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Rethinking Schools is a nonprofit publisher and advocacy organization dedicated to sustaining and strengthening public education through social justice teaching and education activism. Our magazine, books, and other resources promote equity and racial justice in the classroom. We encourage grassroots efforts in our schools and communities to enhance the learning and well-being of our children, and to build broad democratic movements for social and environmental justice.

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BY THE EDITORS OF RETHINKING SCHOOLS

Creating Classrooms for Equity and Social Justice

On Jan. 29, the White House released an executive order (EO), "Ending Radical Indoctrination in K–12 Schooling." The EO is a rambling and lawless document that fundamentally misstates the role of public education and falsely presumes the president can control what schools and teachers do in their classrooms. He cannot.

Federal law is unambiguous. The General Education Provisions Act, originally enacted in 1967, states: "No provision of any applicable program shall be construed to authorize any department, agency, officer, or employee of the United States to exercise any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum, program of instruction, administration, or personnel of any educational institution, school, or school system, or over the selection of library resources, textbooks, or other printed or published instructional materials by any educational institution or school system."

Trump's EO threatens — and challenges — teachers. The threat is the order's command to agency heads and cabinet members to identify within 90 days streams of federal funding to cut or manipulate to promote Trump's plan to turn schools into sites of MAGA indoctrination and McCarthy-era witch hunts. The challenge: for teachers to continue to serve our students and communities by bravely and audaciously teaching the truth and making sure our curriculum is as broad and inclusive as the struggle for social justice requires.

Trump has outlined a nightmarish vision of education based on censorship, indoctrination, and lies. At Rethinking Schools we have a different vision, outlined here, to support teachers in "Creating Classrooms for Equity and Social Justice." First published in our 1994 book Rethinking Our Classrooms, we have revisited and revised it over the years. It is especially relevant in these perilous times. —editors

As educators, we begin from the premise that schools and classrooms should be laboratories for a more just society than the one we now live in. Unfortunately, too many schools are training grounds for boredom, alienation, and pessimism. Too many schools fail to confront — and at times even reproduce — the racial, class, gender, linguistic, and disability inequities woven into our social fabric. And they have not alerted young people to the enormity of the environmental crises we face. Teachers are often simultaneously perpetrators and victims, with little control over planning time, class size, or broader school policies — and much less over the poverty, hopelessness, and other "savage inequalities" that help shape our children's lives.

But we should focus on what we can do, not on what we cannot do. Years ago, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire wrote that teachers should attempt to "live part of their dreams within their educational space." Classrooms can be places of hope, where students and teachers gain glimpses of the kind of society we could live in and where students learn the academic and critical skills needed to make it a reality.

No matter the grade level or content area, we believe that several components comprise what we call a social justice classroom. What follows is not intended as a checklist or rubric, but as an interlocking set of aspirations to guide our planning, our engagement with young people, and our work with colleagues. Curriculum and classroom practice must be:

Grounded in our students' lives

All teaching should begin with respect for children, their innate curiosity, passions, and their capacity to learn, with curriculum rooted in children's needs and experiences. Whether we're teaching science, mathematics, language arts, or social studies, ultimately the class must be about our students' lives as well as about a particular subject. Students should probe the ways their lives connect to the broader society, and are often limited by that society. And they should probe their lives for sources of joy, meaning, and connection, and how these can inform our vision of a better society.

Critical

Curriculum should equip students to "talk back" to the world. Students must learn to pose essential critical questions: Who makes decisions and who is left out? Who benefits and who suffers? Why is a given practice fair or unfair? What are its origins? What alternatives can we imagine? What is required to create change? Through critiques of advertising, cartoons, literature, legislative decisions, military interventions, job structures, social media algorithms, newspapers, movies, agricultural practices, or school life, students should have opportunities to question social reality.

Multicultural, anti-racist, pro-justice

In Rethinking Schools' first book, *Rethinking Columbus*, we used the discovery myth to demonstrate how children's literature and textbooks tend to value the lives of Great White Men over all others — how, too often, they celebrate racism and colonialism. Traditional materials invite children into Columbus' thoughts and dreams; he gets to speak, claim land, and rename the homelands of Native Americans, who appear to have no rights. Implicit in many traditional accounts of history — and our world today — is the notion that children should disregard the lives of people of color, women, working people, immigrants, LGBTQ people, and people with disabilities; they're led to view history and current events from the standpoint of the dominant groups. By contrast, a social justice curriculum strives to include the lives of all those in our society, especially the marginalized and dominated.

ILLUSTRATIONS: KEITH HENRY BROWN

Hopeful, joyful, loving, visionary

The ways we organize classroom life should seek to make children feel significant and cared about — by the teacher and by each other. Unless students feel emotionally and physically safe, they won't share real thoughts and feelings. Discussions will be tinny and dishonest. We need to design activities where students learn to trust and care for each other. Classroom life should, to the greatest extent possible, prefigure the kind of democratic and just society we envision and thus contribute to building that society. Together students and teachers can create a "community of conscience," as educators Asa Hilliard and Gerald Pine call it in their *Rethinking Our Classrooms, Vol. 1* article.

Participatory, problem-posing, experiential

Traditional classrooms often leave little room for student involvement and initiative. In a "rethought" classroom, concepts need to be experienced firsthand, not just read about or heard about. Whether through projects, role plays, simulations, mock trials, or experiments, students need to be mentally, and often physically, active. Our classrooms also must provoke students to develop their democratic capacities: to question, to challenge, to consider alternatives, to make real decisions, to collectively solve problems.

Activist

Student work must move outside the classroom walls, so that scholastic learning is linked to real-world problems. We want students to come to see themselves as truth-tellers and changemakers. If we ask children to critique the world but fail to encourage them to act, our classrooms can degenerate into factories for cynicism. Although it's not a teacher's role to direct students to specific organizations, it is a teacher's role to suggest that ideas should be acted upon and to offer students opportunities to do just that. Children can also draw inspiration from historical and contemporary efforts of people who struggled for justice. They should learn the concept of solidarity — that throughout history people have found ways to act for one another; that we are our best selves when we recognize how we are connected, how we need each other, and how powerful we can be together. A critical curriculum should be a rainbow of resistance, reflecting the diversity of people who acted to make a difference, who found meaning in life by working for the common good. Students should be allowed to learn about and feel connected to this legacy of defiance.

Academically ambitious

A social justice classroom equips children not only to change the world, but also to maneuver in the one that exists. Far from devaluing the vital academic skills young people need, a critical and activist curriculum speaks directly to the deeply rooted alienation that discourages millions of students from acquiring those skills. A social justice classroom expects more from students. When children write for authentic audiences, read books and articles about issues that really matter, listen carefully to one another, and discuss big ideas with compassion and intensity, "academics" start to breathe. Only by reconstructing classroom life do we have any hope of cracking the boredom and despair that lie so close to the heart of massive school failure, and of raising academic expectations and performance for all our children.

Culturally and linguistically inclusive and empowering

Social justice teaching begins with humility — admitting that we don't know it all. Each class presents new challenges to learn from our students and demands that we be researchers and listeners. This is especially true when our racial or social class identity, or our nationality or linguistic heritage is different from those of our students. "When teachers are teaching children who are different from themselves," educator Lisa Delpit writes in *Rethinking Our Classrooms, Vol. 1*, "they must call upon parents in a collaborative fashion if they are to learn who their students really are." Teachers need to challenge all forms of privilege, especially white supremacy, in ways that respect and empower the communities and students they serve. And we must embrace students' home languages, helping them preserve their linguistic heritage while also helping them navigate in English-dominant settings.

Social justice teaching requires vision, collaboration, support, and resources. And those resources will arrive only when we organize to demand them. Our classrooms are worth fighting for. And we need to reach out to each other to produce and share the stories, critiques, and lesson ideas that can be adapted in classrooms of all levels and disciplines and in diverse social milieus. This entails challenging the curricular silos that teachers are too often forced into. The world is interdisciplinary and our classrooms should be too.

But as vital as it is to collectively reimagine and reorganize classroom practice, ultimately, it is insufficient if we don't concern ourselves with issues beyond the classroom walls. Our students' homes and schools have burned in climate change-fueled wildfires. Deportation threatens millions of our students. Our students have been recruited — often through the guile of military recruiters — to fight and die in imperial wars. Police brutality is still a fact of life for too many young people. Trans students' lives are under attack. And so much more. We need to work through our unions and social/environmental justice organizations to make the world our students deserve.

There is a Zulu expression: "If the future doesn't come toward you, you have to go fetch it." We hope that more educators join the movement to go fetch a better future: in our classrooms, in our schools, in our unions, in the larger society and throughout the world. There are lots of us out there. Educators animated by a desire for social justice work all across the country. Let's make our voices heard. Let's defend our right to be the kind of educators we want to become. ●

Teaching the Fight for Queer Liberation

By Nick Palazzolo

The first Stonewall anniversary march, then known as Gay Liberation Day (and later LGBT Pride Day) in New York City, June 28, 1970.

PHOTO: FRED W. MCDARRAH

"Queerness and its history was a mystery to me

and when you are told so many times that a 'concept is new' you believe there wasn't much beforehand. . . . What I didn't know was that there is so much more to queer history than what is visible in the present." After finishing our simulation of the strategic dilemmas that queer movements faced in the 20th century, Stone reflected on the curricular silence many students experience. All students, queer students in particular, deserve to encounter this history so that they might develop a fuller sense of self, examine how questions of gender and sexuality have shaped their present, and imagine where our society might go next.

Today we are experiencing a countermovement in response to recent progress on gay rights. The ACLU tracked 533 anti-LGBTQ+ bills introduced in state legislatures across the United States in 2024. Twenty-one states restrict or explicitly censor discussion of LGBTQ+ people or issues in the curricula.

For students to imagine challenging today's attacks on LGBTQ+ rights and building queer futures, they need to reach back into our collective history and learn from those who fought these same forces that would punish, pathologize, and erase queer people.

"You Are Participants in the Growing Fight for Queer Liberation"

Pedagogically inspired by Bill Bigelow's abolition movement role play and Adam Sanchez's Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee role play, I wrote a dilemma-based, problem-solving simulation in which students imagine themselves as participants in the fight for queer liberation. Role-playing movement participants, students debate key questions regarding the goals and strategies that organizers faced from the 1950s to the early 2000s.

Having taught Bigelow's and Sanchez's simulations in my African American History classes, I knew that I wanted to teach LGBTQ+ movements in my Queer Studies elective with a similarly interactive, problem-posing approach. In their role plays, students took on the role of an activist in one key movement organization and debated important questions that organization faced. With books and articles spread across my table, I was unsure of which organization to select for the role play. No LGBTQ+ organization emerged as an obvious choice given my desire to capture decades of movement-building. I decided to center the simulation around the evolving movement as a whole, not a single organization. This broader scope would enable students to recognize how the work of liberation in an earlier era can lay the foundation for later activists.

I taught this simulation in Queer Studies, an elective I designed with students, and my 20th-Century Social Movements class. At the academically intensive public magnet school in Philadelphia where I teach, the juniors and seniors in my Queer Studies class are a breath of fresh air, developing a sense of

community because they made the choice to be there. My school has a racially diverse student body, though not reflective of a district where more than 70 percent of the students are Black and Latino. Although the activity feels different in Queer Studies where nearly every student identifies as LGBTQ+, many straight students in my other class are eager to participate, motivated to be better allies and more informed given ubiquitous discussions of gender and sexuality in their lives.

We began by reading aloud the "Joining the Growing Movement for Queer Liberation" handout that introduces the simulation:

> In the 1950s, you join the emerging homophile movement, which seeks to support gays and lesbians during the Cold War era when your community is facing increased hostility, policing, and discrimination. In the decades preceding World War II, diverse same-gender sexualities and gender nonconformity increasingly found expression.

The handout describes romantic friendships, Boston marriages, pansy clubs, drag balls, "womanless weddings," queer rural life, queer urban life, the role of the New Deal, World War II, and the Cold War, and finally the Lavender Scare.

Memoirs of Early 20th-Century Queer Lives

After we read the "Joining the Growing Movement for Queer Liberation" handout, students wrote memoir vignettes from the perspective of a character of their creation placed in a real historical context. This assignment engaged students in building the context out of which the movement emerges. I explained to them:

> Before we begin a decades-long journey fighting for freedom and dignity for queer communities in the United States, you will look back on life before 1950. Your memoirs will tap into these experiences before and during the earliest years of the Lavender Scare. Your memoir must describe your character's motivation for joining the growing movement in the 1950s.

I wanted this assignment to help students appreciate that movements are complex amalgamations: responses to ongoing conditions, particular catalysts, and prior resistance. To support diverse and accurate representations of queerness, I asked students to revisit the initial handout:

> In creating your character, remember to use real historical context from the "Joining the Growing Movement . . ." handout. There, you will find glimpses

Definitions of Terms

ACT UP: AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) formed in 1987 with the mission to use direct action to end the AIDS crisis.

Boston Marriage: As more women gained access to education and professional careers, some avoided heterosexual marriage and elected instead for relationships with other women in what were known as Boston marriages.

Daughters of Bilitis: Four lesbian couples in San Francisco formed the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955 to organize secret lesbian social gatherings and avoid police harassment and arrest. The group soon launched a newsletter and began public advocacy for legislative change.

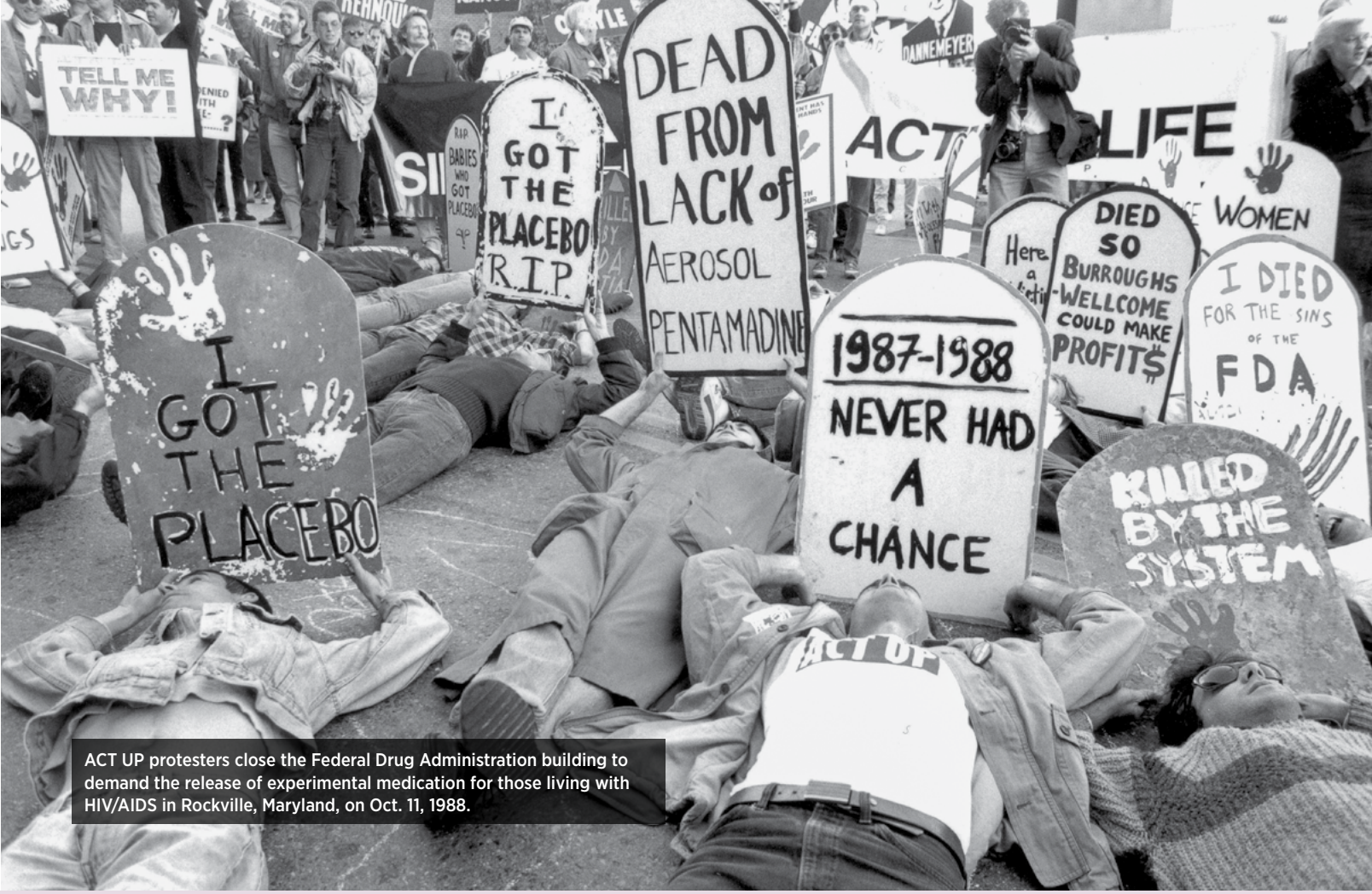
Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA): Signed into law in 1996, DOMA defined marriage as between a man and a woman and denied same-sex couples federal marriage rights even when they lived in a state recognizing their right to marry.

Homophile Movement: The homophile movement refers to organizations and publications representing gay and lesbian people in the 1950s and early '60s. Some at the time considered the term homosexual to have negative connotations, so the term homophile was intended to emphasize gay community and not just an individual's sexuality.

Kinsey Report: The Kinsey Report refers to Alfred Kinsey's 1948 publication, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Based on Kinsey's research, the book posits male sexuality as incredibly diverse. In normalizing same-sex sexuality, the book fostered a gay political consciousness. In 1953, Kinsey published a similar volume focused on women.

Lavender Scare: As the Cold War developed in the late 1940s, the U.S. government began firing thousands of employees suspected to be gay. Government officials justified this purge, arguing without evidence that Soviet spies blackmailed gays and lesbians into providing government secrets.

Mattachine Society: Harry Hay formed the Mattachine Society in Los Angeles in 1950, initially using a secret cell structure he learned from his membership in the Communist Party. The group went national, challenged entrapment cases, and engaged in research and education to promote the normalization of



ACT UP protesters close the Federal Drug Administration building to demand the release of experimental medication for those living with HIV/AIDS in Rockville, Maryland, on Oct. 11, 1988.

gay people. Some chapters went against the national organization's agenda and sought to promote gay rights through legislative change.

Pansy Clubs: Pansy clubs and drag balls became popular in cities like New York and Philadelphia during the prohibition era. They included gender-bending floor acts, like those of Gladys Bentley and Jean Malin. By 1933, the New York police commissioner stationed a cop at the door of every known pansy nightclub, preventing female impersonators, as they were known, from entering.

Romantic Friendships: A socially accepted type of same-sex relationship in the 1800s and early 1900s, permitted a certain degree of same-sex intimacy even for people within a heterosexual marriage.

Stonewall Riots: The police regularly raided gay bars, including the Stonewall Inn. Stonewall catered largely to poor, young gays and trans folks, clientele excluded from some of the "respectable" establishments. When the police conducted a routine raid on the night of June 27, 1969, people fought back. Stormé DeLarverié, a Black biracial butch lesbian and drag king, resisted arrest and punched a police officer as she was taken to the police car. There were several nights of riots following the raid, referred to in New York papers as the Stonewall uprising. In the wake of these riots, organizations like the Gay Liberation Front formed to inject greater militancy into the movement for gay liberation.

"Womanless Weddings": The fundraising ritual of the "womanless wedding" provided readily available public cover for cross-dressing. Starting in small towns across the South, men played the roles of everyone at the wedding, including bridesmaids, flower girls, and the mother of the bride. Although these were comic events to raise money for churches and civic organizations, some attended them as the only chance to cross-dress in public.

PETER ANSIN / GETTY IMAGES

into urban and rural queer lives, Black and white queer lives, and more. Which context did you find compelling? Choose one and review the source I provide for that context so that you accurately depict your character.

After students finished their vignettes, they read them in pairs or groups of three. This provided a chance for students to share their writing and get in the mindset of the time in which the first strategic question emerges.

In Cameron's excerpt, she imagined what might motivate the fictional Marianne Freeman to take action:

> The earthy scent of dusty old books consumed the air. . . . Within the ever-growing chaos of the world, the walls of the old corner bookstore are where I find solace. . . . I've been keeping a big secret for as long as I can remember, a secret that could now ruin my life. . . . Nancy Moore has been a source of dilemma for me for quite some time, yet someone I'm so sure about. She is dear, kind, caring, and easy on the eyes, so much so that I think — no, I know — that I must have become infatuated with her the first time her soulful eyes gazed upon me. She must have felt something, too, considering this somewhat indecent arrangement we've had for quite some time. . . . How come our affection for each other has to remain a secret?
>
> This dawned on me as I continued reading through Alfred Kinsey that my deeper attraction to women, and specifically Nancy, is not uncommon. . . . I became enraptured in Kinsey's description of a Black church in the South where same-sex love could flourish as an open secret. This lifestyle is something I long for.

Strategic Dilemmas in the Fight for Queer Liberation

In the simulation, students engaged in six strategy meetings. Each revolves around an actual strategic dilemma the movement faced during a particular time. Although I did not instruct students to engage in these strategy meetings through their character's point of view, I always have a student who asks. I tell them that they are not required to but can if they want to.

The dilemmas:

1. In the 1950s, students imagine themselves as members of organizations forming amid the Lavender Scare. They debate the first dilemma of the modern movement: Should the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis remain secretive or operate publicly? Why?

2. In the 1950s and '60s, being queer in public becomes more dangerous with an increase in entrapment, job discrimination, and police raids of queer spaces. The Washington chapter of Mattachine wanted to fight to repeal anti-gay policy, but the national leadership insisted that they limit their activities to research and education. Students debate: Which strategy or strategies should the Washington chapter of the Mattachine Society adopt and why: a) providing a social space and education to gay communities; b) sponsoring research that proves gay people are not criminal or diseased; or c) changing unjust laws and protesting for civil rights?

3. In the wake of the Stonewall riots of 1969, some gay people wanted to demonstrate in support of the Black Panther Party members jailed under false accusations in the Women's House of Detention, 500 feet from the Stonewall Inn. Others opposed this. This disagreement was representative of a broader debate among gay people about how to interact with New Left organizations that at times perpetuated homophobia. Students debate: Should your gay movement organization endorse a demonstration in support of Panthers incarcerated in the Women's House of Detention? Come up with three talking points to explain to the press why you are or are not endorsing.

4. In the late 1970s, the movement faces a well-organized anti-gay crusade funded by the Religious Right. In California, state senator John Briggs proposes Proposition 6, which would empower school districts to fire gays and lesbians and anyone presenting homosexuality positively. Opposition to Prop 6 is divided between the more confrontational Streets and the more respectable Suits. Students debate: Should the anti-Briggs campaign mobilize Californians to vote no on Prop 6 by adopting a rhetorical strategy that directly addresses gay identity or should it address the issue of privacy and avoid talking about homosexuality?

5. In the 1980s and '90s, ACT UP, AIDS Memorial Quilt, and Gay Men's Health Crisis among others form to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic during a time of severe government neglect. Students respond to the following prompt: Where would you dedicate your limited time and energy? And why? a) direct service to those with HIV/AIDS, b) counter-memorial commemorating those dying from HIV/AIDS, or c) direct action approaches to ending the AIDS crisis?

6. In the 1990s and 2000s, Bill Clinton makes a campaign promise to end the military's ban on gay and lesbian personnel. Same-sex couples sue for the right to marry in Hawai'i, Clinton signs the Defense of Marriage Act, and wealthy gay donors offer large sums to organizations to prioritize same-sex marriage. Are these opportunities or traps? Students debate: Should movement organizations prioritize gaining access to mainstream institutions like marriage and the military? Why? If not, what should they prioritize?

Although I designed the dilemmas to build on each other, a teacher could

engage students in a particular dilemma or set of dilemmas. Any of the dilemmas and their historical outcomes could work on their own, but the second dilemma assumes some prior knowledge from the first.

In my Queer Studies class, I facilitated the first strategy meeting because this was students' first time doing a simulation like this. With the desks arranged in a circle, students popcorn read the dilemma's overview:

> As the Cold War developed in the late 1940s and 1950s, the U.S. government began firing gay employees hired during the New Deal expansion. Government officials justified this purge by arguing that Soviet spies are blackmailing gays and lesbians into providing compromising information. Tasked with investigating this claim, the investigations subcommittee of the Senate's Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments (also known as the Hoey Committee after its chairman, Senator Clyde Hoey) issued a report concluding that
>
> > homosexuals and other sex perverts are not proper persons to be employed in government for two reasons; first, they are generally unsuitable, and second, they constitute security risks. . . .
>
> The purges that followed, called the Lavender Scare, affected between 12,000 and 20,000 federal employees suspected to be gay or lesbian. In response to these purges and increasing police raids on gay and lesbian bars, the first gay and lesbian organizations formed, known as homophile organizations.

By chairing the first meeting, I modeled for students how to ask follow-up questions, how to prioritize those who haven't spoken, and how to bring the strategy meeting to a close by holding a vote on the proposals that came up in open debate. During the first strategy session, students debated whether the Mattachine Society should operate secretly or publicly:

> Samia: If our group stays secret, we can't contribute to social change. We can't influence anyone. Can the group be public but anonymous?
>
> Adrian: I disagree that secret groups can't contribute to social change. We don't need to be seen by others, just each other. Being in secret is an act of resistance and we can get bigger, maybe big enough to make change later.

After other students chimed in on whether secrecy prevents social change, I asked the group to reconsider Samia's idea:

> I love this debate about secrecy and social change. I wonder if we need to return to the question Samia raised earlier: Can the group be public but anonymous? What do you think this would look like for our organization?

Students picked up on the thread:

> Ellie: Some people in the group could be doing public advocacy but others could stay secret, hosting parties for gay people.
>
> Serafina: What if we did graffiti or published gay people's stories but anonymously.
>
> Bailey: Ooh, we could do a magazine! So we are public but not with any of our names.
>
> Adrian: I like that but how do we maintain protection as we grow?

We were approaching the end of the period, so as the meeting chair, I raised

The Ladder, set up by the Daughters of Bilitis, was published from 1956 to 1972.

the two original options and the third option that emerged in debate.

> Let's vote! Choose one of the three options: 1) Declare ourselves publicly; 2) Remain secret without any public actions — anonymous or not; 3) Develop a public-facing initiative that protects members with anonymity.

Students voted for the third option by a slim margin.

Directly following the strategy meeting, students read about the historical outcome of the debate they had just engaged in. This allowed students to learn what really happened while their own proposal and decision-making was fresh in their minds. The historical outcomes also helped to establish some of the context for the next dilemma. In this case, students found out that the debate about whether to remain a private organization or push publicly for political reforms was just as contentious in reality as it was in our classroom. The dispute split the Daughters of Bilitis and even the members who pushed for the group to be more public used pseudonyms in their newsletter to protect their identities.

Next I asked for student volunteers to chair the strategy meetings for the second, fourth, and sixth dilemmas, which all take place in a circle with the entire class. I dedicated a full 45-minute class period to each strategy meeting. To share responsibility, I selected a different student or pair of students for each of these meetings. Although students might bring their own style to chairing the meeting, most continued the format I had established: popcorn read the overview, read the question, quietly read the arguments, open debate, lift up proposals, hold a vote, and read the outcome.

Students need space to work out their ideas in community. Beyond learning about the fight for queer liberation, by engaging in this kind of debate, students learn how to talk with one another to problem-solve and make decisions that matter.

Students discussed the third and fifth dilemmas in small groups. Breaking up the large group format enables more reticent students to talk with more frequency. For the fifth dilemma, I told students not to debate the options — direct service, counter-memorial, direct action — but rather to share which one they would dedicate their limited time and resources to as an individual during the AIDS crisis and why. This gives them a chance to see where they might fit in the broader landscape of addressing injustice without counterposing different tactics.

Lessons Learned from the Fight for Queer Liberation

After completing the simulation, I asked my students:

> Draw the shape of the history represented in the simulation from 1948 to 2015. Your shape may be metaphorical or more mathematical, like a graph. Think creatively here. You might consider the shape of progress, retaliation, movement goals, or the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.

Drawing two footprints forward and one footprint backward, Isa wrote:

> On the road toward progress, the journey forward is often accompanied by retaliations, circumstances, or mistakes that cause movements to backslide before moving forward again. As gay and lesbian movements acquired success, the Religious Right began coordinating backlash against these movements.

Lena made a similar observation:

> I believe that the shape of the progress of queer liberation over time is not linear and fits more of the idea of a "loop de loop," where after rapidly moving forward, the movement is taken aback before returning to the track. For example, in the 1920s, while people would not verbally state that they were queer, open secrets about queer identities were common such as the gender-bending performances of Gladys Bentley and rise of queer artists, however, once the '50s hit, in came the Lavender Scare that sent queer communities back for decades to come. Queer communities were forced to repress their identities before "bouncing back" with groups like the Mattachine Society.

When students realize that the shape of progress is not linear and countermovements form to threaten prior gains, they not only debunk the myths of progress, they prepare themselves for the need to protect freedoms previously won.

Depicting hands pulling, squeezing, and grasping the "shape" of history, Amari described his powerful vision of agency about who is included or excluded from the LGBTQ+ movement:

> The hands of those who participate in history are the ones that manipulate it. They choose the amount of inclusion, exclusion, and progress that is made within a movement. [For example,] the formation of Radicalesbians brought forth a new interpretation of the shape, expanding it to include lesbians and cis women, but narrowing it so that trans women were not included in their activism.

Delia made a similar observation:

> Early on in America efforts to decrease the strife of LGBTQ+ individuals led to an emphasis on assimilation . . . that meant condemning those within their own community who were further from the norm to shift the

window of acceptance to sparingly include non-heterosexuals, but only those willing to conform. There's a tendency to want to be seen as respectable even if it means holding yourself above those who are struggling.

After drawing and writing about the shape of queer history, I asked students to write a current-day strategic dilemma, applying what they learned. Here are a few student examples:

- Should gay organizations prioritize LGBTQ+ visibility in advertising and marketing?
- How do we help with issues that transgender individuals face with health care?
- How can gay organizations effectively resist "don't say gay" bills attacking LGBTQ+ students and curriculum in schools?
- In the face of anti-trans legislation, do we as an organization prioritize protesting in the streets, creating safe spaces for trans children, or affecting legislation directly such as lobbying and legal movement?

Lastly, I asked students to facilitate their dilemmas in small groups. In her reflection on the last question above, Sarah wrote:

> Throughout all of the situations, there are recurring conflicts. Everything traces back to one question: attempt to tackle the root cause or focus on relieving the symptoms? The difficulty does not lie primarily in uniting toward a common goal, but in uniting toward a common method for achieving that goal. Is it worth it to form alliances with organizations with interests that parallel your own despite those groups refusing to recognize you as equals? Should we focus on working within existing systems and repairing their flaws or tear down the institutions and start from the ground up? Safe spaces or street protests? Progress seems to move like waves, sea foam creating against the sky only to crash into the sands and be dragged back into the depths. But over time, the tide rises.

Protesters took to the streets in the aftermath of the 1969 Stonewall riots in lower Manhattan.

LEONARD FINK / THE LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER NATIONAL HISTORY ARCHIVE

By engaging in these strategy meetings and developing historically informed questions, my students learned to appreciate that ordinary people like themselves can come together to build a more nurturing and just world. ●

Teaching materials are posted with the digital version of this article at rethinkingschools.org

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Teaching the Haibun During Times of Chaos and Struggle

By Linda Christensen

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As I write, fires burn through Los Angeles, leveling homes, schools, businesses, beloved parks. Stephanie Pinto, my former student who teaches art, and her husband, Navin, have lived in Altadena for the last 20 years. They shared a photo of their house that burned to the ground: a charred palm tree, walls toppled and blackened, a soot-stained chimney standing alone, gold Christmas ornaments hanging from a burned tree. Navin's orange shirt and her daughter's red coat provided the only spots of color as they stood in the driveway looking at the scorched remains of their home, named Snehalaya, "house of love," after Navin's father's home in Hyderabad, India.

Climate chaos has swung its wrecking ball across the globe: Massive rainfall resulted in flooding in Southeast Asia and along the Mississippi; hurricanes spawned dozens of tornadoes and flooding in Florida; wildfires burned swathes of forests, towns, and cities in California, Oregon, Washington, Australia, Canada, and parts of the Amazon rainforest. Even the mist-covered, rain-drenched redwoods along the Avenue of the Giants in Humboldt County, California, where I grew up, caught fire.

How do we mourn and remember the places we love that we may never see again? Students face the loss of sacred, beloved places when their families are priced out of their communities, divorced, driven to flee because of violence, poverty, forced immigration, and climate catastrophes. When I visited Kjerringøy, Norway, birthplace of my grandfather, William Christensen, who fled his family's poverty, I wondered what this silent man took with him from home? Fjords? Pastures? The midnight sun? Swimming in the Norwegian Sea? His mother's krumkakes? The sound of his language?

Writing about sacred places has been a consistent practice in my classes for years, because the pieces students write build a safe memory, help create classroom community, and also give me a passage into their lives, so I can know them better. But as the world catches fire, we need to find ways for students to hold on to the places they love, to recreate them in words, to carve the images and feelings in their memories, so if and when chaos visits, they can close their eyes and recall a place they love. When my body has absorbed too much of the world's pain, I tilt my head back and recall my father's hands on mine as we row across Humboldt Bay. I feel the waves lapping against the side of the boat, the briny smell of the bay, the gulls skimming the water, the fog like a misty coat shrouding us on our journey.

As the world catches fire, we need to find ways for students to hold on to the places they love.

ILLUSTRATIONS: SIMONE SHIN

Teaching the Haibun: Listing

This year, I have the great fortune of co-teaching with Dylan Leeman, an incredible 10th-grade language arts teacher and a beautiful soul who I had co-taught with two decades ago. Knowing that the year would be filled with election mayhem as well as books and ideas that deal with the tough topics of injustice in all its ugly forms, we chose to center our opening on joy, to remind students of all that is beautiful in their lives and their world. Teaching about joy, love, and beauty in social justice education is not a denial of hardship or tough truths, it is an intentional choice to demonstrate that even during the hardest moments, people find ways to also hold on to their humanity by bonding with others through laughter, storytelling, and gratitude for the beauty in the world.

Unfortunately, most students are not given the opportunity to write wildly without judgment — to discover and articulate their own insights instead of parroting their teachers or textbooks.

Dylan and I decided our first writing of the year had to be an easy lift — an opening that provided us with an opportunity to learn about our students' lives and writing skills while also introducing them to each other. We chose a haibun, a Japanese poetic form that combines a prose descriptive paragraph with a haiku. Basically, the haibun is the coming together of ocean and shore in writing, a way of remembering an evocative location that provides us with a sense of peace and love.

We began by asking students to make a list of places they love. We salted the pot by throwing in neighborhood spots in our introduction: "Make a list of the special places you love, places that bring you joy, peace, or happiness, places that you want to sear into your memory for the days when you need a safe or sacred place to recall: Church, your grandmother's basement, the Sellwood docks, Oaks Park, the football field, the dance studio, Irving Park, Grant pool, the library."

Dylan's room has eight tables with four chairs per table. Students filled every chair. Grant High School has 2,100 students, who come from multiple middle and K–8 schools, about 30 percent students of color. Most, but not all, of the student body live in economically comfortable households. Although some students knew each other, many were strangers we hoped would become friends, or at least academic partners. If students were going to share ideas and engage in group discussions throughout the school year, we needed them to feel comfortable with their classmates. In a class this size, speaking up can be terrifying for some. Our opening list was for their haibuns, but also worked as a conversation starter. After they listed, we said, "Share your lists with your table group. If someone mentions a place that you also love or that reminds you of a place you love, add that to your list. Your group will share five special places with the class."

Instead of losing students with an elaborate description of the haibun, we sketched a quick definition, then jumped in with models that we'd both written. The easiest way to bore and lose students is to begin with a lecture. Also, by sharing our writing, we demonstrated that we, too, were writers and we could teach them through our pieces instead of through technically elaborate speeches.

We asked them to notice both the content and the style in our writing: What did we write about? How did we write about it? What writers' tools did we use? These questions would become a thread throughout the year as we taught students to think about writing as writing detectives: How did the writer do that? What literary techniques did they use?

If I was working with students experiencing the trauma of immediate loss, I might have chosen to share my piece about picnics on the Van Duzen River, near the Avenue of the Giants fire. But instead, for our opening, I shared a haibun I wrote about Cannon Beach, the closest ocean shore to Portland, which would be familiar to many students.

> On the days when tourists don't crowd Cannon Beach with their candy-striped umbrellas, their carts filled with food and kites and buckets, pelicans land on Ecola Creek, hundreds of them, brown wings bowing to the creek's white-capped dash into the Pacific and the elk run at the edge of the ocean, hooves kicking up plumes of sand until they eclipse the horizon. When the tourists leave, taking the smell of taffy and sugar cones, when the sea is left to ponder the thicket of reeds where the red-winged blackbirds sing, when sand dollars slip back into the ocean's white foam untouched by human hands, the waves unfurl again and again, despite the hurt and anger and mess of the world, washing the day with a patient blessing.
>
> The open palm of dawn
> slides sun from Saddle Mountain
> soothing the sea's rumpled back

Before asking students to share out in the large group about their observations,

we asked them to talk about my piece with their group members. We hoped that more students would talk if they had confidence in their ideas. Mostly, during the large group debrief, students noted lines that they liked. Of course, there was a flurry of discussion of their own memories of flying kites, roasting marshmallows over driftwood fires, Bruce's Candy Kitchen where they buy taffy, but they also noticed the way I described both the pelicans and the elk. After their comments waned, I moved to the whiteboard where my haibun was projected and underlined my use of repetition with the when clauses (when the sea is left to ponder, when the sand dollars . . .), and the repetition of sounds (sand dollars slip, soothing the sea's) — two writer's tools we focused on during the writing assignment.

Drafting

William Stafford, Oregon's fourth poet laureate, wrote, "If I am to keep writing, I cannot bother to insist on high standards. . . . I am following a process that leads so wildly and originally into new territory that no judgment can at the moment be made about values, significance, and so on. . . . I am headlong to discover." Unfortunately, most students are not given the opportunity to write wildly without judgment or standards to new and original thought — to discover and articulate their own insights instead of parroting their teachers or textbooks. When Dylan and I met at Fleur de Lis Café in August, to discuss co-teaching, our ideas were animated by the possibility that we could make Stafford's quote a core piece of our work for the year. Students would write a lot — in multiple genres, with multiple drafts, learning the craft of writing. They would write and share their work in class. When we started writing haibuns, we knew that it would take at least a week, maybe two, so that we could coach them from listing to revision to sharing to reflection.

We moved into the writing by asking them to select one place from their list. "Now, close your eyes and take yourself back to that spot." Over the years, we have found that pausing to evoke memories and solicit details helps students, especially reluctant writers, slip in to the movie of their special place. We stopped between each prompt to give them time for the details to rise up instead of rushing through them all at once. "Remember what your place looks like." Then students wrote the details in their notebook. Although it is time-consuming, we asked students to share their initial list to help other students shake loose more specifics and to help those who struggle know what we're asking for. "Listen to your table mates' descriptions. Which ones help you visualize their place? What else would you like to know?" We proceed through smells that evoke memories of the place (pine trees, hamburgers, incense, sweat). Sounds. People. Action (diving into the lake, dancers bending along the ballet bar).

Then we said, "Write the first section — a description of your place — include sensory details and language specific to that place. Write fast. Make mistakes. Just try. It doesn't have to be great. It's a draft. If everyone is still writing and you feel like you are done, skip a line and write another memory that came up."

Revising While Drafting

After reading their drafts, Dylan and I noted that most were bare bones. Students wrote about skiing on Mt. Hood, jumping off the docks into the Willamette River, or sneaking out and sitting on a pedestrian overpass to watch the city lights. Skimpiness was not unexpected. After all, this was the first assignment of the year. But our goal was not just this piece of writing, it was to build their writing skills by teaching them the tools that writers use. Over the course of the year, we hope that these revision tools will become internalized, something they return to in all genres of writing.

The following class period, we encouraged students to play with their initial drafts, to expand them, make them bigger, more detailed. On the slide deck, I showed my first, second, and third handwritten drafts — the crossouts, the arrows, the new piece written below the original — to encourage them to be messy and playful, invoking Stafford's wild writing.

For this first revision, we also harvested examples from student pieces that exemplified the writing strategies we wanted them to add to their next draft. Using classmates' writing also signaled that we read their pieces, took them seriously, and that we consider everyone in the class a teacher. Our handout noted the tools their classmates employed:

> *After you read each of the following pieces, re-read your piece. Grab a new piece of paper and work on a revision: Add strong verbs. Add delicious details. Add short sentences.*
>
> *In the following section of Eli's piece, notice the use of several writing strategies. Where could you add repetition, short sentences, strong verbs?*
>
> Years-old trees tower over the meadow, echoing each kid's voice. *[Note the strong verbs — tower and echo.]* Current voices. Past voices. And all the future voices. *[Note the intentional use of fragments.]* The smell of pine fills the kids' noses with nostalgia. Sounds of games fill the kids' ears. T-shirts and shorts fill the kids' vision. Days feel quick; nights feel quicker. *[Note the repetition to create rhythm and evocative details.]*
>
> *Notice Zora's use of repetition to create a rhythm:*
>
> It's days at the docks with the boats and my folks *[note the internal rhyme of boats and folks]* that make me want summer to never end. Days at the docks with the sun and my swimsuit that make me want to stay here forever. Days at the docks when the water is calm and the sun shines make me realize the little things

that matter. *[The repetition of days at the docks creates a rhythm in Zora's piece.]*

Then we returned to a drafting/revision process: "In the prose section, you might play with these poetic elements. Go back to your piece and add sensory details. Make the reader see, hear, and smell the library, dance studio, forest, or park." On a projected slide, we wrote:

- Use all the senses. Help your reader see, hear, and smell the place you are writing about.
- Play with line length — a long sentence followed by a fragment, series of fragments, or short sentences. Think about beats in music.
- Repeat a sound. Repeating a letter — the moon shone silver across my satin sheets.
- Repeat a word or phrase. Again, think about music and the way a repeating word or phrase creates a rhythm in the poem.

After each round of drafting, we had them color-highlight their changes, additions, and share with tablemates.

The Haiku

The haibun ends with a haiku that relates to the prose poem but doesn't need to summarize it, rather it partners or reflects ideas from the first section. Dylan gave students a quick review of the elements of haiku by returning to our haibuns and generating a list of haiku "rules" with them. Most students were familiar with the poetic form and had written haikus at some point in their earlier years.

They developed a definition or rules: A haiku is made up of three lines: the first line has five syllables, the second line has seven syllables, the third line has five syllables, for a total of 17 syllables. Students had fun, tapping out the syllables as they wrote, consulting with their table mates — or friends across the room — to find words with the right number of syllables for their haiku. Dylan and I weren't concerned about correctness; we just wanted them rowing in the right direction. By the end of the period, most students wrote a haiku to complete their haibun.

Writing Like a Writer

To build stronger writers, we pushed students to notice, name, and discuss the changes they made, to become fluent in the language of writing and revision, to overcome the "one and done" drafting, the "good enough" mindset that we've observed in too many students.

Once our students completed their draft with all the additions, they typed a clean copy on the computer. "Writers make changes in their drafts. You might continue to revise as you type. Keep track of the changes you make." Once they had their typed draft, we told them, "Highlight any changes you made. Number each change and write notes in the margin about what you added or changed and maybe why. Did you add alliteration? Longer or shorter sentences? A list?" Dylan modeled this process by sharing his numbered and highlighted draft with marginal notes on his Google document, demonstrating how he added notes about the changes he made by inserting a comment in the margin.

After students numbered and highlighted and wrote marginal notes, we asked them to take out their notebooks and look at their first and final drafts, as well as their notes about changes, and to write an analysis of what they changed and why, and what writing strategies they will take with them to their next piece of writing.

Students shared their insights about writing and revision with their table groups and the class. Stephanie talked about making her haibun more concise by getting rid of filler words like "the" and adding repeating phrases to create a rhythm. Reading his first draft, then his revision, Ian showed us how he added more detail about the dock, so readers could visualize it. "I learned 'less is more' sometimes," Iris said. "Also, that descriptive words are powerful, and that

when you cut filler words, strong verbs stand out more."

We followed this by having them create a poster of what they learned or practiced about writing that they will take to their next piece, telling them "Use at least one example from each student at your table." Students hung their posters on the hallway outside of Dylan's room. We ended class by giving students sticky notes so they could comment on the posters. These posters still hang in the classroom as reminders of what they know about writing.

Sharing and Collective Text

On our final day of the haibun lesson, each student created a slide with their haibun on the class slideshow. Because of time constraints as well as the knowledge Dylan had about some students' anxiety, we had students share their haibuns in table groups instead of our usual read-around. Building a safe community is not a one-time activity; students will share their writing and ideas in every

lesson throughout the year — building toward a classroom where students gain confidence to share their lives as well as grapple with tough issues. "Today you will share your haibun. Each student will read their piece as their partners read along on their own screen. Partners will look for what is great in the writing." Our instruction slide read:

> BE SPECIFIC! "Good flow." "I like the words." are *not* specific.
>
> Specifics might be:
>
> 1. I like your repeating phrase . . . (then say the phrase)
> 2. I like where you repeat sound combinations
> 3. I like the verbs xx, xx, and xx
> 4. I like that you wrote about your day at the mountain and how you talked about carving the hill. I could feel the cold and hear the gears when you read . . .

Once they shared, we asked them to read haibuns from five other classmates and write a specific, positive note to keep the writer writing. Dylan and I filled in if some students didn't have notes.

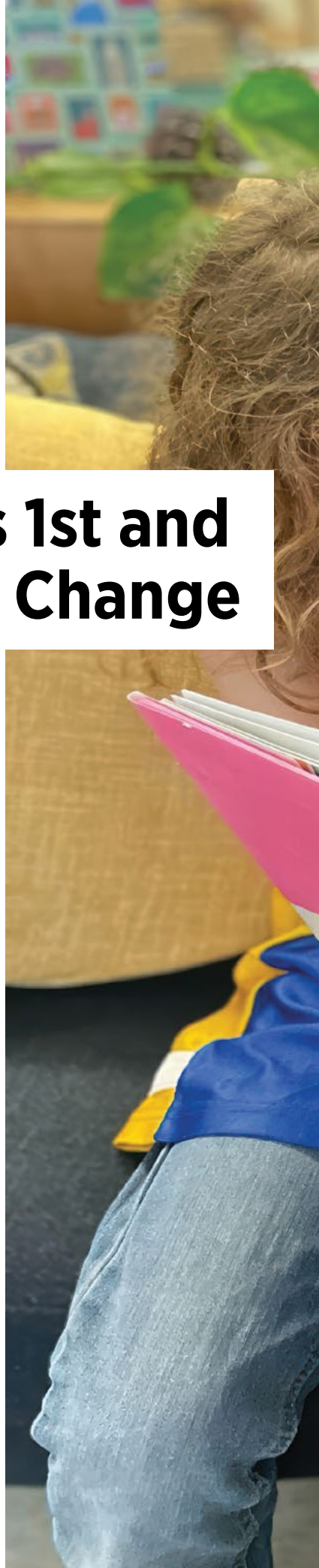
Because one of our aims was developing community in the classroom, we finished the haibun lesson by asking students to write what they learned about their classmates from this activity: "Now that you have listened to your classmates' haibuns, think about what you learned from each of their experiences. 'Read' the collective text of our classroom: What sacred places do your classmates love? Then write a summary paragraph, referring to your classmates' pieces for evidence."

The first part of Sarah's collective summary echoed what many students wrote: "Throughout this lesson I learned most of us enjoy their families and nature." I loved her final sentence because it voiced Dylan's and my intentions for the project: "I also learned more about these people who were previously strangers."

As I think about the fires in Los Angeles and our students who experience loss in all its manifestations, Anna's words about the lesson stand out: "I've learned that everyone has a special place, whether it is a house, a lake, a game. Everyone has a unique place, but each of our places gives us comfort."

Writing a poem doesn't bring back a home, a forest, a city, or a park, but everything we do in our classroom should not only teach students about the world, and the skills and tools of our content, but should build stronger, more resilient, kinder human beings. How do we make strangers into friends? How do we teach our students to savor their sacred places, so they can return to them and find moments of comfort during times of stress and chaos? ●

What Nina Simone Teaches 1st and 2nd Graders About Making Change



By Cristina Paul in collaboration with Olivia Lozano and Nancy Villalta

On the carpet, children listened intently for more than a minute as Nina Simone played the piano before beginning to sing in a video of her 1976 performance of "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free." When she heard Simone sing "I wish I could be like a bird in the sky. How sweet it would be if I found I could fly," Kaylee inhaled audibly. She leaned over and whispered to Sienna: "'Cause the bird's free and that's what she wants for everyone."

At the end of the song, Gia smiled and said "Al final de la canción dice que se siente free. [At the end of the song, she says she feels free.]"

Matsumi gesticulated with strong hands and a loud voice, imitating Simone's powerful finale. "Ella es muy fuerte al final y usa su voz para estar free. [She's very strong at the end and uses her voice to be free.]"

After playing this song as part of our changemakers unit, the children were clamoring for "more Nina." Though Kaylee seemed to understand Simone sang for freedom for everyone, she didn't

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words by TRACI N. TODD pictures by CHRISTIAN ROBINSON
Nina
A Story of Nina Simone

share this idea with the whole class. Our teaching team wondered: How could we help students understand that Nina Simone's message was about a collective experience of freedom? How could we teach them how many people work together to make change?

I work with around 40 multi-age (1st- and 2nd-grade equivalent) students in a Spanish dual-language program at UCLA Lab School, part of UCLA's School of Education & Information Studies. My three-teacher team works across two connected classrooms that allow children and teachers to work collaboratively. Our student population reflects the racial and ethnic diversity and neurodiversity of children in California; students come from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Many conversations in this article have been translated from a rich array of Spanish and English. We encourage students to use their full linguistic repertoires and honor the many ways children "language."

At the beginning of each academic year, our teaching team and the teachers who teach our level decide on an idea to connect all subjects. Guided by our inquiry approach and some of the Common Core and Learning for Justice social justice standards, our universal idea was Poder y Cambio [Power and Change]. As we taught environmental science, composed and listened to poetry, wrote biographies and argumentative writing, and danced, we returned again and again to Power and Change. We introduced students to a variety of changemakers through read-alouds paired with videos or other primary sources related to each changemaker (see Resources). During the unit, students also wrote a biography and created a papier-mâché bust of their chosen changemaker. We asked: What does change mean? What does it mean to have power? What does it mean to be a changemaker?

Yet we wanted to go beyond a traditional approach to changemakers. So often changemaker units have students research individuals working to change a variety of issues in their respective places/times. We wanted students to understand how individual actions can contribute to a movement. By the end of the unit, we hoped children would have an understanding of ways to take action in the face of injustice and come to see themselves as changemakers — not just as individuals, but as part of a community movement.

We read *No Voice Too Small*, a nonfiction book about young changemakers using their voices, and *¡La lucha de Alejandria!* (*Alejandria Fights Back!*), a fictional book about 9-year-old Alejandria organizing and taking action in the face of unjust landlords and gentrification in her neighborhood. We read about Muhammad Ali, José Andrés, Claudette Colvin, Mari Copeny, Jasilyn Charger, Sharice Davids, Dolores Huerta and César Chávez, Sylvia Mendez, and countless other changemakers. Students were fascinated by Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm; painter Alma Thomas; cartoonist Jackie Ormes; and queer Black singer, songwriter, and civil rights activist Nina Simone. We wondered how we could help students make deeper connections to these women and the activism of the civil rights and women's liberation movement, as well as power and change in the present.

We especially wanted to follow students' interest in how Nina Simone used her voice to take action in the face of injustice. We knew that along with Simone's music and interview about what it means to be free, we could use Traci Todd's beautiful picture book (see Resources). Throughout our conversations, students begged to rewatch and listen to more of Nina Simone's performances. We hoped another song might plant a new seed in our learning journey.

Music as an Empathy-Building Primary Source

After Kaylee's comment about Nina Simone singing for everyone to be free, we decided to highlight Simone's "Ain't Got No, I Got Life." Manolo listened on the carpet, lips parted and brows furrowed, and started repeating lyrics: "Ain't got no home. Ain't got no shoes. Ain't got no money. Ain't got no sweaters. Ain't got no love!" He turned to Cecil, ruminating and repeating: "Ain't got no water. Ain't got no air!"

"Wait, wait, wait!" Cecil exclaimed. "We gotta hear these words again. Can we play it again?" I nodded so as not to speak over the lyrics that so engaged the kids.

After the song ended, Gia quietly raised her hand. "There was a list of things that she doesn't have and then I heard her say, 'What have I got? Why am I alive anyway?' That was important!"

"Then there was a list of stuff she had like her hair and her body and her brains and I think she has a voice to sing this song," added Gio.

"Why don't we listen carefully one more time, like Cecil suggested?" I said. "Let's think about her two lists and what they mean."

We played the song again. Students listened closely.

"¡Escuché [I heard] I've got my smile!" Román shouted at the end. "I've got my heart. I've got myself.'" I drew a line on the whiteboard, ready to sort and document what children noticed for each list. The children had different ideas though. Henry stood up, excited to share.

"¡Ella está hablando de muchas personas! [She's talking about lots of people.]" Henry said. "¡No está hablando solamente de *ella*! [She's not just talking about *herself*!]"

"Está hablando por las mujeres y las personas de color [She's speaking for women and people of color]," Cecil quickly agreed.

"¡Y por las personas que necesitan algo — que tienen injusticia! [And for people that need something — that have injustice!]" Wesley added.

"Can we learn more about that?" Kaylee quietly asked. "The people she's singing for? Like *who* are they? Do you know?"

I was thrilled about this unexpected

conversation. I told the kids we could think about Nina Simone's time and the people she might be using her voice for soon. If we could contextualize Simone's time and place, perhaps students would start to understand who Simone was singing for and why.

Perspective-Taking Through Primary Sources

At lunch, my teaching team talked about Kaylee's beautiful question "Who are some of the possible people and changemakers that Simone sang for?" Certainly, we couldn't give an exact answer. Only Ms. Simone could do that. But how might we respond? Who are, were, and will be the people for whom Nina Simone sings?

Nina Simone's career and activism spanned the Civil Rights Movement into the women's liberation movement. Looking for another primary source for students to analyze, we decided to use Jan van Raay's photographs of artist strike protests. We shared two of van Raay's photographs from 1970: 1. Faith Ringgold, Michele Wallace, and other artists at an Art Workers' Coalition protest in front of the Whitney Museum; and 2. A Black Emergency Cultural Coalition, Art Workers' Coalition, and Guerrilla Art Action Group protest in front of the Museum of Modern Art. They portrayed mostly Black and Brown women but included men and at least one white-presenting person. Some people carried signs in front of museums that read, "50% BLACK WOMEN ARTISTS" and "BLACK and PUERTO RICAN ART MUST BE REPRESENTED."

We introduced the photographs. "Historians think about specific times and places," I shared. "Nina Simone's 'Ain't Got No, I Got Life' gives us clues about the late 1960s and artists and activists working around that time. Since Nina often performed and lived for a time in New York, we can only guess at Kaylee's question 'Who was Nina singing for and with?' Jan van Raay's photographs of artist protests also came from this time and place and might give us more ideas about Power and Change. In these protests, people were demanding equal representation for Puerto Rican, Black, and female artists in fancy museums that mostly exhibited art by non-Puerto Rican, non-Black, and non-female artists. We know from studying Alma Thomas that not everyone's art is always valued equally and not everyone has the same opportunities to show their art in the largest museums."

The children looked at each of Jan van Raay's photographs in small groups, talked about what they noticed and wondered, and documented their thinking on Post-its and directly onto the copies of the photographs we made. Then we had a whole group conversation. The children made interesting connections between the two protests.

"In this picture [second protest picture], they look mad," Chet said, "but here [first picture] they're all smiling."

"I think they're happy to be together but it's a sad reason," Pichi added. "There's different types of people even though it seems like it's all for mujeres y personas de color [women and people of color]. Miren a estas personas [Look at these people]." Pichi pointed to white- and male-presenting people.

I was surprised most by the children's discussion of van Raay's first picture, which included a deep interest in a person with their back turned to the camera, who appeared to be walking away from the protest.

"Creo que ese hombre ahí está caminando y pensando GRRRR [I believe that man there is walking and thinking GRRRR]," Gia said. "Esas personas no deben marchar. No necesitan nada. 'GRRRR.' [These people shouldn't march. They don't need anything. 'GRRRR.']"

"Yo pensé que esa persona está pensando ¡Qué bien! Muy bien para ellos. ¡Hurra! Go for it! [I thought that person is thinking 'That's great! Very good for them. Hurrah!]" Cecil added.

"Mmmhmmm," Manolo said. "Está pensando no soy afroamericano pero me gusta. [He is thinking I am not African American but I like this.]" Manolo gave a thumbs up.

Children had created opposing narratives about a person whose face they couldn't see. In Gia's imagination, the faceless person was a racist. In Cecil and Manolo's minds, the person was a white ally. The perspectives that surfaced gave us information about the fact that children knew that people could make choices about participation in protests and anti-racist or racist ideas.

After the discussion, children filled in thought bubbles that our teaching team had photocopied. The students could write or draw and place their thought bubble next to their chosen person.

Interestingly, students continued perspective-taking by filling in thought bubbles for people whose faces and expressions were visible and the faceless person with their back turned to the camera. Afterward, children did a gallery walk to view everyone's thought bubbles and share final ideas about the protests.

"Todos merecen una voz y oportunidades [Everyone deserves a voice and opportunities]," Serene shared. Many children nodded, showing agreement with hand signals.

"People of color were disrespected and people stood up for themselves and others," Gia added. "Plus some other people made a good choice to help too. They continue doing it until they are free."

"You can always change something," Matsumi said. "Everyone should always have the right to be who you are and show yourself to the world. And you stand up for rights for other people if they haven't been treated well."

Children were developing their own ideas about power, change, representation, and intersectional allyship against entrenched racism. I reiterated some of the children's points: We could all make choices to celebrate diverse and accurate representations of people in our library, in public places like museums, in our schools, and in our communities. It's

important to think about whose voice is being heard, whose work is being seen, and to ask questions about fair or accurate representation. No doubt Simone was singing about more than racial representation. Yet we appreciated how the photos offered a concrete way for children to try to answer their own question.

The children loved this learning experience with thought bubbles. Christopher, a quiet student who pays exquisite attention to details, pulled me aside afterward. "Can we make people think again?" he asked.

"She Wants Justice"

Around this time, my colleagues and I were in the beginning stages of co-creating an inquiry-based dance with students in which they would analyze lyrics to a song before generating choreography. We thought we could refocus our attention on Nina Simone and take a deep dive into another one of her songs as practice. Earlier in the year, we'd listened to Fobia's "Revolución Sin Manos" and the kids had a discussion about what "revolution" means: a *big* change. Simone's 1969 song and the image on her album *Révolution!* were ripe for a learning experience based on perspective-taking. The song and album provided students another opportunity to contemplate Power and Change and the concept of representation that had emerged. We decided to show students the album cover first — a black-and-white photo of a pensive Simone with the song and album title emblazoned at the top in bright red font.

We made copies of the album cover for each table group and repeated the noticing and wondering routines we'd employed with van Raay's protest photographs. We listened in as children asked questions about everything from "What does 'RCA' mean?" (which was written at the top of the album) to "Is she sad or maybe just very focused?" to "I wonder if there are sad or happy songs or a mix?"

Luciana swooped her finger across "Révolution!" with a flourish. "It's bright, fancy letters," she said.

"¿Por qué son letras rojas? [Why are the letters red?]" Kennedy wondered.

"Maybe it's like sangre o una emoción fuerte o un mensaje *importante* [Maybe it's like blood or a strong emotion or an *important* message]," Elle responded as her eyes widened and she melodramatically put her hands on the desk.

Before we gave children blank thought bubbles to fill with Nina's thoughts, they had an opportunity to do a gallery walk to view what other groups noticed and wondered. Children saw they had similar questions and initial ideas about the album and song "Révolution!" Then, they individually worked on their thought bubbles.

Shane wrote: Yo creo que ella estaba pensando que va a cambiar el mundo para vivir en paz y para los demás y ella no va a parar. [I believe she was thinking that she's going to change the world to live in peace and for others and she isn't going to stop.]

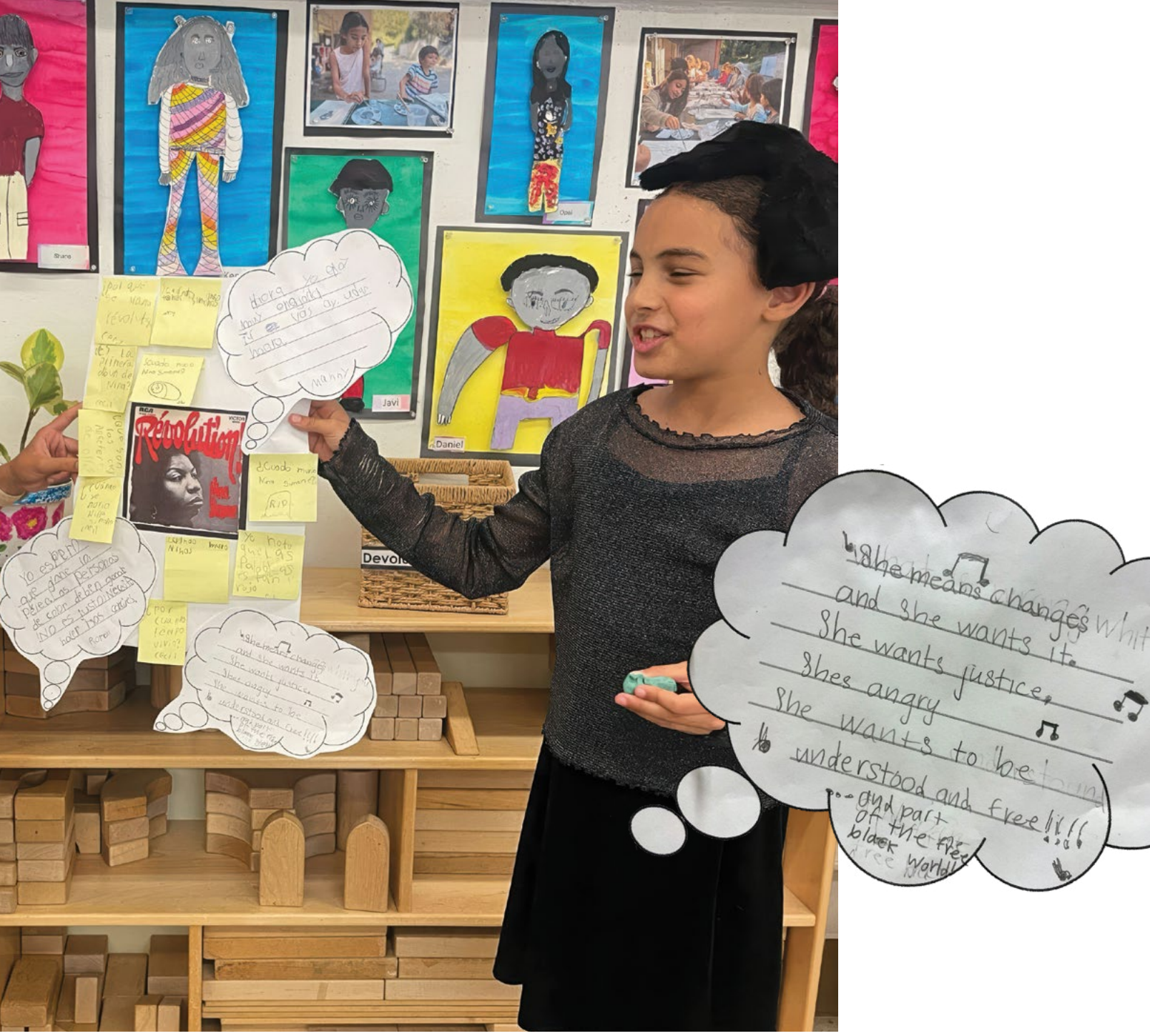
Gia quickly generated four thought bubbles in the first person. One read: Yo pienso que otras cantadoras y muchos más van a ser inspirados por mí. [I think other singers and many more will be inspired by me.]

Fili tilted her head and pursed her lips; she was thinking about how not everyone had fair work. We had talked about access and opportunity as we read about Alma Thomas, Shirley Chisholm, Jackie Ormes, and other changemakers. "Se ve triste. Tal vez está pensando en las artistas de Nueva York o las mujeres que no pueden hacer muchos trabajos. Creo que ella quiere que todos tengan oportunidades justas. [She looks sad. Maybe she's thinking about the artists in New York or the women that can't do many jobs. I believe she wants everyone to have fair opportunities.]" When I returned to her table, Fili had written: No todos tienen trabajos justos. [Not everyone has fair work.]

There was a huge variety of ideas about "Révolution!" and the big changes Simone might be dreaming of and singing about. After completing their individual thought bubbles, Elle and Serene collaborated on a thought bubble that was surrounded by musical notes. "We wrote her thoughts as a song," Elle said when I asked about the notes.

"Like she's humming it in her head," Serene added. I asked if we could all hear it. After a sheepish giggle, they agreed. Elle and Serene sang:

> She means changes and she wants it.
> She wants justice.
> She's angry.



She wants to be understood
and free!!!!
. . . and part of the free Black world!

Lilah stood up and clapped. Everyone followed. "She just wants to be represented like Jackie Ormes," Serene explained once the applause died down. She wants Black women to be represented how they actually are — not in a fantasy or not low (gesturing toward the floor) and she wants to have the freedom for everyone to be themselves. *That's* the *revolución*!" Serene made air quotes. Shane stood up and emphatically pointed to Serene's profound truth.

Children were abuzz once we cued up the YouTube video version of "Revolution!," which included Simone singing and playing with a band and backup singers and an assortment of black-and-white stills from the late '60s.

Before listening, I asked the kids to remind us what revolution meant — a unified shout of "a big change" was their response. "It takes a lot of people power to make big changes," I said. "As we listen to this song about big changes, I'd like everyone to think about who is being represented." I wondered how the children would respond to the themes and discordant music at the end of the video.

"Did somebody bomb that building like Martin Luther King Jr.'s home?" Keaton, who had studied Martin Luther King Jr. and created a papier-mâché bust of him, burst out when a black-and-white image of a man standing in front of a bombed building appeared.

Jaxon was also examining the photos in the video. "They're protesting. Look 'Equality Now. Injustice. Segregation — like Sylvia Mendez' school. It's representing lots of different types of people who suffered."

As children listened, many whispered, pointed, and bopped their heads. "They're all together singing saying 'Do take a stand,'" Valeria said. "Like stand up for yourself y los demás [and others]. Help people. Es como una representación de activistas — personas que usan su voz cuando otros no tienen una o cuando otros quieren que no digan nada [It's like a representation of activists — people who use their voice when others don't have one or when others don't want them to say anything]." An image of a white police officer with an angry attack dog appeared and soon after the guitarist began a cacophonous riff that crescendoed along with the other instruments. Bright circles of light accompanied troubling tones. A close-up of drums was followed by Simone banging on the piano. A couple of children grimaced at the discord.

As the video ended, Javi waved his hands wildly. "¿Por qué es así la canción? [Why is the song like *that*?]"

"Es para despertar a la gente [It's to wake people up]," Georgia said. "Es como (she shook fists) violencia, injusticia (and pulsed her hands outward), necesitamos cambio. *No es bonito* porque no es bonito [It's like (she shook fists) violence, injustice (and pulsed her hands outward), we need change. *It's not pretty* because it isn't pretty.

"Vale, ¡qué mensaje! [That's right, what a message!]" Valeria agreed. "¿Entendieron? [Did you all understand?]"

Her classmates nodded earnestly.

* * *

Students' comments seemed to show they were starting to understand how individuals' changemaking often connects to a broader struggle — ideally for justice. Of course, the definition of "revolution" as a big change did not get fleshed out in any detail. Yet listening to and learning about Nina Simone and other changemakers seems to have helped students connect the concept of revolution with justice.

As my teacher colleagues and I try to find what is urgent to our students, we plan this way: 1. Look at the Common Core and the Learning for Justice social justice standards. Find a great read-aloud or several that are relevant and related to the standards and a big idea we're teaching (e.g., Mexican Repatriation, Japanese Incarceration, Black Lives Matter, the Land Back Movement, etc.). 2. Gather primary sources (interviews, songs, performances, photos, etc.) related to the read-alouds. Introduce routines for children to respond in small groups and/or individually to primary sources and create space for discussion. 3. Find a way for children to go public with their thinking — through dance, a protest, public service announcements posted via QR codes at school or in the neighborhood, fundraising, a community art project, etc.

A conversation at the end of our Power and Change unit continues to resound. Keaton was serious that day: "Change is hard. Some people don't want things to change and some people do." Georgia listened somberly, took a short sip of a breath, and offered us this truth: "El cambio es algo que hacemos *juntos* [Change is something that we do *together*]." This is what we had wanted to teach all year — change as communal action. As teachers and students, we grow and change minds and hearts — from ideas about accurate representation to whose voices matter. All revolutions happen in community. ●

RESOURCES

Learning for Justice Social Justice Standards
https://bit.ly/lfjstandards

NINA SIMONE VIDEOS

"Ain't Got No, I Got Life" live in London, 1968.
https://youtu.be/DtJzr1Wcy_s

"I Wish I Knew (How It Would Feel to Be Free)" live at Montreux, 1976.
https://youtu.be/-sEP0-8VAow

"Revolution" live video from an unknown recording session
https://youtu.be/gFBoKE9H3PA

Excerpt from the 1970 documentary *Nina: A Historical Perspective* where Nina Simone discusses the meaning of Freedom.
https://youtu.be/nPD8f2m8WGI

CHANGEMAKER PICTURE BOOKS

Because Claudette
By Tracey Baptiste

Shirley Chisholm Is a Verb
By Veronica Chambers

Ablaze with Color: A Story of Painter Alma Thomas
By Jeanne Walker Harvey

Alejandria Fights Back! / ¡La lucha de Alejandria!
By Leticia Hernández-Linares

Sharice's Big Voice: A Native Kid Becomes a Congresswoman
By Nancy K. Mays and Sharice Davids

No Voice Too Small: Fourteen Young Americans Making History
Edited by Lindsay H. Metcalf, Keila V. Dawson, and Jeanette Bradley

Jackie Ormes Draws the Future: The Remarkable Life of a Pioneering Cartoonist
By Liz Montague

Nina: A Story of Nina Simone
By Traci Todd

Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation
By Duncan Tonatiuh

José Feeds the World: How a Famous Chef Feeds Millions of People in Need Around the World
By David Unger

Amanda Gorman
By Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara

Jean-Michel Basquiat
By Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara

Pequeña & Grande Carmen Amaya
By Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara

Fresh Picks:

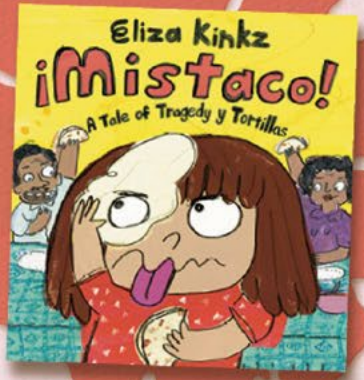
SPRING LATINE PICTURE BOOKS

★"BALANCING AN IMPORTANT TOPIC WITH LIGHTHEARTED COMEDY."
–BOOKLIST, STARRED REVIEW

A young soccer-loving girl is an interpreter for her Spanish-speaking parents.

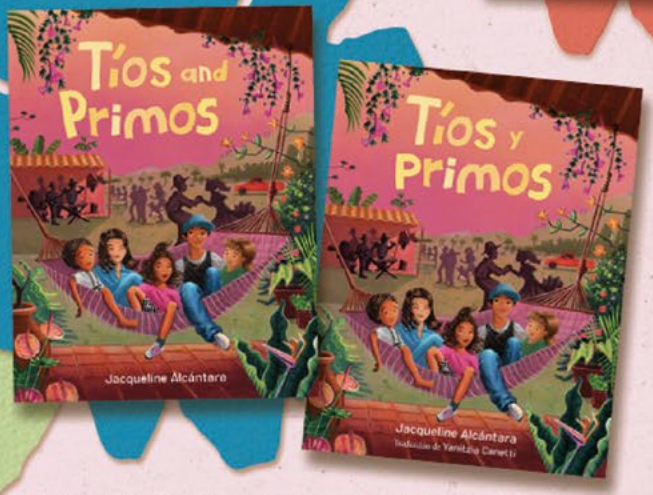
★"A MOVING STORY ABOUT CULTIVATING HOME IN DIFFERENT PLACES."
–PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, STARRED REVIEW

A beautiful meditation on the places we feel most comfortable, loved, and protected—wherever that might be.



★"A DELICIOUSLY EFFERVESCENT CELEBRATION OF FAMILY AND RESILIENCE."
–KIRKUS REVIEWS, STARRED REVIEW

A chaotically funny debut about a girl who's had a terrible day full of mistakes and finds that making mistacos could be a yummy solution.



★"THIS THOUGHTFUL AND MEANINGFUL LOOK AT EXTENDED FAMILIA IS A TRUE GEM."
–KIRKUS REVIEWS, STARRED REVIEW

A little girl meets more relatives than she can count—but how will she communicate with them if she can't speak their language?

A heartwarming and humorous tale of love and family about two young boys who travel to Mexico to be ring bearers in their uncles' wedding.

Six Ways U.S. History Textbooks Mislead Students About the History Between Central America and the United States

By Olvin Abrego Ayala and Elizabeth Hertzler-McCain

JUDITH F. BACA(C)2002, "MIGRATION OF THE GOLDEN PEOPLE" / A COLLABORATION BETWEEN CARECEN & SPARC
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE SPARC ARCHIVES, SPARCINLA.ORG

Central America has long been an overlooked target of U.S. exploitation. Over the last 200-plus years the United States has conducted countless invasions and massacres, funded and trained military regimes and death squads, and extracted maximum capital from the isthmus. The United States claimed Central America as its "backyard," fostering a sense of entitlement to control and profit from the region. U.S. history textbooks do not properly explore this history, or they misrepresent it. Without this history, it becomes harder to understand the United States' role behind current and historical waves of migration and the economic and political complexities from and in these countries.

Central Americans are the second largest Latinx group in the United States, with Salvadorans alone making up the third largest country group. This means that Central American students are in the classroom, reading these textbooks, and learning misleading narratives about themselves and the U.S. role in bringing them here. Textbooks also silence the U.S. government's role in creating the immigration crisis, stoking xenophobia. History is made daily, so not righting the wrongs of the past allows for similar or even worse atrocities to be repeated. These legacies continue unless we recognize the patterns.

We reviewed 10 U.S. history textbooks with publishing dates ranging from 2012 to 2023 from well-known publishers such as Pearson, Cengage Learning, Holt McDougal, Prentice Hall, and Norton Publishing. These books revealed the following failings:

1. Textbooks decenter Central America in the frame of its own history.

Textbooks often begin sections or use headings that decenter Central America in their framing of events. For example, in Holt McDougal's *United States History*, the section on the United States and Latin America opens by encouraging students to imagine themselves as the engineers who oversaw the construction of the Panama Canal. This directive immediately places students in the role of the white, U.S.-based, well-compensated few, inviting them to empathize with the privileged who oversaw the canal project and to ignore the thousands of Black Caribbean laborers who deserve the recognition for building the canal.

Beginning the section on the United States and Latin America by having students imagine themselves as the U.S. imperialist and profiteer sets a precedent for how students approach the rest of the content, aligning themselves with U.S. elite perspectives and decentering Central America. These instructions and framing entrench the idea in students' minds that the United States is "us" and Central America is "other."

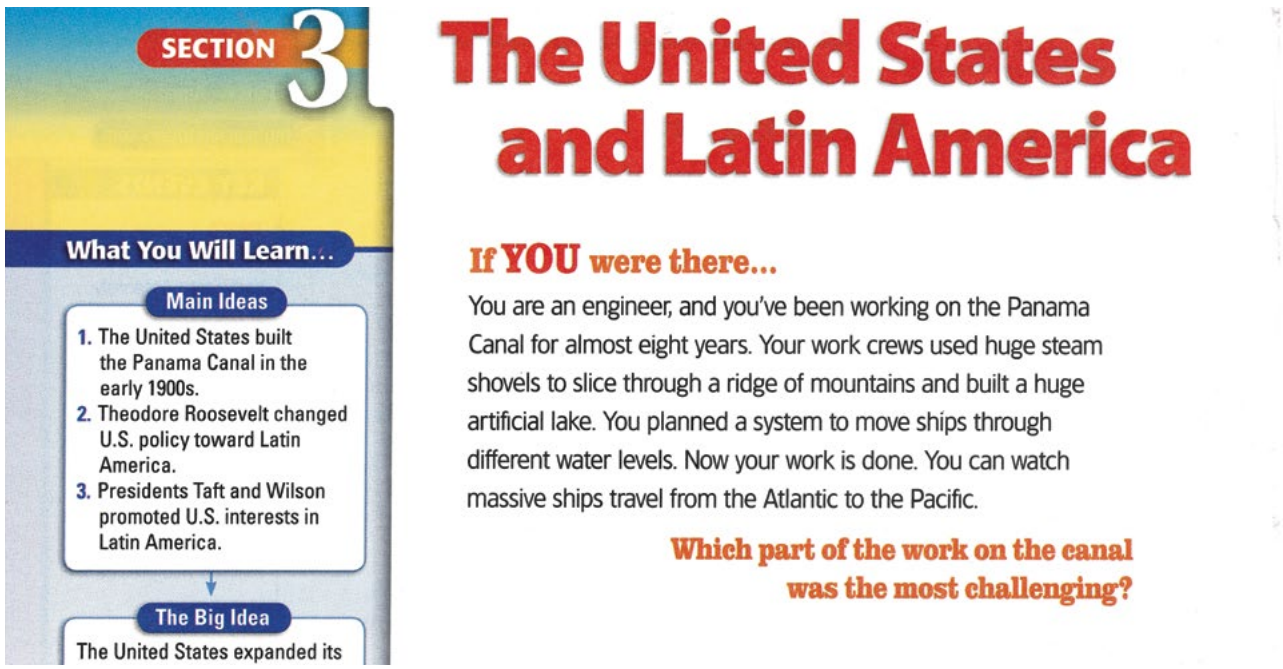
Similarly, many texts frame Central American aspects of important moments in U.S.-Central American history, like Nicaragua in the Iran-Contra Affair, as marginal rather than as central to the narrative. Textbooks discuss the Iran-Contra Affair under headings such as "Trouble Persists in the Middle East," "The Middle East and Terrorism," or "Interventions in the Middle East," signaling to students that the "Iran" part of the "Iran-Contra Affair" is what they should pay attention to. This spreads the notion that funding the Contras was a side quest, secondary to attempts to free the hostages in Iran and puts the Sandinista movement and Reagan's support for the Contras on the backburner, decentering Central America in one of its key historical moments.

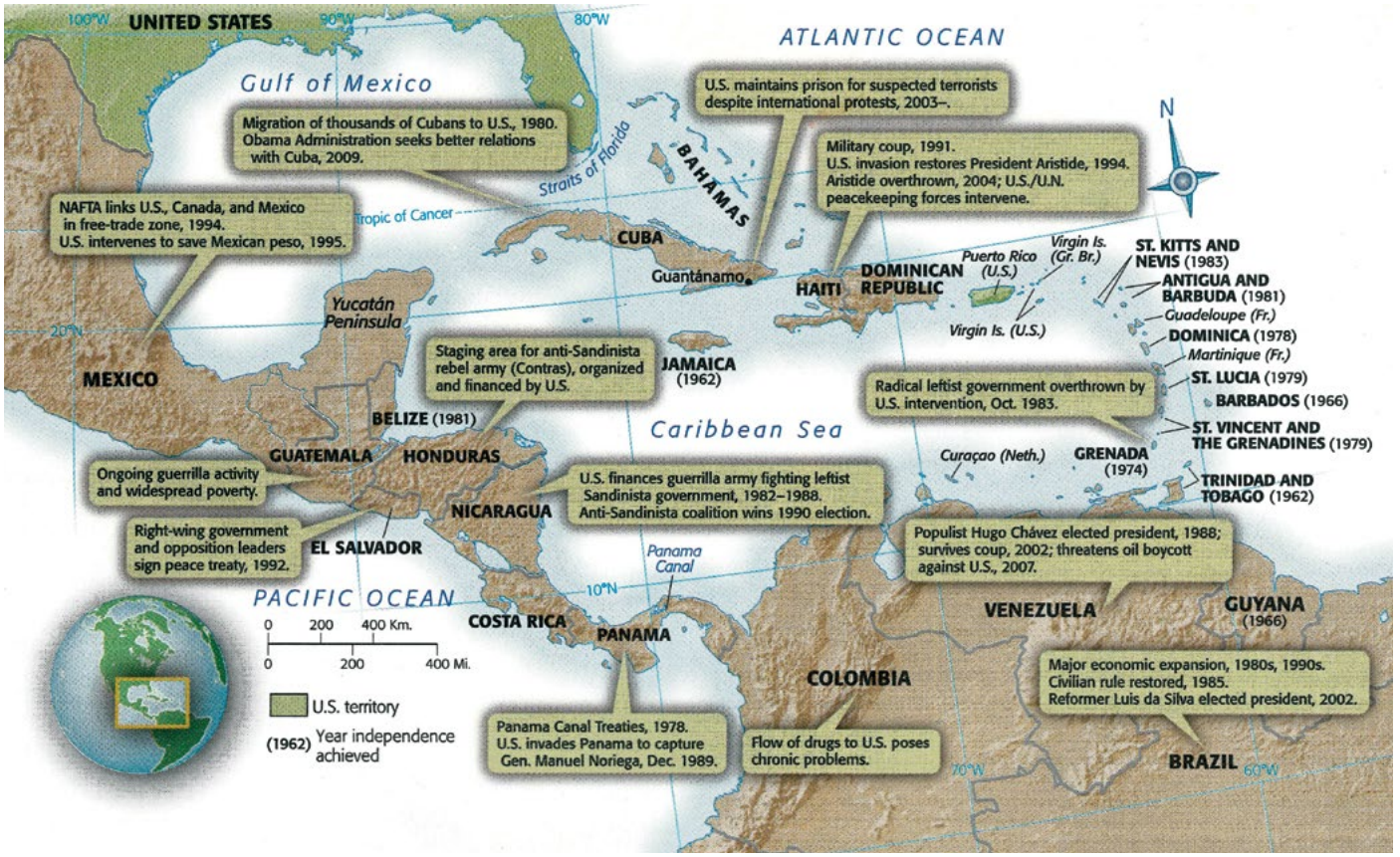
Similarly, textbooks often put U.S. interventions in Central America in the 1980s under subheadings about Reagan-era policies. This encourages readers to think that this history is Reagan's story rather than the story of Central American people who survived or perished as a consequence of U.S. intervention. Furthermore, this framing implies that tensions between the United States and Central America existed only under Reagan. In fact, these exploitative relationships date back centuries and continue into the present.

2. Textbooks omit large portions of Central American history.

We cannot teach what we do not know. Of the books reviewed, zero mentioned Belize (unsurprising given the relative lack of U.S. intervention in Belize), two mentioned Costa Rica, four mentioned Honduras, seven mentioned El Salvador, nine mentioned Nicaragua, nine mentioned Guatemala, and 10 mentioned Panama. By mention, we mean that the word was present in a paragraph (not on a map), not that the countries were discussed in depth. An example of this omission is *History Alive! The United States Through Modern Times* from TCI, which, out of all U.S.-Central American history, only discussed the Panama Canal, and the 1954 coup d'état against democratically elected President Árbenz of Guatemala with minimal detail. Books overlooked the role of the United States in 1970s and '80s Central America through the funding of repressive regimes in El

United States History (Holt McDougal)





Salvador, Guatemala, and the Contras in Honduras against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, or the role in training death squads, and the increase of anti-communist sentiment. The omission of Honduras is notable because of how important it was to the United States in the 1980s: the Soto Cano Air Base, the funding of the Contras against Nicaragua, funding for death squads like Battalion 3-16, and providing training from the CIA. Honduras was a vital part of U.S. interference in Central America to the point where people started calling it *USS Honduras*. U.S. students learn none of this history from textbooks.

When talking about Manifest Destiny, all textbooks included westward expansion, but they made little or no mention of *southward* expansion. As the exception, a fraction of books briefly mentioned William Walker, the "filibusterer" who took expeditions to Central America and parts of Mexico to gain power and establish Central American countries as enslaving U.S. colonies. So strong was his grip that he managed to become president of Nicaragua from July 1856 to May 1857, a government recognized and legitimized by U.S. President Franklin Pierce. He was taken out of power and ultimately assassinated in Honduras where his remains reside. In today's Central America, Walker is a symbol of U.S. imperialism, but textbooks seldom teach his history.

Texts almost completely omit important drivers of economic inequality and land dispossession. A few books have a small section on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), but none mentions the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), a free trade agreement that has gutted local farmers and facilitated labor exploitation and land encroachment, as well as immigration by driving people north.

Perhaps the most obscene omission is the lack of integration of Central American people besides a few presidents. Within this omission, textbooks obscure the multiracial nature of Central America, homogenizing the region, failing to discuss Indigeneity and Blackness in the isthmus. In the same vein, books omit U.S. Central Americans and the U.S. role in their migration.

3. Textbooks treat Central American history as a footnote.

When U.S. history textbooks include portions of Central American history, these are relegated to the literal margins. The textbook *Give Me Liberty! An American History* from W. W. Norton & Company, despite adding new details like the El Mozote Massacre in El Salvador, dedicates only half a page and a map to 1980s Central America. Half a page or less is commonly used to discuss immensely complex regional conflicts.

Give Me Liberty! dedicates an entire 10-page section to Vietnam, but only two sentences to El Salvador and Guatemala

combined. This is not unique to *Give Me Liberty!* Some textbooks devote a full chapter to Vietnam yet spend only a few sentences discussing Cold War-era conflicts in Central America. Some may argue that Vietnam is more important to U.S. history because 58,000 U.S. soldiers died and the divisiveness of the anti-war movement. Despite solidarity movements, Central American conflicts did not grab U.S. public attention the same way, making Central America less prominent than Vietnam. However, Central America has a centuries-long history of entanglement with the United States, including hundreds of thousands of deaths in Guatemala alone, and numerous other massacres across the other six countries. When a textbook uses a few sentences to represent decades-long conflicts — conflicts that the United States helped inflict — the long-lasting trauma and resistance of Central American people is erased. The United States gets to move on. Central Americans do not get this luxury.

U.S. history textbooks are filled with maps like the one on p. 33, which give important information, but lack context not found in the map or in the text. Complex histories get consigned to a word bubble on a map that lacks nuance and that students will likely not read. Those word bubbles could easily be expanded and put into a section or chapter, but Central American history is not a priority.

4. Textbooks perpetuate harmful stereotypes about Central America.

Textbooks often employ a biased, nearly prejudicial tone when discussing Central America. Prentice Hall's *United States History: Reconstruction to the Present*, Mississippi edition, quotes a U.S. ambassador calling El Salvador "rotten" (p. 752) in the context of the 1980s civil war that the United States heavily funded. The book's repetition of this biased quote upholds the false stance of moral superiority that the United States took against the Salvadoran government, as if the United States was not responsible for funding the atrocities that made El Salvador "rotten." Paired with the fact that textbooks almost never mention Central America positively, quotes like this promote the stereotype that Central American people and governments are deficient and inferior.

Many textbooks define Central American regimes by how "friendly" they were to the United States — even if they killed their own citizens and were installed or propped up by the United States. These examples illustrate a false objectivity that disregards Central American lives and prioritizes glamorizing or sanitizing war crimes as long as those crimes align with U.S. interests.

Lastly, the anti-Central American bias and stereotypes in textbooks are prominently displayed in their lack of diverse photos of Central Americans. Across all the books we reviewed, few contained photos of Central Americans; if they did, Central Americans were almost exclusively portrayed as violent guerrillas. The photo on p. 35 of heavily armed Contras from Wadsworth Cengage Learning is an example.

5. Textbooks privilege U.S. imperialist interests over Central American critiques.

Textbooks consistently center U.S. imperialist interests in their recounting of history between the United States and Central American countries, erasing Central American countries' autonomy and desire for freedom from interference. Nearly every textbook reviewed describes U.S. interventions in Central America in terms of "maintain(ing) stability in the region and protect(ing) the Panama Canal," "protecting U.S. interests," maintaining "stability, security, and U.S. Supremacy," "protecting American investment," or by referencing the Roosevelt Corollary's position that Central America needed to be "policed." Although U.S. historical figures may have stated these were their motivations, history textbooks have a responsibility to provide more context by explaining how U.S. corporate interests stood to gain financially from these interventions and the impacts these interventions had on Central Americans.

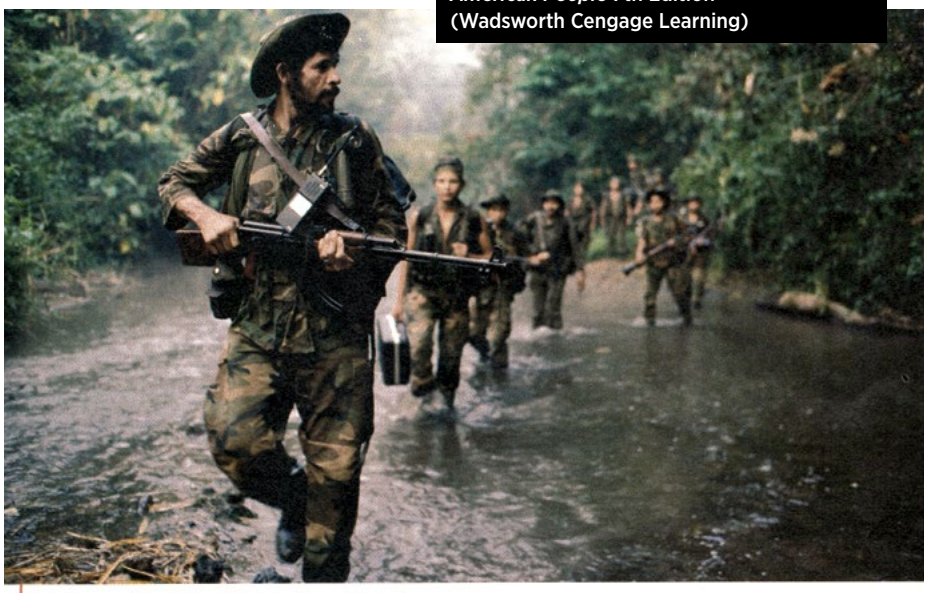
None of the textbooks in this review accomplish either of these responsibilities. Instead, most repeat the myth that U.S. policies and interventions were noble missions of self-defense. Texts vaguely reference Latin American and Central American displeasure with the United States, but do not detail the horrors imperialism brought upon Central Americans. Many textbooks contain unfocused mentions of U.S. actions causing "long-term resentment against the United States" or "poor relations with the entire region of Latin America." Similarly, some textbooks offer weak mentions of returning the Panama Canal to Panama "to end bitterness" or "to remove a sore point" in U.S.-Latin American relations.

The issue with these statements about Central American anger, and more generally Latin American resentment against the United States, is that none properly explains why Central America was angry with the United States. A textbook might mention that the CIA-backed coup that overthrew the elected president of Guatemala "successfully prevented Guatemala from becoming communist" (which entirely misrepresents the situation), but it gives readers no indication that this led to a decades-long civil war and the genocide of hundreds of thousands of Maya people. This and countless other indignities and atrocities that the United States inflicted upon Central America are never explained from a Central American point of view. Textbooks foreground U.S. imperialist goals of "self-defense," making the United States the subject and Central America the object, capable only of being acted upon.

6. Textbooks minimize U.S. atrocities in Central America.

Not only do textbooks center the views of U.S. imperial powers, they also minimize the extent to which the United States imposed its power and violence on

The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People 7th Edition (Wadsworth Cengage Learning)



Anti-Sandinista Contras on Patrol in Nicaragua, 1987
Under Reagan, the CIA recruited, financed, and equipped an army to overthrow Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista regime. This support continued clandestinely despite congressional prohibitions, leading to the so-called Iran-contra scandal.

Central American countries. Many of the sections recounting the imperialist history of Central America give half-truths or lack context about the significance of U.S. interference in the isthmus. This is especially visible in 1980s Central America, under the context of the Cold War, where the textbooks undermine the severity of U.S. interventions. The books often mention sending aid to El Salvador but not the amount. In truth, the United States sent more than $5.5 billion, far exceeding regular spending and symbolizing the stakes present for the United States in the war. The textbooks mention the human rights violations but not the U.S. training of the troops who committed the violations, including scorched-earth tactics. Similarly, textbooks minimize the extent of U.S. involvement. The death count for the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama, also known as Operation Just Cause, varies widely across textbooks, ranging from 300 to 4,000 civilians. Crucially, none of the textbooks cite their sources for the death count.

A number of texts fail to mention the United Fruit Company or describe it as simply exercising "powerful" control over Central America. However, books do not clarify that United Fruit owned half of the arable land in Guatemala, the exploitation, human rights abuses on the isthmus and Colombia, or its role in the 1954 coup of Guatemala. These mischaracterizations protect the United States' image.

While many textbooks minimize the extent of U.S. interference in Central America, some exceptions prove that textbook publishers can do better. BVT's *Introduction to American History* describes Reagan's choice to send aid to Duarte's right-wing government in El Salvador as "tacitly accepting a bloodstained regime." The best example of honestly depicting U.S. interference is the Brown University Choices Program's student text *Imperial America: U.S. Global Expansion*. It highlights the United Fruit Company's legacy in Central America in a concise, yet non-minimizing way. It quickly covers the power that the United Fruit Company had over huge swaths of land, and sometimes governments, in Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Honduras. The text from Choices, however, still has room for improvement because this vital information was placed in a marginal box that many students may skip, and is still quite short, despite the content being good.

Conclusion

The dismal state of Central American history in U.S. history textbooks has remained largely the same for decades. U.S. students, no matter their heritage, need to know the history of U.S. intervention and Central American resistance. The dominant educational system props up narratives of U.S. supremacy and benevolence, encouraging students to develop inaccurate, oversimplified notions about the "good guys" and "bad guys" in history and current global affairs. Without truthful history education, students cannot develop the critical thinking skills necessary to contextualize our present migration crises, the "underdevelopment" of Central America, or to advocate for just and reparative policy.

In terms of creating tangible change, we recommend that educators teach outside the textbook as much as possible. Teachers can use resources like those found at Teaching Central America and the Central American Studies Curriculum Project at UCI History Project to bolster their curricula. For students, we recommend reading against the grain of textbooks: Be curious and always ask *why*. Teaching Central America also has valuable resources for students.

The history of U.S. intervention in Central America is U.S. history, and students deserve access to this history. Publishers and U.S. schools have work to do to repair the fragmentation of Central American-U.S. history. ●

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They wrote this critique while interning at Teaching for Change.

Sanctuary Lessons:

How Chicago Teachers Are Defending Their Students

On Monday, Feb. 3, Chicago teachers, community members, and some elected officials participated in "walk-in" actions at more than 100 Chicago public schools.

By Kelly Hayes

Kelly Hayes is a Menominee author, educator, organizer, and photographer. Kelly is the host of Truthout's podcast Movement Memos *and co-author of* Let This Radicalize You*, with Mariame Kaba.*

Participants rallied to show support for marginalized students — including undocumented youth and queer and trans students — amid Trump's attacks on immigrants, trans people, and the honest discussion of history in schools. The walk-ins were part of a national day of

PHOTO: CHICAGO TEACHERS UNION

action, ahead of the Senate's consideration of President Trump's nominee to lead — and aid in dismantling — the Department of Education, billionaire Linda McMahon.

Recently, "border czar" Tom Homan complained that the city's residents were "well educated" and had effectively prepared communities to resist U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids. At the street level, that preparedness has included widespread Know Your Rights trainings and the work of rapid response teams who investigate reports from community members about the presence of ICE. However, Chicago's preparedness is also taking place within its schools, where teachers are forming "Sanctuary Teams" to respond to threats against undocumented students. The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) has been building a framework for this kind of community defense since the first Trump administration, and those efforts have become more urgent, now that the Trump administration has rescinded guidelines that previously reduced the risk of ICE raids at "sensitive locations," such as hospitals, schools, and health care facilities.

I recently spoke with Stacy Davis Gates, president of the CTU, about how the union is responding to the threats students and staff face in the second Trump era. Davis Gates stressed that the union's preparedness has been a long-standing community-based effort. "We've availed ourselves of more of a community coalition approach to unionism," she said. "We've engaged with [the issue] over time and we've engaged with it with people who were experts, in coalition," she said. "We have been led by those who know better than we do, which is an important part of being in coalition with organizations beyond yourself."

Chicago educator Silvia Gonzalez echoed that sentiment. Gonzalez, who is an artist and an educator in the Chicago Public Schools system, in addition to being a member of the Chicago ACT Collective, pointed to the work of Organized Communities Against Deportations (OCAD), whose community defense efforts have had a profound impact in Chicago. "OCAD was born from undocumented youth who wanted to stop deportations, back in 2012, and it was led by directly impacted folks. So, the protection of undocumented youth has been part of the Chicago conversation for some time."

Davis Gates noted that the union's current strategy was initiated during the first Trump administration. She said that during Trump's first term, "our members noticed severe attendance issues in spaces where immigrant families resided." Davis Gates said educators realized that "a different way of engaging, supporting, and protecting" students was called for. After analyzing the dilemmas teachers and families were facing, CTU began to work in coalition with community groups to provide Know Your Rights trainings and fought for contract language around maintaining sanctuary policies at the school level.

Davis Gates noted that this contract language mirrors the law in Chicago, which is a sanctuary city. "We also have contract language around special education that mirrors the law, because when the law is not being complied with, the contract gives us a process, a system in which we can address it," Davis Gates explained. "It is an accountability document with the district. It is a way in which we can exert our power to make them do something that they might not ordinarily do. We get the implementation of the training, we get the synergy and the policies and the rules."

CTU is currently involved in heated contract negotiations, but Davis Gates stressed that the union's approach is not limited to contract proposals. "It's also about how we are organizing and engaging our members."

The defensive framework educators have established was tested on Jan. 24, when government agents attempted to gain entry to Hamline Elementary School on Chicago's South Side. Hamline Elementary's student population is 92 percent Latinx. The school's staff believed that the agents were with ICE, and sanctuary protocols were enacted to protect students and prevent the agents from entering. Local media would later report that the agents were with the Secret Service. In a statement, Chicago Public Schools explained the confusion, saying, "Two individuals showed up at the school door and presented identification that includes the name Department of Homeland Security, the federal agency that oversees ICE."

Since that incident, I have spoken to teachers who suspect that claims about a Secret Service investigation were merely a cover story to get federal agents inside the school. The teachers cited

collaboration between federal agencies in Trump's recent raids in Chicago, and Trump's slipshod approach to the law. Davis Gates argued that it ultimately "doesn't matter" which federal law enforcement agency was attempting to gain entry to the school. "What mattered most was that there was a system in place to protect people and that was the entire point of it. Whether it was the Department of Homeland Security, the Secret Service, or ICE, none of those people should be in schools."

As educators and parents around the country brace for ICE raids and other federal incursions targeting students and teachers, Davis Gates urged educators to cultivate and practice solidarity. "The way these four years are not simply survived, but turned into a transformational moment, is only going to be through solidarity," she said. "I encourage people to broaden their definition of sanctuary, broaden their definition of worker, and create teams to protect people and to support people." Davis Gates stressed that safety and collective power can only be built "through the solidarity of humanity and by organizing against inhumanity."

She explained that unions cannot have a limited vision of what it means to protect their membership, but must serve the interests of all workers. "If workers belong to the working class and the working class is the union movement, then we can't just see the kids in our classrooms' parents as parents. We have to see them as fellow workers as well."

CTU has embraced this philosophy by "bargaining for the common good," which means the union has used contract negotiations to pursue concessions from the city beyond the realm of wages and benefits. These pursuits have included increased public services for the broader community and district policies that dovetail with community efforts to protect vulnerable populations — such as the union's sanctuary school efforts.

Gonzalez stressed the importance of community collaboration. "It's really important to connect with organizers right now," she said. "It's important to attend Know Your Rights trainings, to post very visibly that your space is a safe space, and to remind folks that you are there to protect them." Gonzalez emphasized that teachers should educate themselves about what rights and protections they and their students can assert and have a plan to enforce them. "Know the difference between judicial and administrative warrants and how to respond," she said. Gonzalez urges educators around the country to draft scripts and rehearse for tense moments. "Be prepared to tell government agents 'We do not consent to the entry of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. We do not consent to entry and we are not authorized to review court orders. As a school, we have the right to deny entry until legal counsel arrives. Please wait outside while the school administration contacts legal counsel.'"

Gonzalez also encourages educators to review CTU's Sanctuary Toolkit, which offers guidance on developing Sanctuary Teams for local schools. Sanctuary Teams assign roles and establish protocols for multiple scenarios, from ICE agents attempting to gain entry to a school to agents having somehow obtained access to the building. Rather than prescribing hard-and-fast rules for every situation, the toolkit provides educators with a template that can be adapted for each school. Gonzalez has also created a Google Drive folder that includes the toolkit and other resources that may be helpful to teachers developing sanctuary plans to protect their students. The folder includes Know Your Rights materials, a deportation defense manual, movement art posters, and other resources.

Gonzalez's folder has continued to expand as teachers in other areas have contributed materials. The real-time growth of Gonzalez's resource sharing is fitting, given the expanding threats students and teachers face under the Trump administration. Amid Trump's attacks on trans youth, "gender ideology," and any accurate accounting of history in public schools — which reflects an anti-Black and anti-Native agenda — all marginalized students are clearly under threat. Gonzalez believes teachers must be ready to defend students against every manner of attack. "At the end of the day, we protect our students, period," she said. "This is non-negotiable. We protect all of our students. Every effort we wage is going to have to reflect our sanctuary response, which means tapping into our local communities, and working with community organizers, whose efforts have been ongoing."

Davis Gates also noted that the defensive efforts of educators must continue to expand. "We are all going to need sanctuary," she said. "Trump is only centering himself and people who look like him, period." Davis Gates noted that the shifting political terrain means teachers will have to fight for added protections for marginalized students. "We use our contract to make the district follow the law, and now, we may have to leverage our contract in place of the law," she explained.

Davis Gates says Chicago educators view sanctuary and the demands of this moment expansively. "You don't get to just fight for Black history, you also have to fight for the sanctuary of our immigrant families. You also have to fight for protections for our trans and queer students, and our SPED [special education] students as well, because Title IX leaves all of them vulnerable. You don't get to pick and choose who is a protected class in Trump's America." ●

This article originally appeared in Kelly Hayes' newsletter Organizing My Thoughts.

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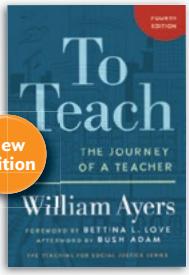

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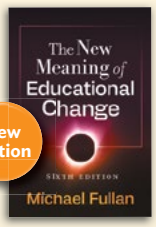

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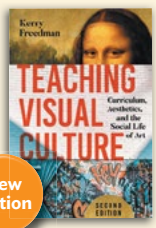

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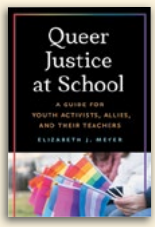

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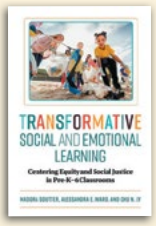

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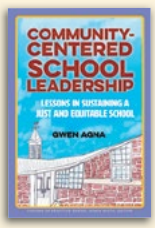

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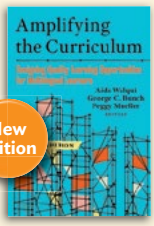

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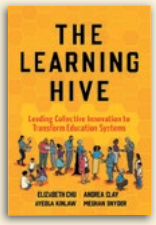

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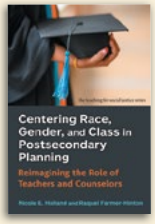

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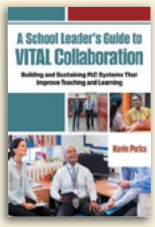

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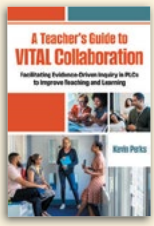

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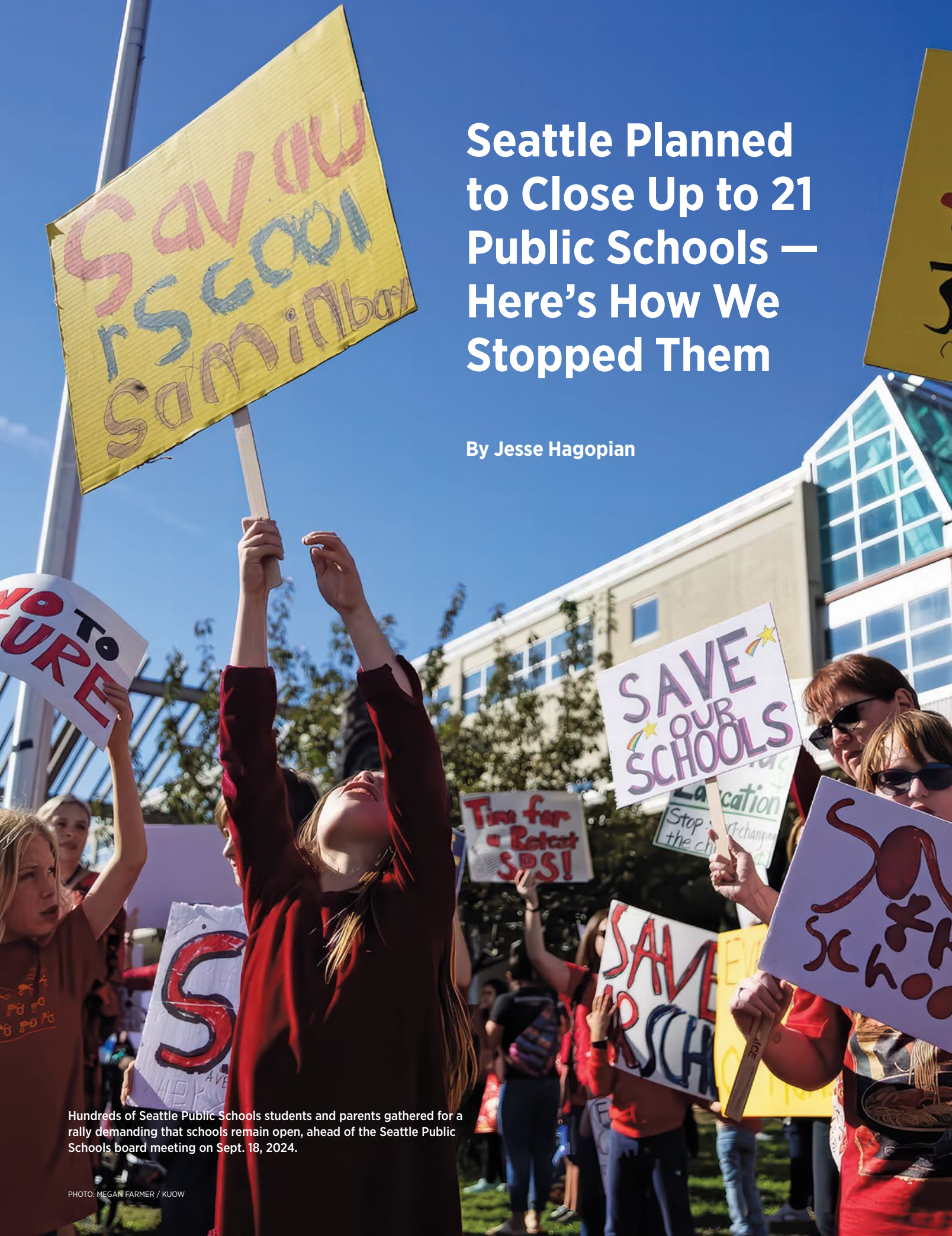
Seattle Planned to Close Up to 21 Public Schools — Here's How We Stopped Them

By Jesse Hagopian



Hundreds of Seattle Public Schools students and parents gathered for a rally demanding that schools remain open, ahead of the Seattle Public Schools board meeting on Sept. 18, 2024.

PHOTO: MEGAN FARMER / KUOW

From coast to coast, school districts are proposing closures, as pandemic-era funds have long since dried up, gentrification has driven working-class families out of increasingly unaffordable neighborhoods, and wealthier families have opted out of the public school system altogether in favor of private schools. Yet in a time when budget cuts threaten public education nationwide, Seattle organizers have shown that communities can fight back — and win.

After initially proposing in spring to close up to 21 schools — and, under immense pressure, reducing that number to four — Seattle Public Schools (SPS) announced in late November that it was canceling all plans to close schools. Superintendent Brent Jones admitted he "no longer saw a pathway for this approach," and emphasized the district's commitment to the "needs and well-being of our students, families, and community."

But make no mistake: this decision wasn't handed down from above. It was won through a relentless grassroots campaign by parents, caregivers, educators, students, and community members who refused to let our children bear the brunt of budget shortfalls.

The district claimed it needed to close schools because of its nearly $100 million budget shortfall. They clearly hadn't learned the lesson from the last disastrous round of school closures. In 2009, SPS hastily closed five schools — despite the massive outcry from communities — just as a surge of enrollment entered the district. Back then, the district was forced to spend $48 million reopening schools — three of which had just been

closed. This year, Seattle Public Schools projected a loss of 600 students, only to see enrollment rise by 206, and yet they were still planning to charge ahead with school closures. The district's inability to learn from its own history only strengthened our resolve to stop this from happening again.

As frustrating as the district's lack of appreciation for the costly impact of previous rounds of school closures was, the real outrage is the fact that schools in a city as wealthy as Seattle have such a massive budget shortfall. Seattle is home to 11 billionaires and 54,200 millionaires. Washington state has the second most regressive tax system in the nation, with the wealthiest 1 percent of earners paying only 3 percent of their income in state and local taxes, while the lowest 20 percent of earners pay a crushing 17.8 percent. Our schools are being starved while billionaires like Jeff Bezos launch themselves into space — a contradiction that fueled our rebellion.

This fight offers important lessons for others across the country facing the devastating impacts of school closures. Here's how we won — and what comes next.

The Movement Erupts

In 2013, when Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel imposed his disastrous neoliberal policy by closing 49 elementary schools, the *Chicago Tribune* called it "unprecedented in number for a major urban center." In a city with around 600 schools at the time, it meant that the closures impacted about 8 percent of Chicago's schools. As harmful as that was, it pales in comparison to Seattle, where the proposal to close 21 schools out of 104 total schools represented an astounding 20 percent of the district. By percentage, this would have been one of the largest school closures in U.S. history.

This fall, the district named the specific schools and threw their communities into turmoil. But parents refused to let their schools be sacrificed to budget cuts without a fight. Their relentless activism — rallies at schools, community meetings, and passionate testimony at school board hearings — forced the district to scale back the proposal from 21 closures to four schools: Stevens, Sacajawea, Sanislo, and North Beach.

At that point, parents from Stevens, Sacajawea, Sanislo, and North Beach took the lead in the fight. They organized their school communities, supported each other, and demanded answers from the district. At every school board meeting, their voices were loud and clear about the devastating impact school closures would have on their community. As one parent, Tim Sullivan, the PTA vice president at Stevens Elementary School, told the *Seattle Times*, "It's been a roller coaster all fall. I think one of our strongest points of complaints was that we don't understand what problem this solves or how it makes enough of a difference to be

worth all of this disruption."

Students also quickly sprang into action, joining their parents at rallies, writing letters to the school district, and testifying at school board meetings. As the Seattle Student Union wrote in their statement on the school closures:

> Many students who form friendships and bonds in their school that will help them throughout their entire life will lose those key relationships because closing schools will disperse students to different schools. The school closures will be especially difficult for the kids who have the most mental health challenges and hardships in their life, losing key relationships with counselors and teachers that are vital for these students' well-being.
>
> Instead of closing schools, we demand the school district join us to build a major campaign directed at state lawmakers to fund our schools by taxing the rich. Show us you care about our futures, by demanding the money from the state that it will take to build the schools we deserve.

This point was driven home by numerous students at schools that the district had slated for closure. "I have been here since kindergarten, and I made lots of my friends that I know today here," Edwynn Louks, a 4th grader, told the *Seattle Times*. "I don't want to lose all of that. Sacajawea is my home. I love it. It's a great community. I love all the teachers here. I don't want it to close."

Organized Parents Built a Citywide Movement

But this fight didn't remain isolated to individual schools. All Together for Seattle Schools (ATSS) connected parents, caregivers, and community members from across Seattle to amplify their resistance.

As Erin MacDougall, co-chair of ATSS, put it: "The last year of the district's efforts to close up to 21 schools without authentically involving families and school communities was a tumultuous and stressful time for parents, caregivers, students, and educators. Instead of being pitted against each other, hundreds of parents and caregivers from all corners of the city worked together to show the district how damaging its proposal was."

ATSS helped neutralize divide-and-conquer tactics that sought to pit schools against each other, and organized parents to recognize that an injury to one school was an injury to all.

All Together for Seattle Schools didn't just mobilize protests — they educated the public. Alex Wakeman Rouse, the other co-chair of ATSS, told me, "Through our coalition-building efforts, parents and caregivers listened, learned, and educated others on the key issues, dug into the data on student impact and supposed cost savings, and elevated the stories of the families most impacted by the district's proposals."

This strategic, citywide unity showed the district that the closures were not just a concern for a few schools, but a threat to the fabric of the entire community.

Educators Rise Up

Educators played a crucial role in this fight. The Seattle Education Association (SEA) — the union representing Seattle's teachers — voted in September "to advise a NO on the plan" to close up to 21 schools. The Seattle Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (SCORE) — a group within SEA committed to racial equity, fully funded schools, and social justice — took the fight further. As Alaina McCallum from SCORE explained to me:

> During union elections last April, SCORE put out a voter's guide of nine candidates who would fight school cuts and closures; all nine candidates won, which signaled educators' desire to take action against closures. The coalition building that SCORE had been doing for several years helped bring together students, parents, and community members. . . . SPS was not prepared to hold up against the pressure of the community.

SCORE made sure the public had accessible information. They created flyers with frequently asked questions debunking the district's claims that closures would save money. Through social media, they kept the community updated on the history of past closures, the district's plans, and the importance of collective action.

A Powerful Citywide Forum Showed Multiracial Unity

The growing movement to stop school closures needed a space to unite, strategize, and push back. As a longtime teacher, activist, and parent of two children in Seattle Public Schools, I helped organize a pivotal town hall forum at Franklin High School. Led by the Seattle NAACP Youth Council, Seattle Student Union, SCORE, ATSS, the People's Big 5, and Black Lives Matter at School, the forum gave people a space to voice their concerns, share information, demand action, and chart a way forward for the movement.

At the forum, we dismantled the district's attempt to rewrite history and brought the assembled media, two school board members, and even state representatives, face-to-face with the truth. Seattle Public Schools claimed closures would save money, but we reminded everyone of the disastrous outcomes of past closures — including the lesson from 2007, when the district closed several schools, only to lose 20 percent of the students from those schools, costing millions in lost per-pupil funding.

Rita Green, education chair at Seattle King County NAACP, spoke about helping to lead the struggle to save Seattle's Rainier Beach High School that was initially on the list of schools to be closed in 2008. Green, an alum of Rainier Beach, explained to the audience the

dramatic turnaround the school experienced after the movement successfully removed the school from the closure list — including a significant increase in enrollment and graduation rates. Beach even received national recognition for its impressive gains and is an ongoing testament to the foolishness of closing schools and the wisdom of supporting and investing in struggling programs.

The forum wasn't only about organizing to stop the school closures but also about envisioning what fully funded, equitable schools could be. Oliver Miska, an organizer with the People's Big 5 — a campaign to fully fund schools by fixing the inequitable tax system — drew applause when he said, "We need new progressive revenue. We need a progressive income tax, we need a wealth tax, we need a payroll tax." Alex Wakeman Rouse added, "Imagine if all the parents who were fundraising joined us to urge the state to fully fund the schools!"

Nathan Hale High School student Leo Falit-Baiamonte spoke of a fight for mental health funding in Seattle schools — a fight the students believed they had won; however, the city has yet to deliver on its promise. Falit-Baiamonte explained, "At the Seattle Student Union we've been trying to fight for increased mental health money. And that passed in November of last year, but Mayor [Bruce] Harrell only implemented $10 million of the $20 million . . . and we are trying again to get the full $20 million."

He wasn't the only student to take the mic that day. My son Miles Hagopian — a student at Franklin High School — also spoke passionately about the impact of budget cuts and school closures. Miles described how school closures would result in severing relationships between vulnerable students and their trusted adults and described how budgets had forced his band class to merge with the orchestra into a single period, requiring the teacher to perform the daunting task of instructing both ensembles at once. The testimony from the youth underscored that students aren't just abstract figures in a budget spreadsheet — they are young people with relationships, dreams, and a vision for their own education that must be listened to.

One of the most important aspects of the forum was that it demonstrated multiracial opposition to the closures. A narrative was being advanced that only wealthier white parents opposed the closures. While some of those parents may have been first to spring into action — often because they had more time and access to the system — our multiracial panel of parents, students, and educators shattered that narrative and showed that closures weren't about equity, they were about austerity. Our argument — that austerity amidst the boundless wealth in Seattle was a cruel absurdity — proved persuasive. The solidarity of parents, students, and educators — across race, neighborhood, and background — was critical in turning the tide and forcing the district to reconsider.

The Fight Ahead

Mothballing a school isn't just closing a brick-and-mortar edifice. It's hanging a closed sign on the hopes of a community. It's disrupting the relationships that our most vulnerable students rely on. We can't close our way to quality schools. We can't close our way to equity. We can't close our way to justice. We can't close our way to excellence. We can't close our way to joy. We can't even close our way to a balanced budget.

Closing schools sends a message that communities are disposable, but investing in them says they matter.

That's why we are celebrating this victory for Seattle's students — but we also know the fight isn't over. Seattle Public Schools still faces a $94 million budget deficit. But instead of closing schools, the district must now focus on systemic solutions, including lobbying the state for fair funding. "With the school closure plan in the rearview mirror for now," MacDougall told me, "We are putting all of our energy working with other school communities across Washington on the Billion Dollar Bake Sale, a statewide advocacy campaign to urge state lawmakers to prioritize fully funding K–12 schools this legislative session."

In addition, the coalition that came together to organize the citywide town hall didn't dissolve when we won the school closure struggle. Instead, we've evolved into a new coalition called Fund Washington Schools.

We will keep fighting to ensure that every school remains a lifeline for its community. Our message to those across the country facing school closures: Organize fiercely, speak the unvarnished truth, and link arms to form an unbreakable chain.

In the richest nation the world has ever known, there is more than enough money to keep our schools open. The question is, will there be enough political will? Too often, our wealth is squandered on luxury for billionaires while children go without counselors, nurses, books.

Seattle's victory shows us this: When we fight together, we don't just resist — we win. ●

An earlier version of this article appeared in Truthout.

Jesse Hagopian is a Rethinking Schools editor, a high school teacher, and on the staff of the Zinn Education Project. He is the co-editor of the Rethinking Schools book Teaching for Black Lives and Teaching Palestine. He also serves on the Black Lives Matter at School steering committee and is the director of the Black Education Matters Student Activist Award.

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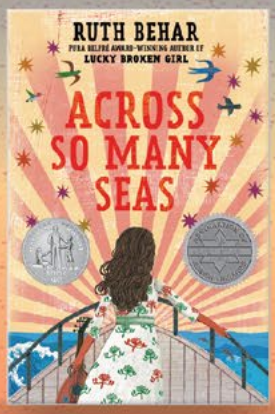

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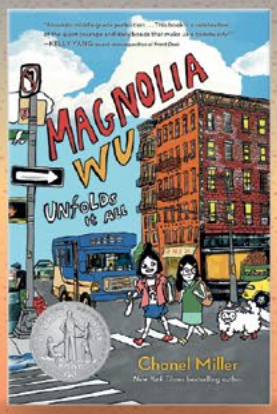
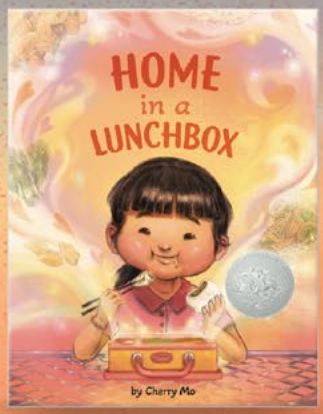
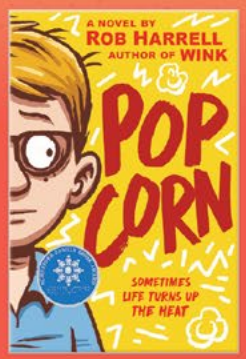
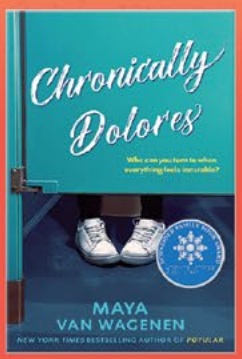


Newbery Honor Book

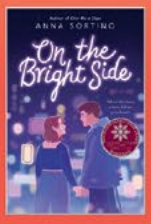


Caldecott Honor Book



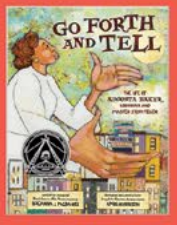


Schneider Family Book Award Winners

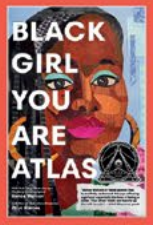


Schneider Family Book Award Honor Books

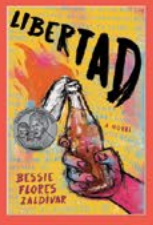
Asian/Pacific American Award Winner



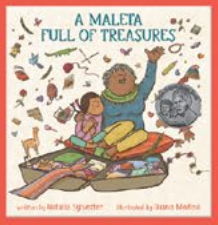
Coretta Scott King Book Award Illustrator Honor



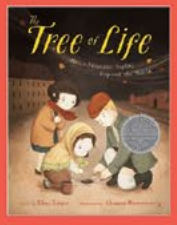
Coretta Scott King Book Award Author Honor



Pura Belpré Author Honor Book



Pura Belpré Illustrator Honor Book



Sydney Taylor Book Award Honor Book

Sydney Taylor Book Award Notable

LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE WINNING BOOKS

Why We Cannot Go Back to Basics

Reclaiming The Right to Teach Literacy

By Daniel Ferguson, Laurie Rabinowitz, and Amy Tondreau

Recently, the media has presented two sets of stories on what kind of reading should occur in U.S. schools.

One set of stories has followed state laws banning books depicting "divisive topics." According to PEN America there was a 200 percent surge in book bans during the 2023–2024 school year despite 71 percent of Americans opposing efforts to remove books from schools and libraries.

Another set of stories has championed a back-to-basics approach associated with the "Science of Reading" (SoR). SoR is a movement that calls for an increase in explicit, systematic decoding instruction. It was originally spearheaded by families of students with dyslexia, but has been extensively taken up by the media and

ILLUSTRATION: ADOLFO VALLE


A

politicians who argue that phonics instruction, distinct from other teaching methods like balanced literacy or whole language, will increase the number of proficient readers in schools. Forty-five states and Washington, D.C., have enacted new reading education policies, many of which restrict classroom reading materials to scripted phonics curriculum.

Although the "culture war" and "reading war" have been described as separate causes promoted by disparate organizations, their stories are more connected than they appear. Both book banning and SoR dogmatism limit what teachers can teach and what students can read, narrowing the ability of public schools to address children's diverse needs. We see this most explicitly in conservative parent groups, including Moms for Liberty, who have made it clear they endorse both. This should be a wake-up call to critically examine the potential impact of phonics-based policies on public school students and teachers.

The Threats to Learning (and Teaching) Literacy

Most reading researchers agree that phonics instruction is essential for young readers. Still, disagreements about approaches to reading instruction, including phonics, are more than a century old. The current push to adopt SoR-aligned curriculum is but the newest iteration of the "reading wars," a decades-long debate that frames different methods of reading instruction as incompatible with one another. These debates, while occurring among scholars, have been exacerbated by the media's persistent conflict framing, a technique used to create a false binary. This conflict has presented a narrative on reading instruction as a moral panic to "save" children from teachers and/or problematic instruction.

For example, take the claim that students aren't reading because they are not taught enough phonics. Regardless of its merit in any one case, conservatives have taken advantage by blaming the reading crisis on teachers and their instructional methods while diverting attention from larger issues, like poverty, housing instability, food insecurity, and access to health care. This conflict framing worked for the Bush administration when it filled the pockets of its benefactors by steering federal funds to commercial reading curricula that ultimately, according to the administration's own Department of Education assessment, did not improve reading proficiency. It is working now, as states yet again have limited curricular choices offered by some of the very same companies that profited 20 years ago.

Simultaneously, this framing benefits groups like Moms for Liberty, who see phonics instruction as a means to creating a whitewashed, English-only approach to reading instruction. When we, as teacher educators and researchers, have asked teachers from various states for their opinions on book banning, they unanimously support diverse texts in classrooms. However, these very

same teachers are often obliged to restrict their classroom texts to less diverse SoR-stamped curricula dictated by state laws, leaving them fearful of adding in additional diverse texts. This form of soft censorship ultimately has the same impact as book bans and may explain another reason for right-wing advocacy of phonics-heavy curriculum.

On top of this, the recurring trend toward prescriptive and narrow approaches to teaching phonics, now labeled "SoR-backed," does not even accurately reflect the actual *sciences of reading* research, nor the importance of skillful teachers crafting quality instruction for children with diverse needs. For this reason, educators need to resist the false binary between approaches to reading instruction and stay focused on the need for diverse materials, research, and instructional practices to support public education in response to both pro-SoR and book banning movements.

Diverse Curriculum Materials Matter

For decades, scholars like Rudine Sims Bishop have encouraged educators to provide children with diverse books that act as mirrors (reflecting one's own experiences), windows (giving students access to experiences different from one's own), and sliding glass doors (encouraging students to step into a character's shoes and empathize with their experiences). Similarly, educators recognize that no one curriculum would fully meet the needs of all, in part because the same texts cannot respond to each student's identities. However, current SoR proponents often encourage school districts to look for a fast and simple solution to increased reading achievement by adopting commercially produced phonics programs that fail to provide young learners with a rich array of diverse and intellectually engaging texts.

Although research shows that children benefit from phonics instruction, it also shows that there are costs to devoting too much of the instructional day to phonics and to relying too heavily on prepackaged curricular materials to deliver that instruction. In one district that recently implemented a scripted program, teachers shared with us discouraging stories of being told not to veer from their scripts for assessments, even when they use multiple languages to communicate with children, or when assessing nonverbal children.

SoR devotees have heavily criticized the use of trade books (i.e., general reading books designed to either entertain or inform) and leveled texts (i.e., books organized by reading level based on factors like vocabulary, text features, and syntax), advocating that students should apply only newly taught phonics skills in decodable texts (i.e., books that only use high frequency words and phonetically controlled vocabulary that students read in sequence aligned to phonics instruction).

However, there are also critiques of emphasizing solely decodable texts. These books rarely contain complex plots or character development and do not provide opportunities to engage in meaningful comprehension work. Even kindergarteners we know have noted the differences between decodable texts and trade books. Implicitly, when instruction focuses on decodable texts, students learn that reading is about getting the words right, not about thinking deeply or critically, or seeing their experiences reflected in affirming ways and learning about other people's experiences.

Moreover, many decodable texts have few characters of color, little to no linguistic diversity, and virtually no disability representation. And, although there are some recent examples of decodable books that aim to be more culturally representative, these texts do not capture the stories and experiences of children from diverse backgrounds in short decodable sentences. We recently asked an audience of more than 50 educators at a national literacy teaching conference if they had ever encountered a curriculum-mandated decodable text that featured a character with a hidden disability such as ADHD, autism, or dyslexia (identities SoR advocates claim to support) and not a single teacher could think of an example. In other words, students who SoR advocates claim to help don't see themselves in the very texts adopted to center their needs.

In effect, SoR-based policies can be hijacked for the same purposes as culture war-based book bans. Multiple conservative parents' rights movements, such as No Left Turn in Education and Parents Defending Education, have argued that the "failure" of balanced literacy is evidence of the "failure" of progressive education, and a back-to-basics approach is the solution. This parallels the rhetoric of "Make America Great Again," advocating for a return to a curriculum that centers dominant white Christian ideologies. This is a new chapter in a long history of reading curriculum's lack of representation and diversity, *especially* in historically marginalized, low-income communities.

All students deserve to see themselves, their cultures, and their families reflected in their classrooms. Educators should use a mix of reading materials, including decodable and trade books. To enable that flexibility, we need to roll back legislation that mandates curricular tools as a silver bullet solution for all students but actually crowds out other essential learning opportunities.

Diverse Reading Research Matters

A persistent argument for why certain materials are given priority over others is the myth that the science of reading is settled. The 2001 No Child Left Behind law referred to "rigorous scientific research" more than 100 times. That law, as well as today's SoR advocates, largely draw on the same research. In the Report of the National Reading Panel (NRP), initially issued in 2000, a group of experts in reading, psychology, and higher education were charged with identifying the most effective instructional methods to teach reading through review of decades of published research.

Claims are frequently made that the NRP report proves the efficacy of phonics instruction over other methods. In 2022, Dana Goldstein in the *New York Times* linked to the NRP stating it "shows phonics . . . is the most effective way to teach reading." Yet, then and now, scholars have called out these egregious claims about what the NRP actually reported. Look no further than the NRP's own introduction, where the authors articulate the scope of their report:

> It should be made clear that the panel did not consider these questions and the instructional issues [addressed in the report] to be the *only* topics of importance in learning to read. The panel's silence on other topics should not be interpreted as indicating that other topics have no importance or that improvement in those areas would not lead to greater reading achievement.

Too often, histories of the NRP ignore this quote as well as the contributions of Joanne Yatvin, then elementary school principal and districtwide administrator who served on the panel and submitted its minority report. In it, Yatvin lists other aspects of reading instruction not selected in the panel's synthesis, including early language development, writing, second language learning, and home contexts; she solicited some of these topics directly from teacher groups and argued that early reading teachers and their knowledge were left out of the conversation about research in reading instruction.

Literacy is about more than recognizing words on a page; it is also about connecting people to identities and cultures and the myriad ways that we express ourselves and communicate within and across communities.

The findings of the NRP report are myriad, and have only been further complicated by scholarship in the 24 years since it was published, including a 2020 review of 12 meta-analyses of systematic phonics research from multiple countries. There, educational psychologist Jeffrey Bowers digs into the NRP and other metasyntheses showing that the assertions on the efficacy of phonics are not as strongly supported in the data as claimed. This scientific work, too, is rarely discussed in context with the NRP's findings, or current SoR policies.

Perhaps the most comprehensive review of research in relation to the SoR movement comes from the International Literacy Association, which recently published two special issues in their top journal, *Reading Research Quarterly*, comprising 50 articles from nearly 150 scholars. Together, they illustrate the diversity of thought and scientific methodology applied in reading research and many things that we do not yet know about reading acquisition. Most of these authors agree that the narrowed view of reading research depicted in media is inaccurate and not reflective of the larger research community.

In order to say, then, that the science is settled, one has to dismiss an awful lot of literacy research, researchers, and institutions, including the largest organization of literacy researchers and educators. While the notion of a singular science of reading persists, the consensus among literacy researchers acknowledges multiple sciences of reading. One strand, also noted by Yatvin as excluded from the NRP, is teacher research — sometimes called translational research, practitioner research, or action research — which is immensely valuable in understanding literacy teaching with diverse learners. The myth of settled science dismisses valuable insights and questions from teachers, and implications for classroom practice that multiple bodies of knowledge inform.

Teacher Autonomy Matters

The media narrative about students who aren't reading — failed by their teachers, their literacy curriculum, and the research it is founded upon — villainizes the autonomy of teachers, when, on the contrary, teacher autonomy is crucial for adapting curriculum to the needs of students. To illustrate this, consider Laurie's work with Kelly, a 3rd-grade special education teacher, to co-plan one-on-one literacy tutoring sessions. Kelly was teaching Talia, a 3rd grader identified as having a speech- and language-based disability, using a systematic phonics approach referred to as "synthetic." Using this approach to phonics instruction, which involves a student sounding out each letter or letter combination in a word and then blending each sound into a word, Talia was making minimal, if any, progress.

Laurie and Kelly assessed Talia's literacy skills. Talia's reading comprehension ability was just below her grade-level

peers when stories were read aloud to the class. When reading on her own, however, she was working on decoding three-letter words, a skill typically mastered by the end of kindergarten.

As Kelly and Laurie listened to Talia read, they noticed that memory played a role in Talia's word reading. In response, Laurie and Kelly shifted to a different type of phonics instruction called an "analogy-based" approach. Instead of sounding out each individual letter, Kelly guided Talia to work with chunks of words such as "an" to read "can," "pan," and "tan."

Within a few weeks of this instruction, Talia started to decode three-letter words that included the short a vowel. Talia's family was shocked to find that such a small shift in the methods used to teach their daughter phonics led to her rapid reading improvement.

Although some SoR narratives claim that a uniform approach to phonics is the solution for all children with reading difficulties, this example illustrates that knowledgeable teachers are essential to navigate the nuances of instruction.

In 2022, scholars from University College London shared the problems with overemphasizing synthetic phonics instruction in elementary school in a paper that analyzed results from 55 longitudinal experimental trials and a survey of more than 2,000 teachers. They found that the "synthetic phonics approach requires a too-heavy emphasis on teaching about phonemes (sounds), and so minimizes attention to other vital aspects of teaching reading." They emphasize that the overuse of synthetic phonics instruction used in England "doesn't give teachers enough flexibility to do what they think is best for their pupils, nor to encourage pupils to enjoy reading."

Literacy teachers know this, and students need them to move flexibly between different methods to teach reading. Even when the highest priority for a student is phonics instruction, teachers still need the autonomy to draw on diverse teaching methods.

Scripted programs are not a pathway to equitable instruction. In fact, they often lead to inflexible expectations that don't allow teachers to respond to their students' needs and realities, and even remove access to other learning opportunities. A 1st-grade student teacher we know was scolded this fall because it took too long to get her students back from music, and therefore, she was seven minutes behind on the scripted program she was expected to implement. In essence, this novice educator was told to remove time for her students to develop self-regulation skills as they transition classrooms and content areas, an important social-emotional skill often developed in early childhood settings, in favor of non-responsive curriculum.

Achieving equitable public education requires forgoing dogmatic allegiances to commercial instructional programs. Rather, our allegiance should be to children and giving teachers flexibility to best meet their needs.

Reclaiming the Right to Learn (and to Teach) Literacy

Literacy is about more than recognizing words on a page; it is also about connecting people to identities and cultures and the myriad ways that we express ourselves and communicate within and across communities. Fostering a rich vision of literacy instruction that values all children's needs and interests should be the cornerstone of public education. Doing so requires vigilance and advocacy, as there are both direct and indirect threats to the kinds of schools necessary for a robust multiracial democracy.

For better or worse, parents have frequently had power to shape curriculum in schools, but we have to make sure not to let the most privileged of those voices drown out the expertise of teachers and the needs of all students over the concerns of their own children. As groups like Moms for Liberty have made clear in their xenophobic contributions to Project 2025 and their counter-programming of Banned Books Week with Teach Kids to Read Week, the line, for them, between a pro-phonics and a white nationalist English-only education agenda is thin.

We are all stakeholders in the outcomes of public education, so rather than ceding to division over book choices or scientific methods, we must unite our efforts toward a better, more nuanced literacy instruction for all. ●

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Amy Tondreau (amytondreau@umbc.edu) is an assistant professor of elementary literacy at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Her research focuses on critical literacy in children's literature and writing pedagogy, critical teacher education, and the intersection of culturally sustaining pedagogy and disability sustaining pedagogy in elementary literacy instruction.

This Land Is Our Land

By Debbie Reese

This Land: The History of the Land We're On
Written by Ashley Fairbanks
(White Earth Anishinaabe)
Illustrated by Bridget George
(Anishinaabe from Kettle and Stony Point First Nation)
(Crown Books for Young Readers, 2024)
40 pp.

I love how this book starts. The words on the first double-paged spread say "This is my house." Behind it is a river. Beside the house is a tall pine tree. We see a family by the tree.

Turn the page and see "Before us, another family lived here." On that page, the illustrations are family portrait style. Four different families are shown, each family unique, each clad in modern clothes.

Turn the page again and we read the words "Before our house was here, there was another family, with a different kind of house." On that page we see wigwams in a village and the families who lived in them. The people in that village are wearing clothes with Anishinaabe designs. Behind that village is the river we saw earlier, and that tree? It is a small, young tree.

All the faces and families up to that point are cheery, happy. With the words and illustrations on these pages, Fairbanks and George take us from the present into the past, helping readers see, learn, and feel that the land they're on was someone else's before.

Another page turn and we get hard history. It is a fact that Europeans who came on to Native homelands wanted that land, and the government helped them get it by removing Native peoples from their homelands. We see that on the next page turn. The image next to this column is a portion of that page.

It is followed by another page of hard history.

But then, we turn the page again and see the little girl from the very first page, running down the street to her friend's house. That friend, TJ, is Anishinaabe. We see him and his grandma standing in a doorway, smiling and waving at the little girl.

With another page turn we see the little girl, TJ, and his grandmother making bread. The little girl tells us that TJ's grandmother told her about other Native people. At the top of the page, we see nine different people in traditional clothing.

Picture me, smiling. One of them is a Native woman dressed the way I dress when I'm home for one of our ceremonies. The "wow" I felt when I first read the book continues. The little girl is on a road trip. Here's a sentence you'll get to:

"This is my house. . . . Before us, another family lived here."

> At the Grand Canyon, I learned that eight tribes call it home: the Havasupai, Yavapai, Paiute, Hopi, Zuni, Hualapai, Apache, and Diné.

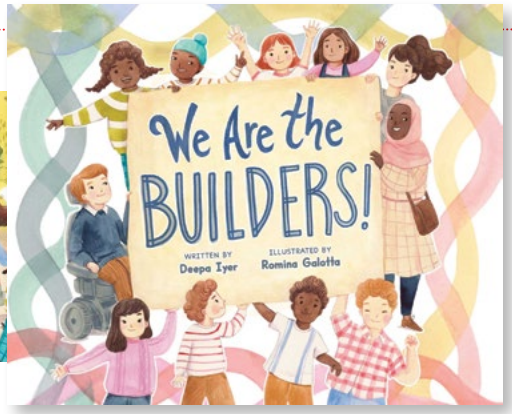
Eight tribes *call* it home. Present tense verbs. In workshops and professional development, I push hard to encourage educators to use present tense verbs to talk about us. Again, picture me smiling.

This book is going to be featured in my work. Another page spread tells us that Disney World is on Seminole land, the White House is on Nacotchtank and Piscataway land, and that Mount Rushmore is on Oceti Sakowin land. There's a link to a database to see what land you, the reader, are on, and that page is followed by a page of discussion questions and suggestions to learn more about the people of that land. Illustrations show Native people holding up signs with their tribal nation's name.

Get more than one copy if you can, and if you'd like to support Native-owned bookstores, go to one in person or online. One option is Birchbark Books. But get the book. ●

Debbie Reese is a Nambé Pueblo scholar and educator. Reese founded American Indians in Children's Literature, which analyzes representations of Native and Indigenous peoples in children's literature. She co-edited a young adult adaptation of An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States with Jean Mendoza.

Resources



Picture Book

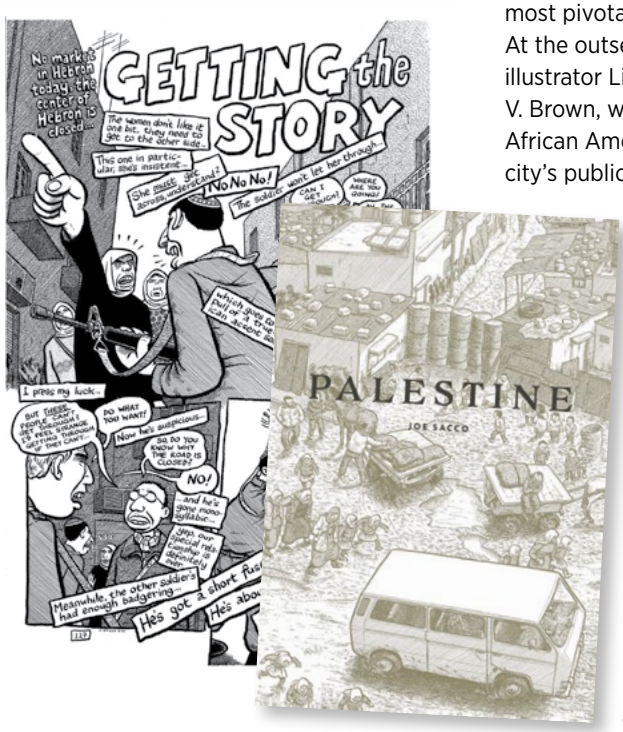
We Are the Builders!
By Deepa Iyer
Illustrated by Romina Galotta
(Simon & Schuster, 2024)
40 pp.

We Are the Builders! is an inviting children's book told through lyrical rhyme that introduces young learners to the concept of community organizing and how everyone has a role to play in supporting their community. The story takes the reader through a neighborhood Community Day, where children learn about different roles from the Social Change Ecosystem Map (e.g., caregivers, builders, weavers, healers, and storytellers). They meet builders tending to furniture, storytellers preserving community histories, weavers engaging in restorative justice, visionaries dreaming new futures, and more. The book includes several reflection questions that encourage readers to consider their role in the community — and what is possible when communities work together.

Curriculum

Palestine
By Joe Sacco
Foreword by Edward Said; afterword by Amira Hass
(Fantagraphics, 2024)
288 pp.

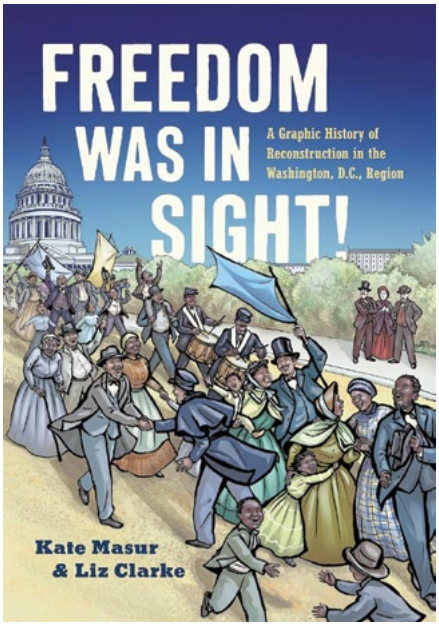
First published as a series of comics beginning in 1991, *Palestine* is cartoonist Joe Sacco's chronicle of his time in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza during the First Intifada, which began in 1987. Sacco is a self-deprecating guide, happy to admit his fear, discomfort, and ignorance. But he is endlessly curious and respectful of the diverse Palestinians



he encounters. This is not a fist-in-the-air narrative. As the Palestinian scholar Edward Said writes in his foreword to the book's first edition, "The people [Sacco] lives among are history's losers, banished to the fringes where they seem so despondently to loiter, without much hope or organization, except for their sheer indomitability, their mostly unspoken will to go on, and their willingness to cling to their story, to retell it, and to resist designs to sweep them away altogether." Sacco's illustrated stories offer some background to today's unfolding Palestinian genocide. Israeli sadism and casual cruelty weave through the book. But as the courageous Israeli journalist Amira Hass comments in her afterword: "Now, wandering through time and space, we can say, 'You think the Israeli violence and repression of 1990–91 was bad? You should see 2023–24.'"

Freedom Was in Sight: A Graphic History of Reconstruction in the Washington, D.C., Region
By Kate Masur
Illustrated by Liz Clarke
(University of North Carolina Press, 2024)
192 pp.

Freedom Was in Sight is a brilliant graphic history that breathes life into Reconstruction, one of the least understood and most pivotal eras in the United States. At the outset, author Kate Masur and illustrator Liz Clarke introduce Emma V. Brown, who in 1864 became the first African American teacher in the capital city's public schools. Brown appears as a character and a guide through each chapter, often addressing readers directly as they weave through communities and halls of power where the wartime destruction of slavery and the second founding of the country took shape. This story brings together common anchors of K–12 curricula, like Frederick Douglass and the passage of the Reconstruction Amendments, with lesser-known figures and events to express the profound hopes, losses, and legacies of this first U.S. experiment in multiracial democracy. *Freedom Was in Sight* brims with vibrant



imagery, rich narrative, and careful sourcework to convey in the clearest terms: Everyday people make extraordinary strides toward justice.

The 21: The True Story of the Youth Who Sued the U.S. Government Over Climate Change
By Elizabeth Rusch
(Greenwillow/HarperCollins, 2023)
400 pp.

The 21 offers an inspiring example of young people who challenge the status quo. Based on the landmark court case *Juliana v. United States*, the book reads like a courtroom thriller and is a must-read for young people who want to act against climate change. Although the narrative includes dense legal details and extended descriptions of hearings and trials, the personal stories of the 21 plaintiffs are both relatable and inspiring. The plaintiffs are a diverse group of students — white, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, neurodivergent, transgender, nonbinary. Their complaint asserts that, through the federal government's manifold actions that cause climate change, it has violated the youngest generation's constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property. More than a story about ongoing legal battles, the book is filled with evocative personal stories told in the voices of many of the 21 young activists.

Website

Air Toxics at School Database
Political Economy Research Institute
Co-directors: Michael Ash
and James Boyce
University of Massachusetts Amherst
peri.umass.edu/air-toxics-at-school

This interactive screening tool tracks air pollution from 15,600 industrial sites at more than 130,000 U.S. schools. The Political Economy Research Institute describes the aim of this resource: "The tool provides toxicity-weighted concentrations of pollutants, highlighting the health risks students and staff may face due to industrial emissions. It uses data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Education, matching 131,325 schools with pollution from nearby large industrial sources such as factories, refineries, petroleum depots, metal mining sites, and toxic waste facilities." What a wonderful resource to engage students in investigating — and challenging — the sources of air pollution in a school community. As the authors explain: "Users can search for any school in the United States by name or location to receive a detailed pollution report, listing nearby industrial facilities and the toxic chemicals they release within a 31-mile radius. The report also provides a comparative ranking of the school's exposure to industrial pollution relative to others in the state and across the country." Check it out. Use it with students to prompt questions and activism.

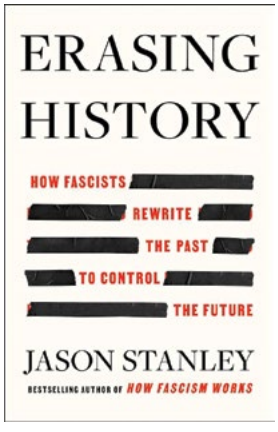
Film

Families Embracing Anti-Bias Values
Directed by Filiz Efe McKinney
Produced by Debbie LeeKeenan and John Nimmo
(2024)
Available at antibiasleadersece.com
50 min.

A companion to their classroom-based teaching film *Reflecting on Anti-Bias Education in Action: The Early Years*, Debbie LeeKeenan and John Nimmo's new documentary lifts up the social justice journeys of parents and caregivers. In *Families Embracing Anti-Bias Values*, families with diverse intersecting identities share how to foster their children's positive social identities, nurture community, and embrace difference. A free guidebook with helpful discussion prompts and further resources — including related picture books — is available on the film's website.

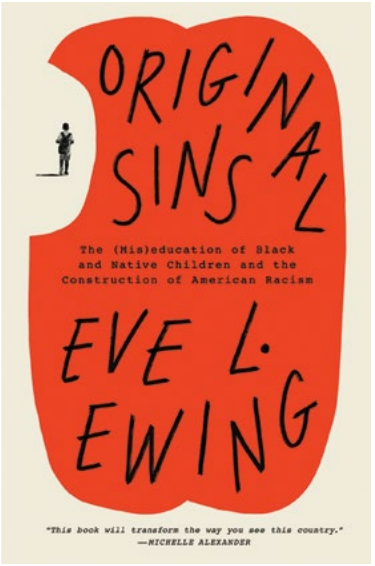
History/Politics

Erasing History: How Fascists Rewrite the Past to Control the Future
By Jason Stanley
(Simon and Schuster, 2024)
256 pp.



In *Erasing History* Jason Stanley exposes the ways authoritarian regimes manipulate historical narratives to maintain power. He provides compelling examples from around the world, showing how political leaders restrict access

to historical truths by banning books, censoring curricula, and criminalizing educators who challenge official narratives. Stanley demonstrates how attacks on education and historical memory support authoritarianism, undermining public understanding of past struggles for justice. By showing how history is weaponized to advance political agendas, Stanley underscores the importance of preserving historical truth as a safeguard against authoritarian rule. Stanley doesn't just diagnose the problem — he also offers strategies to resist these attacks, from advocating for historical literacy to supporting educators under fire. *Erasing History* is an essential read for educators, activists, and anyone concerned with attacks on anti-racist education and the rising threat of fascism. Stanley's book serves as both a warning and a call to action.



[Original Sins: The (Mis)education of Black and Native Children and the Construction of American Racism]
By Eve L. Ewing
(One World, 2025)
616 pp.

In *Original Sins* sociologist and educator Eve L. Ewing presents a searing examination of how the U.S. education system perpetuates racial hierarchies. Ewing argues that, contrary to the ideal of schools as equalizers, schools have enforced white supremacy, aiming to "civilize" Native students and prepare Black students for subservience. Ewing explores the systemic mechanisms that uphold these inequities, such as standardized testing, academic tracking, and disciplinary policies that disproportionately affect Black and Native students. She shows how these practices are embedded in the very framework of the educational system. Ewing illuminates the enduring legacy of the "original sins" of genocide against Native people and the enslavement of African people in contemporary schooling. She explores not just how to change schools, but how to see their transformation as part of the larger struggle for societal change. Introducing the metaphor of hair braiding — a practice central to Black and Native traditions — Ewing emphasizes that just as strands are woven together to create strength, education should be an interwoven process that draws from multiple histories and cultures. Ewing pushes us to rethink not just schooling, but the structures of power and inequality that shape it.

Podcast

[Empire City: The Untold Origin Story of the NYPD]
Host: Chenjerai Kumanyika
Wondery, Crooked Media, and PushBlack podcast
(Aired September and October 2024)
Eight episodes

In contemporary critiques of the police, there is often a reference to the origins of policing with slave patrols in the South. Chenjerai Kumanyika's podcast *Empire City* extends that history to the North, starting with slave catchers in New York City. Kumanyika's unique combination of skills creates a gripping eight-part series on the history of policing in New York. He is a professor of media studies, researcher, award-winning podcaster, and former rapper, and he comes from an activist family and therefore learned early whose side the police are on. While the focus is on New York City, the origin story and the trajectory of police brutality, followed by reforms, followed by more brutality — is similar across the country. Kumanyika highlights people and events with national significance, like Anthony Comstock. Highly recommended for high school and adults.

Reviewed by Bill Bigelow, Jesse Hagopian, Cierra Kaler-Jones, Elizabeth Barbian, Mimi Eisen, Deborah Menkart, and Cynthia McDermott

Teaching Palestine: Lessons, Stories, Voices

Edited by Bill Bigelow, Jesse Hagopian, Suzanna Kassouf, Adam Sanchez, and Samia Shoman

At a time when teaching the truth about oppression is under attack, *Teaching Palestine: Lessons, Stories, Voices* offers a full-throated defense of Palestinian humanity centering Palestinian lives, uplifting and celebrating Palestinians' struggle for justice, and critiquing racism and inequality. *Teaching Palestine* provides educators with powerful tools to uncover the history and current context of Palestine-Israel in the classroom — poetry, personal narratives, interviews, role plays, critical reading and writing activities, and more.

"Teaching Palestine is an urgently needed resource for teachers and students. It fills a huge gap in the school curriculum with regard to a 100-year-old injustice in whose perpetuation the United States is deeply complicit. . . . This book provides resources for a deep, objective understanding of the issues."

MONA KHALIDI Former librarian at University of Chicago Lab Schools and assistant dean of student affairs and the assistant director of graduate studies of the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University

RASHID KHALIDI Edward Said Professor Emeritus of Modern Arab Studies at Columbia University and author of *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017*

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ROBIN D. G. KELLEY Distinguished Professor and the Gary B. Nash Endowed Chair in U.S. History, UCLA; author of *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*

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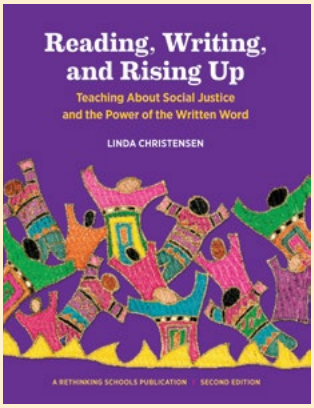

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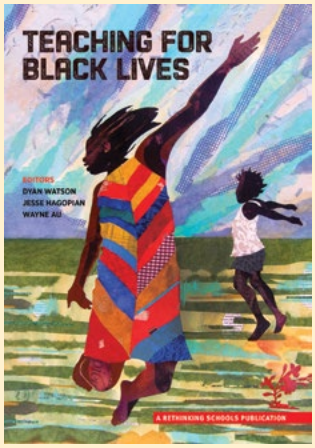

Teaching for Black Lives

Edited by Dyan Watson, Jesse Hagopian, and Wayne Au

Teaching for Black Lives grows out of the movement for Black lives. We recognize that anti-Black racism constructs Black people, and Blackness, as not counting as human life. This book provides resources and demonstrates how teachers can connect curriculum to young people's lives and root their concerns and daily experiences in what is taught and how classrooms are set up. We also highlight the hope and beauty of student activism and collective action.

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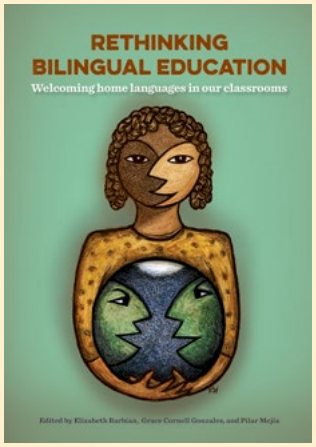

Rethinking Bilingual Education

Welcoming Home Languages in Our Classrooms

Edited by Elizabeth Barbian, Grace Cornell Gonzales, and Pilar Mejía

In this collection, teachers bring students' home languages into their classrooms — from powerful bilingual social justice curriculum to strategies that honor students' languages in schools that do not have bilingual programs. Bilingual educators and advocates share how they keep equity at the center and build solidarity between diverse communities. Teachers and students speak to the tragedy of language loss, but also about inspiring work to defend and expand bilingual programs.

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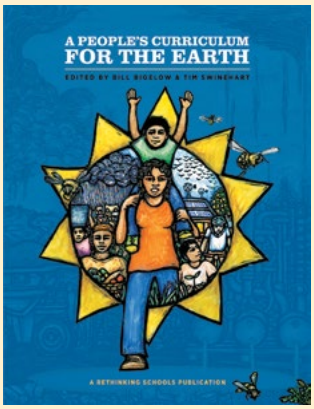

A People's Curriculum for the Earth

Teaching Climate Change and the Environmental Crisis

Edited by Bill Bigelow and Tim Swinehart

Here are engaging environmental justice teaching activities from ***Rethinking Schools*** magazine alongside classroom-friendly readings on climate change, energy, water, food, and pollution — and the people who are working to make things better.

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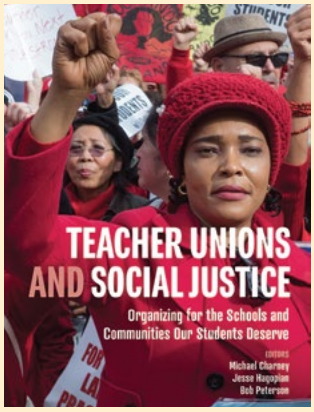

Teacher Unions and Social Justice

Organizing for the Schools and Communities Our Students Deserve

Edited By Michael Charney, Jesse Hagopian, and Bob Peterson

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Edited by Annika Butler-Wall, Kim Cosier, Rachel L. S. Harper, Jeff Sapp, Jody Sokolower, and Melissa Bollow Tempel

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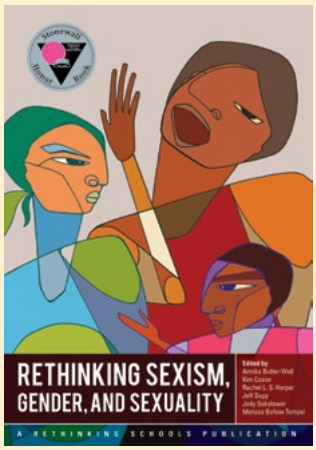

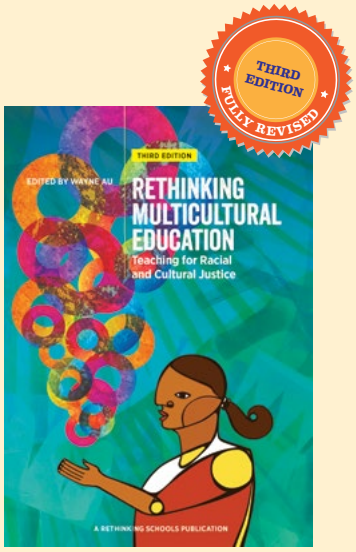

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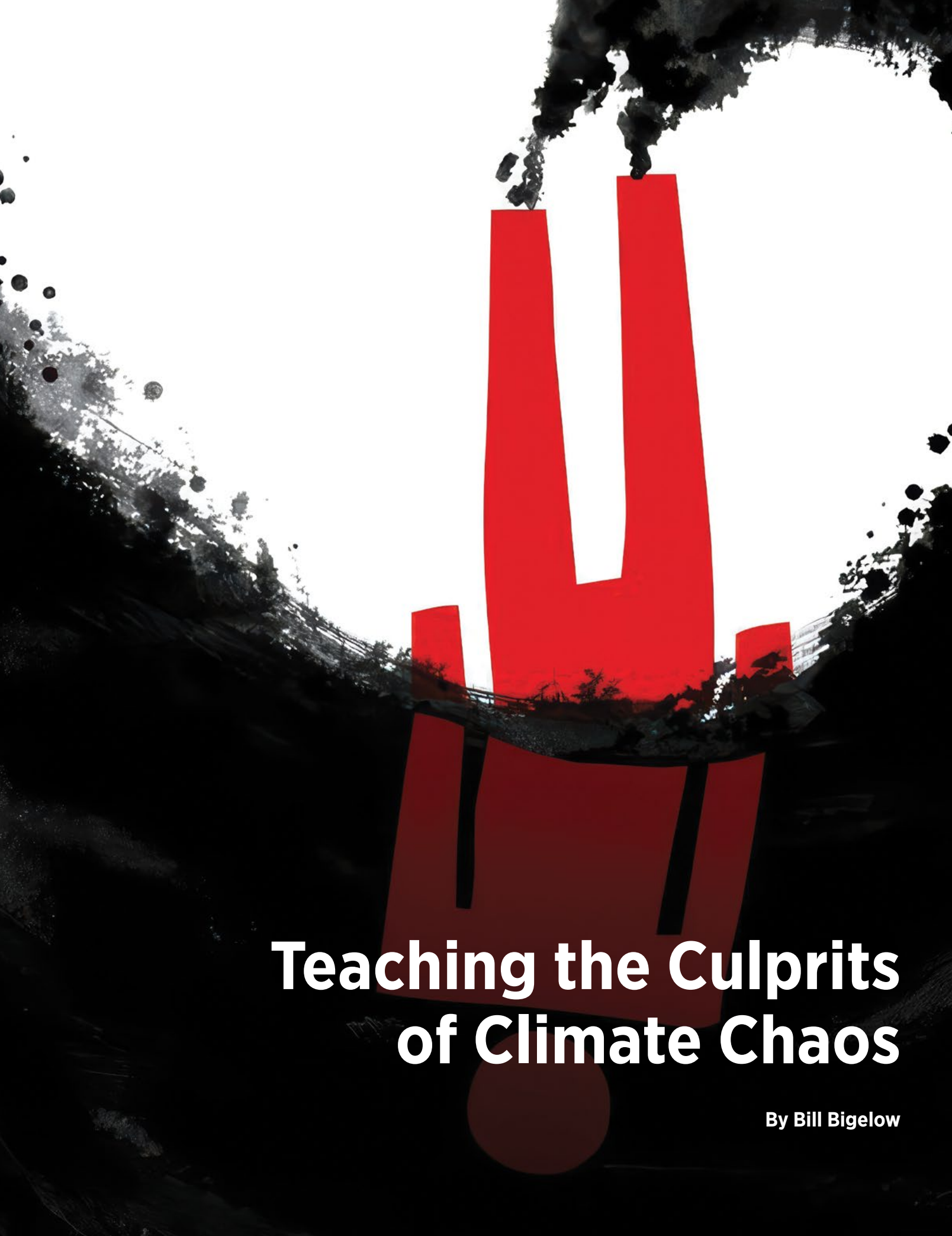
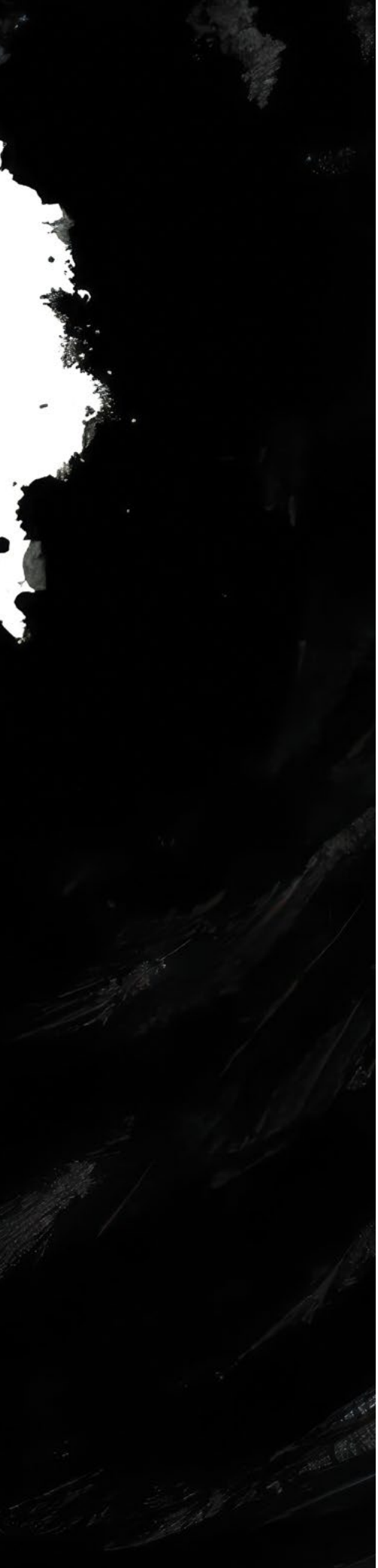


Teaching the Culprits of Climate Chaos

By Bill Bigelow



At least two of my former high school students lost their homes in the recent fires that hit Altadena in Southern California. A *Rethinking Schools* writer, now a school administrator in Altadena, lost both his home and his school — with the homes of many of his students and faculty members also reduced to ash. The enormity of loss is hard to grasp.

On *Democracy Now!*, Leah Stokes, University of California Santa Barbara professor and host of the podcast *A Matter of Degrees*, offered some context on the wildfires: "We know that climate change is the main driver here. The fact is that LA County, more than 80 percent of it is under extreme drought. And we're looking at the driest 20-year period in 1,200 years. . . . More than twice the amount of area is burning in California than would have otherwise because of climate change, and . . . climate change is the main driver of all of this dryness."

Yes, the author of the misery generated by the Southern California wildfires, and countless other not-so-natural disasters, is climate change. But our urgent curricular responsibility is to help students evaluate the social roots of the crisis. Because it is only from a diagnosis of the causes of climate destabilization that we can figure out what to do about it.

As these fires raged, I joined my friend and colleague Tim Swinehart at Lincoln High School in Portland, Oregon, to teach an updated version of my lesson "The Climate Crisis Trial: A Role Play on the Roots of Global Warming." (Instructions and student materials can be downloaded at the Zinn Education Project.) Too often, students' default response to environmental degradation is puny and individual: recycle, replace the plastic spoons in the cafeteria, and yes, take shorter showers. As I mentioned in last issue's "Earth, Justice, and Our Classrooms" column, as personal virtues these are fine; as a response to the climate calamity we face, they are inconsequential. An inability to think systemically and in terms of collective action is not students' fault; capitalism conditions us to respond individually to social problems.

For students to join in creating meaningful strategy, we need to help them make explanations: Who or what is to blame for our climate predicament?

The structure of the trial activity is simple. Students are divided into five defendant groups — fossil fuel companies, the U.S. government, governments of so-called developing countries like China and India, U.S. consumers, and the system of global capitalism: "the market." Each group receives an "indictment" along with lines of possible defense. All are charged with the same crime:

> You are charged with the destruction of cultures, species, and putting at risk the lives of countless millions of people around the world. But your crime is also about the future. You are destroying the lives of people throughout the world who are alive today. And you are destroying the lives of people yet to be born.

The five defendants: **Fossil fuel companies** are the source of most greenhouse gas emissions, and have been since the dawn of industrialization — coal, oil, and so-called natural gas. **The U.S. government** subsidizes the fossil fuel industry and has squandered its immense power to redirect our energy system. **China** is the leading emitter of carbon dioxide, and with **India** burns far more coal — the most polluting fossil fuel — than the rest of the world combined. At the core of the fossil fuel-burning colossus is **U.S. consumer culture** — Thinglandia — about 5 percent of the world's population and consumer of about a quarter of the world's resources. And **global capitalism**: the rules of the

ILLUSTRATION: FRÉDÉRIC TRACER / CREATIVE ACTION NETWORK

game — an economic system with a laser focus on private profit; it has put in jeopardy all life on Earth.

At Lincoln, Tim and I played prosecutors and tag-teamed going after climate-crime defendants, one by one. Each group had prepared written defenses. These were smart and eloquent. There was spirited finger-pointing; the jury and members of other groups challenged one another with astute questions.

Afterward, in written comments and discussion, students assigned percentages of blame for each group or indicated interconnections among the groups as they located responsibility for our climate catastrophe.

In Tim's classes, and in others where I have led this activity, students have contradictory responses when it comes to the guilt of the capitalist system. One student found capitalism 40 percent guilty because it is "the overarching arm of controlling how money flows, and how lives are ultimately affected." Another student who defended capitalism so ably in the trial that she sounded like a free market preacher, found the system 60 percent to blame in her write-up. On the other hand, one student found capitalism only 3 percent at fault because it is "not a thing. It is not responsible because it does not exist."

Of course, there are no right answers — no single climate culprit. I like how the trial gets students to wrestle with ethical issues of causality, exploring personal vs. systemic vs. governmental responsibility. And it is fun. Students have a good time, even if we are dealing with dire circumstances.

But one — maybe obvious — takeaway reinforced for me this year is that just because students land on groups or forces responsible for the climate emergency does not translate into knowing how to address these root causes. For example, Ally wrote in her trial debrief, "The groups with the most blame in the trial have the most responsibility to make a change. The groups making the largest negative impacts could be the ones to create the most positive."

Ally is right that those who make a mess should clean it up — no matter how much it costs. However, regardless of its massive culpability, it is magical thinking to propose that the fossil fuel industry will play any role creating positive change.

"After having this discussion I think fossil fuel production should come to an end," wrote Eva. "Fossil fuel production is pointless anymore." Students found the fossil fuel industry more at fault than any other defendant. Reasonably, many students wanted some kind of government intervention or crackdown. "The government needs to act," Eli wrote with understatement.

Abolishing Fossil Fuels

Just after the trial role play, I began reading Kevin A. Young's *Abolishing Fossil Fuels: Lessons from Movements That Won*. Young opens his book: "Strategizing begins with an assessment of the enemy, namely how it exercises power and where it is vulnerable." For Young, today's "enemy" is the fossil fuel industry and the capitalist system.

It may be counterintuitive, but to develop strategies for climate justice, Young proposes that we look to social movements that had nothing to do with the climate: the movement to abolish slavery; auto workers organizing in the 1930s; the Civil Rights struggle in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963; and the activism leading to the 1970 Clean Air Act. Young argues that "the fundamental source of those movements' power was the direct threat they posed to capitalists through strikes, boycotts, and other mass disruption."

A climate justice curriculum needn't settle on the movements that Young examines, but I love the idea that a way to help students imagine responses to the environmental crisis is by looking at when movements succeed, and asking students to tease out the factors that made these movements powerful — and then to bring these lessons forward to the movement to abolish fossil fuels.

Whether or not we approach "abolishing fossil fuels" by doing the kind of analysis of elite vulnerability that Kevin Young suggests, by centering social movements in a climate curriculum, we alert students that the response to injustice is collective action. That activist sensibility is the "habit of mind" we need to nurture.

At the Zinn Education Project, there is abundant curriculum for this — on the abolition movement, Reconstruction, feminist struggles, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and more. But ZEP also features lessons that tie directly to environmental justice: "Food, Farming, and Justice: A Role Play on La Vía Campesina"; "Blockadia: Teaching How the Movement Against Fossil Fuels Is Changing the World"; "From the New Deal to the Green New Deal: Stories of Crisis and Possibility"; and in *Rethinking Schools*: "'We Cannot Create What We Cannot Imagine': Helping Students Picture Climate Justice."

Yes, let's teach the culprits of climate chaos. That's how students learn who has created and maintains our predicament — and what needs to be abolished. But we can also alert students to the fact that in every era, people have organized to challenge injustice. And, although no victory is clean and permanent, sometimes they win. ●

Student names in this article have been changed.

Bill Bigelow (bbpdx@aol.com) is curriculum editor of Rethinking Schools. With Tim Swinehart, he edited A People's Curriculum for the Earth: Teaching Climate Change and the Environmental Crisis.

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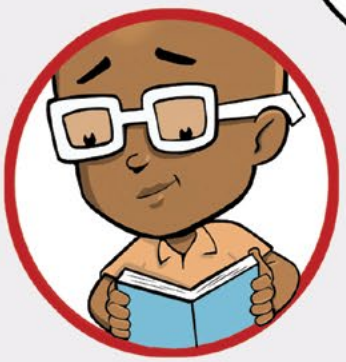

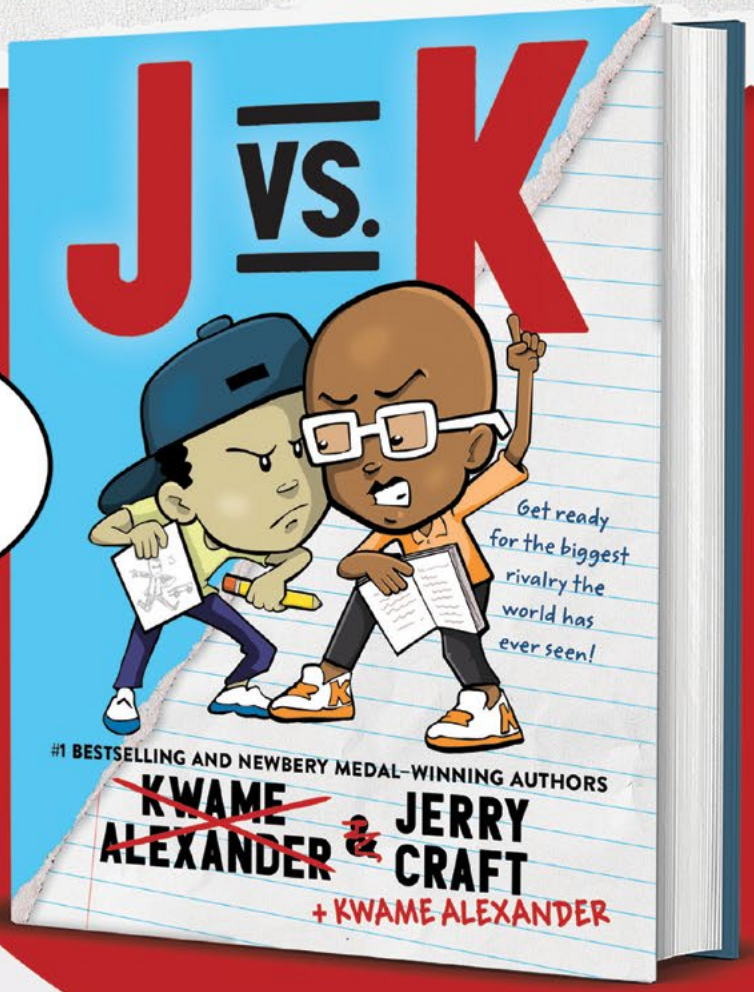

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