



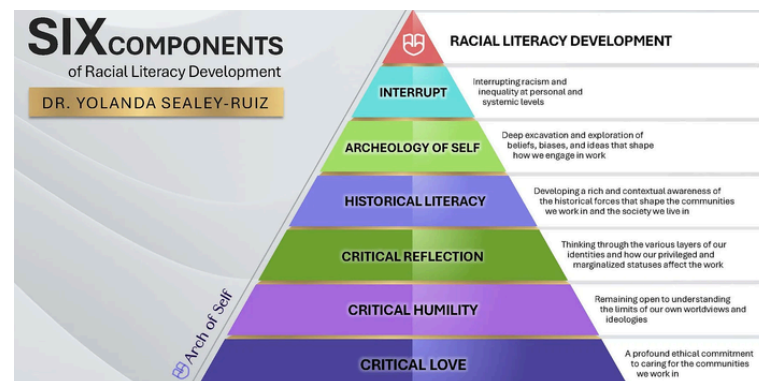
HISTORICAL LITERACY: TEACHING TRUTH IN AN ERA OF ERASURE

February is a time to study and reflect on true American history. The US is entering an unprecedented era in public education—one where the teachers entering the classroom are the products of the educational reform movement of the last 25 years. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) “pushed states to focus on basic skills; [while] teacher-student relationships were perceived as unimportant” (Love, 2023, p. 106). NCLB began removing social studies from schools in 2002. We have now arrived at a time where “almost half of all public school children across the country are subjected to laws that forbid honest education about the history of racism” (Hagopian, 2024, p. 5). The focus on testing has ushered in an “organized forgetting” of Black history, queer history and any history that may go against the dominant white supremacist narrative of our country. Hagopian informs us that this rewriting of the past serves to justify current inequality while “imped[ing] the ability of those who have learned revisionist history to imagine a future without oppression” (Hagopian, 2024, p.16). Those students who have been subjected to an education laden with revisionist history are now entering the teaching profession without the opportunity to learn the true history that would equip them to teach children how to recognize and challenge oppression—continuing a cycle of organized forgetting.

For this reason, Archaeology of Self, can be a pathway for teachers to sharpen the historical literacy that will inform their teaching. In order to be open to the stories of others, teachers must first be open to their own stories. Dr. Sealy-Ruiz warns, if educators are not open to their own stories, they risk recreating harm and trauma on the students they serve (Sealy-Ruiz, 2021). For this reason, historical literacy is a key component of the work of Archeology of Self. When teachers have a deeply rooted understanding of history, they are able to make clear connections between the past and

contemporary times. Historical literacy helps us understand the present moments we are living in, it is the context in which all of our stories live.

Regardless of the discipline you teach, your awareness of true history and the context of your content will determine whether your students see themselves reflected in the material or positioned outside of it. “History—the collection of the stories we tell about the past—does reflect the experiences and values of the person telling it, hence the necessity to be forthcoming with the students about whose view is being expressed” (Hagopian, 2024, p. 27). There are so many resources available to sharpen your historical literacy ([see page 3 of this newsletter for places to start](#)). The work of teaching is the work of lifelong learning. Archaeology of Self is the process of digging deep and discovering your unknown truths. Now, more than ever, students need a true understanding of history, the ability to see themselves in the curriculum and the tools to recognize oppressive forces. Teachers, study your stories and our collective stories so that we can pass on the truth to our students. “At a time when schools are destroying the minds and spirits of our Black and Brown students, we must work differently to make sure those that fail to see their beauty and brilliance do to claim our children’s souls” (Muhammad et al., 2020, p. 424).



SPOTLIGHT ON.... JESSE HAGOPIAN

Jesse Hagopian's African ancestors survived enslavement on plantations in Mississippi and Louisiana. Jesse is a Seattle educator, an editor for Rethinking Schools magazine, a founding steering committee member of Black Lives Matter at School, and the Director the Teaching for Black Lives Campaign of the Zinn Education Project

How did you get involved in TEN?

I've been reading Bree's work for a long time and learning from her brilliant scholarship and her dedication to education justice. That's been an inspiration to me. I was just really honored when she reached out to see if I could share some of my work in my new book, Teach Truth with the network.

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

I think my why [is] Little Jesse Hagopian in kindergarten. Who was called the n-word by a student and when I went to a teacher to tell them what had happened, the teacher was embarrassed and said they would follow up on it and nothing ever happened. I internalized that as I had done something wrong. My why is the fifth graders that I taught in southeast Washington, D.C. who went to a school where we had a hole in the ceiling of my classroom and it rained into the room and destroyed the first project I ever assigned as a teacher... My why is my own kids. And it's really rooted in my ancestors commitment to the struggle for Black liberation and for everybody getting free. We need to be honest about this country and students deserve the truth that we live in one of the most inequitable, repressive, racist societies that has ever existed. And we have to face that squarely and allow young people to have discussions about what to do about it.

What do you see as the most important factors that go into supporting historical literacy, for students and for teachers?

I think the first thing is you have to build a beloved classroom community in order to have the



**LISTEN TO JESSE ON
DEMOCRACY NOW HERE**

trust that's needed to have difficult conversations about historical truths. That requires a commitment to social and emotional learning. It means seeing every student. It means building relationships and allowing students to be themselves to share their authentic selves with each other. To be willing to learn from students about their realities and perspectives. And once that foundation is established... magic is possible. It's just an electric feeling to be in a classroom where people feel valued and seen, and where they know that their culture and perspective will be uplifted. It's such a rare space in American society. So many spaces in our society are punitive and repressive and there are powerful forces that want the classroom to replicate those conditions. And yet there are truth teachers—honest educators, social justice teachers who have been able to create classroom spaces that are our modern day versions of the hush harbors and pit schools that my ancestors engaged in where they snuck off plantations and built fugitive spaces to teach each other important lessons. We're trying to recreate those spaces today in very difficult circumstances and yet it's

possible and it's happening. It's really inspiring to see educators continue this tradition of liberatory pedagogy in the face of these draconian attacks. The idea that the teachers can uplift and give students the power to know the truth and to speak the truth really resonates with me.

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

The whole thing has to be transformed. It's underfunded. We have to flood the schools with money to create the schools our children deserve...To ensure that our kids have the education they need, we have to transform the nature of the education system on a very fundamental level. We need community schools that provide wraparound services for our youth so that they can get healthcare and tutoring and dental care and meals and provide for their families as well. We also need to stop segregating all of the subjects - this artificial creation of every subject being a different discrete class. It unnecessarily separates different forms of knowledge. I would rather have school organized around real problems that exist in our society, and then use all of the different disciplines to help address those problems. And then education is organized around real life issues that are facing our communities, our students' lives and we use the subjects in service of solving these problems rather than just in service of a grade or a score on a test.

What is a book that changed your life?



The Black Jacobins by CLR James. It's the story of the Haitian revolution, their liberation has been hidden in the US education system for too long.

WALKING THE WALK:

RESOURCES FOR HISTORICAL LITERACY

With Dr.
Sealey-Ruiz
and others



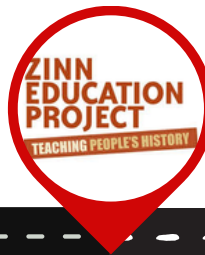
Learning from Black Women
Educational Theorist



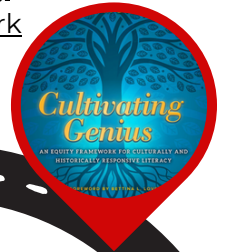
Learning for Justice



Zinn Education
Project



Cultivating Genius:
An Equity
Framework



Dr. Sealey-Ruiz
on Racial Literacy



Teaching for Black
Lives Study Group



Teaching Hard
History



PUSHING THE PENDULUM

TOWARD JUSTICE

DID YOU KNOW

Historically, any time there's been gains in social and racial justice movements, there has been a **direct counter-force from the right** causing setbacks. We are experiencing setbacks now from the racial uprising of 2020 with the current attacks on DEI, CRT, and anti-racist truthful education.

How do **you** plan to engage with historical literacy in the classroom?

WINDOWS INTO THE CLASSROOM

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

A MILESTONE IN THE TEN PROGRAM IS THE CREATION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE UNIT PLANS THAT PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN TO LEARN THE TRUTH. BELOW IS STUDENT WORK THAT CAME OUT OF RESIDENT'S SOCIAL JUSTICE UNITS THAT FOCUS ON HISTORICAL LITERACY.



In UTR resident Ms. Morales' 5th grade ELA class, students explored Western expansion and the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. They learned how White settlers took Indigenous land and how Chinese workers faced discrimination and harsh conditions. Students were tasked to create a documentary as directors, highlighting the struggles and realities of Chinese laborers during construction of the railroad. [Click here to see this student's awesome work.](#)

MEET THE STUDENT BEHIND THE WORK

YANNIS

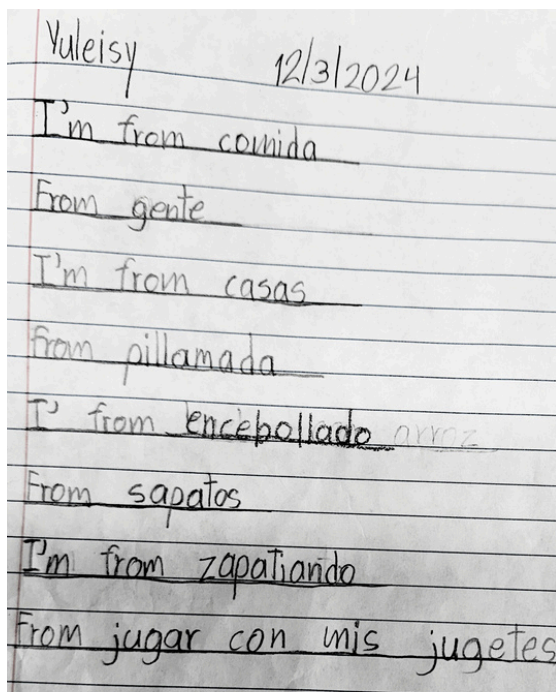
Forest Street Community School | 5th Grade

What they love about their community:

Challenges, opportunities, tennis, basketball, and the spelling bee.



In UTR resident Ms. Touw's class, students use George Ella Lyon's poem "Where I'm From" as inspiration to write their own poems, reflecting on their personal histories, identities, and communities. [To read more about this lesson plan, click here.](#)



MEET THE STUDENT BEHIND THE WORK

YULEISY

Luis Munoz Marin | 3rd Grade

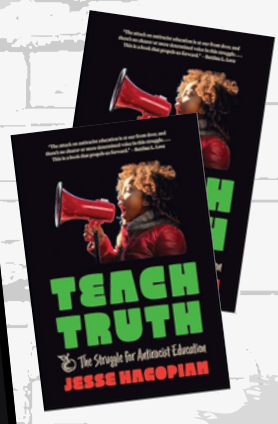
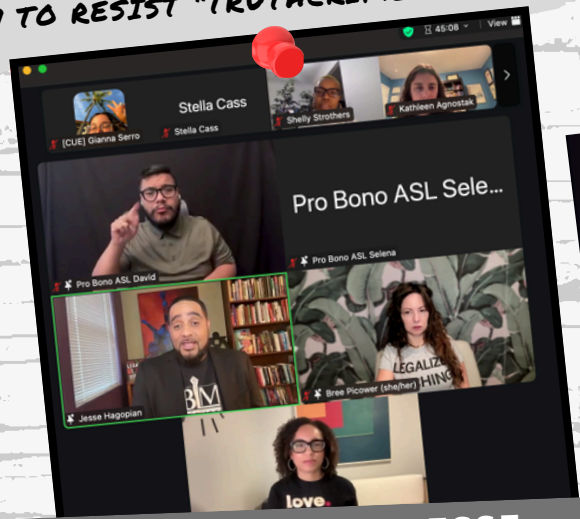
What they love about their community:

Spring time when the flowers come out, the way the houses look during this season.



WE WELCOMED **JESSE HAGOPIAN** FOR OUR SPRING CUE EVENT! HE SPOKE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING THE TRUTH, AND HOW TO RESIST "TRUTHCRIME" LEGISLATION

TEN HAPPENINGS



TEN CO-DIRECTOR **DR. TANYA MALONEY** PRESENTED HER KEYNOTE AT NJEA'S ANNUAL DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS CELEBRATION! [CLICK HERE TO SEE IT!](#)

INTERESTED IN JESSE HAGOPIAN'S NEW BOOK? [CLICK HERE TO GRAB A COPY!](#)



[CLICK HERE TO SEE NTP ALUMNI NELLY BESS AND UTR RESIDENT SHELLEY STOTHERS PERFORMANCE OF THEIR POWERFUL POEM FROM OUR SPRING CUE SPEAKER SERIES](#)

MENTORS AND RESIDENTS HAD SOME QUALITY BONDING TIME AT MENTOR PD



UPCOMING EVENTS

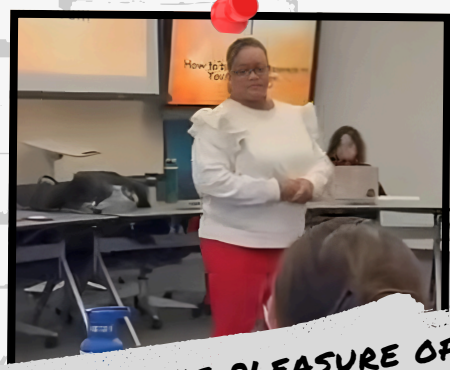
February 19 6:30 - 8:30pm
[A Revolutionary Friendship: Malcolm X and Yuri Kochiyama](#)
 (Click here to register)

February 26 7:00 - 8:30pm
 Virtual Education For All:
[Defending Targeted Students](#)
 (Click here to register)

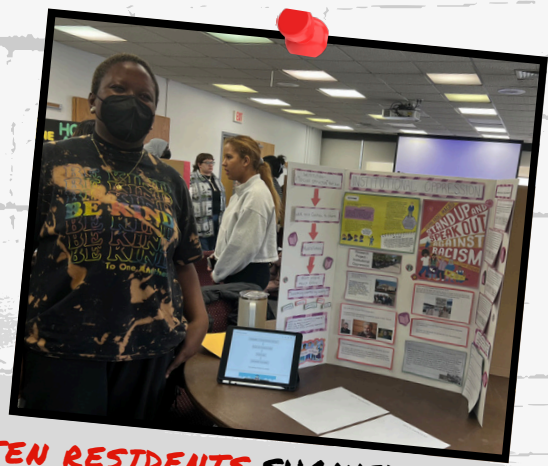
March 28 3:45pm
[Induction Happy Hour at Pineapple Express in Montclair](#)

COME CHECK OUT OUR **A+ TEACHER TAKEOVERS**

GRADUATES AND RESIDENTS ARE TAKING OVER INSTAGRAM STORIES EVERY THURSDAY!



TEN HAD THE PLEASURE OF HOSTING **MS. WALKER** FOR A WORKSHOP ON CLASSROOM PRESENCE



TEN RESIDENTS SHOWED OFF THEIR SOCIAL JUSTICE UNIT PLANS!

CONNECT WITH US!

DONATIONS

THANK YOU FOR READING!
 LOVE, KIYOMI
 TEN'S OFFICIAL MASCOT

