



# TEN NEWSLETTER

Bimonthly Newsletter of the  
Transformative Education Network  
at Montclair State University



Photo by Anthony Gachetti, NTP Resident

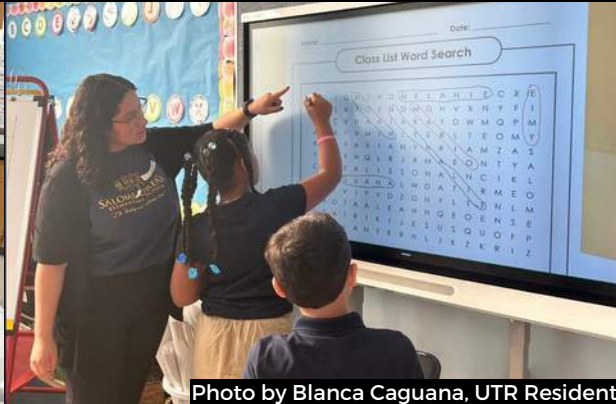


Photo by Blanca Caguana, UTR Resident

## IN THIS ISSUE

### PAGE 1

- Feature Article

### PAGE 2

- Spotlight On

### PAGE 3

- Did You Know?

### PAGE 4

- Antiracist and Social Justice Resources

### PAGE 5

- Upcoming events

## LOVING ENGAGEMENT: THE ACTION OF CARE

We know there are many things in schools that are out of an individual teacher's control: the curriculum, the school climate, the amount of time our kids are able to go outside, and the list goes on. One area that we hope you will feel empowered to take control of is principle 3 of the 13 principles of Black Lives Matter at school: Loving Engagement. [bell hooks](#) (2001) writes about, "love as an action rather than a feeling." This describes the spirit of this principle which states, "Our interactions are guided by a commitment to embody justice, peace, and liberation" (BLM). Loving engagement is more than a sweet feeling of affection. It is love as a verb; it is the labor of advocating for your students. "When we are loving we openly and honestly express care, affection, responsibility, respect, commitment and trust" (hooks, 2001, 14). To demonstrate this principle in practice we must allow love to lead our interactions. This a radical act of creating a mirror so that your students can feel seen, heard, safe, respected, and prepared.

Ask any adult about why a certain teacher was their favorite, and time after time, you will get the same answer: the teachers that are the most impactful are the ones with whom they had a personal connection. In her recent publication [Unearthing Joy](#), Gholdy Muhammad (2023) writes, "If we are not centering children's humanity through love, there is no strategy, no professional book or instructional method in the world that can prepare the teacher to elevate the child" (15). Loving engagement transcends curricular mandates. Showing up with loving engagement in the classroom means creating joyful experiences and lessons that allow children to see their fullness; infusing wonder, play and creativity into our lessons, leaving room for artistic expression, and peacefully resolving conflict as it arrives. As [Valarie Kaur](#) (2021) states when discussing Revolutionary Love, "Joy is the gift of Love!" By engaging lovingly with your students, you and your students both can receive the gift of a sustained sense of joy that is bigger than temporary moments of happiness. Sustained joy can lead to self-love and trust in your community. Joy is "the embodiment of, learning of, and practice of the love of self and humanity, and care for and help for humanity and earth" (Muhammad, 2023, 77).

Finding time for interactions that are led with love can feel hard at times for teachers. We encourage you to remember, teachers can't pour from an empty cup. Loving others requires love for ourselves. In a school environment, institutional forces can leave teachers feeling a lack of autonomy. When guided by action, our interpersonal relationships can be filled with love and care for the people around us. We hope this edition of the newsletter gives you resources and renewed energy to enact loving engagement every day!



## Lani Flack



Lani Flack is a first-year teacher and a recent graduate of the Urban Teacher Residency Program at Montclair State University. She currently works at Newark's George Washington Carver as a special education 3rd-grade teacher.

### What is your connection to TEN?

I was working with Ms. Amanda Faison in 2020, we worked at a school in West Orange, and I was Ms. Faison's para at the time. She just kept on speaking about how well I was working with the kids. She said, "I think you would be a great teacher." I was kind of hesitant, I'm not gonna lie. But she gave me encouragement. She saw something in me that I felt like I didn't necessarily see in myself or know that I had. Finally, she said, "Listen, let me tell you something, you need to do this program. Join the information session and see if you like what you hear." So I did. I fell in love with this, especially antiracism and social justice. So it's just like, everything fell into place.

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

Awareness and understanding. These are things that we're trying to foster in school, and we're trying to understand how do we cultivate that in a classroom. I feel like antiracism and social justice is the answer to that, a way of awareness and understanding, empathy and compassion. How can we teach empathy and compassion if we have somebody who feels like they're superior to somebody else? We can't challenge it unless we know the true story about it, right? So we need to tell these stories about things that happened in our past to make sure that history doesn't repeat itself.

### How do you create loving engagement in your classroom?

My first answer is encouragement and words of affirmation. I always tell my kids to "kiss your brain" when they get it right and I see them light up. And they're so excited. I give high fives. I give hugs. They see how excited I am and that makes them happy too. I just make sure to check my own energy, because I'm the leader in that classroom. I know that my energy shifts the room, depending on how I come in. I have to make sure that I'm on point, that I'm happy, right? Even when I'm not happy, how do I express that to my kids, as far as "I'm having a bad day today", so that they know that they can do the same thing? I think modeling that is the best way and encouragement, encouragement, encouragement, encouragement!

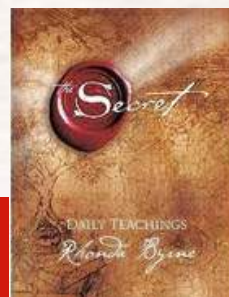
Read [here](#) how Lani practices community care so that she can continue to lovingly engage with her students.

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

One big change that I would really like to see is resources being allocated correctly. I work in the south side of Newark, probably the hardest ward. I went to the art teacher the other day to get some supplies, and she showed me her room. She had to buy 90% of our supplies. I would like to see resources get allocated in a way that it doesn't reflect on property taxes. There's so many resources out there - that I know. I just know that my school is not going to receive them because it's always a "we don't have that in a budget" or "we don't have money to do it." And I'm tired of hearing it when I know other places have probably double that.

### What's the book that changed your life?

The book that changed my life is called The Secret by Rhonda Byrne. It's a self help book.



# DID YOU KNOW?



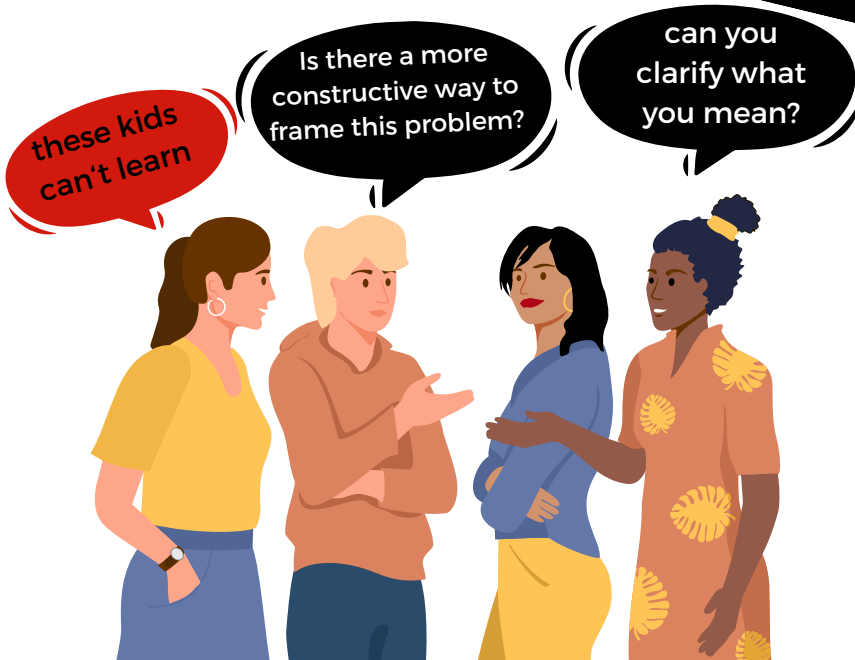
How we speak and think about students can impact how we engage with them. Consider these language and mindset shifts from Deonna Smith's book, Rooted in Joy, on how we can lead with love.

# MINDSET SHIFTS

"I found love to be the answer to any educational dilemma"  
-Choldy Muhammad



## \* Questioning



"When you hear problematic comments about students or families, speak up" (Smith, 2023, 20)

## \* Student's Why



All behaviors are communication  
(Smith, 2023, 53)

## Reactive vs. Responsive



Understanding your responses can help you engage lovingly even when things get hard. Before you react, take a beat or a breath and respond with love.

student not understanding after explaining material

why don't you get it? → Let's try a new way

Put your ego to the side, it is about the kids understanding

student talks back

don't disrespect me → I will talk to you later

Anger is a secondary emotion, consider what is underneath

student crying

don't cry → I see that you are upset right now

Leave space for all their emotions



# RESOURCE

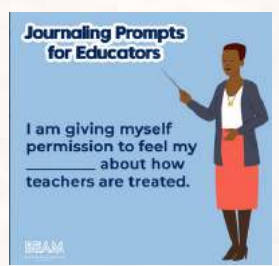
# Bingo

-Teacher edition-

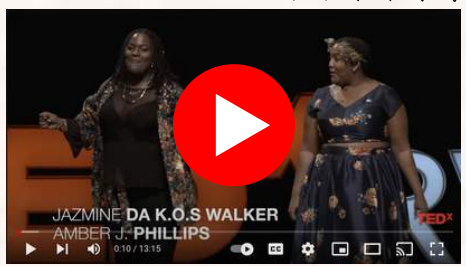


### Peace: the gift we give ourselves

During this season, it's common to feel added tension. [The Newark Center for Meditative Culture \(NCMC\)](#) offers this gentle reminder that "peace of mind" is the gift we can give to ourselves at any time. Listen to their meditation [HERE](#).



BEAM is a national training, movement-building, and grant-making institution that is dedicated to the healing, wellness, and liberation of Black and marginalized communities. Check out their [journals HERE](#).



Amber J. Phillips and Jazmine Walker in [their talk](#) redefine Black Joy, discuss barriers to its expression, and highlight how embracing Black Joy can energize movements and enhance our lives.

TED Ideas worth spreading



Valarie Kaur explores the antidote to rising nationalism, polarization, and hate in an inspiring, poetic talk, urging us to reclaim love as a revolutionary act. Watch her [TED talk](#).



Access [online training materials](#) from the Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) Foundation for educators to use. The training emphasizes self-care for teachers, covering topics such as building resilience, gratitude, kindness, and reconnecting with the essence of teaching.



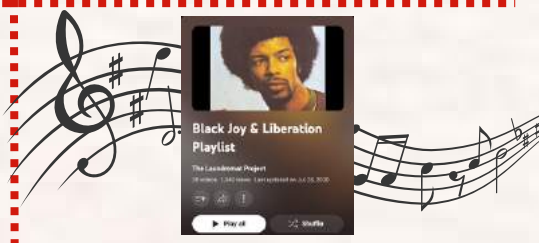
It's impossible not to listen to hosts Heben Nigatu and Tracy Clayton. Every week they get together in the studio, with their 'Pod Squad', to pour a drink, talk about, and enjoy, all things Blackness. Tune in [HERE](#).



If you are ready to teach revolutionary love in your classroom, this comprehensive curriculum authored by Valerie Kaur and backed by research is for you! Read more [HERE](#).

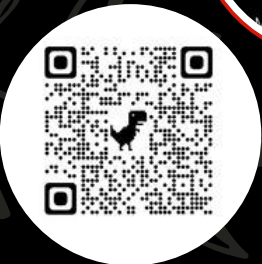
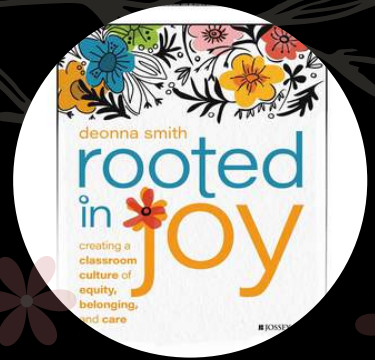


The hosts share the belief that the best and oftentimes most important work is what comes up in real-time, at the moment. In this episode, learn about the [PAUSE wellness tool](#). They exemplify this great de-escalating tool.



Listen to the Black joy and liberation [playlist](#) by The Laundromat Project. We encourage you to create your own, so whenever you need a beat to remind you of the melody of your heart you can tap into the rhythm





3/21/2024  
5:00-7:30PM EST  
Via Zoom

**Dr. Deonna Smith**  
"Transform your classroom with joy!"  
Dr. Deonna Smith  
<https://bit.ly/DeonnaSmith>

Free and open to the public  
ASL interpretation

**REGISTER NOW!**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- February 5-9: BLM at School Week of Action  
(Click here for BLM at School booklist)
- February 6: 6:00 - 7:00 pm EST via Zoom: Virtual Open House UTR (MAT) for Black and Brown Greek Organizations
- March 21: 5:00 - 7:30 pm EST via Zoom: CUE Presents: Dr. Deonna Smith



## UTR WEBINAR DATES

- Sunday, February 4, 2024, 4:30 pm
- Tuesday, February 6, 2024, 6:00 pm: Special Webinar For Black and Brown Greek Organizations!
- Sunday, February 4, 2024, 4:30 pm
- Wednesday, February 28, 2024, 6:00 pm
- Wednesday, March 6, 2024, 12:00 pm

Click to Register for Webinar

## APPLY FOR TEN HONORS!



It's time to apply or nominate an educator who is teaching for racial and/or social justice in their classroom! Submissions may include lesson plans, unit plans, curriculum overviews, instructional materials, short video recordings, and/or student work. The honorees will be recognized at our 2024 May Gathering.



Submissions Accepted  
Feb 5 - Apr 15



### Eligibility

Currently teaching PK-12 in a NBOE or OPS school, or an alum of MSU's UTR, NTP, or WWTF

[click this link](#) for more details

