



SHOWING UP FOR RACIAL JUSTICE- KANSAS CITY, EDUCATIONAL CORE H. Councill Trenholm Memorial Award (Non-Black)

Many individuals “talk the talk” when it comes to combating the forces of intolerance and inequity, but the ultimate example of

“walking the walk,” is the Kansas City-based advocacy alliance Showing Up for Racial Justice.

The late H. Councill Trenholm, legendary, Executive Director of the American Teachers Association, believed that a united coalition of educators could impact change. SURJ-Kansas City, Educational Core is doing just that. Established in 2016, SURJ-KC Ed Core is the largest entity in the United States that brings together groups of white educators to specifically advocate for multiracial and marginalized groups.

Locally-based white educators saw the importance of bringing like-minded instructors together, enlightening themselves about how racism and white supremacy affects America’s public education system. Transforming allyship into direct activism was the key to foster positive change. SURJ opened doors, organizing public forums at local libraries and holding panel discussions utilizing literature that speaks to these issues... featuring a diverse gathering along age and ethnic origin. Students bonded with their teachers in unique and unprecedented ways.

SURJ-KC Ed Core is part of a nationwide network of SURJ chapters, made up of antiracist activists from across the state. Educators joined with administrators, students, and POC-led advocacy groups including Just Systems, BLOC (Brothers Liberating Our Communities), Latinx Education Collaborative, and many more.

A landmark 2019 Martin Luther King Day conference afforded the chance for dozens of speakers to share strategies on eradicating oppression in our school systems. No blame, no guilt, just open and honest discourse on how to improve the quality of life for all groups. These conversations not only resulted in greater understanding about the root causes of these conditions, but let educators know they’re not alone in the fight to make things better.

In the momentous year of 2020, when the crisis of the pandemic intersected with the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, SURJ showed up and showed out, even virtually. Organizing via Zoom allowed the power of the Internet to connect more people than ever. Kansas City Metro school districts posted racial equity statements on their websites, calling for over a dozen definitive changes proven to deliver substantive results in schools.

Five years later, SURJ-KC Ed Core remains a driving force, holding school districts accountable to implement these changes, monitoring progress towards full racial equity, and correcting past wrongs for tens of thousands of children.