

# What's the IDEA?

A publication of the Georgia Chapter of the National Association for Multicultural Education

*"Although the majority of fourth graders cannot read at grade level, states spend about three times as much money per prisoner as per public school pupil."*

~Children's Defense Fund



## Heartbreak & Hope

### Children, Incarceration, & an Enduring Quest for Justice

The 25th Benjamin E. Mays Lecture on November 12, 2013 featured, a dynamic, inspiring, and compelling presentation by Bryan Stevenson, founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI).

Mr. Stevenson, along with his team of lawyers and other diligent workers provide wrap around support for their clients: the economically disadvantaged (i.e., poor) and children (under 18 years old) prosecuted as adults. They serve the needs of justice by seeking to change unfair laws, challenging discriminatory/biased or inadequate legal practices, providing quality legal counsel, and publicly advocating on behalf of the individuals and communities they represent.

To hear of the work of EJI is to hear and acknowledge the dissonance of *heartbreak* and *hope* as it relates to children, incarceration, and justice. The highlights below are an effort to capture the essence of EJI's work, inspired (in parts verbatim) by Bryan Stevenson's Benjamin E. Mays Lecture at Georgia State University and a conversation with EJI lawyer Aaryn Urell.

#### Heartbreak

Heartbreak is what can happen when tenets of democracy and justice fail to cultivate the humane and promotes the nonsensical. For example, according to Stevenson and EJI:

- The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world.
- The U.S. is the only country in the world that condemns children to die in prison (i.e., life in prison without parole), including 13 and 14 year olds. In some instances there is no minimum age and no segregation of children from the adult prison population.
- Approximately 10,000 children are currently in adult jails & prisons.
- Most children prosecuted in adult court are charged with non-violent offenses.
- Only 24 states have statewide public defender systems, which provide attorneys for individuals who cannot afford to hire one. Georgia is *not* one of them.

**Heartbreak and Hope** continued on page 10

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# A Letter from the Editor

Dear Educators,

The scene is always an endearing one. It's adults with children who are not their own, engaging in a moment of awareness, awe, and admiration. It's a stranger, often appearing to be White, although I've also seen strangers of various racial backgrounds, on the street, on public transportation, in the park interacting good-naturedly with children, particularly boys. It's the strangers in these moments that stick out to me and what they say smiling to the adult accompanying the child: "Cute" they say. "Adorable" they declare. "Little man" they quip. "How precious." Watching these exchanges prompted me to think about writing a piece entitled, "From cute to criminal" that explores how and why "cute" little boys, particularly Black and Brown, turn into (perceived) criminals.

Endearments turn to fear and condemnation. While it's true that youth as a whole from just about every background are too often perceived through the gaze of negativity, mischief, misbehavior, and mal intent, the perception seems more so egregious with particular youth. The reality of innocence is filtered through the perception of race (based on skin color), socioeconomic status, language, gender, and even religion. In other words, presumptions of guilt and innocence are differentially applied, as are the consequences.

I received some insight into this phenomena while serving on a month-long grand jury session, hearing a variety of cases. Grand juries, in the state in which this story takes place, serve to determine whether or not there is enough evidence to support that the presented case merits a trial. In essence, determining if it's worthwhile to spend taxpayer money on the case. Grand juries indict but do not determine guilt or innocence of an individual or group of individuals of an alleged crime, as is the case in criminal and civil courts.

One particular case involved the following situation: A group of youth robbed a delivery man, after he had made a food delivery in an neighborhood apartment building. After the incident, the police were authorized to make a "sweep" for "male Hispanic in a hooded sweatshirt." This sweep resulted in a group of teens being questioned about the incident, two of whom were now presenting their stories to us (the jury). I remember one youth in particular describing, in Spanish (with a court appointed Spanish-English translator), the innocuous circumstances that landed him in front of a grand jury. Before I continue, you should know that it is the right of defendants to come to court to share their story and be questioned by the assistant district attorney (ADA) and the jurors. The defendants risk being seen and heard, and if they have any priors on their records, they are read aloud and documented. Jurors are told that the commission of the priors *cannot* serve as a reason to presume the current charges to be valid.

For the one youth I recall, he stated that because he was already on probation, he opted out of getting involved and soon after exited the apartment building. Later, however, he was brought in as part of the neighborhood sweep. He and the one other youth came to share their stories and that they did not participate in the robbery. The ADA seemed very intentional in separating these two defendants from the rest of the accused group of males. All the accused youth had their statements read aloud and they either implicated one of the others or their stories of what happened were not consistent, except for one piece of information: they all said that the two youth who were in the courtroom, were not involved.

Yet, during our behind closed doors deliberation, one juror kept insisting they must be guilty (despite, the fact our job was not to determine guilt or innocence) and was convinced that all the youth were lying, including the two that came to speak. In my view, this juror represented a person whose ears were clogged with prejudices and consequently could not hear clearly; and this juror was someone whose mouth can utter uncommon sense that can prove dangerously life changing.

Jury duty reinforced for me the significance of being judged by a jury of ones' peers as well as just how biases and expectations filter our own and others' realities. It made me realize how truth can be an undisputable reality, or an illusive one or an illusion we craft because we do not listen deeply enough, observe too quickly, or apply common sense too narrowly.

*Vera Stenhouse*

# Community Spotlight

**SOUTHERNERS ON NEW GROUND**  
BUILDING A POLITICAL HOME ACROSS RACE, CLASS, CULTURE, GENDER & SEXUALITY.

## MISSION

Southerners on New Ground (SONG) is a home for LGBTQ\* liberation across all lines of race, class, abilities, age, culture, gender, and sexuality in the South. SONG builds, sustains, and connects a southern regional base of LGBTQ people in order to transform the region through strategic projects and campaigns developed in response to the current conditions in our communities. SONG builds this movement through leadership development, intersectional analysis, and organizing.

SONG has learned that movement building requires grassroots organizing, leadership development, deep analysis, listening/data collection, inter-generational relationships, the linking of social movements, and good long-term planning.

## HISTORY

Since 1993, SONG has been known, both regionally and nationally, for its organizing and training work across issues of race, class, gender, culture and sexuality with both LGBTQ people and allies.

SONG works to build and maintain a Southern LGBTQ infrastructure for organizers strong enough to combat the Southern-specific strategy of the Right to divide and conquer Southern oppressed communities using the tools of rural isolation, Right-wing Christian infrastructure, racism, environmental degradation, and economic oppression. SONG formed to build understanding of the connections between issues and oppressions, do multi-racial organizing, and develop strong relationships between people who could and should be allies.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Major accomplishments have included: crafting the

first-ever Southern, LGBTQ-led, traveling Organizing School for small towns and rural places all over the South; training over 100 Southern and national racial and economic justice organizations to integrate work around homophobia and transphobia into their work; holding over 50 Southern sub-regional retreats for Southern Queer People of Color; continuing to be one of the only LGBTQ organizations in the US that truly listens, responds, and represents LGBTQ folk in small towns and rural places; and in 2008 holding the largest gathering specifically for Southern LGBTQ organizers in the last 10 years.

Most recently, the coalition-strong campaign in Georgia where SONG was central in winning an injunction against a key aspect of HB 87 (Arizona copy cat laws), wherein "harboring of illegal aliens" was made punishable by law for individuals and organizations.

## LONG TERM GOALS

All of SONG's work centers the shared interest of women, LGBTQ people, people of color, and immigrants—in who we are as SONG's leadership and membership, and the analysis and work we create. We start at the place of lifting barriers and breaking the isolation that prevents people from participating fully in economic, social, and political life through creating an organizational home for LGBTQ Southern organizing and LGBTQ Southern people. This creates a space for Southern LGBTQ people to enter a political home and grow the work of liberation.

## CONTACT

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\*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer



# Doing The Work: Georgia Educator Spotlight

## Mr. Matt Jones

**In this issue, we feature Matt Jones, a six year veteran teacher who was named his system's 2013 Teacher of the Year. Below we learn about his background, passion, commitment, and advocacy for his students and public education.**

### **Tell us a little about you.**

I am a native Georgian and live in rural South Georgia. While attending college, I worked at a school that served students with severe emotional and behavioral disorders and students with autism. This experience taught me the importance of patience and helping students reach their individual potential as well as the significant impact made by dedicated educators. I graduated Magna Cum Laude from Georgia Southern University with a bachelor's degree in Teacher Education.

### **What have you taught?**

I have taught World Geography, American Government/Civics, English Language Arts, and Engineering. In order to help my local school system maximize opportunities for students despite budgetary pressures, I served in three departments – History, English Language Arts, and CTAE (Career Technical and Agricultural Education) -- all in one year. I also volunteered to bring back an Engineering program that had been dormant for several years in an effort to expand academic and career opportunities for my students.

### **What got you in to teaching?**

Most teachers can point to teachers

who inspired them to go into the profession. My teachers had a profound impact on my life. During high school, my parents were working through some issues and teachers really became a stabilizing force during that turbulent time of my life.

Looking back, I can't remember an individual teaching standard, but I can remember excellent teachers who always greeted me with a smile, who took a real interest in my life, who served as role models, and who planned activities/lessons that made school a place to look forward to attending. As a teacher, my goal each day was to have that same impact on all of my students.

### **What do you love about teaching?**

I love watching kids get excited about learning. I get enormous pleasure out of helping a student overcome a challenge and witnessing the 'Aha!' moment when things 'click', confidence builds, and learning catches fire. I have always enjoyed working with youth and developing activities/lessons that spark their interests, though the highest honor is developing activities/lessons that inspire new interests for my students.

*In one of the hardest moments of my life, I chose to leave the classroom for a year to dedicate my time and energy toward reversing the negative policies that are eroding the quality of education.*

### **What does social justice look like in your teaching?**

I was fortunate to work for a small rural school system. Our system has only one high school, so the student population of the school reflects the population of the community. I believe

public education affords both opportunities and challenges for the community.

Many challenges that can often go ignored within a community (racism, poverty, class, stereotypes, etc.) all come to head within a school. The push to fracture public education through vouchers and in some instances, charters, is a way for some to ignore these challenges completely by insulating certain students and certain elements of the community from those problems.

However, public education offers opportunities to acknowledge, address, and overcome these challenges in a collaborative and conversational way that ultimately strengthens the entire community. We will never be able to move our state and communities forward if we simply abandon certain students.



# Doing The Work: Georgia Educator Spotlight (continued)

## Mr. Matt Jones continued

Certainly there is more work to be done, however, I have always felt that my high school has done a good job addressing these issues. Within my own teaching, I have always used group projects as a means to increase dialogue and break down barriers among students different in race, class, and ability. I constantly push kids to get out of their comfort zone. I strive to be a good role model by respecting and listening to my students. I also use humor to diffuse tense situations.

Though poverty is definitely an issue in different areas of the state, I do feel that rural poverty often gets ignored. While urban poverty is without question a challenge, urban areas often have the non-profit and organizational infrastructure as well as the public transportation system in place to expand opportunities for children. In most rural areas, museums are often a half hour or more away and many of our kids have never left the county. Churches attempt to fill the gap in social services, yet often focus their limited resources within their own membership and are often unable to fully address the challenges associated with serving a large (geographically) rural area.

### **How do you advocate for students and teachers in your work?**

Education advocacy must include all stakeholders. Shortly after becoming a teacher, I discovered that each group of stakeholders was trapped on islands of advocacy. Students, parents, and educators should

be natural collaborators – a good teaching environment is a good learning environment. Teachers must do what they do best – educate. The foundation for advocacy must always be what is in the best interest of the student. As long as that is the case, then building a framework that includes parents and educators should come naturally.

### **What is EmpowerED Georgia?**

I am the co-founder and president of EmpowerED Georgia and EmpowerED Georgia Action. EmpowerED Georgia ([www.empoweredga.org](http://www.empoweredga.org)) focuses on bringing together students, parents, educators, and community members and informing them about education issues. EmpowerED Georgia Action ([www.empoweredgaaction.org](http://www.empoweredgaaction.org)) is focused on advocacy.

Last year, I reached a point where I felt that recent policies, often created by sources outside our schools, were restricting my ability to teach and negatively impacting my students' ability to learn. In one of the hardest moments of my life, I chose to leave the classroom for a year to dedicate my time and energy toward reversing these negative policies that are eroding the quality of education.

In July 2013, EmpowerED Georgia launched a *Tour Across Georgia* and we have been traveling across the state speaking to students, parents, educators, and community members. This year, I plan to travel to 56 counties throughout Georgia to "spread the word" about the negative impact policies are having in our classrooms. The response has been overwhelming, with many Georgians hungry to share their experiences and add their voices to our growing list of members. We want to put these people back in the driver's seat of education reform in the state. Whether in rural, urban, or suburban areas, Georgians want schools and teachers to have the resources to teach their kids and they want a standard of quality that is consistent across the state.

Toward this effort, EmpowerED Georgia has released a Student Bill of Rights (<http://www.empoweredgaaction.org/billofrights>), which addresses the key concerns of our members and will become the basis for crafting a truly student-focused vision for public education in Georgia.

*Georgians want schools and teachers to have the resources to teach their kids and they want a standard of quality that is consistent across the state.*

**IF YOU KNOW OF A PK-12 TEACHER YOU WOULD LIKE TO NOMINATE FOR  
THE GA NAME EDUCATOR SPOTLIGHT,  
PLEASE SEND A BRIEF EMAIL TO: [ganame2010@gmail.com](mailto:ganame2010@gmail.com)**

## BOOK REVIEW

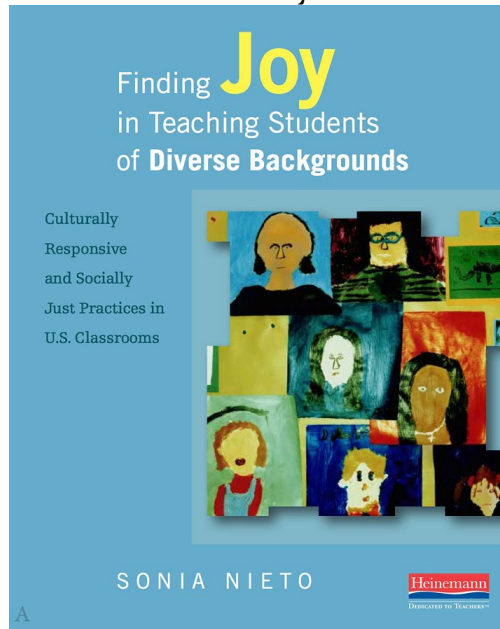
by Scott Robinson

Nieto, S. (2013). *Finding Joy in Teaching Students of Diverse Backgrounds: Culturally Responsive and Socially Just Practices in U.S. Classrooms*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. 200 pages.  
ISBN-10: 0325027153  
ISBN-13: 978-0325027159

Sonia Nieto reminds her audiences in her book, *Finding Joy in Teaching Students of Diverse Backgrounds*, that even though we teach in a time of overwhelming standards, administrative oversight, governmental regulations, and a surprising amount of data collection analysis, there is a great deal of joy and fulfillment that can be taken out of teaching. The opening to Nieto's book gives audiences a real sense of what it means to be a teacher in the public school system. She even goes as far as to write "Novice teachers who join the profession with enthusiasm and high hopes may not be prepared for what they find when they first enter a classroom" (p. 3). Nieto does not strive to undermine the public school system, rather she guides her readers through barriers such as No Child Left Behind, conventional wisdoms in the classroom, and the difficulty that teachers have bridging the gaps in age, societal structure, culture, and upbringing that exist within the public school

system. The closing in chapter one eloquently sums up the purpose of this book when a title states "Context Always Influences Teaching" (p. 17). Nieto wants her readers to be aware that context, any context, will be

a factor in who they are as a



teacher. Specifically she reminds us that a culturally responsive pedagogy and a socially aware teacher can excel in even the most rigid of systems.

With the reality of teaching in 2013 firmly set in the reader's mind, Nieto moves forward to professionals who embody the ideals of diversity and culturally responsive teaching; the people who are described by Nieto as

thriving teachers. The teachers highlighted are from a variety of backgrounds, and serve to highlight how culturally responsive teaching is a mindset and a learned behavior, nothing else. The common motif that is prevalent in these thriving teachers is that they all made some effort to branch out, in their own way they found a way to bridge gaps between themselves and their students, often even before the gaps existed.

Even though Nieto pulls no punches about the realities that teachers face, she goes to great lengths to stress that honoring a student's culture and identity, as well as nurturing their dreams will result in the success that every teacher desires. In short, an effective teacher is a reflective and culturally responsive teacher.

Scott Robinson is a student at Clayton State University.



**EDUCATORS, STUDENTS, ARTISTS,  
PARENTS/FAMILIES, ACTIVISTS-  
YES, YOU.**

**Have something to say about education?  
Have something you want to share with  
Georgia educators?**

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### **Upcoming Themes & Due Dates**

- ♦ **K-12 & Higher Education Policies & Politics  
(1/31/2014)**
- ♦ **Student Perspectives on Education  
(3/15/2014)**
- ♦ **Teacher Wellness  
(6/15/2014)**
- ♦ **Open themes  
(Anytime)**

# The Stigma of Chattel Slavery: Implications for Educators

## by Stacey French-Lee

Ananda made an important comment in the graduate diversity class in which she was enrolled. She told of how her brothers and other Indian children in the United States have become more accepted and have seen some stereotypes go away. She said her little brothers think "it's cool" to be Indian and share their culture with others at school. Ananda expressed to Malia that things would get better for Malia's son's generation because of the improvements that she has seen in her own culture. Ananda has seen and experienced rapid growth over a relatively short period of time, but as Malia expressed, for African Americans, generations have come and gone and they do not have the same story to tell. As I see it, the difference is due to the STIGMA of SLAVERY with which Americans of African Descent have been branded.

According to Link and Phelan (2001),

*[A] stigma exists when...people distinguish and label human differences...dominant cultural beliefs link labeled persons to undesirable characteristics to negative stereotypes...labeled persons are placed in distinct categories as to accomplish some degree of separation of 'us' from 'them'...[and the] labeled person experiences status loss and discrimination that leads to unequal outcomes... (p. 367)*

I believe that it is important that educators understand the root of racism towards African Americans in this country. Understanding the impact of the stigma of slavery may help in building understanding of why racism, discrimination and prejudice against descendants of enslaved Africans in America cannot be discussed, understood, taught or solved through the lens that is used for analyzing racism, discrimination and prejudice against others. Not only is it

important for teachers to understand this for themselves, but also it is important that their classroom practices are reflective of this understanding.

I believe as others' do, namely the Federal Court, that racism toward

**I believe, as others' do, namely the Federal Court, that racism toward African Americans in the United States is built on and persists because of the stigma of slavery.**

African Americans in the United States is built on and persists because of the stigma of slavery. For example, "although some 73 years have passed

since the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment and although it is clearly apparent that its chief purpose, (perhaps we may say its only real purpose) was to remove from Negroes the stigma and status of slavery and to confer upon them full rights as citizens, nevertheless, there has been a long and arduous course of litigation through the years" (Briggs et al. v. Elliott).

Further, according to William M. Carter, Jr. (2004),

*Racial profiling is best understood as a current manifestation of the historical stigma of blackness as an indicator of criminal tendencies. This stereotype arose out of, and was essential to, slavery in the United States. The demonizing of African Americans as the dangerous, uncontrollable "other" made it easier to reconcile the American ideal of liberty for all with the reality of enslavement. The myth of innate black criminality served both to dehumanize African Americans during slavery and to justify the brutal means of social control needed to*

*maintain white dominance after the end of slavery. (p. 20)*

I feel a sense of urgency on this issue for many reasons. One is the stigma of slavery and the resulting racism influences my whole life (and the lives of my family), all day each day. Another is that ordinary citizens, and great leaders have been fighting, dying, reasoning and begging for the same thing for far too long: justice. Justice not years from now, or later today or in a week, but today. In April 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. said

*For years now, I have heard the word 'Wait!' It rings in the ear of every Negro [African American] with piercing familiarity. This 'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never.' We must come to see... that justice too long delayed is justice denied.*

As educators, by acknowledging the roots of racism in the United States and the persistent consequences of the stigma of slavery today, we have an obligation to ensure that justice will be delivered and no longer delayed.

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Stacey French-Lee is a doctoral student.



## Free Minds Free Bodies: The Color of Liberation

By Jillian Ford

Sunday 7.14.2013

3:30pm

The air pressure feels different today, the day after a jury found George Zimmerman not guilty of murder for killing Trayvon Martin. I feel the energy of conscious connection between other Black folks and me – strangers with assumed ties – as we walk south on North Broadway near the Target shopping center in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood. Though this is a familiar feeling, the energy between myself and the (fewer) White people feels intensely new. I sense what I think might be guilt, or at least some questioning about the levelness of the playing field after all. There is a particular molecular frenzy that seems to me quite out of the ordinary. I have not yet identified this new sensation generated, for example, in the space between a White woman and myself as we cross paths in the toothbrush aisle at Target. It feels to me like embarrassment or sadness or humility.

Minutes later, I wonder if a White man behind me in the checkout line will blurt out that he is sorry; if he will drop to his knees sobbing for forgiveness from the woman working at the cash register, from me, from the mother behind him in line, from the teenage boy at her side. I cannot shake the force of the vibrations, and find myself in a familiar existential field of questions regarding the origin of my perceptions and the ways in which my attendant affect may contribute to the jumble of energies collecting in the short distance from where I stand and they stand. It dawns on me for a moment that perhaps the unspoken interactions are a figment of my imagination, but I crush that thought as soon as I draw it up. Certainly everyone has Trayvon on their heart this morning, I reassure myself, and do not allow my mind to consider apathy as a possible reaction to such a grave injustice. The sister working at the cash register and I exchange weary greetings, and I ask her how she's feeling. Though neither of us mention the trial, she says quietly that her pastor preached about the U.S. judicial system this morning at church, and that congregants were beside themselves in disbelief, anger, and resolve. Our eyes don't catch for long; I do not want to cry or scream, despite my overwhelming need to release some of the pressure crowding the space usually wide enough for my heart to expand joyfully.

Making my way back up North Broadway after

leaving the store successfully dry-eyed, I see two handsome, chocolate men walking towards me emoting love and confidence. As the space between us shrinks, the one with a full low beard optimistically declares that we have one day to do whatever we want; that the cops are going to take it easy on all of us today.

The three of us chuckle, and I am comforted sensing that they feel the difference in air pressure too.

I know I am not expected anywhere for at least three hours, and give thanks to the universe that I am able to continue yesterday's exploration of Chicago streets by foot, bus, and train. How different, I realize, are my thoughts today from yesterday. My outrage was in no way created last night, but it absolutely was set ablaze newly. Turning left onto West Leland Ave, I replay the events of last night in my head, though I have done so at least a dozen times already today. News of the verdict has affected us in myriad and profound ways. We are youth, parents, teachers, community activists and educational scholars, attending the 5<sup>th</sup> biannual convening of the Free Minds Free People (FMFP) conference. We have come to Chicago to engage in idea and resource sharing, to form relationships, and to imagine and create new possibilities regarding education for liberation. Many of us share an understanding that learning spaces and pedagogies can be constructed in ways that manifest ripe conditions for a more just society.

Saturday 7.13.2013

9:30pm

We are about 30 or 40 folks deep at a house party hosted by two members of the FMFP planning committee. As word of the Zimmerman (Martin?) verdict spreads through the party, folks are feeling a mix of shock, confirmation, betrayal, justification, tenacity, and on and on. Instinctively knowing – though perhaps not until this moment at the party articulating then enacting – that our brilliance is multidimensional, our energies shift dra-

matically from joyous and celebratory to devastated and determined. A young brother pulls out his electric guitar as others organize an impromptu open mic, intended to create a supportive communal space in the face of such crucial injustice. *Why would this news be released on a Saturday night?* A few folks hold one another and

cry. *What about Marissa Alexander?* Small sets discuss what this incident means vis-à-vis their responsibility to actively resist. *If Zimmerman is not guilty, then who is guilty?* Individuals

walk around dazed, making declarative statements, as though desperately holding onto some form of personhood in the context of a country that has just condoned the murder of an innocent black boy on his way home from the store with a now-iconic bag of Skittles. *Is Mamie Till guiding Sybrina Martin tonight?* We assert that "Zimmerman was never on trial; blackness was on trial," and "Trayvon Martin was just found guilty in the case of his own murder." For some of the partygoers, this is the most deeply felt public injustice in their lifetimes.

A motely crew of self-identified activists devoted to education for liberation, we have come together to share and reflect. As we gather, a community leader from Atlanta offers a fierce racial and political analysis of the implications of the case, which greatly help to frame the issues from an intersectional social justice perspective. We decide to organize a space for mourning tomorrow morning. Tomorrow is the last day of the conference.

Sunday 7.14.2013

8:30am

It is during this organically-created plenary that we create a 'zine, titled *Free Minds Free Bodies: The Color of Liberation*. And although we expect to be super pleased with the way the 'zine will look upon completion, the end product is not our primary goal this morning. Instead, we want the process of creating the 'zine to serve as a tool by which we can share our feelings and support one another. Two other conference participants from the South – an educator from Atlanta and an organizer from Durham – lead the participants through a democratic, empowering series of discussions and activities to facilitate our thoughts about the Zimmerman verdict. It is with that energy, intention, and love that we create this 'zine. We hope that you are fed and challenged by its contents; we encourage you to engage in and share your own forms of grieving, imagining, and organizing.

*I sense what I think might be guilt, or at least some questioning about the levelness of the playing field after all.*

# Past Highlights

## Heartbreak & Hope: Children, Incarceration, & an Enduring Quest for Justice **CONTINUED**

- In the U.S., about 70% of the youngest serving life without parole are African American or Latino.
- Nearly 1 in 3 Black males in their 20s is in jail or prison, on probation or parole, or otherwise under criminal justice control. Black males are eight times more likely than Whites to be incarcerated.



Such heartbreak is further exasperated when the aforementioned trends are discussed in the larger context of practices that Stevenson succinctly captures by noting:

“Our system treats you better if you are rich and guilty than poor and innocent.”

“Wealth, not culpability shapes outcomes.”

“Too many people in America are burdened with a presumption of guilt. Their race, their ethnicity, their religion, their nationality, and sometimes their poverty is seen as an indicator of danger, a basis for distrust or suspicion that marks them as some one to be feared, someone to be closely monitored.”

### Moving from Heartbreak to Hope in Four Ways

Heartbreak and hope appear to live perfectly together in a society that fosters both. Heartbreak and hope are often linked, particularly for those like Stevenson, who, as he says, have a “desire to increase the justice quotient.” Stevenson shared four ways, in order of increasing difficulty, that one might increase the justice quotient.

#### 1. Be proximate.

Proximity to an issue, a situation, or a person can heighten one’s awareness. Without being proximate, we do not see the nuances and miss the complexity. Be a reflective witness, a listener, a strategic storyteller. We must work to connect and engage in small or extensive ways, as doing so can enhance perspective.

#### 2. Be willing to understand the problems that matter to us and be willing to change the narrative.

In the U.S., we have not done a very good job of embracing people who have been victims of our excess, our abuse, our bias, our discrimination. We have also perpetuated a narrative of criminality specific to certain populations. For instance, in the 1990s, criminologists talked about juveniles, particularly Black and Brown, as “super predators,” claiming such children were not really children but excessively violent impulsive deviants. Despite researchers’ later admission that they were wrong, the narrative persists. We must understand that all children are children.

Also, in order to understand the context of justice, we must talk honestly about racial injustice and where we have been in the U.S. To those ends, four historic periods require our attention:

First, the legacy of [chattel] slavery. We cannot talk about the criminal justice system without an incisive critique of the institution that grounds the racial legacy in the U.S.

Second, the subsequent reign of terror and terrorism (threatened and actualized) during and after the era of Reconstruction (including institutionalizing Jim Crow laws). For many in the U.S., threatened terror and acts of terrorism predate September 11, 2001.

Third, the Civil Rights Movement, while notable for its victories towards justice, was fraught with humiliation and trauma. In South Africa, the process of Truth and Reconciliation was built into the process of the nation’s acquired freedom from apartheid. This process of reconciliation involved deep work around recognizing, acknowledging, and healing from the traumas of



The Equal Justice Initiative is a private, nonprofit organization that

provides legal representation to indigent defendants and prisoners who have been denied fair and just treatment in the legal system. EJI litigates on behalf of condemned prisoners, juvenile offenders, people wrongly convicted or charged with violent crimes, poor people denied effective representation, and others whose trials are marked by racial bias or prosecutorial misconduct. EJI works with communities that have been marginalized by poverty and discouraged by unequal treatment. EJI is located in Montgomery, AL.

To learn more about EJI  
Go to [eji.org](http://eji.org)

**CONTINUED ...**

# Past Highlights

## Heartbreak & Hope: Children, Incarceration, & an Enduring Quest for Justice **CONTINUED**

apartheid before moving forward into a more liberated nation. No such extensive work occurred in the U.S., which simply moved forward from slavery without this crucial work, consequently, the results of legal mandates for justice have often been limited, unrealized, or denied.

Fourth, mass incarceration has emerged as a continuation of unjust policies, practices, and presumptions disproportionately affecting major populations in U.S. society.

### 3. We have to believe in some things that we have not seen.

A threat to justice is hopelessness. This level of work entails a high level orientation of the spirit. It includes being a witness with a persistently hopeful orientation, despite the acts of others to dehumanize. We do not always know how our own integral actions can connect with and shift others.

### 4. We need to be willing to commit ourselves to things that are uncomfortable to create opportunities for justice and extend the legacy of those that came before us.

Humans are designed for comfort. Nevertheless, we must be deliberate in doing the uncomfortable. Every person is more than their worst act. Being uncomfortable positions us in ways that open us up to the brokenness in and around our lives.

According to Stevenson:

"It's how you treat the condemned, disfavored, and marginalized that can be the ultimate marker of justice. One must be brave and courageous by being willing to be proximate, changing the narrative on race, believing in things we have not seen, and being willing to be uncomfortable."

### Hope

A part of the enduring quest for justice requires an equally enduring sense of hope. Hope is what happens when heartbreak can heal and the tenets of democracy and justice succeed in cultivating the humane. From EJI's vantage point and that of their clients', key court cases, such as those offered in the side bar, as well as their ongoing efforts to litigate, expose, and represent the issues that demand our attention are manifestations of interrupting the cycle of heartbreak and taking hopeful steps towards justice.

### Hear Bryan Stevenson for yourself. Go to:

- **Brayan Stevenson's TED Talk**  
<http://www.eji.org/TED>
- **Interview with Bill Moyers featuring Bryan Stevenson**  
<http://billmoyers.com/episode/full-show-and-justice-for-some/>
- **Interview with Bill Moyers featuring Michelle Alexander & Bryan Stevenson**  
<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/04022010/watch.html>



Photo by Richard Ross

### Key Court Cases

#### *Gideon v. Wainwright*, 1963

In *Gideon*, the Supreme Court declared it an "obvious truth" that "in our adversary system of criminal justice, any person haled into court, who is too poor to hire a lawyer, cannot be assured a fair trial unless counsel is provided for him." The Court has since held that, in addition to indigent defendants facing a felony charge, those charged with misdemeanors who could be jailed, convicted defendants filing a first appeal, and juveniles charged with delinquency all have a constitutional right to counsel.

#### *Roper v. Simmons*, 2005

The U.S. Constitution bars imposition of the death penalty on juveniles under age 18 at the time of the crime.

#### *Miller v. Alabama*, 2012

EJI challenged the constitutionality of life without parole sentences for children, most of which are given as part of mandatory sentencing proceeding. The Supreme Court banned mandatory life without parole sentences for children.

### Recent Report

In 2010, EJI released a report, "Illegal Racial Discrimination in Jury Selection: A Continuing Legacy," which is the most comprehensive study of racial bias in jury selection since the United States Supreme Court tried to limit the practice in *Batson v. Kentucky* in 1986. Nearly 135 years after Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1875 to eliminate racial discrimination in jury selection, people of color continue to be excluded from jury service because of their race, especially in serious criminal trials and death penalty cases.

See [www.eji.org](http://www.eji.org) for additional details.



# Past Highlights

## A Recap of My Visit Home: The 2013 NAME Conference

by Rhina Fernandes Williams

It is important, from time to time, to go home and be surrounded by the people that know you without an introduction. To be among people who never need to hear you explain where your loyalties and commitments lie because they already know. To have dialogues that don't have to begin at the beginning. Such times uplift me and remind me about why I do this work and with whom I do it. I know how important it is for me to seek out this space when I am able and to allow my soul and my truth to be out and free and understood without an explanation. This November I had the opportunity to go to Oakland, CA, to attend the annual conference of the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME). I choose this one conference every year if I have the opportunity for all the reasons I stated above. The conference theme for this year was ***Erasing the Shadows, Embracing the Light: Re/Visioning Multicultural Education***.

Going to this conference each year is like going home for me. It is a place where I am surrounded by strangers who are immediately family because our loyalties and commitments are to the same causes. No matter how different our approaches, we are there because we believe in equity as the means to freedom. We believe in children and teachers and education. We understand these fundamentals about each other and begin our dialogues from there. Needless to say, I was thrilled at the prospect of sharing a hotel room with two women who were friends, colleagues and GA-NAME members, Mari Roberts



Drs. Sleeter & Williams

and Morgan Faison, and also at the prospect of running into people whose work makes them celebrities in my eyes. And I was not disappointed. The NAME conference lived up to all my expectations of a thought-provoking, refreshing, rejuvenating, FUN and thoroughly engaging experience. As much as I love the Bay area, I found little time for sight-seeking. Great connections were made with new people around the country, committed to the same work and deeper connections were built with my GA-NAME co-members over good food and great beverages.

The additional highlights for me were (1) James Banks' talk on *Teach the Children to Know, To Care and To Act* (he cited Paulo Freire's work and I was interested to notice a bit of a shift in Banks' perspectives); (2) Christine Sleeter's talk about her new book ***Confronting Injustice with Critical Research and Action***; and (3) (This one made me giddy) Angela Davis' talk about *The Meaning of Freedom and Other Difficult Dialogues* in which she discussed the systemic issues that lead to an overrepresentation of Black and marginalized males who are incarcerated. As I furiously took notes during her talk, I realized that I was writing down direct quotes because she stated everything perfectly. One quote I choose to share with you is:

***"What good is knowledge if it does not make life better for someone else?"***

**-Angela Davis**

She's on my short list of role models who inspire me to keep going and have hope for a more socially just and socially conscious society. I'm all in for doing the hard work that she and so many others have done and continue to do in various arenas for the same cause.

Yes, indeed, attending the NAME conference was like going home to visit with family where I was fed well literally as well as emotionally, socially and intellectually. If you have never been, I highly recommend you go to next year's conference in Tucson, AZ, Nov. 5-9, 2014. It is bound to be equally re-energizing and I hope to see you there. I cannot resist leaving you with one more gift of words of wisdom from Angela Davis...

***"Education is most importantly for the imagination of new futures."***



Angela Davis speaks



# Past Highlights

## Navigating NAME: A Second Timer's Tips on the Annual NAME Conference by Morgan Faison

My recent trip to the NAME conference in Oakland, California provided me with just the right mix of information and inspiration to continue my social justice work! I was welcomed by my multicultural education colleagues with the kind of warm greetings and smiles that are exchanged between comrades. Similarly, I was delighted to see and chat with some of my favorite scholars and writers like Carl Grant, Sonia Nieto, and William Howe. I would highly recommend this conference to activists, teachers, community leaders, graduate students, teacher educators and others who are committed to social transformation for equity. Here are a few tips for prospective attendees as well as some brief snapshots of my experience this year:

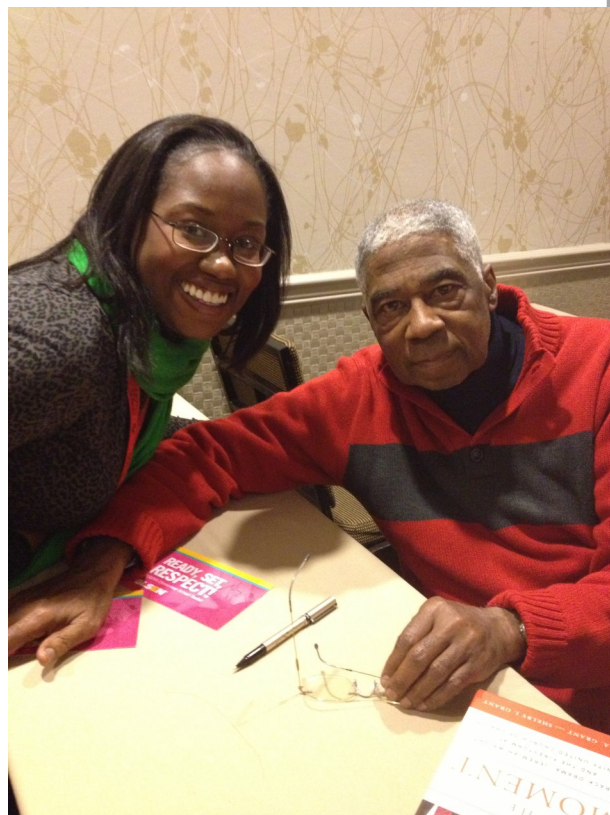
**Check [www.nameorg.org](http://www.nameorg.org) for an announcement that provides details on the Rose Duhon-Sells Scholarship.** This need-based, competitive scholarship covers the cost of conference registration for graduate students. Online applications must be submitted before the end of early bird registration, usually in late September.

**Consider registering for an Intensive Professional Development Institute.** Intensive Institutes are offered throughout the NAME conference and provide an extended opportunity to learn from NAME scholars and activists who share their experiences and provide useful resources on a range of topics. I attended two informative Institutes; one on writing for publication in multicultural education and another on strategies to develop a multicultural education course for higher education. Costs of the Intensive Institutes vary.

**Don't forget to schedule time for screening the films selected for the NAME Multicultural Film Festival.** Multicultural film screenings are held throughout the conference and sometimes feature film premiers, director's cuts, and opportunities for discussion with the filmmaker. One personal highlight from this year's conference was my screening of Shakti Butler's film, "Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequity." Shakti Butler was present for the screening and paused the film at discussion points to lead us in sharing our reflections and responses. I plan to use this film similarly to facilitate discussion amongst my undergraduates on the systemic nature of racism.

**Look for a variety of session types to attend.** There is no need to be bored at the NAME conference! NAME sessions are facilitated in a variety of ways from traditional paper and poster presentations to interactive workshops and roundtable discussions. For example, I facilitated a session on my dissertation proposal as a work-in-progress and allowed for time to receive feedback and suggestions from my audience.

**Volunteer to help at the conference or be a mentor.** Service to the conference is a great way to give back as well as network with other conference attendees.



*Morgan with new friend, Dr. Carl Grant.*



# News Watch

## Legislation

### GA Schools Shoestring Budget Campaign

*Stop Putting Our Schools On Shoestring Budgets*



**You probably know that since 2003, the state has cut over \$7.6 billion dollars from our schools – clearly, many of our schools are on shoestring budgets.**

But what most Georgians do not know is how these cuts are negatively impacting students across the state. According to a recent Georgia Budget and Policy Institute (GBPI) survey:

- **71%** of Georgia school districts have **cut their school calendar** to fewer than the standard 180 days
- **95%** of districts have **increased class sizes** since 2009
- **80%** will **furlough teachers** this year
- **38%** are **cutting back on programs that help low-performing students**

**The Georgia Constitution states “that an adequate public education for the citizens shall be a primary obligation of the state.”**

Looking at the statistics above, our kids do not have access to a quality public education. Our state officials are not meeting their constitutional and moral obligation to support our public schools.

To raise awareness of this issue and to promote action, EmpowerED Georgia has partnered with FACE It Cobb (a grassroots group from Cobb County) to launch a ***Stop Putting Our Schools On Shoestring Budgets*** campaign.

**We’re asking Georgians to mail a shoestring and a letter to each of their state legislators and the Governor.** With simple shoestrings, we have a strong, committed symbol for our education funding concerns.

## News Watch

# STOP PUTTING OUR SCHOOLS ON SHOESTRING BUDGETS!

AN ACTION CAMPAIGN ORGANIZED BY EMPOWERED GEORGIA ACTION AND FACE IT COBB

### Shoestring Campaign

***Mail Your State Legislators and the Governor Shoestrings and Letters!***

Tell your state legislators and the Governor to 'Stop Putting Our Schools on Shoestring Budgets!' With simple shoestrings, we have a strong, committed symbol for our education funding concerns to share with others and especially our elected officials.

**#StopShoestringBudgets**

### Day at the Capitol

***Join Us at the Capitol on  
Monday, January 27, 2014!***

**What:** Wear green and bring some shoestrings

**When:** Monday, January 27, 2014 @ 9am

**Where:** Room 216 at the Capitol

**Who:** Parents, educators, students, and community members who care about public education

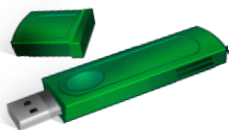
*Please RSVP at the website below.*

Get involved with our 'Shoestring Campaign' and RSVP for our 'Day at the Capitol' at:

**shoestringcampaign.com**







# Resources

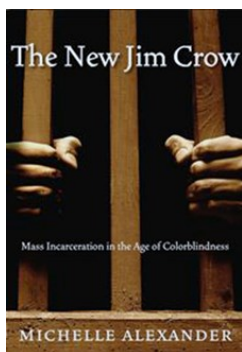


## Books

Alexander, M. (2010, 2012). *The New Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the era of colorblindness*. New York: The New Press

Legal scholar Michelle Alexander argues that "we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it." By targeting black men through the War on Drugs and decimating communities of color, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control—relegating millions to a permanent second-class status—even as it formally adheres to the principle of colorblindness.

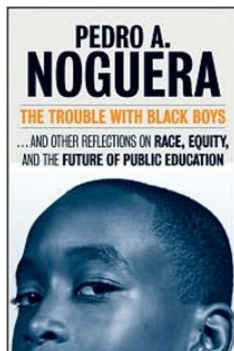
(From [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))



Noguera, P. A. (2008). *The Trouble With Black Boys and Other Reflections on Race, Equity and the Future of Public Education*.

New York: Wiley and Sons.

Educators, who should be committed to helping young people realize their intellectual potential as they make their way toward adulthood, have a responsibility to help them find ways to expand identities related to race so that they can experience the fullest possibility of all that they may become. In this brutally honest—yet ultimately hopeful—book Pedro Noguera examines the many facets of race in schools and society and reveals what it will take to improve outcomes for all students. (From [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))

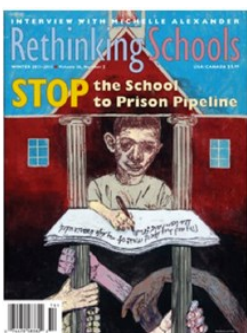


## Article

Noguera, P.A. (2003) "Schools, Prisons and the Social Implications of Punishment." *Theory to Practice*, 42(4), 341-350.

## Issues

Rethinking Schools. (Winter 2011-2012). Stop the school to prison pipeline. *Rethinking Schools Magazine*, 26(2).



This issue includes the following articles:

- \* Schools and the New Jim Crow: An Interview with Michelle Alexander
- \* Arresting Development: Zero Tolerance and the Criminalization of Children
- \* The Classroom-to-Prison Pipeline
- \* Teaching the Prison Industrial Complex
- \* Haniyah's Story: A 17 year old reveals the impact of having a parent behind bars
- \* Teaching Haniyah: How can teachers support students with incarcerated parents, siblings, or relatives?

[www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org)

## ORGANIZATIONS

### The Children's Defense Fund (CDF)

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/>

CDF grew out of the Civil Rights Movement under the leadership of Marian Wright Edelman, the first Black woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar. CDF has challenged the United States to raise its standards by improving policies and programs for children. CDF has become known for careful research on children's survival, protection and development in all racial and income groups and for independent analyses of how federal and state policies affect children, their families and their communities. (From Website)

CDF provides FREE national reports, local fact sheets, and other media resources.

### Initiatives

#### *Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Campaign*

Aimed at reducing the detention and incarceration by increasing preventive supports and services children need, such as access to quality early childhood development and education services and accessible, comprehensive health and mental health coverage. (From Website)

#### *Leave No Child Behind®*

The LNCB mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. (pre-dates federal No Child Left Behind policies.)

### Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)

[www.eji.org](http://www.eji.org) (See pages 1, 10, & 11 this issue)

### Georgia Appleseed Center for Law and Justice

<http://www.gaappleseed.org/>

Georgia Appleseed connects top private practice lawyers, corporate counsel, law schools, civic leaders, and other professionals throughout Georgia to tackle difficult social problems at their root causes. (From Website)

### Initiative

#### *Effective Student Discipline: Keeping Kids in Class*

<http://www.gaappleseed.org/initiatives/esd/>

Studies have demonstrated that 'zero tolerance' school policies and other factors have triggered a growing reliance by school officials on the most stringent administrative sanctions available or on referrals to the court system for a growing number of student behaviors. Some argue that the schools use overly stringent disciplinary options for relatively minor incidents....The phenomenon of arguably excessive school disciplinary action disproportionately impacts disadvantaged youth, especially young black males. ... Completed in June, 2011, Effective School Discipline: Keeping Kids in Class documents the findings of the 18-month study of student discipline policies and practices in Georgia's K-12 public school system. It includes analysis of millions of data points provided by the Georgia Department of Education. (From Website)





# Upcoming Events

## 5th Annual Alabama NAME Regional Conference

March 14, 2014

University of Montevallo, main campus  
Montevallo, AL

The conference theme, **Bridging the (Un)common Core**, seeks to promote critical dialogue around the constructs of "rigor" and "relevance" by engaging Common Core State Standards (CCSS) alignments for diverse P-12 stakeholders across rural, suburban, and urban contexts.

CEU/LPC credits available.

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS DUE JANUARY 25, 2014**

Contact: [tlp@montevallo.edu](mailto:tlp@montevallo.edu)

The Alonzo A. Crim Center for  
Urban Educational Excellence  
presents the

**9th Annual Sources of  
Educational Excellence in Urban  
Education Conference**  
Georgia State University  
Atlanta, GA

Theme:

**Strengthening the Community of  
Believers: A Legacy of Excellence**

**Save-the-Date**  
**April 19, 2014**

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS DUE FEBRUARY 21, 2014**

<http://education.gsu.edu/cuee>

email [sourcescuee@gmail.com](mailto:sourcescuee@gmail.com)

(404) 490-CUEE

NAME National Conference



**24th Annual International Conference**

**Nov. 6-10, 2014**

**Tucson, AZ**

### Why Tucson? Why Now? Why Go?

In response, see the letter below from the NAME Board of Directors distributed November 15, 2013.

NAME is planning the next conference for Tucson, AZ on November 5-9, 2014. Many of you are aware of the racist and mono-culturalist efforts by Arizona politicians and Tucson school board members to ban ethnic studies as well as a large number of books on critical education and Mexican American history. Because of these repressive measures, many of us had felt that it was our duty to boycott Arizona and Tucson.

But in talking with activists there—including activists from the public-school classrooms, and those at the University of Arizona in Tucson, and those who have just founded the Tucson NAME chapter—one plea has been resoundingly clear: come to Tucson, act in solidarity, and create a presence of NAME as part of their efforts to fight back. There is urgency in this struggle, because the verdict of the right-wing school board has not been final and important changes are still taking place (see the Los Angeles Times article below). In fact, in fall 2014 the Ninth Circuit Court will once again take up the challenge to the ban on ethnic studies.

We have heeded the call and we aim to organize a NAME conference that gathers us onsite to generate great energy and enthusiasm for the advancement of multicultural education and in support of ethnic studies in the Southwest.

We know that NAME will receive an enthusiastic welcome from the deep and diverse community of Tucson and nearby southern Arizona communities reaching all the way to Nogales, Mexico. In Tucson we will have an opportunity to explore the struggle of the border, beginning with the US-Mexico border but also the borders that separate and oppress—from continuing Jim Crow voting practices to gender oppression to the barriers of class and power.

We call on all of you, the entire NAME membership, to join us in envisioning the kind of transformative and inspiring gathering that the Tucson conference could be. We are needed now and there as much as ever. More information on the conference, including the conference theme and ways to get involved, will be announced soon.

Sincerely,  
NAME Board of Directors

**Go to**  
**[www.nameorg.org](http://www.nameorg.org)**

Los Angeles Times:

"Fighting to end Tucson 'ban' on books, Latino activist wins"

<http://www.latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/la-et-jc-latino-activist-tucson-ban-on-books-20131107,0,4089395.story#axzz2kO3Mq8fi>

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# Submission Guidelines

## Submit to

[ganame2010@gmail.com](mailto:ganame2010@gmail.com)

Subject line: Newsletter Submission

Your submission will be reviewed and considered for the newsletter and subject to editorial edits by Newsletter Team members. The content will be vetted by several factors including alignment with chapter/national mission, quality of the representation of ideas, language bias, and length.

## Format

Submissions should follow the following format:

Include title of article, name of author(s), any affiliation(s), and contact information for lead contact person (email/phone)

Indicate section of newsletter for submission (See Sections for Submission.)

250-750 typewritten words (for written submissions)

12 point font (Times New Roman or Old Century Schoolbook)

Language/Terminology: Please refer to APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition for Reducing Bias in Language <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/14/>

Use of citations/References where appropriate (Include Reference list)

## Sections for Submissions

### News Watch

Features commentary on current/timeless educational issues. Commentary must first include the various perspectives on the issues followed by the author's position and supporting argument.

### Doing the Work:

Educator, Community, Research

Spotlight on educators/teaching, organization in the community, or researcher(s) doing critical work on matters related to education.

### Visual Art

Visual commentary on educational issues in the form of graphic art/cartoons.

### Additional Arts representation

Arts-based commentary offered through including but not limited to poetry, monologues, written music/lyrics, and so forth.

### Book/Multimedia Reviews

Reviews of books, videos, film, plays, and other media that inform and supplement understanding of ideas, concepts, and issues. Reviews should connect practice and theory.

### Resource Highlights

Detail resources for birth-5 and families, P-16+ educators, and students relevant to Multicultural Education

### International/Global

Address issues in global/international education that affect local and national education trends in the U.S.

## Content

Submissions should address the following considerations:

- ◆ Must speak to excellence and equity in education.
- ◆ May offer issues, concerns, or problems but must include solutions and problem solving ideas/initiatives or critical questions for further inquiry.
- ◆ Links to the genres of multicultural education within or across your content area/sphere of influence.

## Upcoming Submission Due Dates

January 31st

March 15th

June 15th

## Upcoming Themes:

- ◆ Education Politics
- ◆ Student Perspectives on Education
- ◆ Teacher Wellness

