



BULLETIN BOARD FROM
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN NEWARK

CRITICAL LOVE: AN INVITATION TO EDUCATORS

Before we can teach for justice, we must first know and love ourselves. This excavation, the archeology of self (Sealy-Ruiz), begins when we give ourselves permission to unearth new understandings, opening the door to a more critical approach to our work. At the foundation of the racial literacy model—where the practice of archeology of self resides—is the pillar of critical love. Critical love is “rooted in a profound ethical commitment to caring for the communities in which teachers work and serve” (Sealy-Ruiz, 2019). Dr. Sealy-Ruiz argues that love must be the foundation of all teachers' interactions with their students. Her vision of love is grounded in justice and involves “examining our hearts and minds to uncover the dissonance between what we have been told and what we believe, and the reality in front of us” (Sealy-Ruiz, 2019). Critical love challenges us to interrogate whether we truly love our students—and if not, why not? What do we need to learn or unlearn? In this way, personal reflection becomes a political act, pushing against dominant narratives and aligning our practice with justice. It reshapes our daily practice—how we greet our students, respond to harm, design lessons, and resist policies that dehumanize.

Understanding critical love can be a huge undertaking especially during times of great discord, like the moment in which we currently find ourselves. Many teachers feel a growing disconnect between their values, their vision for how children should learn, and the harsh realities they face in schools. In response to the constant attack on education including the destabilizing conditions in which Black, immigrant, and queer students are expected to learn daily, Dr. Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy of the AACTE, offers teachers actionable strategies rooted in the teacher's agency. The AACTE provides a framework of educate, advocate and innovate. **Educate:** ensure access to best training and resources, **advocate:** share our stories and reclaim our narratives, and **innovate:**

embrace new ways forward and imagine and create liberatory practices despite oppressive conditions. These actionable steps can be emergent, developing out of a teacher's reflective practice and willingness to confront where their own biases live. In this way teachers can ground their efforts in critical love being intentional about the ways they are working for change.

This call to educate, advocate, and innovate is not new, it echoes a long lineage of resistance within education. We are in challenging times but they are not unprecedented. Givens (2023) describes black education as a “fugitive project from its inception- outlawed and defined as a criminal act”. In his book *Fugitive Pedagogy*, he highlights the many ways that enslaved educators risked their lives to share knowledge and educate despite the oppressive conditions of the times (Givens, 2023). We can also look to the Freedom Schools of the 1960s (Hale, 2024) and the innovative community programs of the Black Panther Party (Okonkwo, 2024) to be reminded that teaching has always been political and that love in the classroom can look like refusal, risk, restructuring and radical care.

The attacks on education today call for the same courage and commitment to ourselves, our students and our communities. Choosing to teach with critical love, choosing to educate, advocate and innovate is a refusal to give in to fear. We hope this newsletter will empower you as an educator rooted in love to respond with reflection, and action and remember that together we are strong, together we hold the power.



SPOTLIGHT ON.... DR. HARPER KEENAN

Harper B. Keenan is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the University of British Columbia. Dr. Keenan's work examines how adults guide children to make sense of the social world.

How did you get involved in TEN?

I met Bree when I was an undergrad at The New School in New York, she came and spoke at a conference that I helped to organize about oppression intersectionally. I found her inspiring and she was part of why I ended up becoming a teacher. Then, she was my mentor at the elementary school where I worked. She has known me and I have known her since I was 19 or 20 years old. [Dr. Keenan was also our CUE speaker in Nov '22.]

What is your “why” for antiracist/social justice education?

My most central belief about education and about teaching children in particular is that children deserve an education that's honest with them. Education should not be a way of hiding the realities of the world from children or trying to fabricate a reality that doesn't exist, instead it can help them to think about reality as it is, and how they might transform it. Racism is, unfortunately, a reality in the world that we live in, and it's a reality in the lives of every kid (although it impacts every kid differently). It's important that educators are honest and real about the conditions of racism with even the youngest children. With social justice, it's the same thing. I think that school and education should be a place where children are invited into wrestling with the same kinds of challenges that adults wrestle with but they are supported by adults who are really well versed and trained in how to support kids at their level. It's just being in the same world as children. That's what it comes down to.

This month we're exploring critical love as a framework for political activism. How has critical love helped activism in your community?



When I became a teacher I was not publicly out as trans. In part because I didn't know any other trans teachers and it was scary enough to be a new teacher to also be publicly out as trans seemed even scarier. I had the luxury of making a decision about whether or not to be out, not everybody has that choice. But I chose not to be because I felt too isolated. Because of that experience, combined with losing a friend of mine to suicide who was trans, I decided that I needed to figure out what I could do in my corner of the universe to build more communities of care for people who might feel isolated. I founded an organization called the Trans Educators Network that was meant to connect trans educators working in pre-K to 12 schools with each other so that they could make friends, share strategies of how to navigate their jobs, talk about books they found interesting, whatever it might be, just get to know each other and know that they're not alone. That project has also shaped my scholarship and a lot of my writing and thinking about trans pedagogy, about trans studies in education, and what the experiences of trans people reveal about the education system at large. All of that emerged from this network of care that helped me, and I hope other people, to feel less alone.

It had this other amazing benefit of also becoming a site of knowledge construction and production. Critical love can be a way to build community that can sustain marginalized people and also produce new understandings of the world.

What is one change that you'd like to see in public education?

The biggest change I would like to see is a change in the dominant view that adults have of children. Instead of treating children as incompetent or incapable, think about every child, even a two-year-old who comes into a preschool classroom, as competent and capable. Start from that place rather than believing adults are superior to children. Adults have different capabilities and different competencies than young children, but when I spend time with young kids, they see things I don't see all the time. For example, they see bugs on the ground that I don't see all the time. Both because it is more novel to them and also by simple fact that they are closer to the ground. There's a reciprocity that can emerge when we actually start to look at children as capable and competent, the adult can respond with the adult's capability and competency and maybe share something with that child that they didn't know. The biggest thing is a reconceptualization of children. If you think about all the language that is child hating like, “You're being childish”, it really shapes the idea of children in the public imagination as stupid.

What is a book that changed your life?



My favorite childhood book is called Andrew Henry's Meadow. There's some messed up gender politics in that book [it's from 1965], but what I really like is it's about children's collective freedom.

ANTI-RACIST AND SOCIAL JUSTICE RESOURCES

Educate



CLICK THE IMAGE TO
GO TO THE RESOURCE



New Ark Freedom School

The 4-week summer program empowers children to grow as literate, impactful leaders.



TEACH the Black Freedom Struggle
ONLINE CLASSES 2024-2025 | ONE MONDAY / MONTH

The Zinn Education Project

Monthly 75-minute sessions feature a teacher interviewing a historian, followed by small-group discussions.



Self-Work before Toolkits:

An Interview with Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz about Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education

Advocate



Queer Newark's

In-depth interview with Beatrice Simpkins, the executive director of the Newark LGBTQ Center.



New Jersey Curriculum

New Jersey schools must include curriculum highlighting the social and political achievements of LGBTQ+ people and people with disabilities.



Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ Students

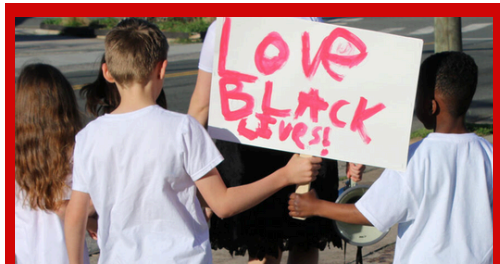


Newark LGBTQ Community Center Programs and Services



Grief as an Invitation to Heal:

Extending Trauma-Informed Pedagogies, Research, and Praxis



Learning for Justice's Existence Is Resistance: Supporting Student-led Social Change

DID YOU KNOW

For over 30 years, Safe Schools South Florida has championed the safety, support, and education of LGBTQ+ students and educators, empowering tens of thousands. They've trained hundreds of education professionals across the region. In 2022, they led youth efforts against the "Don't Say Gay" law, taking students to the Capitol, organizing rallies, and inspiring continued advocacy.



WINDOWS INTO THE CLASSROOM

TEN EDITION

This page is a special edition dedicated to highlighting how TEN has been practicing a multifaceted approach to positive change.

EDUCATE



Teaching people about unfair systems and how they affect different communities helps everyone understand what's really going on. When people know the truth, they're more likely to care and want to help change things.



ADVOCATE

Speaking up for people who aren't being heard is a big part of fighting for justice. It's about using your voice and your power to push for better laws, fair treatment, and real change.

INNOVATE



Building new pathways into the future is key in creating liberatory spaces. It means thinking creatively to build better systems that include a multitude of perspectives and ideas that sustain community.

Example: start a school-wide initiative to call all teachers, Teacher ____ instead of Mr. and Mrs. This eliminates the issue of trans and nonbinary teacher being misgendered by oppressive policies.

IN PRACTICE

WHO WILL TEACH OUR KIDS?

Impact of Cancellation of the US Department of Education Teacher Quality Partnership Grant for Montclair State University

The USDOE cancelled the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant at Montclair State University (MSU) which had been awarded in 2020 under the Trump administration. This grant was critical to the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers in high-need schools, with 85% of NBOE and 55% of OPS students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch. The grant also helped stabilize these districts by supplying over 140 highly qualified teachers to the STEM and special education fields with persistent vacancies. This is a proven program that prepares and retains teachers for NBOE and OPS.

Fewer Teachers in High-Need Schools
The current cohort of residents are at risk of not completing their program, leaving schools to rely on unqualified staff.

Since first receiving the TQP grant in 2020:

- UTR provided 140 Highly Qualified teachers to NBOE and OPS
- Provided STEM and SPED educators which are in high demand
- Improved 42,000 K-12 students
- 95% of UTR graduates stay in education for 3 years
- 90% of UTR graduates receive ratings of highly effective

Harm to Special Education Students

All UTR-AMSU students were dually certified as a generalist and as Teachers of Students with Disabilities (TOSDs). 14.3% of students receive special education services, of students in Orange receive such services. Fewer teachers will lead to larger caseloads, individualized instruction, and increased reliance on paraprofessionals—further disadvantaging students with disabilities.

When the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant was canceled, the Transformative Education Network sprang into action. We created an impact statement to educate the community on exactly what would be lost if our grant funding went away. We were determined to show just how vital our work is and to amplify the real impact this decision has on the community.

IN PRACTICE

We rallied together—educators, students, and community members—to make our voices heard. TEN participated in and AFT Rally and appeared on the news. Our efforts led the Attorney General of New Jersey to take on our case, recognizing the importance and urgency of our fight. Dr. Maloney testified in Trenton about the impact of losing our funding.



IN PRACTICE

CRITICAL URBAN EDUCATION

SPEAKER SERIES

- Montclair State University



Even though a judge sided with us, it is unclear if we will keep our funding and we know there will be no more grant money in the near future. TEN continues however by creating new ways to bring our programming to teachers by expanding the Newark Teacher Project to form the Urban Teacher Project embedding lessons learned from the Residency program.

TEN Happenings



WITH PASSION AND PURPOSE, TEN TEAM MEMBERS AND RESIDENTS JOINED THE AFT RALLY IN NEWARK, STANDING STRONG AGAINST THE DEVASTATING CUTS AND THREATS TO OUR PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM.



DR. MALONEY TESTIFIED IN TRENTON ON THE IMPACT OF ENDING THE TQP GRANT WHICH HAS PROVIDED ESSENTIAL FUNDING FOR THE UTR

UPCOMING EVENTS

This following events are **FREE** and **IN PERSON**.

April 23rd 10:00-6:00pm
Reparative and Restorative Paradigms for Environmental Justice [Click here to register](#)

May 2nd 10:00-4:00pm
The 2025 Racial Justice Summit - Soul & System: The Power of Activism in Decolonizing Identity [Click here to register](#)

This following events are **FREE** and **VIRTUAL**

May 12th 7:00pm
Erasing History: How Fascists Rewrite the Past to Control the Future [Click here to register](#)

May 21st 11:00-12:00pm
Oral History in Practice: Documenting Refugee Stories [Click here to register](#)

June 7th
Teach Truth Day of Action 2025

June 23rd 9:00-12:00pm
MSUNER 2025 Summer Conference [Click here to register](#)

CREATING SAFE SCHOOLS FOR IMMIGRANT FAMILIES:

A Workshop for Educators, Families, & Students

**APRIL 12, 2025
12-3 PM**

COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL- CAFETERIA

A BIG THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO ATTENDED OUR WORKSHOP ON CREATING SAFE SCHOOLS FOR IMMIGRANT FAMILIES!

WE'D LIKE TO THANK OUR CO-SPONSORS:



RESIDENTS ATTENDED THE NEW JERSEY EDUCATIONAL COMPUTING COOPERATIVE TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE!



NEW TEACHERS GOT A SNEAK PEEK AT TEN-GPT AT THE 3RD INDUCTION FOR ALL PD DAY!

Diversified Teacher Workforce Pre-Conference 2025

→ AACTE 2025 Annual Meeting Long Beach, California



INDUCTION COORDINATOR MS. RHENA JASEY-GOODMAN PRESENTED AT THE AACTE 2025 ANNUAL MEETING



INDUCTION HAPPY HOUR WAS ALL SMILES!

CONNECT WITH US!



DONATIONS



**THANKS FOR READING!
XO, KIYOMI
TEN'S OFFICIAL MASCOT**