



## DIGGING WITHIN: ARCHAEOLOGY OF SELF AS A TOOL FOR EDUCATORS

Welcome to Volume 4 of the Transformative Education Network (TEN) newsletter. One of the major goals of TEN is to recruit, prepare, and retain new teachers for our partner districts Newark and Orange Public Schools. As we consider all the work it takes for teachers to show up daily, be exceptional, and truly serve BIPOC communities, we are drawn and redrawn to the deep self-work required to infuse the classroom with love, joy, and community. One can not pour from an empty cup. With this in mind, we invite you, our readers, to the practice that our recent Critical Urban Education (CUE) speaker Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz calls, Archaeology of Self. Archaeology of Self, which is a part of Racial Literacy Development, is a call to educators to engage in deep digging into yourself. What are your motivations, fears, limitations, and sources of inspiration for antiracist education? What is your reason for the work that you do and what feels nourishing to you as you try to sustain your why in the chaos of everyday life?

Dr. Sealey-Ruiz writes that “engaging in the Archaeology of Self involves the self-exploration, probing, and understanding of where issues of race and racism live within” (Sealey-Ruiz, 2022, p. 24). This is a question that can’t be checked off as a task on a to-do list. As educators, it is essential that we commit to the recursive work of asking ourselves deep questions about our beliefs about the communities we serve and why. “For me, there is no way around this: the heart and the mind must be examined if we are to move forward in eradicating the inequalities that exist in education for students of color” (Sealey-Ruiz, 2022, p. 24).

Consider this newsletter a call, an invitation and a request, to join us as we look within. Each edition of the newsletter this year will offer points of practice for what Archaeology of Self might look like and feel like in practice. “Archaeology of Self helps teachers understand that their beliefs about students and their community dictate how much or little they will invest in them” (Sealey-Ruiz, 2022, p. 24). So let’s invest deeply in ourselves and our students. Don’t be afraid to sit with yourself and reflect on your why. Why do you feel the way you do about your most troubling students? Why do you show up day in and day out? What is your passion for teaching? As you dig deep, try and incorporate these steps from Dr. Sealey-Ruiz to create an inviting environment for your students:

1. Co-construct a classroom space that invites open dialogue leading to greater self-discovery, understanding, tolerance, and action.
2. Pay attention to the ways teacher biases can influence pedagogy, selection of curricula items, and the classroom environment. Unexamined and unchecked biases continue to create hostile and unwelcoming environments for BIPOC students.
3. Connect lessons, activities, and text selection with movements for social change and transformation—it is our social responsibility to do so.

Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2022). *An Archaeology of Self for Our Times: Another Talk to Teachers*. *English Journal*, 111(5), 21-26.

# SPOTLIGHT ON....

## DR. YOLANDA SEALEY-RUIZ

YOLANDA SEALEY-RUIZ, PH.D. IS A PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH EDUCATION AT TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY. IN MAY 2024, YOLANDA WAS RECOGNIZED WITH THE PRESTIGIOUS DOROTHY HEIGHT DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD FROM NEW YORK UNIVERSITY.

### How did you get involved in TEN?

Bree (Dr. Picower) is a dear friend from grad school who was already doing transformative work through NYCoRE (New York Collective of Radical Educators). We had the same mentor (Suzanne Carothers) and naturally, through our activist work, ended up in each other's circles. The years have gone by but we're in the same circles, so when she invited me to come to Montclair, I immediately said yes.

### What is your WHY for anti racist or social justice education?

My why is driven by the deep inequality that's baked into this country. What I want, is for all children in schools to have an opportunity to thrive, and that is not the case because the racism in this country is so deep. Teachers come into the classroom already with racist ideas around the students they are teaching, (and) the media reinforces those ideas. I know it takes a lot to go up against the system, particularly as one person, but I know I'm not alone in doing this work, and it is deeply attached to my purpose. I believe I will make some kind of change, maybe not the change I want to see, but I will, as 50 Cent would say, "get rich or die trying".

### Can you tell us a bit more about the Archaeology of Self™?

I'm still learning about the Archaeology of Self, in part because I'm living it. It is quite simply an opportunity in education, particularly for teachers, to pause, and really think about why they're doing what they're doing. That self-work, as simple as it sounds, is not really done. We don't really have a self identity, what I



would call the archeology of self, class [in teacher education]. We're not really given a chance in teacher education programs to ask our why.

As a teacher, your traumas will be poked and prodded when you come across a child who has a similar background. Whatever humans sadly suffer from, it's there in the classroom. So if the teacher doesn't take the time to work through their own trauma, they're not going to be prepared when a student presents this to them. Oftentimes what happens is they'll ignore it and that student won't be able to get the support they need, or they will get angry at the student, because that is how trauma works.

That's why Archeology of Self is important. Ultimately it is to ask the question: Why do I feel this way? Why do I think this way? Why do I move in the way that I do? All things about you matter, and shouldn't be used to put you in a box, but to understand why you think and move the way you do. Once you do that, you can be open to other stories. But you have to know your own story. We have to do that self work, or else we can cause harm.

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

I know it seems strange, as an anti-capitalist [as much as I can be in a capitalist society] but I would say funding. Funding impacts quality of teachers, professional development of teachers, the buildings students enter, the resources that can make them feel like they're important or not important. With funding, you can recruit some of the best leaders for that particular school building, you can create things in the community to support the students. We know funding is dependent on property taxes, which determines what kind of resources make students feel their school sees them as important. I'd love to ultimately change the hearts and minds of people. If I had a magic wand I think that's one of the things that I would wave to make people anti-racist. Replace it with loving, you know you gotta replace it as you take something away, replace it with something.

### What is one book that changed your life?

[All About Love](#) by bell hooks. A young lady I'm mentoring (and I) started planning an edited volume that is out now. It's called [All About Black Girl Love in Education](#), bell hooks and pedagogies of love. We timed it this way because 2024 is the anniversary of All About Love, the book that deeply changed my life.



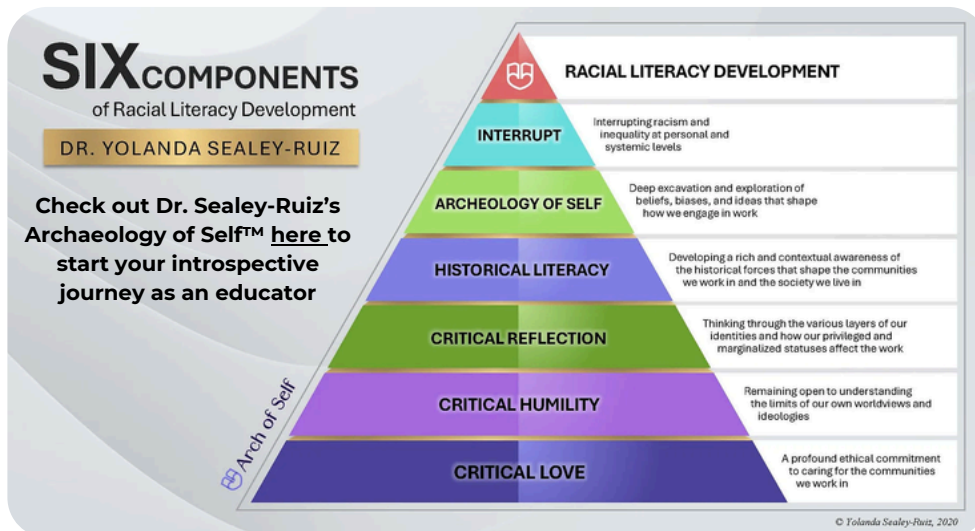
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# ANTIRACISM & SOCIAL JUSTICE RESOURCES



**Self Work is Hard Work**

Click the picture above to watch [this video](#) and reflect on what came up

- How do you feel now?
- What thoughts arise?
- What thoughts and emotions come to the surface?



**Introspection is not easy. We hope these resources serve as entry points as you consider your why for the work you do.**

## YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN DR. RUIZ'S RESEARCH!

Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz invites educators to contribute curriculum ideas that use the Racial Literacy Development Model (RLDM) and the Archaeology of Self™ for inclusion in her forthcoming book. The curriculum plans should integrate the concept of Archaeology of Self™ and apply the components of the RLDM. Yolanda plans to publish a select group of curriculum examples across grade levels and in various content areas. All ideas are welcome!

**[PLEASE CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)**

**DID YOU KNOW**



# WINDOWS INTO THE CLASSROOM:

This page is dedicated to highlighting and uplifting the work of the children in our Residents' classrooms.

**Meet Mecca and Malachi, the youth poets at our CUE event this fall.**

**In class, Mecca and Malachi have been learning about fear and how to work through it. Read below to hear some of the work they are doing to understand this topic:**



## Malachi's thoughts on overcoming fear

How did it feel performing on the stage at Montclair State University?

***OMG, I was so nervous, butterflies and all....but I prayed, and I did it, afraid.***



Why do you think it's important to sometimes do things afraid?

***Well, when you do things afraid, after you're done, you feel like you can accomplish ANYTHING!!***

## Malachi

**Forest Street Elementary | 6th grade**

Something you love about your community:  
"My school is a part of the community, and I love it here. I absolutely love the friends I was able to make."



## Mecca

**Forest Street Elementary | 6th grade**

Something you love about your community:  
"I love how everyone works together. We operate like we are all one and not separate, like a family"

Mecca wrote the following poem in response to this prompt from her teacher:

Maya Angelou's "Life Doesn't Frighten Me" lists a number of childhood fears and describes how the poem's speaker finds the courage to face those fears. Consider the fears you faced as a child. Write your own lyric poem about facing childhood fears. Be sure to write your poem from the point of view of a fictional speaker. Include the use of repetition and a refrain and suggest ways to face a fear.

### "No Escape" by Mecca

**In the room dark and cold  
I'm in the place were I  
Used to call home**

**Can't move lights out  
I can't seem to find  
A way out**

**No door no window  
Can anyone even  
Hear my sorrows**

**I say no  
Room gets smaller**

**I say no**

**I don't eat**

**I'm like a little puppet  
But only in my dreams**

**Mother walks in the room  
With a big shiny plate**

**I get excited wondering  
My fate**

**She turns around  
With a big happy smile**

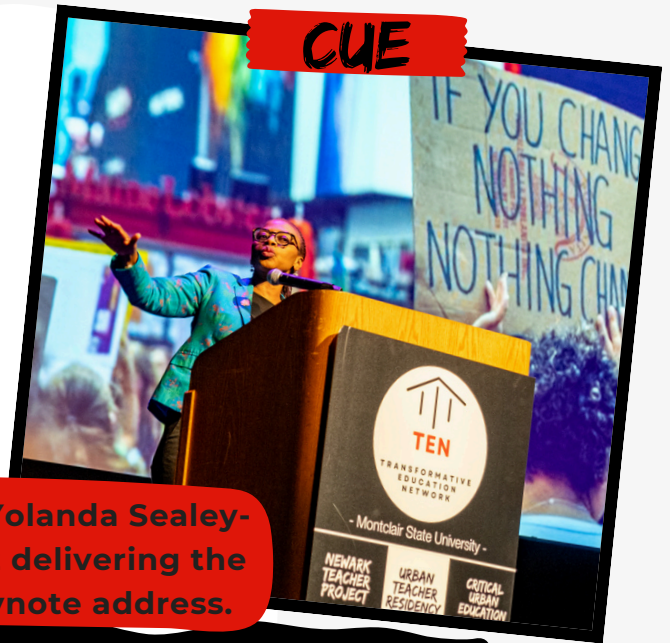
**But that will only last  
For a little while.**



# TEN HAPPENINGS

We were delighted and honored to welcome Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz as our featured speaker for the fall installment of the Critical Urban Education Speaker Series (CUE). Dr. Sealey-Ruiz, a professor of English Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, delivered an insightful talk on the importance of examining our own biases, engaging in meaningful conversations, and reflecting on the beliefs that shape our experiences as educators. The evening began with powerful poetry performances from students in TEN residents' classrooms at Forest Street Elementary, followed by an energetic cheer routine from the Luis Muñoz Marín Cheerleaders, led by two TEN alumni. It was an uplifting and engaging night for all who attended!

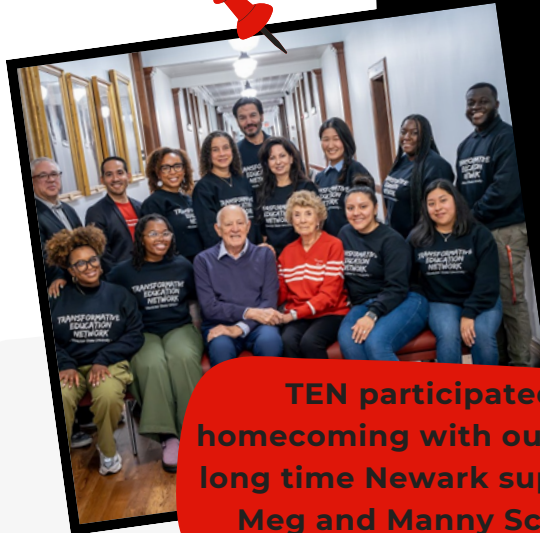
CUE



Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz delivering the Keynote address.



## HOMECOMING



TEN participated in homecoming with our donors, long time Newark supporters, Meg and Manny Scrofani.



## HAPPY HOUR

## TEA & TREATS WITH TEN



TEN hosted Tea & Treats in the TEN office to celebrate our residents and meet future residents. Happy Student Appreciation Week!



TEN hosted happy hour at Pineapple Express, a time to connect with and enjoy each other.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**October 18** 3:30pm-5:30pm  
Induction Happy Hour @  
[Pineapple Express in Montclair](#)

**November 2** 12:00pm-3:00pm  
Native Knowledge 360° Teach-In featuring [Dr. Elizabeth Rule](#)

**November 15** 5:00pm  
[SNCC & Grassroots Organizing: Freedom Teaching Roundtable Discussion](#)

**November 18** 7:00pm-8:30pm  
[An American Coup: Wilmington 1898](#) held by [Yoruba Richen](#), featuring [Jesse Hagopian](#)



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