



TEN NEWSLETTER

Bimonthly Newsletter of the
Transformative Education Network
at Montclair State University

IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 1

- Feature Article

PAGE 2

- Spotlight On
- Upcoming Events

PAGE 3

- Antiracist and Social Justice Resources

PAGE 4

- Did You Know?

SPRINGING INTO ACTION: EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO RAISE AWARENESS

Happy Spring! Children in classrooms near and far have begun to feel the buzzing energy as the earth busies itself with the work of waking up from winter. The energy of spring can only be matched by the energy of children as their bodies engage in learning in the classroom. It is a perfect time of year to embrace Element 5 of the Six Elements of Social Justice, Raising Awareness. This element gives students the opportunity to get moving and begin to share what they have learned. When engaged in activities that raise awareness, students have the opportunity to become experts and inform others about topics that they are passionate about while finding people that are also interested in working for change. Classroom projects around raising awareness are diverse and can engage students in traditional writing projects or leave room for self-expression and creativity. Some activities that raise awareness are

- Newsletters, websites, blogs, social media campaigns
- Songs, raps, spoken word, poetry, performance pieces, plays
- Museums, galleries, art installations, poster/sign campaigns.
- Letter writing campaigns
- Public service announcements, documentaries, web-series, podcasts
- Get creative- the ways to spread the word are endless.

Dr. Picower writes that, "providing an outlet for students to present their learning and see people's reactions helps them to see that other people share their concerns" (Picower, 11). This is so important because it will naturally lead to the 6th element - social action. While raising awareness is an important step toward social action, it alone does not create lasting change. It gives the students an opportunity to feel excitement and connection around an issue, but as Dr. Picower warns, "while raising awareness feels good, it can also provide a false sense of completion if not accompanied by activities in which students' efforts have the potential to actualize change" (Picower, 11).

In the spirit of modeling, we are using this month's newsletter to raise awareness around an issue that two of our UTR Residents identified as important for their students: the issue of safe water access as a social justice issue. In this month's newsletter, you will find resources to learn more about the water crisis in Newark and beyond and how you can engage your students around this issue. This is a human rights issue that is facing many communities right here in NJ. This is an issue that disproportionately affects Black and Brown communities in the US and around the world. Read more in today's newsletter to see how you can raise awareness in your community and get involved in community action.



SPOTLIGHT ON...



Lamani Crawford



Tamara Dixon

UPCOMING EVENTS



- MSU Induction: Happy Hour Even
April 28 Location: TBD
• 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm EST
- Teacher Journey Stories
May 4 ADP Center
• 4:30 -7:30 pm EST
- TEN Rising Up Ceremony
May 11 University Hall 7th Floor
• 5:30-8:00pm
- Teacher Development Showcase
May 30 University Hall 7th Floor
• 4 pm -7 pm EST

How and why did you get involved with TEN?

Lamani: We were both previously in the five year master's program for education at Montclair. I felt there wasn't enough people that look like me in that program. I got an email one day from TEN about the webinar and I sent it to Tamara. I said, we should just apply, try to get into this program. And then we applied together. And now we're here!

Tamara: So then when I found out about UTR, I found out about all the great things that they're involved in. And they teach more than just the basic teacher education skills, they go above and beyond. And the priority is Black and Brown children. I love the social justice aspect of education. So I felt like I was able to have more conversations with people who understand what's going on in the system, and people who want to change the system.

What is your "why" for antiracist/social justice education?

T: I was born and raised in Paterson, New Jersey, with African American and Latinx students. And when you are raised in an urban area, and when you leave an urban area, you just see the differences. So, as I got older, I realized that children need to be empowered, because our urban areas don't always get nurtured as well as they need. Also, I did have great teachers, I saw how much they did for me how much they poured into me, so I want to do the same.

L: I was gonna say that! We both went to the same schools growing up. Our teachers were amazing, all of our teachers definitely had lasting impacts on me. Most of them are women, without those women in my life, as a student, I wouldn't be where I am now. [They] definitely pushed us to go for it. So for me, my "why" has to be lasting impact on my students- to have some effect on them, providing the same love and support they need.

How do you get inspired to raise awareness in your classroom?

L: A lot of times when there's environmental issues happening in like a city like Newark, everything is silenced. Nobody knows what's happening behind closed doors. Nobody really talks about it. So that's why you have to raise awareness, you have to let people know about what's going on because if not, they're just going to continue to bury Newark.

T: Yep! And by silencing people, there's not many changes being made. We want them [our students] to advocate and raise awareness, use their voices, because at a young age, they can do so much. They don't think they can, but they really can, they have so much power. And that's really what the [water protectors] unit is aiming to do- promote advocacy and push them to use their voices and to be confident. To know that they have power, even though they're only eight years old.

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

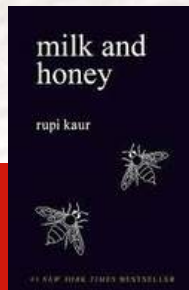
L: I want to see more relevant curriculum. I've seen so much during student teaching, like books and text that to me, don't hold meaning. Or the kids are not represented in the text. For example, there's a book that we're reading about North America, and there are no brown children in the book. It is false, stating that the Europeans were here first and I know that's not true. Why are we exposing them to these false narratives and Eurocentric views? That's what I really hope to see change and as teachers in this program, we're being prepared to do that.

T: I feel like I just want to see more genuine care and thought be put into every aspect of the public education system. When you start there, everything else falls into place. It's a ripple effect. Everything will be taken care of if there was more genuine thought, care and love.

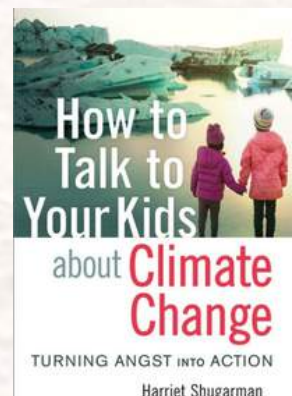
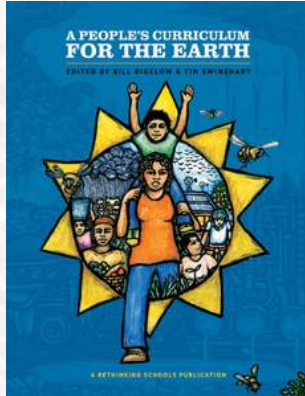
What's the book that changed your life?

T: For me, it was actually Milk And Honey, by Rupi Kaur.

L: Authentically, Uniquely you by Joyce Myers



TEACHER RESOURCES: EMPOWERING KIDS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



The Kids' Book of Social Action: Hundreds of Ways to Make a Difference by Barbara A. Lewis - This book provides practical and creative ideas for young people to get involved in their communities and make positive changes in the world.

A People's Curriculum for the Earth: Teaching Climate Change and the Environmental Crisis by Bill Bigelow - This book offers teachers a framework for teaching about climate change that encourages critical thinking, creativity, and social action.

How to Talk to Your Kids About Climate Change: Turning Angst into Action by Harriet Shugarman - This book is a guide for parents and educators on how to have productive conversations with children about climate change and empower them to take action in their communities.

Lamani and Tamara chose to focus on teaching about water issues with a social justice lens, connecting a global issue to a local one in Newark, where lead has been found in the water. They wanted to educate their students about Little Miss Flint and her advocacy for change in Flint, Michigan, as well as the Newark Water Coalition, which helps address the water crisis in their community. Through the lessons they designed, the students will learn about protesting, creating signs, and different means of expression to advocate for change. The students will write letters to the Newark Water Coalition pledging to be water protector, and the coalition plans to display some of these letters in their new location. Their unit aims to educate the students about important water issues, inspire them to take action, and show them that they can make a difference in their community. To learn more please check out their [Unit plan](#).

WATER PROTECTORS

WHY IS WATER IMPORTANT?
Students will reflect on how essential water is in our daily lives

THE WATER PRINCESS
We will be using the Water Princess by Susan Verde as an introduction to the global water crisis. Students will learn about the long, tiresome journeys people in other countries, take to get water.

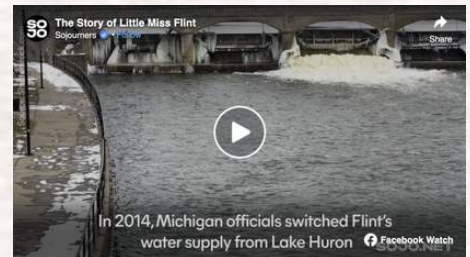
GLOBAL AND LOCAL ISSUE
Students will learn about the connection between the water crisis around the world and the current water crisis happening in their community.

NEWARK WATER COALITION
We will be inviting the Newark Water Coalition to come speak to our students about water inequality, the current water crisis in Newark and their impressive work in bringing clean and safe water to Newark.

BECOMING WATER PROTECTORS
Students will learn about child activist Little Miss Flint, which will introduce them to the various ways to advocate for change in their community. On Day 3, students will write letters to members of the Newark Water Coalition, sharing what they will do to become water protectors and say thank you for the work they have done for city of Newark.

A "TOXIC WATER" SCIENCE EXPERIMENT WILL BE COMPLETED AS A VISUAL DEMONSTRATION OF LEAD IN NEWARK'S WATER.

A summary of The Water Matters unit by Lamani and Tamara



"Little Miss Flint" is the nickname of Mari Copeny, a young activist from Flint, Michigan, who gained national attention for her advocacy on behalf of her community during the city's water crisis. At just 8 years old, she wrote a letter to President Obama, and has since continued to speak out and raise awareness about the ongoing challenges faced by Flint residents.



DID YOU KNOW?



The water crisis in Newark, NJ is due to high levels of lead contamination in drinking water. Here are some ways folks are already raising awareness. How can your students get involved?



In the Community

High levels of lead contamination in the drinking water have been linked to severe health problems like developmental delays in children and cognitive impairment in adults. The water crisis has shed light on broader issues of aging infrastructure and inadequate water treatment, which pose a significant risk to the health and safety of residents in Newark, NJ. The water crisis has also exposed the disparities in access to safe drinking water, particularly in Black and Brown communities that have long been neglected by policymakers. The lead contamination in Newark serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need to address these issues and work towards providing safe and clean drinking water for all. To learn about the Newark Water Coalition's efforts to fight against Newark's water crisis: [Click here](#)

Get Students Involved in Newark

- Greater Newark Conservancy (GNC):
 - focus on promotion of the health and well-being of Newark residents through programs that address environmental, food, and racial justice.



To volunteer, donate, and engage with GNC: [Click here](#)

- The Newark Water Coalition (NWC): Be a Water Warrior
 - Water distribution, donating water or funds to [Water Box Fund](#), and volunteer, promote, and spread awareness of the NWC's effort

For info on how to become a water warrior: [Click here](#)

How to test water in the classroom:

- 1) Create a lesson plan on the importance of quality water and where the community's water comes from.
 - [Highschool Lesson Plan](#)
 - [Elementary Lesson Plan](#) (modify based on your classroom)
- 2) Purchase water test kit ([click here](#))
- 3) Gather water from the community or the school
- 4) Begin the engaging lesson with your students



The Newark Education Workers (NEW) Caucus and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) filed a citizen suit against the City of Newark and New Jersey state officials in 2018 due to high levels of lead in the drinking water. By January 2021, Newark had made substantial progress, with over 18,000 lead service lines removed and a new water treatment designed to reduce lead levels. To read more: [Click here](#)

