schools to have permission from caregivers before releasing any personal information from a student's records, even to law enforcement.

Taken together, these laws and legal precedents paint a clear picture: Sanctuary schools, despite critics' words, are not running afoul of the law; they are upholding it.

Even so, Knight says, individual educators have power to shape the experiences of students and families. Teachers can mitigate a lot of harm with trauma-informed, inclusive classroom practices that prioritize student well-being, interrupt bigotry and include immigrant students' cultures and experiences in curricula.

Educators also have many opportunities to include immigrant families. They can research best practices for serving English language learners. They can ensure all correspondence is translated into home languages. They can ask how field trips, athletics, the classroom library or even snack time can be more inclusive. Patel says efforts with less institutional infrastructure should have the same starting point as with district-wide sanctuary initiatives: "Get community voice."

To ensure authentic connection with the community, educators will have to be, as Knight puts it, "unapologetically sanctuary" in their practice.

"This notion of being unafraid educators is extremely important for our community," she says. "[Students and families] need to know that we're here not only symbolically or in words, but that we are going to do everything that we can to ensure they are safe, physically and emotionally."

Paul Chavez recommends educators in more hostile climates still get "Know Your Rights" information and emergency preparedness kits out to families and fellow staff members. He recommends encouraging families to create preparedness kits to ensure children are safe and an attorney is contacted if their guardian is detained.

Ultimately, educators should remember that this work isn't radical, Roseann Torres says. "The law is that all children are allowed a free public education."

"[Students and families] need to know that we're here not only symbolically or in words, but that we are going to do everything that we can to ensure they are safe, physically and emotionally."

Building Something Better

Early in her tenure as a classroom teacher in San Leandro, Dr. Sonal Patel also worked as a Spanish language translator for family conferences and afterschool meetings.

"I was bearing witness to all the pain and fear and frustration and confusion the families were holding," she says. "It made me really empathetic to how hard it is to interface with schools."

That pain and confusion are only compounded when communities face a crisis, be it the deportation of family members or a pandemic that

spotlights gaps in access to health care and resources. That fear and frustration are only intensified when a child's learning or well-being is endangered and it feels like no one is listening.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when undocumented students and families may hesitate to seek help for fear of ICE, educators in San Leandro have focused on meeting them where they are. Staff have called families and unaccompanied minors, visiting homes and shelters to ensure students have food, Chromebooks and Wi-Fi.

In Oakland, when educators realized that the CARES Act provided no support for undocumented people, they started a fundraiser. It raised more than \$220,000 for undocumented families in its first month.

But challenges remain. As a new school year begins in the midst of a pandemic, plans to keep school communities safe change day to day. Many schools lack either the will or infrastructure to quickly communicate plans to families who don't speak English—an equity issue that will affect enrollment, learning and family engagement. Many families are forced, once again, to determine their children's safety with little support.

That is why, for advocates across the country, sanctuaries and safe havens are more than translated words. They are more than a promise. They are a reckoning with history and an unequal system.

They are better places, built from within. ♦

Collins is the senior writer for Teaching Tolerance.

THIS CONVERSATION IS ANTI-RACIST

**Young people have the vision
to imagine—and create—a world
without racism. Adults just
need to get on board.**

BY MONITA K. BELL EDITED BY CORY COLLINS
ILLUSTRATION BY AURÉLIA DURAND
LETTERING BY SHANNON ANDERSON





TIFFANY JEWELL HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT WRITING A CHILDREN'S book when an editor approached her about one in November 2018. This editor had learned that Jewell had been doing anti-racist work with elementary students for nearly two decades, most of that time spent as a Montessori educator. Their initial exchange, followed by a fruitful editorial relationship, is part of the origin story for *This Book Is Anti-Racist: 20 Lessons on How to Wake Up, Take Action and Do the Work*—which Jewell wrote in three and a half months.

When I asked Jewell to share more about this origin story, she told me that phrase “makes [her] feel like a superhero.” I don’t think she’s far off. This book is informed not only by thoughtful self-reflection but also by many years steeped in exemplary education, relationship-building with young people and dedication to dismantling white supremacy. When we talked—just four days after George Floyd’s murder and early in this year’s uprisings—that dedication was on full display.

So she does what many superheroes do: She uses her abilities to leave the world better than she found it and to help the next generation tap their (super)powers to do the same.

This interview has been edited for length. Find a longer version, along with a video of the interview, at t-t.site/this-conversation.

You state in the introduction that this book is meant to be read in a set order and that the design is deliberate. Will you talk about that?

It followed the pattern of the work that I always did with my students. Because I tried a bunch of different things. So sometimes I tried to jump right into the history and that didn't work, or sometimes I jumped right into action and that didn't work. And so really wanting folx* to really do work on their inner selves first and understand their own identity and positionality. And then once you know who you are, then you can start to know more about the world around you.

So knowing the history of what came before you, the side of history and the anti-racist side of history. Because it's really important to amplify that resistance has always been part of us. And then from there, once you know the history and you've done deep analysis and understand what's going on, then you can jump into action and understand how to work in solidarity with other people. But you can't do that if you don't know yourself, if you don't know where history has led you to.

There are a number of definitions of anti-racism out there right now. Can you state the definition of anti-racism that you're using?

When I think of anti-racism, anti-racists are people who oppose the systemic misuse and abuse of power by institutions that lead to us having those personal biases and prejudices against each other. That foundation is there. An anti-racist person is somebody who is actively working for a society where we aren't oppressed because of our differences, where every person gets to be their whole self and honored for that.

When you think back to yourself as a young person—and I love the way you

include these vignettes from your own childhood throughout the book—what would having this book have done for you or meant to you?

It would have been awesome to see somebody like myself in a book because that didn't happen until I was in my early 20s, as a Black, biracial person. Also, it would have given me the language to understand what I was experiencing around me.

Because I saw injustice. I knew it was there. But I didn't have that language. Nobody said, "That's racist!" Also, because I wrote it thinking about me and "What would 9-year-old and 14-year-old Tiffany really do with this?" It would have helped me stand up stronger against my teachers and against the systems in our school. As I got older, like in high school, I was able to do that with a little more strength, but I still didn't have that language that the adults kept really close—like they held on to it and they didn't share it with us. They didn't want us to have it.

What is it that you hope young people understand about power? Not only the power outside of themselves that they are working against, but the power within them.

I want young folx to be empowered. I want them to know that they have agency.

Recently, I did a workshop with the organization Be the Bridge, and they had this conference for young folx. And one of the young white kids in the group, he was like, "My parents: They're nice people, but they don't understand why I need to talk about racism." And he was like, "I don't know what to do."

And what I want is for young folx to know that even if your family's not ready for you to take this journey, you can do it. You can absolutely have a different viewpoint than your family. You can be the one that shifts your family's thinking in the actions that you do.

Young folx don't have to wait for the adults because the adults will always talk themselves out of something that's uncomfortable. I see young folx. They're able to dream bigger. They're able to really just kind of go with change or create change. And so, really, I want them to know that they can do this.

What would you like young people to think about their education, what they're actually being taught, as a result of reading this book?

We as a family just finished reading the book *Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky*. ... I've been thinking a lot about how that story relates to whose stories get told. It's all about a storyteller, a kid who has the gift of telling stories. ... The part that really struck me is towards the end where Tristan Strong agrees to tell the story—everybody's story. He's not just going to tell it one-sided. He's like, "I need to tell this part, too."

And that's what our *students* need. They need those stories. You know, I never learned anything about Malcolm X—other than we shouldn't talk about him—until I read his words on my own. And I never learned about the Black Panther Party and, like, we got free breakfast because of them!

There's so much that's hidden. I didn't learn about the MOVE bombing until decades later when I was living in that neighborhood in West Philadelphia. ... And those things, our kids can handle them, and they need to know them and they need to know how we stood up. ...

The people who control the stories don't want us to know those parts.



And so, you know, students knowing just those little bits from the book, hopefully it sparks their curiosity and they're like, "I need to know more" and, "What we're learning in our American history class—it's totally one-sided." Or just be able to speak up about that and get their parents because parents have a lot of power in schools.

What do you hope educators take away from this book?

I really want educators to know that you *have to* address injustice. Like, you can't push racism aside. That our kids see it. They know it exists. And so we can cultivate a community where we're discussing it and diving into it and understanding it courageously.

I think that is really important. I also think it's important for educators to not feel like they are the ones that have to give all the information. It's OK for us as adults to not know and to pause and listen to students. We really need to—as teachers and educators—we need to let go of our egos and really work collaboratively with our students, which doesn't happen a lot. And I hope, with this book, they'll be doing that work together.

Given the pandemic and this summer's protests, I think it is really important that we're having this conversation right now about anti-racism. Is there a particular message that you would like to send to young people and perhaps to educators about their power to

engage in anti-racism right now, with the current state of the world?

Folx who are able to spend time with the book, do the work on your inner self *right now*. Because when we start emerging into community, community is going to need *community*. We have to take care of each other, and we can't do that if we haven't done the work ourselves. Then we just turn into a "savior." ...

Spend a little time learning from people who are out of your comfort zone. You know, if you're a white educator, listen to Black women. Listen to Indigenous women. If you're cisgender, spend some time listening to trans folx. ... It's time to expand yourself a little bit, to go a little beyond, and also to challenge other people. If there's somebody in the group who is saying something sexist or racist or homophobic, challenge them.

[Online communities are] great practice for us to do this challenging work. Because when we get out into public, then we're with people and it feels different. But if you practice it, you're like, *Oh, I can call that person out on their racism, no problem.*

Practice is another important thing that you place in the book. Like, *What would I do if I witnessed someone being unfairly treated by a police officer?*

Unfortunately, this is coming up all the time. And the thing that I've been doing with my own children who are 8 and 4—the ages that many people deem are too

young and they're *not*—[is] really teaching them how to witness.

Like, "What do you notice? How many cops are there? How many cars? Do they all have a different car? Where are they going? ... What do you hear?" And really asking them to notice those things because my children are white-presenting. They walk through the world through their white bodies, and they're going to be believed over many other people. So really getting them to practice that and then to talk about what they see and to question. ...

Reading books, too, and questioning authors and looking at, "Who wrote this book? Is this the right person to be telling this story right now?" ...

But there are so many things as parents we can do—and teachers and educators—to be encouraging: talking with their students and families about this, to practice witnessing, practice talking, practice asking questions.

We were just talking about being "old enough." So even if they're not old enough to vote yet, what do you want young people to understand about the power of their voices when it comes to elections and other decisions that affect their lives?

This is the thing that I hear most from young folx—13-, 14-, 15-year-olds that are like, "I *can't* vote." And so some of the things we talk about is really kind of breaking down what those systemic [misuses and abuses of power] are within our institutions and being very vocal about them, especially in the realm of education, which is the institution that so many of our young folx are entrenched in. To really use their voices to speak up against it and to really talk with the adults in their lives, like, "You are not voting for yourself. You are voting for me. This is what I need." I think it's really important.

And then, a lot of the young folx that I've talked to, they're like, "I want to

go out and stump. I want to go out and campaign.” They’re really excited and want to do that work, too.

So I really want politicians to open up those spaces because we have the energy of young folx. We can do so much more. And we need to be working with them because they’re the folx who we’re making all of these changes and policies for. ...

The other thing I always like to remind young folx, I’m like, “You have to be 35 to be president, but there’s not a cap on age to be the mayor,” and pointing out some of the younger mayors. ... You *can* effect change! Senate, Congress. There’s so many [ways]. There’s so much in the world of politics and elections: school board, library board. ... Those don’t have an age cap, and there’s no reason why they couldn’t run.

Is there anything else that you’d like to share about this book or about young people’s anti-racism that we haven’t gotten into yet?

I love doing anti-racism work with young folx. My dream is that it becomes a part of our schools everywhere. So we have this new generation of folx who just understand it. ...

Every time I do this work with young folx, it’s super clear to them. They’re ready to dig and do the work and to see and envision what a world without racism looks like. And adults are like, “But this is how it’s always been for 400 years! It’s going to take that long to dismantle it.” ...

And I think young folx are really good at envisioning what we’re fighting for and have that imagination. As adults, we kind of block that away in ourselves and we’re just always fighting against things. We just kind of get tired, and we lose steam. We talk ourselves out of it.

Anti-racism work is all [about] moving us forward—understanding the history but moving forward.

You were saying you would love to see anti-racism work regularly happening in schools. So, for these adults who have talked themselves out of it or say it’s too hard, where do you think they can start?

For adults, I always go back to the goals of anti-bias education. And they’re for little kids ... but they work really well for all ages. And they work well for ourselves.

And the first goal is all about identity and knowing who you are as an adult, and for kids, empowering them to love themselves. ... How can we argue with loving yourself?

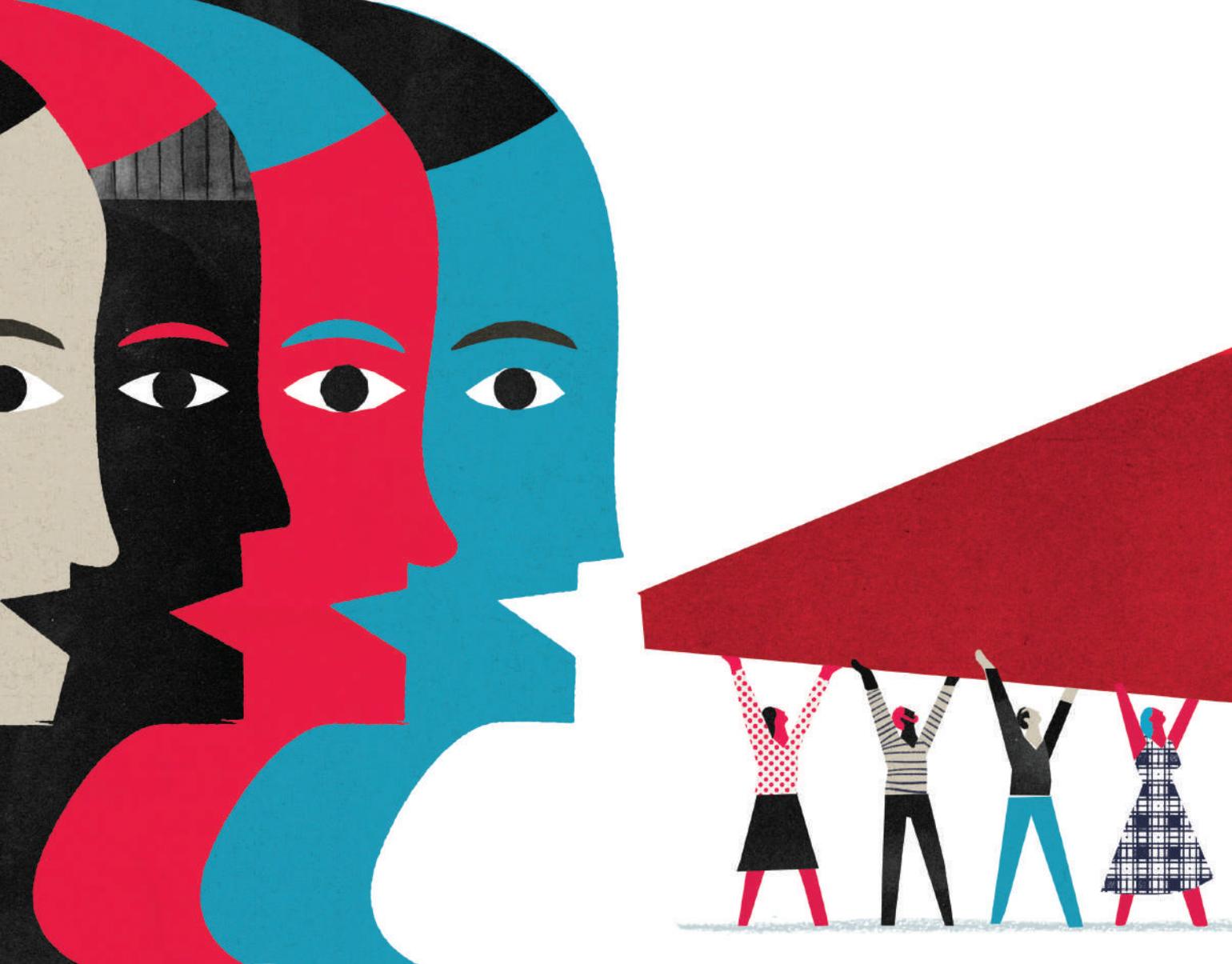
So that’s where we start, is to really learn how to love ourselves again as adults. And then for young folx ... amplify and empower them and help them grow to keep loving themselves. Because it stops. Once you get to school, it’s kind of when you stop loving yourself.

And right now, it feels like it’s courageous. And what if it didn’t have to feel courageous and it was the way we always were? ♦

Bell is the managing editor and an interim co-director for Teaching Tolerance. Collins is the program’s senior writer.

**This is the spelling Jewell uses in This Book Is Anti-Racist. There, she explains, “You will notice I have chosen to use ‘folx’ instead of ‘folks’ because it is a gender neutral term created by activist communities, and I would like to honor everyone who reads this book. Replacing the ‘ks’ with an ‘x’ allows for every reader who has never been seen before to see themselves in here.”*

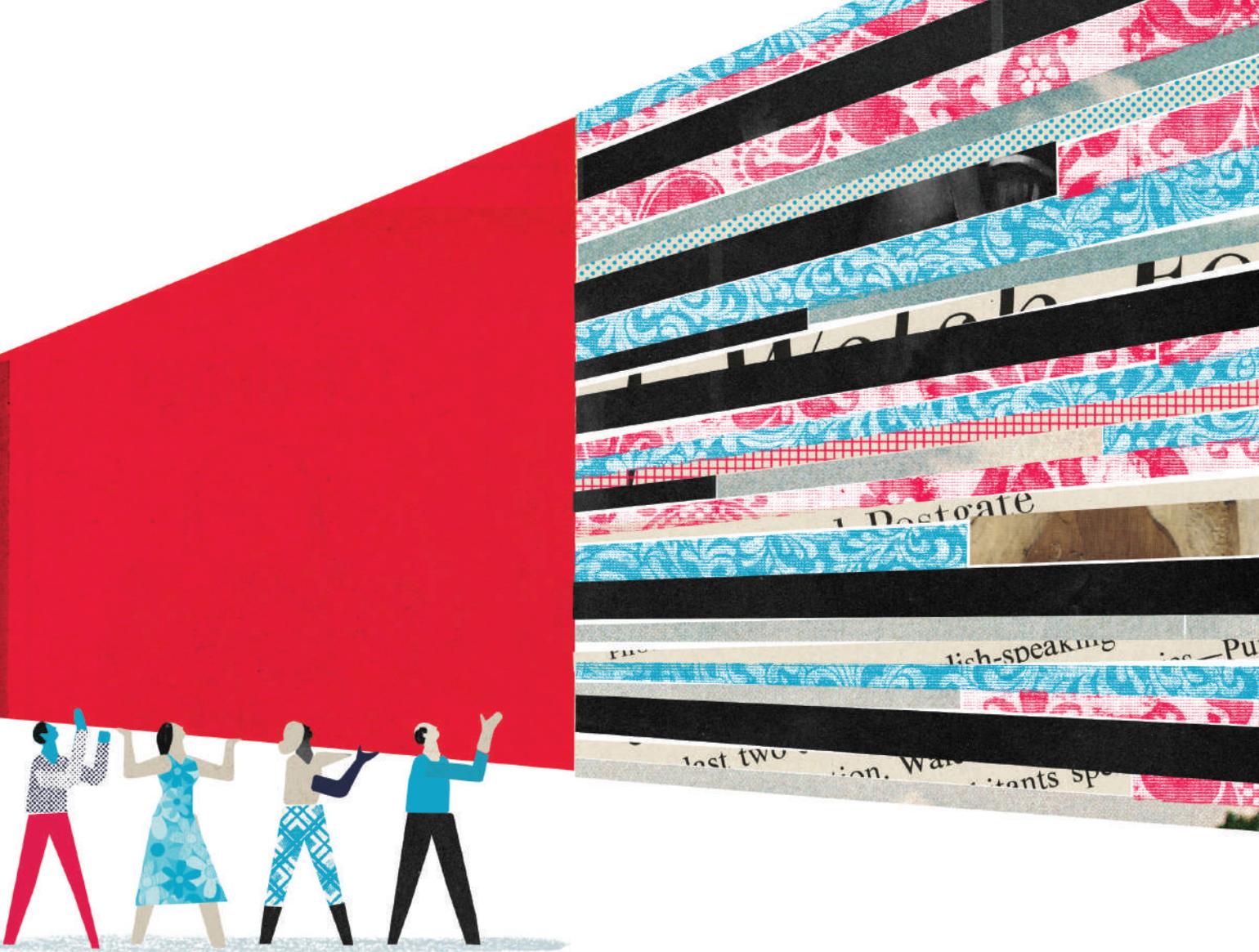




Uplifting the Student Vote

Educators have a critical opportunity to help shape the electorate in 2020 and beyond.

BY **JEY EHRENHALT** ILLUSTRATION BY **KEITH NEGLEY**



IN THE 2018 U.S. midterm election, young people turned out in the highest numbers in decades. But even so, just over 35 percent of eligible 18- to 29-year-olds cast a ballot, compared to 66 percent of eligible citizens aged 65 and older.

When we hear about low voter turnout among young people, we often hear that young people themselves are to blame. It's their fault they're consistently outvoted by older generations. They're the ones who are too unmotivated, too uninterested, too cynical to care.

According to some experts, however, the problem is not apathy but access.

When they narrowed their data from everyone with eligibility to only registered voters, *The New York Times* found that 67 percent of registered 18- to 29-year-olds turned out to vote in 2018.

So how do we help more young people register? One recommendation from organizers and voting rights activists is to expand voter registration drives in K-12 schools. School-based voter registration, they stress, could not only increase voter turnout among young people; it could also create more equitable access to the ballot.

Abby Kiesa, director of impact at Tufts University's Center for

Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), suggests that K-12 institutions have the capacity to reach young people who might otherwise not be encouraged to register.

"When you look at youth voting data," she explains, "you see humongous differences in people's access to information. ... In every cycle that I've been involved with that we have data for, it's young people who have college experience or who are on college campuses [who receive outreach]. ... And it's more white voters than voters of color." In fact, studies

show people of color of all ages are less likely than white people to be contacted by voter information and registration efforts.

But reaching every eligible future voter is only part of the challenge. In the last decade, restrictive voter I.D. laws and other legislative attempts to curtail voter registration have reduced opportunities for students to register at school and have their voices heard at the polls.

Complex policies regulating the training, timing and qualifications for voter registration efforts have passed in state legislatures across the nation. As part of North Carolina’s notorious 2013 Voter Identification Verification Act, for example, state legislators eliminated preregistration for 16- and 17-year-olds. Preregistration was reinstated in 2016 when a federal appeals court overturned the law, noting that it “target[ed] African-Americans with almost surgical precision.”

By then, however, lawmakers in neighboring Virginia had tightened regulations for third-party voter registration groups, making it harder for educators to work with nonpartisan nonprofits to register students. Those restrictions remained in place until this year, situating Virginia among states like Florida, Wisconsin and Texas, which already had similar laws on the books.

More recently, a federal judge temporarily blocked a 2019 Tennessee law that took regulations a step further, imposing fines of up to \$10,000 for submitting incomplete or inaccurate voter registration forms. A similar bill in Texas, threatening future voters with fines or even jail time for errors on their forms, failed in the state legislature.

“All of these issues [around youth voter turnout] are about access,” says Kiesa. “They’re all about how we as a country are—or aren’t—including and welcoming devoted young people into democracy. It has nothing to do with apathy.”



Connecting Within and Beyond Their School

Jacquelyn Whang, an English teacher at Centennial High School in Compton, California, is working with students to address these issues of access. In 2019, Whang and a group of students attended a workshop from The Civics Center to learn about supporting student civic engagement and registering students to vote. Afterward, they

founded the school’s Future Voters Club, which Whang says has become both a social gathering spot and a place for students to find their voices and their power.

At the workshop, she says, she and her students couldn’t help but notice some of the disparities between Centennial and neighboring schools.

“Other schools [are] really set up. ... They have systems in place that make

it easier for a mass voter drive to happen,” she explains. At Centennial, “it was really daunting. [We had to] figure out those systems and how they worked. We did a lot of problem-solving with unique barriers within our school.”

Part of that meant building connections and collaborations beyond the school itself. Whang says because Centennial is one of many schools in her area doing this work, students could align their efforts with those of peers at nearby schools and create space for collaboration.

They also continued their work with The Civics Center, which gave a presentation on the history of the fight for voting rights. The facilitator offered data on local voter turnout and discussed the importance of voting for youth of color, and she shared her own story about being undocumented.

Later, when members of the Future Voters Club worked to register

classmates, they made sure to engage undocumented students, encouraging those who aren’t legally able to vote to connect in other ways. They drafted a script with language to include everyone and passed out pledges that any student could sign.

“It was a scene ... a cool scene,” Whang says. “Honestly, the kids were inspired. I was inspired.”

Advocating Across Generations

Retired history teacher Penny Wells found her inspiration for voting rights work as a college student. In 1966, Wells went to Choctaw County, Alabama, to educate and register new voters. Now, every year she travels with students from her home of Youngstown, Ohio, to tour voting rights landmarks in the Deep South.

They visit the state Capitol in Montgomery, Alabama, the terminus of the historic march from Selma that helped pave the way to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

They walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, where Black activists were beaten and teargassed on Bloody Sunday for marching for their right to vote. For years, the late Congressman John Lewis met students on the bridge to speak about his experience there.

Wells says the students bring their new understanding of the stakes and history of voter registration and voting rights back to Ohio with them. After the trip’s first year, they began registering voters and educating peers on their campus about voting. This year, they took even more direct action.

Students obtained lists of individuals who had been purged from Ohio’s voter rolls. They visited them to let them know they’d been purged and to explain that if they’d been removed from the voter rolls in error, they were entitled to be added back onto the list and vote.

While most educators can’t take students on a cross-country tour, all educators can facilitate an exploration of the past. Regardless of where

“For a lot of Black students, they see voting as this rigged system that only allows white supremacy to prosper. So the best way [they’ve found] to respond to that is to not engage with it at all. **I’ve found that nobody has really contextualized voting.**”

the study takes place, this history offers clear entry points to the present, inspiration for action students can take against voter suppression today.

Continuing the Fight

In Memphis, Tennessee, Benjamin Smith infuses the history and present-day fights for voting rights into his African American studies and sociology classes at KIPP Memphis Collegiate High School. Like Wells, he's found that students are more

likely to engage with voting once they understand the context.

"For a lot of Black students," Smith says, "they see voting as this rigged system that only allows white supremacy to prosper. So the best way [they've found] to respond to that is to not engage with it at all. I've found that nobody has really contextualized voting. ... So a lot of the students don't understand the ways in which voter suppression has hindered African Americans in actually voting."

Smith stresses that this is work that needs to be done in every school but that educators teaching this topic shouldn't "sensationalize" it. He encourages white educators in particular to reflect on their positionality and privilege so as not to reproduce racism in their classrooms.

"There have to be real conversations with students about the history of politics and voter suppression and how that impacts them today," he says. "And it will take

Rewriting The Narrative

One way to counter the harm caused by voter suppression, activists maintain, is to create national, school-based voter registration opportunities. Nonprofit organizations, including When We All Vote, the League of Women Voters, the Andrew Goodman Foundation, CIRCLE and more, encourage structural change while also supporting educators and schools.

Here are some recommendations from these groups and others for educators leading school-based voter registration efforts:

1

Create a school climate that values voting.

"Making [voter registration] a part of the culture of a school makes it a part of a student's identity," explains Ethan Ashley. A member of the Orleans Parish School Board, Ashley helped pass a resolution encouraging schools to make voter registration and education opportunities available for all students.

"If you can make it a part of someone's identity, it makes it easier for them to become chronic voters. And that is the goal. The goal is to make sure that everyone is counted, everyone's voice is expressed, and you do it through voting and empower them to do it."

Ashley emphasizes the importance of making voting a normalized part of the high school experience, just like graduation or prom.

"It's like you would fantasize, 'Man, I can't wait to get to prom. I can't wait to graduate and walk across the stage,'" Ashley says. "When you make it that clear when you're in middle school, [students may] start to fantasize about, 'Man, I can't wait until I'm able to vote.'"

2

Assure first-time voters throughout the process.

Registering and voting for the first time can be overwhelming.

"I'm confused at the highest level, which makes me think that it's intentional for everybody to be confused," says Christina Sanders, regional program manager at the Andrew Goodman Foundation. "And leaving people confused suppresses the vote."

Educators who are registering first-time voters can find support through any number of national or local organizations knowledgeable about each state's registration and voting procedures. Letting students know what to expect when they reach their polling place helps ensure that first-time voters will become lifelong voters.

white teachers reflecting and finding ways to ... carry these conversations within their classrooms. A lot of schools with predominantly white students are not having conversations about the historical voter suppression of African Americans. These [schools] are the gatekeepers to those political systems.”

With his own students, Smith looks at systems like education, economics and politics to discuss how voter suppression manifests within each. For

example, he teaches about contemporary practices like gerrymandering and contextualizes them within history. Juxtaposing past and present, he explains poll taxes and literacy tests from the 1950s and '60s, then compares them to voter-suppression tactics that exist today. Once students have this important context, Smith helps them register to vote.

As the work of these educators shows, it is critical that students learn how our nation's history of voter

suppression still affects elections today. If not, they run the risk of viewing the struggle for voting rights as a relic of the past. But when educators help them make these connections, students can come to understand the true power behind their vote—and why it's worth fighting for. ♦

Ehrenhalt is Teaching Tolerance's school-based programming and grants manager.

3

Offer opportunities for everyone to engage.

Grace Chimene, president of the League of Women Voters of Texas, says research shows that standing behind a table in the lunchroom is not the best way to engage new voters.

“Get some dialogue back and forth,” she recommends, “so that people feel comfortable.”

Doing so can allow you to work with students to build a program that is sensitive to the needs of those who cannot register due to immigration or citizenship status, age or incarceration history.

For students concerned about disclosing eligibility status, educators can make it clear that registration is not mandatory. If your class is registering online, it should be easy for students to opt out. If you're meeting in person, you may choose to have students drop registration forms in a box by your classroom door as they leave, rather than collect them individually, so as not to single out any student. Making yourself available for questions will ensure students do not feel pressured to disclose information about their eligibility. Informing students about registration plans well in advance provides time for them to raise questions or concerns.

It's equally critical to engage young people who are not yet eligible to vote. According to CIRCLE, teaching younger students about voting increases the likelihood that they will vote by 40 percent.

4

Build a student-centered process.

My School Votes, a part of the nonpartisan, nonprofit organization When We All Vote, recommends and models a student-led process for leading voter registration efforts. The program incorporates principles of community organizing to encourage registration efforts driven by teams of educators and students.

“[We aim] to empower educators and students to change the culture around voting in their schools. Students can organize their peers,” says Andrew Amore, the program's director. “It's up to all of us to prepare students, especially students who have been historically underrepresented, to make their voices heard in our elections.”

My School Votes' emphasis on collaboration and student action means that voter registration and advocacy work can translate from a physical space to an online setting fairly easily. For example, in the organization's Student Action Series, students meet online weekly to join their peers and learn best practices for online organizing and voter registration.

“We have more than 700 [students] now who have signed on,” Amore says. “They're starting their own state, district and school teams. [We] give them the knowledge and guidance, and they build this thing on their own.”



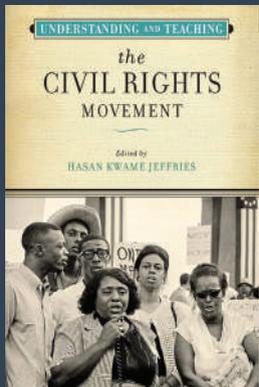


History Moves With Us

A movement veteran reflects on teaching civil rights history.

BY CHARLES E. COBB JR. AND HASAN KWAME JEFFRIES
ILLUSTRATION BY ALLEANNA HARRIS

THE UNITED STATES IS AT A CROSSROADS. In the wake of the May 25, 2020, killing of George Floyd—a 46-year-old, unarmed African American—by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets demanding justice for the victims of police violence and seeking meaningful changes in law enforcement. They did this in the middle of a global pandemic that in only three months' time had claimed the lives of 100,000 Americans, hitting Black, Latinx and Native American communities especially hard.



Understanding and Teaching the Civil Rights Movement

Edited by
Hasan Kwame Jeffries

Use the code **CIVILRIGHTS**
for a 30 percent discount
on this book from the
University of Wisconsin Press.

t-t.site/crm-book

Students helped lead the way. They joined and organized marches and demonstrations, calling attention to the gross injustices facing African Americans and voicing their own personal experiences with racism and prejudice.

The protests have already had a remarkable impact. The officers who killed George Floyd were arrested and charged; major municipalities announced plans to reallocate millions of dollars earmarked for police; states rewrote their use of force guidelines, banning chokeholds; state attorneys opened investigations into past police killings; and legislation designed to rein in police misconduct moved through Congress.

Still, the ultimate goal of a racially just and equitable society—a more perfect Union—remains elusive. History can help.

The civil rights movement offers a blueprint for creating meaningful social change. The movement transformed America, ending the most egregious forms of legalized racial discrimination, including de jure segregation in education.

But for students to learn the lessons that civil rights history has to offer, they have to learn more than the “Master Narrative,” the version of the movement that reduces the struggle to Rosa Parks sitting down and Martin Luther King Jr. standing up. In fact, they have to learn how to deconstruct that narrative, to see the ways that it distorts the past and misconstrues the present. They also have to learn how the movement actually happened, how ordinary people brought about such extraordinary change.

Understanding and Teaching the Civil Rights Movement was written to help teachers teach the movement accurately

and effectively. A collection of more than 20 original essays by civil rights history educators, the book offers detailed overviews of essential civil rights content, suggests practical strategies for teaching civil rights icons, identifies and explains the best ways to use primary source material, and presents proven methods and tools for engaging and exciting students.

The book begins with a reflection on teaching civil rights history by veteran civil rights activist Charlie Cobb Jr. Cobb was a field secretary for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and originated the idea of Freedom Schools as a part of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project. He worked for many years as a journalist and recently taught civil rights history as a visiting professor at Brown University.

In an abridged version of his essay, which is featured here, Cobb offers insightful observations and shares important lessons learned from teaching movement history in formal and informal settings for several decades. His dispatch from the front line of civil rights education is a powerful reminder that civil rights history is useful history, capable of teaching us about the past and the present. It can help students pursue a racially just and equitable society, but only if we take the time to learn what actually happened during the movement and have the courage to teach it truthfully.

— *Hasan Kwame Jeffries, Editor*
Understanding and Teaching the Civil Rights Movement

From “Who Is Fannie Lou Hamer?”

Nearly two decades ago, I returned to Mississippi, where I had been an organizer for the Student Nonviolent

Coordinating Committee (SNCC). I traveled back to the Magnolia State to hand-deliver copies of *Radical Equations*, a book I had just written with legendary SNCC activist Bob Moses, to friends from my movement days. One of the first people I visited was Shae Goodman Robinson, the principal of Brinkley Middle School. Her school is located in the heart of the capital city of Jackson. My visit was delightful, and afterward, as I sat on the front steps of the school building waiting for my ride, I could not help but think about the many movement people who had sacrificed so much in the fight for freedom. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) activist Medgar Evers, who was shot dead in the driveway of his home very near where I was sitting, came immediately to mind.

As I reflected on Evers, I wondered what the half dozen or so middle school students who were sitting with me knew about him. So I decided to engage them in what I only half-jokingly call “old guy” talk. After I told them that Medgar Evers’s home was not far away, I asked, “Can anyone tell me something about him?” I waited eagerly for an answer, but my question was met with stony silence. “You mean none of you can tell me anything about Medgar Evers?” I asked incredulously. Again, nothing. Then one kid finally said, “Didn’t he get killed?”

Directly across the street from the school is the Fannie Lou Hamer Public Library. In every way, Mrs. Hamer represented the heart and soul of the Mississippi movement. She was an ordinary person who faced extraordinary circumstances yet never yielded to fear or failure. The youngest of twenty children, she dropped out of school after the



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sixth grade to work on the cotton plantations of Sunflower County. She was evicted from her home after attempting to register to vote, but that didn’t keep her from getting involved in the movement. In fact, it deepened her commitment to fighting for freedom. With a powerful singing voice and keen organizing skills, Mrs. Hamer partnered with young SNCC organizers to help transform Mississippi by challenging the power of southern segregationists and northern liberals. Without Mrs. Hamer, the movement in Mississippi would not have been nearly as effective as it was.

So, having gotten nowhere with Medgar Evers, I decided to shift gears. Nodding toward the library, I asked, “How about Fannie Lou Hamer? Who can say something about her?” But once again, no one said a word.

By then, my ride had arrived, and as I got up I pointed at the library and told the kids that Black Mississippians made a big difference in the civil rights struggle and that Mrs. Hamer was one of the people they needed to learn about if they wanted to understand how those African Americans did it. She was a native Mississippian, I added for emphasis. I also told them that I would be happy to share my remembrances of Mrs. Hamer since I knew her personally.

Just then, as I was about to tell a story that I thought might bring them back to the school’s steps when I returned in few days, one of the kids leapt to his feet and in sheer amazement exclaimed, “Mr. Cobb! You was *alive* back then!”

The student’s surprise at discovering that I knew Mrs. Hamer personally is easy to understand. After all, her name was chiseled into the facade of a public building,

albeit a modest one. For a middle school student at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the 1960s were ancient times. Anybody who knew someone whose name was on a library was most likely dead or tottering on the brink of death, and certainly not likely to be sitting on the steps of their school talking to them.

At the same time, the student's reaction, and the entire conversation for that matter, disturbed me greatly. I had increasingly become distressed over how very little civil rights history the generation to whom the twenty-first century would belong actually knew, and this conversation only intensified my anxiety. But it also changed me forever.

Up to that point, my career as a journalist and writer had revolved around foreign affairs. I had bounced all over the world as a writer for *National Geographic* and as diplomatic correspondent for

AllAfrica.com. Yet, with the exception of my book with Bob Moses,

I had written almost nothing about the southern freedom movement. The kids

on the steps of Brinkley Middle School forced me to face up to the fact that I had an obligation as a writer with a movement background to figure out how best to convey movement history and culture as

I understood it. But this charge presented serious challenges, something I learned as a writer and as an occasional college professor.

As a former SNCC organizer, I was inclined to approach telling movement

history the way I had organized, from the bottom up and inside out. But despite an expanding body of scholarship stressing the importance of an approach centering on the tradition of grassroots community organizing, elementary and secondary schools across the country continue to stress a top-down and outside-in approach. As a result, a handful of charismatic leaders receive all of the attention to the exclusion of nearly everyone else.

At the same time, the movement is often taught in such a way as to separate and isolate it from the broader American story. Indeed, Black protest is usually confined to the South and separated from the much longer history of Black protest. The truth is that civil rights era protest was national and a part of an organizing tradition—largely at the grassroots—that includes enslaved revolts, the Underground Railroad, and continuous efforts to challenge the double standards of law and custom under which African Americans have been expected to live since the colonial era. In other words, insisting that “Black Lives Matter” is not new to the struggle.

Similarly, white opposition is frequently reduced to a handful of mad dog sheriffs. Generally speaking, the idea that the movement was a popular challenge to core American values, systems, and institutions that were firmly rooted in the soil of white supremacy is ignored. So too is the fact that America was founded on a great contradiction, immortalized in the words and actions of Thomas Jefferson, who famously declared “that all men are created equal” and infamously held Black men, women, and children in bondage. Rather than ignoring these connections, they should be explored, since reconciling this fundamental contradiction has

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I had increasingly become distressed over how very little civil rights history the generation to whom the twenty-first century would belong actually knew.



been a motivating factor in the Black freedom struggle since the colonial era.

Civil rights history needs to be conveyed in a connected way. Although today it is taught much better in colleges and universities, it is still not taught the way it should be, especially at the elementary and middle school levels. Indeed, having students memorize Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech or sing "Lift Every Voice" during Black History Month is no substitute for learning the intricacies of civil rights history. And using textbooks that barely mention the Black experience during the rest of the year does not help either.

...

My experiences in the movement and in the classroom have convinced me that if we want civil rights history to be useful to young people, then what we teach has to portray Black people in meaningful ways. This can and should be done at every educational level, for it is the usefulness of history—what history teaches

us to understand about ourselves—more than classroom exercises or syllabi that determines a history lesson's ultimate value. I speak here not as an academic, because I am not one. Instead, I speak as a veteran of the southern freedom movement and as someone still committed to fighting for freedom. What's more, it is clear to me that in the very near future, if not already, we will need to incorporate the current wave of activism and organization by young people into our discussions of the movement. After all, #BlackLivesMatter, Dream Defenders, Moral Mondays, and the many other newly formed organizations of the twenty-first century that have taken up the struggle for change are history in the making. ♦

Cobb is a distinguished journalist, educator and activist. Jeffries is an associate professor of history at The Ohio State University.



“We Still Haven’t L

The first group of 82 Japanese Americans arrive at the Manzanar concentration camp (or “war relocation center”) in Owens Valley, California, carrying their belongings in suitcases and bags on March 21, 1942. Manzanar was one of the first of 10 U.S. concentration camps, and its peak population, before it was closed in November 1945, was over 10,000 people.



earned From This”

Japanese American incarceration stories are American stories that need to be told.

BY CORY COLLINS

STANLEY HAYAMI WAS 16 when his family was incarcerated at Heart Mountain—a concentration camp so large that its 10,000-plus Japanese American inhabitants made up the third-largest town in Wyoming.

Hayami was one of approximately 1,500 students at Heart Mountain. His journal entries and drawings, in many ways, reflected the typical musings and anxieties of a teenager. He worried about whether his body would grow, about his grades, about sports and what his future held. But as a Japanese American incarcerated as a result of President Franklin Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066—an order that cast Japanese Americans as potential culprits of espionage and violence during World War II—Hayami held anxieties unique to a child coming of age under the shadows of suspicion and xenophobia.

His story, like most stories of the 33,000 enlisted U.S. Army Nisei soldiers and 120,313 Japanese Americans incarcerated in 10 U.S. camps, remains woefully forgotten in the history books. A new education initiative from the National Veterans Network (NVN) and the Smithsonian’s Asian Pacific American Center (APAC) aims to change that, utilizing their historical resources and the stories of Japanese Americans to create lessons often missing in U.S. history curricula—and connect those lessons to lived experiences of injustice today.

“I hope the war ends this year,” Hayami wrote on New Year’s Day in 1943. “I hope I’m out of here and a free man by ’44.” His resolutions included vows “to be more understanding of others,” and, as any student might wish, to “learn as much as I can.”

In 1944, Hayami enlisted in the U.S. Army, joining the segregated 442nd Regimental Combat Team in Europe.

For a while, Hayami’s family continued to receive his letters and doodles, reflections of his enduring lightheartedness. Hayami died while administering first aid to wounded soldiers on April 23, 1945. His family, awaiting his letters, received the telegram on May 9—one day after the U.S. had celebrated its victory in Europe.

An Education Project Designed to Preserve the Stories

“Personal stories have a way of connecting to people, connecting to students,” says Christine Sato-Yamazaki.

Sato-Yamazaki is the executive director of the National Veterans Network, an organization that advocates for the preservation of Nisei soldiers’ stories and strives to provide education that will utilize those stories to prevent future injustices.

After previously collaborating with the Smithsonian’s APAC on the digital exhibition that accompanied the 2011 Congressional Gold Medal awarded to Japanese American soldiers, Sato-Yamazaki saw an opportunity. The exhibition—featuring the stories of 12 enlisted Japanese Americans—had received great feedback, including San Francisco Unified School District sharing the resource with its educators. But it wasn’t being used as Sato-Yamazaki had hoped.

“Because for us,” Sato-Yamazaki explains, “it starts in the classroom.”

She imagined that the wealth of primary documents and biographical materials could inform an expanded curriculum with national reach. And the Smithsonian was the perfect partner.

“There’s so many hard lessons we learn from American history, the great American story,” says Andrea Kim Neighbors, manager of education initiatives at the Smithsonian’s APAC. “The

story of the Japanese American camps is a key one. ... This is a story that needs to continuously be told.”

Initially, the Smithsonian and the NVN contracted out the lessons, which aligned information about Japanese American incarceration and those who served in the military with social studies standards. But it was clear, early, that they would need educator feedback.

“We decided we really needed teachers to be involved with this process and to shape it, to create it,” Neighbors says. “Because they know how it will be applied and learned in the school classrooms.”

At first, four educators were brought to the Smithsonian APAC in Washington, D.C., to do a “sandbox”—providing input on already-designed lessons.

“But it turned into much more than that after we all got together,” remembers Brian Mason, a middle school teacher in Virginia’s Fairfax County. The lessons required a lot of background knowledge, and the educators spotted a disconnect between ideas and usability.

“We all agreed that there was something missing,” says Erin Miranda, who teaches fourth and fifth grade in San Francisco. “It was great to be there and be so valued as teachers trying to figure it out in real life, thinking about how we could make this accessible for as many classrooms, as many teachers as possible.”

To the credit of the Smithsonian and the NVN, they scrapped the original lessons. Three educators, including Mason, Miranda and D.C.-based elementary teacher Jon Berg, stayed on to design and pilot new material. The

Find the activity books at t-t.site/veterans-network.



In 1944, 18-year-old Stanley Hayami joins Company E of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a Japanese American unit.

team worked for almost two years.

The result is two activity books, one each for elementary and middle school students. Each book foregrounds the personal stories of Japanese Americans in teaching students this history, present-day implications and what these stories have to say about our values.

“We were super excited about what the message was,” Mason says. “And to get it out.”

The materials are available—to download, print or order—through the NVN’s website. And at both the elementary and middle school levels, they offer activities that explore the interconnection between the personal and the political, between this terrible chapter of our nation’s past and the need for righteous action in our nation’s present.

Teaching Elementary Students About the Japanese American Experience During World War II

“To teach history we have to be honest,” Erin Miranda says. “And there’s a way to be age-appropriate about it.”

Many elementary educators may balk at the idea of broaching the heavy subjects of racism, incarceration and war with young learners. But Berg insists, “If you are purposefully leaving out components of our shared history, you are actively doing a disservice to the students you’re teaching.”

Rather than avoiding tough topics, the activities created by Miranda and Berg are clearly designed to use developmentally appropriate questions to help students understand this history.

“What we essentially agreed upon was that we can’t underestimate these young children at a pivotal time when we can teach them about character,” Sato-Yamazaki explains. “We can teach them about fairness. We can teach them about compassion.”

The elementary activity book offers lessons for grades 2-5. Focusing on age-appropriate concepts of fairness, making friends, moving, artistic expression and team building, the activities inspire the exploration of two key questions: How can events from the past inform the decisions we make today? And why is it important to think critically about the consequences of racial discrimination?

The story of Stanley Hayami features prominently. Inspired by his doodles, students consider what it means to make art with limited supplies. Inspired by his love of sports, students consider what it means to create communities during a time of struggle. Students confront the uncertainties of

moving, the pains of being forced to leave pets and culturally significant heirlooms behind, and the stressors of doing schoolwork when your future freedom isn’t guaranteed.

According to Miranda, students were quick to empathize upon learning these stories—and quick to make deeper connections.

“Realizing the resilience that people who lived through that experience had [allowed] students to recognize something in themselves,” Miranda says. For some, she said, they recognized their own resilience, the strength they may have to endure such a

situation—a virtue known in Japanese as *gaman*. For others, they recognized they “can be the agents of change.”

It’s something that was really important to Jon Berg as he helped design the activities.

“The ultimate goal is students who are engaging in these lessons, really caring and connecting and empathizing with the people that they’re learning about,” Berg says. “And then, that connection driving them toward feeling empowered to act, to ensure that a similar thing doesn’t happen in the future.”

That empowerment opens the door, as students grow, toward an understanding of the many forms resistance, activism and patriotism can take—in both the past and the present.

Taking It a Step Further in Middle School

In Brian Mason’s seventh grade class at Herndon Middle School, a song was playing. Students read along with the lyrics:

And some folks didn't even have a suitcase to pack anything in. So two trash bags is all they gave them. And when the kids asked, 'Mom, where are we going?' Nobody even knew what to say to them.

"I could immediately see from their body language," Sato-Yamazaki remembers. "They perked up. And they listened."

The rap song "Kenji," by Linkin Park's Mike Shinoda, chronicles his father's family's experience with incarceration in Poston, Arizona. The lyrics are included in an interactive three-day unit that allows middle school students to consider three distinct stories of Japanese American history and why they remain relevant today.

In learning more about the hidden histories of Japanese American people, Mason says he learned the importance of asking particular questions to design the activities: What voices are missing? Whose voices are present? Whose voice didn't appear in a reading?

"I think if you just ask those questions and you are an educator who is a lifelong learner yourself, and you're open to change and flexibility, I think that's going to be enough," he says.

Students are introduced to three key figures in the middle school activity book: Daniel K. Inouye, a 442nd veteran who went on to serve in the United States Senate; Terry Nakanishi, who enlisted in the Women's Army Corps; and Fred T. Korematsu, who challenged the legality of incarceration all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Mason says many kids really latch onto the injustice of Korematsu's story; his incarceration was ruled as justifiable in one of the Supreme Court's



A group of children at a concentration camp in Tule Lake, California—the largest U.S. camp

most infamous decisions. Mason hopes educators will see the activities as providing students with multiple perspectives from which they can choose to learn or connect.

The vastly different experiences of Inouye, Nakanishi and Korematsu—coupled with present-day examples of incarceration and xenophobia—allow middle school students to confront complicated questions about what it means to be patriotic or to fight injustice.

A key outcome of the activity book Mason designed is to look critically at "what it means to be an American," connecting the Japanese American experience to other instances in which people's Americanness was questioned because of their identities. More specifically, Mason hopes the middle school lessons allow students to see World War II through a different lens, not just through the experiences of white people who dominate textbooks.

"You have American history, where there was this one narrator, right?" Mason explains. "That narrator told of the American experience, and it was largely singular and you had to force yourself to fit into it or you just didn't. And you were the 'other.' And I think the most broad-level goal that we hope to achieve with this is making

people realize that America is not one story with one narrator. That it's a collection of short stories from different voices and different times and different people who have very different experiences but have something that makes them uniquely American."

Both Sato-Yamazaki and Neighbors were able to witness Mason's classroom as he piloted the lessons. They walked away impressed—and hopeful.

"Students on their own were able to make really incredible connections with what they see happening on the news or what they heard," Neighbors says, noting that students quickly recognized the gross injustice of what happened to Japanese Americans.

"I think [the lessons] started to really impact students' awareness of race and justice in their school communities and in what they see happening across the country."

The Past Is Present; The Past Is a Present

When the educators began piloting the activity books in their classrooms, that work coincided with national news about the increased incarceration of children and families at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Berg says that creating classroom cultures that value student voice and participation, and where students feel



comfortable sharing, will often lead students to make present-day connections on their own—connections that are vital for building a better future.

“The reason why I believe this story is so important to tell,” Neighbors says, “is that [Japanese Americans] were wrongfully imprisoned because of how they look, because of misinformed, racially biased decisions to imprison people because of fear they might do something harmful. That was never proven to be true, and I think there’s so much we can still learn from that. ...

“We see this happening now on the border, families separated forcefully. We see children in cages. And what really makes me sad about that is, as a nation, we still haven’t learned from this at all.”

Since the lessons were first piloted amid incarcerations at the border, history has echoed in different ways. The coronavirus pandemic laid bare the quickness with which anti-Asian xenophobia and racism can re-emerge as a scapegoat in a time of crisis. For Sato-Yamazaki, it was hard not to note the comparison.

“[Japanese Americans] were looked upon with suspicion,” she says. She recalls how many were spit upon in public, how those who enlisted in the Army during World War II often did so to prove their loyalty and protect their families from undue speculation.

“Seeing the increase in discrimination does bring it back,” Sato-Yamazaki admits. “This feeling that we’re not looked upon as Americans again.”

A descendant of incarcerated Japanese Americans, Sato-Yamazaki notes the importance of telling her son about his family history.

“It’s about making sure that history is passed on,” she says. “It’s very personal for me, but it’s much larger than that. It’s an American story that should be told.”

America is not one story with one narrator. It’s a collection of short stories from different voices and different times and different people who have very different experiences but have something that makes them uniquely American.

For many of Erin Miranda’s students, the stories of Nisei soldiers and incarcerated Japanese Americans is very personal as well—family stories, just a few generations old. Miranda teaches at Rosa Parks Elementary, home to a Japanese Bilingual Bicultural Program. She herself is the granddaughter of incarcerated Japanese Americans.

“It’s part of our local history,” she explains. Those who resisted or persisted through incarceration are part of the community’s past and inspire the community’s future.

One such person who visits the school is Dr. Satsuki Ina, an activist and community trauma expert whose family resisted incarceration. As co-chair of Tsuru for Solidarity—a direct-action group of Japanese American activists fighting racist detention and removal policies—she continues to advocate for victims of incarceration, including immigrants at the southern U.S. border.

And when Satsuki Ina visits Rosa Parks Elementary, the thank you notes she receives illustrate the ways in which students can see her story as a lesson for their own lives.

“The message that she gets most often is that ... they want to speak out,” Miranda says. “They want to do what they can, even if it’s not happening to them.”

It hasn’t always been common for Japanese American elders to share these stories or to advocate for their inclusion in education spaces. Sato-Yamazaki speaks of the incredible humility of Nisei veterans, of growing up as the granddaughter of a 442nd veteran but rarely hearing about his story.

Miranda admits that, for a long time, her mother—the child of incarcerated Japanese Americans—didn’t really talk about it.

But recently, Miranda’s mother retired and began volunteering to read books to elementary students. Miranda says she took notice of people, cultures and histories that hadn’t been represented in her classroom libraries as a student. She told her daughter, “Why can’t we have the Japanese American experience and internment camps also explained that way?”

Thanks in part to her daughter and this new initiative, more students *will* be introduced to that history. And while its continued relevance reveals painful, ongoing injustices, this newfound opportunity to teach it—thoroughly—also offers some hope.

“I think it’s because earlier generations weren’t ready to do that,” Miranda’s mother told her. “I think you’re doing the right thing. It’s your voice that can teach this to other generations.” ♦

Collins is the senior writer for Teaching Tolerance.

2020

TEACHING TOLERANCE AWARD

EXCELLENCE
IN TEACHING

And the Winners Are ...

Meet the recipients of the 2020 Teaching Tolerance Award for Excellence in Teaching.

BY ANYA MALLEY

THE 285 APPLICANTS for this year's Teaching Tolerance Award for Excellence in Teaching were extremely impressive. The opportunity to learn about the work of these educators reaffirmed for us that members of our TT community are incredibly creative in the ways they explore social justice with their students.

In their curricula and beyond, the five educators who won the award integrate the domains of TT's Social Justice Standards—identity, diversity, justice and action—in astounding ways. They support students in affirming their own identities, and they help them understand and empathize with others in their communities. Their students critically discuss and call out injustices, and they learn to take action against them.

Here's a look at some of the work our 2020 awardees are doing in their schools every day.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ZÉ OTAVIO



Kaitlin Kamalei Brandon

*Teaching young students
ethnic studies and allyship.*

Leschi Elementary School // Seattle, Washington

A colleague says...

"She is so valuable to the work our community is doing toward racial equity."

In Kaitlin Kamalei Brandon's classroom, picture books aren't just stories—she uses them to teach ethnic studies. As students see themselves represented in the books they read, she says, they "feel more comfortable bringing in their authentic selves."

As a Native Hawaiian, biracial woman, Brandon didn't see many children's books representing her identities in school. Once she became a teacher, she wanted to use multicultural literature but realized she didn't have a model for how. So Brandon created the organization and website *Colorful Pages*. There, she vets books, compiles reading lists, writes lessons using diverse books and provides workshops.

But teaching diverse books is only half of the equation; when teaching ethnic studies Brandon also teaches her students what allyship looks like. They learn that allies insist on the dignity of their own identities and partner with the communities around them to make necessary change. Because of their continual discussions, Brandon explains, her students immediately understood the significance of the Black Lives Matter movement.

"The kids got it so fast," she says. They recognized that "a harm on one member of the community is a harm on all of us."



Rosie Reid

Fostering strong communities inside and beyond the classroom.

Northgate High School // Walnut Creek, California

A student says...

“She is without fail ready to listen to what everyone has to say and makes sure all of her students have a voice.”

To better support her students, Rosie Reid started meeting without them. With caregivers and other educators, Reid created a county-wide, anti-racist discussion group. Together, they explore works like Monique W. Morris’s *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* and Bettina L. Love’s *We Want to Do More Than Survive*. But they’re not only a book club. At each meeting, members make a plan to carry their work forward, committing to anti-racist action. Recently, for example, some members rewrote their school’s dress code policy to make it more gender inclusive. Others are currently working to eliminate funding for school resource officers in their community.

Doing this work, they engage a question that guides Reid’s classes, as well: “Who do I owe something to?”

With students, she approaches the question from many angles. Perhaps the most popular is the “Bronco of the Month.” Students nominate and vote to honor a classmate who has done something difficult or uplifted others. The ritual allows space for appreciating one another, but it also helps students think deeply about how to appreciate, celebrate and contribute to the community they’re building together.



Sam Long

Teaching social justice in high school science class.

Standley Lake High School // Westminster, Colorado

A colleague says...

“He navigates his sphere of influence beautifully ... to disrupt injustice and advocate for the LGBTQ community and his students.”

In his biology and chemistry classes and on his website, *Gender-Inclusive Biology*, Sam Long offers a model for understanding and teaching social justice through STEM.

In all of his work with students, Long celebrates human diversity. Early on, he takes time to explain his transgender identity and the importance of respecting others’ identities in a diverse world. Later, his students learn about diversity in the natural world, how some species change sexes and some have traits similar to bisexuality. They learn how diversity helps species survive.

But Long doesn’t only connect science to identity and diversity; his students also learn about the relationship between science and justice. They learn about “junk science” and discuss how false assumptions about race harm Black people, Indigenous people and people of color. They learn that men of color are disproportionately convicted of crimes, and they learn how the scientific breakthrough of DNA fingerprinting has exonerated hundreds.

In helping them understand the connection between social justice and STEM, Long helps his students think about the role science can play in advancing—or impeding—a more just future.



Erin Shadowens

Promoting critical thinking and action in third grade.

Brooklyn Prospect Charter School // Brooklyn, New York

A colleague says...

“She is always curious and interested in learning how to innovate her practice.”

After learning about food insecurity in their city, Erin Shadowens’ students wanted to take action. So she helped them do that. A staff member worked with some of the third graders to reduce food waste in their school. Others discussed tactics used by youth activists. Then they led a protest for children’s rights in a Brooklyn park.

She’s proud when her third grade students speak up, Shadowens says. But she’s also proud when they make space to listen.

Last year, for example, students discussed the difference between equality and equity. They considered a simple statement: “You should treat everybody the same no matter what they look like.” Every student agreed—except one. Although her classmates were initially dismissive, they eventually listened. The student explained she disagreed because we can’t make everyone use stairs if we aren’t all able to.

The student activism project was an impressive moment, Shadowens says. But it was the dialogue that stuck with her. She says that it’s in class where students first learn to use their voices. It’s the dialogues that let the protests happen.



Kia Turner

Encouraging liberation and transformation in middle school English class.

Harlem Academy // New York, New York

A student says...

“She helps me understand the material so well that I feel as if I am in the story.”

Kia Turner believes her students need to know more than how to navigate the world; they also need to know they can transform it. In the classes she designs and teaches, she helps them see how change can happen—and how they can lead it.

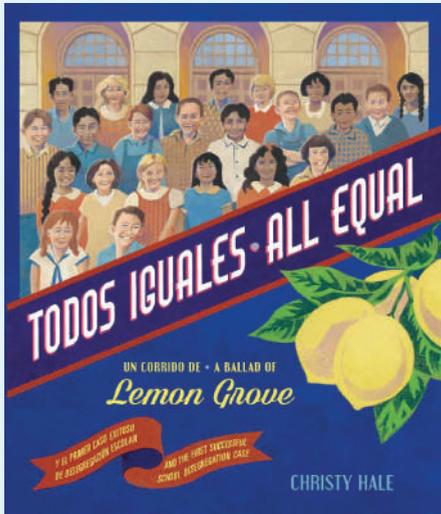
Inspired by Harvard University’s Aaliyah El-Amin, Turner created the middle school advisory program Tools for Liberation. It helps students explore their identities and their experiences with race, ethnicity and gender.

In her English/language arts classes, Turner takes a different approach. She uses literary analysis to help students think deeply about language, liberation and justice. In her poetry units, building on ideas by H. Bernard Hall, she supports critical readings of hip-hop. Students study the Black Panthers and the politics of respectability. They analyze lyrics and discuss how word choices can be acts of resistance. At the end of the unit, they perform their own poems.

The goal of her work, Turner says, is to help students recognize that “they matter, regardless of what society is saying about their sexuality, their gender, their race. ... They’re carving their own futures.” ♦

Malley is the editorial assistant for Teaching Tolerance.

What We're Reading

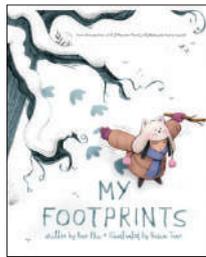


In 1930, 12-year-old Roberto Álvarez was attending Lemon Grove School, where he and other Mexican American kids learned alongside their Anglo-American classmates. When his community discovered the school board's plan to segregate Mexican American students into a far inferior “barn” school, they fought back, choosing Roberto as the plaintiff for their groundbreaking case. Christy Hale's *Todos Iguales: Un Corrido de Lemon Grove/All Equal: A Ballad of Lemon Grove* tells the true story of the first successful school desegregation case through vibrant illustrations, sheet music for a bilingual ballad, and supplementary photographs and quotes. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“A great example of the power of community action, and young students get to see children leading in the fight for their right to education.”

—Matilda Morrison,
Teaching Tolerance
Advisory Board Member

Teaching Tolerance loves to read! Check out a few of our favorite books for diverse readers and educators.



Feeling angry and lonely after being teased by bullies, Thuy walks home alone in the snow, making her footprints look like those of animals. When she gets home, Thuy and her two mothers imagine creatures who always have courage—just like Thuy. Written by Bao Phi and illustrated by Basia Tran, *My Footprints* is, for young learners, a good look at self-discovery and finding your courage and confidence. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“A sweet and inclusive story about imagination, finding power from within, and drawing strength and courage from family and cultural heritage.”

—Lindsey Shelton, Teaching Tolerance Marketing Coordinator

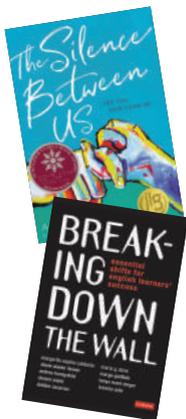


United States history lessons often move quickly from the Civil War to the civil rights movement. But there is a fascinating history sandwiched between those two watershed moments. In *Dark Sky Rising: Reconstruction and the Dawn of Jim Crow*, Henry Louis Gates Jr. teamed with Tonya Bolden to flesh out the unfinished business of this period for young readers. In their exploration, they detail how freed Black people had agency in helping decide policies to ensure their full citizenship, which was later dismantled through discriminatory laws and violence.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

“This book can help students contextualize how U.S. policy has framed and supported white supremacy—and acknowledge our rights’ fragility.”

—Coshandra Dillard, Teaching Tolerance Staff Writer

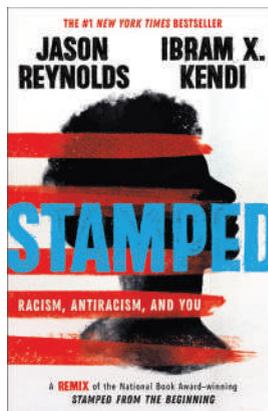


“Introduces a story too often underrepresented in YA literature.”

—Angela Hartman, Teaching Tolerance Advisory Board Member

“A thought-provoking text for a collaborative book study focused on success for language learners.”

—Julie Bradley, Teaching Tolerance Advisory Board Member



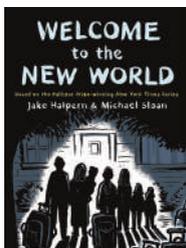
“A timely and necessary work that shows young people they are not too young to think deeply about how racist ideas influence the world around them—and gives them valuable resources to challenge those ideas.”

—Gabriel Smith, Teaching Tolerance Program Associate



“An individual commitment to anti-racist work begins with a catalyst—this book is poised to be that for so many youth.”

—Christina Noyes, Teaching Tolerance Fellow



“A searing look into the ways American systems honor people’s humanity—and how they don’t.”

—Monita K. Bell, Teaching Tolerance Managing Editor

This Book Is Anti-Racist, by Tiffany Jewell and illustrated by Aurélia Durand, is a much-needed guide for young people to understand and challenge the oppressive systems and interpersonal behavior that underpin our society. Filled with personal anecdotes and invaluable wisdom, this book provides space for young people to question dominant narratives about identity, race and racism and reflect on the intersections of their own identities. Throughout, Jewell embraces complexities inherent in discussions about racism, and she gives readers the necessary tools to be part of the diverse coalitions that will dismantle it.

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

Based on the serialized, Pulitzer Prize-winning comic strip by the same name, **Welcome to the New World** tells the true story of two branches of the Syrian Aldabaan family, who arrived in the United States on Election Day 2016. What began as a reporting assignment for *New York Times* journalist Jake Halpern—and eventually illustrator Michael Sloan—turned into a three-year collaboration with the Aldabaans. The resulting graphic novel explores universal themes: desiring safety and belonging, having hopes and dreams, and wanting what’s best for one’s family. Particularly through the experiences of high schoolers Naji and Amal, we also see the assumptions, stereotypes and lack of compassion that result when we fail to see each other as fellow human beings.

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

The beautiful cover art by Deaf artist Nancy Roark is just one reason **The Silence Between Us** stands out. This lovely YA novel follows Maya, a

Deaf protagonist, as she navigates her last year of high school, a romantic relationship and more. For the first time in her life, Maya is attending a school for hearing students, and she struggles with classmates and teachers who don’t understand or respect Deaf experience or culture. Written by Alison Gervais, who is Hard of Hearing, the dialogue mixes conversation, sign language and lip reading to tell Maya’s story.

“This is not a history book. I repeat, this is not a history book,” begins the newest title from Jason Reynolds. Instead, Reynolds wants young people to see his text as a “present book” and a guide to have intimate and honest conversations about racism in America. In **Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You**, Reynolds reimagines Ibram X. Kendi’s 2016 National Book of the Year, *Stamped From the Beginning*, a work that explores the origins of racist ideas in America. Very much like its predecessor, *Stamped* explores the insidious ways racist ideas may take form in the lives and experiences of young people and examines how students can make anti-racism a reality in their spaces.

During these divisive times, it’s refreshing to find a book written collaboratively by well-known and respected leaders in the field of English language learner education, especially since it’s intended to be read and discussed in a group. Corwin’s **Breaking Down the Wall: Essential Shifts for English Learners’ Success** offers not only practical strategies but also a forward-thinking path to ensure an equitable, excellent education for all.

What We're Watching

Dim the lights and get ready to learn with these TT-approved films!

Pixar's **Loop** tells the story of Renee, a non-verbal autistic girl of color. Voiced by Madison Bandy, a voice actor who is autistic, Renee communicates using gestures, sounds and her smartphone. At her canoe camp, Renee is joined on a day trip by neurotypical camper Marcus. Although they don't use the same methods of communication, Marcus and Renee make it through a tough time, and the two build a much stronger understanding of one another and their realities. Their adventure offers a gorgeous story of identity and diversity, and it also exhibits the importance of empathy. (11 min.)

[Available on Disney+](#)
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

"For us to be labeled as climate change refugees, in a way, is kind of harsh ... but I haven't been able to put another word in its place yet." Chris Brunet struggles to understand what it means to be an American and a refugee in the United States, but he can't seem to define his story any other way. **Lowland Kids** paints a grave and intimate portrait of the effects of climate change by giving viewers a glimpse into the lives of a few residents of Isle de Jean Charles in southern Louisiana, which has lost hundreds of acres to rising ocean levels. In addition to Chris, the film follows his niece Juliette and nephew Howard, along with other residents, as they

navigate being forced to leave the only place they've ever called home. **Lowland Kids** is a beautiful yet solemn picture of the real consequences of climate change taking place in our country, and it serves as a warning of what might be on the horizon. (22 min.)

[Available on HuffPost](#)
MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

A brief yet poignant film, **Twenty & Odd** offers viewers imagery of Black life inspired by Maya Angelou's poem "Still I Rise." Produced by the National Park Service and narrated by Angelou, the title refers to the number of enslaved Africans who were brought to the shores of Virginia in 1619. This visually stunning short shows Black people against the backdrop of national parks and historic sites, and it parallels Angelou's messages of fear, pain, resilience, joy and liberation. We recommend this video and its accompanying text to start discussions about symbolism, the impact of slavery, family, cultural expressions, innocence, communal gatherings and intersectionality. (4 min.)

[Available at t-t.site/20-and-odd](#)
MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

Presented by the Southern Poverty Law Center, **Bibi** is a story of identity, family and forgiveness. After he gets a call that his

father has died, Ben—or Bibi, as his father called him—visits the Rio Grande Valley in Texas where he grew up. The film tells the compelling story of a new beginning for the relationship between Bibi and his father, years after they last communicated, and even after his father's death. **Bibi** centers the main character's Latinx and gay identities and offers educators a key to unlocking conversations about communication, understanding, identity and intersectionality. The film is accompanied by lessons for grades 6-8 and 9-12. (18 min.)

[Available at tolerance.org/bibi](https://tolerance.org/bibi)
MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

Crip Camp, a Netflix film directed by Nicole Newnham and James LeBrecht, documents a little-known story in the disability rights struggle. It's no coincidence that so many of the leaders of the disability rights movement went to the same summer camp in the 1960s. The liberating environment this group of young people experienced—and helped to create—at Camp Jened directly inspired their role in some of the key moments in disability rights history. This funny and heart-wrenching film challenges us to create empowering spaces in our own lives, schools and classrooms. (106 min.)

[Available on Netflix](#)
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Min Jee's Lunch

BY ELIZABETH KLEINROCK ILLUSTRATION BY JANICE CHANG

IT WAS FIVE MINUTES before the class transitioned to lunch, and Min Jee was excited. She and her father had cooked dinner together the night before, and she knew he had packed extra for her today. None of her friends ever brought stew for lunch, especially not bright red stew like kimchi jjigae, and Min Jee was excited to show them what she had made.

As she entered the cafeteria, Min Jee's friends Ella and Gabriel waved her over to a space at their table. Min Jee unscrewed her thermos and proudly showed them her lunch.

"Whoa, it's so red! I bet it's really spicy," exclaimed Ella, peering at the stew.

"Remember last time I came over to your house for dinner, your dad made those rice cakes that were so spicy they made my eyes water?" laughed Gabriel.

And then suddenly: "Eww, what is that stuff?"

A loud voice came from the opposite side of the table. A girl named Audrey, who Min Jee recognized from the classroom next door, was staring at the kimchi jjigae, dramatically wrinkling her nose.

Min Jee's voice faltered. "It's called kimchi jjigae. It's a Korean stew. My dad and I made it together."

Audrey raised her eyebrows.

"Well, it looks weird. Does your family eat stuff like bats and lizards? I heard Asian people eat weird stuff like that, and that's how everyone got sick. Is that true?"

Min Jee felt her face turning as red as the kimchi jjigae. By the time she opened her mouth to respond, Audrey had already turned away and was talking to someone else. Gabriel and Ella stared at the table as they ate their lunches. Min Jee realized she wasn't hungry anymore.

At dinner that evening, her appetite still hadn't returned.

"Min Jee, is something wrong?" her father asked. "You usually eat like your food is about to run away from you!"

Min Jee felt her throat tighten.

"Appa, a girl at school today said our food looked weird. And then she asked if we eat bats and reptiles because we're Asian, and that food like ours made everyone sick. It made me so angry! And Ella and Gabriel were right there, but they didn't say anything!"

Her father frowned and then took a deep breath.

"I'm sorry that happened, honey, and I'm so glad you told me. It can be really hurtful when people make mean comments just because something is different or new to them. It sounds like she was saying a lot of things she didn't understand. That doesn't make it OK, but it's important that you don't feel embarrassed of who you are just because of her ignorance.

"I'm also hearing that you're disappointed your friends didn't speak up for you. Maybe when you see



them tomorrow, you can tell them how you felt. They might not have meant to hurt your feelings, but if they're your friends, they'll care that they did."

Min Jee swallowed and nodded, but the thought of speaking up to Ella and Gabriel sounded just as scary as standing up to Audrey.

The next day, Min Jee approached her two friends at the lunch table. She set down her lunch and took a deep breath. Just as she was about to launch into the speech she practiced the night before, she heard Ella's voice.

"Gabriel and I had a talk," Ella said. "We're really sorry we didn't say anything when Audrey was talking about your food yesterday."

"Yeah, we messed up," added Gabriel. "Friends are supposed to have each other's backs. Ella and I should have interrupted Audrey and told her what she was saying was wrong, and it's not funny to make fun of someone's traditions. We promise to do better next time."

"Thank you for saying that." Min Jee nodded and smiled. "I was really upset yesterday and felt nervous about telling you because I didn't think you noticed. I almost didn't let my dad pack my lunch today!"

Opening her lunch bag, Min Jee saw that her dad had packed her a few rolls of kimbap. When she looked up to offer a roll to Ella and Gabriel, she couldn't help but laugh when she saw them eagerly holding their forks, ready to dig in. ♦

Questions for Readers

RIGHT THERE (IN THE TEXT)

Why was Min Jee extra excited for lunch at the beginning of the story?

THINK AND SEARCH (IN THE TEXT)

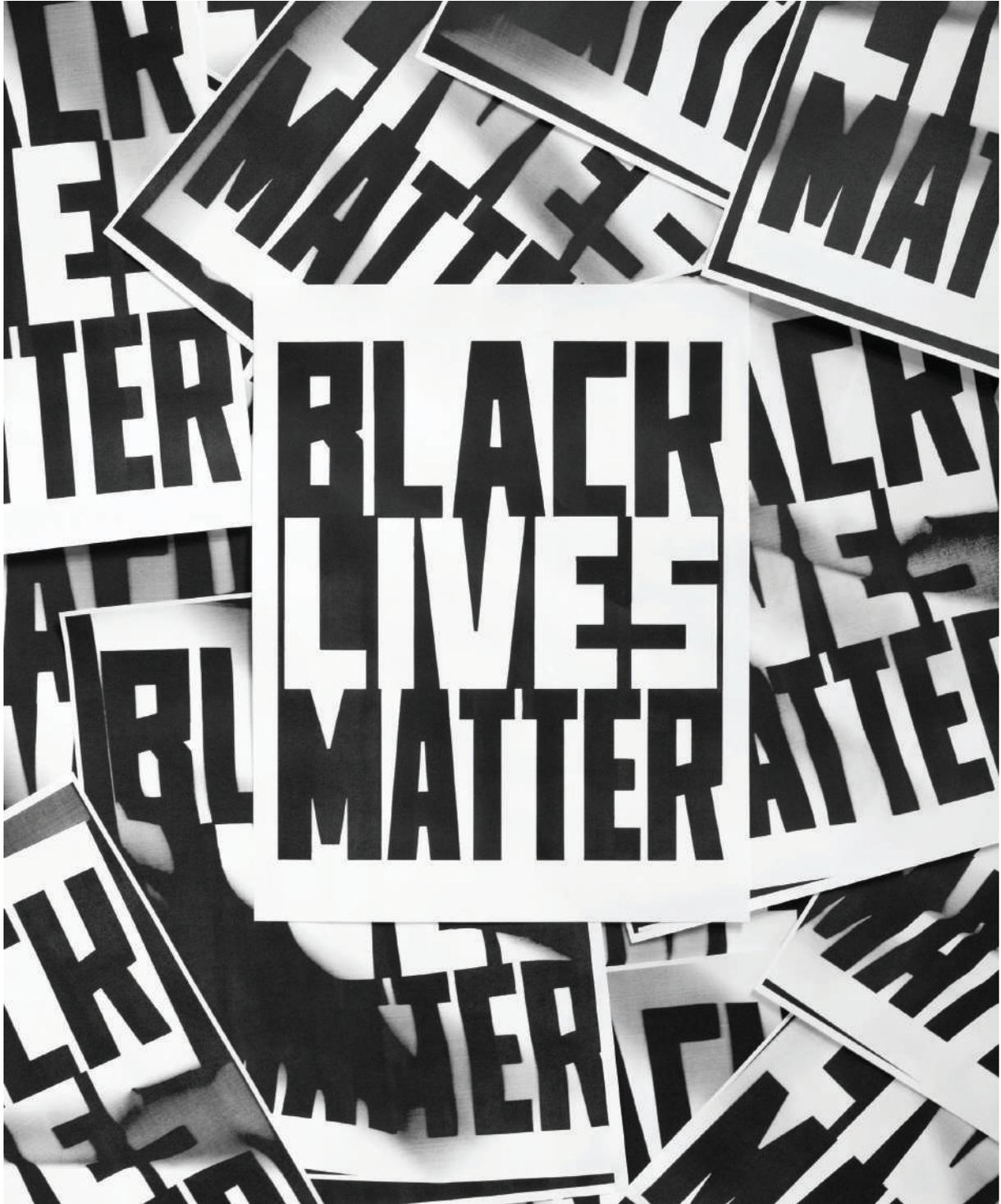
How did Audrey's comments make Min Jee feel? Why?

AUTHOR AND ME (IN MY HEAD)

Why is it wrong to make assumptions about people or groups like the ones Audrey made about Asian people?

ON MY OWN (IN MY HEAD)

Ella and Gabriel wished they had stood up for Min Jee. When is a time you have stood up for a friend, someone has stood up for you, or you have seen someone stand up for someone else?



ADÉ HOGUE, a designer based in Chicago, Illinois, originally approached this piece simply, but then a scanner mishap changed everything. “The [poster] is now a collage of a hand drawn lettering piece that has been scanned and manipulated on the scanner bed,” Hogue says. “I think it helps amplify the many times we’ve felt we need to shout this phrase.”

ILLUSTRATION BY ADÉ HOGUE



TEACHING
TOLERANCE
A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER



BLACK LIVES MATTER AT SCHOOL

Black Lives Matter at School is a national coalition organizing for racial justice in education.

In this era of mass incarceration, there is a school-to-prison-pipeline system that is more invested in locking up youth than unlocking their minds. That system uses harsh discipline policies that push Black students out of schools at disproportionate rates, denies students the right to learn about their own cultures, and whitewashes the curriculum to exclude many of the struggles and contributions of Black people and other people of color.

That system is also pushing out Black teachers from schools in cities around the country. Educators in the Black Lives Matter at School movement developed these demands for the movement:

- 1 END "ZERO TOLERANCE" DISCIPLINE AND IMPLEMENT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.
- 2 HIRE MORE BLACK TEACHERS.
- 3 MANDATE BLACK HISTORY AND ETHNIC STUDIES IN K-12 CURRICULUM.
- 4 FUND COUNSELORS, NOT COPS.

LEARN MORE AT
[BLACKLIVESMATTERATSCHOOL.COM](https://blacklivesmatteratschool.com)



DO YOU HAVE A GREAT IDEA FOR A PROJECT? DON'T JUST THINK IT—DO IT!

**APPLY
TODAY!**

SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATOR GRANTS

Educators know best how to build empathy, develop positive identities, and promote critical thinking about injustice. Our grants fund creative classroom, school and district-level initiatives to make schools safe, just and equitable places for all students to learn.

To apply, review the guidelines and complete the online application at tolerance.org/grants. Applications are considered on a rolling basis.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Educators who work in U.S.-based K-12 schools, alternative schools, school districts, and therapeutic or juvenile justice facilities may apply.

TEACHING TOLERANCE
EDUCATOR GRANTS RANGE FROM

\$500 - \$5,000

VISIT [TOLERANCE.ORG/GRANTS](https://tolerance.org/grants) AND SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION TODAY!