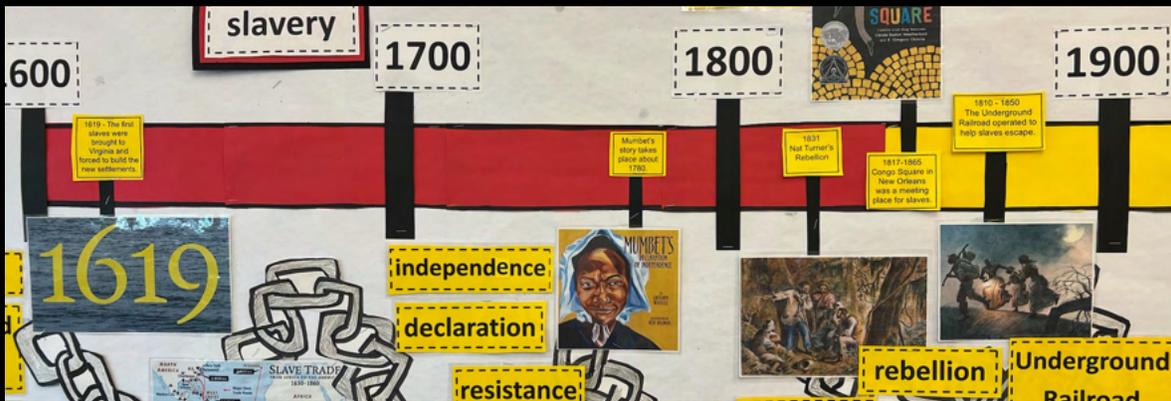




# TEN NEWSLETTER

Bimonthly Newsletter of the  
Transformative Education Network  
at Montclair State University



## ABOLITIONIST TEACHING

Chances are you've heard the term abolitionist teaching, but can you define it?

There are many different working definitions for, and ways to understand, abolitionist teaching. At its core, abolition is about abolishing systems of oppression – structures in society that allow for inequity, such as slavery, the prison industrial complex, and the education system. Abolitionists maintain that these systems are intentionally designed to control and oppress, and therefore must be dismantled instead of simply reformed.

Lessons in Liberation: An Abolitionist Toolkit for Educators defines abolition as the work to end systems of policing in our country. "Though abolitionist education is culturally sustaining, anti-racist, and committed to social justice, it is not to be used interchangeably with these terms because abolition is specific in its focus and demand; abolition is about the particular and urgent need to get rid of systems of policing, surveillance, and prisons, and to build alternatives that make us truly safe." Thus, abolitionist educators actively work to dismantle practices that schools and prisons have in common; that teach us to view our students, particularly our BIPOC students, as dangerous and in need of monitoring. This interconnection between school and prison is known as the School to Prison Nexus, which identifies schools as a "key site at which technologies of control that govern Black oppression are deemed normal and necessary."

The term abolitionist teaching is also explored in Dr. Bettina L. Love's book, We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom, where she calls on teachers to "struggle together not only to reimagine schools but to build new schools that we are taught to believe are impossible; schools based on intersectional justice, antiracism, love, healing, and joy." Abolitionists hold a more expansive vision than reform; abolitionists seek transformation.

The Transformative Education Network seeks to actively develop and support abolitionist teachers. An abolitionist educator enters their classroom as a human first, prioritizing relationships, leading with care, and engaging in the continuous work of honest self-reflection required to sustain abolitionist work. Lessons in Liberation notes that "abolitionist educators distinguish accountability from punishment, leveraging transformative justice and...community accountability to strengthen safety, repair relationships, and adjudicate harm." What abolitionist practices are embedded in your pedagogy? Are you ready to do more?

Photo credit to Ms. Lesia Kuziw, 3rd grade ELA/Social Studies teacher at South Street School. She developed the pictured bulletin board for her Enslavement, Resistance & Freedom (Underground) unit.

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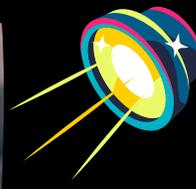
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# SPOTLIGHT ON...

## Nelly Bess



**An alum of the Newark Teacher Program, Nelly Bess teaches 5th-8th grade ELA at Pride Academy Charter School in Newark.**

- **How and why did you get involved with the TEN?**

In my [teacher prep] program I felt like I was learning procedures, but I wasn't learning about connecting with students on a human level. Then I had Bree [Picower, TEN Co-Director] as my social studies education professor, and she talked about social justice and systematic racism, the problematic oppressive history of education in America, and about connecting with people, and that's what I wanted.

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

I have felt the aftermath of not being accepted in school and having teachers who really didn't care to educate me. Up until sixth grade I was in an all-White school district, and I did get overlooked. A lot. And I did have teachers who tried to put me in detention or say I wasn't smart. I had the experience of not being protected.

- **How do you incorporate BLM in your classroom?**

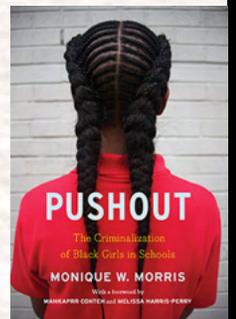
First, it's knowing my students. I'm creating a space where Blackness is accepted, in all shades of the diaspora. In the curriculum and on the classroom walls, I'm sharing stories of people who are Black and brilliant. Another thing is incorporating positive affirmations. I don't talk down to my students. I say things like, "You know what? I really need you to step into your greatness today, because I've noticed you're so intelligent." We start our class everyday by asking, "How is your heart today?" I make sure I'm checking in with them, making sure that I have a connection to their environment, that I know what they do outside of school, that I know the issues that are going on in their communities, that I know their family members by name. I work to make children feel seen, welcomed, heard, and that they matter. And their families and their local experiences matter, too.

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

I want people to stop having low expectations, to replace the narrative that Black children are not capable. I think the way we look at Black children, the way that we understand Black children, and the way we teach Black children has to change. I just want people to really understand their students, to really get to know their students beyond what is on those score sheets. I want the kids to think for themselves and really be able to navigate the world around them and have choices, so they're not forced to be in survival mode.

- **What's the book that changed your life?**

Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools by Monique W. Morris. I feel like we tend to talk about Black boys and don't talk about Black girls enough. This book is about how schools are pushing out Black girls, but their stories don't get seen.



## UPCOMING EVENTS



February 17 via Zoom

- 4 - 5:30 pm EST

**MSUNER's Amistad Curriculum Event**

February 18 via Zoom

- 9 am - 11:30 am EST

**Mentor Professional Development**

February 24 via Zoom

- 6 - 7:30 pm EST

**CUE Speaker Series:**

**Dr. Carla Shalaby**

**Author of "Troublemakers: Lessons in Freedom from Young Children at School"**

[View the flyer](#) and [Register](#)

March 15

**NTP Application Deadline**

March 18 via Zoom

- 9 am - 2 pm EST

**Mentor Professional Development**

March 21

**UTR Application Deadline**

March 25 via Zoom

- 8:45 am - 3:15 pm EST

**Induction PD**

April 8, in-person location TBD

- 3:30 - 5:30 pm EST

**Induction Happy Hour**

UTR / TEN community invited



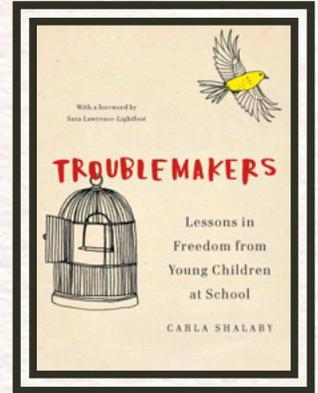
## CUE - CRITICAL URBAN EDUCATION SPEAKER SERIES

Our next CUE event will feature **Dr. Carla Shalaby**, the author of **"Troublemakers: Lessons in Freedom from Young Children at School,"** on **February 24, 2022**. Join us as we consider the troubling relationships between traditional classroom management approaches and carcerality, and begin to wonder how intentionally shifting our models of power and authority in the classroom might instead support the teaching and learning of freedom. By seeing our "troublemakers" as a resource to leverage instead of a problem to solve, this talk invites us to imagine classrooms as a space in which we might practice the world we want by rejecting disposability in favor of the struggle for love, justice, care, and healing.

The event will also feature an incredible young poet, Florence Faison!

[Register here](#), and purchase Dr. Shalaby's book by clicking on the image to the right!

The Critical Urban Education (CUE) Speaker Series is a bi-annual event bringing leading national scholars to Montclair State University. CUE provides a forum to develop attendees' racial and political analysis through a series of lectures and workshops focused on social and cultural issues influencing urban schools and communities. Learn more and watch previous talks [here](#). Follow our "[Critical Urban Education - CUE at MSU](#)" [FaceBook page](#) or [Instagram](#) for updates!



# TEN HONORS

Submit an application or  
nominate someone today!

At our 2022 June Gathering,  
TEN will honor two  
educators who are **teaching  
for racial and/or social  
justice in their classrooms!**



### Timeline

Submissions Accepted  
- Feb 1 - Apr. 15  
Nominations Due  
- March 1



### Eligibility

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

See all eligibility  
requirements and  
submission details  
by scanning the  
QR code, or [by  
clicking this link.](#)





# DID YOU KNOW?

There are 13 Guiding Principles of Black Lives Matter in Schools, click on the underlined text to learn more about the principles!

**Restorative Justice**



**Empathy**



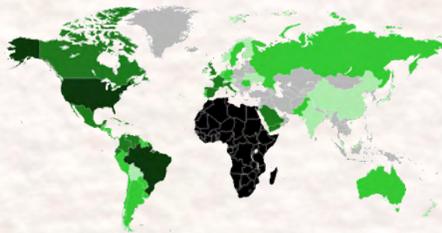
**Loving Engagement**



**Diversity**



**Globalism**



**Queer Affirming**



**Trans Affirming**

**TRANS RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS** ❤️

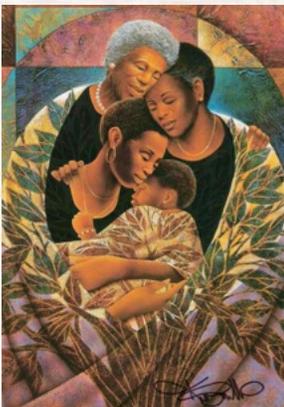
**Collective Value**



**Black Villages**



**Intergenerational**



**Black Families**



**Unapologetically Black**



**Black Women**

