

# RADICAL TEACHER

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

*Activist Notes*  
Student Voices in the Movement for Integration and  
Equity

by Sophie Mode and Dulce Michelle



IMAGE BY DULCE MICHELLE, TEENS TAKE CHARGE, NEW YORK CITY

**I**n a time when equity and justice are at the forefront of conversations across the nation, it is essential that the voices of students are not ignored or tokenized. New York City has the most segregated public school system in the nation, more segregated now than in the 1960s. Hundreds of thousands of students spend every day in segregated classrooms, and yet our voices are not the focus. Students are powerful. Students are knowledgeable. Students are passionate. Students are the ones directly feeling the effects of an immensely segregated and inequitable system.

Here is what student leaders at Teens Take Charge (TTC), a youth-led organization fighting for educational integration and equity in NYC public schools, have to say:

"I do this work because I realize that in my role as white student I should be trying to do as much as I can to give other students opportunities that might come much more accessible to me. I am determined to be as productive as possible instead of sitting by and watching injustices occur. I've most recently taken part in helping promote the Education Unscreened campaign and helped establish our coalition team. Strategies I have seen work well are always preparing myself with knowledge first and having meaningful conversations with ordinary people and people of power because both have impactful effects. I am sustained as an activist because I have a strong community and group that supports myself and each other. As a student activist, I need an understanding environment, by that I mean sometimes being able to know that I want to step back when things feel like too much."

-Carla Gaveglia, Freshman at Cornell University (Recent Graduate of the NYC iSchool)

"I fight for integration because I know that equity and integration is possible if we fight and remember that my identity matters as much as someone else's. I am on the policy team where we do coalition-building, help spread TTC's proposed policies to other organizations and officials in separate meetings and the Education Unscreened team where we attend different meetings with key officials and groups, communicate messages of work to DOE officials through letters and emails, and more. I love attending different meetings to promote TTC's policies. This is an amazing chance to showcase what we're fighting for. I am sustained because I know that what I'm fighting for is for everyone, including everyone in the future."

-William Diep, Senior at The Brooklyn Latin School

"What motivates me to fight is my mom's good advice and seeing all the horrible things about the world and it makes me want to change that. I am a part of the Growth Team and we worked on events and contracting organizations and schools. I also have been signing petitions for Black Lives Matter and sending an email to

try to get back the Summer Youth Employment Program. Strategies that I have found successful are being a good listener and being consistent. I am sustained as an activist because I am able to do things without giving up."

- Koudjedji Coulibaly, Senior at Essex Street Academy

"Seeing (or at least previously seeing when we were at school) how segregated my school is every single day is a reminder why we need to keep fighting. Not to mention just how interconnected education is to absolutely everything else. So when our schools are inequitable, it feeds into many more problems in our society. Integrating our schools and creating an equitable education for all is a necessary step in dismantling the systemic racism in this country. With TTC recently I have been working on the push to repeal Hecht Calandra--the racist NY law that maintains segregation in specialized high schools--and put the power of admissions for the specialized high schools back in the power of the city. Strategies that have worked for me as a leader is delegation, knowing when you should do something or when you will get a better result when someone else does it. Especially as a white activist it's important to know when you should not take up space and instead allow for marginalized voices to share their experiences and thoughts. I am sustained as an activist by just how much is on the line, how many students are failed each year when our schools do not integrate."

-Ula Pranevicius, Freshman at Wesleyan University (Recent Graduate of Bronx High School of Science)

"Many of the tasks that I like to take on directly affect me and those in my community. I feel like it is my responsibility as a good samaritan to tackle what I am passionate about. In my activism it is very helpful to stay organized and communicate with others who are also working on tasks with you. I have realized when I take on too many tasks, I begin to neglect other tasks I had promised to complete. The community that you are welcomed into once you start partaking in activism is what sustains me. Connecting with people who have the same goal as you makes me feel good and motivated. It is always helpful to have other activists check in with you to see how you're doing mentally."

-Abbie Jobe, Senior at Eleanor Roosevelt High School



IMAGES BY DULCE MICHELLE, TEENS TAKE CHARGE, NEW YORK CITY



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