

**Family Reading Groups**  
Start One at Your School

**Black Lives Matter**  
Join the Week of Action

**Plantation Visits**  
Teach the Truth About Slavery

# TEACHING TOLERANCE

# *Equity,* PERIOD.

ISSUE 61 | SPRING 2019  
[TOLERANCE.ORG](http://TOLERANCE.ORG)

Normalizing menstruation reduces student anxiety and makes school policies fairer. Here's how to join the movement for menstrual equity.



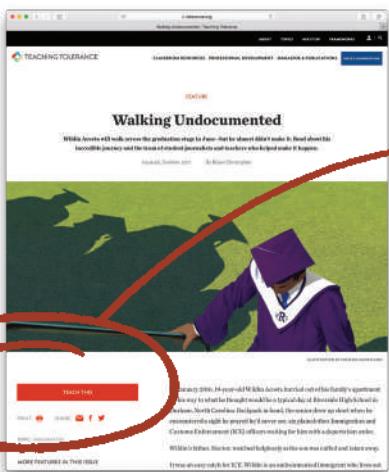
**FREE**  
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WHAT CAN TOLERANCE.

## EDUCATING FOR A

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TO YOUR CLASSROOM.  
TRY OUR FILM KITS.**



### **SELMA: THE BRIDGE TO THE BALLOT**

The true story of the students and teachers who fought to secure voting rights for African Americans in the South.  
*Grades 6-12*



### **ONE SURVIVOR REMEMBERS**

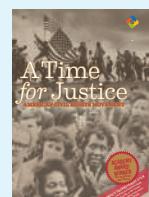
Gerda Weissmann Klein's account of surviving the Holocaust encourages thoughtful classroom discussion about a difficult-to-teach topic.  
*Grades 6-12*

#### **STREAMING ONLINE**



### **VIVA LA CAUSA**

An introduction to lessons about struggles for workers' rights—both past and present.  
*Grades 6-12*



### **A TIME FOR JUSTICE**

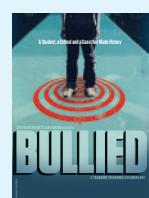
Follow the civil rights movement from Emmett Till to the passing of the Voting Rights Act.  
*Grades 6-12*



### **MIGHTY TIMES**

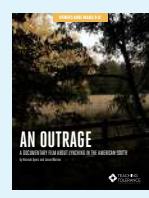
### **THE CHILDREN'S MARCH**

The heroic story of the young people in Birmingham, Alabama, who brought segregation to its knees.  
*Grades 6-12*



### **BULLIED**

A STUDENT, A SCHOOL AND A CASE THAT MADE HISTORY  
One student's ordeal at the hands of anti-gay bullies culminates in a message of hope.  
*Grades 6-12*



### **AN OUTRAGE**

A documentary film about lynching in the American South.  
*Grades 9-12*

#### **STREAMING ONLINE**

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*All kits include film and viewer's guide.*

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[tolerance.org/teaching-kits](https://www.tolerance.org/teaching-kits)



# TEACHING TOLERANCE

ISSUE 61 | SPRING 2019

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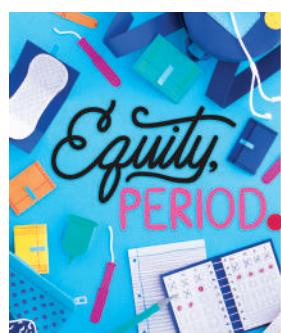
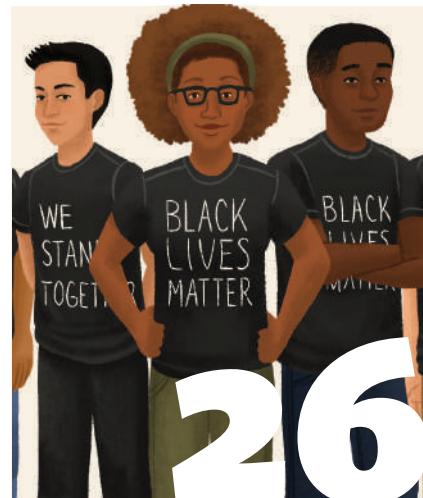
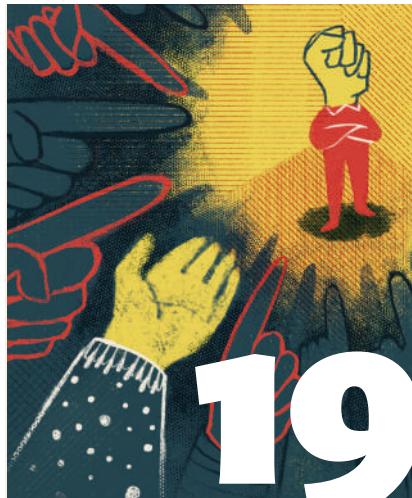
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ILLUSTRATION BY LORRAINE NAM

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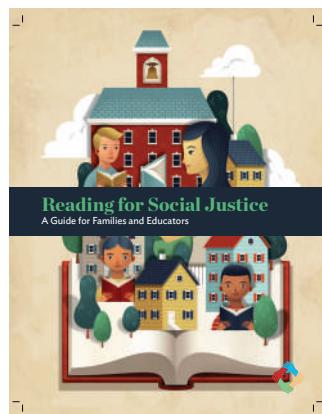
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**NEW RESOURCE! ▶**  
Check out our new “choose your own adventure” guide to planning a family reading group!  
[tolerance.org/reading-together-guide](http://tolerance.org/reading-together-guide)



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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

**“If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things.”**

— CONFUCIUS



**IN 1991**, I was a New Yorker with long brown hair, mom to a 6-year-old and in my 16th year of teaching. That year, we were wearing high-waisted tapered pants, and no one thought NFL-style shoulder pads for women's suits were at all strange. A lot has changed, as a glance at my photo will prove.

Teaching Tolerance began that year; the following year, we released the first issue of this magazine. The project was founded to reduce prejudice among American school children by providing their teachers with ideas and resources to promote intergroup contact.

Our alliterative name reflected the needs of the time as we saw them: Schools had been steadily integrating for more than 25 years, and these diverse classrooms offered the perfect opportunity for teachers to put empathy, compassion and appreciation of diversity into their lesson plans. This generation, we hoped, would reject hate and exclusion.

But the world changed, and we changed in response.

Since Teaching Tolerance began, schools have become less, not more, integrated. That limits students' opportunities to interact with people who have different lived experiences. American schools are more regimented and test-focused than they were in 1991, giving teachers less time and autonomy to teach about empathy. And the majority of today's students

are children of color; prejudice reduction doesn't address the systemic inequities they face.

In response, we've evolved as a program. Our work shifted toward pedagogy and approaches that seek to empower students, make schools more equitable and address oppression head on. We developed a set of Social Justice Standards anchored by four pillars: Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action. While we continue to advocate for appreciation of difference, we understand that much more is needed.

In early 2017, we adopted a new mission to reflect our work and vision more accurately: "We work with teachers to prepare children and youth to be active participants in a diverse democracy."

And today, in 2019, we're wondering if it's time to change our name.

Many readers—perhaps even you—have told us that our name falls short of what we offer. Tolerance, they point out, is too low a bar; it connotes "putting up with" rather than respect. We've pointed out that we see tolerance as "respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's

cultures." We ask people to judge us on what's inside the book and not what's on the cover.

Names matter, though. They signal what's inside. The name Teaching Tolerance has an impact on many people, especially people from marginalized communities and groups who don't feel respected by this name. As social justice educators, we preach that impact is more important than intent. And we're taking that message to heart.

For the next two months, we're exploring the possibility of a new name, one that truly reflects who we are and what we stand for. It's not something we take on lightly. Teaching Tolerance is used by tens of thousands of educators every month; generations of teachers cherish our program. Will they recognize us behind a new name?

We're asking you to help inform the exploration process by letting us know what you think. Turn to the back cover for a link to our survey.

We'll keep you posted!

—Maureen Costello



# 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](https://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  
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RANGE FROM

**\$500 -  
\$10,000**

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

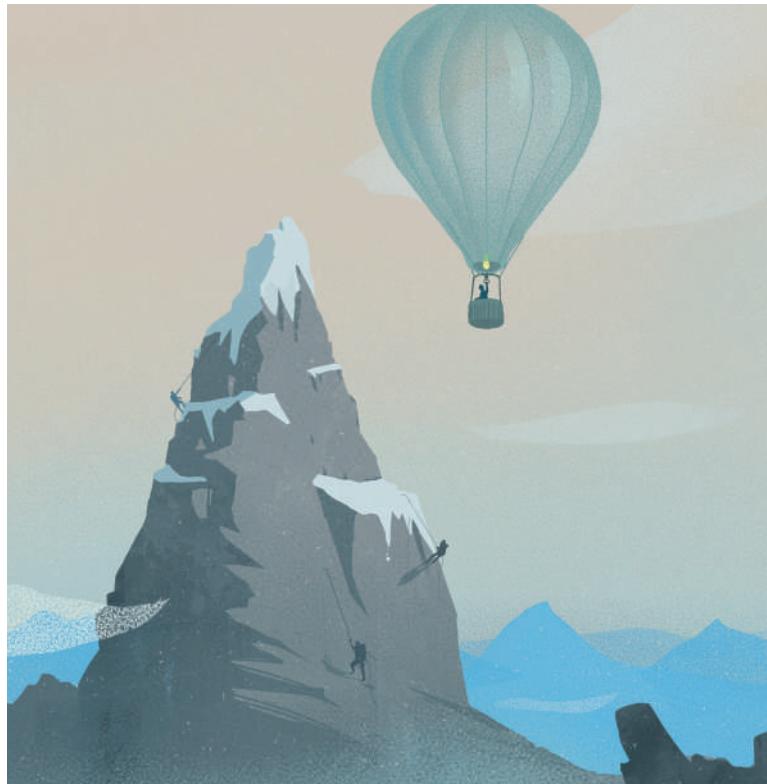


ILLUSTRATION BY MARCIN WOLSKI

TT offers educators an extensive range of resources—and, thankfully, our readers have plenty of feedback to help us improve them. We truly appreciate your opinions and suggestions. Please let us know your thoughts!

## PRAISE FOR NEW LGBTQ GUIDE

This is an OUTSTANDING & comprehensive resource. It's exciting to see so many amazing inclusive book titles, inclusive language guide & ideas to keep in mind that build more inclusive schools. TY for ALL your advocacy, friends #EducationalJustice

—COURTNEY @EDUCOURTS

VIA TWITTER

*Editor's note: Download the full Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ Students guide, additional teaching resources and a poster for your classroom at [tolerance.org/lgbtq-guide](http://tolerance.org/lgbtq-guide).*

## TEACHING HARD HISTORY RESOURCES

Just thank you. Thank you so much for the 'Teaching Hard History' resources. I feel so much gratitude to this project as a white teacher who

needed those resources to remedy her own ignorance, as well as the reassurance that there is a way to teach this that won't traumatize my students of color.

—KIRSTIN OLSON

VIA EMAIL

## HARMFUL WORD CHOICE

I was deeply surprised when I came across this sentence in "A Museum. A Memorial. A Message": "It doesn't



Teaching Hard History is a brutal & beautifully honest look at how to teach the fullness of American slavery. The horror, inhuman treatment, the start of modern racism, rebellion, how America depended on and continues to benefit from the labor of enslaved people.

My big takeaway, changing my language from slave to enslaved people. This was HUGE for me.

Please listen. This is heavy. This is necessary. This is a part of American history and every student deserves to be taught the fullness of American history.

#AmericanSlavery  
#teachinghardhistory  
#AmericanHistory

@CHANGINGNARRATIVESTOO  
VIA INSTAGRAM



require a visit to the museum in Montgomery, but it does require confronting dark and often forgotten or intentionally omitted periods in U.S. history.” ... The English language and its literature are full of dark places, dark thoughts, dark imaginings, “the dark continent,” “darkies” ... all understood as bad experiences, ideas, places, and people in full racist form. ... “Black Lives Matter” and

many others are strongly reclaiming “blackness” and “darkness” as positive realities, upholding them as rich and full and strong. By using “dark” in a thoroughly negative way, you have slipped into surprisingly racist usage. That is surely not your intention.

— SUSAN E. DAVIES

VIA EMAIL

### CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LESSON

We had so much fun reading “Julia Moves To The US”! The students worked in pairs to fill out Venn diagrams with the similarities and differences between their identities. Thanks for the great lesson.

—@MISSRACHELCY

VIA TWITTER



### QUEER AMERICA

Great podcast! I'd like to hear ideas and strategies for teaching queer identity in content areas other than history class, like science or math.

—@SUNNJAX

VIA TWITTER

*Editor's note: Download our podcasts Queer America, The Mind Online and Teaching Hard History at [tolerance.org/podcasts](https://tolerance.org/podcasts).*

### WHITE PRIVILEGE CONCEPT IS RACIST

[On “What Is White Privilege, Really?”] I completely reject “white privilege” as a legitimate construct. The very term is offensive and racist.

Anecdotal evidence from a college professor does not constitute the legitimacy of the term. Neither does any of the other “evidence” provided in your article. Instead of assuming white people receive benefits from their whiteness, why don’t you ask, “Could there be other explanations for why minorities experience some of the so-called results pointed to in this article?” ... When will people learn that dividing people by race, ethnicity,

religion, gender, etc. is not helpful.

—BABYLONBEE

VIA TEACHING TOLERANCE MAGAZINE ONLINE

### MATTHEW'S MEMORY

Thank you for this tribute! I was 14 years old when this happened and don’t really

remember this tragic and malicious event. Now, with this article, I can bring Matt’s story into my classroom so that my students and I can talk about this together.

—@TPRAY22

VIA TWITTER

### MANIPULATING CHILDREN

Please take me off your mailing list. You do not teach tolerance. You teach left-wing indoctrination of children. You are far left activists who live for the purpose of manipulating our children to be leftists; you could not care less about a free forum of ideas ... especially conservative values, that also happen to be American values.

—ANONYMOUS

VIA EMAIL

### CORRECTION

*In the Fall 2018 issue, we mistakenly printed an excerpt from an article by Jamilah Pitts and attributed it to T. Elijah Hawkes. Read the article we intended to run, “Youth and the Quiet Work of Teachers,” at [t-t.site/quiet-work](http://t-t.site/quiet-work).*

### TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

Have an opinion about something you see in *Teaching Tolerance* magazine or on our website? Email us at [editor@tolerance.org](mailto:editor@tolerance.org) with the subject line “Letter to the Editor.” Or mail a letter to 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104.



If you have an opportunity to attend a @Tolerance\_org workshop. Do it. You will not be sorry. #TTWorkshops

—KORYTELLERS VIA TWITTER





### Q: How can I help students build relationships outside of our white, affluent, segregated community?

If you're planning a volunteer opportunity at a food bank or another type of "exposure" experience, please reconsider. If the ultimate goal is to build authentic relationships outside of segregated school communities, exposure experiences will often fall short and may reinforce stereotypes. Contact theory tells us that authentic relationships can be built when certain conditions are met. Members of both groups should have equal status, share personal interactions and work on a project with a common goal. Is there a nearby school you can partner with to develop a cooperative project with the goal of benefiting all students? This could be anything from a co-produced

art showcase to the rehabilitation of a basketball court. If so, start making connections at that school. If not, consider giving students opportunities to explore their own community. Encourage them to ask critical questions about how that homogeneity came to be, and invite them to think about whether they'd like to disrupt it.

#### How do I create accessible field trips for students?

Creating an equitable field trip requires teachers to consider every student's socioeconomic access and physical and mental health needs in every aspect of the planning and execution. When initially brainstorming a field trip, think about the end goal and

commit to giving every student an opportunity to participate. Ask questions such as, "Will the cost prevent any students from attending?" or "What physical or socioemotional accessibility needs do my students have?"

For any field trip that requires financial contributions from students or their families, develop a plan for financial assistance and make sure there is a clear, private pathway for families or other caregivers to communicate their need. For example, the permission slip can invite families to pay more than the requested amount in order to subsidize costs for other students. Alternatively, your financial assistance plan can include soliciting

outside support from local businesses or community members. However, avoid having students fundraise or "earn" their field trip experiences. This can place a burden on students and families who don't have time or resources to fundraise safely.

When considering the physical accessibility of a field trip, remember to check in with students and families about their needs. Take special note of the potential obstacles you may face at the field trip site and, if possible, make sure to visit the site ahead of time to check for any potential issues. Remember to consider transportation accommodations, such as wheelchair accessibility or the cost of having a school nurse on the trip, if required. Ultimately, your goal is to ensure the trip is a meaningful learning experience that *all* students can access.

#### ASK TEACHING TOLERANCE!

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

DID YOU KNOW?  
DID YOU KNOW?

*More than half of students ages 14 and older with emotional and behavioral disabilities drop out of high school.*

—Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health



ARTICLE 8.16.18 // RACE &amp; ETHNICITY, RIGHTS &amp; ACTIVISM

## How Can We Build Anti-Racist White Educators?

BY CHARLIE McGEEHAN

Too often, I and other white educators like me don't see the impact of race on our practice. But that doesn't mean it isn't there. ... In addition to examining our own racial identities, white educators should follow people of color in this work. Their voices and experiences should always be centered. But we must also push back against the notion that people of color should be burdened with the responsibility of guiding white people through this work.

### Reader-writer exchange...

"I agree for the most part with this. However, ... how the hell are a group of white folks who have not been exposed to other cultures and are sitting in a room discussing racism going to do this without guidance?"

"It's true that this is a serious challenge. There is a ton of great media and resources online that can help folks educate themselves. An aspect of this work is collaborating with people of color. However, if people of color are the ones doing the teaching to white folks, I recommend that they should be compensated for their work—not simply expected to do this labor on their own time."

READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE:

[tolerance.org/antiracist](https://tolerance.org/antiracist)

### ARTICLE SPOTLIGHT

Check out some of our most talked-about posts. Search for these headlines at [tolerance.org](https://tolerance.org).

Unmaking "Hispanic": Teaching the Creation of Hispanic Identity

BY STEF  
BERNAL-MARTINEZ

Engendering Inclusivity in a Language Class

BY RACHEL CUNNING

Self-Awareness in the Classroom

BY SAMANTHA  
SPEZZANO

"Why Keisha Can't Write": The Marginalization of Black Student Writing

BY KIARA LEE

DID YOU KNOW?  
DID YOU KNOW?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits allow people to buy food but not personal-hygiene products, such as pads and tampons.

— Girls Helping Girls.Period.



Regina Santiago teaches kindergarten at St. Paul Academy and Summit School in St. Paul, Minnesota.

# I'm Different, Just Like You

I immigrated to the United States in 2003 and earned my teaching license in 2008. When I began my career, I thought that part of the job was to blend in. I wanted to avoid shining a light on my foreignness; I just wanted people to think I had lived here my entire life.

But as I applied for U.S. citizenship in 2011, I realized that I should share this process with my students. I passed my green card around the circle for the kids to see. We practiced the civics questions together, and I let them know when it was time for me to get fingerprinted and take the test. They were just as excited as I was about every step.

At first, it just seemed like a good idea to share a real-life example of a social studies lesson. But as time went on, I learned that telling the kids about my experiences meant a lot more than that. Parents who also immigrated to the United States would find me to talk about their immigration and naturalization stories. I realized that I was serving as an all-too-rare mirror, not just for my students, but for their families as well. By opening up and telling my story, I made it OK for those narratives to emerge. I didn't need to be afraid of shining a light on my experience because it illuminated the path for others to do the same.

In my school's kindergarten program, we teach the kids to have empathy. We draw a "map" of our hearts and then talk to each other about it, swap hearts and try to imagine what it would feel like to have that person's heart. We teach the kids to sit with difference and be OK with it. Some kids like Cheez-Its and some don't. There are different ways to say the same word in different languages! We were born in different places! My hair happens to be a different color than yours! Isn't it cool that we can learn so much about each other?

Now, whenever it feels organic to do so, I try to share stories with my

## 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](mailto:submissions@tolerance.org).



students about myself: that I'm from another country, that I speak other languages and had different childhood experiences. I want the kids to know that someone who loves them and cares deeply for them is "different." That different isn't scary—it's beautiful. And the kids who already feel "other" in some way feel less alone because their teacher is "different" too. Every time I sustain a microaggression, I try to channel that experience and my feelings into something good by validating these little humans: It's OK to be you.

I can only hope and pray and wish and dream that I'm planting seeds for a better world with what I do. I refuse to give up hope that someday the world will be the accepting, kind and loving place that I know it can be. The one I see every day in kindergarten.

#### DID YOU KNOW? DID YOU KNOW?

*Black students from low-income homes who have had at least one black teacher in grades 3–5 are less likely to drop out of high school.*

– Institute of Labor Economics

ARTICLE 9.27.18 // RIGHTS & ACTIVISM

## How My Third-Graders and I Address Consent

BY ELIZABETH KLEINROCK

In elementary school classrooms, one of the first social emotional topics covered is the importance of keeping our hands and feet to ourselves and respecting others' personal space. ... In these conversations and lessons, educators are already teaching the foundations of consent, and it is crucial to assign language to the concept of asking permission before touching anyone else's body.

While teaching my third-grade students about consent, it has never crossed my mind to talk about sex. Instead, we talk about safe physical interactions that occur daily in the classroom and outside at recess, and how to communicate your personal boundaries with those around you. We begin by defining the word consent and breaking it down to its simplest form. ... One student volunteers, "It means to give permission," to which I reply, "OK, but what does it mean to give permission?" As a class, we define consent as "saying yes to letting someone do something."



#### And a reader replied...

This is great! We always talk about this with our son but I love how simple & straightforward it is—I'll definitely use it for our next convo.

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)

[tolerance.org/consent](https://tolerance.org/consent)

*According to a 2017 study, about 11 percent of children ages 12–17 reported having suffered from at least one major depressive episode (MDE) in the preceding year.*

– Mental Health America

*Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the federal law that protects people from sex discrimination in education programs, was modeled after Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.*

—U.S. Department of Justice

# Thinking Differently About Our Work

Since 2010, Angela Ward has worked to promote cultural proficiency and inclusiveness in Austin Independent School District (ISD). Ward spoke with TT about her work providing the resources, training and support that educators and district staff need to serve every student in every classroom.

## **Can you tell us about your cultural proficiency work as administrative supervisor of race equity?**

The goal of the Office of Cultural Proficiency and Inclusiveness is to support the development of the staff at Austin ISD ... as well as to create school spaces that are identity-affirming for students. And so our work centers around helping our adults understand that they are unique beings and—because of that—they come into their work with certain ways of viewing the world. Their worldview often colors how they are able to support students. So we help staff get in touch with who they are, what their values are, what their biases are, what their beliefs are and, ultimately, how all of those things impact their ability to be successful with students every day in our schools.

## **What does a day look like for you?**

It will look like coaching sessions with principals, with department leads, with district leaders, with parents, with teachers, you name it. There's no day that looks the same. I do a lot of work with community partners, and so I check in with community partners periodically. Right now,



*Angela Ward is administrative supervisor of race equity and oversees the Office of Cultural Proficiency and Inclusiveness in Austin Independent School District in Texas.*

what my days look like are planning for our culturally responsive restorative practices work. ... It's stopping by campuses and having conversations with principals, helping them think through how to structure professional learning for their staff ... around issues of differences stemming from race or gender identity, gender expression, religious differences, you name it. Anything that has to do with identity and who we are as human beings shows up in my work daily.

## **For those who don't know about restorative practices, would you offer a brief explanation of what that means?**

Restorative practices have been popularized by the criminal justice system, so often people will call it restorative justice. But in Austin ISD, we are taking a step back from that and recognizing the Indigenous roots of restorative practices. We are not saying justice is not a part of it, but it is not the practice; it is a part of the practice. ... When we talk about restorative practices, we talk about community building.

## Student Reads

TT's Student Texts align with the Social Justice Standards and the Common Core's text complexity recommendations. Find these and other titles under Classroom Resources at [tolerance.org](https://tolerance.org).

### One Million Men and Me

by *Kelly Starling Lyons*  
(K–2, Action)

Students learn about standing up to injustice through the eyes of a girl who attended the Million Man March.

### The House That Love Built

by *William W. Price*  
(3–5, Diversity)

Marie faces tragedy when war erupts in her French town—but one encounter teaches her the value of gratitude.

### Afro-Latina

by *Elizabeth Acevedo*  
(6–8, Identity)

Acevedo recounts how she first rejected the various cultures in her heritage but eventually learned to embrace them.

### I Saw Emmett Till This Week at the Grocery Store

by *Eve L. Ewing*  
(9–12, Justice)

This poem offers a more personal understanding of Emmett Till, who would be 77 years old if his life had not been stolen from him.

We're talking about using practices that affirm people as human beings, as unique human beings. We're talking about practices that create space in schools for the environment to be welcoming, safe and inclusive for anyone, no matter how they identify, no matter what their values or beliefs are.

The most visible piece of restorative practices is the circle process. We use the circle process to meet and to give space for individual voice. We use the circle process also so that all feel that they are seen and heard at some point during the school day.... We talk about restorative practices as a way to build community, as a way to connect with each other and to help us to learn how to communicate with each other.

### What are some challenges you face in your work with educators?

In many cases, people don't even know that they need to adapt the way that they are engaging in the world.... A lot of that has to do with willingness and awareness of the need.... I try to help people find ways to empathize [and] to get people to think differently about their work. It's more than just whatever your job role is. If you're a teacher, if you're an administrator, if you're a person who does paperwork all day and looks at spreadsheets, your spreadsheets are impacting a child in a classroom in every single school that exists in our school system. So what does that

mean if you're not even thinking about that work from that standpoint?

### How can educators help build these values with colleagues?

They have to find something their colleagues believe and value. That is the starting point.... If someone doesn't want to talk about race, but they want to talk about poverty, then that is where you start. Then you ease into the... intersections of race and poverty. You look at data and you have conversations around something to give them a new perspective. We do a lot of work around having dialogue that helps staff understand multiple perspectives.

### What is a joy of your work?

Working with staff who really want to have this conversation about difference and how to make students feel safe, welcomed and included no matter how they come into this world and how they navigate the world. So I get joy from seeing people find their voice, find their footing in this conversation.... I find joy in listening to people talk about their new understanding and their new learning. And I see the impact in the way that our students are being supported in their spaces.

### DOWN THE HALL

Know an excellent administrator, librarian or counselor we should interview? Tell us all about them at [editor@tolerance.org](mailto:editor@tolerance.org).

## FREE STUFF!

These web resources support and supplement anti-bias education—at no cost!

**808Education** offers professional development and classroom resources that educators can easily plug into existing lessons. Their site includes a lesson suite that correlates with inspiring videos from youth like Little Miss Flint—and that translates from class discussion into action.

[808ed.com](https://808ed.com)

**Densho** has developed lessons and materials for educators teaching about WWII Japanese American incarceration. The organization's digital repository contains thousands of photographs, letters and other primary documents to introduce students to civil liberties in a variety of classroom subjects.

[densho.org/learning-center](https://densho.org/learning-center)

The **DREAMer's Roadmap** app helps undocumented students easily find scholarship opportunities across the United States. Users can save and share scholarships, and they can also suggest scholarships to include in the app's database.

[dreamersroadmap.com](https://dreamersroadmap.com)

The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation developed the **African American Voices in Congress (Avoice)** virtual library project, which features primary sources that address historical and contemporary African-American policy issues. Each unit includes lessons to supplement history, government and civics classes.

[avoiceonline.org](https://avoiceonline.org)



## Digging Deep Into the Social Justice Standards

The Teaching Tolerance Social Justice Standards are the anchor standards and learning outcomes created to guide teachers in curriculum development and to make schools more just, equitable and safe. Our standards are designed to be used alongside state and Common Core State Standards in all content areas to reduce prejudice and bias and advocate for collective action.

These standards are divided into four domains: Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action. Starting with this issue of *Teaching Tolerance*, PD Café will walk through each domain one at a time to help you understand and apply each to your practice so that students develop the skills they need to make their schools and communities safe places for all.

# Understanding Identity

## What Is Identity?

- The collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a person is definitively recognized or known.
- The set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group.

## Visible vs. Invisible Identity

- Your identity consists of the various characteristics you use to categorize and define yourself and those that are constructed by the people around you.
- Some aspects of your identity are visible, such as skin color. Others are not as easily knowable, such as the language you speak. Still others are invisible, such as religion or sexual orientation.

Read the list of characteristics and write whether you believe they are visible or invisible.

CHARACTERISTIC	VISIBLE OR INVISIBLE?
Skin Color	Visible
Gender	
Socioeconomic Status	
Marital/Relationship Status	
Parent or Childless	
Education	
Career	



## Personal vs. Social Identity

- Parts of your identity can be personal: beliefs, values and characteristics that make you unique as an individual.
- Other parts of your identity are social: attributes that influence how you interact with others, such as personality traits (kind, shy), where you live or your group affiliations (belonging to a religion, your occupation). These are things you can manipulate. Others you can't, such as your race, ethnicity or certain physical characteristics.
- It's important to remember that multiple identities make each person who they are and can be fluid—some things might be personal but have social impact, and some things with social impact can have a personal effect. The key is to be able to understand how identities are formed, which can lead to self-confidence and the ability to celebrate others.

# Mapping Identities

Now practice mapping out aspects of your identity. You can also do this activity with students.

► See the two circles below. In the center circle, write words you would use to describe your personal identity: traits, behaviors, beliefs, values, characteristics and skills that make you an individual. These could include occupation, hobbies and invisible attributes (like being the eldest sibling). You can also write ways you see yourself (funny, artistic, conservative, assertive).

► In the outer ring, write words that describe your social identity: traits others might assign to you without knowing you. Consider your race, age, gender, physical characteristics, where you live or how others might perceive you. For example, some might view you as shy or athletic. It's OK if attributes of your personal identity overlap with your social identity—you can write them in both circles.



This activity is adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership's resource "Social Identity Mapping."

# Identity Standards

Our Identity domain has five anchor standards to help students understand their own identity as well as the identities of others.

1. Students will develop positive social identities based on their membership in multiple groups in society.
2. Students will develop language and historical and cultural knowledge that affirm and accurately describe their membership in multiple identity groups.
3. Students will recognize that people's multiple identities interact to create unique and complex individuals.
4. Students will express pride, confidence and healthy self-esteem without denying the value and dignity of other people.
5. Students will recognize traits of the dominant culture, their home culture and other cultures, and understand how they negotiate their own identity in multiple spaces.

Next, read these two scenarios to consider what these standards might look like in a school setting, and determine which standards are demonstrated in each.

## Scenario 1

For Show and Tell, Joi brings in a picture of her family on a church camping trip. "My family goes camping a lot. I like camping," she says. "I'm a Christian, and sometimes my family goes camping with our church. I'm also a big sister, so I have to help my parents take care of my little brother, especially when we go camping."

Which of the Identity standards are demonstrated in Joi's Show and Tell?

**Answer:** This scenario touches on standards 1, 2 and 4. Joi discusses her membership in multiple groups, aspects of her chosen identity (camping), aspects of her given identity (being a sibling) and pride in who she is.

## Scenario 2

Omar's mother is serving as a chaperone on her son's field trip. During the bus ride, the teacher, Ms. Robin, overhears a conversation between Omar and Peter.

"What is your mother wearing on her head?" Peter asks.  
"It's called a hijab," Omar replies. "Many Muslim women wear them."  
"Why does she wear it?"  
"Our religion teaches us that the hijab is a way of being humble and modest. Muslim women wear it to show they love God."

Which of the Identity standards are demonstrated in Omar and Peter's discussion?

**Answer:** This scenario touches on standards 2, 4 and 5. Omar has cultural knowledge to explain the hijab to Peter, and he expresses confidence in that explanation. Peter also understands that there are different cultures around him and that he can be curious about understanding Omar's culture without insulting him or feeling insecure about his own culture.

You can find age-appropriate, grade-level outcomes and more scenarios at [tolerance.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards](https://tolerance.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards).



## Essential Questions

A great way to integrate the Identity standards into your practice is to write essential questions to guide students through a unit of study. Here are two examples of essential questions from different content areas.

### Third-grade Science Unit on Electricity

I.3: How can a person's access to or experience using electricity change the way they live in society and interact with others?

**Sample Answer:** Students can explore how having functioning electricity in their homes changes what they might do for fun (watch TV, surf the internet), as opposed to someone who does not (spend more time playing outside), and how that shapes their identities.

### Ninth-grade Social Studies Unit on World Religions

I.5: In what ways does being at home affect a person's identity versus being in a situation where that identity is not part of the dominant culture?

**Sample Answer:** Students could think about how a Jewish person might practice their beliefs openly and more intimately in their home than when they are at a community event.

Now you try! Write an essential question based on one of the five Identity standards for your grade level and content area.



You can't tell the story of the United States  
without talking about lynching.

RECOMMENDED  
FOR GRADES  
**9–12**

# AN OUTRAGE

A FILM BY HANNAH AYERS AND LANCE WARREN

**VIEWER'S GUIDE NOW AVAILABLE**

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OUR 33-MINUTE DOCUMENTARY, *AN OUTRAGE*,  
IS AVAILABLE TO SCHOOLS EXCLUSIVELY  
THROUGH TEACHING TOLERANCE.

For decades following the Civil War, racial terror reigned over the United States, claiming thousands of black lives. Lynching—an extralegal system of social control—left in its wake a pain that still lingers. Help your students understand how this terrible legacy affects individuals, communities and institutions today.

AVAILABLE FOR STREAMING ONLY AT [TOLERANCE.ORG/OUTRAGE-FILM](https://tolerance.org/outrage-film)



# Speaking Up Without Tearing Down

How do you correct a student who says something harmful without losing the opportunity for learning? This veteran human-rights educator recommends calling them *in* instead of *out*.

BY LORETTA J. ROSS ILLUSTRATION BY LUISA JUNG

“It’s not fair to insist that people hurt by **cruel or careless language or actions** be responsible for the personal growth of those who have injured them.”

**IT’S A MOMENT** most educators will recognize: A student has said something biased or promoted a stereotype. There’s a ripple through the classroom, but the speaker hasn’t noticed. Students look to you expectantly, and you know the statement can’t go unaddressed.

Most teachers look for opportunities to build a human rights culture and to counter hatred, bigotry, fear-mongering and intolerance. One way to do this, when students make a mistake, is to call them *in* rather than calling them *out*. Doing so prepares them for civic engagement by encouraging a sense of hope and possibility.

#### Guiding Instead of Dragging

In conversations and debates about social justice issues, insisting someone take responsibility when they say or do something hurtful—regardless of their intent—is a common way to protect vulnerable communities and individuals. It’s often necessary, but not every correction allows both parties to move forward. Calling out happens when we

point out a mistake, not to address or rectify the damage, but instead to publicly shame the offender. In calling out, a person or group uses tactics like humiliation, shunning, scapegoating or gossip to dominate others.

In our society, call-outs have become a way of life. They are generally done publicly, either in person or online. Extreme calling out is when a person or a group expresses their disagreement cruelly, sometimes grandstanding. Fearing they may be considered politically backward if they don’t prove their “wokeness” on trending social justice issues, witnesses to the conflict may pile on while bystanders silently withdraw.

Calling in is a technique that *does* allow all parties to move forward. It’s a concept created by human-rights practitioners to challenge the toxicity of call-out culture. Calling in is speaking up without tearing down. A call-in can happen publicly or privately, but its key feature is that it’s done with love. Instead of shaming someone who’s made a mistake, we can patiently ask

questions to explore what was going on and why the speaker chose their harmful language.

Call-ins are agreements between people who work together to consciously help each other expand their perspectives. They encourage us to recognize our requirements for growth, to admit our mistakes and to commit to doing better. Calling in cannot minimize harm and trauma already inflicted, but it can get to the root of why the injury occurred, and stop it from happening again.

Calling in is not for everyone or every circumstance. It’s not fair, for example, to insist that people hurt by cruel or careless language or actions be responsible for the personal growth of those who have injured them; calling in should not demand involuntary emotional labor.

Calling in is also not a useful response to those who intentionally violate standards of civil conversation. When powerful people use bigotry, fear and lies to attack others, calling out can be a valuable tool, either for

## How to Start a Call-in Conversation

the individuals they seek to oppress or for bystanders who choose to interrupt the encounter. When people knowingly use stereotypes or dehumanizing metaphors to describe human beings, their actions victimize targets and potentially set them up for violence. Calling out may be the best response to those who refuse to accept responsibility for the harm they encourage or who pretend they are only innocently using their right to free speech.

But, if call-ins can occur without demanding undue emotional labor or allowing space for hateful behavior, this approach offers a way forward that increases the potential for learning—particularly in activist and academic spaces. This practice works especially well when allies call one another in or when leaders, such as teachers, use it to model speaking up without losing the opportunity for learning. By teaching our students how to call one another in, we're providing them the tools and skills they need to gather up those who share their privileges, to offer patience and grace when they can, and to facilitate growth—so others won't have to.

### Why Classrooms Are Made for Calling In

Teaching calling-in practices means teaching students techniques to avoid escalating conflicts and to relate to each other in affirming ways. When we teach call-in skills, we create what we need for ourselves and our students: brave spaces in which everyone understands that people make mistakes, that people come from diverse cultures and speak languages that may use words differently, and that people should not be punished for not knowing the right words to say. When we call students out instead of building a call-in culture in the classroom, we contribute to increasingly toxic and polarized

“I need to stop you there because something you just said is not accurate.”

“I’m having a reaction to that comment. Let’s go back for a minute.”

“Do you think you would say that if someone from that identity group was with us in the room?”

“There’s some history behind that expression you just used that you might not know about.”

“In this class, we hold each other accountable. So we need to talk about why that joke isn’t funny.”

conversations. And we make learning less inviting.

In class discussions, for example, the concept of privilege frequently becomes a source of call-outs, since privilege isn’t always apparent to those who have it. But educators can build space for a culture that relies on calling classmates in instead of publicly shaming them.

In a classroom with a call-in culture, for example, a white student denying white privilege by pointing out how hard his parents worked is regarded first as a classmate who’s not understanding, not as a member of a privileged class refusing to acknowledge his advantages. The student’s statement offers an opportunity for peers to teach one another, for example, by asking if he has ever had the experience of being stopped by the police for no reason while walking down the street. This question—a form of calling in—encourages the student to rethink his position. It highlights the experience of the student rather than labeling him with an

identity he’s not open to. Most importantly, it helps clarify a key misunderstanding by helping show the student that privilege doesn’t necessarily mean a lavish lifestyle, and that privilege and hard work aren’t mutually exclusive.

Calling in is not a guarantee that everyone will joyfully work together. It is simply the extension of grace, the opportunity to grow and to share learning and responsibility for each other.

### Building a Call-in Culture

Calling someone in effectively requires preparation. The first step for educators is a self-assessment to prepare ourselves for effective engagements. This inventory might include writing and practicing some sentence starters, taking stock of which students tend to trigger or irritate us, and checking in with ourselves daily to assess the status of our emotional bandwidth.

While class discussions offer ample opportunities for calling students in, the technique shouldn’t just be reactive. There are many ways that educators can create a space where calling in is the norm, where students feel comfortable calling one another in and where they don’t shut down when they themselves are called in by their peers.

### Practice Calling In

When someone is called in, they may still have the same reactions as if they were called out. They may feel panicked, ashamed, combative, upset or attacked. But letting students practice calling their peers in—and being called in—helps them see that mistakes can be an opportunity to learn something new and get a fresh perspective. When we let students practice calling in, we teach them how to distinguish between people who are intentionally hurtful and those who are trying to figure out how to understand or talk about differences.

One effective exercise I've used is "Human Rights in the Headlines." Students bring copies of their local newspaper to class and are asked to select a story about something they believe is unfair. There will inevitably be differences of opinion about whatever is said, and these provide the opportunity for students to practice their call-in techniques. For example, questions such as, "I don't think I understand what you're saying, so can we talk some more?" or "Can we stop and explore what is happening now?" allow the asker to seek clarification and calm tensions.



#### **Discuss Call-out Culture**

One way to help students distinguish calling in from calling out is to ask what call-out culture looks like for them. You can also ask them to list and define specialized terms commonly used to justify call-outs like "trigger" or "microaggression." Take time to discuss these terms. For example, you can explain that—despite how the word is casually used today—being "triggered" means being trapped in the memory of a past trauma, not just feeling uncomfortable. Ask students to consider the difference between aggressive behavior and a microaggression—both in terms of intent and impact. Explain that, if no one calls in an offender about a microaggression, they only have their own intentions to rely on going forward and will likely offend others. Talking about call-out culture before anyone is called in or out can help students understand why calling in is part of your classroom expectations.

You can continue this conversation by asking students to compare the effects of call-outs and call-ins. Calling out is intended to shame, encouraging others to exclude the person called out without any discussion of details that may shed light on what the conflict may actually be. Calling people out shuts down listening and escalates the conflict. Calling in prevents differences in understanding from escalating into conflict. It means exploring the underlying issues precipitating a situation. Given the difference in results, you may ask students to contemplate why so many people choose to participate in call-out culture.

#### **Look for Curricular Spaces for Calling In White Students**

In my college courses on white supremacy, I teach a concept called "appropriate whiteness" to discuss new forms of knowledge and history and to explore

different ways whiteness may be lived. Appropriate whiteness occurs when white people can be proud of themselves and their ethnic backgrounds without falling into the trap of white supremacy (for example, neglecting a history of enslavement and oppression to pretend the Confederate flag is simply about heritage).

Calling in helps to dismantle a culture of white guilt and shame and helps transform fear into positive actions that center on the white community calling each other in. Helping white students talk about their race and explore their implicit biases aids them in learning how to complicate the concept of identity. It lets them practice participating in honest conversations without falling back on white fragility—or avoiding the topic of race altogether.

Learning about the ways in which they are privileged doesn't need to be an exercise in guilt and shame for students. Learning to call one another in—and to respond to being called in with a sincere desire to do and be better—can help students feel good about committing themselves to a more just world and gives them another tool to build it. ♦

*Ross is a feminist human-rights educator and visiting college professor. This article was adapted from her latest book, Calling In the Calling Out Culture: Detoxing Our Movement, which will be published by Routledge in 2019.*



# SAVING TITLE VI

Title VI is supposed to protect students from experiencing racial harassment. Now, a group of mothers is asking, 'Why isn't every school complying with this law?'

"I COULD'VE LOST MY KID." RAQUEL MACK SAYS.

For two years, starting at the onset of football practice in 2013, her son Evan faced targeted racial harassment at Analy High School in California's Sonoma County. Open and repeated use of the n-word by white teammates escalated into personally threatening behavior, in person and on social media. Despite the evidence and multiple requests for help, the abuse continued.

Evan was left socially isolated, academically strained and feeling unsafe.

In September of 2015, his parents removed him from the school. But they kept fighting for him. In February of 2016, they officially filed a complaint with the Department of Education, citing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That September, three years after the first incident, the Office for Civil Rights found Analy High School in violation of Title VI for failing to “end the harassment, eliminate any hostile environment that was created, prevent its recurrence, and remedy the effects of the harassment on the Student.”

Based on her experience—and what she heard from other families when Evan’s story went viral—it was clear to Raquel Mack that neither educators nor families knew what responsibilities public schools held under Title VI, let alone the processes for holding schools accountable.

But that was about to change.

**No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.**

—TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

The more Mack told her story, the more people she met who had similar experiences. She joined local parent groups to discuss the issue of discrimination in schools, leading her to meet social media strategist Celeste Winders. Through Black Lives Matter activist work, she already knew communications designer and strategist Johanna Pino. She met D'mitra Smith when she reached out to the Sonoma County Commission on Human Rights, of which Smith is vice chair. Out of necessity, a coalition formed: Save Your VI—an organization determined to raise awareness of students' Title VI rights among young people, families and educators.

**So, What Is Title VI, Anyway?**

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 represents one of the biggest victories of the civil rights movement. The law prohibits discrimination based on race, color, ethnicity or national origin by any program that receives federal funds.

The law requires schools to protect students from racial harassment and take immediate action to repair harm when harassment takes place. In fact, it requires schools to address any form of racial discrimination, including disparate suspension rates; unfair discipline practices; unequal access to courses; or any action that impairs students' education because of their race or ethnicity.

Every public school in the United States is bound by Title VI, but its reach goes far beyond that. The law helped desegregate many aspects of public life in the U.S., including public transportation, parks and hospitals. For those who participated in bus boycotts and sit-ins, and for those who took the first courageous steps into newly integrated schools, this law is a legacy—a product of their sacrifice and resolve.

So when D'mitra Smith says this law "was paid for in lives," she doesn't exaggerate.

**Title VI Today**

Enforcement of Title VI falls at the feet of the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Catherine Lhamon—currently the chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights—served as the assistant secretary over the OCR from 2013 to 2016.

The role of the OCR, Lhamon says, "is to investigate every complaint over which it has jurisdiction [and] ensure that the office gets to the bottom of where facts actually are and whether schools need to take steps to address that student's rights."

Lhamon has seen the racism that can fester in a school and claim students as victims, and stories from her time at the Office for Civil Rights clearly stick with her. She recalls students barred from participating in school programs because they wore hijabs and a boy pelted with pennies and tormented about his "Jew nose." She remembers a young Latinx student, beaten by his peers. "Welcome to America," they said.

Very few cases reported to the OCR are ever resolved. In 2016, the number was 57—out of 2,439 complaints covered by Title VI. Today, more than 1,500 pending Title VI complaints remain under OCR investigation. Families seeking justice for children who have been victimized by discrimination or harassment may not find it.



Evan Mack (center) faced such severe racial harassment at Analy High School that his parents, Raquel and John, enrolled him in another school.

To make things worse, Lhamon says she's seen a shift in the office since her departure. "The clearest indicators to date in this administration are that the administration has turned its back on meaningful civil rights enforcement," she says. "And that includes at the Department of Education."

Enter Save Your VI, a group working to educate young people, families and educators about the Title VI complaint process since Mack and her colleagues formed it in 2017. Personal experience informs the work of Save Your VI. The activists involved know firsthand that resolving a Title VI complaint isn't easy.

"My whole life was turned upside down just trying to get some accountability for my son," Mack recalls. "It's very important that parents and caregivers understand that, from the very beginning, the cards will be stacked against them. And

they need to understand how that system works.”

This means making sure families know to document everything, including hate incidents and any correspondence with school officials. This also means knowing complaint procedures at the district and state levels. This means recognizing that justice isn’t inevitable, but the fight is vital.

Title VI advocates underscore the importance of holding the federal government accountable to its promise written in the Civil Rights Act. If we don’t, they fear, the absence of complaints could justify the dissolution of the office meant to resolve them.

“I refuse,” Smith says of the law paid for in lives, “to let this pass into oblivion.”

### Saving Our VI

“The number one thing is awareness,” Mack says, describing the work of Save Your VI. Stakeholders need to know, first and foremost, that this pivotal civil rights law exists.

On the organization’s website, flyers offer classroom-friendly reminders of what students and teachers can do when they see racial discrimination happen at school. Toolkits are tailored for students, families and educators. A checklist reminds school leaders of their legal obligations—and how to uphold them.

Save Your VI also does work on the ground, participating in workshops, consulting with parents and educators directly, and advocating for the enforcement of Title VI and similar, state-level laws. This includes pressing state legislators to push for more transparency in schools and for mandatory Title VI coordinators.

Celeste Winders, like Mack, has a painful understanding of the need for a twofold fight for Title VI—to preserve it from the bottom up and demand its enforcement from the top down. Her son was subjected to repeated racial slurs at school. The OCR investigation into his school’s alleged negligence has been going on for nearly two years due to a backlog at the federal level and noncompliance at the local level.

“At Save Your VI, obviously, we’re willing to shoot straight for the top and fight at that level,” Winders says, “But we really need the boots on the ground of parents, activists and [teachers] really holding their school districts accountable and holding their states accountable.”

“Because while we fight the federal battle, we have to protect kids on the ground in the schools.”

### How Educators Can Help

Catherine Lhamon believes educators have a role to play in defending Title VI. “Having educators, parents and students stand in leadership for non-discrimination principles persists as an incredibly important way of ensuring the safety net for all of our students.”

Winders notes that many teachers have confided in her “that when they see these things happen in the hallways and in the classrooms, they’re not sure what to do.” But resources from Save Your VI and former resolution agreements from the OCR can offer a roadmap. They show educators how to respond if they see racial harassment occur, how to report it, how to document it, and how to protect the student and provide comfort.

Educators can also work to ensure students’ families have ready access to their rights under Title VI. Many families advocating for students are met with the same defense: “The school or district will tell them ... ‘This is totally out of the blue. This never happens here,’ ” Mack says. “It’s always a lie.” By keeping track of incidents, and by having the law and the complaint process readily available and accessible, educators can act as advocates.

Those facing dismissive district leaders or administration have the power and legal standing to press for more accountability, Winders says. She recommends looking for a policy that specifically addresses discrimination—not just bullying—due to a student’s race or ethnicity. “If I was an educator, I would want to make sure that that policy exists,” Winders says. “And that there’s training for myself and my colleagues who are in the classrooms.”

Smith adds, “At the end of this, we’re trying to protect the students, that little girl or that little boy that feels like, ‘Why should I be engaged in this education? I’m not safe here.’ Empowering teachers, who are the ones that are with those students all day when the parents are not, is the best way that we can really start to increase their protection.” ♦

*Collins is the senior writer for Teaching Tolerance.*

## THE TIME IS NOW

Why is Save Your VI fighting for a law while the office responsible for its enforcement faces cuts and backlogs? Because the mission is more important than ever. Teaching Tolerance found that incidents of hate and bias jumped during the 2016 election season and have continued to increase. Since October 2017, TT has tracked more than 700 reported incidents of hate directed at students and staff because of their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or perceived immigration status.



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# Teaching in Solidarity

BY COSHANDRA DILLARD ILLUSTRATION BY ALLEANNA HARRIS

## IT BEGAN IN SEATTLE.

On a September morning at John Muir Elementary School, a group of black men stood at the entrance high-fiving students. Some of the men beat ancestral drums with wide smiles on their faces. Others wore Afrocentric clothing. They praised each child who approached the steps of the school.

The event, called Black Men Uniting to Change the Narrative, was organized to uplift black youth in the community surrounding John Muir. Teachers at the school—where students of color, half of whom are black, are in the majority—were eager to partner with the community group. They had focused on race and equity in their professional development for years; they were ready.

But the jubilant rally wasn't just a celebration of the students. On this day, it was also an act of resistance against hate. Just hours before, the school had been threatened by people who'd learned that teachers at John Muir intended to wear "Black Lives Matter—We Stand Together" shirts. One person even sent a bomb threat.

But the school's joy would not be contained. After local authorities confirmed there was no legitimate threat, community members showed up as planned, and John Muir teachers soon found that thousands of educators across the greater Seattle area stood in solidarity with their message.

In spite of the threats (or, perhaps, fueled by them), a local group of union teachers called Social Equity Educators (SEE) encouraged teachers in the district to follow John Muir's lead and host a Black Lives Matter at School Day. On October 19, 2016, thousands of teachers wore Black Lives Matter shirts to school.

Seattle high school teacher Jesse Hagopian, a founding member of SEE, worked closely with the group to encourage participation.

"It was clear that educators wanted to show their students how much we care for them," Hagopian said. "That was an incredible eruption that

showed there was a real urgency felt by educators to support their black students' lives in the face of things like the dramatic, disproportionate discipline that exists in the Seattle schools and across the country, but also with so many examples of police brutality going unchecked."

Inspired by the 13 principles of the Black Lives Matter movement, participating educators focused on three policy demands to facilitate ongoing action in Seattle schools: 1) support ethnic studies in school; 2) replace zero-tolerance discipline with restorative justice practices; and 3) recruit more black teachers.

The Seattle action caught the attention of national media, which inspired Philadelphia teachers to plan a similar event. But they went a step further: Instead of one day, they organized a Week of Action in 2017. The idea continued to grow in places like Montpelier, Vermont, and Rochester, New York, before spreading to classrooms in more than 20 cities during the 2017–18 school year.

In 2019, the Week of Action is scheduled to begin on February 4.

### The Week of Action Blueprint

Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action is a time set aside to affirm all black identities by centering black voices, empowering students and teaching about black experiences beyond slavery. The lessons emphasize social justice and ethnic studies, but in addition to classroom work, teachers like Hagopian are organizing, planning, protesting and addressing real-world issues that affect black students.

"I think the pedagogy in the classroom is important, but it rings hollow if you're telling your kids, 'Here are the great movements for social and racial justice' and engaging them in those conversations, but then not doing it yourself in your own life," Hagopian says. "I think it's incumbent upon social justice educators who are teaching this stuff

to also live it, and that means getting involved with the Black Lives Matter at School movement, to get involved with the movements for structural change."

In Washington, D.C., the nonprofit organization Teaching for Change and the Center for Inspired Teaching have convened a working group of teachers to plan the local Black Lives Matter Week of Action. They collaborate with the local Black Lives Matter chapter, BYP 100, and other activist groups. Teaching for Change staff suggest starting February off with more in-depth lessons about black history and black experiences, such as the lives of black Muslims in the United States and "Resistance 101"—tools that help students recognize their power by identifying with young activists throughout history. Educators can share ideas with their network and at curriculum fairs.

Teaching for Change Executive Director Deborah Menkart and Coordinator of Teacher Engagement and Professional Development Rosalie Reyes say they want to ensure all students have a positive racial identity that is visible to the world.

"I think one of the goals is that this does become the norm, that we shift the weight of the curriculum from the classroom ... rethink some of the resources that we are using and that we're making sure that the students are seeing themselves in their curriculum, in their literature," Reyes says.

High school humanities teacher Charlie McGeehan is among a network of educators in Philadelphia that was moved by the energy brewing in Seattle. Teacher Action Group—Philadelphia and the Caucus of Working Educators, which had been working on racial justice issues, connected with Hagopian during their planning process. As a teacher who sees issues of economic inequality, mass incarceration and police brutality often arise in his classroom, McGeehan felt it was important to get on board.

"Whenever I bring up a topic like police brutality, I have students who



consistently can bring those experiences of times when they themselves experienced that police brutality,” he says.

#### Centering Black Lives

As Reyes points out, students are more likely to engage in lessons when they see themselves reflected in the curriculum. According to a Stanford Graduate School of Education study, graduation rates dramatically increase for *all* students who take ethnic studies classes.

The education nonprofit Rethinking Schools published *Teaching for Black Lives*, a book that supports Week of Action teaching and learning efforts. The editors of *Teaching for Black Lives* say the book is one way to offer that engagement. Editor Wayne Au, a professor at the School of Educational Studies at the University of Washington Bothell, said 4,000 books were sold in the first three months after it was published in April 2018, and that they’ve received orders and inquiries about the book from across the country.

*Teaching for Black Lives* is divided into five sections and covers topics like activism, black history, intersectional identities, anti-blackness, gentrification, the school-to-prison pipeline and mass incarceration. It fills in the gaps about key historical events and recognizes many black identities and narratives that students aren’t usually exposed to. For example, the book features issues rarely examined in traditional texts, such as the true history of the Black Panther Party and the FBI’s COINTELPRO campaign to dismantle black activist movements. *The Color Purple*—literature filled with intersectional identities—is used to connect to the #MeToo movement.

These lessons not only benefit black students but can also be transformative for nonblack students, particularly white students. Due in large part to school and residential segregation, white students often get a narrow view of blackness from their lived experiences.

“I think [*Teaching for Black Lives*] has the potential to help win over

*“I believe that once all folks start to respect and regard black people as human and as worthy of the respect and honor that other races sometimes see, then we all are going to benefit.”*

students of all races and ethnicities to understanding the importance of supporting the struggle for black lives,” says Hagopian, who is also one of the editors. “As the founders of Black Lives Matter have said, ‘When black people get free, we all get free.’”

Editor Dyan Watson, an associate professor at Lewis & Clark Graduate School of Education in Portland, Oregon, agrees that the book's content is valuable to nonblack students.

"When you systematically deny the dignity of one group, your dignity is also compromised," she says. "So, I believe that once all folks start to respect and regard black people as human and as worthy of the respect and honor that other races sometimes see, then we all are going to benefit."

### White Teachers, Black Students

McGeehan is like most teachers at Philadelphia public schools—white and teaching to mostly black students. He's been instrumental in exemplifying to other white teachers the importance of anti-racist work in the classroom and organizing for the Week of Action.

But McGeehan knows that being an effective and empowering teacher for his students requires learning from and listening to them, their families and to members of his school community.

"As much as I probably wouldn't admit it at the time, I do think that when I first came at teaching, I came at it from a savior complex perspective," McGeehan says. "I do think that for white teachers, coming in with a savior complex and seeing students from a deficit perspective is a real, serious issue that takes a long time to break," he continues. "I'm trying to think about what my 'a-ha' moment was, and I don't know. I think it's just been a long process, and it's involved a lot of different types of learning."

The Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action is a good time to reflect on how white teachers can teach about black lives more accurately and more empathetically. Wayne Au says they must go on their own journey to learn about the politics of whiteness and white supremacy. And Hagopian points out that thousands of educators around the country have their backs.

"With the visibility of this movement and the visibility of this book that's here to support the movement, they shouldn't feel completely isolated," he says.

### Keeping the Momentum

The Black Lives Matter movement is seen by some educators as a continuation of the civil rights era—a time when young people feel empowered enough to pick up where activists of the 1960s left off. Teachers know they can't miss this pivotal moment in history, which is unfolding before our eyes daily.

Many teachers who do this work get a lot of support, but occasionally, there is pushback in the community or from a school administrator. Nonetheless, they continue advocating for equitable schools, rather than environments that mirror society's inequities.

"There's a whole lot more work to do, but I do think it's a growing movement, [and] we know nothing changes unless there are people organizing and engaged," Menkart says. "So, the fact that the Black Lives Matter Week of Action got so much support and is growing, the fact that there's now the book *Teaching for Black Lives*, will really help give people the tools to make that possible."

### What Teachers Can Do

Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action is a movement sweeping across some of the country's largest school districts. But you don't have to live in a large city or be a member of an organization to join in this effort. The goal is to challenge structural and systemic racism while centering the lives of black students inside and outside of the classroom.

To join this effort, begin with these six steps:

► **Mark your calendar.** The Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action is slated for February 4 through 8. Connect with a local collective of social justice educators or organize teachers in your school and urge school administrators to get on

board. You don't have to have the blessing of national organizers, but if you need support, contact them for assistance at [blacklivesmatteratschool.com](http://blacklivesmatteratschool.com).

► **Order *Teaching for Black Lives*** and use it as a guide in the classroom.

► **Compile teaching materials for the week of action and beyond.** Visit the Black Lives Matter at School website for lesson plans successfully implemented in Seattle schools, or find resources at [dcareaeducators4socialjustice.org](http://dcareaeducators4socialjustice.org).

► **Seek support from the community.** Reach out to families, community members and even Black Lives Matter chapters who can enlighten you about the most pressing issues in your community.

► **Follow the Black Lives Matter at School movement** on Facebook and Twitter and use the hashtag #BlackLivesMatterAtSchool.

► **Show solidarity** by urging all teachers to wear Black Lives Matter at School T-shirts. You can customize your own or obtain the official T-shirt through the Black Lives Matter at School website. ♦

*Dillard is the staff writer for Teaching Tolerance.*

## 13 Guiding Principles

Organizers are focusing on these 13 themes and have assigned them to specific days throughout the week:

**Monday:** restorative justice // empathy // loving engagement

**Tuesday:** diversity // globalism

**Wednesday:** collective value // transgender and queer affirming

**Thursday:** intergenerational // black families // black villages

**Friday:** black women // unapologetically black



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# Grantee Spotlight

## Whose Renaissance Is It?

What happens when your city changes rapidly? This project, funded by a TT Educator Grant, helped students in Rochester, New York, explore this question and look for the answer in their own community.

BY JEY EHRENHALT PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE BRADLEY

**WHEN CHRIS DOLGOS** noticed upscale boutiques cropping up in Rochester, New York's trendy South Wedge neighborhood, he knew there was more going on in his city than just gentrification.

Rochester's downtown revitalization allowed Dolgos, a longtime resident of the area and teacher at Genesee Community Charter School, to wander through coffee houses, salons and eclectic gift shops; his sixth-graders could visit new ice cream stores and sample organic produce at the Rochester Public Market with its brand-new, state-of-the-art, indoor pavilion. But, at the same time, Dolgos' class knew about residents having to move out of their homes because they could no longer afford to live in their neighborhoods.

"People want to live in the South Wedge or the East End," relays Dolgos. "It's displacing people who've lived there for so long because landlords are realizing they can jack up the rent."

The rents had been low because Rochester, much like Detroit and other rust belt cities, had been a city in decline. Once a hub for manufacturing giants like Xerox, Kodak and Bausch +

Lomb, the industrial center declined in the last two decades of the 20th century as companies downsized. The city lost many major businesses, jobs and much of its population. But, more recently, Rochester's medical, arts, communications and education sectors have attracted millennials back to the city. Its downtown population has more than doubled in the last 15 years.

While Dolgos welcomed downtown's newfound prosperity—what some have dubbed an "urban renaissance"—he continued to wonder about Rochester's other neighborhoods. He decided to explore the idea with his students.

"We talked about the downtown renaissance: the new restaurants, the stores, our expanding children's museum with its proposed nearby affordable housing units," he says. "The city of Rochester is doing a lot of big things, but it always comes back to, 'Are we doing enough for the people who need it the most?'"

What followed was a year-long expedition into Rochester's renaissance, which Dolgos and his co-teacher, Alexis Stubbe, devised at their EL Education

school. The project, partly supported by a Teaching Tolerance Educator Grant, explored how the city has reinvented itself after decades of economic downturn. Students investigated the ways the city's renaissance has included some residents while simultaneously excluding others. "Our students are perfectly poised to examine the neighborhoods they call home, identify what works and what doesn't in their communities, and collaborate with local and national experts to make sure our city's renaissance is an inclusive one," Dolgos explains.

### Exploring Barriers and Bridges

To better understand their community's identity, the class investigated their own identities—and those of their fellow residents. Dolgos and Stubbe framed their expedition as an inquiry into the question, "Whose renaissance is it, Rochester?"

The entire project was centered around the theme of "barriers and bridges": barriers being anything holding back individuals and communities, and bridges being anything bringing them together.



*Chris Dolgos leads his sixth-grade class in a discussion at Genesee Community Charter School. Dolgos and his colleague led the project “Whose Renaissance Is It?”*

*Alexis Stubbe co-taught with Chris Dolgos about the equity of urban revitalization. She guided students in a reflection of their perceptions of their city, as well as the impact of “bridges” and “barriers” in their own lives and communities.*



The class launched into a three-mile walking tour through neighborhoods in their city. They took note of physical barriers like railroad tracks and the Inner Loop, a 1950s freeway expansion project that cut swaths of residential zones off from downtown and cleaved the city in two. Students also noticed experiential barriers like homelessness, gun violence and poverty. At the same time, the class pointed out bridges—physical ones, like the Erie Canal aqueduct, and metaphorical ones, like public art, community gardens and murals.

Students noticed disparities in neighborhoods' amenities right away. As Dolgos recalls, "They posed a lot of questions like, 'Why are there soup kitchens here?' 'Why are these corner stores filled with this kind of food?' 'Why is there garbage on the ground here, but not in another part of the city?' Kids picked up on these things and asked about who's getting the benefit and who's being taken advantage of."

Rowan Nordquist, one of Dolgos' sixth-graders, reflects on growing up sheltered from much of the city's poverty and crime: "Once you step

outside my neighborhood, you see the real world. I was basically living in a reality where everything was perfect, but now I'm moving out into the real world. ... I had not seen it before. It's really different."

Dolgos and Stubbe wanted to explore the notion that cities, just like people, have malleable, fluctuating identities. To do so, they integrated the Teaching Tolerance Social Justice Standards into their curriculum, organizing their syllabus around the Standards' four anti-bias domains: Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action. The lessons began with an inward investigation of identity and progressed in sequence through the last three domains. (Learn more about the Identity domain in PD Café on page 15.)

"The standards helped us to focus on questions of who we are as people and do we really understand ourselves," Dolgos remembers, "because before we can understand the people living on the west side or the north side of the city, we need to know who we are and where we come from."

To further explore the topic of personal identity, the class collaborated with teaching artist Almeta Whitis. This is where support from the TT grant came into play. Whitis, a storyteller with literary arts nonprofit Writers & Books and former performing arts professor, helped students compose monologues of self-expression. Rowan, for example, depicted a tumult of inner struggle. In his monologue, titled "I Am a War Inside," he wrote, "A battlefield exists inside me. It is a war to balance my heart and mind."

Do you have an idea for an anti-bias or social justice project? Apply for a Teaching Tolerance Educator Grant and let us help fund it!  
[tolerance.org/grants](http://tolerance.org/grants)

#### **The Story's in the Numbers**

The course expanded outward, delving into the identities of the school, students' communities and, finally, into their city. To examine the next two domains of the Social Justice Standards—Diversity and Justice—the class reviewed demographic

data for Rochester and explored how the numbers told the story of a community.

Students discussed literacy, poverty and health disparities across demographic groups. They examined the statistics behind redlining—duplicitous tactics employed by the banking and real estate industries to keep people of color out of certain neighborhoods or to keep them from becoming homeowners. The class discussed how discriminatory practices segregate communities by income and race.

“We looked at poverty rates and census data about where the poverty rates occurred,” recalls Dolgos. “The kids could see a correlation between poverty and race. They said, ‘Why is it like this?’ ‘How’d it get like this?’ There are a lot of things that people talk around, but nobody wants to address the root causes of poverty and systemic, institutional racism.”

Dolgos, Stubbe and their students examined the report *Hard Facts* by ACT Rochester—an organization dedicated to community problem-solving—to dig deeper into the enduring link between poverty and race.

Ann Johnson—ACT Rochester’s director and a guest lecturer in Dolgos’ classroom—explained that, while nationally African Americans earn just 62 cents for every dollar their white counterparts earn, in Rochester it’s only 48 cents.

“How could we be so different from the United States when, as a region, we’re pretty similar? We looked at the life cycle of a person, from infant mortality to reading and unemployment rates,” Johnson says. “We found that people of color do not have the same results throughout their life as their white counterparts.”

Once they got a good handle on the problems, the class began thinking about solutions. They met with community members devoted to removing achievement barriers for all Rochesterians. Kevin Kelley, a city planner, spoke with students about the city’s

next development proposal, the comprehensive *Rochester 2034* plan. Kelley and the students reviewed the successes and challenges of *Rochester 2010: The Renaissance Plan*, and discussed the tension between planning for the future of all city residents and working with limited available resources.

painting four murals across the city. They collaborated with guest artist Shawn Dunwoody, a lifelong Rochesterian and activist focused on community-based forms of urban development. Dunwoody connected students with business proprietors who had planted their roots in Rochester decades prior.

## “We have to listen to people’s stories and honor their truth.”

### Listening as Learning

Students next set out into the city. They spoke with Rochester residents about the strengths and challenges of their surroundings. Sensitive to entering communities that were not their own, students made sure to keep respectful listening top of mind. “You don’t make judgments; you don’t take action. You’re just listening,” Dolgos explains. “We have to listen to people’s stories and honor their truth.”

From Rochester, students then embarked on their “Four Cities” tour, splitting up to visit Oakland, Detroit, Pittsburgh and New Orleans—all places experiencing recent urban renaissances. They met with community organizations to learn about their inclusive, equitable urban planning efforts. “The big word about that was equity,” says sixth-grader Rowan. “You have to fit everyone’s needs.”

In Oakland, for example, students met with staff members from The Greenlining Institute, a policy, research, organizing and leadership initiative for racial and economic justice.

Staff spoke with students about advocating for urban environments where communities of color thrive and race does not present a barrier to economic opportunity.

### Painting a Positive Picture

The class capped off their year-long expedition with a city-wide art project,

The students sought community input for the murals’ designs and messages, and students from four different schools even pitched in to help paint. Every mural featured an affirming message, including one from abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who once lived in Rochester: “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

At Genesee Charter’s Exhibition Night, attended by community members, students’ families and a representative from city hall, the class presented their findings in a multimedia storytelling presentation featuring their project’s interactive website. The site includes photos from the mural project, student journalism, insights from the Four Cities tour and recommendations for how the city can foster an inclusive and equitable urban renaissance. They titled their presentation “Whose Renaissance Is It? A Closer Look at Rochester’s Renewal.”

Looking back, Rowan characterizes his experience of the year-long expedition as “eye-opening.” “Before this project, I had blindfolds on,” he recalls. “But then during the project, they lifted the blindfolds off of my face.” ♦

*Ehrenhalt is the school-based programs and grants manager for Teaching Tolerance.*

# Finding Our POWER

Carol Anderson talks to Teaching Tolerance about voter suppression and the ongoing fight for voting rights.

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY **VAL BROWN** AND EDITED BY **ANYA MALLEY**

**CAROL ANDERSON** is a professor of African-American Studies at Emory University, where she researches, teaches and writes about race and civil rights in the United States. Her newest book, *One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression Is Destroying Our Democracy*, tells a modern story about who has voting rights, who can access their voting rights—and who makes those decisions.

**The title of your newest book is *One Person, No Vote*. Why did you choose this title? And what do you hope it will evoke in your readers?**

We live in a nation where we have these kinds of sound bites, and we think we understand how this nation works. “We hold these truths.” “This is a nation of immigrants.” “One person, one vote.” But the way that voter suppression works is that it absolutely undermines that basic notion of “one person, one vote,” and it becomes “one person, no vote.” I wanted to hit the familiar but also to hit that discord that’s in there so that we can begin to understand what the attack on democracy looks like.

**Voter suppression has always disproportionately affected people of color. How does institutional racism manifest itself in the current systems**

**surrounding voting and elections in the United States?**

The civil rights movement dealt with institutional violence and institutional racism that African Americans faced on a daily basis, from *utero* to coffin—not even from cradle—*utero to coffin*. That kind of systemic, institutional racism. And one of the tricks that was deployed was to say, “Well, the signs [enforcing segregation] have come down, and now these black people have a Civil Rights Act, and they’ve got a Voting Rights Act. And so if anything is really not happening, it’s on them. It’s because they don’t have initiative. It’s because they’re lazy. It is because they don’t want to work hard.”

I talked about, in the first chapter in *One Person, No Vote*, how—[in] the Mississippi Plan of 1890—they knew that they had to deal with this thing called the 15th Amendment that said,

“the right to vote shall not be abridged on account of race, color or previous servitude.” So Mississippi’s looking at this going, “But we don’t want black people to vote.” So what they did was they took the societally imposed characteristics of a group of people and then made those societally imposed characteristics the litmus test—the ticket to the ballot.

You don’t fund education, and then you require folks to read chunks of the Constitution. We don’t have public transportation because we have refused to invest in public transportation. We shut down polling places. We require IDs and only specific types of IDs.

[My previous book] *White Rage* dealt with the myths of black pathology because this nation needs the narrative of black pathology in order to justify a series of policies. But what we don’t get is the inverse of that. ... The narrative that we get is, “How racist can America be? We elected a black man—twice.” And it is kind of self-congratulatory because the *we*—“We elected a black man twice”—that *we* means whites. It doesn’t mean everybody else. [But] the majority of whites did not vote for Obama.



So there are times when I'm giving my talk on *White Rage* and I get the question, "What are we to do?" And I say, "These are conversations that whites must have with whites because the work that needs to be done ... is in the white community. Black folks can provide you some of the tools, but you've got to do that heavy lifting."

**You write, "The reason the Voting Rights Act worked was the advent of vigorous federal intervention, not because the racism that required the law in the first place had stopped." Can we stop racism, in your opinion, without enforcement? What other options do we have?**

Enforcement. So, between 1982 and the 2006 reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, it came out that the Department of Justice had blocked over 700 proposed changes to voting laws by the jurisdictions—those states that were under the pre-clearance provision of the Voting Rights Act. And the DOJ blocked [the proposed changes] because they were racially discriminatory. ...

...During radical Reconstruction, federal troops are really there [enforcing voting rights] and they know they got to handle business. And we saw that with the rise of black registration, black voter turnout and black elected officials. With the Compromise of 1877, when federal troops are removed from the South, and Rutherford B. Hayes is like, "Yo, you're on your own. Peace," you start seeing this thing begin to move and shift until we get to massive disfranchisement in 1890, and there was no enforcement. None. And the impact of that was by the time—I think it was 1940—only 3 percent of African Americans were registered to vote in the South.

**What is missing in the ways we teach and talk about voting in our country, and what are the best ways to learn about voter suppression?**

In K-12, you get kind of an arc that the Founding Fathers crafted this beautiful Constitution, and you can almost hear the harps playing in the background. And then, you get a sense that, “Oh, but something didn’t go quite right, so we had to have a little Civil War. Because there was this thing called slavery. And Lincoln freed the slaves.” And then we get ... “Go west, young man! From sea to shining sea!”

Struggle is missing. Racism is missing. The battle for citizenship is missing. The steps forward and the steps back, the kinds of racialized opposition to full enfranchisement, the gendered opposition to full enfranchisement. All of that is missing in that arc.

We don’t educate about voting. North Carolina, which had been a very progressive government, had high school voter registration. When students were taking their civics class, they were being registered to vote as well. So they got a sense that voting was part of your civic engagement; it was your right as a citizen. When the Republicans came to power in 2010, not only did they close early voting sites and reduce early voting hours and require certain types of voter ID, but *they stopped registration in high schools*. So voting and registering becomes a task that you do instead of part of your identity. ... And so they don’t have a voice—a political voice—and they don’t have an economic voice.

**You write in the book, “It can never be forgotten that the state that produced the Eugene ‘Bull’ Connors, the Sheriff Jim Clarks and Judge Roy Moores also created the civil rights warriors who took down and defeated Bull and Jim and now had Roy in their crosshairs.” Talk about the people and organizations working to protect the right to vote. What can we learn from them?**



**“The narrative is, ‘How racist can America be? We elected a black man—twice.’ But the majority of whites did not vote for Obama.”**

We saw our power. Folks knew that work needed to be done, and the state wasn’t going to do it. They knew what was at stake. So, watching the NAACP [get] the list of the voters that hadn’t voted in 2016 (or voting intermittently) and get all of their members [to] start calling. Just talking—Alabamian to Alabamian—then following up, knocking on doors, continuing the conversation.

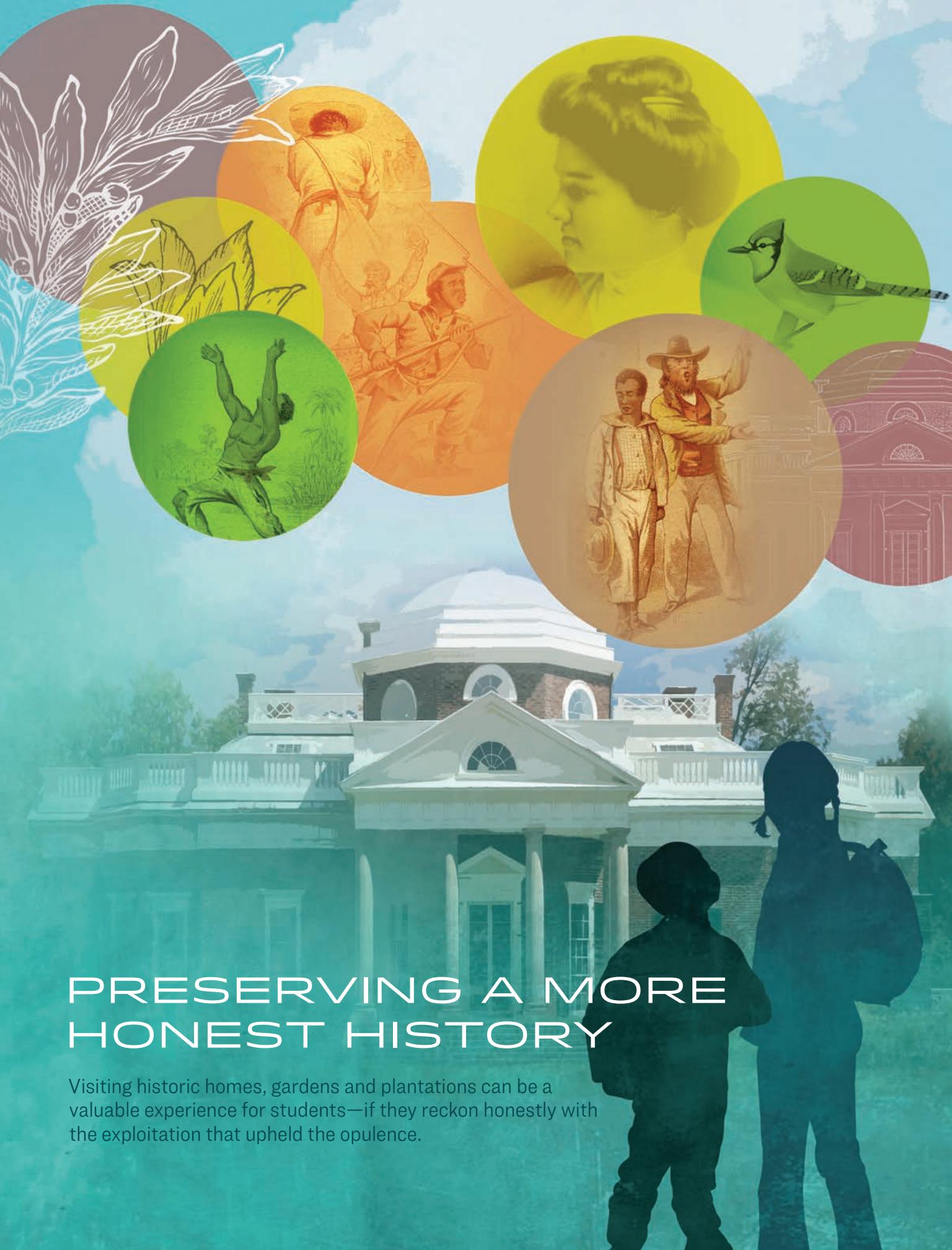
Alabama had shut down 66 polling stations. ... The NAACP and another organization set up a private car system like they did in the [1955] Montgomery bus boycott so that people could get to and from the polls. There were information sessions ... just letting people know: *When do you register to vote? Where do you register to vote? How do you register to vote?* Those sorts of things. Providing information, figuring out: What are the barriers that the state has created to block people from voting? What resources can each of these organizations bring to bear on either removing those barriers, getting folks over those barriers, around those barriers or through those barriers?

**Is there anything else you want readers to know?**

Race may be a social construction, but it is real. And we need not to fall into that trap of acting like that social construction does not have a major effect on the quality of your life. And to also understand that the language of racial divisiveness is a tool. The ploy of racial divisiveness is real because what that does—we’ve got a long history of this—is that it keeps us from finding our power. It keeps us from finding our joy. And it keeps us from experiencing our own greatness. ♦

*Brown is a professional development trainer and Malley is the editorial assistant for Teaching Tolerance. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*





## PRESERVING A MORE HONEST HISTORY

Visiting historic homes, gardens and plantations can be a valuable experience for students—if they reckon honestly with the exploitation that upheld the opulence.

BY CORY COLLINS ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHANIE DALTON COWAN

**EVERY SCHOOL YEAR**, busloads of children visit estates, botanical gardens and Colonial homes in the North and old farms in the South. In almost all cases, the presence of enslaved people has left its mark: in hand-built bricks still pocked with fingerprints; in centuries of tilled, still-fertile soil; in the grains of hand-carved furniture and the seams of hand-sewn fabrics that have stood the test of time.

But, while their stories remain intricately woven into the setting, too often enslaved craftspeople, farmers and artists aren't named or mentioned at all by tour guides. Brochures fail to mention that, beneath the earth and behind the walls that encase these historic sites, truth has left its mark. Black students and their families sense the erasure; they feel pain where a guide presents charm and beauty. In describing how it felt to see her first-grader participate in a whitewashed plantation tour, writer Taylor Harris put it like this: "Where some people see beautiful gardens and trees, I cannot help but see the strange fruit hanging from them."

Educators planning field trips or hoping to provide their students with

ahead of time and look for evidence of some basic principles.

Ideally, sites should "understand how to put enslaved people and the institution of slavery in context, how to humanize people whose humanity was stripped away and how to create an empathetic bridge between us today and the individuals who were enslaved," Gallas says.

Screening for these principles in advance of a visit can provide a guide for educators navigating field trips to historic sites.

## PRINCIPLE 1

### Build a Knowledgeable, Responsive Staff

"A site is only as good as their frontline staff," Gallas says. "And if the frontline staff is giving a tour that you don't feel is good enough for general public visitors, it's probably an indication of what their education programs are like."

According to Ibrahima Seck, the academic and research director at Whitney Plantation, this is the key to a transformative experience for student visitors. A script will only get tour guides so far;

So at Whitney, knowledgeable tour guides are a priority, Seck says. And he sees the results of that focus.

"Whenever I see all the tours coming back with their tour guides ... there is something positive they got from it," he says. "They don't come back angry. They come back educated."

A good staff will also be responsive and adapt tours and educational experiences based on the needs of the educator and their students.

"As the director of education at a historic site myself, I want teachers to come to me and say, 'Look, we're studying this content—can you focus a little more on this?'" says Gallas, who serves as the co-founder of Interpreting Slavery, a public education project that offers workshops for museums and historic sites. "If they're not doing what you were hoping they would do," she tells educators, "offer to help them."

## PRINCIPLE 2

### Provide the Context Behind the "Beauty"

"If you'd come to Monticello about 25 years ago, you might not even have

**"TOURS DON'T COME BACK ANGRY. THEY COME BACK EDUCATED."**

an evocative, thorough understanding of local history have options—but they need to know what to look for. Kristin L. Gallas—who co-edited *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites* and is working on a second book about interpreting that history for young people—says teachers should visit sites

young people will have questions and feel personal connections to what they see. He has seen how this can go wrong at other plantations and sites.

"The tour guides, they get questions," Seck says. "They aren't ready to answer those questions. They are in trouble. There's a lot of embarrassment."

heard anything about slavery," says Melanie Bowyer, the manager of digital learning at the site of Thomas Jefferson's Virginia home.

That has changed in recent years, with Monticello's efforts to make the experience of enslaved people more visible at their site, from a new exhibit

on Sally Hemings to relaying a deeper understanding of the ways in which Jefferson's success relied on unpaid, enslaved labor.

"If we're onsite with teachers and students, you could see Monticello and it looks like a beautiful, serene architectural masterpiece," Bowyer says. But she stresses the importance of showing teachers and students that enslaved people touched every aspect of life on Jefferson's plantation—the cooking, the clothing, even the nails made by teenage boys and hammered into fences and walls.

"Jefferson's entire life was made possible by slavery," Bowyer says, noting that the time Jefferson had to write, to think and to draft architecture was time he owed to the 100 or more enslaved people performing forced labor on his property at any given time.

In their book *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites*, Gallas and co-editor James DeWolf Perry encourage sites to teach "comprehensive content": crafting a narrative that explores the role slavery played on a site, as well as putting it in context of the community, colony or state, nation and the Atlantic world.

Taking students to a site that doesn't do this, Bowyer argues, is harmful—especially to black students.

"When you erase an entire population or entire group of people from the history, you're doing a great disservice," she says. "You're saying that this history of African Americans did not matter. It wasn't important. They're not going to see themselves in this history. And they should."

Educators should look, instead, for sites where that story of slavery is interwoven throughout—where that story is told through individual narratives

## Making Your Classroom the Historic Site

Funding, geography or lack of institutional support may prevent educators from taking students to an exemplary historic site—but you can still bring the best practices of historic sites into your classroom.

**Be knowledgeable and responsive.** Always be willing to further educate yourself on the history of American slavery so you can be ready to answer your students' questions. A book like *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery* is a good place to start.

**Provide context.** Avoid what Christian Cotz calls "the mythology of America," which tends to center the Founding Fathers as visionaries beyond reproach. Telling everybody's story means always providing context as to what privileges allowed certain people to succeed, what forces held other people down, and how slavery contributed to the political and economic development of early America.

**Humanize the experience of enslaved people.** Utilize primary sources and artifacts to illustrate the many deeply personal ways that slavery affected them.

**Listen to descendant communities.** Collaborate with local descendant communities to see if they'd be willing to share their stories. Even if you cannot invite members of a descendant community into your classroom, you can still highlight their stories.

**Connect past to present.** Teach the through-lines and the legacy of slavery. From convict leasing to Jim Crow laws to mass incarceration to ongoing racial inequities in U.S. institutions today, challenge students to think like historians and help them draw connections.

that provide a more human portrait of enslaved people's experiences.

### PRINCIPLE 3

#### Humanize the Experiences of Enslaved People

In the cellar of James Madison's Montpelier, visitors view a film called *Fate in the Balance*. They hear the story of Ellen Stewart, who at 15 watched as her family was sold away person by person before she attempted to escape. During one such viewing, a child was crying. His grandmother asked him, "What's wrong? Didn't you study slavery in school?"

"Yes, Grandma," he replied. "But I never knew they had names."

Christian Cotz recalls this scene as

he underscores the importance of promoting empathy by telling enslaved people's personal stories. Cotz serves as the director of education and visitor engagement at Montpelier, where the descendant community inspired that focus on humanized storytelling.

"The real atrocities of slavery are individual and deeply personal," Cotz explains. "By leaving them out, you don't really convey the true history to the visitor, and you don't give them a sense of the horror."

At Montpelier, this is achieved through oral histories from enslaved people's descendants, historic letters and artifacts that belonged to enslaved people, illustrating their ambitions and traditions, as well as the work they were forced to do.



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Educators should seek out sites that weave these personal stories and names into the experience.

“These enslaved people were working within this horrible, oppressive establishment to make lives for themselves and their family,” Bowyer explains. These acts of agency and courage should be the highlights of any trip to one of these sites—or to any teaching about slavery.

## PRINCIPLE 4

### Include Descendant Communities and Personal Narratives

In a rubric of best practices for engaging descendant communities established by the National Summit on Teaching Slavery, the authors do not mince words in underscoring why it matters: “Without their voices, our research lacks depth, humanity and credibility, and institutions continue to perpetuate the exploitative practices of the past by privileging the perspectives of slave owners.”

This is why Kyle Stetz, the manager of student and family programs at Montpelier, says the first question an educator should ask about a historic site is, “Where is the story that they’re telling coming from?”

Stetz cites this as one of Montpelier’s strengths, where descendant families lend their voices to oral histories heard by visitors and to decision-making discussions by the institution itself.

“We would not have been able to do this exhibition without two decades of relationship building with the descendant community,” Cotz says. “Telling personal stories in a very empathetic and

humanistic way was important to them.”

Much of what the Montpelier descendant community produces—from genealogical research to archaeology expeditions to inherited stories and artifacts—is also being produced by descendant communities at other sites across the country. Educators should let that work inform units and trips surrounding the topics of slavery or early America.

## PRINCIPLE 5

### Connect Past to Present

“We can’t understand Black Lives Matter without understanding the history of slavery,” Gallas says. “We can’t help kids, especially children of color, understand all the different types of racism in our country today without understanding where that came from and how the construction of race and its connection to slavery existed for so long.”

At Montpelier, Christian Cotz sees the strongest reaction—both positive and negative—to their 10-minute video, *The Legacy of Slavery*.

“I think [some] people don’t want to think about James Madison and Black



Lives Matter or the Charleston shooting in the same breath, in the same space,” Cotz says.

These experts embrace that discomfort and continue to connect past and present in their exhibits because they know it’s necessary for a thorough history education.

“When I say visitors get transformed,” Whitney’s Ibrahima Seck says, “I mean they finally have a material understanding about the legacy of slavery.”

That material understanding is key, Seck and others say, not only to inform young people about why things are the way they are, but to arm them with the information to talk about it—and to do something about it.

At Whitney Plantation, Monticello and Montpelier, the past-to-present through-lines are explicitly documented in exhibits, videos and online educational resources. Sites like Cincinnati’s National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and Philadelphia’s Cliveden historic house have made community action and conversations about present-day inequalities part of their programming.

“It’s important in not just defining where we started as a nation but defining where we are today ... especially for teachers,” says Monticello’s Melanie Bowyer. “I think they’re the ones that can really make a difference.”

History hides behind facades, but teachers don’t have to. They hold the tools needed to expose students to honest interpretations of history—and to respect the people who lived that history by saying their names. ♦

*Collins is the senior writer for Teaching Tolerance.*



# *Bearing Witness to the Hard History of Guilford*

These New England students are using primary sources to trace the wealth that built their charming town back to the brutal history of chattel slavery.

BY JENIFER FRANK PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHANA SURECK AND IAN CHRISTMANN

**HANA STARTED HER SCHOOL PAPER** with a description of Guilford's town green—and for good reason. The beautiful, centuries-old space is the hub of this Connecticut coastal community. Residents like Hana, who attends Adams Middle School in Guilford, stroll beneath its shade trees, browse at the quaint shops on its perimeter and gather there for the town's annual Holiday Tree Lighting.

But after alluding to its charm, Hana shifted her focus. "One would hardly believe," she wrote, "that, centuries ago, this little town square was a stage for slavery."

Many Americans still consider slavery an exclusively Southern institution. But Hana and her eighth-grade classmates at Adams Middle School are delving into a deeper, more accurate history of their overwhelmingly white New England town.

They learn that, before the Civil War, slavery was practiced in every Northern state. They find out that, in Guilford and other towns like it, ministers, merchants and other wealthy people often enslaved at least one person—sometimes an entire family. And although the number of people enslaved per household was typically smaller in the North than on sprawling Southern plantations, the students come to understand that the motivation for enslavement was identical on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line: to increase profits by exploiting the labor of people held in bondage.

"This lovely town we live in was built on the backs of not only [people enslaved in Guilford], but people in the American South and people in the West Indies," says Dennis Culliton, the social studies teacher who created the locally focused

curriculum. “So the profits, the buildings we live in, this green that’s been preserved, the churches that you see—that’s where that wealth came from.”

### Confronting the History

Culliton’s passion for teaching about slavery in Guilford was ignited when he read a biography of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s father, Lyman Beecher, in which the famous 19th-century minister referred to slavery in Guilford during Revolutionary times.

“I stopped, took a breath and said, ‘I don’t know anything about slavery in Guilford—or in Connecticut,’” Culliton says.

He also observed that, typically, history curricula reflect a version of history that centers white experiences and perspectives.

“It doesn’t always feel like there’s something missing in our curriculum [until] you go out to look for history that’s centered around people of color,” he says.

With that goal in mind, Culliton plunged into research, examining census data and probate records, and eventually gave a talk on his findings at the public library. Douglas Nygren was one of approximately 140 Guilford residents who attended the talk. Months later, after he took a trip to Berlin, Nygren contacted Culliton; he had to tell the teacher about *Stolpersteine*.

Nygren learned during his travels that, in 1993, German artist Gunter Demnig began creating 4-by-4-inch bricks, placing each in the ground in front of homes of victims killed by the Nazis. A brass plaque covering each *Stolpersteine*, or “stumbling stone,” was inscribed with the victim’s name, birth year and other information. More than 70,000 stones have been installed in 24 countries.

“Being a therapist [specializing in trauma], I know people have to deal with this, and the same is true of nations,” Nygren says. “I started to look at our own country and saw we haven’t dealt with our own history of slavery.”

Inspired by Demnig’s model, Nygren, Culliton and several Guilford residents started the Witness Stones project. The group focuses on researching the people who were enslaved in their town and honoring them with physical markers.

From the beginning, participants knew the project and the curriculum had the potential for great impact. But they also worried that some residents, students and family members would reject their efforts, preferring to attribute Guilford’s affluence—and that of Northern colonies and states more broadly—solely to hard work and talent, rather than to the unpaid labor of enslaved people.

### Indisputable Primary Documents

One way Culliton preempted skepticism was to build his social studies unit around primary sources: 18th- and 19th-century wills, property and probate documents, and church records. He created document analysis sheets and a glossary of legal terms for students. With the help of their teachers, the entire eighth-grade class at Adams Middle School—300 students working in three teams—learned to decipher these documents.

It’s a demanding, creative process. Social studies teacher Thomas Bushnell says that when the unit was introduced in October 2017, he and language arts teacher Lauren Gullette “were literally with the kids, hands-on, figuring [documents] out ourselves.”

In analyzing the documents, students gained insight into the lives of three people enslaved in Guilford: Phillis, Candace and Moses. Each team researched the life of one person and used the jigsaw method to educate one another. They approached their research through five different lenses. They considered how the system of enslavement relied on dehumanization and paternalism, and on treating people as property. They also analyzed the economics of slavery. Finally, they looked for examples of

agency and resistance in the lives of the men and women they studied.

After becoming familiar with the new vocabulary and the key concepts, the eighth-graders then began working on the culminating project of the three-week unit: writing a biography.

As they researched the lives of Phillis, Candace and Moses, the students found their stories were complex and heartbreaking. Phillis, for example, had been kidnapped and brought to Guilford by an 18th-century merchant and enslaver named David Naughty. Naughty also enslaved a man named Montrose. Phillis, Montrose and their children, Candace and Moses, were enslaved in the merchant’s home on the town green for decades. Today, students know the site as the location of Guilford Savings Bank.

In November 2017, the students also led the town’s first Witness Stones installation ceremony, honoring Phillis, Candace and Moses, three previously anonymous residents.

### Providing the Words

At a teachers’ workshop Culliton organized last summer, Dr. Tracey Wilson, West Hartford’s town historian and a longtime teacher, remarked, “It takes confidence as a teacher to do this.”

Before she retired several years ago, Wilson taught a human rights course at West Hartford’s Conard High School for 20 years, as well as a course titled U.S. History Through the African-American Experience.

“Some people say, ‘We’re not going to talk about slavery because it’s too hard, and we may say the wrong thing,’” she says. “I think part of this whole [Guilford] project is that it gives teachers the words and the materials to get comfortable doing this.”

A unit about the lives of people enslaved in their hometown may be emotionally loaded, but the narrowness of its focus sharpens its impact. Frederick Douglass’ and Harriet Tubman’s lives offer powerful

Like Demnig's stumbling stones, Witness Stones ask the residents of Guilford to recognize the hard history beneath the paths they walk each day.

narratives, but only time separates Guilford students from Phillis, Candace and Moses. They walked the same paths the eighth-graders follow today.

At Adams Middle School, the Triangular Trade is no longer an abstraction, a set of arrows in a textbook linking continents and regions. Examples of its impact on the lives of enslaved people are legible in each of the documents students study. And evidence of its benefits to white people is visible in every elegant historic home the students pass as they walk through town.

History teacher Thomas Bushnell says there was a “different kind of energy” in his room last year. Taking what formerly seemed like a far-away Southern practice and placing it squarely in their own backyards, the new curriculum has dramatically reframed the institution of slavery for students.



“One of the beauties of this process is that we can’t keep pointing our fingers at other people and saying they need to change,” Culliton says. “We can’t say, ‘The South is bad and we’re good,’ if we have our history that we’re hiding. ... Before we engage other people, we need to do this right here in

Connecticut. Not only in Connecticut but right here in Guilford.” ♦

*Frank is a Hartford-based writer and co-author of *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery*.*

## Guilford and the Key Concepts

The biography project at Adams Middle School touches on nine out of 10 “Key Concepts” Teaching Tolerance recommends in our *Teaching Hard History* framework:

1. Slavery, which was practiced by Europeans prior to their arrival in the Americas, was important to all of the colonial powers and existed in all of the European North American colonies.
2. Slavery and the slave trade were central to the development and growth of the economy across British North America and, later, the United States.
3. Protections for slavery were embedded in the founding documents; enslavers dominated the federal government, Supreme Court and Senate from 1787 through 1860.
4. “Slavery was an institution of power,” designed to create profit for the enslavers and break the will of the enslaved and was a relentless quest for profit abetted by racism.
5. Enslaved people resisted the efforts of their enslavers to reduce them to commodities in both revolutionary and everyday ways.
6. The experience of slavery varied depending on time, location, crop, labor performed, size of slaveholding and gender.
7. Slavery was the central cause of the Civil War. (*This is the only key concept not included in the Guilford project because this study of slavery is completely independent of the Civil War.*)

8. Slavery shaped the fundamental beliefs of Americans about race and whiteness, and white supremacy was both a product and legacy of slavery.

9. Enslaved and free people of African descent had a profound impact on American culture, producing leaders and literary, artistic and folk traditions that continue to influence the nation.

10. By knowing how to read and interpret the sources that tell the story of American slavery, we gain insight into some of what enslaving and enslaved Americans aspired to, created, thought and desired.

Including 18th-century documents and focusing on primary sources, the project as a whole lets students build understanding in Key Concepts 1 and 10. Each aspect of slavery researched in small groups also aligns with at least two of the framework’s key concepts:

**Treating people as property:** Key Concepts 4 and 5

**Dehumanization:** Key Concepts 4 and 6

**Paternalism:** Key Concepts 3 and 8

**Economics:** Key Concepts 2 and 4

**Agency and resistance:** Key Concepts 5 and 9



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Equity, -  
PERIOD.

## Educators can help reduce stigmas associated with menstruation by challenging rigid school policies and advocating for equitable health education.

BY COSHANDRA DILLARD ILLUSTRATION BY LORRAINE NAM

**AT THE BEGINNING OF** the 2017-18 school year, middle school teacher Kristin Heavner shared on Facebook a photo of a colorful makeup bag filled with disposable menstrual products. She explained in the caption that she creates menstruation care packs for students. Since many educators follow her on social media, she thought it would be a good idea to remind them that middle school-aged students tend to have irregular menstrual cycles, which can mean unexpected periods or accidents at school. She didn't think there was anything special about this public service announcement. After all, menstruation is a natural biological process that affects about half of all humans.

To Heavner's surprise, the post went viral when it popped up on numerous blogs. The teacher had done a great deed, but most importantly, her post spiraled into a conversation about one of society's most stigmatized topics.

It signified a small moment in a rising menstrual equity movement—one that aims to ensure anyone who menstruates has access to safe, environmentally friendly products, while also dispelling the shame associated with menstruation.

When we think about equity in the classroom, we envision ways teachers can give students from marginalized communities the right tools to flourish. Gender parity is also part of that—how to be cognizant of the messages we send students about their identities, their bodies and about the nature of gender and of sex assigned at birth. Self-awareness and education about these topics often begin at school. The stigma does, too. That's why schools can be critical sites in the menstrual equity movement.

Heavner's students, especially those who were too embarrassed to ask for a menstrual product, quickly opened up to learning and talking about menstruation—all because she offered a service without shrouding it in secrecy. In her homeroom class, students of all genders voluntarily helped fill the period packs.

"Once kids were talking about it a little bit more, they seemed a lot more comfortable to just kind of walk in, walk to the back to take one and walk

out," Heavner says. "There wasn't a lot of hiding."

In the United States, this sort of effort has been carried out by menstrual equity organizations that focus on schools, among other institutions, where people don't normally have access to menstrual supplies. Some states are also addressing this issue, with at least 14—including New York, California and Illinois—passing laws to provide menstrual products for free in schools.

*"It's our responsibility to help students understand that a shame-based response to a natural bodily process is a social construct, and we can push back against that."*

### A History

Lack of menstrual equity is most often thought of as an issue in the Global South, where women may have limited access to menstrual products, be isolated and shamed, or miss work and school because of their periods. But menstrual advocacy in the United States can be traced back to the 1960s. For years it was considered a fringe movement, first propelled by health activists, consumer rights advocates, environmentalists and feminist spiritualists working to



change the narrative about menstruation. It then spread to punk subcultures that fought against the exploitation of the menstrual cycle as a way to sell products.

By the mid-2010s, the movement had hit the mainstream. In 2015, phrases like “year of the period” and “the year the period went public” appeared commonly in the media. In Canada, officials stopped taxing menstrual products, a practice that requires women to pay inflated prices for personal care items.

“Just in the last years, it’s been on fire, frankly, which has been fascinating to me as someone who’s been studying this since the early 2000s,” says Chris Bobel, associate professor of women’s, gender and sexuality studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston and former president of the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research.

There’s a dearth of studies that show the economic and opportunity costs of menstruation for U.S. students, but activists point to numerous anecdotes that describe the struggles, including school absenteeism, barriers to accessing menstrual products and shame. According to *Periods, Poverty, and the Need for Policy*, one of the few research

reports on the topic of menstrual equity, girls at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota miss up to a week of school due to a lack of access to affordable menstruation products.

#### Policies Ignore Periods

While menstruation is a reality for half of the population at some point in their lives, the experience is often trivialized or ignored in schools. Lack of consideration for menstruating students is evident in restrictive and—in some cases—

dehumanizing restroom policies, the worst of which have become the subjects of whistle-blowing news reports. Most recently, a network of charter schools in the Chicago area came under fire for a restroom policy that led to menstruating students bleeding through clothing or developing urinary tract infections.

Dress codes, too, are rarely created with menstruating bodies in mind. The same charter school network criticized for its limited restroom breaks also required that students wear khaki bottoms only. With no option to wear darker pants or skirts, it became embarrassingly obvious when students—who already had to negotiate their trips to the restroom—bled on their clothing.



#### Socialized Shame

Perhaps bleeding through clothing or asking a teacher for a tampon wouldn’t be embarrassing in the first place if periods were better understood—a challenge in a society that doesn’t speak openly or neutrally about menstruation in public spaces. Students who menstruate often go out of their way to avoid letting anyone know they’ve gotten their period. Students who’ve never had the experience tend to behave as though they are disgusted by the very mention of it.

Conversations about menstruation typically happen at home or at a doctor’s office. When they do occur at school, it’s within the limits of health or sex education courses, where instructional time is limited, and it’s common to separate classes by binary gender. And even then, it’s unlikely that these conversations will provide students the information they need. According to a 2014 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study, more than half of American high schools and four-fifths of middle schools fail to teach the 16 essential sexual education topics CDC researchers recommend.

By the time a young person gets their first period, or menarche, they’ve already been socialized to believe there is something dirty and shameful about the process. In media, menstruating women are portrayed as moody, angry

## HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR MENSTRUAL EQUITY AT YOUR SCHOOL

**Normalize menstruation.** Adapt or create a curriculum that includes the menstrual cycle. Ensure all students and staff—regardless of sex or gender—understand the menstrual cycle.

**Watch the language.** Use correct terms instead of euphemisms such as “Aunt Flo” or “monthly visitor.” Shut down bullying that involves stereotypical references about a person’s temperament while menstruating (e.g., “PMSing”).

**Don’t assume that any student**—regardless of sex or gender—**does or does not menstruate.**

### Think of menstrual products as school supplies.

Stock bathrooms, nurses’ offices and classrooms with menstrual products, and make students aware of where they are stored.

**Reconsider bathroom and dress code policies.** Urge school administrators to create more than one option for school uniforms, and ensure no one has to wait to use the bathroom in the event of an emergency.

**Seek help from organizations working to make products free and accessible in schools.** Here are three:

• PERIOD. delivers period packs to people in need and offers education through a network of schools, colleges and community chapters.

• #HappyPeriod provides menstrual hygiene kits to people experiencing homelessness or poverty, including the LGBTQ community, teens, veterans and people with disabilities. The organization has chapters in New York City, Atlanta, Miami, San Diego, Chicago and Washington, D.C. People interested in the cause can raise funds or start their own chapter in their community.

• In the D.C. Metro area, Bringing Resources to Aid Women’s Shelters (BRAWS) delivers products to schools for people who cannot afford menstrual supplies.

and isolating. Advertisements use the word “feminine” in the same breath as “sanitary” and “protection.”

All of these messages send a clear signal to menstruating students: Learn to hide this event. Even in the privacy of a bathroom stall, many are careful not to make too much noise while unwrapping a pad or tampon.

“I think, as educators, it’s our responsibility to help students understand that a shame-based response to a natural bodily process is a social construct, and we can push back against that,” Bobel says.

### The Right Messages

Bobel notes that the current wave of menstrual equity activism is missing an opportunity to empower youth to have pride in their bodies. Adding menstrual education would be a helpful addition to curricula that explore both puberty and sex education.

“What’s important is that we as educators impress upon youth that their bodies are sites of power and pleasure and agency,” Bobel says. “And they can make up their mind and change their mind about how they feel about their bodies, how they want to care for their bodies. Right now, menstrual education is really about, ‘What do you do to clean up the mess?’”

To ensure the inclusion of transgender students—who may or may not be out—it’s important that teachers are thoughtful when speaking about menstruating bodies. Not all women menstruate, and not *only* women menstruate. Teachers must acknowledge that transgender students may have a hard time managing

menstruation while escaping negative attention that could put them at risk of harm.

“That’s one reason why this gender-segregated menstrual health education, which is still common, is not a good option—because everybody needs that information,” Bobel says. “We really have to begin by recognizing that you can’t make assumptions about who is and isn’t menstruating.”

Bobel says she is pleased to see more people in more spaces paying attention to menstruation. She worries, however, that product-related campaigns are the lowest-hanging fruit and may distract from other dimensions of the menstrual equity movement.

“While I think caring for the menstrual body is important, I think we have to think beyond that to actually fight stigma,” she says. “Because as long as our agenda, this menstrual movement agenda, is fixed on products, access, cost, quality, we are not taking on stigma. We are accommodating it. We are saying the most important thing is to develop your capacity to contain [menstruation].”

Because students spend so much time at school, educators are in a unique position to help reframe the idea that menstruation is a punishment or a deviant function that makes bodies that menstruate inferior to bodies that don’t. Instead, schools can treat menstruation as an important process for everyone to understand—for the sake of body literacy and reproductive and sexual health. ♦

*Dillard is the staff writer for Teaching Tolerance.*





# Reading Together

Reading groups that bridge school and family reinforce important lessons about identity, diversity, justice and action.

BY DAVE CONSTANTIN ILLUSTRATION BY JON REINFURT

**TEN-YEAR-OLD SIENA SCORNAVACCO** stands on a chair overlooking a roomful of her peers and their parents, confidently laying out the evening's agenda. Scattered around the room on couches and chairs are nine children ranging in age from 8 to 13 and a dozen adults. Seated next to Siena, her mom, Karla, offers a few helpful prompts and points of clarity—but she is careful to let her daughter do most of the talking. The mother-daughter team is co-leading tonight's social justice book club. The topic Siena chose is a big one: the rights of children and how kids can fight against unfairness.

Everyone at the meeting has read two pre-selected and thematically relevant books, one on the civil rights movement and another on the Holocaust. Karla holds up a copy of *The Tree in the Courtyard: Looking Through Anne Frank's Window* and confesses that she almost didn't finish reading it with her two daughters, 10 and 8, because of the heavy subject matter. But tackling tough subjects is what this group is all about.

"When we're talking about these things, we're allowed to say what our feelings are," Karla explains. "A part of our activism is to have that emotional awareness." She pauses, then adds with a smile, "But we're allowed to have fun."

Taking her cue, Siena kicks things off with a lively game of Two Truths

and a Lie. The group breaks up into smaller clusters of kids and adults who come up with three statements about any of the historical characters from their readings. Siena flits around the room, checking in on each group's progress and offering encouragement, clearly enjoying her turn as the leader. Throughout the room, the kids laugh, debate and whoop in celebration at correct answers. No one scolds or tries to manage them. The vibe is more kid-run social gathering than classroom, with the adults hanging back and offering just enough helpful nudging to keep the ship on course.

It helps that this particular ship boasts an expert crew. Every adult in this room, located on the top floor of the education building at the University of

Colorado Boulder, is a faculty or staff member here whose work addresses issues of justice and equity. And these are their children. But if that makes it seem like this is some staged experiment on multigenerational book clubs, that was never the intent. Yes, data is being collected. But any contribution to academia is secondary. These families came together for a more immediate purpose: responding to a new political climate that poses a direct threat to their values.

## The New Normal

"I don't think we would have done this if it hadn't been for the [2016 presidential] election," says reading group co-founder Kevin Welner, a CU professor of education and director of the National Educational Policy Center. "A lot of people said, 'If Trump wins, I'm going to move to Canada,' 'I can't raise my children in this environment,' and that sort of thing. I think that for us, it was a similar sentiment. We were concerned about what the children would see as normal, lessons they would learn about how we treat the most vulnerable

in our communities, what's appropriate in terms of public discourse."

Welner, along with his colleague Michelle Renée Valladares, decided to be proactive. They contacted other parents in the School of Education who had similar concerns and children around the same age as theirs and decided to put the current political climate in context. "We wanted our children to look at the current situation and understand that the struggle for social justice, the struggle for civil rights, is something that's been going on forever and will continue to go on," Welner says. "The current moment is best understood within that continuum, within that past and the need to continue the struggle into the future."

Since the 2016 election, the group has met roughly once a month to discuss how contemporary views on race, identity, equality and belonging relate to the historical parallels in their readings. Their subjects run the gamut of social justice historical literature: the Lost Boys of Sudan, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, the civil rights movement, women's suffrage and more. To keep the reading material fresh, they work closely with

the CU library's subject liaison for education, Lindsay Roberts, sending them a steady stream of title requests, which they eagerly accommodate.

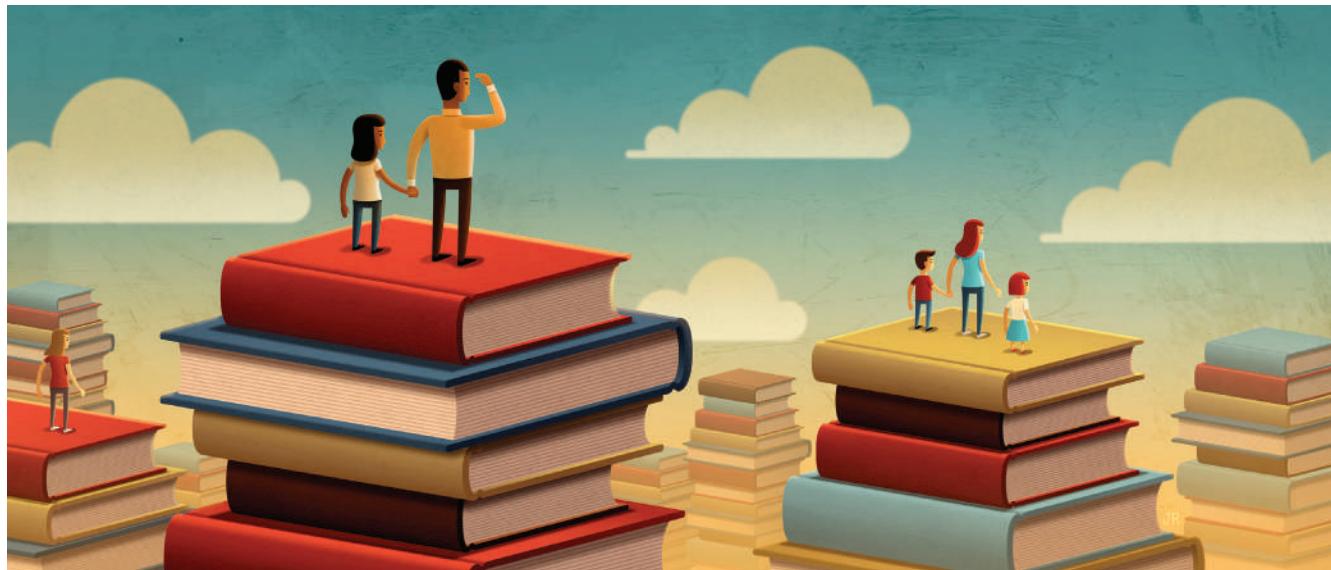
"What's been really cool is seeing this sort of creative energy and ideas that children and families have had of new materials that they suggest," Roberts says, estimating that they've bought over two dozen new titles for the library so far based on the group's suggestions. "They are definitely books that we wouldn't necessarily have purchased otherwise."

This influx of new material has prompted Roberts to carve out a prominent section of library space devoted to social justice literature for children, stocked with reading group books and other materials. Those materials are available to local K-12 students and teachers as well, which Roberts hopes will help connect the broader community to what they're doing on campus. "What I would love to do more of is closer collaboration with our local school librarians and public librarians to close the loop here and see more sharing of social justice resources and ideas," they say. "That's my hope."

Professor of Education Kathy Schultz, who also serves as the school's

dean, sees tremendous potential in this reading-group model. "This kind of idea not only creates community in the school and among our families; it creates a sense of possibility and critical action," Schultz says, "which I think is very connected to what education is all about." As a career educator and as a parent, Schultz says she's encountered plenty of book clubs among adults and even "a few fun, novel ones" among adults and children. But nothing quite like this. "The fact that this is a group of parents who are coming together with their children to explore—in a variety of modalities—how to respond to the moment that we're living in ... feels very unique to me, and [it's] something I hope will catch on."

There's no reason it shouldn't. The Boulder group's situation is certainly unique in a number of ways, mainly in its demographics and access to resources. But it's only one of many possible variations of the reading group model, one these participants have adapted to fit their specific needs. "Like any curriculum or any educational reform effort or any sort of teaching effort, it should be context-flexible," Kevin Welner explains. Other unique



# “This idea not only creates community in the school and among our families; it creates a sense of possibility and critical action.”

examples of these reading groups have sprung up in diverse pockets around the country in states such as Texas, South Carolina and Michigan.

## We’re Social Learners

In the Boulder group, the kids choose the topics and the structure, which usually involves a mix of games, discussions and group activities. The variety helps them stay interested and retain more, and the group setting strengthens their appreciation for the basic tenets of community, democracy and the power of their individual and collective voices.

The merits of bringing children, parents and educators together in this way are unassailable. Countless studies have demonstrated the clear benefits of family involvement in children’s reading—from improving early literacy and critical-reading skills to boosting social emotional learning. When that’s done in tandem with educators and reinforced regularly in a social setting, it creates a powerful incentive to learn and fosters a greater sense of community and shared goals.

“We’re social learners,” Welner explains. “We also learn when we’re more engaged. And if you think about the reading itself, it takes on meaning when you know you’re going to go into that environment and share your thoughts afterwards. A lot of what would otherwise maybe *not* be very compelling reading becomes compelling because of the context we’ve created.”

“This social action group was not connected to Black Lives Matter or

the current response to the shootings in Florida that have activated youth,” Kathy Schultz says. “[But] they’re all borne out of youth desire to make a difference in the world in these times. I think it’s part of a larger, really global, youth movement.”

## Children on the March

The meeting Siena is leading takes place just days after the nationwide school walkouts against gun violence in the wake of the Parkland school shooting in Florida. Everyone in attendance either participated or had friends or siblings who did. To put this bold response by America’s youth into historical perspective, the group is watching *The Children’s March*, a documentary about the coordinated school walkouts against segregation that took place in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963 (available for free at tolerance.org).

A lively discussion ensues, again with the kids drawing their own connections to contemporary examples. Siena says that although her school didn’t participate in this walkout, they are planning one against fracking.

“What’s fracking?” someone asks. Siena eagerly educates the group on the issue, one she’s proud to say has landed her on TV once and in the newspaper *twice*. Ten-year-old Alana Valladares immediately ties the environmental threat posed by fracking wells to something she read about oil pollution decimating sea turtle

populations. Another student breaks in to talk excitedly about a solar-powered car some people in town are building.

And the conversation continues like this—kid-powered, parent-approved.

The group has been successful from a strictly educational standpoint by encouraging kids to take an active role in their own and each other’s education. But it has also served to strengthen bonds between children and their families in a way that may not be as easily measurable but is no less critical.

“I’ll pick Siena up from school, and as we’re driving here she’ll say, ‘Let’s do this again next year,’” says Karla Scornavacco. “She’s like, ‘This is one time a month that we get to do a mommy-daughter thing.’ And so that’s a special thing. To me, that’s beyond raising a little activist; it’s the time that we have together. That’s probably the most motivating thing—and that’s what hits you down at your heart.” ♦

*Constantin is the editorial coordinator for the Pennsylvania State Education Association.*

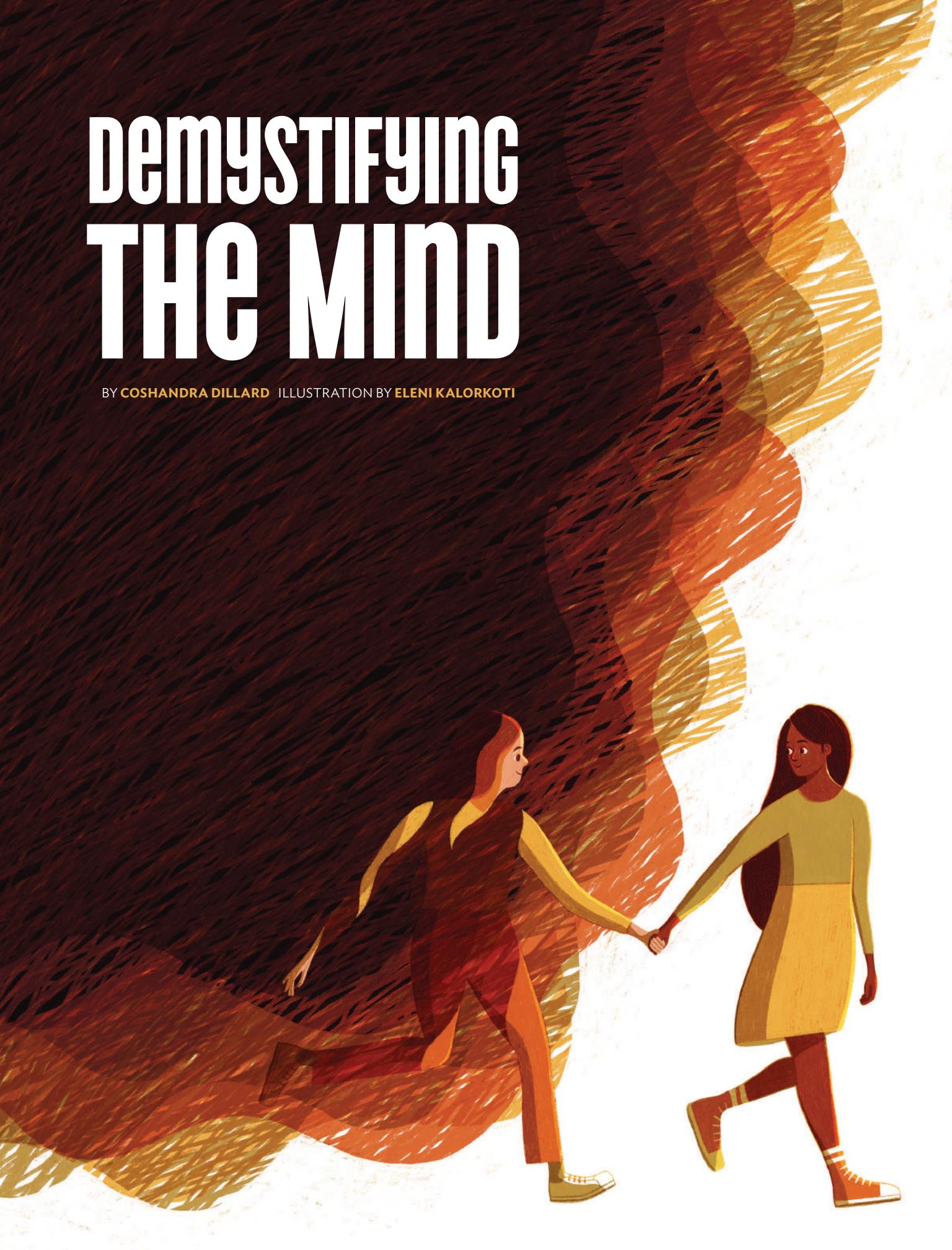
## Start Your Own Social Justice Reading Group!

Our new guide offers multiple models so you can work with families to design a group tailored to your school community.

[tolerance.org/reading-together-guide](http://tolerance.org/reading-together-guide)

# DEMYSTIFYING THE MIND

BY COSHANDRA DILLARD ILLUSTRATION BY ELENI KALORKOTI



*More schools are adding mental health to the required curricula, reducing stigma and educating young people to better understand their emotions, their behaviors and their own brains.*

**DEBORAH AND WILLIE BINION** awoke at 2 a.m. one spring morning to find their son, Jordie (as they affectionately call him), standing outside with his guitars strapped to his body, “waiting for Drake and Eminem to pick him up.” Jordan Binion hadn’t yet been diagnosed with a mental illness, but based on delusional episodes and other symptoms, his parents suspected he might have been developing schizophrenia.

The Binions immediately sought help for Jordan, but they soon found that the mental health system was complicated and filled with barriers. Their son was hospitalized days after that early morning incident, but since Washington state privacy laws allowed people age 13 and older to make decisions about their mental health treatment, he left the facility within 24 hours of arrival. Due to a shortage of mental health professionals, his first scheduled psychiatric appointment wouldn’t happen for months.

He didn’t make it. Jordan took his own life the day before the appointment—six days after his 17th birthday.

The time between Jordan’s first signs of distress and his untimely death was short and agonizing for his family. “It was the worst time of my life, other than his death—to watch your child suffer, to

watch your child clearly not well, and so helpless,” Deborah Binion recounts.

She and her husband turned their grief into a mission—the Jordan Binion Project.

#### **THE PROJECT BECOMES A MOVEMENT**

The Binions began by flooding Washington state high schools with a PowerPoint presentation that detailed Jordan’s story and the importance of seeking help for a mental health issue. They researched mental health curricula available in the United States and, after failing to identify anything suitable, introduced a set of evidence-based mental health education resources widely used in Canada. The curriculum focuses on maintaining mental health, understanding mental disorders and their treatments, and learning how to decrease stigma and build help-seeking skills. The project has reached at least 106 school districts in Washington and continues to offer free training for teachers across the state.

Deborah and Willie are part of a movement to improve mental health literacy among young people. Lawmakers are also taking notice. Two states—New York and Virginia—recently passed legislation to add mental health education to existing

curricula. In New York, the new law requires that mental health education is integrated at the elementary, middle and high school levels. The Virginia law requires the inclusion of mental health education in a health class for ninth- and 10th-graders.

Mental health awareness and destigmatization campaigns have existed for decades, but mental health advocates stress that this education must begin earlier in life. Students grapple with multiple stressors—defining their identities, coping with conflicts that might be happening at home, pushing through social anxieties—all while meeting academic and behavioral expectations. As many as 1 in 5 children between the ages of 3 and 17 have a diagnosable mental, emotional or behavioral disorder, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reports that, in half of all lifetime cases, the onset of mental illness happens by age 14, and 75 percent of all of chronic mental illness begins by age 24.

There is no sign that these figures are on the decline. According to the CDC, suicide rates increased by nearly 30 percent in the last two decades;

suicide was the second-leading cause of death among young people in 2016. And between 2008 and 2015, the number of youth contemplating or attempting suicide almost doubled.

### SETTING AN EXAMPLE

Niagara Falls City School District (NFCS) has been recognized by the New York State Office of Mental Health for their work in systematically creating a culture that values mental wellness as much as physical health and academic achievement. Superintendent Mark Laurrie had been working on initiatives to improve mental health literacy even before state legislators passed the new law last summer.

But the district goes beyond teaching about mental health; it has adopted a framework that promotes a continuum of wellness from pre-K3 through high school. Mental, social and emotional support are included in the health and wellness curriculum, alongside physical fitness, nutrition and healthy behaviors. An emphasis on the connection between mind and body is rooted in the climate of NFCS schools. Teachers are trained in “mental health first aid” so they know how to respond in a crisis.

“If a student is thinking about something outside of school with their own mental or physical health or pregnancy or what have you, they have no focus or concentration on the Pythagorean theorem or the religions of Southeast Asia,” Laurrie says. “They could[n’t] care less about that. They’re thinking about what’s on their mind now.”

Part of NFCS’ push to integrate mental health education and provide support stems from responses it received from a 2015 CDC survey, which looked at risk behaviors of youth in their city. The survey revealed that more than 19 percent of students surveyed had contemplated suicide, while 10 percent had actually attempted suicide.

“It was very clear to me, based on a couple of the indicators, that we needed to make some major changes ...



and add programming to not only support better mental health but better health education in general,” Laurrie says. “[T]hat really was the kick in the pants, so to speak, to say, ‘We’ve got to get going on this.’”

Christine Barstys, an English teacher at Niagara Falls High School, leads a

team of teachers, guidance counselors, a school psychologist and peer leaders in a program called Sources of Strength. The grant-funded program, now in its third year at the school, seeks to prevent suicide. Barstys invites organizations such as YWCA and the Niagara County Mental Health Board to talk to her ninth-grade students.

In her classroom instruction, she uses texts as springboards for discussions about mental health. For example, in reviewing the book *Speak*—which deals with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and suicide—her class has an opportunity to delve into those issues.

Laurrie says since they’ve made mental health education a priority, he’s already noticed a shift at the school.

“It’s not something that people or kids are afraid to talk about or address or have programs for, so the stigma is really starting to lessen,” he says. “Secondly, it’s forced us to create just as many programs to support kids in the community in the areas of mental health as we do in the areas of academics.”

The new law in Virginia was inspired by three high school students who saw the need to address students’ mental health and to reduce stigma. They appealed to their state senator, Creigh Deeds, who also wanted to prioritize mental health education. It was personal for him. In 2013, his son, who’d been diagnosed with a mental disorder, died by suicide.

Like those in New York, some Virginia schools were already taking steps to emphasize the importance of mental wellness. Leaders in Winchester Public Schools, for example, knew many of their students were struggling silently and welcomed the additional support.

“I think that we’re looking at so many environmental impacts that weigh heavier and heavier on our children,” says Judy McKiernan, director of student services at Winchester Public Schools. “The increase in

stress, the impact of social media messages [and] economic issues that our community continues to feel, even 10 years after the recession. We have a large opioid epidemic situation in our community and in our surrounding region, and that's resulted in extreme family dysfunction."

Winchester schools are part of a health district where 20.6 percent of middle school students and 12.7 percent of high school students have seriously considered suicide, according to a recent community-needs assessment. Suicide screenings have been on the uptick for at least the last three years. So Winchester administrators improved how they identify problems and make referrals to counselors. They also made sure counselors were following the American School Counselor Association model for best practices.

**"We needed to make some major changes and add programming to not only support better mental health but better health education in general."**

## LOOKING AHEAD

So far, New York and Virginia are the only states to mandate mental health education in schools. However, more schools across the country are assessing the role they should play in supporting the complete health of students. Often, this takes the shape of offering more mental health services. In Utah, one school district plans to employ a full-time psychologist at each of its 36 elementary schools. Louisiana and South Dakota schools recently secured federal dollars for mental health support. But, increasingly, conversations are including mental health *education*, like the governor-led task force in Pennsylvania that not only recommends improving access to mental

health services but also expanding standards to address social, mental and emotional health for students from pre-K through 12th grade.

"I think that you're going to see a great shift in the purpose of public education in the coming years," Laurrie says. "Kids can learn in various ways: on their phones, on their computers, et cetera. What they can't learn on their phones and on their computers is how to get along with each other, how to resolve problems, how to handle crises—all these mental health issues. I think it's going to become more and more the role of the school."

That's exactly what the Binion family is hoping for. While they understand firsthand that the mental health system is broken, they believe young people like Jordan may have a better chance of survival if they find hope in early learning about mental illness and about how people can live productive and successful lives despite it.

They are now seeing the impact their son's story has on hundreds of students who write letters to the Jordan Binion Project, saying they are inspired by their message of hope—that they know they're not alone in their journey.

Jordan once told his mother he'd change the world one day. In that moment, she didn't know how prophetic those words were.

"At that time, I was like, 'All right, Jordie.' But now he is changing the world," she says. "My hope is that, through this project, we can change the mental health of this nation; that kids are going to get in, they're going to get evaluated, they're going to get treated early. It's going to change their path in life. And it's going to save lives, and that's what I want. I want Jordie's memory to be kept alive and his legacy to be that he helped change the mental health of the nation." ♦

*Dillard is the staff writer for Teaching Tolerance.*

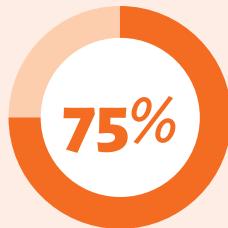
## WHAT THE STATS SAY...



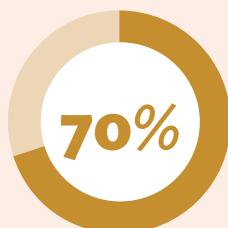
Suicide rates have increased by nearly 30 percent across all age groups in the last two decades. (CDC)



As many as one in five children between ages 3 and 17 have a diagnosable mental, emotional or behavioral disorder. (CDC)



In 75 percent of cases, the onset of mental illness happens by age 24. (NAMI)



70 percent of youth in state and local juvenile justice systems have a mental illness. (NAMI)





# THE RHYTHM OF RESILIENCE

In the wake of 2017's Hurricane Maria, a group of Puerto Rican artists is helping teachers and students find agency and stability by drawing on the legacy of *la bomba Puertorriqueña*.

BY CORY COLLINS ILLUSTRATION BY JOVANNA TOSELLO

**LA BOMBA PUERTORRIQUEÑA** is as rhythmic as its name—as unmistakably tied to its place, its history, its joy and its pain.

The dance was born on Puerto Rico's sugar plantations, a form of resistance and self-expression for enslaved people facing cruel conditions. The varying beats, lyrics and movements gave them freedom within their bondage: to express torment and trauma, to celebrate small triumphs of laughter, love and community, to sustain traditions of an old land—and to lay claim to a new one.

For once the movement had been performed, it could not be undone.

The dance's call-and-response echoes traditions of West Africa. The drums often used—*barriiles de bomba*, or rum barrels—evoke memories of the trade system that brought enslaved people to the island. At the time the dance originated, many enslaved people were separated from others who spoke the same language, so lyrics were necessarily scarce. But it was the empowered dancer's movements—a shared language perfected over centuries—that illustrated resilience.

A resilience so deeply planted in Puerto Rican soil that no wind, no rain could wash it away.

On September 20, 2017, Hurricane Maria hit the island of Puerto Rico, wreaking devastating damage. Forceful winds and relentless floodwaters broke bridges, ruined roadways and swept away entire neighborhoods. The island lost power. Many Puerto Ricans went months without running water, air conditioning or refrigeration.

Recovery efforts failed, in the short term, due to the impossibility of air travel to and from the island; in the long term, the U.S. government did not provide the Puerto Rican people the same steadfast support and resources it provided to people who had recently endured natural disasters on the mainland. And the local government had neither the resources nor the organization

needed to go it alone. This crisis was too big, too costly.

The latest estimates conclude that nearly 3,000 people died as a result of the hurricane, either in its initial surge or in the continued darkness that cut them off from medical care.

#### A Call to Action

In San Juan's Escuela Dr. Arturo Morales Carrión, music educator Rody J. Huertas Ostolaza had previously made plans to transform the struggling elementary school. With help from a School Improvement Grant from the Department of Education of Puerto Rico, he had recruited dancer and counselor-in-training Víctor M. Serrano Román to assist him in forming alliances in the community and leveraging these relationships to improve the school. But after the hurricane, they knew they had to dig deeper.

"We had a plan already to help transform the school," Serrano says. "But since the hurricane came, we transformed the plan."

Friends since 2004, Huertas (a musician) and Serrano (a dancer) had traveled around the world as artists expressing Puerto Rican folklore through performance. In 2012, the duo co-founded *Compañía Folklórica Magüey de Puerto Rico*, a nonprofit that (among other work) integrates theater, music and dance into workshops for school communities as a way to address issues like bullying. They define their mission as "rescuing the values, sensibility and motivation of Puerto Ricans."

Five years later, many Puerto Ricans needed a reminder of that motivation. This was especially true for educators and students. Schools were closing. Teachers were losing jobs. Students were leaving, seeking refuge on the mainland. The fate of Escuela Morales Carrión was uncertain.

But Huertas and Serrano saw an opportunity to return to the roots and the stories that no hurricane-force

wind could destroy. Those who had first danced *la bomba Puertorriqueña* had endured worse—but still, they danced.

"Everyone, including us, was so sad because of what was happening," Serrano says. "But it was very important for us to empower [teachers] in order to then start doing what we're supposed to be doing. ... It was an opportunity to embrace the experience and become more powerful than before."

#### Empowering Teachers

In the eight weeks prior to students' return to school, teachers at Escuela Morales Carrión discovered a uniting and inspiring force in each other—and in their shared culture. It began with healing.

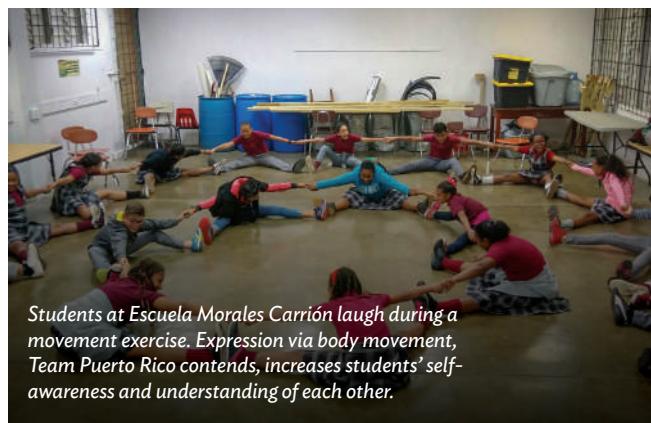
"First, we needed teachers to talk about what they were living at that moment," Serrano explains. "To have the opportunity to express themselves, to listen to each other, and to start working as a team after the hurricane."

This was accomplished through workshops that explored mindfulness and body movement as tools of self-empowerment and interpersonal connection. They helped teachers open up about the different ways the hurricane had brought them pain—and brought them closer to their community.

"They were so glad they had the opportunity to express themselves, to listen to each other," Serrano says. "During those days and those moments, it was like a new beginning."

Huertas and Serrano—with collaboration from local musicians, artists, educators and organizations such as *Asociación Universitaria de Consejería Profesional*—also organized workshops that taught empowerment, wellness and resilience through creativity. Teachers learned how social justice issues and emotion are expressed through Puerto Rican dance, music and literature. They learned that their resilience had a history—a history that could be repeated, like a rhythm.

Huertas witnessed a transformation among the teachers. Many had come in, he said, worried about the lifespan of their jobs and the school. By the end of the eight weeks, they were grateful to have tools to help them not only cope, but feel rejuvenated to serve their students.



Students at Escuela Morales Carrión laugh during a movement exercise. Expression via body movement, Team Puerto Rico contends, increases students' self-awareness and understanding of each other.

### Empowering Students

Huertas, Serrano and dance instructor Zorimar Rosado Meléndez—brought together by the School Improvement Grant—pounced on the opportunity to teach social justice and empowerment through Puerto Rican folklore. The students of Escuela Morales Carrión who returned to the school were still suffering in the aftermath of the hurricane, but they now had a new opportunity: to connect to a piece of their cultural heritage grounded in resilience.

Those lessons began with the movements of *la bomba Puertorriqueña*. Given its origins as a form of expression for enslaved people, the dancer's power to dictate what the drummer must do—not vice versa—provided an immediate lesson in agency.

In teaching this dance and its history to students, Rosado says, “we were telling them that they are the only ones that are in control of their lives.”

“And their bodies,” Huertas adds.

Throughout the year, students learned about the social justice themes embedded in their folklore and connected those lessons to their present-day emotions, concerns and passions. They analyzed lyrics from more modern *bombas* that explored themes of racism, politics, the environment and education. They learned how words and body movements could be used to express frustration, anxiety or feelings of injustice. Like their teachers before them, they discovered coping strategies, but they also discovered more about their culture and, within it, their power.

Rosado describes this as helping

students learn how “to be resilient in a Puerto Rican way”—a culturally sustaining method of teaching that illustrates the history and strengths inherent in students’ identities.

“We gave them another way of thinking,” Huertas says. “We knew that right now children need that type of practice. When they go to their houses they’re not going to have energy or electricity. But they knew they had another thing to do using the art. They feel that they have a new life, a new chapter.”

This approach to using art to explore identity and justice undergirds the mission of Team Puerto Rico—a group comprised of Huertas, Serrano, Rosado, Vianca Ortiz Veguilla and Instructional Coach Evelyn Pérez Mass. Rather than viewing artforms as electives, they stress the importance of music and body movement in helping students understand not just their emotions, but their language, their culture and their perceptions of others.

“We build up individual and collective identity as Puerto Ricans,” Serrano says, underscoring the group’s mission. “So they cannot only understand it but believe it.”

This approach, Team Puerto Rico found, had a positive impact on students beyond the workshops.

“Students had the opportunity to solve problems through art,” Rosado says. “It was another way that the students learned they can change the world without a word. That they can change the world through movement, through the body, through knowing themselves so they can help others.”

### Un Propósito Puertorriqueño

The youth still remaining in Puerto Rico have been called “The Maria Generation”—many feeling disconnected from the life they knew, from hope. One-third of students say their families struggled to find enough food and water; more than 7 percent of students show signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For all students, regardless of their circumstances, life as they know it is now divided into *before* and *after* the storm.

But there are things a storm cannot take away—things buried deep, rooted deep. It’s this reminder that Team Puerto Rico is hoping to bring to more students. A reminder that resilience is a Puerto Rican trait.

Serrano recognizes this moment as especially fraught. Puerto Rico faces many obstacles beyond its control—including continued disparities in federal support—in rebuilding its infrastructure and providing for its people. But he finds strength in the folklore.

“We are trying to use it so [students] identify with it and live it through the dance or live it through the music,” he explains. “And live it through day by day in what they do and how to express themselves freely in this identity that defines us.”

Puerto Rico’s students face undue burdens going forward, in both the rebuilding of their homeland and of their futures. Skeptics might say that no art form can overcome the incredible challenges Puerto Rico faces after Hurricane Maria. They might say that the rhythm is moving too fast for Puerto Rican youth to keep up. But these students of *la bomba Puertorriqueña* know that it’s the dancer who is in control.

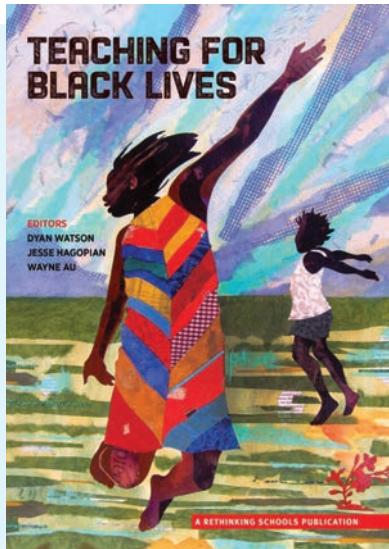
That once this movement begins, it cannot be undone. ♦

*Collins is the senior writer for Teaching Tolerance.*

► *Read how Team Puerto Rico adapted their workshops to teach resilience through fine arts in other parts of the world!* [tolerance.org/body-movement](https://tolerance.org/body-movement)

# What We're Reading

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



"Black students' minds and bodies are under attack..." begins Rethinking Schools' ***Teaching for Black Lives***. Editors Dyan Watson, Jesse Hagopian and Wayne Au have organized a thoughtful and dynamic work that explores how educators have reframed their thinking and teaching about black experiences in the United States—in ways that humanize black lives. In an education system that marginalizes black experiences in both subtle and harsh ways, ***Teaching for Black Lives*** provides educators with a tool to teach students about the extraordinary journey of black Americans and help them affirm and reaffirm their own identities.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

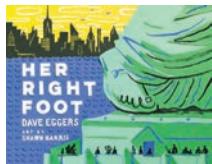
***"An essential work for educators dedicated to challenging white supremacy and anti-blackness."***

—Gabriel A. Smith



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

***Disrupting Poverty: Five Powerful Classroom Practices*** by Kathleen M. Budge and William H. Parrett



***Her Right Foot*** takes the all-too-familiar icon that teachers everywhere use to teach 19th-century immigration and shows she's got a timely—and timeless—message. While most of us picture the crown, the torch or the book when we think of Lady Liberty, Dave Eggers focuses on her right foot, which, he notes, is caught in mid-stride. She's always moving because "liberty and freedom from oppression are not things you get ... by standing around like some kind of statue." Speaking directly to the reader, Eggers starts out with playful humor that leads to the heartfelt understanding that the statue stands for what we should always aspire to: action, humanity and openness.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

***"A quirky, humorous and moving book."***

—Maureen Costello



## HIGH SCHOOL

***Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth*** by Sarah Smarsh



## MIDDLE SCHOOL

***Hello, Universe*** by Erin Entrada Kelly, illustrated by Isabel Roxas



## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

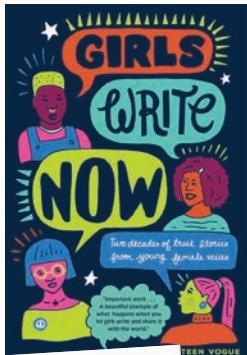
***I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark*** by Debbie Levy, illustrated by Elizabeth Baddeley

Twelve-year-old Caroline Murphy's beloved mother left over a year ago and mysteriously never returned. While determined to find her somewhere on St. Thomas of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Caroline is beset by clinging spirits and relentless bullies, all the while trying to sort out her growing feelings for Kalinda, the new student from Barbados. Readers will find that Kheryn Callender's ***Hurricane Child*** is bookended by dangerous storms, but that Caroline's greatest challenges and discoveries about her family and herself lie in between.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

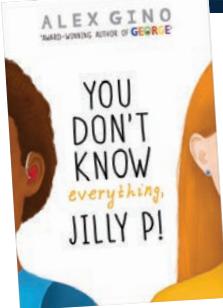
***"A skillful and vivid snapshot of the rocky and confusing times of adolescence."***

—Colin Campbell



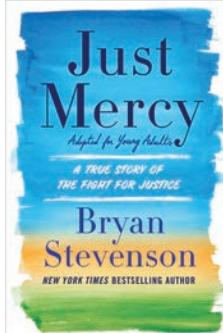
**“It will move your students to believe in the beauty and strength of their own stories.”**

—Anya Malley



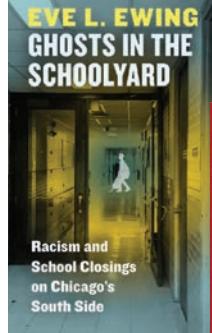
**“A story that intersects privilege, racism and Deaf culture to deliver a lesson in allyship.”**

—Coshandra Dillard



**“An illustration of our country’s historical fascination with extreme punishment and a reminder that we all have a right to justice and deserve mercy.”**

—Stef Bernal-Martinez



**“Clearly illustrates how necessary schools and communities are to each other—and the hole that’s left behind when schools are closed.”**

—Julia Delacroix

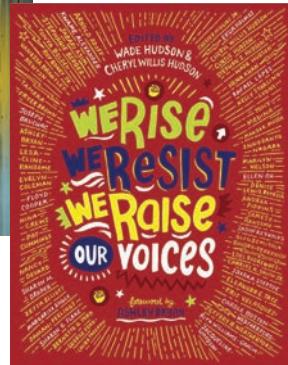
Each author featured in *Girls Write Now: Two Decades of True Stories From Young Female Voices* writes with astounding awareness of the people around her, but many are still beginning to understand themselves. The writers explore these dynamics through writing about their experiences with assimilation, feminism, bullying and more. Sprinkled throughout the book are quotes by authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Roxane Gay, whose powerful impact on the young writers is evident in their stories. Note: *Educators are encouraged to preview stories and prepare students to encounter sensitive topics and explicit language.*

HIGH SCHOOL

In 2013, Chicago Public Schools announced the closure of 54 schools. As author Eve L. Ewing notes, “90 percent of [those] schools were majority black, and 71 percent had mostly black teachers—a big deal in a country where 84 percent of public school teachers are white.” In *Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago’s South Side*, Ewing documents the accretion of racist policies that led to four such closings in Bronzeville and records the dedication and activism of a community where “the value of a school is directly related to its nurture and support of lasting human relationships.”

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“There are more good people / than not. / They will win. / We will win / if we believe / and don’t get tired of believing.” These lines from Tameka Fryer Brown’s “Where Are the Good People?” illustrate the central



**“These pieces will remind children—and adults!—to love and believe in themselves and each other.”**

—Monita K. Bell

theme of *We Rise, We Resist, We Raise Our Voices*.

Motivated by the hateful rhetoric of the 2016 election, editors Wade Hudson and Cheryl Willis Hudson have collected short nonfiction pieces, poems and art by some of today’s most inspiring artists of color, including Jacqueline Woodson, Kwame Alexander and many more.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

In *You Don’t Know Everything, Jilly P!*, author Alex Gino examines what it truly means to be an ally through the experiences of 12-year-old Jillian Pirillo, who is white and hearing. Through an online friendship with a deaf, black student who uses ASL, and by seeing the effects of her family’s inability to address racism, Jillian learns she must support other people without centering herself. This cleverly spun tale will encourage young readers to communicate more thoughtfully with people of all identities and abilities.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

In this young adult adaptation of *Just Mercy: A True Story of the Fight for Justice*, Bryan Stevenson weaves together his personal experience as a public interest lawyer with a historical analysis of mass incarceration that allows young readers to understand complex legal procedures and recognize how the unjust nature of the criminal justice system implicates us all. Without minimizing the gravity of mass incarceration, this work gently guides young readers to understand how “an absence of compassion can corrupt the decency of a community.”

HIGH SCHOOL



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

## What We're Watching

The first project from TAIKO studios, **One Small Step** tells the story of Luna, a Chinese-American girl who dreams of becoming an astronaut. Luna's journey of struggle, failure and resilience is supported by the unwavering love of her father, a cobbler who makes Luna her first pair of moon boots. The details of their Chinese immigrant household add specificity and depth to a universal story of pursuing one's dreams, no matter the setbacks. (8 min.)

Free to stream on TAIKO Studio's YouTube and Vimeo pages

[taikostudios.com/projects.html](http://taikostudios.com/projects.html)

ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Netflix's new show **Brainchild** is equally focused on entertaining and educating. In each episode, host Sahana Srinivasan introduces a new question: "What exactly are memories?" "How big is the universe?" "Do you control your emotions, or do emotions control you?" Expanding on the tradition of Mr. Wizard and Bill Nye, Srinivasan and a diverse group of teenage students explore these questions by consulting with experts and conducting snappy experiments. Following the need for recent Twitter trends like #whatadoctorlookslike, the show does a service by spotlighting a group of young scientists who look like the young people in classrooms across our country. (24 min.)

Free to stream on Netflix  
[netflix.com](http://netflix.com)

UPPER ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Are you or your students hearing the phrase "implicit bias," but unsure what it means? Do you feel like admitting to having a bias will cause others to view you negatively? In the series **Who, Me? Biased?** The New York Times offers six introductory videos discussing implicit bias with experts. The videos use everyday items, such as peanut butter and jelly, to deal with a challenging topic. After explaining a term or discussing related research, they end with a practical action step anyone can take to understand and challenge their own biases. (2-3 min.)

Free to stream through The New York Times

[nytimes.com/video/who-me-biased](http://nytimes.com/video/who-me-biased)

UPPER ELEMENTARY THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

**Dolores** tells the story of Dolores Huerta, labor rights activist and co-organizer of the Delano grape migrant workers' strike in California. The film chronicles her evolution from passionate community organizer to one of the most instrumental champions of migrant labor rights of the 20th century. Huerta's dedication to workers' rights is displayed in a narrative carefully crafted from archival footage and personal interviews. **Dolores** captures the essence of a tenacious civil rights visionary who has worked tirelessly to turn her conviction into justice. (96 min.)

Widely available for rent or purchase  
[doloresthemovie.com](http://doloresthemovie.com)

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

Adapted from the highly acclaimed book of the same name, **The Hate U Give** follows Starr Carter, a teen who finds her voice after she witnesses a friend being killed by police. Reluctant to speak out at first, eventually she is empowered to join her community in seeking truth and justice for her friend. Starr manages her dual life as a black girl from an all-black neighborhood at a predominately white private school with double consciousness and code-switching, even as her childhood friendships are interrupted by violence and racism. Featuring a theme of stolen innocence among black children, as well as a caring, proud family, **The Hate U Give** offers a representation of the black experience that comes without stereotypes or a respectability lens. (132 min.)

Widely available for rent or purchase

[foxmovies.com/movies/the-hate-u-give](http://foxmovies.com/movies/the-hate-u-give)

UPPER MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL



# The New Kid in Class

KAITLIN CYCA AND MONITA K. BELL

It was the first day of the fifth grade, and Mia was excited to see her name listed for the same class as three of her best friends. This year was going to be the best one ever!

Hanging up her sparkly backpack, Mia looked for her friends. They weren't there yet, but when she turned around to decide what desk she wanted, she noticed a new student.

Even though she was normally very shy, Mia decided to go over to the new girl and introduce herself. She was in the fifth grade, after all. She wasn't a little kid anymore!

"Hey, I'm Mia. What's your name?" she asked the stranger.

The girl glanced up from what seemed to be a really long math problem, her eyes only briefly meeting Mia's. Then she looked away.

Mia stood there feeling awkward for a few seconds before she decided that the girl must not have heard her. Why else would she ignore her?

"Hey, did you hear me? What's your name?" She tried again. This time the girl whispered, "Amena," and then got up quickly and walked away.

*I guess she doesn't like to make new friends, Mia thought.*

The teacher, Mr. Brown, walked over to Amena, and the two of them started talking. Then Mia's friends came in, and she forgot all about the new girl.

A few weeks later, the class was hard at work on multiplication problems. And struggling.

Mia happened to glance up at Amena—she was already done! *How?!*

Mr. Brown said everyone could work together in pairs. Mia was a little nervous at the thought of asking Amena to be her partner, but Amena sure knew what she was doing!

"Hi, Amena," Mia said when she walked over to her desk. "Will you be my partner? You seem really good at this, and I could use some help." She smiled shyly.

Amena seemed hesitant at first, but after a moment, she quietly replied, "OK."

Before long, with Amena's help, Mia was starting to get the hang of it.

"Wow, you're a genius, Amena!" Mia said excitedly as they finished up.

"No, not a genius," Amena laughed, "but I was the best in my class before..." She suddenly stopped, her smile now a frown. She looked as if she were trying not to cry.

Before Mia could ask what was wrong, Mr. Brown announced that it was time for lunch.

Mia watched the class file out and waited behind to talk with him.

"Mr. Brown, I think there's something wrong with Amena. She got really upset just now, but I don't know why."

"I think I might," Mr. Brown said. "I'll talk with her, OK?" "OK," Mia replied.

Back in the classroom after lunch, Mr. Brown began speaking. "Before we start on social studies, I'm going to tell you a story, but it's not a very happy one. Please listen quietly until I am finished, and then I will answer your questions."

Mia looked at her friends and they looked confused, just like she did.

"Imagine that our city became so dangerous that there was nowhere safe to go."

The children in Mia's class all looked horrified.

"No more school, no more recess, no more softball practice in the evenings. Imagine having to leave your home and move to a new place, where the people speak a different language."

Some children were fighting back tears. Others looked down at their shoes.

"This is Amena's story. She moved here from Syria, and she gave me permission to tell you this."

Mia looked back at Amena, who no longer looked tearful. Instead, she sat up straight, looked around the room, took a deep breath and said, "It's OK. If you have questions, you can ask me."

The room was silent. Some kids still looked down, unsure of what to do.

Mia raised her hand, and Amena nodded at her, inviting her to ask a question.

"How did you become a math genius?" She asked with a smile.

Amena returned the smile and said, "A good friend helped me work at it." ♦

## Questions for Readers

### RIGHT THERE (IN THE TEXT)

Why does Mia feel awkward early in the story?

### THINK AND SEARCH (IN THE TEXT)

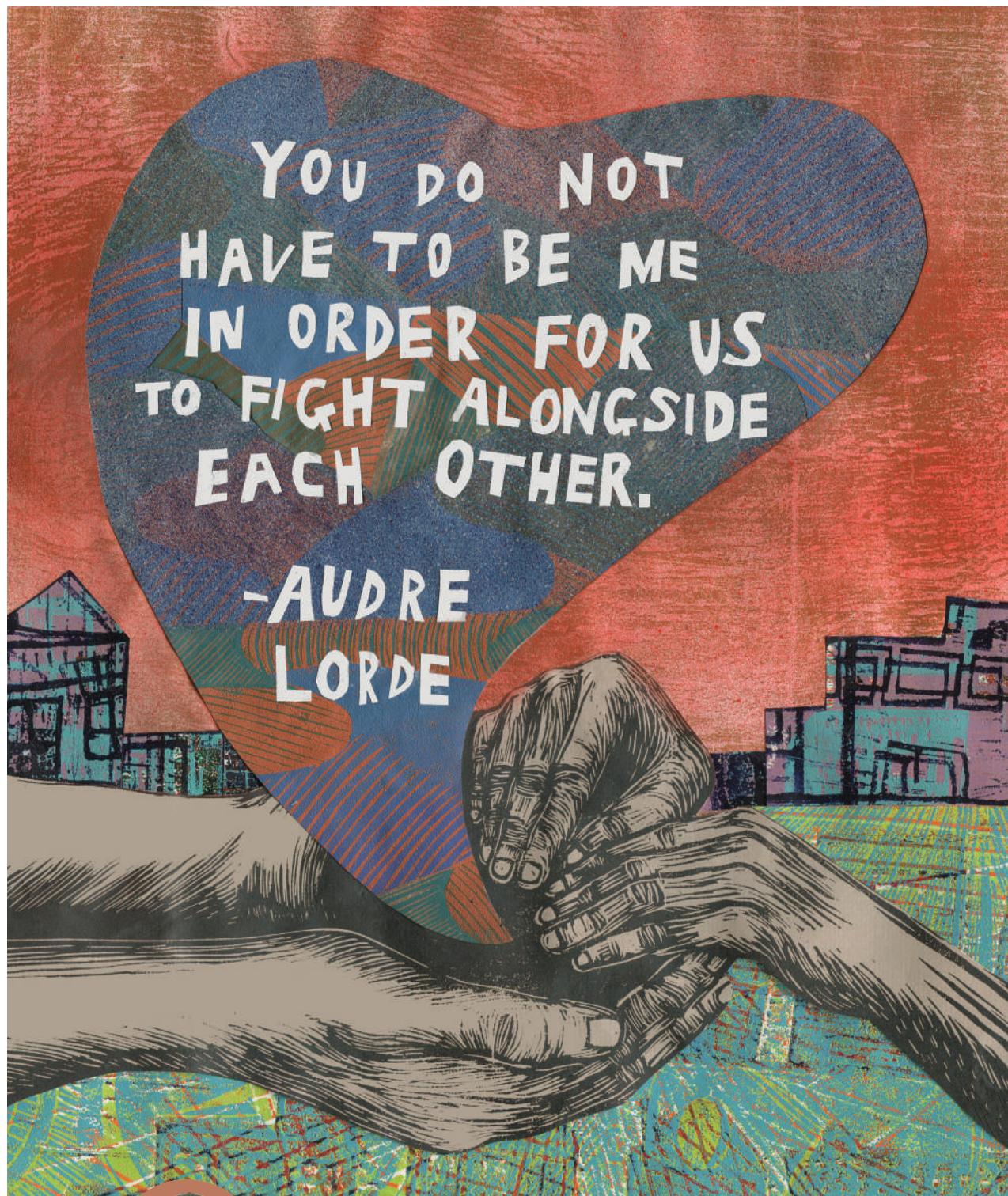
Why does Amena try not to cry when Mia calls her a genius?

### AUTHOR AND ME (IN MY HEAD)

Why does Mia's teacher tell Amena's story to the class?

### ON MY OWN (IN MY HEAD)

If a new student came to your school, how would you want them to feel? Why?



Audre Lorde (1934-1992) insisted upon the dignity of intersectional identities, including her own: She famously described herself as a “black, lesbian, feminist, mother, poet warrior.” In her writing and her activism, Lorde fought for equity and justice for people of color, women, members of the LGBTQ community and many others.

ILLUSTRATION BY MEREDITH STERN



## 2019 WORKSHOPS

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- ▶ Practice facilitating critical conversations.

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### What's In a Name?

When Teaching Tolerance launched in 1991, the world was a different place—and we were a different program. Since then, our mission and our work have evolved, and we're wondering:

***“Have we outgrown  
our name?”***

### What do you think?

No one knows us better than educators like you. Share your thoughts about our name and what our work means to you by answering a three-question survey. Your perspective will help us ensure that our name truly reflects our value.

**TAKE THE SURVEY TODAY  
[TOLERANCE.ORG/WHOWEARE](http://TOLERANCE.ORG/WHOWEARE)**

