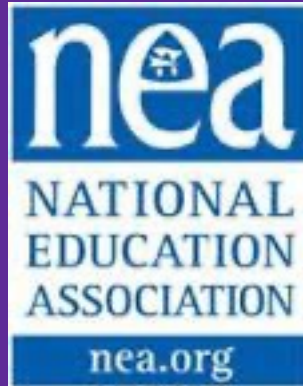


Promoting, Protecting, and Strengthening Public Education by Engaging our Retired Members in Racial/Social Justice Activism

NEA Retired Conference : March 2025
presented by Janice Dwosh



Session Agenda



- Introductions- icebreaker activity
- Land Acknowledgement
- Review AEA Retired RSJ goals/strategies for 2024/2025
- Book discussions: diverse literature activity & group discussion
- Discuss community agreements
- Mini-lessons (microaggressions, cultural appropriation, intersectionality, disability rights)
- NEA and state groups as resources and partners (LJS equity project)
- Other resources
- Comments /questions/follow-up/sharing – contact information

Introduction -- Janice Dwosh



NEA/AEA/PVEA member for 25 years

AEA Retired executive board member, formerly Secretary (2019-2025)

AEA Retired chairperson - RSJ committee (2021-2025)

NEA RSJ Committee Co-Chair (2022-2025)

NEA Women's Issues Committee (2023-2025)

AEA RSJ Leadership Cadre member (2021-2025)

NEA Leaders for Just Schools - San Diego Cohort (2019-2024)

NEA Transformational Journey for Racial Justice Co-Conspirators (2022-2023)

NEA Minority and Women's Leadership Training Seminar (2023)

“Where I’m from ” poem (icebreaker activity)

“Where I’m
from....”

A Poem
About Self

I am from _____
I am from schools like _____
I am from food like _____
I am from neighborhoods like _____
I am from families like _____
I am from languages like _____
I am from jobs like _____
I am from religion like _____
I am from holidays like _____
I am from cultures like _____
I am from music like _____
I am from heroes like _____
I am _____ and my name is _____

From NSEA
Conversations on
Race & Belonging
workshop



Where I'm from poem (video example)

- A visual poem based on "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyon, created by Julia Daniel for Tamalpais High School's Academy of Integrated Humanities and New Media (AIM), fall 2010.



AEA Retired RSJ Land Acknowledgement



"Every community owes its existence and vitality to generations from around the world who contributed their hopes, dreams, and energy to making the history that led to this moment. Some were brought here against their will, some were drawn to leave their distant homes in hope of a better life, and some have lived on this land for more generations than can be counted. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference. We begin this effort to acknowledge what has been buried by honoring the truth. I stand on the ancestral lands of the O'odham People. We pay respects to their elders past and present. Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together today."

"Arizona is located on the territory of the O'odham people. We recognize this location is due to the continued occupation of this land. We also recognize that many enslaved and indentured peoples were forced to dedicate their labor to the construction of what is now Arizona. To these peoples and their descendants, we acknowledge their indelible mark on the space. Lastly, in recognizing that this land is colonized indigenous territory that has been crafted through enslaved and indentured labor, it is our collective responsibility to critically interrogate the histories and afterlives of these events, and to honor, protect, and sustain this land."



Video explaining AZ tribal lands

- Who were the Hohokams?
- Find your local indigenous groups. <https://native-land.ca/>
- Find other people or videos to engage members
- Use NEA Land Acknowledgement guide

<https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/landacknowledgementguide.pdf>



Meaningful land acknowledgements

- Find and use different land acknowledgments in your state or local area
- Share with your group and discuss – use videos if available
- It is a learning time and time to show respect for others
- Do not ask an Indigenous person to read the land acknowledgement
- Build relationships with your local groups and support their causes
- Visit and support Native cultural sites, museums and historical landmarks

AEA Retired RSJ goals/strategies for 2024-25

Goal:

AEA-Retired will lead & advance a culture of racial & social justice awareness & understanding.

Strategies:

- **AEA-Retired leaders will learn and share with each other at monthly board meetings as well as at chapter events, using children's lit that fosters racial and social justice, as well as providing resources and internet links to members.**
- AEA-Retired RSJ Committee goals will align with the RSJ goals from the AEA Strategic Plan .
- AEA-Retired RSJ committee will provide trainings within the committee and with our AEA-Retired executive board - (based on member needs), as well as through Chapter meetings, & ask for NEA/AEA support as needed.

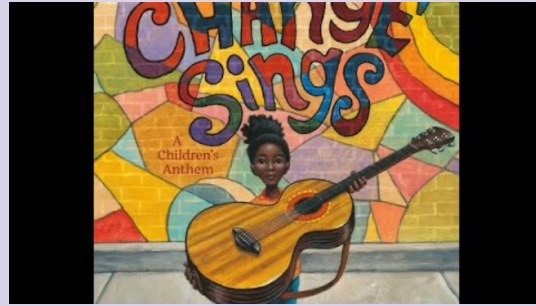
AEA Retired RSJ Goals/Strategies (cont.)

- AEA-Retired RSJ committee will offer book club & other media discussions, as well as NEA/AEA speakers to train and engage AEA-Retired executive board and other AEA-Retired members on racial and social justice issues.
- AEA-Retired members and leaders will attend and share from the AEA mini RSJ conference to increase knowledge and understanding of RSJ issues and concerns.
- AEA-Retired RSJ committee will conduct outreach with the AEA-Retired executive board and other interested members through The Conduit (newsletter), emails and other RSJ documents shared.



Use of diverse literature with children & adults (read alouds)

Change Sings by Amanda Gorman



Another read aloud: *The Year we Learned to Fly* by Jacqueline Woodson



More Read Alouds (Diverse books – LGBTQ+)

- *I am Jazz* by Jazz Jennings

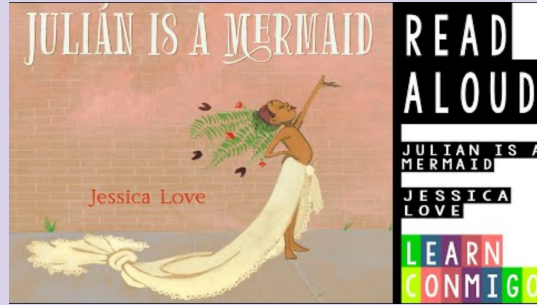


- *My Shadow is Purple* by Scott Stuart



More Read Alouds (Diverse books – LGBTQ+)

- more read aloud books to read and share: *Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love

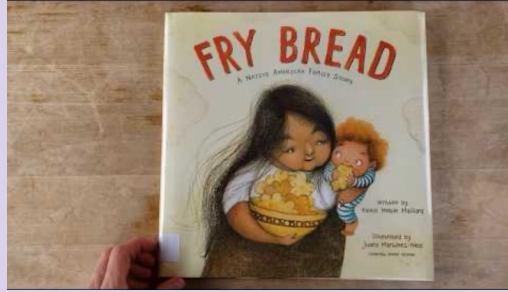


- *And Tango makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell

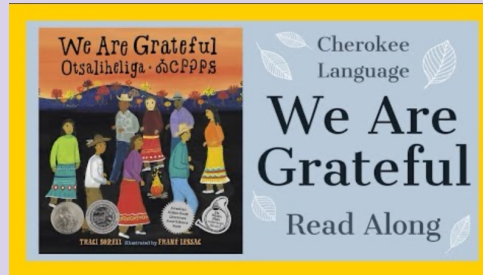


More Read Alouds (Diverse books – Indigenous)

- An award -winning book: *Fry Bread – A Native American Family Story* by Kevin Noble Maillard



- This book celebrates the Native American culture of the Cherokee: *We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* by Tracy Sorell.



Group activity – discuss with partner/group

What element from the children's lit resonates with you?



How does diverse literature impact us (adults as well as children)?

How can we find connections with others through literature/poetry?

More Read Alouds (poetry – Amanda Gorman)

- An inaugural poem for the country *The Hill We Climb*



- Her recent poem honoring Los Angeles during the devastating fires:



NEA Diverse Literature links



NEA diverse literature links (Read Across America Calendar)

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/read-across-america/2024-2025-calendar>

NEA Diverse Books Challenge: <https://www.nea.org/diverse-books-challenge>

NEA Freedom to Read : other resources

<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/classroom-resources-celebrate-freedom-read>

supporters and sponsors:

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/read-across-america/sponsors-and-supporters>

Book/media discussion group

with AEA Retired leaders and members



- Held on Zoom every 4-6 weeks (90 min. long) for past 4 years
- Variety of fiction and non-fiction RSJ books/podcasts
- Different facilitators from the discussion group
- Our group has grown from 10-20 members (statewide)
- Engages members that may not participate in other areas
- held two podcast discussions – “Nice White Parents” (NYT)
“The Sum of Us” (Spotify)



Books discussed in AEA Retired RSJ group

- *Caste* - Isabella Wilkerson
- *The Warmth of Other Suns* – Isabella Wilkerson
- *Stamped* - Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi
- *Small Great Things* – Jodi Piccoult
- *Kamala's Way, An American Life* – Dan Morain
- *American Dirt* – Jeanine Cummins
- *The Nickel Boys* – Colson Whitehead
- *Harlem Shuffle* – Colson Whitehead
- *The Other Black Girl* – Zakiya Delila Harris
- *The Sweetness of Water* – Nathan Harris



More books discussed in AEA Retired RSJ group

- *Beautiful Country* – Qian Julie Wang
- *The Love Songs of W.E.B. DuBois* – Honoree Fanonne Jeffers
- *Killers of the Flower Moon* – David Gran
- *The Sentence* – Louise Erdich
- *The War on Normal People* – Andrew Yang
- *Molokai* – Alan Brennert
- *Black Cake* – Charmaine Wilkerson
- *Take My Hand* - Dolan Perkins Valdez
- *Charity Girl* – Michael Lowenthal
- *The Night Watchman* – Louise Erdich



More books discussed in AEA Retired RSJ group

- *The Personal Librarian* – Marie Benedict
- *Snow Falling on Cedars*- David Guterson
- *Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge* – by Erica A. Dunbar
- *Lessons in Chemistry* – by Bonnie Garmus
- *Horse* – by Geraldine Brooks
- *This Other Eden* – by Paul Harding
- *Little Liars* – by Mitch Albom
- *James* – by Percival Everett
- *Under the Java Moon* – by Heather Moore
- *The Vanishing Half*- by Brit Bennett (next month)



Movies that we viewed together

- “Killers of the Flower Moon” – Golden Globe/Oscar nominations



- “The Color Purple” – new musical version



- “The Sound of Hope – the story of Possum Trot”



NEA Retired RSJ Committee – book discussion

- ***The Four Pivots - Reimagining Justice, Reimagining Ourselves – by Shawn Ginwright.*** Vimeo introduction : <https://vimeo.com/670362901>

“

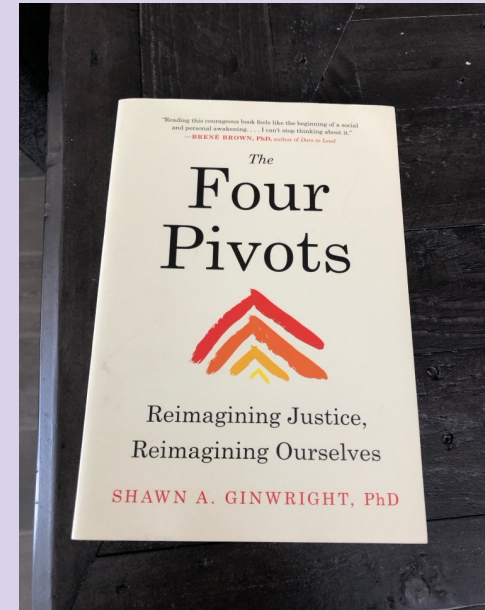
Social change is deeply connected to our own healing, reflection, and well-being.

The Four Pivots for Reimagining Justice and Reimagining Ourselves

1. **Awareness:** From lens to mirror
2. **Connection:** From transactional to transformative relationships
3. **Vision:** From problem-fixing to possibility-creating
4. **Presence:** From hustle to flow

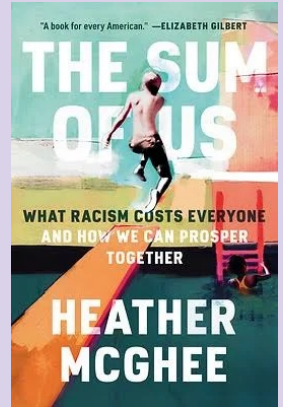
SHAWN GINWRIGHT, PH.D.
The Four Pivots: Reimagining Justice, Reimagining Ourselves

Unlocking Us
with BRENE BROWN



Latest NEA Retired RSJ Committee –book discussion

- *The Sum of Us –What Racism Costs Everyone* by Heather McGhee (will be discussed in April 2025)
- 3 formats – adult version, young adult version, and podcast
- Use discussion guide , video of author, podcast questions
- Engage readers and listeners in their interests and concerns
- <https://heathermcghee.com/-author> (author info and discussion guide)
- Free podcasts on Apple podcast or Spotify :
- <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-sum-of-us/id1640137860>



https://heathermcghee.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/McGHEE_TheSumOfUs_HC_DiscussionGuide_Final.pdf

Time for a quick breath!

Quick stretch and refocus - self care!



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPIW9ZnAeml>

<https://youtu.be/IFcSrYw-ARY?si=kp-SCh3CgtMona9->

Peaceful, calming music

Brave Space Poem – community agreements

AN INVITATION TO BRAVE SPACE



Together we will create *brave space*
Because there is no such thing as a “safe space” —
We exist in the real world
We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
In this space
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
We call each other to more truth and love
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
We have the responsibility to examine what we think we
know.
We will not be perfect.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be
But
It will be *our brave space together,*
and
We will work on it side by side.

by Micky ScottBey Jones

Community Agreements



What is a Community Agreement? :

<https://www.nationalequityproject.org/tools/developing-community-agreements?rq=community%20agreement>

Overview

Developing community agreements is a powerful strategy for coalescing a group into a team. Consensus-driven, they provide a common framework for how people aspire to work and be together as they take transformational action.

Define:

- Take time to define what a community agreement means. A consensus on what every person in our group needs from each other and commits to each other in order to feel **safe, supported, open, productive and trusting...**

Community Agreements – definitions/types

See the differences below:

- **Agreements** are an aspiration, or collective vision, for how we want to be in relationship with one another.
- **Norms** are the ways in which we behave and are currently in relationship to each other, whether consciously and explicitly or not.
- **Rules** are mandated and enforced by an authority, and do not necessarily reflect the will or buy-in of the group.

Types:

- Relational Community Agreement
- Operational agreements

Community Agreements -why needed?

- We can't achieve our vision in a hostile, disrespectful, or undermining group culture.
- Some of the most critical conversations teams/groups need to have are emotional, painful, and uncomfortable (e.g., equity issues, examining differences in viewpoints), but we won't engage or make ourselves vulnerable without emotional safety and trust.



Community Agreements – develop/resolve conflicts

Develop agreements:

- Journal on a prompt
- Pairs or trios share list
- Whole group

Resolve conflicts: If harm has occurred to a member of the group , then what happens

Intent vs. Impact - what you mean vs. what you say and how that affects others

- Person harmed needs to be able to report out their issues (ability to contact leader or facilitator with problems/issues)
- Chairperson or leader will deal with the issues and persons involved, so that the group can move forward. Feedback is critical in order to accomplish change – **not about punishment but about acknowledgment of harm by taking responsibility for actions.**

Community Agreements- what's next



- **How do you determine your agreements ?** – survey of committee members, discussions, voting, thumbs up
- **Who is the person that deals with any conflict resolution?** - President, committee co-chairs, or impartial officer or group leader
- **Is it a flexible agreement and reviewed frequently?**
- **Will members of the committee feel safe and brave in the space?**

Community Agreements : from NEA Board of Directors

- Be mindful of what non-privileged voices are saying, and what privileged voices are saying in all settings. Be intentional to make space for historically marginalized voices.
- Commit to participating in your own and others growth. Make the opportunity to build trust. Be Brave.
- Mistakes and discomfort are part of growth,
- Take ownership and learn forward.
- Listen to grow with the potential to change.
- Listen for understanding.
- Consider instances of harm, intended or not, as opportunities for shared learning and growth.
- Own the harm. Commit to change the behavior. Create resolution.
- Resolve at the lowest level possible.
- History comes with us.
- Share your values.
- Breathe-Pause-Reflect intentionally.
- Know we are not finished.
- Give each other grace.
- We strive to be a family.



Community Agreements (NEA L4JS and TJRJCC)

Put Relationships First

Work to build community and trust with awareness of positionality.

Keep Focused on Our Common Goal

We care deeply about youth and families, especially those who are directly impacted by racism. We care about each other as members of the NEA.

Notice Power Dynamics in the Room

Be aware of how you use your privilege: From taking up too much emotional and airtime space or disengaging.



Community Agreements (NEA L4JS and TJRJCC)

Create a Space for Multiple Truths and Norms

Speak your truth & seek understanding of truth that differ from yours, with awareness of power dynamics.

Be Kind & Brave

Remember relationships first, & work to be explicit with your language about race, class, gender, immigration, etc.

Practice Examining Racially Biased Systems and Processes

Individual actions are important, and systems are what are left after all the people in this room leave.

Community Agreements (NEA L4JS and TJRJCC)

Look for Learning

Show what you're learning, not what you already know. Avoid playing devil's advocate, the devil has enough advocates.

Intent vs Impact

How what you say can make a negative impact even if you didn't intend it to.

What other important agreements does your group need to add or possibly delete ?

How should get your group to engage and agree upon a set of community agreements?

Community Agreements (AEA Retired)

- Put relationships first
- Be Kind, Brave, and Humble
- Respect Confidentiality
- Listen thoughtfully before speaking
- Remember intent vs. impact
- Look for learning and growth



Mini-lessons (for leaders in local/state affiliates)

- **Microaggressions:** everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership

Example video : use as a base for discussion:



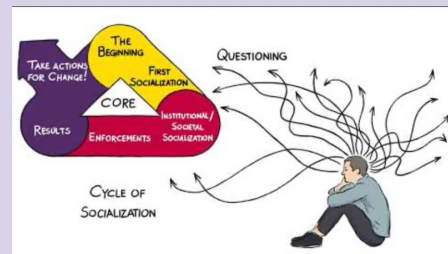
NEA Resources on Microaggressions :

<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/implicit-bias-microaggressions-and-stereotypes-resources>

Mini-lessons (for leaders in local/state affiliates)

Implicit Bias - the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

- Video from NEA – use as discussion starters
- Lots of online resources
- Follow up with NEA Microcredentials
- <https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/professional-learning/micro-credentials>



Mini-lessons (Cultural appropriation vs. Cultural appreciation)

- **Cultural appropriation:** the adoption or use of elements of one culture by members of another culture. It may be perceived as controversial or even harmful, notably, when the cultural property of a minority group is used by members of the dominant culture without consent. It can take many forms; including clothing, hairstyles, art, language, literature, music, food.
- **Cultural appreciation:** Cultural appreciation is when elements of a culture are used while honoring the source they came from. It is important to note that appreciation involves respect and value. It's okay to find things beautiful. It's better to appreciate it and learn more about it.” ~The Odyssey Online
- **Article in recent NEA Today magazine:** <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/navigating-cultural-appropriation-classroom>



Mini-lesson : intersectionality

- **Intersectionality** --- The acknowledgement that multiple power dynamics and "isms" are operating simultaneously — often in complex and compounding ways — and must be considered together in order to have a more complete understanding of oppression and ways to transform it. Examples: (white, female, heterosexual, retired, Jewish, educator, middle income)

Based on work of Kimberle Crenshaw:

Wheel of Privilege:

<https://just1voice.com/advocacy/wheel-of-privilege>

NEA Pronoun guide : <https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/29231-nea-pronoun-guide-2pgr-april-23-no-crop-v2.pdf>

NEA LGBTQ+ resources: <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/nea-lgbtq-resources>



Mini lessons – Disability rights (NEA book discussions)

- Three books discussed on Zoom – three months per book in 2024

- *Demystifying Disability* – by Emily Ladau
- *The Pretty One*- by Keah Brown
- *What Matters: Reflections on Disability, Community, and Love*
by Janice Fialka



- Book guiding thoughts/questions provided by NEA :

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/virtual-book-club-supporting-disability-rights-and-inclusion>

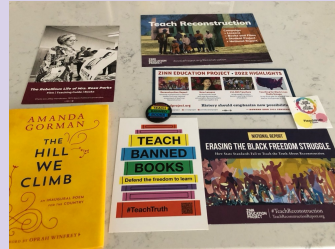
Mini lessons – Disability rights

- Champion of Disability rights: Helena Donato Sapp
- <https://www.nea.org/becoming-champion-disability-rights-and-inclusion>
- Disability rights and inclusion info:
- <https://www.nea.org/individuals-with-disabilities>
- Disability awareness booklist:
- <https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/books-uplift-perspectives-and-experiences-disability>



NEA Leaders for Just Schools – equity project book bans/diverse literature in schools.

- Proposal written in 2023 for LJS program
- Presented info on Book bans/freedom to learn at AEA Retired summer retreat
- Presented to local AEA Retired chapter meeting
- Wrote articles for the AEA Retired Conduit quarterly news magazine
- Met with community members, legislators, AEA/NEA leaders throughout the year
- Presented to NEA Retired RSJ Committee and at NEA Retired Conference
- Was invited to present at the NEA Leaders for Just Schools MegaWeek-- Equity Symposium in Denver (7/24)



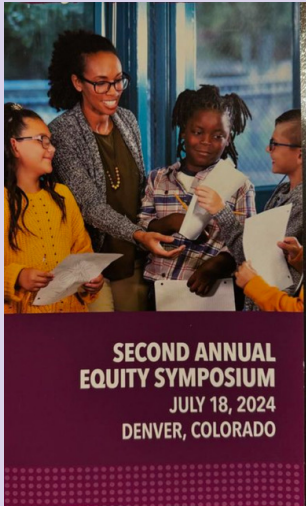
NEA Leaders for Just Schools – equity project

Book Bans/Diverse Literature in Schools



NEA Leaders for Just Schools – equity project

Book Bans/Diverse Literature in Schools: Equity Symposium 7/2024



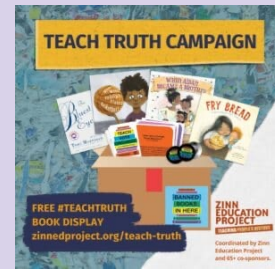
NEA and other state resources for RSJ trainings & collaboration



- Your state association (AEA Leadership Cadre for RSJ)
- **NEA Transformational Journey for Racial Justice Co-Conspirators** --NEA HCR
- **NEA Leaders for Just Schools** – Durham , San Diego, DC, Minneapolis and Denver cadres (now member of the NEALJS Alum network supporting current cadres)
- **NEA Leadership Summit** - every March
- **NEA Conference on Racial and Social Justice** – June/July before NEA-RA
- **NEA Retired Racial and Social Justice Committee** – newly formed in 2022
- **NEA Minority and Women’s Leadership Training Seminar** (East/West)
- **NEA Microcredentials** – online trainings free for NEA members
- **NEA Committees** (WIC, EMAC , SOGI) – even retired members can be appointed

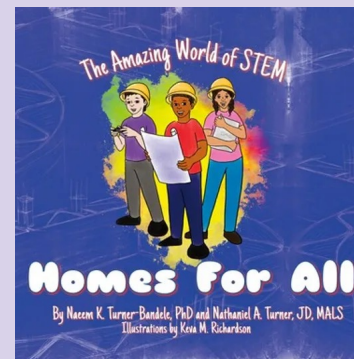
Other resources to learn about RSJ

- NEA Ed Justice website – <https://neaedjustice.org/>
NEA Racial Justice Ed Resources <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/racial-justice-education-resources>
- NEA Transformational Journey for Racial Justice Co-Conspirators – [TJRJCC](#)
contact Dr. Hilario Benzon Hbenzon@nea.org.
- NEA Leaders for Just Schools -<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/leadership-development/leaders-just-schools>. Contact Elic Senter esenter@nea.org.
- Learning for Justice (magazine and website) formerly Teaching Tolerance – [Learning for justice](#)
- NEA Indigenous resources : <https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/resources-teaching-about-indigenous-peoples>. Contact S. Oosahwee SOosahwee@nea.org
- Zinn Education Project -- <https://www.zinnedproject.org/>
- Teach truth day of action: <https://www.zinnedproject.org/campaigns/teach-truth/>.
- Lots of free materials, books and resources for your RSJ advocates and activists!



Community Partnerships

- Building relationships and connections
- Met the keynote speaker **Nathaniel Turner** at 2023 NEA Retired Conference
- amazing author and advocate for RSJ issues
- Latest book : *The Amazing World of STEM – Homes for All*
- <https://www.nathanielturner.com/>
- Met local AZ leader in education justice – **Lloyd Hopkins**
- Executive Director of Million Dollar Teacher project
- Working to support classroom education in underserved populations
- <https://mdtproject.org>.



Partnerships – meeting with legislators and candidates

- Advocacy days at the AZ state Capitol with “friendly legislators”, and on the campaign trail with our AZ Association for Retired Americans – build relationships and share RSJ goals



AZ Sen A. Ortiz



Rep. S. Simacek



Sen. Ruben Gallego

Partnerships – adopt a local liaison (PVEA)

- Meet with prior local association (PVEA) – assist with new educator membership, retired celebrations and Council of Reps meeting – share RSJ info and build relationships with leadership and members

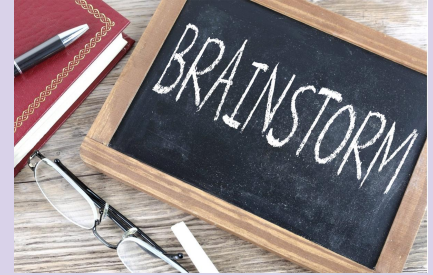
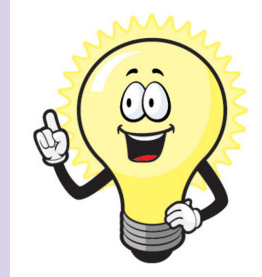


More resources for RSJ (Social Media)

- **Instagram –**
 - Learningforjustice
 - Zinneducationproject
 - Raceforward
 - Neatoday
 - nationalequityproject
 - Sojustbooks
 - American library association
- 
- Possibly other networks (NEA360), state or local associations
 - Facebook , Bluesky , Threads, etc. (at your own level of comfort)

Brainstorm time – please share with us – use chart paper

- Your favorite RSJ books/podcasts
- Any ideas for RSJ resources
- If you have a state retired RSJ committee your focus this year (name your state and current RSJ focus)
- Your contact information for the presenter (and if you are willing to share with other attendees) -- name, state, email address (if you want this PP)



Thanks for your participation and support!

“The time is always right to do what is right!” Martin Luther King, Jr.

Contact info:

Janice Dwosh

AEA Executive board member

AEA Retired RSJ Committee chairperson

NEA RSJ Committee co-chair

NEA Women's Issues committee

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(602)689-4419

