

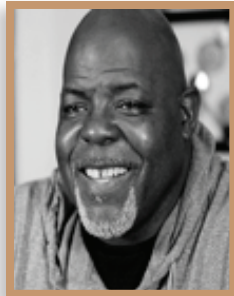
2018 NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner



◆ Jitu Brown ◆

Rosa Parks Memorial Award



Jitu Brown draws upon his skills as a long-time community activist to advocate for students, raise the volume of conversations about institutionalism racism and ensure that communities of color win the fight for community-driven alternatives to privatization and disinvestment from public education. In his role as Director of Journey for Justice, he is able to share the lessons he has learned to inspire, encourage and drive the work with an alliance of grassroots community organizations, youth groups and parent-led associations across the country.

Brown is a product of Chicago’s public school system and has seen first-hand the need for direct action and non-violent civil disobedience in protecting our nation’s public schools. After leaders in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) continued to ignore the voice of the community in decisions about their public schools, Brown and several other community leaders went on a 34-day hunger strike to keep Dyett High School open as South Side Chicago’s last open enrollment public high school.

When interviewed during the hunger strike Brown spoke from the heart, describing the difference between priorities of CPS and the community priorities, “CPS believes pushing out special education students is ok, as long as at the end of the year your test scores look good. You have to have strong discipline policy, because these children are animals....The community looks at those children as God sees our children. That lens looks at our children and sees the brilliance in our children, sees the compassion and greatness, and makes sure those children get every resource that they need to be who they are supposed to be. That is what is at stake,” said Brown.

One year after the hunger strike, Dyett High School reopened its doors.

“Jitu has moved, and continues to move, the conversation about equity in education, about social justice, and about institutional racism to the forefront of our battle. He has inspired countless educators, students, and communities to take up the fight for education equity and social justice,” said Marla Kilfoyle, National Board Certified Teacher.

Brown uses his powerful voice and experience to push for a better life for communities of color. He is a visible force not only in Chicago but all over the country. In Newark, he works with families who have fought to end the state control of their schools, and he continues to work with Detroit parents in the fight to win back their public schools.

With Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education, his work is taking on a greater intensity than ever. Brown has organized marches, rallies, and gatherings in the fight for equity and equality. Through the #WeChoose Coalition, he has led the way in organizing over 30 critical conversations around the country about equality and the fight to save our public schools. And he’s not slowing down.