

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Making a RUCCAS or How is an Urban Community Change Axis like a Writing Desk?

by Hannah Ashley and Katie Solic



YES ALUMNI, STUDENTS AND PROFS AT THE FREE MINDS, FREE PEOPLE IN BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, IN JULY OF 2017. (LEFT TO RIGHT) KHALIL SUARAY, DR. HANNAH ASHLEY, AKINRINSOLA SOLEBO, MIKHI WOODS, DR. LAQUANA COOKE, JESSICA AMARANT, NORMA MONESTINO-FUENTES, OLIVIA CAMPBELL, JALYSE THOMAS, LILAH SABER AND NAKYNA GARFIELD-DESPHY

How is a raven like a writing desk? Lewis Carroll has the Mad Hatter ask Alice. Spoiler alert: there is no answer. It was originally written as nonsense. If there has ever been a time when we as educators must swim through noise and madness (whether authentic or put on for political purposes), this era is it. As Kurt Anderson (2017) captures it, we have become a country which disdains “the reality-based community,” which prefers “truthiness”—the feel of authenticity, without all the inconvenience of actual facts. Anderson describes our descent into madness as foundering into the depths on the 1960’s left-counter culture, followed by the academic left’s Foucauldian deconstruction of knowledge, then capitalized on by the right-wing media (as well as leftish Oprah-like wishing our worlds into being), social media and the bots that love it, the Christian Right—and voila: here we are at the Mad Tea Party.

The Mad Tea party is the (un)logic that continues out and past the far end of market-based logic. As Rapheal Randall, director of Youth United for Change, one of our long-time RUCCAS collaborators, pointed out recently at a conference, we are probably witnessing the end of commodity/colonial/racial capitalism. There simply are almost no more markets to which the global economy can expand. So they must contract, and with that, there will be consolidations of power and resource. But it is imperative that those who will lose out not notice as the contraction occurs; it is essential that the masses stay confused. We need not describe our current President’s Mad Hatter “Make American Great Again” hat and the delusions and lies and magical thinking that he has tuned into and amplified.

We are not shocked (ok, we were shocked, but we are over that now). Of course the king of the Mad Tea party is mad. But how do we help ourselves and the youth and others with whom we partner to name and analyze the world with the Mad Tea party happening all around us, louder and louder? Organize, teach organizing, lead with others on teaching organizing. It is not an antidote, but it is a counter-logic. The logic of democratic participation is the counter to the logic/not logic of the market. It is slow, messy, inefficient, and real.

We need our own not-mad (but maybe angry) party, a reality-based one, an organized one, and so we made one. We have started to make a RUCCAS, the Rustin Urban Community Change Axis. We propose that universities—particularly but not exclusively colleges of education—join with national and local movements to resist, and to reconstruct the democratic social compact. And we mean something different than the neoliberal calls for civic responsibility (see, for example, the American Association of State Colleges and University’s recent lead address, “Can Higher Education Recapture the Elusive American Dream?”).

Producing and being educator-organizers, in our time especially, can’t be done “sensibly,” following tradition and with civility. It needs to be raucous; we need to make a ruckus, which traditional education, particularly colleges of education, is not used to doing. The challenge to the current neoliberal regime, especially from a college of

education, implies a break from hierarchical governance/top-down decision-handing/divested and disconnected perspectives on communities and their schools. This is the raucous ruckus – working alongside communities, en mass, authentically balancing a multitude of needs and values and placing democratic participation at the center of educating educators. Based on our experience, we think radical educators at all levels can lead colleges of education and all institutions of learning toward this alternate logic, and we are building that plane as we fly it in our region.

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RUCCAS is named after our native son Bayard Rustin (born and raised in West Chester, Pennsylvania). Rustin was a prominent organizer in the civil rights movement, a spokesperson for nonviolent social justice movements, and an artist; he is often referred to as the architect of the 1963 March on Washington, although he often took a back seat to others because of being an out gay Black man in the 1950’s and 60’s.

Rustin is a role model for us in several ways. First, he managed to coordinate thousands of people and hundreds of groups by showing up where the people were, by word of mouth, by phone and index cards—and doing the hard, sometimes boring, but ultimately rewarding work of figuring out details, following up, and connecting with others to develop shared understandings and make things happen. So when it feels like (or we are told), *Well, the College of Ed just doesn’t have the time/resources to work with the community; we already work with schools and that’s hard enough*, it’s good to remember: March on Washington without a single computer. Secondly, he lived his intersectional reality—always Black, always gay—and yet made decisions based on his best thinking about how his mind and voice could best have an influence on the world in that moment. Sometimes that meant staying in the background and leading from behind. We (two White women, one of us with bi-racial children, another of us queer and Jewish) are not suggesting people remain closeted or that our analyses can be race-neutral. Rather, in a race-toxic country that has flourished based on racial capitalism (Robinson, 1983) since its inception, it seems important for universities to lead from behind and for White folks to step up our labor and back the creation of organizations with the lived realities of people of Color front and center, with a clear understanding of history and power, with the active leadership of many but without essentializing or freezing up because we might be criticized (this article, for example, is with permission based on a presentation drafted by several others who don’t share our

racial, socioeconomic background, and other lived experiences).

RUCCAS was founded in 2016 but its components grew in the years of liberal Obama-era stasis and conservative push-back. Before we started calling ourselves RUCCAS, our dean provided funds to support the formulation of an “urban strategy” to have a positive effect in the urban communities with which we worked, but did not explicitly ask us to work *with* those communities to formulate it. Truth be told, the College was likely expecting a bringing together and coordinating of our various programs, including the previous, disparate work of some of us on this article, and originally only involving university faculty in the conversation. However, while sewing together various field placements, courses, and extracurricular projects may result in more coherent urban education programming, it is not a coherent strategy for community change.

We knew that the answers didn’t reside entirely in our state-school ivory tower. So we occupied the request for a strategy, and brought together allies—including students, community organization leaders, staff and faculty—to figure out what seemed to be lacking in urban community change work in our region, and what our university could do to fill that gap. Ultimately—and one of the points of this article is to argue that—while the College of Education was and is very supportive of the vision and mission that emerged, RUCCAS couldn’t quite fit in among the requirements of accreditation, assessment and budget in a college of education.

RUCCAS is a university-community center whose mission is to *support the building of power for Southeastern PA metropolitan communities, specifically but not exclusively Global Majority/communities of color and low-income urban communities, through providing together new and mid-career urban community change professionals-- particularly urban youth workers, artists, and cross-sector racial and economic justice workers-- credential-bearing educational pathways and supportive, healing spaces and opportunities for renewal.* It doesn’t sound much like a college of education mission. Yet.

RUCCAS is now housed and supported by our College of Interdisciplinary Studies at WCU. The vision of RUCCAS, created by its members, is to have community and collective impact: *a sustainable hub for “urban change-makers,” an enduring and robust institution that authentically and mutually meets the needs of multiple WCU entities and Philadelphia neighborhoods and organizations, where a deeply multiracial and cross-class alliance of youth and adults with a multiplicity of professional expertise and lived experiences engage in practices to further develop their own and each other’s abilities to leverage assets and resources in and outside the community to cultivate security and vibrancy, trust and relationship, and equity and power.* RUCCAS is composed of member organizations that share a commitment to creating educational pathways for urban community change-makers, including but not exclusively teacher educators, and of people who themselves are already urban community change-makers and are looking for

support in continuing to fight those fights. We are new as an entity, so those pathways and support mechanisms are still in development, but below we will discuss some of the rationales for our existence and a few interconnections already occurring among member programs. Although RUCCAS is not housed in college of ed, these interconnections are having a growing, though admittedly ad hoc, imperfect and improvisational, impact on our education programs and work in the region.

Q: When a university “disses” you, what do you get? A: A disposition.

One political and historical rationale that makes sense to college of education administrators is self-defense. Harvey Kantor (2017), reminds us that around the time of the Great Society, Americans gave up on solving inequality directly. Instead, we hung our hats on education. Sometime in the 1960’s our country gave up on solving housing, health, socio-economic, and racial injustice *per se*, and put all our eggs in the basket of education, “the great equalizer.” Educators of every political stripe know the impossibility of this cultural myth quite well. It’s *truthy*, but not *truth*. But in response to what became a regular assault on us as educators for failing in every conceivable way, we decided to no longer just be responsible for “educating youth,” but to be the everything to everyone. The movements are as varied as standardized testing, (surface-level) parent involvement, “no excuses” education, and university-community engagement. Some of these “innovations” work, to a degree, in some contexts, for a few.

Higher education is full of pockets of critique of the neoliberal, but we have not been at the forefront of the dirty, on-the-ground fights to take back our schools.

Barbara Ferman and co-authors (2017), in their new collection, *The Fight for America’s Schools: Grassroots Organizing in Education*, articulate education’s recent path, with its market-based DeVos logic of “choice” and “accountability.” They also provide some countering case studies of democratic engagement of teachers, students, communities, and organizations that have pushed back on this “apparently logical system” (7), a system that, like the Mad Tea party when each attendee shifts down one seat, only gives a clean cup to the person at the head of the line. What is notable in Ferman et al’s narrative is the conspicuous absence of higher education and colleges of education in particular. This gap is not because individuals and centers housed at universities don’t focus their research or advocacy on public education—they do. But higher education writ large has been *docilely following* or even supporting the logic of “racing to the top” along with think-tankers and Gates-Zuckerbergs, rather than *leading alongside* their activist grassroots constituents. Higher education is full of pockets of critique of the neoliberal, but

we have not been at the forefront of the dirty, on-the-ground fights to take back our schools. In our own self-interest we must move from education grounded in the context of community to being leaders with community in community change. Supporting pathways for community change agents is not extra; it's mission.

A second rationale for the essential nature of this type of coalition work, despite it seeming "off-mission" for colleges of education, is that the logic of democratic participation is a dispositional and structural counter to the mad-market (un)logic in which education functions. The educational context in which we founded RUCCAS and the groups that are its members is the city of Philadelphia. Philly represents a microcosm of the challenges that face many school systems in urban centers, and the "solutions" that have followed the market logics. The eighth largest school district in the United States, with over 202,500 students in 339 schools, faces intractable and persistent issues, including the largest (and highly racialized) state-level school spending gap between rich and poor districts in the country (Mosankis, 2017), and deep budget cuts that have both increased class size and reduced critical staff in positions such as nurses, counselors, librarians, let alone ignored crises such as lead and asbestos in schools. In turn, trends toward standardization and privatization have resulted in the adoption of scripted curricula and top-down professional development, as well as schools being labeled as "failing" and subsequently being closed, re-staffed, or converted to charter schools, all of which is disproportionately impacting low income communities and communities of color (Buras, 2011; Lipman, 2011).

At the same time colleges of education continue to prepare preservice teachers who are overwhelmingly white (Milner, 2006; 2010; Sleeter, 2001), have limited experience in participating in cross-racial and cross-cultural relationships (Keengwe, 2010), and bring with them deficit perspectives and discourses about urban schools, communities, and students (Amos, 2011; Groff & Peters, 2012; Lazar, 2007). This, on the whole, has been true of our own university, West Chester, part of the State System of Higher Education, and a former normal school at which a great many of our students are pre-service or in-service teachers, so our education programs are integral to the entire university.

However, sitting at the nexus of the Philadelphia education context and the lived experience gap between K-12 youth and many of our preservice teachers lies a longstanding, rich, and vibrant local educator activist community, including both groups that have formed and pushed back on the neoliberal education agenda, and individual community members and university faculty who have worked in this area. Some of this work is profiled, in fact, in Ferman et al's book and in other research (see, for example Stern and Brown, 2016).

Knock knock. Who's there? Ink. Ink who? Incubator

In partnership with these Philadelphia educator-activist-organizer communities, RUCCAS-affiliated organizations have started to coalesce around a logic of democratic participation and practices. This coming together is offering an important sense of identity grounded in an essential set of dispositions for our time. As involved faculty and students, we share a commitment to do the messy work, on the ground, within the communities we are working to fortify, sometimes leading, but more often listening, learning, and backing. And by recognizing and naming our shared counter-logic, by linking our democratic participatory practices, and by leveraging our individual relationships and resources, we are building our not-mad tea party to be "incubating and sustaining" (Ritchie, 2012) for one another.



SCHOOL FUNDING DEMONSTRATION

One of those member organizations is the Youth Empowerment and Urban Studies (YES) program, which Hannah co-founded and currently directs. Another is the WCU Urban Education Fellowship (UEF), which Katie co-founded and currently co-directs. Our colleagues who drafted an early presentation on which this article is based are faculty or staff affiliated with RUCCAS, including Kyra, who is long-time staff at a community organization called Need in Deed; Bernard, who teaches in YES and runs a poetry club for youth in Coatesville, PA; and Kathleen, who teaches in YES and co-founded and co-directs UEF with Katie. Each of these separate projects (and we represent just some of the moving parts of RUCCAS) are based on practices of democratic participation. Together, they reinforce a counter-logic to the (un)logic of the mad market, not through classroom-based critique but through on-the-ground community.

Youth Empowerment and Urban Studies

YES was founded in 2011-2012 as an interdisciplinary, community-engaged academic minor open to all majors with a particular focus on helping to prepare urban educators. WCU, partnering with the School District of Philadelphia, obtained a mini-grant from AASCU (Association of State Colleges and Universities) in 2009 which spurred its development. RUCCAS currently houses YES, and its mission is “to amplify through study and action a critical understanding of the role youth can play in social change in Philadelphia.” Like many community-based programs, one goal of YES is to contribute to making real community-based change in our local urban areas, but a more central goal is to develop “change-makers.” Students take a three-course core sequence, and three more directed electives. The intro course, YES 250, moves students to reconceptualize “what is urban” (our students who grew up in urban areas need this work as much as their suburban counterparts), consider the operations of personal, interpersonal and institutional “-isms,” and begin to form connections as a cohort through “youth worker resource groups.” The next two courses are field-based. YES 300 includes theories of Freire, Gramsci and others that are made concrete by reading about strategies ranging from Youth Participatory Action Research to youth organizing, while students are in weekly field with one of our over a dozen community partners. In our capstone, YES 301: Seminar in Youth-Led Media, students learn practical skills of video, podcasting and gaming in the context of field work at critical urban youth media organizations.

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Our partner organizations vary in mission and practice. For example, one is a youth-led organizing project, another a teacher development program rooted in Freirian service-learning, while a third has a stated mission to support very concrete traditional objectives, such as tutoring and college access; some are community centers and YMCA’s; others are arts- and media-based, and a few are now based on organizing on campus. Through sharing in class their struggles and successes in field, YES students experience a variety of strength-based responses to the needs of urban youth and communities.

Some of the field placements work out extremely well, in the immediate sense of contributing to the actual community. Recent YES 300 students have led teens at a community center to sponsor a town hall for their teachers

and parents around racist, classist and adultist practices that they experience daily at their schools. Another YES 300 student, a man in recovery, mentored a young woman through her senior project on addiction, which she herself was facing. Some YES 301 students are placed with the media program at a school for pushed out youth, where they have produced videos on police violence or bullying. Others serve as near-peer mentors at our locally-grown social justice/media “iCAMP.”

Others don’t work out so well. Two recent YES 300 students worked with a weak student government organization at a Philadelphia charter high school (one was herself a former student there) to try moving them to be a stronger and more social-action oriented group. Though the partnership was developed by request of the school principal, staffing changes, cancellations, and lack of support meant that students sometimes drove an hour to find an empty room, and real movement was limited. Some teachers or staffers are delighted to accept students to work with them when we schedule in the fall, but by spring they seem challenged to figure out how to have WCU students be active participants in their organizations or classes. PSSA’s, winter weather and lockdowns sometimes keep students from being able to easily meet even the very minimal number of field hours required (20 in YES 300 and 30 in YES 301).

While students enroll in YES voluntarily, they sometimes complain about field requirements that are an hour away from campus, especially when a number of them have field work for their Social Work, Teacher Education, Psychology, Criminal Justice (etc.) majors. Disproportionate numbers of our students are themselves from impoverished backgrounds and struggle with the demands of multiple jobs, being parents or guardians of children, having families threatened by deportation, or never having had the academic supports to read critically and write in the dialect of the academy. Nearly all students start out with top-down, “servicey” approaches to their field work, ranging from real savior complexes to knee-jerk adultist solutions to “the kids are just always on their phones”—many of which shift, but slowly, through the praxis. Reading is never enough; practice is never enough. It is essential that those happen recursively.

So caveats and challenges abound. But interest in the YES minor from students and community organizations has been exciting. We have graduated about twenty-five alumni, and currently have over sixty minors, one of the most successful interdisciplinary minors on campus. While WCU is a predominantly White institution (about 75% of our students are White), over half of YES students are of the Global Majority, primarily Black and Latino students, a racial balance completely unmatched in any other large academic program on main campus. About one in three are teacher education candidates. Nearly all of those students identify as leaders or say that they want to make a difference, though many are not sure how, when they arrive in our minor.

When they leave, however, many say they are changed. One student, a woman who already runs her own mentoring project in the City of Philadelphia, recently

told us that because of her coursework in YES, she is completely revamping her programming. YES students are actively sought after for internships and jobs in the region. They often go through as a partial cohort, so they are influencing each other toward new dispositions and identifications over several years. We believe that the "incubation" of selves that happens in the space of a coherent minor simply could not take root as deeply in a single course. Further, we believe that the emphasis on a collective mindset toward action and hope, rather than merely critique (which our students report makes them feel depressed and withdrawn) is central to the successes so far. Here is some of what we hear from YES students:

Over the last three years, the YES program has been the most empowering, challenging, and inviting learning space on campus to me. The YES program truly does "create change"—in students, communities, and in the campus climate here at West Chester University. –O.

The best part of my time at West Chester was becoming a YES minor. Through this minor I was not only awakened to the many everyday disadvantages of youth but to my true calling in life, to work beside these youth and make incremental change within diverse communities, in particular my own. Growing up as an inner-city youth I honestly didn't think that this minor could shed any light on much of anything for me. I was sure that I was very much aware of the unfavorable disparities that hindered minorities, much like myself...I was happily mistaken...I quickly discovered that I was learning more than I imagined, that the disadvantages that surround my community could be changed if I was committed to changing them. –D.

When you show up consistently in a youth-dominated space, encourage student voice, and explore relevant issues, you are teaching with advocacy and love... As teachers, there is no way to work impartially. So, since we must be biased, we have a responsibility to be biased towards our students. We must come alongside youth in the spirit of advocacy and act as respectful allies instead of standard authority figures. We must lay down our systemic power every single time we walk through the doors of our schools, because our students do not have the option to lay down their systemic oppression. In doing so, we open up space for young people to discover their skills and create an environment where they can learn to live in advocacy, as well... *So, to my beautiful, bright, and brilliant students—past, present, and future, No matter what happens, I will still show up. But I promise you, I will do so, so much more. Love, Miss Jess. –J.*

The YES Program...gave me a space to discuss social justice. People need to talk about the consequences of the biased systems in our

society. YES has given me tools and experience to counteract these issues and given me hope that in my career I will be able to make further changes...to the systems that oppress so many communities of color. –N.

These students who articulate the counter-logic of democratic participation are our posse. They hang out in the YES office. They asked us to create a major and a master's track in Urban Community Change, which we are working on. YES--and now the wider entity of RUCCAS--is becoming a place where students who want radical change find identity, find a "reality-based community" that is also hopeful, determined, infused with a counter-logic of the possibilities of democratic participation. These students and others like them are not quite as swept up in the madness of a disintegrating and racially-stratified market system because they have a counter-identity and a countering set of essential dispositions. They have hats of their own. And while the theory they learn in classes matters, what matters equally is participation alongside community leaders (including youth leaders), and each other, and us, on the ground. Many of these students are now our colleagues in the region; they supervise our YES field students; they are running organizations working with urban youth and communities, in schools and elsewhere, with a very different perspective than the ones they started with.

Urban Education Fellowship

The Urban Education Fellowship (UEF) was founded in 2014-2015 as an extracurricular enrichment program for undergraduate preservice teachers. With year-to-year financial support from our College of Ed dean, fellows spend a semester interacting with partner networks of activist-organizer in-service Philadelphia teachers, including the Teacher Action Group (TAG) Philadelphia and the Caucus of Working Educators (WE). Most importantly, we believe, these engagements occur outside the context of schools and classrooms, taking preservice teachers to the *community spaces* in which practicing teachers are doing social change work *alongside* young people and community leaders. Fellows attend two day-long professional conferences, including the annual Education for Liberation conference hosted by TAG, two teacher inquiry community meetings of either TAG Inquiry to Action Group (ItAGs) or the Philadelphia Teachers' Learning Cooperative, and six meetings with one another on our campus to prepare for, reflect upon, and critically analyze each experience.

The intentional focus on groups of teacher organizers operating collectively in community spaces is a transformational experience for our preservice teachers. In their teacher education programs, interactions with practicing teachers are primarily limited to those with single mentor teachers and always focused on the work and professional life within the walls of a classroom—necessary, but perhaps not sufficient in an urban teaching life. In UEF, the invitation to participate in the networks and the organizations, and to take up and embody the

existing norms of democratic community engagement is the mentoring. Even more profound, our mostly white preservice teachers are challenged to re-think and give up their initial savior mentalities or their individualistic orientation to be the one who alone will make the change. Instead, many for the first time get a first-hand look into the power, the resources, and the collective action already existing in the community. This re-centers their perspective from individual actors to incoming members of a movement to which they already belong and can contribute.

As co-directors and practitioner researchers (Kathleen and Katie), we have been formally studying what happens in the fellowship, identifying ways in which fellows experience the program as a transformative learning experience (Mezirow, 1997). Fellows grow through the processes of encountering new perspectives (most powerfully those of youth and people of the Global Majority) that create chances to critically “re-read” their worldviews; of grappling with the tensions of returning to their home communities and peer and family relationships with heightened levels of consciousness around social inequities, white supremacy, institutional racism, and systemic oppression; of feeling a strong desire to know more about the inquiries that they had begun during the program. In addition, fellows noted the extensive new learning that they had done related to understanding issues of race and racism and to practicing their racial literacies (Stevenson, 2014).

As an extracurricular program, we run into many roadblocks that impede our students from fully engaging with these transformational experiences. Our preservice teachers have tightly prescribed course sequences that entail multiple semesters of high credit loads. Many are working significant numbers of hours at jobs as well. It is not uncommon for a student to commit to participation in the fellowship in December, only to acknowledge that they are overextended and withdraw from the program in March. Working with grassroots organizations sometimes means that scheduling information is not available far in advance, or can change at the last minute, with the schedules of groups of practicing teachers not always aligning well with the availability of college students. Sometimes fellows show signs of having experienced initial shifts in their thinking, and then the program ends and they shift back to previous perspectives.

We are seeing evidence, however, that fellows who are able to participate deeply for the duration of the program are taking up reframed worldviews and heightened senses of mission, and beginning to raise their voices in pursuit of democratic engagement towards equity and justice. After attending a TAG conference with the theme *#Black Lives Matter: Centering Racial Justice in Our Fight for Public Education*, Khalil (also a YES minor), shared with his peers:

And for us to get awareness about this, I feel like we need to speak about it. And we need to say, you know, “that is not okay.” Even if it is going to make someone uncomfortable. Who cares? Because, they’ll be okay. Who cares if, for the

moment [they feel uncomfortable]? Racism is not okay, it hurts people in so many ways that we don’t realize. We don’t even realize ourselves.

As Khalil indicates, a key insight that supports fellows in actively taking up issues of equity and justice (including systemic racism), is learning to accept and embrace discomfort, the need for ongoing learning, and a lack of permanent resolution in the struggle. After the TAG conference the following year, Nate (who became a YES minor) explained how the experience fundamentally shifted his visions around being a teacher:

I think probably before the fellowship I didn’t think much about what teacher enrichment, personal enrichment really looked like. And to see what it can look like was really powerful. I guess when I thought about that, I would think of inservice meetings with some guy in a suit or something but the TAG conference was really beautiful. *Teaching can be, or should be, like a folk movement* rather than like a sterile indoctrination. To see teachers as active community members, involved stakeholders, or partners is definitely an important way to see teachers, I think. A lot of people think of teachers as teaching and going home but I think the work is far beyond the confines of the school. The Fellowship definitely added that perspective. (emphasis added)

We frequently see fellows enter the program either already pursuing the YES minor program or deciding to pursue it. We also see fellows who leave us and seek out field experience course sections that they informally know offer urban placements or formally declare their intention to student teach in the School District of Philadelphia, a placement into which students must opt. Eighteen of our current twenty-six fellow alumni are moving forward on an urban teaching career pathway, with six alumni teaching or working with youth in the City of Philadelphia, six alumni teaching in schools in other low-income communities with racially diverse student bodies, three alumni student teaching in the School District of Philadelphia, and three more advancing into their upper level course and field work with intentions to do so. Most exciting to us, our program alumni in the City of Philadelphia are now becoming active participants of the teacher networks and organizations that they first encountered in UEF.

As is clear from the above examples, our interdisciplinary community of learner-teacher-change-makers has the added bonus of deepening student engagement in education and aiding teacher recruitment and retention (which is at crisis levels), including students and teachers of the Global Majority (teachers and students of color), though we do not believe that having more teachers of the Global Majority is a panacea or what ails us or should even be a central aim. If it happens, that’s probably all to the good (for example, Khalil was a Psych major and now is a new dean of students at an elementary school), but more important is our orientation toward

education and youth work being informed by a collective logic of democratic engagement, a logic that is equal parts knowledge, skills and dispositions that reach in hope and anger toward shared, if temporary, democratic decisions to act. This messy slow real goal is what colleges of education must take on: education, as Nate put it, as a folk movement.

A RUCCAS is not like a writing desk; it is like a collective impact party. Or an incubator. Or a folk movement. Or a democracy. The interrelationships between RUCCAS member organizations make sense to our WCU students, and they move within and across and beyond our individual courses and projects and community programs, sometimes creating bridges to new partnerships. They may not explicitly name the shared thread of the logic of democratic participation as the tie that binds their interests and commitments, but they know that they benefit from and feel energized by the chance to do the hard, connected, deeply personal work and that it matters to be able to feel a part of something larger than oneself. It turns out that this is true of those of us leading RUCCAS-affiliated entities too.

Additionally, our experience has been that as we work together with organizations, even those not now staffed with a YES or UEF alum or two, we influence each other toward greater democratic possibilities. For example, a more traditional and successful tutoring-mentoring program founded by UPenn students, where YES students were in the field, influenced WCU students to begin a student-run chapter on campus. In return, YES/UEF students and faculty have influenced the organization's overall leadership to work toward ways to expand youth voice and leadership toward greater authenticity and participation. Other examples of the slow shift toward mutual support and the incubating of democratic participation through RUCCAS: drafting together and piloting a new democratic participation curriculum for after-school programs, written, piloted and revised by our students in collaboration with community partners; providing space, expertise, connections or labor toward iCAMP, toward a new center for youth development professionals, toward a social justice training network for youth; the expansion of university organizing work of one of our powerhouse urban organizing partners whose focus was not young adults. These were not transactional agreements, but results of relational connections in which all invested, unsure of the precise ends. These were the result of getting our hands dirty together. A last example, from a recent email connecting a community member to RUCCAS:

Wanted to connect the two of you kindred spirits in hopes of fostering relationship. [Name] is a school board member in Phoenixville and is looking to further her education. She's an advocate for kids, has helped write legislation, has experience in lobbying, and is an all-around all-star...I'll let y'all take it from here.

Colleges of education should be throwing parties radical teachers and our allies want to come to. Stern and

Brown (2016), writing about teachers in WE and TAG, with whom UEF collaborates, note, "Activist educators...ameliorate the anguish of their condition by collectively naming, critiquing, and acting upon their world" (17). We can't keep up with the fake news that gets thrown at us on a more than daily basis; we need an overall counter-logic to keep ourselves sane and moving forward in connection with each other. When enough of us share a commitment to the collective counter-logic developed on the ground, in authentic relation to each other, our accrediting bodies and budget offices might shrug and follow.

We think it's time to call for leadership. In fact, if we accept the role that the liberal society has placed on us, we can appropriate some of-the-moment language and call ourselves "collective impact organizations." Collective impact organizations are meant to solve complex problems that cannot be addressed through separate efforts. The Mad Tea party is one such complex problem. We don't know that it has a solution so much as it has different paths to resolution. Some of those paths look almost apocalyptic; some look equitable, just, exciting and "reality-based."

Colleges of education must be accomplices to their base constituencies: youth, families, communities, teachers. We must not keep doing the same thing over and over and expect different results. Therein lies the definition of madness. We have to convince our deans, our superintendents, our colleagues to *produce* and *be* educator-organizers. We have to provide rigor and also not be afraid to take the risks of humanly connecting and backing youth and young adult leadership. We need to create programs like YES, and the UEF, and Need in Deed, and poetry projects, and our other community-based partner organizations, and others we have not dreamed of that will attract change-makers (a significant number of whom will be of the Global Majority--if not, the program is not working) to be part of the educational landscape. We challenge ourselves to continue to be reality-based but even less civil and sensible. We plan to continue to make trouble with our students, our regional teacher-activist colleagues, and youth, and back them. We are not so scared to make a mess if we can remain fortified in the messy work of learning, all of us, democratic participation together.

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Notes

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