



TEN NEWSLETTER

Bimonthly Newsletter of the
Transformative Education Network
at Montclair State University



Photos from alum Kareema Abdul-Razzaq



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?

NURTURING CULTURE, CREATING ROOM: UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK IN SCHOOLS

Welcome to volume 3 of the TEN newsletter. This year's newsletters will focus on the 13 principles of the Black Lives Matter At School Movement (BLM@Schools). We invite you to consider the above pledge taken from their website as you embark on creating inclusive classroom spaces this year. Attending to the 13 principles of BLM@Schools is not something that can be highlighted in a week or even a month. Creating classrooms and schools where our Black students feel empowered to be their authentic selves is ongoing work. Historically, schools are not spaces where Black students have felt seen, loved, or entitled to succeed. The question, "how does one imagine Black educational success if Black students are set within schools that are designed to see them fail?" (Noguera, 2008), rings as loudly now as ever. As we continue to work to correct this injustice and set Black students on the path to truly soar, the 13 principles offer us touchstones to commit and recommit to this goal. The TEN newsletter will explore a different principle in each edition this year, and today we are thrilled to open the year by exploring the principle, "Unapologetically Black!"

As the BLM@ at schools website states: "We are 'Unapologetically Black' in our positioning. In affirming that Black Lives Matter, we need not qualify our position. To love and desire freedom and justice for ourselves is a necessary prerequisite for wanting the same for others." Black cultural norms are often perceived as out of place in school environments. We know that Black students are educated in spaces where they are suspended, disciplined, and retained at greater rates than any other racial group (NCES) because of institutional racism and educators' own internal biases. To embrace being "Unapologetically Black" is to assert that "Blackness is not the problem. Rather anti-Black racism is the problem because it poses barriers in education to Black people and Black communities" (J.Clark & D. Brooms).

When we consider the cultural wealth in Black communities and create classroom spaces that are "Unapologetically Black" and rooted in this wealth, we challenge these norms and affirm that all students have the freedom and right to show up as their full, cultured selves. Bettina Love writes that we must not just love our Black students but love their culture and community, get to know them, and create spaces explicitly for them. "Teachers who disregard the impact of racism on Black children's schooling experiences, resources, communities and parent interactions will do harm to children" (Love, 2019). When our Black students instead see their full history reflected in the curriculum - not just their struggles but their brilliance, innovation, and joy - they feel entitled to question and think deeply about the world around them. "Unapologetically Black" spaces are liberatory spaces for all. This is because when we attend to the needs of the most marginalized among us, we attend to the needs of all students. As Paulo Freire writes in Pedagogy of the Oppressed, "No one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so." How will you ensure this principle is a part of all you do this year?

SPOTLIGHT ON...



Dr. Denisha Jones

Dr. Denisha Jones is the Executive Director of Defending the Early Years, an education justice advocate and activist working with various grassroots organizations to dismantle the neoliberal assault on public education. Since 2017, she served on the steering committee for the national Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action. In 2020, Dr. Denisha Jones published her first co-edited book, Black Lives Matter at School: An Uprising for Educational Justice.

UPCOMING EVENTS



- October 12: 5:00 - 7:30 pm EST
Montclair State University,
Memorial Auditorium
CUE Presents: Dr. Bettina Love
- October 13: 3:45 - 5:45 pm EST
Just Jake's restaurant
New Teacher Induction Program
Happy Hour
- October 22: 4:00 - 5:00 pm EST
via Zoom
Virtual Open House: UTR (MAT)
- October 27: 9:00 - 3:00 pm EST
Mentor Professional Development

What is your connection to TEN?

I know Bree Picower from NYCoRE. I attended your last in-person [CUE] event in 2019 because you had a Black Lives Matter at School showcase, and Dr. Bettina Love was the keynote. And then I've attended some of the virtual events as well.

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

So my why is that traditional public schooling, which is very Eurocentric, very US-hegemonic, is not good for most people. I did okay in New Jersey public schools, but I suffered in the sense that I never fully developed my racial identity and understood myself as a Black person in this country, as a daughter to an immigrant mother. That was really denied and I didn't get that opportunity to develop it until I left New Jersey and went off to college at an HBCU. I was the exception in the sense that I still did well in public schooling; most people won't. Most people who don't have positive racial identity development while in school or access to social justice education, so they can really understand who they are in a country that has historically marginalized and disadvantaged them, will not do well in that system. So my why is to make education better for all students.

What does being "Unapologetically Black" mean to you?

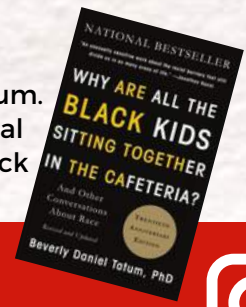
That is one of the BLMAS 13-guiding principles. I think, for me, it's the idea that we fully identify and fully want to live in harmony with who we are as Black people. Most of the education I received about being Black came from a very negative perspective: Black people were slaves, they were freed by white people, and it was more white people who gave us our civil rights, and now Black people should be grateful for this life we have. And growing up with these narratives of racial inferiority and white salvation did not inspire me to learn more about Black history or make me feel proud to be Black. I think "Unapologetically Black" gets us out of this negative framework and just says Black people have been here since the beginning. They are part of this entire world globally. They've created and built societies around who they are. And it's okay to be Black and to be proud of being Black, not just Black American, but Black with any sense that you describe it, and not to be shackled to a history that's not about Black people, but about what was done to Black people.

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

There's so much! I think I'd like to see us do away with the standards and testing. I think together, standards and testing drive so much of what is wrong with education. I'm not saying we don't need some type of standards, but the way it's set up that we have all these requirements to meet is just too much. 90% of what teachers are required to do every year doesn't really need to be done at that level or at that specific time. I think we need to step back and create more space for authentic learning and teaching to happen. That can only happen when there's not a predetermined list of things that you have to accomplish everywhere and then the testing to make sure that you're accomplishing all of that. So I feel like if we could get rid of those two things together, then we might make space to really step back and say, what does learning look like? How can we support learning in action? What's the goal of it? Then let's see how it's happening instead of having teachers who are exhausted.

What is the book that changed your life?

"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" By Beverly Daniel Tatum. A lot of teachers don't learn about racial identity development and how that's central to the work that we do in curriculum, in pedagogy, in assessment. It all has to tie back into this idea that we are all responsible for helping children develop racial identity.

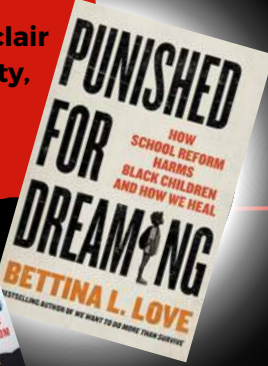


CRITICAL URBAN EDUCATION SPEAKER SERIES PRESENTS:

DR. BETTINA L. LOVE

10/12/2023
5:00-7:30PM
EST

Location: Montclair
State University,
Memorial
Auditorium



Opening Performance by:
Youth Poet Maryah Godbolt-Thomas
Dance performance by students from
Orange High School
MC: Nelly Bess
DJ: Shell Spin

<https://bit.ly/BettinaLove>

Get your tickets



"UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK" IN PRACTICE



Black self-expression through hair is a powerful statement of self-love and self-efficacy, but unfortunately, hair discrimination is a real problem for Black individuals. Starting from a young age, they often face negative comments and unfair treatment because of their natural hair in schools and workplaces. While there are initiatives like the **CROWN Act**, we need spaces where children don't have to question their value due to their hair. Teachers can introduce children's books that celebrate Black hair, its history, and its significance. Click the books as references, and for older students, check out the [blackhairsyllabus!](https://www.blackhairsyllabus.com)

Embracing the principle "unapologetically Black" means embracing Black heritage, culture, and identity as well as Black contributions to the world. The **Black Panther newspapers** are powerful primary resources that showcase the Black community's organizing skills and collective efforts, providing historical insights into ongoing antiracist work. Exploring these newspapers can deepen students' understanding of the past and inspire meaningful conversations about social change and activism.



Kids Fun Learning is a family-friendly YouTube channel that offers elementary school content. Videos include read-aloud books featuring Black characters, Black authors reading their own books, and student-friendly Black history videos.



SUBSCRIBE



The graphic essay "**Lighten Up**" by **Ronald Wimberly** focuses on race, representation, and colorism within a Marvel comic, providing a platform to discuss and raise awareness about this issue. We invite you to encourage conversations about **colorism** and **create your own comic!**



DID YOU KNOW?



All educators, no matter their racial identity, can teach the principle, "Unapologetically Black". Here are some tips to bring this principle to light in your classroom.



Year of Purpose reflection questions for all teachers to consider:

- How are school-wide policies and practices, especially disciplinary practices, applied across categories of race?
- Do problematic patterns emerge when we look at how policies are applied to Black students and when we also consider the intersections of gender, sexual orientation, and (dis)ability with Blackness?
- How are the voices, accomplishments, and successes of Black folx uplifted in my lessons, units, and curriculum?
- Rather than focus on singular events or individuals, does your approach highlight the everyday actions and community organizing that will lead to change?



The BLM Year of Purpose reminds us of the ongoing work for racial justice and the urgent need to dismantle systemic racism. Brian Milara, an alumnus of the Newark Teacher Project, embodies this message. As a social studies teacher at Arts High School in Newark, Brian acknowledges his positionality as a white man and challenges the traditional narrative of history. "Black history is a part of everything we study, as is Latino history, as is women's history, as is Asian American history." Brian empowers Black and Brown students to embrace their identities by designing a classroom where all students feel a sense of belonging. Brian is a non-Black teacher who exemplifies the principle, "Unapologetically Black."



Click [here](#) to read the full article on Brian Milara, NTP Alumnus.



Classroom Tips from an Alum

- **Posting content around the room that your students can identify with/ see themselves within:**

Representation matters, post images that reflect individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Click [here](#) for posters!

- **Uplifting students and their cultures through content and conversation**

Providing students with a comfortable and safe space to express themselves and share their thoughts and experiences when diving into the curriculum is vital.

Click [here](#) for resource!

- **Being a good role model for students:**

The more you emulate what you expect, there's a better chance your students will follow suit:

- Quietly greeting others in the hallway with a wave or a smile
- Picking up wrappers or trash within the stairwells
- Taking accountability and apologizing when necessary
- Simply sharing small tokens of appreciation

Thank you for the great advice Kareema!

Kareema Abdul-Razzaq, NTP, Class of 2021

