EDUCATION POWER CHANGE

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EDUCATION – POWER – CHANGE

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Published by Citizens UK

www.citizensuk.org | @CitizensUK

November 2022

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Cover design by Michaela Ajani

For Bernadette Farrell.

'Today, I ask you to think of yourselves […] as civic leaders. Leaders who question the basic assumptions of a democratic society, learn how to govern, and not simply be governed, who are capable of promoting a vision of the better society, and raise important questions about what education should accomplish in a democracy.'

Professor Henry A. Giroux
in 'Educated Hope and the Promise of Democracy'

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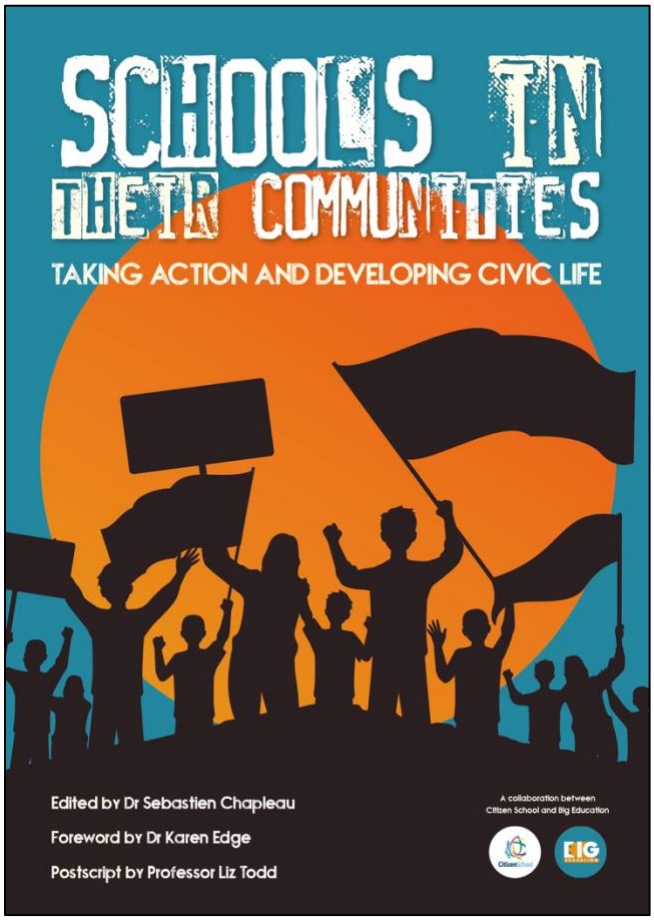

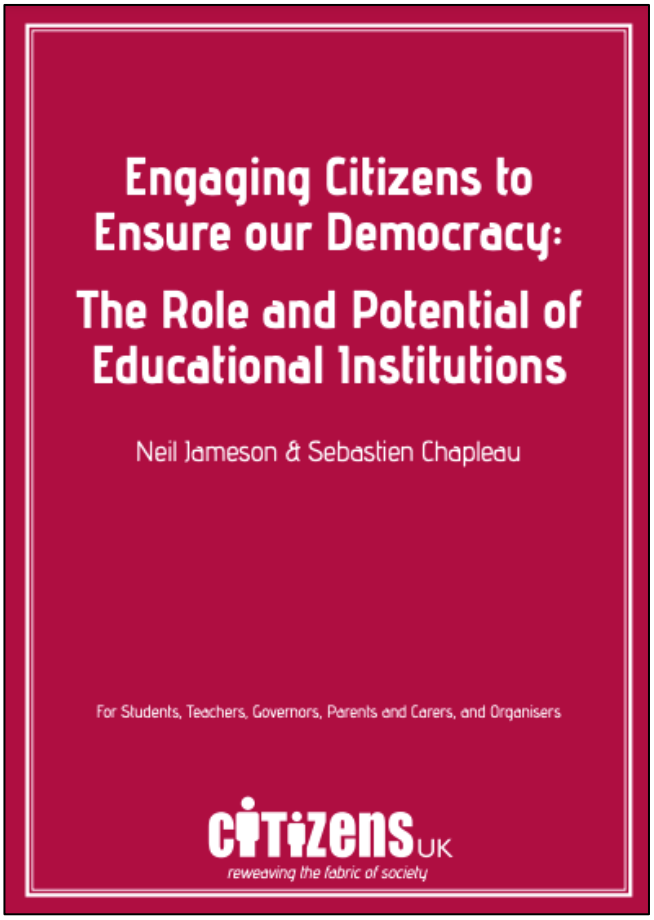

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‘THERE ARE STRENGTHS THAT ARE VAST’: SCHOOLS AND THE BRIDGING POWER OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Loic Menzies and Dame Julia Cleverdon

In 2019, for the first time since the 1970s, a majority of people in the UK described themselves as dissatisfied with democracy. Foa *et al.* in their 2022 *The Great Reset: Public Opinion, Populism, and the Pandemic*, argue that this dissatisfaction has many causes, but according to a piece of research by Quilter-Pinner *et al.*, published by the Institute for Public Policy Research in 2021, key factors include the disjoint between the lives people hoped to lead and the lives they are living, and a lack of confidence in governments’ ability to tackle the challenges that matter to citizens. This is the context into which this book lands, and what makes it so important.

According to many political theorists, the perceived failures of representative democracy are the origins of populism – in which people’s grievances are brought together and expressed as a hostile rejection of an ‘out-of-touch elite’, as Laclau put it in his *On Populist Reason*. Yet, the book that’s in your hands right now is proof that a dissatisfied descent into populism and polarisation is not inevitable. Indeed, this book is nothing if not a more optimistic, hopeful, and inclusive manifesto for change.

You might expect the case studies of pupils, parents, and teachers in *Education – Power – Change* to be the stories of people who have given up on the system - who reject it, refuse to be part of it and instead carve off new and alternative enclaves. But that isn’t their approach. In her contribution, Head Teacher Janice Allen refers to liminal spaces – spaces at a threshold that make politicians pause, and that precipitate a profound response, challenging them to think differently about how they respond to social problems. Those are exactly the spaces created by the people brought together in this book. These changemakers have identified the representatives and decision-makers in control of the things that matter to their community and have summoned all their ingenuity, passion, and humour to cross a boundary, finding new and surprising possibilities for change in doing so. You’ll read about the parents at St Mary’s CE Primary School who wrote a letter ‘so big that they can’t say they didn’t see it’; you’ll hear about James and Edward dressing up as chickens and demanding to see a business manager; as well as their peers, writing gift tags on 700 double decker chocolate bars in a bid to stand up and be noticed by the local bus company. These are individuals who won’t accept the boundaries in their way, instead opening up routes across them – refusing to be bound by conventionality and carefully calibrating how much tension to create between themselves and those they seek to influence. In other words, they don’t stand outside the system and throw stones, they demand to be let in – sitting with those in power and negotiating change together. The #LoveESOL campaign demonstrated this too – breaking with traditional politics by employing participatory theatre, but also tapping into local elections as an opportunity to work with elected representatives and to secure the commitments they needed.

This boundary spanning reminds me of the work of the American Sociologist Ronald Burt, who described ‘structural holes’ in systems and the crucial role played by those who bridge gaps between disconnected groups. Ronald Burt argues that these connectors are invaluable sources of new ideas, just as the individuals in this book are. Pupils like Jess, who stood up and said: ‘You know what would make a difference *to me*?’ In doing so, she and her peers precipitated a chain of actions that created bridges between students, local authorities, and school catering companies. What Citizens UK has done so effectively, is to recognise that the people who are closest to the problem are sometimes closest to the solution, as Hannah Gretton from St Mary’s CE Primary School puts it.

What Citizens UK has done so effectively, is to recognise that the people who are closest to the problem are sometimes closest to the solution […].

The title of this book is apt, since it makes clear the power that individuals and communities can unleash when they tap into the social capital that comes from bridging the 'structural holes' that riddle our system. For the academic Robert Putnam, this 'bridging capital' is 'sociological WD-40'. In his masterpiece *Bowling Alone* he goes on to provide a comprehensive analysis of civic participation (alongside political and religious participation), and its role in building social capital. In doing so he critiques the rise of 'mere-card carrying membership organisations' that fail to bring people together, instead contenting themselves with lobbying on their behalf. The participation catalogued in *Education – Power – Change* is of a very different ilk, demonstrating that part of the value of organising lies in allowing individuals to realise that *they themselves can* get nearer decision makers. A far cry from simply outsourcing their participation. As the Bradford students' manifesto demanded, they want to be 'partners in policy making' and as Natasha Boyce realised through her work with the Stephen Lawrence Ambassadors, 'the key to success in working towards systemic change is having close proximity to power.' In effect, citizen action shrinks the distance between decision makers and citizens by unleashing what Hannah Gretton goes on to call, 'relational power', or, 'power *with'*.

Power of the type showcased in this book is about far more than the passive power of 'the consulted'. As Dermot Bryers and Kasia Blackman from #LoveESOL argue, it involves a much greater degree of respect and accountability, and it is also far more unpredictable. The story of Mohana, a former Maths teacher shows that once people's leadership energy is unleashed in service of social change, the reaction can snowball in unforeseen ways. The same happened with the Stephen Lawrence Ambassadors when a vanguard of students from one school went on to deliver training to schools across Leicester. Meanwhile at St Mary's CE Primary School, it was only when parents compared their experiences that they discovered the overlaps – and as a result, unleashed their collective will to pursue change. Part of the message from these stories is that, if isolation is the enemy of democracy, perhaps organising is the cure.

There is no getting away from the need for 'patient tilling of the soil' to prepare the ground for action – as Hannah Gretton puts it (quoting civil rights organiser Ella Baker). And herein lies a paradox that Dermot and Kasia put their finger on: 'we organise because we don't have money but to a certain extent, we need money to organise.' It's therefore refreshing to hear James O'Connell-Lauder's account of how a group of MATs in Bradford came together to fund the follow up to the School Recovery Summit and to read about teacher unions in Chicago coming together with parents, ostensibly to pursue community, rather than self-interest. Organising for change is not a free for all, and it is called organising for a reason. Investing in the structure matters.

If our society, and the next generation in particular, are to stand a chance of bouncing back, then a reinvigorated collectivism in some form or other is surely our only hope, offering a powerful alternative to populist anger, polarisation and disempowerment.

Most people realised long before the pandemic that the challenges communities face stretch well-beyond the school gates, and the pandemic revealed the toll that years of siloed working and 'structural holes' have taken on our society's resilience. Yet it was in schools that Lyda Hanifan – an American school superintendent, first observed the phenomenon that he came to call 'social capital'. The covid crisis showed that 100 years after Hanifan coined the phrase, schools remain the anchor institutions that can bridge these gaps, providing the structure around which 'social capital' so often crystallises.

If our society, and the next generation in particular, are to stand a chance of bouncing back, then a reinvigorated collectivism in some form or other is surely our only hope, offering a powerful alternative to populist anger, polarisation and disempowerment. As Jon Yates argues in *Fractured*, 'the crisis of Covid has distanced us from each other. We see anew how far apart we are. The result must be a new way to bring us together'. Schools must surely be at the heart of this, and the stories in *Education – Power – Change* paint a picture of what that might look like. Let me therefore hand over to Dame Julia Cleverdon – my co-author for this foreword – who has five key lessons that promise to guide us on our way:

1. As co-founder of the #iWill campaign in 2013, I so agree with the Rochdale experience of Falinge Park High School where Janice Allen reports that her second Deputy Headship, in an all-through school in North Manchester cemented her belief in community partnerships. As she explains, it became clear to her that:

   > *'A school cannot work in opposition to a community… there are strengths that are vast and never ending within communities that should be cherished… There is nothing more powerful… than listening to young people articulating their thoughts in a space held by professionals and politicians'*

   For me that has been the growing experience of the #iWill movement as young people take the top seats at the funding tables of the #iwill fund; explain the priorities on commissioning in Young Manchester; or set a challenging clarion call on the quality standards for work experience as young leaders on the Careers and Enterprise Company Board.

2. The second key word to hold onto is 'listening'. I remember attending a listening day at Beckfoot School in Bradford in 2019 which had been convened by the Chair of the Opportunity Area. As always, it appeared to be very tough for professionals to listen, and virtual-sticky-tape had to be applied to the mouths of the over 50-year-olds in the room, so anxious were they to explain why transport ran as it did – rather than to listen to young people's vivid accounts of their experiences on the buses. It's therefore so very impressive to *listen* to what has been achieved through the Bradford Schools Summit, where post-Covid realities have provided a burning platform and will result in a permanent Bradford Citizens alliance, jointly funded by five collaborating Multi-Academy Trusts.

3. Thirdly, comes the importance of sustainability and resourcing the structure, as Loic has already mentioned, and as amply demonstrated in Peterborough, where the work of pupils at Thomas Deacon Academy kick-started a structure for young leaders across six schools. As Tim Hall so insightfully points out 'Alliances that are too thinly orchestrated with insufficiently thick relationships within and across institutions will burn out'. I remember so clearly how I failed to understand this fifteen years ago when trying – as Chair of Teach First, to encourage Teach First participants in Burnley to take on the world – without realising the thinness of their relationships across the town. Building thicker and deeper chains of influence takes much longer – but every link is worthwhile. This is exactly what the Citizens UK movement is so powerfully nurturing, armed with additional lessons from America.

4. After every action or assembly, Citizens have the excellent habit of evaluating – a practice equally important in organising as it is in participatory education. A key question is: 'did we develop leadership? Who stood out?' Some might be reluctant to pick out individuals, but the question focuses us on the importance of leadership development and learning, both individual and collective. Of course, as the #LoveESOL campaign, and so many others in this great collection show, young people build their power by building their skills – because it is by doing that you become. I saw this so clearly at the #iwill residential weekend convened by UK Youth and Volunteering Matters where this year's cohort of #iwill young ambassadors were building, not only a common experience and language, but a real investment in storytelling through practice and honing of skills. I could feel their power building in the room!

5. As a campaigner I have always been interested in identifying the 'Actionable First Step', something perfectly demonstrated by the parents at St Mary's CE Primary School who asked themselves, what would you like to change? And what specific action will you take?

We leave you with those last two questions and urge you to return to them once you have finished reading this inspiring collection of stories. Ask yourself: what would you like to change? What specific action will *you* take…?

INTRODUCTION

WITHOUT REALTIONHIPS OF TRUST THERE CAN BE NO JUSTICE

Dr Sebastien Chapleau

'A friend may be waiting behind a stranger's face.' (Maya Angelou)

As Loic Menzies writes in the Foreword to this book, '[i]f isolation is the enemy of democracy, perhaps organising is the cure.' I agree. Obviously! Organising is about relationships. And what this collection of stories is about, essentially, is the importance of relationships: relationships which grow out of a desire to build a more equal world for our communities. Sometimes, what this will mean is that relationships will be developed to fight for justice at a very local level. Sometimes, it will mean engaging in broader struggles which focus on systemic barriers. Irrespective of the size of the struggle, the ingredient that will always remain the same in the stories you are about to read is that unless people who face injustice find ways to trust each other, and work together, change rarely happens.

Bernadette Farrell is someone who taught me to be intentional about the need to build relationships of trust between communities and institutions that would otherwise never get to speak to one another. Along with Neil Jameson, Bernadette helped establish in the mid-1990s, in East London, what has now become a powerful network of Citizens alliances across the UK, bringing together hundreds of thousands of ordinary people, from all backgrounds, through the institutions they belong to – schools, colleges, universities, community associations, faith organisations, unions, and many more – and getting them to build relationships, power, and strategies to improve their lives.

Bernadette taught me, as I first got involved with Citizens UK (the Citizens Organising Foundation, as it was called then), and as I was teaching seven- and eight-year-olds in Greenwich, in South-East London, that Community Organisers are, first and foremost, relationship builders. As she got me to step into the world of Community Organising, Bernadette suggested to me teachers can also be described as relationship builders: people who invest time and energy – and often sweat and tears – in creating environments where young people feel acknowledged and respected and where they get to establish connections of trust between one another.

Beyond the symbolic nature of the importance of relationships, and in a world where knowing our neighbours is not necessarily the norm, a world where 'stranger is danger', Bernadette encouraged me to think about the role strong relationships can play as they become the necessary basis upon which a fairer society can be built. Without people knowing, and looking after, each other, she would tell me, there is little hope of moving towards a world where our children will ever thrive. And unless we are able to answer the question '*How are the children?*' with a smile, she would suggest, then we know there's still work to be done.

As a Community Organiser, I get most of my energy from the conversations I have with people across the areas where I organise. Hearing people's stories, enabling hopes, pains, struggles, and aspirations to be shared, and plans to be imagined: such is countercultural nature of the work. As a teacher – and then headteacher – it was the same: getting to know our children and their families in meaningful ways enabled me to get the energy often required to deal with the painful constraints imposed on the education system.

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The world we have let people in positions of power build around us is one where barriers have been erected across our communities. These barriers, too often structural, and too often rooted in long histories of oppression, are deeply embedded across the society we live in. Going against the grain, challenging the systems that exist all around us, can therefore feel arduous and will often generate fear and apathy on the part of those people who suffer from those very unequal systems.

Building trust across communities is hard work and can be seen as the most courageous aspect of the stories that follow. As the people mentioned herein got to know, and trust, each other, and as they started to turn their private pains into public, and collective, plans and strategies, they challenged themselves to imagine the solutions that would make their lives better and more just. Without relationships of trust, they realised, there can be no justice.

As Bernadette often reminded me, as she turned the teacher that I was into a Community Organiser, trust needs to be tested out. The best way to test it out, she would tell me, is by stepping outside together and by agreeing on what it is that we're going to do together to improve each other's lives. It is that reciprocity which will validate our shared understanding – and appreciation – of each other. It is that trusted togetherness that will bless our shared humanity.

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The stories that follow are rooted in a deep belief that the world we live in does not have to be the way it is. More than that, they are also inspired by a commitment to see ordinary people get their seat to the table to power when it comes to fighting for their rights.

The specific lens through which this collection of case studies has been brought together is that young people, their parents and carers, teachers, and school leaders, alongside others across our communities can work together in powerful ways to address the many issues which so many face across our neighbourhoods and cities.

The emphasis – as was the case in *Schools in their Communities: Taking Action and Developing Civic Life*, a similar collection of stories published in 2020 – is on the importance of seeing educational institutions embrace their civic responsibility, not shying away from what brought most educators into the world of teaching – *a sense of civic purpose* – and fully embracing the need engage with the injustices which impact young people and their families, and which too often lead to the inequalities we see in our classrooms and our homes.

As I wrote in the introduction to *Schools in their Communities: Taking Action and Developing Civic Life*, you may notice and feel that the stories you're about to ready may come across as messy, sometimes rather organic in the way their narratives and arguments are developed. This is because politics is messy. We are often told that politics is for experts and that it belongs to politicians. What this collection of essays demonstrates is that politics is not – and should not be – a domain for experts. Rather, politics is something which belongs to us all. it is an essential part of us all. And it is by getting stuck in what many describe as our birth right that we can shape – or reshape – our lives for what we've always dreamt them to be.

Rochester, November 2022

#LOVEESOL

SOUTH LONDON PARENTS ORGANISING FOR FAIRER ACCESS TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES

Dermot Bryers & Kasia Blackman

'Learning to speak English is really important – it was important for my Mum, it was important for my Dad and it's really important for new arrivals as well. It's a life skill and it's the ladder that provides social mobility and I want all Londoners to be able to speak English.' – Sadiq Khan speaking at the 2021 London Citizens Mayoral Assembly where he committed to providing an up-to-date and staffed website listing English classes across London.

It's a politician's promise, and a year later we're not quite there yet, but to hear the Mayor of London speak so passionately in support of ESOL meant a lot. We'd barely heard a high-profile politician mention ESOL before.

This is the story of how a group of ESOL teachers and their students, mostly south London parents from all corners of the world, are managing to make small but significant improvements to the provision of free English language classes for migrants in London. Like all honest organising stories, it's not perfect; there are more partial victories than total ones, and it's been a long, hard graft.

#LoveESOL?

The #LoveESOL campaign is five years old. It's led by English for Action (EFA London), a charity committed to supporting migrants to learn English and take action for social justice. EFA sets up ESOL courses with community partners like children's centres, charities, unions, and schools in order to make classes accessible to people who might ordinarily miss out. The bigger vision is to make London a more equal city where people can thrive irrespective of where they are from and EFA recognises that learning English is a necessary, but not sufficient, part of the solution. We also need to organise and take action to bring about the justice we demand, and our ESOL classes provide a basis for this organising and action.

Previously, EFA had been involved in national ESOL campaigning, alongside partners like Action for ESOL, a group of ESOL teachers and Natecla (the National Association of Teaching English and Community Languages to Adults). With the devolution of the Adult Skills Budget (ASB) to London and the recent election of Sadiq Khan (in 2016), it seemed logical to turn our attention to London and City Hall. EFA is a long-term member of London Citizens, originally in Southwark and now across south London and also TELCO (the east London chapter of London Citizens) and North London Citizens. We knew that for almost all of London Citizens' member organisations, especially the schools and diverse faith organisations, the lack of ESOL classes is a massive issue. But ESOL had never really made the agenda of election assemblies or negotiations with councils or the Greater London Authority (GLA). We therefore organised to demonstrate the strength of support for ESOL campaigning, not just at EFA but across the alliances we belonged to. We recognised that through our membership of London Citizens

and alongside ally organisations we were much more powerful and potentially had a seat at the table with local authorities and GLA politicians.

Five years on, and after literally scores of meetings and a number of actions, the Mayor announced his support for ESOL and committed to providing an ESOL website for London to improve accessibility in front of a digital audience of 6,000 people at the London Citizens Mayoral Assembly in April 2021, a few weeks before the London Mayoral elections.

We started, back in 2017, by organising a mass teach-out on the grass outside City Hall with 90 ESOL students, mostly women, mostly parents, some with their kids in tow. The plan was to attract the attention of the people at City Hall responsible for developing ESOL policy and get a meeting with them. The following week we received a reply to our 'we visited' message, inviting us to meet. That was the start of the dialogue.

The following year we were invited in and held our now annual #LoveESOL event inside City Hall. We invited the then Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Matthew Ryder, and he listened to students' concerns and their ideas to improve accessibility and provision.

In addition to placing great importance on dialogue, at EFA the teachers and students are keen to experiment with creative practices in order to disrupt the norms of communication and to set the agenda. We used theatre to demonstrate the impact of cuts to ESOL – not that we were holding City Hall to account for that, blame lay squarely at the door of successive governments from 2007 to the present – and how more efficient local coordination could make better use of the resources left.

The pandemic didn't stop EFA from organising events and continuing the dialogue with City Hall. In 2020, we couldn't assemble in person so #LoveESOL went online. In some ways, this made the event more accessible to ESOL students, many of whom are parents looking after pre-school children or have limited time between school drop-offs and pick-ups. Many are also doing shift work, most commonly in cleaning or catering roles and time is limited. The online event in September 2020 was attended by 142 people, a powerful number Deputy Mayor for Skills, Jules Pipe, alluded to in our subsequent meeting to go through the details of our asks.

The #LoveESOL campaigning continued after the 2021 mayoral election as we turned our attention to the local elections. After lots of work developing the right asks with Citizens allies, we won small but important commitments from council leaders in Brent, Southwark, Lambeth, and Greenwich, especially around appointing ESOL coordinators, convening ESOL sector meetings and set up or improve web pages with information about classes at borough level. These should make the GLA's work easier as they seek to coordinate and promote ESOL across London.

What kind of meaningful impact was had?

Change in policy and practice

Things have certainly changed for the better since 2017. At each public assembly, commitments were made, and between them some progress was delivered.

For example, in 2019 City Hall appointed the ESOL coordinator role – actually a job share that amounted to more than one full-time position. The coordinators have done important work, bringing together

different groups and individuals to share best practice, creating a newsletter with job vacancies and funding opportunities, supporting EFA to put on subsequent #LoveESOL events and raising the profile of ESOL inside and outside City Hall.

Around the same time, they also set up ESOL plus funding – grants to support organisations to address accessibility issues and develop innovative methods. EFA students had raised the crucial issue of the lack of childcare to support ESOL classes, making ESOL inaccessible for thousands of parents, mostly women. One of these pilot projects addressed the issue specifically – making the case for childcare with ESOL and researching sustainable models to provide it, such as partnerships between adult education providers and children's centres, something that had existed before, but had taken a big hit when the cuts to ESOL were deepest, between 2010 and 2016.

City Hall raised the threshold for fully-funded classes to anyone earning less than the London Living Wage, making free classes accessible to a further 20,000 people in the city.

Perhaps most significantly, City Hall raised the threshold for fully-funded classes to anyone earning less than the London Living Wage, making free classes accessible to a further 20,000 people in the city. In 2021, City Hall took legal advice and successfully managed to extend free classes to people seeking asylum, previously ineligible as a result of rules imposed by the Home Office. EFA made eligibility for free funding for all migrants, not just certain groups, a central demand at our 2018 #LoveESOL day and subsequent events. We are not there yet but it's heartening to see these two big steps in the right direction.

Leadership development

A less tangible, but no less important, impact is on the people involved in the campaign. After every action or assembly, we have the habit of evaluating – a practice equally important in organising as it is in participatory education. A key question is: 'Did we develop leadership? Who stood out?' Some of us might be reluctant to pick out individuals, but the question focuses us on the importance of leadership development and learning, individual and collective.

The agreements made with the Mayor, and then subsequently with council leaders, are important, and, when the powers that be deliver (they have already to a certain extent), will change lives for the better, but no less important is that EFA's students and teacher-organisers are now better equipped to continue organising and continue winning change.

How was power built?

Action

Firstly, we have taken action in order to get a relationship with the right policy-makers and to demonstrate the strength of support. The various actions, detailed above, have been taken in order to:

- secure a meeting – the first action, for example, when we assembled outside City Hall and held a mass teach-out;
- win agreements – the following year, for example, when we held the event inside City Hall with Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Matthew Ryder;
- hold leaders accountable for agreements made previously.

Sometimes some tension has been necessary; and action can definitely bring some of that productive tension. Politicians and their teams have a variety of individuals and groups clamouring for attention on a wide range of issues. Even politicians with the best intentions to listen widely to civil society groups,

The difference between organised people negotiating with power and politicians consulting civil society is that organised people can obtain commitments and then hold the officials and staff to account for delivering.

attempt to keep them at arm's length or funnel them into existing channels. EFA and Citizens don't want to be 'consulted'. Rather, we want a respectful relationship with power and, above all, accountability. The difference between organised people negotiating with power and politicians consulting civil society is that organised people can obtain commitments and then hold the officials and staff to account for delivering.

At various moments during the #LoveESOL campaign we have created a little more tension when we felt politicians and civil servants were not really engaging, not responding to communications, or reneging on their commitments. One example of this is a letter to the Mayor signed by almost 1,000 people and 30 organisations. After months of failing to find a time to meet with us to discuss progress on the GLA's ESOL website, the Mayor's team picked up our letter and invited us to an urgent meeting the following week to address our concerns (and gently reprimanded us for publicly embarrassing them without acknowledging the progress made).

Leadership

When she moved to the UK to join her husband, she left behind her job and community and found her linguistic skills were no longer valued. EFA teacher-organisers recognised the skills she brought […].

Power is built by people who lead and inspire others. Occasionally, leaders emerge who not only make a vital contribution to a campaign, but they also inspire those around them including the organisers. Mohana is one of those leaders. In India, Mohana worked as a mathematics teacher and was active in her community. She speaks five languages. When she moved to the UK to join her husband, she left behind her job and community and found her linguistic skills were no longer valued. EFA teacher-organisers recognised the skills she brought but also helped her develop, especially through the weekly ESOL course she attends at the Salvation Army in Camberwell, but also through participation in action teams and community organising training.

Mohana already told her story well – and now she tells it even better. She spoke English well and now she speaks even better. She has continued to organise, tell her story, and impact people moving from classroom discussions and participatory video to addressing decision-makers on ESOL policy. When Southwark Citizens brought together cabinet members and the leader of the council for a Zoom meeting in December 2021, Mohana spoke powerfully to them about the difficulties she had experienced as a mother navigating new systems in an unfamiliar language. She had been afraid to leave the house without her husband. She urged the leader of the council to improve coordination and access to ESOL classes for parents like her. Four months later, at a public pre-election accountability assembly in Southwark, the same council leader committed to appointing an ESOL officer, convening quarterly meetings for ESOL stakeholders and compiling an ESOL directory on the council's website. Such achievements are never attributable to one person, nor are they possible without the involvement of individuals like Mohana. Mohana now supports other parents by volunteering at MumSpace, a charity supporting mothers in Southwark, and encourages other students in her EFA class to get involved in ESOL campaigning.

It's significant that Mohana found EFA through MumSpace – a fellow member of Southwark Citizens. When participants find their way to us at EFA from partners also steeped in organising this helps them transform the EFA spaces they arrive at into organising spaces, or help them continue in this trajectory at least.

There were other student leaders who developed their skills too. Ania Dawid, a parent from Henry Cavendish School in South London, has been pivotal to the campaign since the beginning, overcoming her fear of public speaking to address large groups and tell her story for campaign videos as well as using her visual arts skills to help create those videos. This is what the leadership process in community organising looks like, people learning new skills and honing existing ones.

EFA's teacher-organisers are also learning and developing. As a result of the #LoveESOL organising we are learning how to negotiate with council leaders in pre-assembly meetings, how to communicate the importance of ESOL to a variety of audiences, how to prepare and turn out large groups of people to actions and assemblies and how to develop appropriate asks that are realistic and winnable, but also worthwhile.

Time

It's not a new or exciting answer but one key factor is time. Organising takes time and, to sustain the work, it's obvious, but it really helps to build organisations that endure. EFA is 15 years old now, and counting. Key to this relative longevity has been the dedication of volunteers including the board of trustees, the skill and commitment of paid staff and volunteers, and above all the enthusiasm and dedication of our ESOL students.

We have proved our worth and helped the alliances to build power by developing leaders and turning out in large numbers for actions and assemblies. Over time, ESOL has become a bigger and bigger priority for citizens alliances across London and the country.

EFA has also been a member of Citizens for over 10 years, first Southwark and now across south London, TELCO, and Brent in North London Citizens. Over this time, we have built hundreds of relationships, supported with actions and campaigns not directly in our self-interest and received support in exchange on the campaigns most important to us. We have proved our worth and helped the alliances to build power by developing leaders and turning out in large numbers for actions and assemblies. Over time, ESOL has become a bigger and bigger priority for citizens alliances across London and the country.

Money

We don't like to talk about it but let's be frank: effective organising (almost always) needs money. It's a contradiction because, on the one hand, we organise because we don't have money but, to a certain extent, we need money to organise. Power is organised money and organised people, the so-called founding father of broad-based community organising Saul Alinksy teaches, and the two are inextricably linked.

The reason EFA met Mohana is because we raised money and put on ESOL classes with childcare in her community. This money came from two sources. The first was AMIF – the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund. The second was the European Union's Erasmus+ funding, which enabled us to work with our students on a counter-narrative, participatory video project.

It has been difficult to raise money for ESOL campaigning specifically and we've had to dedicate core funding to carry out the work. It hasn't always been enough which has made it difficult to sustain progress. EFA staff have had little dedicated time for ESOL campaigning and Citizens organisers and leaders are stretched in many directions. A major goal over the next few months and years is to raise the money we need to sustain and perhaps expand the work.

How was action taken?

ESOL classes

EFA's model is to combine learning and action. The basis of both are the ESOL classes. The classes bring people together. First of all, they provide a regular space that enables the participants to develop deep relationships with their teachers and with fellow students. There is no separation between learning and action; the critical discussions about real life issues enable students to develop their language skills but also often lead to a commitment to take action to effect change. Planning, taking and evaluating action, are language and literacy-rich activities. For example, preparing for the #LoveESOL days entailed:

- Reading about the politicians and policy offers we were engaging with
- Debating strategy
- Negotiating an agenda for the meeting/assembly
- Inviting people to the event
- Preparing speeches and content for the day
- Writing emails or letters to express demands

The classes then serve to carry forward our institutional memory of the action and help pass down these memories and commitment to the next generation of ESOL students who can pick up the baton.

Mass meetings and assemblies

The assembly is a political tradition that goes back millennia, and it is central to Citizens UK's *modus operandum* despite the vast array of digital tools organisers and activists now have at their disposal. They are hard work to prepare and the participants need to commit far more time and energy than for a Twitterstorm, petition, sharing online content, or sending an email from a template but the gains can be greater. Mass meetings and assemblies have been a major part of the #LoveESOL campaign so far. They have developed leadership and produced memories. Crucially, thanks to the power of students' and teachers' personal testimonies and the impact this has on policy-makers, and also perhaps the relatively large numbers of people who have turned out, they have secured agreements and/or positive reactions from those in power.

Participatory video

In addition to theatre, as mentioned previously, one of the methods we used during the #LoveESOL campaign was participatory video-making. Participatory video-making helps people to tell their own stories – not to contract their story-telling to an expert but to be in control of the process – both the what and the how. We wanted to make a #LoveESOL video to further our aims. Given our relatively small reach we decided not to make a video generally raising awareness or to demonstrate mass public support, but instead to secure support from key allies and to target specific policy-makers at local councils and the Mayor's office.

The #LoveESOL video started with four groups of EFA ESOL students, two at primary schools and two at children's centres, all in south London. With each group we used participatory tools to explore the theme of migration and encourage students to share their opinions and experiences. A sub-group of six students emerged to take on the project and commit to making the video, alongside Verushka, an EFA teacher-organiser. They met around ten times and worked out the specific message, decided the audience (as described above) and therefore the tone. They hired a videographer and together they wrote the script, chose the music, starred in the video of course and even edited the footage as a team.

Next steps

Our main task in 2022, as we finish writing this essay, is converting agreements made with the Mayor and local council leaders into policies and monitoring that the policies are delivered in a meaningful and impactful way. This year, EFA teachers have been learning more 'theatre of the oppressed' techniques (as introduced by Augusto Boal) and, as we write, are organising a forum theatre play to develop our capacity to convert commitments to policies. We are experimenting with using forum theatre as a means to rehearse possible negotiation scenarios, playing the roles of politicians to explore their self-interest and social contradictions, and safely testing the strategies we may then go on to use around the negotiating table. Then the organising cycle carries on with more listening, action and negotiations leading to more change and more justice. *La lutte continue*…

ST MARY'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL – TRAINING FOR LEWISHAM COUNCIL

Hannah Gretton

'I'm not a praying person, but whenever I have to go to Lewisham Council to get support for my kids, I go to Church, get down on my hands and knees, and pray that they treat me like a human and not like an animal.'

BACKGROUND

When Christine Bernard, headteacher at St Mary's CE Primary School in Lewisham, reached out to Citizens UK in 2018, it was because of the challenge many of their pupils faced accessing citizenship. Their students, many of whom were blocked from citizenship due to the £1,012 associated cost, wrote poems about their situation and joined many other member schools outside the Home Office to take action on World Poetry Day. This started a powerful relationship between the school and Citizens, as St Mary's became core members of the local alliance Lewisham Citizens, and played a strategic role in national campaigns.

In 2019, the school became one of two pilot schools – the second being Surrey Square Primary School, in Southwark – to explore the intersection of parent organising and legal advice, as part of a partnership with Coram Children's Legal Centre and Citizens UK funded through the Citizenship and Integration Initiative.

This piece tells the story of a campaign that emerged from that work, where a team of migrant parents took it upon themselves to challenge the hostile policies of Lewisham Council – and won.

LISTEN

Community Organising is a craft, or an art, rather than a science, but some of the practices to use this craft to make change and build people power ('power with') have followed very similar steps: starting with listening, before jumping to action.

[I]f we don't listen, we don't know what is impacting people!

We call this 'people before programme'. Why? Partly because if we don't listen, we don't know what is impacting people! So many well-meaning do-gooders, particularly in the charity sector, try to make change on behalf of people thinking they understand those people's interests better than them. Community Organising principles say that it is the people closest to the pain who are closest to the solutions. We might think that what a group of people want to campaign on is poverty, because we know they are in poverty and we know poverty is bad. But, actually, when we take the time to ask – and listen – we hear that, yes of course poverty is bad, but what they'd really like to campaign first on is the lack of lighting on their estate that makes them feel unsafe every single day. But even when we know what the issue is that people want to care on, we refuse to skip listening, because listening is how we build the relationships – and therefore the relational power, or 'power with' – needed to make change.

The staff at St Mary's and the core parent team knew that immigration issues were dramatically impacting families, but we still needed to listen to find out what specific issues we could campaign on and who else could be involved.

'People come to the meetings very closed, very kind of, 'Oh, what's all this about?' and, literally, you can see people's shoulders dropping after about 45 minutes. They realise, 'Ah, people are going through the same experiences as me. It's okay to talk about this'... It was trying to build up that trust and that rapport, really' – Marta Tildesley, School Home Support Worker, St Mary's CE Primary School

So as parents at St Mary's listened to each other, through one-to-one conversations and sharing in group settings (known as 'house meetings', a term going back to Fred Ross as he organised migrant farm workers in California in the 1940s and 50s, where workers would meet in their homes in order to share stories and build momentum in the lead up to bigger gatherings). They asked a simple question: what would you like to change? And answers came in thick and fast, both specific and broad:

- 'Make the UK more welcoming'
- Reduce Citizenship fees for children'
- 'Cancel our NHS debt for giving birth'
- 'Help my wife come to the UK'

The most specific and tangible issue that came up, time and time again, from almost every parent that was spoken to, was how Lewisham Council staff treated parents when they came to them in need.

Parents told horror stories of going to the council with their children declaring homelessness and being told outrageously hostile and racist comments: 'When I went to the council about a housing problem, I was told to go back to where I came from' one parent said; 'I was told if I can't look after my children, maybe I shouldn't have had children', said another. School staff, organisers and Coram lawyers agreed, as they had seen this in practice when supporting families.

And as parents shared their stories one by one, their collective anger grew. They realised it wasn't just them who had experienced this poor treatment, but it was a systemic issue at the core of the council that was impacting many more than just them.

And as parents shared their stories one by one, their collective anger grew. They realised it wasn't just them who had experienced this poor treatment, but it was a systemic issue at the core of the council that was impacting many more than just them.

Most importantly, they wanted to do something about it.

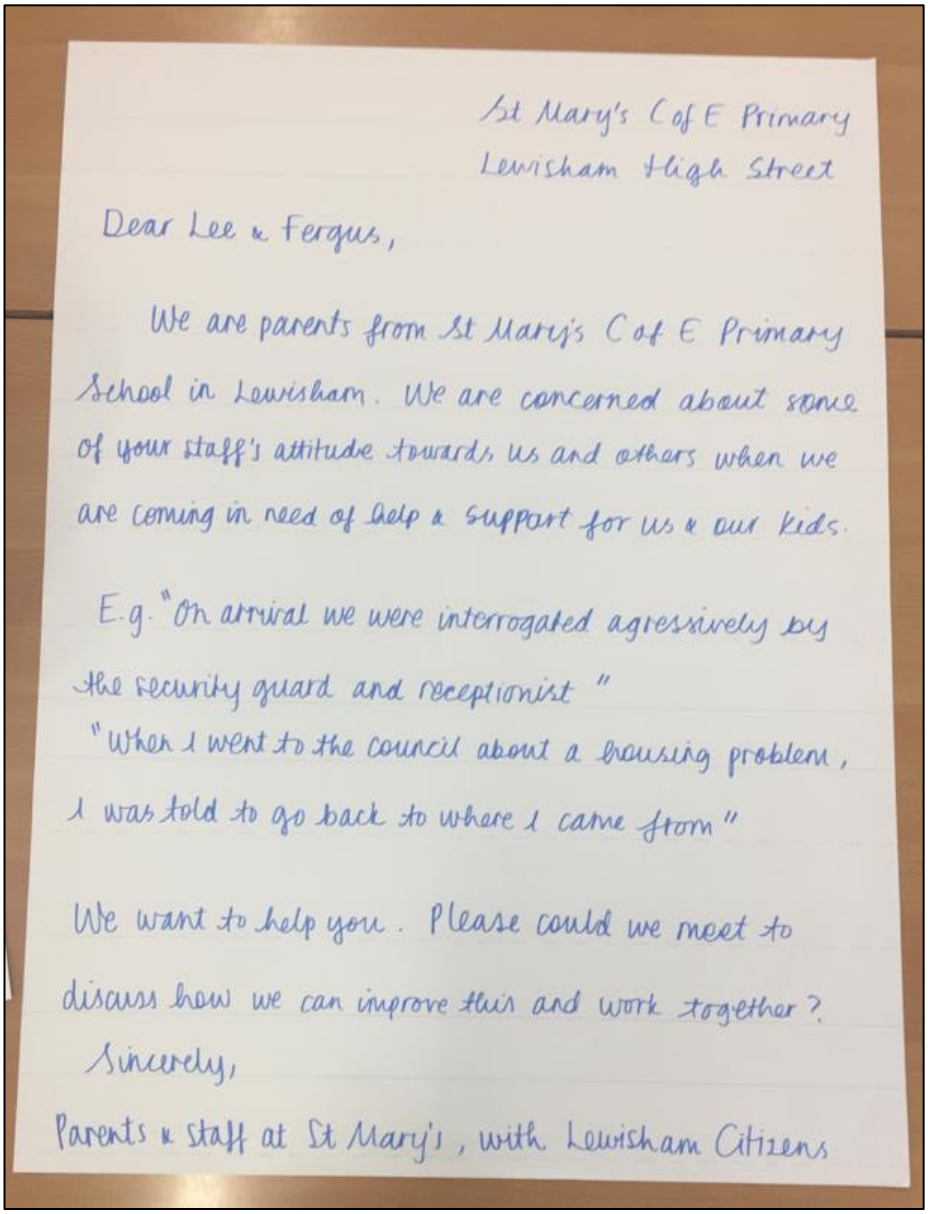
RESEARCH

The next step was to create a strategy. This is a group of parents who have never taken political action before, who are used to feeling powerless at the hands of decision-makers, so this stage was vital. The parents met with people from other organisations, like Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network (LRMN), to find out what they knew about the council's practices. Clients using LRMN's services had faced similar hostility, and this compounded the feeling that they needed to act. Parents also found out from them about the council's recent commitment to become a Borough of Sanctuary. This was an opportunity, as it meant there would be people in the council working to shift things.

Parents also needed to decide what they were asking for. People who want to make change so often fail because they are asking for something broad ('Make Poverty History', 'End Sexism', etc.) but are not giving decision-makers something specific they can say YES – or NO – to. Parents decided that what would have a tangible impact on their experiences would be for the council staff they interact with to receive training to better understand where parents are coming from. And, alongside experts at Coram and Project 17, they wanted the training to be delivered by parents themselves.

Through more conversations, we found the people to target: Councillor Kevin Bonavia, cabinet member for Refugees, Accountability, and Democracy, who was leading on the Sanctuary commitment and had been a real ally in previous Lewisham Citizens campaigns, and Fergus Downy, overseeing the NRPF (No Recourse to Public Funds – for migrant families who can't access other forms of state support) team in the council, who would need to be on board to implement the training.

ACT



St Mary's C of E Primary
Lewisham High Street

Dear Lee & Fergus,

We are parents from St Mary's C of E Primary School in Lewisham. We are concerned about some of your staff's attitude towards us and others when we are coming in need of help & support for us & our kids.

E.g. "On arrival we were interrogated agressively by the security guard and receptionist"
"When I went to the council about a housing problem, I was told to go back to where I came from"

We want to help you. Please could we meet to discuss how we can improve this and work together?

Sincerely,

Parents & staff at St Mary's, with Lewisham Citizens

The next step in the organising cycle is action. We act not for the sake of action but to get a reaction. Parents decided the reaction they wanted was a meeting with Councillor Kevin and Fergus, and so the first step was to get in touch with them, along with Lee who managed Fergus.

'Let's write a letter first, before we take bigger action, so they don't think we're being hostile…'

'Ok, but let's make it really big, so big that they can't say they didn't see it'.

The parents collectively composed the giant letter.

Within a few days of delivering the giant letter to the council building, Fergus had replied: 'I accept your good intentions and very much appreciate you bringing this to my attention'. A date for a meeting was arranged. The team celebrated the positive reaction to their mini-action, and got preparing for the next step: negotiation.

NEGOTIATION

'If you're not at the table, you're on the menu…'

The tables – real or metaphorical – around which decisions are made, are usually behind closed doors. Offices in Westminster or rooms in 10 Downing Street, board rooms, council halls, luxury golf courses… these are not places most of us have access to. But one of the chief aims of community organising is to get a seat at the table. We can run the best and most creative action in the world, we can have the strongest argument for the most just cause, we can be absolutely convinced we are on the right side of history, and

We can run the best and most creative action in the world, we can have the strongest argument for the most just cause, we can be absolutely convinced we are on the right side of history, and if we do not have the power to get around the decision-makers' tables, we are very unlikely to be able to influence their decisions.

if we do not have the power to get around the decision-makers' tables, we are very unlikely to be able to influence their decisions.

We practised the negotiation with the council four times before the real thing, with parents taking turns to play council staff and each other in a role play. Parents scripted their stories so they felt confident sharing them with Councillor Kevin. They wanted to be absolutely certain of what was committed to and what was not, so with the help of Ezra from Holy Trinity Church in Sydenham they created a checklist of their asks, once again giant-sized, so they could physically tick off each commitment Councillor Kevin made to them right in front of him.

When the day arrived, parents led the meeting. They welcomed Councillor Kevin, acknowledged the brilliant work he had previously done with Lewisham Citizens on welcoming Syrian refugees to the borough, and acknowledged his commitment to making Lewisham a Borough of Sanctuary. Then they shared their stories.

'I'm not a praying person, but whenever I have to go to Lewisham council to get support for my kids, I go to church, get down on my hands and knees, and pray that they treat me like a human and not like an animal.'

Councillor Kevin was moved and ticked the box of every ask the parents made of him.

FOLLOW-UP

It took many more back-and-forths, and many delays due to the pandemic, but finally, in March 2021 the parents of St Mary's, along with Citizens UK, Coram Children's Legal Centre, LRMN and Project 17 delivered their training to a team of staff from the housing and NRPF teams at Lewisham Council, along with Fergus and the newly recruited Sanctuary Manager, Phil.

The highlight was the parents role playing real-life scenarios with council staff, in reversed roles, to give the staff a chance to experience the situation in the parents' shoes, and for parents to share how it makes them feel.

'We went from being powerless to those staff who have power over us, to having the power together to make them change their ways…' – parent

'After we looked at how to approach the council (because many people who work for housing in the council can be very rude)... I think we can make changes because it's not coming from just one person, it is coming from group of people saying the same thing…' – parent

***

This was one campaign win, and of a fairly-small scale. St Mary's parents and staff have since been involved in winning the massive commitment to permanently extend Free School Meals and Pupil Premium to cover families with NRPF or no documents (up to 250,000 children across the UK) and the fee waiver introduced for children's citizenship fees for children in care and children whose parents can't afford the fees. But the work to develop a team of parent leaders, who are confident to act and build the power they need to make the change they want, has to go at their pace. Civil rights organiser Ella Baker talked about organising as 'spade work', the slow and patient tilling of the fields needed to prepare the ground for the next harvest. Each small action in a local campaign, each relational one-to-one conversation, each listening meeting, each moment a parent does something for the first time… is a preparation of the soil for the harvest that is to come. And with St Mary's the work is only just beginning.

Each small action in a local campaign, each relational one-to-one conversation, each listening meeting, each moment a parent does something for the first time… is a preparation of the soil for the harvest that is to come.

RAISING ROCHDALE

Janice Allen

How do we move from being a community-focused school to being a school which takes direct action and organises alongside communities? Should it even be something we do? After all, surely, we have enough to do! The list of what schools should 'fix' in society is endless with almost every week, it seems, a different pressure group telling us what we should include in our curriculum. So why am I suggesting that schools benefit from being involved in community organising and what are the steps we can take to get there?

A value system

Before I outline our journey and suggest the benefits to our wider family at Falinge Park High School in Rochdale, it may be helpful to explain the values systems I hold and which underpin our practice.

I was fortunate when I began teaching in 1998 that my first job was to introduce Drama to an inner-city all-boys school in North Manchester. The school was in 'Special Measures' but the Headteacher believed that it was through championing the Arts and making it an open place where children and families were proud to be that we would be successful. I was fortunate that they led through enabling creativity and innovation and developed us professionally which, in a really tough school, was a brave approach. Consequently, the impact of their leadership has shaped the way I have led as a Senior Leader and, since 2015, as the Headteacher of a large Local Authority comprehensive secondary school.

Perhaps it was the fact that we were coming from a position of being at the bottom that gave the Headteacher the freedom to think a little differently. Perhaps it was the huge deficit we had. Perhaps it was just their personality because I was fortunate (again) to be given the space by an excellent leader to build partnerships with businesses, youth workers, health services, and other statutory partners to help the curriculum come 'alive'.

The benefits of working alongside our community was developed further between 2006-2012 when I was Deputy Headteacher, overseeing our school's curriculum and whilst we were under intense scrutiny, locally and nationally. Perhaps it was the fact that we were coming from a position of being at the bottom that gave the Headteacher the freedom to think a little differently. Perhaps it was the huge deficit we had. Perhaps it was just their personality because I was fortunate (again) to be given the space by an excellent leader to build partnerships with businesses, youth workers, health services, and other statutory partners to help the curriculum come 'alive'.

It was, however, my second Deputy Headship in an all-through diverse school in North Manchester that really cemented my belief in the importance of community partnerships and gave me the strength to hold fast that a school cannot work in opposition to a community but that there are strengths that are vast and never-ending within communities that should be cherished. Through a series of sessions I held with various communities (usually over food), we engaged our Somali, Roma, and Afghan communities. We asked the parents and leaders what they wanted from school. This led us to develop a Somali supplementary school on a Saturday where parents and pupils taught Somali culture, language, and heritage alongside supporting children to develop their success in English and Maths. It was, and remains, one of my proudest achievements yet I did not realise at the time that what we were doing could be described as ***Community Organising.*** To me, Community Organising was something people other than me were good at and whilst I could see the benefits of working alongside faith leaders and community partners, and whilst I knew that it was having a profound positive impact on how our families felt, I did

not comprehend fully the ***power*** of what we were doing. I saw it when we opened our community shop for a week in a vacant lot in Cheetham Hill, Manchester and parents and pupils worked side by side leading reading sessions, selling homemade wares, and providing welfare support and advice. Although all this was happening, I couldn't articulate it as community organising.

The opportunity to breathe and think throughout my career has enabled me to take a wider view of schooling and this, in turn, is what I hope to do as I outline how we are fulfilling our objective of 'Creating a Compelling Learning Experience at Falinge Park High School' and how community partnerships and community organising are central to this practice.

I hope this potted history of the events that shaped my leadership is not too indulgent. I just think it is important to highlight how the courage to disrupt the *status quo* and to work within the systems that define us as educators has been supported through excellent leaders who trusted in me and were willing to take calculated risks. The opportunity to breathe and think throughout my career has enabled me to take a wider view of schooling and this, in turn, is what I hope to do as I outline how we are fulfilling our objective of 'Creating a Compelling Learning Experience at Falinge Park High School' and how community partnerships and community organising are central to this practice.

The ten-year plan

We set out our blueprint for what we wanted to achieve over a ten-year period back in 2015.

Phase One – 2015-2019: Creating the conditions where Compelling Learning can take place

Phase Two – 2019-2022: Embedding Compelling Learning across all teams; Embedding Collaborative Professionalism

Phase Three – 2022-2025: Transforming Compelling Learning and leading out in partnership with the community

Creating the conditions for community partnerships

It is fair to say that the pandemic actually enabled us to lead out in partnership with the community much quicker than we had intended. We restructured in 2018 and appointed for September 2019 an Assistant Headteacher for Creative Partnerships and Community Cohesion.

As part of the restructure, we created a community wing of the school who could support the Assistant Headteacher to drive this, crucially with time on their timetable to do this. This involved a non-teaching Director of Community Cohesion who could work alongside the Assistant Headteacher and was able to bid for pots of money as well as Teaching and Learning Responsibilities (TLRs) for staff working as Student Leadership Co-ordinator, Parent Leadership Co-ordinator, Primary and Project Leadership Co-ordinator. These TLR postholders were carefully timetabled to enable them to have blocks of space on their low schedules and, in one case, two non-teaching days.

With the structure in place, we were able to commit to meetings with our local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) at Grassroots Gatherings. At one event during the first lockdown, we met two placed-based charities where we created a link to explore race and equality. Through the facilitation from the VCSE, we also began working with Rochdale Women's Welfare where we came together to begin a project, funded by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, looking at White Ribbon Champions to address gender-based violence in school and the communities.

By the end of 2020, we had identified five local based charities for whom any fundraising we undertook would benefit from this, for whom we could provide volunteers to help and support and who worked

with us on our Human Rights work and participated in our International Human Rights Day. We worked together to collect food for the local foodbank in December 2020 and were committed to each other. Before I share how I was challenged that this wasn't enough, or that we weren't thinking laterally enough, a key factor in developing this provision was in the wider reading we were undertaking. *Flipping Schools* by Malcolm Groves and John-West Burnham was a key influencer and continues to be a very helpful guide that guides schools in working with their communities and outlines key values and practice; Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* and *Bowling Together* were also central to us thinking about the benefits of partnership possibilities; alongside the recognition that there was work going on across the UK that was highlighted in *Schools in Their Communities: Taking Action and Developing Civic Life*.

I was challenged that we weren't fully taking forward the momentum and partnerships we had built and challenged as to whether we were creating the conditions whereby social justice – and not only social action – could be our main focus.

This is where I met Seb Chapleau. I contacted him after reading the case studies in *Schools in Their Communities: Taking Action and Developing Civic Life* and we spoke a number of times as we placed our key staff on Community Organising training. I was challenged that we weren't fully taking forward the momentum and partnerships we had built and challenged as to whether we were creating the conditions whereby social justice – and not only social action – could be our main focus.

Community Organising and Social Justice

I must admit that the thought of moving into this space was a little concerning. Like many of us in education, we are well-aware of our professional responsibilities and need for impartiality. I was worried that, if we became focused on social justice, we might blur boundaries and that it could be uncomfortable with accusations of leaders in the school putting their own views onto young people. A lot of what we do in schools is community organising but not to the extend I thought it was.

We joined Citizens UK as an institution and were thrown in at the deep end with a Mayoral Accountability Assembly organised in the run up to the elections for Mayor of Greater Manchester. We worked as part of Greater Manchester Citizens' child poverty action group, and this is where I realised tensions arose. The action team we joined, I realised, was mostly led by adults. Therefore, the pupils who are the people who we want to be involved weren't involved in this very planning. If you weren't careful, they'd become recipients as opposed to being involved in the direction of the campaigning.

To address that, our students got directly involved in the action group and helped shaped the Child Poverty section of our Citizens alliance's Mayoral Accountability Assembly. As such, their voices were central to the argument that was made to the mayoral candidates.

In addition, we were fortunate in that we already had in school Democracy and Human Rights Ambassadors with a member of staff responsible for developing these programmes as part of our community wing. We had, as well, already done a significant piece of work for International Human Rights Day on poverty. We also had pupils who were engaged with campaigning through Citizenship and through those pupils who work on the Manchester City in the Community programme. Therefore, what it needed in our case were discussions with the pupils as to whether this was something they felt they could be involved in. Unsurprisingly, it was a resounding yes.

There is nothing more powerful (in my opinion) than listening to young people articulating their thoughts in a space held by professionals and politicians. It creates a liminal space which challenges the politicians in how they respond and the commitments they make: no politician wants to dash a young person's dreams or aspirations! Despite the pride you feel as a Headteacher listening to the young people speak, I'm always conscious that it is what you do ***after*** the event that is key.

Embedding throughout our school

Through work like this, we now have over 50% of our 1,350-strong pupil community involved in school advocacy groups.

Here are just ***some*** of the projects and social action we have been involved in over the past six months:

- Gender based violence – because of our work with Rochdale Women's Welfare Association we have had over 400 young men sign up to be White Ribbon Ambassadors. They have worked with Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit to spread the work further and have engaged in discussions with our Mayor Andy Burnham.
- Our Women and Equalities group, alongside Rochdale Women's Welfare, are co-designing and co-creating a theatre piece which will go across all GM schools related to consent following the #IsThisOk video released by Greater Manchester Mayor.
- We have pupils working alongside Petrus, a local homeless charity who supports local residents. Their clients work with our Eco Ambassadors and Additional Needs pupils on a campaign to create more green spaces across Rochdale. We have been able to access funding which in turn supports Petrus – giving support back to the local community.
- Through our work with Citizens UK on child poverty, we have secured welfare advice for parents in school.
- Our Parent Partnership has helped to develop the Community Warehouse facilitated by our VCSE. This in turn is guiding parents to the adult learning that is in place in Rochdale.

So why bother?

For this, I turn to the four underpinning values of our school. We try to ensure we live and breathe these. There are far more eloquent people than me that can write about the quantitative benefits. For us, prior to one of the Covid lockdowns in 2020, we had worked together on ensuring our values had clarity and defined who we were and who we wanted to be. These are outlined below as they appear to all staff, pupils, parents and partners.

- **Ensuring Equity** – this links to the fact that we are starting from a position whereby we know that there is inequity in our school when the pupils arrive. This can come from socio-economic issues such as poverty; trauma in childhood with at least a tenth of our cohort experiencing trauma, neglect, abuse before they come to us; religious and cultural inequities which are being played out nationally and globally; academic inequity which plays out in terms of exposure to vocabulary, cultural capital, cognitive and learning difficulties and EAL. With regards to EAL a key piece of thinking is that our pupils may be bilingual – but they are often not academically fluent in any of the languages they speak. Ironically, our success as a school is making these inequities even more apparent to us as a ***community*** as we really are a true comprehensive with pupils representing a full range of identities – academically, ethnically and socio-economically. Whatever we do, we have to remember that we are driven to make improvements through a strong sense of social justice. When we talk about equity therefore it encompasses all aspects of school life.
- **Building Community** – we believe that as a school we should serve the community and that a school plays an important part of any community in terms of regeneration, equity building and social cohesion. We have many communities in school (year groups, friendship groups, ethnic groups, gender groups, disability groups, LGBT groups, staff team groups, staff friendship groups) and we are part of a local, national and global community. When we think about community we have to think of it in the small sense and the wider sense**.** When we are talking about community we are talking about identifying how we want our community to be and what can be, fostering a sense of connectedness which builds social capital and ensures equity.

- **Securing Communication –** improving communication is the cornerstone of addressing equity and supporting community cohesion. Improved communication orally, written, academically, socially builds the positive relationships which is how we bring about the change. The building of the positive relationships we make with our ***community*** and between professionals means that we can create a sense of connectedness and work on a strength finder approach rather than a deficit model. The fact we take time to reflect on our practice and we believe 100% that people have the capacity to improve demonstrates itself as well in our leadership behaviours and actions as well as impacting positively on our children. We cannot bring about the improvements unless we look at our own communication.
- **Celebrating Diversity –** Maya Angelou wrote, 'In diversity, there is beauty and there is strength.' As a multi-faith, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural school the celebration of diversity is central to us achieving a harmonious culture in school and within our wider communities. We see people as individuals and celebrate their strengths as opposed to working on a deficit model. In order to celebrate diversity fully, we have to ensure that our environment is safe and calm and that there are clear boundaries for adults and children to thrive in. We know that we cannot achieve this if our wellbeing as individuals is compromised as this is when we build up barriers around ourselves. We cannot ensure equity if we are not secure in ourselves and our communities and if we lack the communication skills to express ourselves in an increasingly complex world. As one of our Year 7 eloquently expressed it, 'wasn't possible to change the world if you're not feeling emotionally healthy and secure'.

Summary

Whilst not a step-by-step guide, there are some key factors of our practice which might be helpful for other schools embarking on this journey.

1. Create the structure in school where this can take place. It needs investment in terms of time and staffing but it is worthwhile. Even if schools can't invest in the way we have been able to because of our context, identifying staff who are interested and giving them some space to be able to lead in this area is hugely beneficial.
2. Take time to find out the local partners and charities who will help you. All areas have a VCSE umbrella organisation who may be a great starting point.
3. Don't be hierarchical – it's not the school who are in charge; true partnership takes time to develop, and it needs to be equal. Organisations will have their own remit so finding time to understand their needs is important.
4. Be flexible – sometimes charity organisations might not be able to make the date they said because, by their very nature, hyper-local, place-based organisations have limited staff, often many being volunteers who work it around their day job. They might not be able to fit in around a school day.
5. Don't be afraid of saying that you are looking at social action and social justice as a school. It isn't about you as a leader and your views. Things emerge out of the listening you do with the communities you serve. It's got to be rooted in what people want to see.

Finally, be prepared as this is a long journey; it's beautiful when it all clicks into place and the partnerships that are built support young people through their journey in school – academically, socially, and for the future.

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BRADFORD SCHOOLS' PANDEMIC RECOVERY SUMMIT

James O'Connell-Lauder

The experience of the coronavirus pandemic for staff and students in Bradford will be depressingly familiar to everyone. Schools that alternated between open but restricted and nearly empty; organising laptops and food parcels for those that needed them; the monotone of MS Teams. This uniform experience sitting atop a bedrock of the significant social challenges the city already faced.

The boredom bred anger and creativity.

Schools had, out of necessity, become more deeply rooted in our communities and in the needs of our students and their families. This was a trend to be harnessed and used as the basis for building power, and change. The starting point would be to listen to students and give them a voice.

In the Autumn of 2020, conversations with staff from schools from across Bradford revealed a lot of common ground and similar thinking. Schools had, out of necessity, become more deeply rooted in our communities and in the needs of our students and their families. This was a trend to be harnessed and used as the basis for building power, and change. The starting point would be to listen to students and give them a voice.

January 2021 saw us all with a lot more time at home on our hands. Already, in Bradford, we had an informal collaboration between four leading academy trusts. Brought together by Charlie Tebbutt of Beckfoot, this group was a natural basis for reaching out across the city to get young people organised.

We hit on the idea of a summit that would allow young people to air their aspirations for the city and talk directly to key decision makers. As a trust, Dixons had already been working with Citizens UK, so it was a natural next step to utilise their organising expertise to make it happen. The idea struck a chord and soon we had a committed steering group of staff and students planning the details for a summit to take place in March 2021.

The first step was to get students to run listening exercises in their schools and with their families. We had 18 secondary schools in total taking part. The student steering group designed easy resources for their peers to work through, structured around finding out what issues young people cared about as we emerged from the pandemic.

The students also had to decide what format the summit would take. They chose to have welcomes and introductions, reflections on the experience of coronavirus in Bradford, followed by workshops that would allow more students to put their points across, and a final panel discussion where key decision makers responded to the ideas the students had put forward. One useful development from the pandemic was our growing familiarity with Zoom. Using Zoom for the summit would enable a far wider range of young people and adults to attend.

Finally, the students had to write a script and practice. Perhaps most importantly we had to test the tech!

We had taken inspiration from other Citizens alliances in Peterborough and London that had created opportunities for students to lead set piece events with key decision makers. However, this seemed something altogether a bit larger in scope and scale. Our panellists included the Chair of the Opportunity Area, the Director of Children's Services and one of the Deputy Lieutenants for West Yorkshire. In addition, we had a huge range of local and national stakeholders also attend, from the Bishop of Bradford to the Department for Education.

The run-in to the summit was left largely up to the students to script and practise. From the opening curtain, they shone through as incredibly professional in engaging publicly with key decision makers.

Most important, however, was the individual testimony that formed the core of the opening of the summit and each workshop. Students spoke about the issues they had encountered in the city in their lives, and how these had manifested in the pandemic years. We heard testimonies on mental health, loneliness, the impact of disadvantage, the opportunities that had been missed, and the effects of overt and structural racism on young people. The summit provided an outlet for the collective experience we had all shared over the preceding twelve months. For many, both students and adults, it was a moment of clarity where what we all knew to be true was laid bare. Bradford as a city has tremendous opportunities for its young people, all too many – far too many – challenges, but a desire is there across all segments of society to do the hard work to spread the former and diminish the latter.

We heard testimonies on mental health, loneliness, the impact of disadvantage, the opportunities that had been missed, and the effects of overt and structural racism on young people. The summit provided an outlet for the collective experience we had all shared over the preceding twelve months. For many, both students and adults, it was a moment of clarity where what we all knew to be true was laid bare.

Through the summit's workshops and final panel, a coherent set of themes emerged that the students subsequently ratified as a manifesto.

The manifesto's peroration was lifted from one student's closing lines during the summit: 'The world we once knew, that was filled with colour and light, abruptly turned colourless and dull. Make this the beginning of a brighter future for us all, one filled with colour and light.'

At its heart, the manifesto demanded that young people be included as partners in policy making in Bradford. Beyond this, it identified the areas of mental health, antiracism, disadvantage and inequality and lost opportunities as of particular concern in the wake of the pandemic.

Following the tenets of community organising, we know that whilst the summit was an unprecedented and positive opportunity for young people in the city to come together, what mattered was the reaction from those in power. As we say in community organising, *the action is in the reaction*.

Impressed by the demonstration of organised young people and with it clear that they represented around 20,000 young people in the city, the powerful people that attended were overwhelmingly positive. Whilst they did not always give clear and specific responses to what was asked of them, they all recognised the importance and legitimacy of the students' endeavour. This was crucial. Once that initial point had been conceded, it became possible for us to go back to each individual decision maker and hold them to that commitment by asking for follow up meetings.

The first key follow to the summit was taking on our manifesto to a West Yorkshire Mayoral Accountability Assembly with Tracy Brabin and Matt Robinson, the candidates to be the West Yorkshire Mayor. We were ably represented at the assembly by Zaynab and Camille who had been leading figures in organising the summit. Zaynab was timekeeper and co-chair for the assembly, just as she had introduced the Bradford summit. She was ruthless in cutting off both candidates when they spoke for too long!

Following on from the success of the summit, the multi-academy trusts in Bradford agreed to fund follow up work and to explore building a permanent Bradford Citizens alliance. This formed the basis for our work in 2021-2022. Across the five trusts we have worked with we built action teams, with each trust taking a lead on a key strand of work emerging from the summit.

In the Autumn, we held workshops to take the general themes raised by the summit and refine them into specific asks for people in power. In the spring, we then planned how to approach key individuals, making the most of the momentum we had generated at the summit. Once again, the action teams were composed of students and the planning was overwhelmingly driven by the students.

In the run up to Easter this year, we had our first round of bilateral meetings with decision makers in the city. These meetings had been planned and scripted by students to include powerful testimony and the specific asks they had refined in each area we had been working on. We met with the leader of the council (twice), the chief executive of the local NHS care trust, senior executives from business in the city, the Bishop, and the deputy mayor for police and crime. In some cases, these decision makers were evasive or possibly a bit thrown by the clarity of what they were hearing from their young constituents. But more often, they were positive and constructive, and committed to some key wins for us.

The impressive showing of the students who have taken on the work of the summit has given us a clear mandate to move ahead with establishing a Citizens alliance in Bradford. Uniquely, this will be an alliance focused on representing young people, in the country's youngest city.

The impressive showing of the students who have taken on the work of the summit has given us a clear mandate to move ahead with establishing a Citizens alliance in Bradford. Uniquely, this will be an alliance focused on representing young people, in the country's youngest city. We have a funding commitment from multi-academy trusts, who have shown themselves to be key civic leaders. And we are exploring bringing more institutions in the city that serve young people into membership. As Bradford prepares to become the UK's city of culture for 2025, young people are well placed to have a powerful impact on the city's development.

Over the last 18 months, we've learned several key lessons about organising with young people and schools.

Online meetings make everything much easier. Teachers do not have to physically take students to different places for meetings all the time. Our summit was fully online, and our assembly this year will be hybrid online and in person.

Openness is vital. There are many groups and people in Bradford serving young people, and many have been doing so for years. We've been clear that anyone who supports young people in the city is a friend of ours. A special shout out has to go to Young in Covid, a group that has made a film about the experiences of young people in the city during the pandemic and met with huge success. It's been great to partner with them on this journey.

Multi-Academy Trusts have shown themselves to be key civic institutions. Serving thousands of students and their families each, working groups formed from multiple Multi-Academy Trusts can organise money and young people to ensure they have a voice and play a civic leadership role.

Having a **burning platform** means that there is no reason for people to say no, and every chance they will be enthusiastic. Our organising work has struck a chord with teachers and students who were keen to channel the experience of the pandemic into positive change.

Get the commitment to engage from people in authority. This is opening the door. Once the council, the police, the NHS or whoever else has agreed to work with you, you can always hold them to that commitment. The summit provided the ideal opportunity to get that commitment without them credibly being able to say no.

Follow up is then crucial to hold people in power to their commitments.

Foregrounding the students was a conscious choice we made from the outset. None of the content of what we have put forward has come from adults. We have only supported students to articulate their own voice. This has shone through in the meetings that students have led and has enabled them to get successful results.

Demand more of leaders. We know all levels of government face constraints. However, much is possible if we encourage them to be creative and build our power to do so.

DRIVING ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION THROUGH STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Natasha Boyce

'What we are ethically called to do is create a safe space in our schools and classrooms where all students can walk in and, for that day or hour, take off the crushing weight of their armor, hang it on the rack, and open their hearts to truly be seen.' (Brené Brown)

Schools should be places where all students feel a sense of belonging and community. In October 2019, a group of students of colour raised concerns with our headteacher about Black History Month. They felt the school didn't give enough space to recognise the diversity within its community and celebrate the contributions of all groups to British society. Our headteacher shared the situation with me and, as a result, we set up a group of student ambassadors whose main focus would be to bring the change they wanted to see.

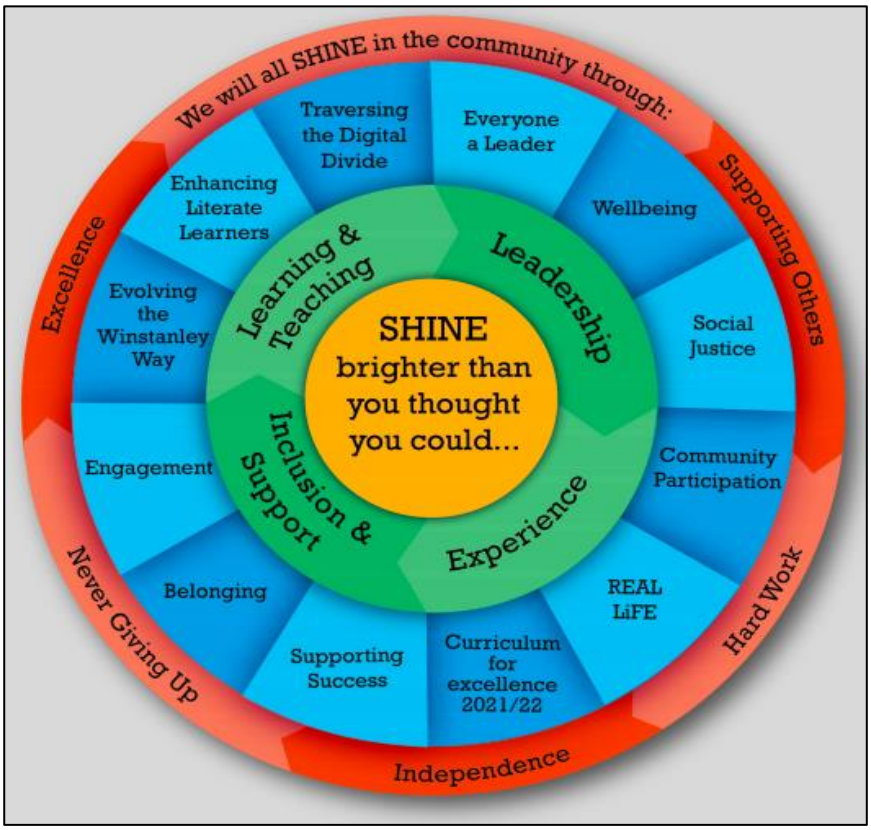
[T]he murder of George Floyd on 25th May, 2020 served as a tipping point in discussions around race and racism. Many of our students had most likely watched the recording of the murder. As an adult, I was traumatised! We can only imagine the impact it had on young people watching this horrific act whilst quarantining at home.

Lockdown came in March 2020, and it seemed as though the work of the group had stopped before it could get started. However, the murder of George Floyd on 25th May, 2020 served as a tipping point in discussions around race and racism. Many of our students had most likely watched the recording of the murder. As an adult, I was traumatised! We can only imagine the impact it had on young people watching this horrific act whilst quarantining at home. As a school, we recognised our whole school community would need support to navigate a changing world filled with unfamiliar language to them around anti-racism.

Our school is based in Leicester, which is one of the most diverse cities in the UK. However, our school is on the margins of the city. We are a small school with a total population of 615 students. The percentages of students receiving free school meals and having special educational needs are above the national average. In terms of the cultural demographic of the school, the majority of students come from White British backgrounds. Some of the parents have racist views and have no problems vocalising these to the school. I think it's really important to share this information, as I have heard colleagues say anti-racism work isn't a priority in schools where the demographic seems to be White homogeneous. My argument is that the less visibly diverse the school population the greater need for these conversations to happen!

Furthermore, since the murder of George Floyd it would be judicious of education settings to take action in racial justice as a response. As Olayinka Ewuola stated in a Schools Week article in June 2020, '[t]his is a time of incredible opportunity. We know that there are significant issues with racial equality in education, from well-documented problems.'

So, what has our journey to becoming an anti-racist school looked like? The fundamental step was to have social justice as a key priority for our school.



Our strategic wheel outlines the priorities for each year. It states how we are going to ensure a high level of education for all our students. Our anti-racism work is centred around social justice, because as a school we recognise anti-racist education is not only beneficial for minoritised students, but through this work the whole school community gains a framework for valuing diversity and difference.

The cycle of action used in community organising is an extremely effective tool for driving systemic change. ***The first step in the cycle is to build relational power with a diverse alliance of organisations who share similar self-interests.***

We then had to find out more by listening to our communities. We are very fortunate to have the Stephen Lawrence Research Centre in Leicester, based at one of our local universities. A key action was to develop a collaborative relationship with them and this began when we were invited to participate in a listening activity with our schools across the city in 2019. It was this interaction that led to an alliance between the centre and our student ambassadors. Initially, the ambassadors received training from the centre on race, anti-racism, and the legacy of Stephen Lawrence.

[W]e wanted to genuinely develop our students' agency, which can only be achieved if students research the issues, identify what needs to change, and present these concerns to those with power to implement change. Through this process we enable students to change the world from what it is, to what it should be.

Driving anti-racism through student leadership was an explicit intention because the students who were frustrated about the situation needed to see they had the power to bring the change they wanted to see. Also, we recognised there was an incredible opportunity for us to create a culture where students feel safe and able to vocalise their experiences, and present issues to leaders demanding action. Therefore, we wanted to genuinely develop our students' agency, which can only be achieved if students research the issues, identify what needs to change, and present these concerns to those with power to implement change. Through this process we enable students to change the world from what it is, to what it should be.

Through the training from the Stephen Lawrence Research Centre, our ambassadors gained an understanding of the presenting issues. Students were then able to progress to the next stage of the cycle of action which is to listen to the community. The ambassadors targeted their peers in every year group and undertook primary research using semi-structured interviews. The outcomes of the listening revealed a range of issues including inappropriate touching of Afro hair, teachers showing stereotypical expectations of Black students and the general school community having a lack of understanding of how racism operates within society and its effects on individuals and groups.

The third stage of the cycle is to plan a strategic response to the issue. The ambassadors decided to harness Stephen Lawrence Day 2021 to address the issues raised from the listening campaign. The ambassadors recognised that Stephen's story highlights the nature of racism in all its forms, and they provided the burning platform to educate the school community on racism and the importance of being anti-racist.

The fourth stage of the cycle is to take action to get a reaction. The ambassador group had now morphed into Stephen Lawrence Ambassadors, and they relished the opportunity of planning activities to celebrate the life and legacy of Stephen Lawrence. The result was a whole week of vibrant and fun activities which included: working with the Right Honourable Stuart Lawrence, liaising with the Stephen Lawrence Research Centre to host lesson takeovers, planning PSHE resources, wearing orange in Stephen's memory on April 22nd, participating as part of the panel in a national webinar alongside Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon OBE and planning competitions with prizes.

The ambassadors promoted the week of events on BBC Radio Leicester. The actions of the ambassadors were so high profile it was a feature on BBC East Midlands news.

Through the work of the ambassadors, I have realised the key to success in work towards systemic change is having proximity to people in power. One of the most precious parts of this journey has been creating an opportunity for our students to work alongside a formidable change maker in Baroness Doreen Lawrence. Through this powerful relationship, our students have experienced a personal connection with a woman who made an unchangeable mark on British History in so many ways, including redefining racism, changing the law and being a relentless champion of social justice.

Baroness Doreen Lawrence has personally taught our students that real change is achievable with relentless commitment, and you can change the world from what is, into what it should be. The fruit of the ambassadors' work is evident in the fifth step in the cycle of action, which is to ***get a seat at the table and negotiate***. Much of this work has been documented in The Stephen Lawrence Research Centre Annual Engagement Report 2020/2021. The report details how our collaborative relationship developed into a pilot offer for schools nationwide entitled 'Teaching to Transform.'

Initially, the students wanted to create a school culture which provided space to recognise the diversity within its community and celebrate the contributions of all groups to British society. However, the reality is they have far surpassed this expectation.

The high-profile coverage of the work of the ambassadors was good for the school's reputation and demonstrated a strong message to other schools across our Multi-Academy Trust that schools shouldn't shy away from these conversations. As a consequence, at student level, the ambassadors are now delivering peer training to other schools in the Multi-Academy Trust and across the city and for the first time all ten schools across our Multi-Academy Trust celebrated Stephen Lawrence Day.

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The mandate of the group is to hold the organisation accountable in the area of race equity.

Creating anti-racist schools is more than educating students about racism. To be truly effective, anti-racist practice must be reflected in organisational systems, policies, and procedures. This is a continuing journey for our Multi-Academy Trust. However, at a structural level, the impact has been that a race equity group has been formed with representatives from across all schools. The mandate of the group is to hold the organisation accountable in the area of race equity.

The ambassador's anti-racism work was not only recognised across our family of schools. It has also been identified as exemplary across the city and our students have shared this journey with school leaders through the Leicester City and Leicestershire Schools Effectiveness partnerships. Furthermore, our ambassadors presented the case for anti-racism education in schools in the presence of the Assistant Mayor for Education who agreed to this in principle.

We are proud to say reactions to the ambassadors' work have prompted discussions across the city around systemic change, and we are really excited to have been an agitator and part of the solution. For example, our school has been asked to collaborate with the Leicester Education Improvement Partnership as part of a 'Diverse Curriculum Taskforce.' This partnership will achieve real systemic change, as student voice and listening will not only be extended across the city, but there will be an opportunity to create curricula that will be reflective of the communities they serve.

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Most recently, we have launched an anti-racism in school campaign with students across Leicester and Leicestershire through Citizens UK. Through this newly-established campaign, we did some further listening. The findings have revealed issues that could be found in many schools such as casual racism within school culture – which is unfortunately normalised and teachers failing to challenge incidents of direct racism. We intend to extend our work campaign to more schools in the future and formulate 'proposals' for more institutions to adopt an anti-racist approach.

I would argue one of the most notable impacts of this work at The Winstanley School has been modelling how schools can create spaces for meaningful anti-racism discussions and actions to occur. The national organisation Challenge Partners accredited us with 'Citizenship in Action' as an area of excellence in February 2022. The report noted:

'The school works with a number of organisations to support active citizenship. Consequently, students are able to experience citizenship in action and see the impact of their involvement in improving their school community… Students become trainers across the wider school network. For example, Stephen Lawrence ambassadors link with other schools' students across the multi-academy trust. Consequently, students' awareness of racism is highlighted, not just within the school, but beyond.'

However, the most important impact measure of community organising in schools is the experience of the young people. Effective anti-racist approaches in schools should be evidenced by students feeling a sense of belonging and community. Hence, it is only right that I conclude with the selection of student voices so they can share the transformative power of this work themselves:

'As someone who hasn't directly experienced racism, going on this journey with my peers has really helped me to understand racism on a much deeper level. I have learnt about all the ways it can show its face and how to combat that effectively. What I am most proud of is, of course the journey, but also our ability to pass this work on to our schools and students in our schools so that the work we do will continue with the next year group and the year group after that. One meeting can't solve an issue, that's just the start. It's many meetings over many years that reduce an issue down to a point that is able to be combated effectively on a large scale.' – Reuben

'I am really proud of the progress the school has made and how far we have come in terms of understanding and dealing with racism. Not only do black students speak up more confidently when someone is in the wrong but so do non-black people as they now know the right and wrongs when it comes to race because of the amount of work that's been done on it. Even when we tell other schools about our work they are shocked as not all schools do what we do. Although our school is small, the work we do isn't. I also think the work that has been done has brought us closer together as an entirety.' – Anopa

'I am proud of becoming an upstander because back in year 7 I never thought I'd have the voice to speak up about racism. Becoming an ambassador has made me confident and my self-esteem has increased knowing that it is okay to use my voice and not to be scared.' – Priviledge

ST DAVID'S CATHOLIC SIXTH FORM COLLEGE – COMMUNITY ORGANISING THROUGH THE LENS OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Richard Weaver & Geraint Williams

From the margins to the centre

This is the story of the power of Community Organising to bring people on the margins of their institution and community into the centre of its life and to be able to work together with others to bring about change which benefits them and many others across both their institution and community.

St David's is a Roman Catholic Sixth Form College located just north of the centre of the City of Cardiff. The college has around 1,500 students, from across Cardiff and also drawing students from Catholic and other schools in Barry, west of Cardiff, and from Merthyr Tydfil, Pontypridd, and Caerphilly, in the South Wales Valleys. The College was a founding member of the first Citizens UK alliances in Wales in 2014. Voter registration and other actions ahead of the 2015 UK Parliament elections were early actions in the College supported by Organisers. A team of students learned about the importance of voting and led a voter registration drive across all the tutorial groups in the College. This demonstrated how taking a Community Organising approach to registering students to vote led to 95 per cent of the students in the college being registered and ready to vote. Voter registration has become part of the normal practice and culture of the College with very large numbers of students registering to vote ahead of every Senedd, local, and Westminster elections since then.

Community Organising was seen as an integral part of the College's Catholic ethos. The College had a desire to build and develop its ambition to become a genuine community and commit itself to the common good and support those on the margins. It drew a lot of its ambition for community organising from the Papal Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which was a key document on Catholic Social Teaching. For the College, Community Organising was the vehicle to develop a relational culture within its institution so it could reach out to the wider catholic community and beyond.

Drawing on Catholic Social Teaching in relation to the dignity of work, a team of students from St David's organised with other Citizens Cymru Wales members to successfully convince Cynthia Ogbonna, the head of Cardiff Bus Company, for the company to become an accredited Living Wage employer, thus leading to a substantial pay rise for many of their workers across the city.

Building on the success of their Living Wage actions, a leadership development programme for students was developed. Over the course of the academic year, this programme would provide them with the tools to make change using Community Organising and an experience of the five steps to social change model: organise, listen, plan, act, and negotiate.

Building on the success of their Living Wage actions, a leadership development programme for students was developed. Over the course of the academic year, this programme would provide them with the tools to make change using Community Organising and an experience of the five steps to social change model: organise, listen, plan, act, and negotiate.

Through conversations with staff in the College, one key hope was that the programme would enable students to reflect on Catholic faith and Catholic Social Teaching and to put this into practice while studying. One senior staff member said that a hope for them would be that students would be inspired by what former students had achieved and that their ambitions on what they would want to change would be raised above a focus on the price of chips in the college canteen. Several staff also hoped that that working as part of the Citizens programme would enable students to talk more with others in the College

and break down barriers between some groups. One teacher expressed it like this: 'at the end of each lesson, the students leave the classroom with their phones clamped to their ears. I know that they are not on a call, but this is a way for them not to have to have to talk to anyone. This College may well be the last institution they are part of before going into work or further study. I am really worried that, if they don't learn how to communicate with people who are not just from their immediate family, and friendship group while they are here in the college, they will never learn it. And that will impact on our churches and communities and broader society if it is full of people who struggle to relate to and communicate with other people who come from a different background or perspective to them.'

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In the first weeks of the autumn term, every new student in the college attended an introductory session on Community Organising, including hearing from an ex-student of the College who had been involved in the Cardiff Bus Living Wage campaign. From this, twenty-five students were selected to be part of the Citizens student community leadership programme in the College. These students were a diverse bunch, from different parts of Cardiff and South Wales, several who had grown up outside the UK and recently arrived in Wales, and a mix of those who were seen as academic high-flyers along with other students who were resitting GCSEs alongside their College courses and others who were doing vocational courses.

Among them was James who, with his sister and mum, had just moved to Cardiff from the top end of one of the Valleys so he could study at the college and so his sister was much closer to her cleaning jobs. James, like several of the group, had little confidence in himself and was nervous to even speak in a small group in the initial sessions of the programme. James had moved from a small, former, coal-mining town where few of his friends stayed on for college and young people from there often felt that people in Cardiff and elsewhere had a dim view of this area and an even dimmer view of young people from the town.

The initial sessions focused on building a sense of team. Discussions focused on what the students wanted to change that would make their community an even better place for everyone and their personal experience of issues. Several of the students raised the issue of cycle lanes on the roads around the college. Or, rather, the lack of them and where, there were some, it was mostly in short stretches which seemed to start and stop at random. As a result, few students were regularly cycling to the college.

Some of the students coming from outside Cardiff were depending on a train and then a bus. All of them had stories of being late for their first lesson of the day and of being late home because of a bus being late or so overcrowded that they could not get on the bus or train. This was an issue that was directly affecting them almost daily and so something these students wanted to change.

To get our research started, we did a neighbourhood walk as a group to map out where the cycle lanes were and where new ones could be added or existing ones extended. However, from our conversations on the walk it became clear that none of the students in the group were coming to the college by bike. In addition to the lack of cycle lanes, the steep hill, Penylan Road, leading to the College, may well have been a factor in deterring cyclists. But then the conversation turned to how the students were actually getting to the college. Some were walking but most were taking at least one bus each day. Several of the students were relying on two buses to get to College on time and to get home. This was James' experience and he shared it with the rest of the group. Some of the students coming from outside Cardiff were depending on a train and then a bus. All of them had stories of being late for their first lesson of the day and of being late home because of a bus being late or so overcrowded that they could not get on the bus or train. This was an issue that was directly affecting them almost daily and so something these students wanted to change.

Ahead of the half term break, the students talked to their peers from across the college to listen to see if other students were also experiencing problems with their bus or train journeys to the college. Due to the diversity of the group, they represented many different tutorial and subject groups and between them they organised themselves to talk to all the tutorial groups in the College. James and a number of the other students also undertook research actions at the bus stops close to the college in the mornings and on their way home. Several of the students also contacted other local institutions that had lots of members using the same local bus routes serving the College. These included the local Roman Catholic parish, Cardiff Metropolitan University, and Cardiff University.

The students then met together to discuss what they had heard and learned from this listening and the research actions. They had heard many stories of problems with buses and trains. Students, older people, and those with small children all shared experiences of buses turning up late and of often having to wait for the second or third bus to come before they could even get on the bus. This was particularly true of two of the Cardiff Bus routes serving St David's College – the number 57 and 58 buses.

As a result, there were many stories of students regularly being late for their first lesson of the day. Cumulatively, this added up to hundreds of learning hours missed already in the autumn term alone. Students from the college and university also shared their experiences of the buses in the mornings and after College and comparing this to their experience of catching buses in the middle of the day. Somewhat paradoxically, the buses on the routes at the start and end of the College day were often single-decker buses, whereas in the middle of the day there were more double-decker buses. So, there were overcrowded single-decker buses at peak times and half empty double-decker buses sailing past empty bus stops on the routes in the middle of the day. This didn't make sense to the students. Surely it should be the other way round. After all, all they wanted was for their buses to run on time!

It was coming up to Christmas and so the students decided that a Christmas-themed action would be best. And in the planning meetings for the action, the creativity of the students went into over-drive!

The students decided to take action; to get this issue and their solution recognised by Cynthia Ogbonna, the Chief Executive of Cardiff Bus Company, and to get a chance to meet and negotiate with her and others from the senior management team for Cardiff Bus. It was coming up to Christmas and so the students decided that a Christmas-themed action would be best. And in the planning meetings for the action, the creativity of the students went into over-drive!

One of the quieter students, Edward, revealed that he was a keen musician. In the space of a few days, he had written alternative words to *Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer* so that the song was now all about buses coming down Penylan Hill. Edward, another student who had been nervous to speak in the group at the start of term had found his voice. The students were keen to deliver a Christmas gift to Cynthia Ogbonna and her staff as part of the action. But what should it be? Well, what did they want – double-decker buses on the 57 and 58 bus routes at peak times. So, the students decided that the perfect Christmas gift would be to give a double-decker chocolate bar to every staff member at Cardiff Bus Company. They found out that there 700 staff members

including all the drivers, cleaners, security, and office staff. 700 double decker chocolate bars were bought, and each one had a gift tag attached to it. On one side of the tag, students from across the college wrote something that they loved about Cardiff Bus Company. And on the other side, they wrote that getting double decker buses at peak times would make them love Cardiff Bus even more! Emily and Julia, two others in the group who were studying art and film studies in the college, volunteered to design and make a giant Christmas card with pictures of Cardiff buses replacing baubles on the tree.

The day of the action arrived. The students travelled by College minibus down to the headquarters of Cardiff Bus company on Sloper Road in Cardiff. James was dressed in a Father Christmas outfit. Several other students were dressed as elves and everyone else was wearing a Santa hat. James and the elves carried present sacks full of the chocolate bars, each with its gift tag attached. They and the other students approached the senior executives from Cardiff Bus Company carrying the gifts and singing their song. To be fair, the staff, who knew we were coming and were lined up outside the offices, looked a bit bemused. We could spot the grins of the drivers and other workers back in the depths of the bus depot. James, in his Father Christmas outfit, spoke briefly to explain what their campaign and how double-decker buses would make a big difference to them and many other students and local residents. The staff promised to pass on the gifts and agreed to meet in the new year.

Change soon came as a result of their action. By the February half term, the students who had planned and delivered their campaign action and others in the College were seeing more double-decker buses on the 57 and 58 bus routes at peak times.

Change soon came as a result of their action. By the February half term, the students who had planned and delivered their campaign action and others in the College were seeing more double-decker buses on the 57 and 58 bus routes at peak times. They were now much more often able to get on the first bus that came along, rather than having to wait for the second or even third bus because of an overcrowded single-decker bus. They could see and experience the change they had made.

However, the students didn't want to stop there. For many of the students, improving cycling routes and bus services also connected very strongly with their interests for more action on environmental issues. Having won change through their bus campaign, they had the confidence to think about other problems which they experienced daily and which they wanted to change. The College had introduced wooden recyclable cutlery in the college canteen. But if students went off site for a lunch break, as many did, then much of the packaging and materials for their takeaway lunch was not recyclable. The students again undertook a listening campaign across the College and with university students, discussed what they had heard and planned how they could take action. They organised a recycled art exhibition in the College which every student could enter. It was well-attended, and they used this to do further listening on people's experiences of takeaways close to the College.

By the last weeks before Easter, they were ready to take action again. They decided to target a favourite takeaway for St David's College students, Benny's Fried Chicken. The students loved their chicken and chips but didn't like their polystyrene packaging and plastic forks, none of which could be recycled. On a Monday afternoon after College, the team of students who had planned the action along with a group of other students who had agreed to join the

action walked down Penylan Hill together to Benny's Fried Chicken. This time, James and Edward had volunteered to dress in chicken costumes! Forty-five students lined up outside the takeaway and then formed an orderly queue, each one of them carrying a recyclable food box to put chicken and chips in. They formed a long queue leading up to the counter, snaking back out and along the road. None of the other takeaways were as busy at 5pm on a Monday afternoon, and so the long queue – added to the students dressed up as bright yellow chickens – got the attention of other businesses and people passing by. When a student reached the counter, they ordered chicken or chips or both, explained that they were concerned about the environmental impact of using polystyrene packaging and asked that their food be put in the recyclable cardboard food box. They also asked for a meeting with the manager for a group to be able to discuss for the takeaway to make the move to fully recyclable packaging. The initial students were told that the manager was not there and no meeting would be possible. By the third student, the staff had caught on that there was a pattern to what was being requested, or would be requested, by everyone in the queue. And by the sixth or seventh student the manager had appeared from a space in the back of the takeaway and sat down with James and Edward and other students from the group for an impromptu negotiation. They got a commitment to meet again on how a change in packaging could be made. The students were thrilled with their progress in this second campaign.

The local authority elections in Cardiff and across Wales were coming up in May that year. James and many of the core group of students from St David's College were among around two hundred people from member institutions across Cardiff meeting for an Accountability Assembly with the leaders of the main parties in Cardiff Council. James, Edward, Emily and Julia shared about their successful bus campaign and asked the party leaders to work with them to reduce the use of single-use plastics and non-recyclable materials by takeaways in the city. All of the party leaders agreed on the night to work with the students on this. Following the election, the Welsh Labour group took on leadership of Cardiff City Council and in their programme for government was a clear commitment on reducing the use of single-use plastics.

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Students from St David's College learned the skills of Community Organising, developed their leadership skills and put these into action with other institutions in the city to make change on issues they prioritised. Over the year, the College had also become a more relational place, with strong relationships formed between students following vastly different courses and from very different backgrounds. Tensions between different groups have reduced or disappeared altogether. And James and other students who had felt on the margins of the College and their communities went from being nervous to speak in front of a small group to being able to confidently share their campaigns and asks with the head of Cardiff Bus Company and Council leaders and play a central role in making positive change.

WHERE TO BEGIN?

AN ORGANISER'S REFLECTIONS ON A NEW ALLIANCE'S FIRST CAMPAIGN

Dr Tim Hall

I

'But what is it that is putting you under pressure here?' James thought for a moment before replying.

This was my second trip to Thomas Deacon Academy (TDA) in search of partners for the burgeoning civic alliance that I was trying to establish. The first had been to meet the CEO of the Academy Trust that the school formed a part of who had given in principle support for the alliance. The second trip was to meet the Deputy Head of Sixth Form at the School – James Mepham. As well as his role as Deputy Head, James was a PE teacher wearing a tracksuit on his way to teaching another class. It was late January 2020, just before the pandemic. Peterborough, the city in which the school is located, was already showing signs of being overwhelmed with a cash-strapped local authority, a high street in descent with abundant shop closures and a pervasive homelessness problem.

'One of the biggest problems for us at the present time is the mental health and wellbeing of our students. We have mental health awareness days in the school and student support services but these are overwhelmed. I don't really know what to say to parents when they ask me 'What can you do to support my son or daughter?'. We are at our limit and the waiting times for assessments and accessing support are very long.'

Peterborough Citizens is an alliance in the making. When it is founded in November 2022, it will be the nineteenth chapter of Citizens UK to be established in the UK. Chapters are alliances of civil society organisations – i.e. organisations that are neither public nor private sector. They are premised on the idea that while civil society is home to some of the most important values in society, the lack of organisation means that it lacks the power to determine its own priorities and work up its own agenda and thereby hold government and markets to account. As the founding organiser for Peterborough Citizens, charged with establishing a sponsoring committee to oversee the development of the chapter, I have come to TDA, a school with a reputation for inclusivity and taking progressive stances on issues, in search of a partner in this endeavour.

What issues are you facing that you cannot address on your own but can potentially address in alliance with other civil society organisations?

Sponsoring committees establish credibility for the work of building a civic alliance. They raise patient capital to enable the alliance to employ a community organiser and they oversee the first cycle of action undertaken by the alliance. The latter is crucial because the only genuine way of demonstrating to civil society organisations the value of being a member of an alliance is through the experience of action. Hence my question to James: what is it that is putting you under pressure as an institution? What issues are you facing that you cannot address on your own but can potentially address in alliance with other civil society organisations? In a desultory conversation between classes, James had identified the issue that would animate the fledgling alliance bringing it into partnership with the Clinical Commissioning Group and leading it to be in the vanguard of a campaign to make school-based counselling statutory.

II

In my limited experience of organising, all successful campaigns seem to begin life as conversations – conversations that become conspiracies, which, with the heft of organisation behind them, start to reshape the world. A few weeks after that conversation, James got approval from the Head Teacher and

a small budget to organise and host a summit on young people's mental health in November 2020. At a school assembly, a core group stepped forward to volunteer to work on the summit. Fortnightly meetings commenced and the students attended training in community organising. These meetings and training sessions switched to online as the pandemic arrived. The students were trained on how to conduct listening events across different year groups to gain an insight into the extent of the mental health problem. Stories and testimonies began to emerge: a student had been awaiting an assessment for over a year. Another spoke of the wait to access services having got an assessment. Data showed that around a third of children and young people in the city had a diagnosable mental health disorder. There were stories of quite minor issues that were not addressed, escalating into full-blown crises. There were stories of young people falling through the gaps of a disjointed and confusing support system and spiralling downward. This made for difficult listening for the students. However, they were learning that they were not powerless and that, organised, they could create change.

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By now we had hired our first organiser that worked with the students to create a successful event. Delegations from eleven schools participated in the mental health summit, which was held online due to covid, sharing testimonies of their experiences and details about the support available in their schools and communities. The main outcome of the summit was a determination to form a campaign team, drawn from different schools to host and prepare for a second summit, this team with leaders from the CCG and the local MP. The second summit took place in January 2021 and this time the twenty-strong team had prepared by undertaking research in addition to bringing forward testimonies. Their campaign was starting to draw attention from the media and the local MP and the Head of Children and Young People's services at the CCG, agreed to meet with the team on a regular basis to try to address the issues they had raised.

Around the same time, a Delegates' Assembly across our emerging alliance picked out mental health and street safety as the priorities we'd take forward. The alliance was undertaking its first cycle of action which involves a listening campaign, a discernment assembly, action followed by negotiation. We had identified the Mayoral elections later that year as the point at which to set out our agenda. We duly brought the main candidates together for a virtual meeting attended by 170 people from our various institutions. All three candidates agreed to work with us to improve mental health services in this city if elected. We now had a core team of young leaders working with Paul Bristow, the local Member of Parliament, and the Clinical Commissioning Group to improve services in the city and a commitment from the future mayor to support our work.

III

It is not typical to bite off more than you can chew when a new alliance takes on its first campaign. Ideally, the campaign should be clear cut and easily achievable just enough to demonstrate to leaders that change is possible working in this way, and to whet the appetite for further action. The provision of mental health services and support is not one of these issues. It is a multi-faceted and complex problem. Demand far outstrips supply and any improvement in services – delivered by a bewildering array of organisations, some part of the NHS and others third sector organisations – seems to depend on securing significant resources. This, however, was the issue that our member institutions wanted to take action on, so we were obliged to address it irrespective of its complexity and difficulty.

The young leaders, drawn from six schools across the city, divided themselves into two groups: one to work with Paul Bristow MP to identify and draw down more resources for the city and the second to

work with the Clinical Commissioning Group. They met on a monthly basis, on each occasion working up the agenda and chairing the meeting. Due to Covid, there were few opportunities to train the students in broad-based organising. They learnt on the job. They wrestled with the notion of power analysis while researching the institutions they are engaging, acquiring negotiating skills while preparing for their meetings with Paul Bristow MP or the Head of Commissioning for Children and Young People's Mental Health Services at the Clinical Commissioning Group. The team showed remarkable ingenuity with one group of students developing a questionnaire that elicited nearly three hundred results. They learnt the art of holding someone in public office to account. Students that were initially shy at the outset of the project learnt to pin politicians.

The team, sensing this, push harder: will he speak in favour of a private members motion on statutory school-based counselling? Not only will he speak in favour, but he will let the group write the speech. Will he set up a meeting with the Minister responsible? 'Yes, and I'll come with you!'

Paul Bristow MP is a critic of the lockdowns and is only too glad to work with the team to highlight the extent of the crisis of mental health. The team, sensing this, push harder: will he speak in favour of a private members motion on statutory school-based counselling? Not only will he speak in favour, but he will let the group write the speech. Will he set up a meeting with the Minister responsible? 'Yes, and I'll come with you!'

Paul Bristow MP enthusiastically trumpets the work he is doing with the young people on his social media channels, conveniently overlooking the work of Peterborough Citizens in making this happen. But this does not matter yet. He is one of the few Conservative Members of Parliament actively supporting this campaign and for this reason is an important ally in the task of gaining access to government Ministers. We can work on the relationship and the recognition at a later stage. The young leaders learn an important lesson: irrespective of the particular ideology of the politician, what he or she is saying, and how they are saying it, with the right approach and a powerful alliance behind them it is possible to work with them and hold them to account.

IV

So, what was achieved? In terms of outcomes, in response to the summit, the Clinical Commissioning Group simplified their system creating a single-point of entry to access a range of services and support. The *Keep Your Head* website aimed at young people was also reviewed by the group working with the Clinical Commissioning Group to make it more accessible. While the waiting times for assessments and then to access services remained, the system was at least simplified and made understandable to young people. The meetings with Paul Bristow MP to secure more resources for mental health services and support in the city have not been successful to date but both negotiations are ongoing. And this is perhaps the main victory of the campaign. For while the students that commenced the campaign have since finished at the school and moved on, they have passed on their knowledge so that the process of holding to account can continue. Off the back of the work done by the initial group, Peterborough Citizens established a strategic partnership with the Clinical Commissioning Group and it now meets monthly to work on a range of problems including the suitability of A&E departments for those experiencing a mental health crisis and the provision of a sanctuary for young people in or approaching a mental health crisis. The campaign for the introduction of school-based counselling is on-going at the time of writing with a national summit planned. The young leaders from Peterborough will play a key part at this event.

The wins for the fledgling alliance are important in other respects. James Mepham has been on a journey which started with a conversation in his office and has led to his students holding a government minister to account on the provision of school-based counselling services. He knows the power of organising and he knows the value of it for his students and his school. Thomas Deacon Academy are part of Peterborough Citizens now and are thinking about how they embed organising in the school as well as

thinking about how to bring other schools and Academy Trusts into membership. This is the case even though James is moving on to another job, taking these ideas with him to his next school.

V

Developing campaigns that deliver change and building capacity in an alliance such that it has the power to develop campaigns often stand in tension in an organising effort, particularly when an alliance is being established. Alliances that are too thinly constructed with insufficiently thick relationships within and across institutions, will not stay the course and risk burn out. The people are the programme as Saul Alinksy, a key organiser in the history of broad-based organising famously remarked, emphasising that the real purpose of an organising endeavour was an organised people with the capacity to respond to any problem or injustice that confronts them. However, if alliances did not try to tackle the issues confronting them, even at the risk of over-extending themselves, then there is danger that they become too cautious and inward-looking. The programme is the people, but the people exist to bring forward programmes. If you were alighting on a campaign for a fledgling alliance to cut its teeth you probably wouldn't start by trying to tackle the poor state of mental health services for young people in this city, Yet, meaningful change has been achieved and the mindsets of those involved have been changed. The inspiration drawn from involvement in successful campaigns fires the work to build capacity across the alliance.

BUT IT'S NOT THEIR MONEY!

THE STORY OF THE JUST CHANGE CAMPAIGN

Dr Val Barron, Revd Joanne Thorns, & Kath Wade

All good organising starts with listening, and that is where this campaign began. Tyne & Wear Citizens launched with a listening campaign in 2016/2017 with thousands of community conversations about what was putting pressure on communities.

Conversations were taking place with pupils in Year 10 at Park View Academy in Chester-le-Street, County Durham. Students were talking about food poverty and debating whether such a thing even existed? Was it food poverty? There wasn't a shortage of food, just a shortage of money? It was just poverty! During this debate Jess piped up:

'You know what would make a difference to me?'

'What do you mean?'

'Well, if I'm off school on a Monday, I still have £2.10 on a Tuesday. Where does Monday's £2.10 go?'

As a group, they agreed: those who pay for school dinners, had a credit balance that rolls forward. However, those on Free School Meals didn't. It was yet another example of how young people are treated differently based on nothing more than family household income. Jess and the group went further to say that if they too could roll forward a credit balance, they could afford a breakfast and lunch the next day. Or they could save their allowance for when they had PE or an exam and could do with more to eat. They described how if they were absent from school, the amount of food at home didn't increase and they were likely to skip a meal. So that additional meal that they could get with a carried forward balance would make a huge difference. All they were asking for was parity of treatment, to be treated the same way as their peers who paid for school meals.

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This simple discussion amongst pupils at Park View started the Just Change campaign. Listening before we act, or campaign, is so crucial. We can't presume we know what's best. We may have experienced poverty as a child ourselves, but the world is a very different place now. Children and young people in receipt of free school meals not only know and understand the flaws in the system, but they know how to fix it too.

But where did the unspent money go? The students met with their Headteacher to pose the question. He didn't know the answer, but he said he would find out. It wasn't as easy to work out as we had first thought. After some investigations by the school, pupils were shocked at the results. We discovered that the change was retained by the provider of the school meals, in this case a private contractor. The complex system of school meals means that providers vary from school to school. The provider might be the school itself, the local authority, or a private provider. In all cases, the money was not going where it was intended, to feed our poorest children.

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Across English secondary schools, Citizens UK estimated that £65 million was taken from children's Free School Meal allowance in this way. Subsequent research by Northumbria University, put the total even higher at £88 million. That £88 million if it went where it was intended, to feed our poorest children, could make a huge difference to tackling the food poverty that we see up and down the country.

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We knew the problem. We now needed to work out a way to fix it. Parity of treatment. Treat those on free school meals the same as their peers. Allow any unused, or unspent, monies to be carried forward. Make sure pupils have the full academic year to spend it. No cash transactions take place. It's a credit balance, that can only be spent on food or drinks. Simple.

But did we have the power to make it happen?

On our own, as one school, no we did not. Broad-based community organising consciously builds the power of civil society to act for social justice and win. Tyne & Wear Citizens is a broad alliance of faith groups, schools, universities, charities, and community groups. Together, at a Delegates' Assembly, our member institutions voted to prioritise the Just Change Campaign. Together, we had more power, and we began to gain some traction.

The first step forward came from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. As a strategic partner of Tyne & Wear Citizens, they agreed to act. The Bishop at the time, Seamus Cunningham, in response to testimony from young people at Park View Academy, pledged to get a meeting with his Director of Education and see what was possible within the Roman Catholic Schools. Inspired by that commitment, the Anglican Bishops of Newcastle and Durham committed to do the same.

Meetings took place with the Directors of Education from the faith-based schools, which then led to a meeting of all the Catholic Headteachers from across the Diocese. At this meeting was Dame Maura Regan, CEO of Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust. School meals were provided in-house at her schools, and she went away and took action. Carmel College in Darlington was the first school in the UK to operate a Just Change system. All that was required was the will to act and some moderations to the IT system. Dame Maura Regan and Carmel College proved that a Just Change system was possible. At an All-Party Parliamentary Group meeting on School Food, Maura explained why she felt it was important to act.

Once I was made aware of the issues around free school meals and the Just Change campaign, I felt a moral imperative to act.

The real issue is that the biometric system (a feature of many secondary schools) is programmed to clear any unspent monies at the end of each day.

Children who under spend, or are absent on a particular day, lose that money and it is absorbed back into a school budget or into a contractor's budget. An additional problem is that some schools only allow children to use their free school meal allowance at lunchtime so, if they miss lunch because of extra-curricular activities, they also lose the money.

Surely this is wrong?

Money designed to feed children is being used to prop up budgets or to support catering contracts and provision. ***But it's not their money!***

I know that changes to the system will put a strain on budgets, but it would be wrong not to act. ***Because it's not our money***

I took the decision to change the system in the secondary schools that were in the Trust at the time.

For a few hundred pounds (£250 per school because we were doing multiple schools) the biometric system was re-programmed so that any unspent monies were rolled over for children to spend on future days.

To give you an example of the impact – in one secondary school a further £17,000 was spent in one year on food by children who are entitled to free school meals.

As you can imagine this a large amount of money for a school or contractor to lose from their spending power but surely, it's just wrong to have a system that denies children access to money that was specifically designed for them. ***It is their money.***

We hear so much about food poverty and campaigns to ensure that children are fed and yet we seem to be ignoring or are blind to a system that is preventing children accessing funding designed for them and that ***is just wrong!***

Leaders from Tyne & Wear Citizens (including school students) negotiated with other schools and local authorities to follow suit. We launched the campaign nationally, with Citizens UK chapters across the country getting involved. We aimed to have all secondary schools up and down the country operating a Just Change system and to get that £88 million back where it's needed most – feeding hungry children.

Young people's testimonies were compelling. In Tottenham, North London, young people asked the question, 'where does the money go when we are fasting during Ramadan?'. Powerful stories led to more and more schools to adopt a Just Change System. We began organising one school at a time, following the same process: listening to young people, young people sharing their stories with school leaders, and school leaders acting where they could.

Young people made YouTube videos to get the message out, after arguing that other young people were more likely to see those than anything we could get on the news. They also experimented with other media, making comics, and spreading the word school to school.

All the schools that took action ran their own in-house catering and were able to address the issue quickly. Pupil testimonials from St Thomas More RC Academy showed the impact knowing that the money they are entitled to will be rolled over to the next day if it's not spent would have.

'Noticing that money had carried over on my card made me feel that people in society really care about how other people are being treated, thinking about what money, what food you might need if you're not getting enough at home or if your parents aren't getting enough money because of the situation we're in at the minute.

I feel I don't have to worry as much about asking my parents to add money to my account because now I know I don't have to worry about it because it's getting transferred over and I'm getting it every day. Now that I know I'm definitely getting that money, I'm not worrying about needing lunch – I know I will get it.' Student in Year 8.

Where we began to struggle was when the meal providers were the Local Authority or a Private Provider.

Negotiations took place with several local authorities. Some were candid and explained that the money is used to subsidise the school meal system as a whole. With a shortage of funding there has been reluctance to adapt Just Change.

Leaders wrote to the big five private providers to request a meeting – only one replied, and so far, no meetings have taken place. Private Providers did claim that they needed the change to be able to provide enough meals and account for 'wastage'. They had to provide 100 meals, whether the pupils took them or not. Students' responses were along the line of 'but why are only the poorest students covering those costs?'. Those who pay for school meals do not pay if they are absent and they always get their change. So why are only the poorest paying? It is a question of social justice.

In some cases, local authorities claimed the money sat with the schools. Some private providers claimed the money sat with the schools. In reality, often, the money was in several places. If a child was absent, then the money did stay with the schools. If the child didn't spend the full daily allowance, the change went to the local authority or private provider. In all cases the money was not going to the child as intended. The complicated system meant one single budget line did not exist in school budgets. Such discussions were often a distraction and a reason not to act. The ask remained simple – treat all children and young people the same. Whatever you do for those paying for school meals, treat those in receipt of free school meals the same.

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Leaders met with civil servants within the Department of Education and the then Children's Minister Nadhim Zahawi to request that the money be ring fenced, only to be able to be spent on food. They said that would not be possible, schools had the freedom to spend as they wished.

Then Covid.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the campaign, largely because our access to the schools and students became difficult. Also, because the priorities and the issues facing families pivoted.

At the start of the first lockdown in March 2020, the action team was able to run a rapid listening campaign, via networks created by the Just Change campaign and the wider Tyne & Wear Citizens alliance. They wanted to make sure that pupils in receipt of Free School Meals could still receive their meals during lockdown.

It became clear early on that a mixed response was needed. Students couldn't get into schools for the packed lunches schools were providing – some had no money for travel, others were isolating. Fear and stigma all resulted in low uptakes. With little guidance from the Government, schools adapted. Some stated making deliveries, many others gave money directly to families out of their own budgets. Yet despite the good will of school leaders, this was a finite solution without Government reimbursement. Families had a clear preference for a voucher scheme that included local and affordable shops rather than expensive chains such as Waitrose or Marks & Spencer's, which families needed a car to get to.

This scheme was vitally needed during the school holidays too, but the Government were unwilling to offer this.

The Just Change team therefore pivoted their campaign to meet the emergency need. They listened to others from across Citizens UK to develop asks to the Government – to allow schools to exercise their discretion so that vouchers, money, or food could be used in cases of need – for example to those with No Recourse to Public Funds, to reimburse schools, to negotiate with low-cost supermarkets to bring them into the voucher scheme and, crucially, to extend the scheme into the school holidays.

The team worked via their contacts in the Government, Parliament, and the House of Lords, along with an MP letter writing campaign and won crucial elements of the campaign. There was an extension of the

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The Government, however, were still not budging and would not extend into the summer holidays. A 15-year-old school pupil led the team in planning an action on the Department for Education and local MPs' offices, to compel them to listen to young people and their families – then Marcus Rashford told his story and finally compelled the Government to relent.

Campaign leaders were delighted – but also knew there was much more to do. They continued to organise for a better system for Free School Meal recipients.

As we emerge from the Covid pandemic, leaders are currently in negotiations with two local authorities to pilot Just Change. If a pilot doesn't happen, then a public action will follow.

Newcastle University are currently evaluating the impact of Just Change based on research in those schools operating Just Change and a group of control schools who do not. We hope the findings will encourage others to follow their lead. Suzanne Butler, the lead researcher, shared some of her initial findings at a Tyne & Wear Citizens Assembly in March 2022.

'For schools that have changed their free school meal system to allow the allowance to roll-over, children have talked about having a freedom to choose, experiment and to be a part of the school like every other child.

They have talked about being able to enjoy 'normal' stress like homework, rather than feeling stressed about what they can and can't eat at lunchtime and what they are able to participate in in their friendship groups.

When asked, children unanimously express that they feel mealtimes should be fair and equal for all children, that children on free school meals should be able to keep their allowance and use this whenever they want.

While schools are hungry to be better for their children, there is a general lack of awareness of how this can be done. The Just Change campaign proposes one practical solution that can be adopted across all schools.'

Central to this next stage of the campaign will be developing young leaders across our schools who will continue to lead this change. Being morally right isn't enough to win justice. We need to understand power, to organise, listen, and act together.

What Just Change has shown us in Tyne & Wear, however, is that change is possible. We *can* tackle poverty, when we listen, organise and act for change together. We have the power to win.

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Wilhelmenia Etoga Ngono

In the academic year of 2020-2021, my institution had become involved with Citizens UK in line with the some of the aims of our strategic plans aligned with BHASVIC becoming more engaged in the community. As a result of this involvement with Citizens UK, I was given the opportunity to support the development of a new initiative for the young people of colour within our institution: the BAME Leadership Group. This was organised and developed in conjunction with Sussex University and led by Monique Forbes-Bromes, a key member of the Students' Union at Sussex University. For the purpose of this initiative, I was mainly shadowing Monique and recruiting young adults from my institution. Following my engagement in the leadership group, I made the decision to attend Citizens UK's three-day training course in community leadership to gain a more thorough insight and understanding into community organising.

The key motivation which emerged as a result of this training was the opportunity that was then presenting itself to give the young adults within my institution a voice, something that I am passionate about and have committed my practice to ensuring as an educator. Our institution has a students' union, student-run societies, and has been proactive in supporting young people expressing themselves through our students' forum. But I wanted to widen this opportunity by providing our young adults with a safe space to learn more about their passion and take small steps towards developing as organisers with the support and guidance required to build their confidence in their own capabilities as leaders.

The situation

Following the training, a suggestion was made to develop and implement a new portfolio course for our second-year students focusing on helping them develop the skills and knowledge they need to become effective leaders and lead on a social campaign of their choice. Additionally, an opportunity arose to run the portfolio conjunctively with the University of Sussex giving me an opportunity to work with Dr Katherine Kruger to develop resources and run the programme successfully. So, the hope was that we would be able to join the efforts of our cohorts in developing ideas, sharing good practice and even co-working on social justice campaigns.

The main aim of the leadership portfolio course was to provide a platform for development of our young people in line with one aspect of our strategic plan centred on our 'students as leaders and citizens'. Secondly, my personal aim and aspiration was to give young people a space where they can express their feeling and views of society and use that to fuel their own aspirations for social change, whilst using my knowledge to give them the tools necessary to be successful. The leadership portfolio not only had the opportunity to contribute to the growth of the young people within our institution, be the starting point for a change within our institution by creating lasting and developing legacy, but also changing the face of our institution and its norm through change.

One of the benefits of having the portfolio structured as part of the college timetable was that it was easy to allocate the time required for delivery. However, this being a new course, students didn't have much to hang onto in terms of what their learning would actually entail.

The relatively small size of the group this did not reduce the anxieties I felt as a newbie to community organising. I was keen to share some of my recently-acquired knowledge but felt that the students would immediately call my bluff.

The course would run from end of September to April, and I decided to run it with two sessions weekly, to allow enough time for the delivery of content and theory, as well as opportunities for one-to-one conversations with the students. To start with, we had eight curious and intrigued young adults who signed up to take part in the course. The relatively small size of the group this did not reduce the anxieties I felt as a newbie to community organising. I was keen to share some of my recently-acquired knowledge but felt that the students would immediately call my bluff.

The first part of the portfolio course which lasted from September to mid-December centred on developing and building relationships within the group itself by engaging in a range of activities in line with community organising principles. The young adults involved for the most part were strangers to one another. The thing that united them was that they all had a commitment to social change. Thus, through the process of one-to-ones and rounds – where all learnt to share their thoughts about their experience of society – my goal was to help the group build, and develop, relational power with one another through establishing common self-interests. In my case, as someone in a position of authority, I wanted to build cohesion within the group by establishing a leadership style which would be conducive to that purpose. Thus, I opted for an affiliative style of leadership which would allow me to also become part of the group by fully engaging in the discussions and one-to-ones. This was something that I had witnessed whilst working on the BAME leadership group project and felt had been really helpful to its good running.

Throughout this time where the focus was on delivery, we experienced very few snags and the process ran really smoothly. Our first challenging task occurred when we engaged in the 'beads of privilege' task, which was part of the oppression and privilege section of the course. The group in itself was highly in favour of engaging in the process and the exercise really generated some excellent reflections on both parts. The task in itself is rather visceral and emotionally challenging for all involved. Emotions such as sadness, guilt, shame, or all those combined are often those experienced by the participants regardless of their level or lack of privilege. This experience was one which the group also experienced quite strongly. Therefore, what was key for me was to ensure was that I reinforced the notion that we all have some level of privilege. But it was also key to discuss that, as community organisers and leaders, the focus should be on how we can use our privileges for the greater good of our communities.

From January onwards, the focus shifted and centred on a social campaign, once the group had decided what it was they felt they wanted to work on. This changed the dynamics of our sessions where the focus turned to developing strategies. We carried on using rounds discussion as these allowed members of the group to share and had become a favoured activity for bonding purposes. As a result of those rounds, a decision was made before the Christmas break to go ahead and focus on helping in the development of resources for victims of sexual violence and sexual assault.

One of the first activities I facilitated was to do a power analysis of our College, as the social campaign was focused on our institution directly. As such, it was key for the group to establish who the power holders within it were and decide what would be the next steps to take.

Our power analysis was very straightforward, and we identified seven key individuals which included members of senior management, governors and the members of the safeguarding team, as well as the Students' Union.

Our power analysis was very straightforward, and we identified seven key individuals which included members of senior management, governors and the members of the safeguarding team, as well as the Students' Union. At this stage in the course, leaders within the group definitely emerged and they took ownership of the campaign by scheduling initial meetings with the Students' Union, the Head of Student Support, as well as the Safeguarding Lead. The Safeguarding Lead became an instrumental

form of support in the development of the campaign as she provided guidance on the creation of resources the group had agreed on to help them understand the magnitude of the issue. She was able to reign in first and foremost the expectations of the core team who were fuelled by a sense of injustice at the way in which the process was currently handled. This was essential in levelling the group as a whole and centring their focus once more on the notion of social change.

The next step for the team was to decide on the resources they required to be able to pursue their campaign successfully. Discussions around the matter led to the decision that the use of a survey and a house meeting (i.e. a small group discussion) would be the way forward. Again, supported by our Safeguarding Lead, sessions ensued to discuss the content of the survey and the way in which the data would be gathered.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, it was crucial for the core team to be aware of some of the ethical challenges with the survey, which was aligned with consent and data protection. As the facilitator, I took the lead in engaging in communications with our data manager to and draft an appropriate introduction to the survey, amending the draft by the team and identifying the best way to send out the survey whilst minimising potential harm and maintaining anonymity. The survey was sent out to all students within our College using their email addresses and the group, after a week, collected all the responses. As part of the survey, one of the questions requested for volunteers to participate in a house meeting to discuss the issues raised.

The next step for the team was to plan and schedule the house meeting which took place the week before the Easter break with a view to organise an Accountability Assembly with the stakeholders on Thursday 28th April, 2022. I facilitated access to a room and provision of refreshments and snacks for the house meeting which was the final opportunity for the team to discuss in depth their campaign and generate some insight from individuals not directly involved in the campaign. Subsequently, analysis of the data was carried out by selected members of the team whilst the remaining members worked on drafting an invitation email to the stakeholders telling them about the upcoming Accountability Assembly.

The changes

The team, in the process of developing and planning their campaign, had identified key aims that they wanted to achieve as a result of their work:

1. Training for staff on trauma-informed support so that disclosures are made more efficiently and without students being unsure of who to talk to – *the Head of Student Services organised for basic awareness of trauma informed practice to take place during our May 2022 INSET.*
2. The implementation of a 'Report a Concern' button – *the Assistant Principal is currently working on a proposed app for the students and will look into implementing a 'Report a Concern' button as part of it. If this does not work, discussions will take place with our team of developers to add this to our Virtual Learning Environment page or our student dashboard.*
3. Wider awareness of positive relationships and sexual relationships (at this stage we have dedicated November as a sole month for awareness) – *the student services department implementing 'drop down days' for 2022-2023 academic year in the first instance, focusing on various challenges our young adults face delivered by expert organisations such as WiSE and the Survivors Network. Those are scheduled to take place during our progress review. Additionally, review of the tutorial programme will be taking place to ensure that awareness if promoted through our tutorial programme.*
4. Flagging up of relevant external charities who can provide support – *relevant and additional resources will be added to the wellbeing section of the website.*
5. Reviewing/implementation of policies clarifying the process of reporting and investigation; specialised support available on site if possible – *our Head of Student Support has reviewed our policies and procedure with regards to reporting of incident aligned with sexual assault/violence. Additionally, recruitment*

took place for a mental health specialist as well as a safeguarding manager to add further capacity to our student services department.

To engage in a discussion with the power holders in our institution and secure their pledges to bring forth some of the changes above, the team scheduled an Accountability Assembly.

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Based on the power that we'd built and the energy of our group, in attendance were the entirety of the student support team, including our trainee social worker, the Assistant Principal and our Safeguarding Governor.

Our team presented to the attendees, explained their rationale, findings, and demands during the session and also allowed time for an open discussion which enabled both parties to clarify requests and current processes in place. Thus, as a result of this Accountability Assembly, the power holders agreed to all our demands above and additionally have already started the process of implementing some of those.

Analysis

One of the long-term implications for the College in relation to this new initiative has made a positive contribution to our strategic plan in developing our young adults into leaders. Additionally, this is setting a very positive precedent for the College community in inspiring other students with an activist mindset to seek out to develop as leaders and bring about social change. With the help of the marketing team, the teams work and wins (have been/will be publicised) in the parents and student newsletters.

Additionally, the campaign has also worked to improve the support available to our students experiencing severe and challenging circumstances which will no doubt have a long-lasting impact on their overall wellbeing but also their ability to continue with their studies. The aim of the campaign was not to pretend that we can solve all the issues aligned with sexual victimisation but rather ensure that we can support our students effectively in collaboration with specialised agencies through the process supporting them through the journey.

The demands and changes agreed have been identified by the team to ensure that those would be sustainable, have the ability to be reviewed and reframed as necessary to ensure that the original foundation for the changes is maintained and consistent across subsequent academic years. With one of the strengths of our institution embedded in our quality assurance process, I am confident that the required reviews of the various initiatives will take place consistently.

One of the key strengths of the team and the campaign they led and which was key to their success was their transparency with the organisation from the start as well as their eagerness and commitment to engage with power holders at any given opportunity. For example, when the plan for the campaign was finalised with the key demands identified, power holders and key events aligned with the campaign. The documents compiled was sent to the Head of Student Support and the Assistant Principal to ensure they were clear on what the team sought out. As a result of this approach, the team was able to develop a collaborative relationship with the power holders and thus lead a successful campaign.

#SOUTHLAPARENTLOVE

REDEFINING PARENT PARTICIPATION IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES SCHOOLS

Maisie Chin

Following the 1992 acquittal of police in the brutal beating of Rodney King, an unarmed African American man, which was caught on tape, South Central Los Angeles erupted in violence. It was the manifestation of decades of disinvestment from the region. I was an undergraduate at UCLA at the time and decided that I didn't want to perpetuate the dominant economic system and culture that pits people of color against each other. This led me to get involved in organizing efforts that forged my commitment to working for multiracial solidarity and unity.

[I]t was obvious that we were going through the motions as far as equity, but we weren't doing anything to dismantle the stereotypes and the racism embedded in the culture of schools.

After graduating from UCLA, I began working for an initiative that connected schools in key South Central neighborhoods across grade levels with the closest community college. Within a few years, however, it was obvious that we were going through the motions as far as equity, but we weren't doing anything to dismantle the stereotypes and the racism embedded in the culture of schools.

Teachers would stop me outside of meetings to express shockingly violent, dehumanizing beliefs about students and their parents. One white teacher invited me to agree with him that all of these children were 'monsters.' My goddaughter had this same teacher, who summarily failed everybody in the class except for one student.

This blatant contradiction between talking about equity and not connecting it to the implicit bias or outright racism in the classroom and toward parents led me to believe that we cannot improve educational outcomes in our communities without challenging the structural racism in our public schools.

This inherent disdain toward black and brown parents was a clear contrast to my growing up as a child of Chinese immigrants. South Central administrators and teachers would complain about black and Latino parents not showing up to meetings, answering a phone call, or returning some form. Meanwhile, my mom went to night school or worked the graveyard shift and did not attend a single parent-teacher conference after I was in third grade. Never was my family judged or my education denied because of a racist perception that we didn't care about education. It became clear to me at that point how families of Asian descent were being, and were allowing ourselves to be, used to perpetuate antiblack racism.

Racist perceptions of parents play a huge role in determining how schools respond to students. I started working on the modest idea that parents could be at the table to turn these perceptions on their head by sharing their wisdom and knowledge of their community, their children, and themselves. That's how CADRE (Community Asset Development Redefining Education) initially came about.

Conventional wisdom says that if you involve yourself as a parent of color, you can foster an equitable education for your child. The unspoken rule, however, is that you must never challenge schools or call out any of their practices as racist. That is the deal.

I met Rosalinda Hill, who cofounded CADRE with me, through a community project based in Watts. 'Linda' was a parent with five kids who participated in every district workshop, conference, and training offered to parents. She was the one parent on staff at her children's school who served as the liaison

between administration and the parents. Yet her son, who was in second grade and in special education, still got locked in a closet as a form of discipline.

She was extremely conscious of racism and very passionate about challenging people perceptions about black boys in particular. In response to my modest proposal for parent engagement, Linda envisioned a movement of thousands of powerful parents. She realized that despite the years of her involvement as a parent volunteer, she had never been trained to be a leader-organizer, someone who could bring parents together as advocates for their children. Seizing on this new vision, she started organizing all of her friends. We met in her and other parents' living rooms every Friday night for two years, and in 2001 we launched CADRE.

PARENT EXCLUSION AS SYSTEMIC RACISM

Emotionally and spiritually, it took a lot of storytelling to show that despite what they did to be involved, South Central parents had no recourse to prevent mistreatment of their children. This had become too common an experience. You couldn't even say the problem was a lack of resources or books, or poor teacher training, or dirty bathrooms. Mistreatment was a symptom of a deeper problem: the fact that families and communities of color had no power and were not respected inside schools, despite having rights outlined in our state education code.

Rosalinda suggested we door-knock and ask parents if they felt they had power at the school. If they had the power, what would they change? If they had a magic wand, what would they change? Most of the parents we talked to felt completely disregarded by their children's schools. Without realizing it at the time, we equated fighting racism with challenging the treatment of black and brown parents.

We then started to ask ourselves: How do you make student and parent treatment into an issue? Can black and brown parents truly advocate for their children without backlash and retribution?

After two more years of house meetings and experimenting with different ways to bring attention to parent exclusion, we decided to start a participatory action research project and recruited a core group of parents to plan and carry out the effort. The majority were parents who had been incarcerated, whose children had been incarcerated, or whose family members had been incarcerated.

Our 2004 survey results made several things clear: the majority of the South LA parents we interviewed felt their schools were racist, did not recognize the culture and experiences of families, and had no real accountability to parents nor any meaningful form of parent engagement.

Meanwhile, stories kept coming up that revealed how systematically black and Latino parents' rights were violated and how these violations occurred most often during disciplinary proceedings. We started talking to lawyers and doing workshops for parents on the subject of their rights. We heard story after story. Students were counseled out of school or told to stay home for the rest of the semester. Some were told they had to transfer to another school, but the paperwork never went through, so they'd be sitting at home for two months. We heard how students became disengaged from school after these discipline incidents and about the domino effect that led to other negative consequences. And parents felt pretty powerless and angry.

PARENTS' POWERFUL QUESTIONS ASKED AND ANSWERED

By this point we knew we were going down a path less traveled but one inspired by history and political courage.

By this point we knew we were going down a path less traveled but one inspired by history and political courage. We had these survey results and lots of stories. How were we going to use an organizing strategy to respond to what we heard?

The committee of core parents saw the power of our report's truth telling and wanted CADRE to use it for real change. We could have gone in many different directions. One parent, Roslyn Broadnax, said we can't just focus on our kids and fixing these separate incidents. It's not enough to help individual parents advocate for their child and settle for a few families getting a slightly better deal out of an unjust system. She challenged everybody to think about changing the rules of the game for everyone. By the end of two hours, she had organized all of us in CADRE to choose systemic change as our initial theory of change.

It was a watershed moment. The next question became, 'What's the system we're changing?' The one our kids were actually living and experiencing, what our parents called the 'school-to-prison train' that our kids were on. And what fueled it? Racially discriminatory school discipline practices that seemed to over-punish black children and then anyone whose behavior got close to antiblack stereotypes. But the system was also fueled by under-resourced schools, alienating school climates, poverty, and disinvestment in youth and community services in African American and Latino neighborhoods. Our parents' focus became stopping the 'pushout' of students in all its forms.

There was one challenge: proving discrimination. The burden of proof in filing civil rights complaints is so high that it has left many parents of color frustrated, so we started investigating how we could apply a human rights framework to education. It was like a lightbulb went off. There was finally a name for all the pains parents felt. It went beyond suspensions to the deeper value of parents' lives and the lives of their children. Every negative experience students or parents had in South LA schools could be equated with a violation of a basic human right.

In June 2005, we adopted human rights as our framework and launched our Human Right to Education Campaign, naming three core principles: the human rights to dignity, a quality education, and participation in the institutions that shape our quality of life.

We began another participatory research project in the fall of 2005 in partnership with a human rights organization, the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI). We went door-to-door to hold conversations with parents to find out if their children had ever been suspended; then we wrote down and documented their stories. We surveyed out-of-school youth and youth who were in alternative schools. We started to network with children's rights advocates, primarily special education lawyers.

We had a great turnout of South LA parents, and we engaged attorneys and school board members to respond to testimonies. That day we also made our first public demand for a policy change.

This led to our 'people's hearing' in June 2006, where we shared the extent and consequences of the human rights violations caused by zero tolerance discipline policies and pushout. We had a great turnout of South LA parents, and we engaged attorneys and school board members to respond to testimonies. That day we also made our first public demand for a policy change.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

Several months before our people's hearing, we heard about the LA Unified School District's plan to adopt a new, more comprehensive school discipline policy. Some children's rights advocates inside the district were pushing for school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) as an alternative to harsh discipline. Under SWPBS, punishing students for negative behavior is a last resort; instead, school staff address the root causes of behavior and provide supports for students who need help. But SWPBS proponents in Los Angeles faced an uphill battle. People thought the plan was too soft. The teachers' union thought it took power away from teachers.

We had already excavated a gold mine of stories showing the need for SWPBS. While not as far-reaching as we wanted a new policy to be, SWPBS gave us the very leverage we needed. The new policy would require schools to look at and use discipline data to make and review disciplinary decisions and to be

proactive so that suspensions became a last resort. Parents were to be included in designing each implementation. SWPBS would mean that everyone on all school campuses had to adopt positive behavior support practices. For once parents could begin to challenge discrimination in school discipline.

We threw our weight behind SWPBS. We went to school board meetings for eight months before our proposal came up for a vote, and we used the public comment periods to tell stories of families' experiences with pushout and its devastating consequences. We negotiated an additional policy component mandating that parents be included on the district-wide task force charged with independently monitoring SWPBS implementation.

The district's data also made the case for us by documenting the huge number of suspensions considered 'normal' at the time. In 2005-2006 the district suspended nearly 73,000 students. In South LA some elementary schools suspended 150 students a year, while some high schools suspended 1,500 students a year. Meanwhile, nearly 40 percent of those suspended in South LA middle and high schools were African American students, even though they made up less than 20 percent of those schools' enrollments.

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Our family testimonies put human faces on these statistics and made great news stories that sharpened the debate and got out in front of our opposition. We organized support letters from judges, advocates, and civil rights groups around the country, applauding LA Unified for what it was about to do before they even did it.

It took nine months of mobilizing to overcome opposition from the teachers' union and others, but the school board finally adopted the SWPBS policy in 2007. We became one of the first community organizing groups in the country to win a district-wide policy shift away from zero-tolerance discipline and toward a more positive approach.

Our partner all along the way was NESRI, which, with CADRE and a handful of children's rights attorneys and community organizations like us around the country, helped start the Dignity in Schools Campaign, a national alliance committed to ending the school-to-prison pipeline. Our victory with SWPBS encouraged and excited advocates in the new alliance to challenge harsh and racist school discipline policies in localities around the country and to appeal to the federal administration in Washington to use its oversight powers to end such policies.

CHALLENGING THE POWER DYNAMIC OF SCHOOLS VERSUS PARENTS

When individual parents of color challenge schools' treatment of their children, it often results in a deep power struggle that usually ends with the blame shifting squarely back onto parents: 'You as a parent must be doing something wrong.' We needed to shift the focus away from the parent's word against the teachers – because the teacher always wins out – and turn this into a policy victory for systemic change. That's what we achieved with SWPBS, creating a basis and tool for parents to push back against the power of schools in discipline practices.

A district-wide policy doesn't matter, however, if it is not carried out or if no one has heard of it. That is why, after the passage of SWPBS, we placed a big focus on monitoring and evaluating implementation of the new policy and subsequent changes in school climate. We knew, then and now, that the political will to fully implement something like SWPBS would be hard to find in the high-turnover schools in South Central.

We spent a year working on community education. We helped parents learn to use SWPBS as leverage to help their children. We helped parents to see the value of being in solidarity with one another, because a positive school climate and ending racist school discipline helps everyone. SWPBS gives the school a

shot at being a better place, with an 'operating system' that is focused on preventing any student from being excluded from learning.

We conducted another participatory research project to find out whether SWPBS had been implemented with any fidelity in South LA. We performed our own independent analysis of the data and issued our first 'shadow report' in 2010, followed by a report on 'off the books' suspensions in 2012, and another shadow report in 2017. We continue to find that the more superficial aspects of SWPBS are being implemented, mainly to comply with district policy, and not out of a deep commitment to changing school climate and eliminating racially biased – namely, antiblack – discrimination in school discipline.

BUILDING SEEDS OF RADICAL LOVE AMONG PARENTS

To this day, and despite a 95 percent reduction in suspensions, we continue to train parents on how to monitor school discipline and school climate in their schools. It is at the core of our work to build the power we need for parents to confront the structural racism on which our schools are based, but building that power starts with the belief that black and brown parents' stories about school discipline and racist or unfair treatment matter. Many people in the general public or in schools react to these stories by thinking the parent is lying or blindly defending their child. It is where the division starts.

To this day, the most difficult political battle is creating space for these testimonies to happen in a transformative way. It's hard for parents to tell their story. It's hard to name discrimination at first, to not blame themselves. When parents share with each other, it's hard for them to be in solidarity with one another's truths, to not judge each other. Even so-called progressive folks often have a hard time not judging parents of color. It forces everybody to confront their biases. Validating parents' stories challenges the racist suppression of parents' voices and power, as well as the internalized oppression that fuels the idea of divide and conquer. It's where we start.

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Our work involves building solidarity across parents' experiences in a non-judgmental environment where people can look critically at these seemingly individual stories and identify the systemic issues across generations. We don't assign blame. We make the case, advocate, build consciousness, and find a common thread. The goal is to move beyond judging each other's parenting or children to seeing ourselves as a political force if we work collectively. We resist divisions among parents as much as we can, and we resist labeling parents as 'good' or 'bad'. This is the greatest labor of love in our organizing model.

THE QUESTION FOR US ALL: HOW CAN WE AS A SOCIETY CLAIM TO LOVE CHILDREN BUT SO READILY HATE THEIR PARENTS?

This question continues to motivate our work. The narrative about 'bad parents' hasn't changed despite our parent-led victories on school discipline policy around the country. We have shifted the narrative about discipline that justified the school-to-prison pipeline and caused zero-tolerance approaches to tumble and fall. Yet getting schools to accept, embrace, and love parents remains elusive.

Schools often 'talk the talk' of parent engagement, so you don't see outright racism toward parents until they have to defend their children's humanity and behavior. You don't see it until it is a power struggle between the parent and the school – when school staff have the power of their unions, their professional status, and their elitist language behind them.

Our society believes that kids can be saved, so if we have to love somebody, we choose to love the kids. The more difficult struggle is to love and not give up on the adult who is their parent, to believe in the possibilities of a parent's continued growth and evolution.

In the work of education and racial justice, the challenge is the same: we don't ask ourselves to be as patient with adults. We pivot to the young people when parents are also in pain. Many parents haven't healed from the trauma of poverty and racism, possibly for decades.

Although black and brown parents like our CADRE leaders embody this history and trauma, they also embody all the possibilities for transforming our schools. It's going to be up to them. No one else has the skin in the game to do this kind of work – adult to adult.

Fundamentally, we are calling for a new paradigm of democratic schools that does not rely on getting rid of kids or parents to succeed. We believe our parents and all parents can be the shape-shifters. They are the ones who can and will call forth the better angels in our schools.

THE SCHOOL IS THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

BUILDING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ACROSS NEW YORK CITY

Natasha Capers

When my children were still in elementary school in New York City, Mayor Michael Bloomberg released his annual list of schools that were 'low performing' and slated for closure. My children's school, PS 298 in Brownsville, Brooklyn, was on the list.

PS 298 is my alma mater. I attended that school until sixth grade. It's surrounded by New York City public housing, but it was always considered a jewel of Brownsville. It had great programming, with a glee club, athletics, and a newspaper. And this was just an elementary school.

I was a 'mathlete' at the school. We had opportunities to get out of the building and do things and explore. But over the years, the school declined. When my children began attending, I could see that there had been disinvestment. At one point the school didn't have a functioning library or a librarian. There wasn't an up-to-date computer lab. Many of the after-school programs had been cut. And yet I loved and still love PS 298; I see the glory that is within the walls of my alma mater.

I was the vice president of the parent association and chair of the school leadership team at the time the school was slated for closure in the fall of 2011. I received a call from Fiorella Guevara from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, who was working with the Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ), to organize parents at schools that were on the closure list to try to save their schools. CEJ is a collective that works toward creating educational equity in the system at the citywide level. I joined the fight because I had a historical understanding of where my school had been and the wonderful things that were possible there.

When people are flippant about closing a school, it wounds me. I think about who I might not have been if I hadn't been able to sing in that glee club. The school gives young people a foundation.

School closure is devastating. The school is the heart of the community. Everything dear to me either happened in PS 298 or happened because of that school. I was able to go to college and pay for part of it through a music scholarship because I started singing in the third grade in the glee club. When people are flippant about closing a school, it wounds me. I think about who I might not have been if I hadn't been able to sing in that glee club. The school gives young people a foundation.

When a school is slated for closure, no one asks the really hard questions: Why aren't students achieving? What will it take for them to achieve? And what are the 'experts' doing wrong? All the blame falls on all the wrong people. It's 'the kids don't care, the parents don't care, and even the teachers don't care' – and none of that is true, nor is it the true source of any of the problems. Often when a school closes, another one opens in the same building with the same students, and the same horrible things just keep occurring.

We began to organize other parents to save the school. Fiorella and CEJ helped me understand that school closure was a deeper, citywide, and even state-wide issue. She helped me to articulate an alternative vision for what could be possible for our school. I vowed that I would make PS 298 a community school if it's the last thing I do.

By organizing, we saved the school, and after the election of Mayor Bill de Blasio, PS 298 became a community school through New York City's Renewal School Program. The city's Department of Education started the program to transform low-performing schools into community schools with

extended school days, mental health services, support from and for families, and extensive partnerships with community organizations. I was over the moon about it.

PS 298 is now doing great and has the resources it should have had all along. The school has been able to improve attendance and raise student proficiency rates. The principal has created an environment where students are excited about being in school. PS 298 is now much more like the school I attended as a child.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE WHOLE CHILD

After saving PS 298, I continued working with the Coalition for Educational Justice and became a leader with their state-wide partner, the Alliance for Quality Education. Then I was hired as the CEJ coordinator.

CEJ is the largest parent-led group in New York City and comprises community-based organizations across all five boroughs that organize parents in black, brown, and immigrant communities. For example, the Queens parent committee of Make the Road New York advocates for school construction, because their schools are so overcrowded that many students have to take classes in temporary trailers. These groups push for change in an individual school or district, but there's only so much that a district superintendent or school principal can do without systemic change, especially in a system with more than seventeen hundred schools and mayoral control.

[W]e envision community schools as a hub for services that address the needs of the community at large, but specifically the needs of the student and family population at the school. Where there is a need for a dental clinic, mental health services, a food pantry, or laundry services, those things are made available to families.

At CEJ we envision community schools as a hub for services that address the needs of the community at large, but specifically the needs of the student and family population at the school. Where there is a need for a dental clinic, mental health services, a food pantry, or laundry services, those things are made available to families.

We believe that by taking care of the needs of students and families, students will be more successful in schools; their test scores, grades, and attendance will all improve. For example, if you give a student a pair of glasses, they see better and they perform better academically. Similarly, if students are not hungry, they can focus better in class. Then we took it to the next level: if you can do all those things while also dissecting teaching and learning and improving everyday practices in the classroom, you will get the long-term systemic change that children need.

STRONG PARENT ENGAGEMENT

We want parents to be full partners in community schools. We see a relationship between intentional, strong parent engagement and what happens in the classroom. We brought the Academic Parent-Teacher Teams model into NYC schools with the help of the educational non-profit WestEd. These teams hold parent-teacher conferences in a new and dynamic way. Schools traditionally conduct fifteen-minute parent-teacher conferences with individual families. In the new model, a teacher brings together all parents into the classroom, and together they look at achievement data and discuss the key skills that students need before advancing to the next grade.

All the parents work with the teacher to set both classroom and individual goals for their children. For example, the teacher may say, 'We are working on growing the class's vocabulary by two hundred words, and this is how we're going to do it together as a team.' The teacher and parents figure out how to work together to achieve the goal, and the teacher identifies resources, games, and activities that parents can use at home to help their children. At these meetings, parents have an opportunity to build a stronger

relationship with the teacher and also with each other. The last Academic Parent-Teacher Team meeting of the school year discusses how to set students up for success in the following year by coming up with ways to sustain learning through the summer vacation.

How do you build strong relationships between the community and the school? How do you begin to shift how teachers view parents, how parents view teachers, and how each of them views young people? How do you grow the relationship academically? With our approach, the school asks parents to perform a teaching skill to reinforce academic practice and gives them the tools and support to be able to do that. Now you have a whole classroom full of parents who are immersed in learning and teaching practice. It is no longer just a one-sided equation; you have begun to equalize the relationship.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

What's different about a community school? When you walk in the door, you may first notice that there are a lot more resources and more hands on deck. A community school director coordinates the after-school programs, the medical clinics, and other services. This role allows principals to focus on being instructional leaders and allows the director to take on more of the social-emotional and support work.

You may see more parents in the building, because there are more workshops in such areas as English as a second language or Spanish as a second language, depending on what parents communicate that they want or need. Community schools provide an extra hour of instruction to students and offer a variety of after-school programs.

At their best, community schools feel more vibrant. The adults are happy to be there, so the students are happy to be there. Students report that it's more fun to be in their school. I have found that when a school lacks vibrancy, or where the adults aren't invested, it bleeds over to the students. At a community school, teachers and other adults have a renewed sense of excitement about being in the building.

SCHOOLS THAT REFLECT THE COMMUNITY

The teaching force in New York City is over 60 percent white, while 85 percent of students are children of color. Students across the city and even across the country don't see themselves reflected in their teachers, nor do they see themselves reflected in the books they read.

Parents of color, especially immigrant families, are viewed as not caring about their children. I have seen Spanish-speaking families flat-out ignored. The school considers it a bother to find someone who speaks their language, so non-English-speaking parents cannot have a robust conversation about their children's academic performance.

The white-supremacist belief system that devalues communities of color is responsible for what is happening in schools and in communities that have seen complete disinvestment. For decades, no one cared about schools in Brownsville, Brooklyn; they ignored and underfunded them. Without a strong challenge, this belief system continues to be reinforced, even in community schools. We work extremely hard to shift how teachers and school staff view families so that they treat them as assets. We work to shift deficit thinking to asset-based thinking, and we help educators learn to listen to parents and hear what they are saying.

We work extremely hard to shift how teachers and school staff view families so that they treat them as assets. We work to shift deficit thinking to asset-based thinking, and we help educators learn to listen to parents and hear what they are saying.

Another parent engagement model that we have brought to New York City is the Parent Teacher Home Visit. Teachers go through training, and then they call the family to set up a visit. The meeting can take

place anywhere other than the school, such as in the neighborhood library. Teachers and staff need to know the communities where they are working. They can get to know families on a whole different level when they are not on the teacher's turf.

Teachers might ask, 'Tell me about yourself. Tell me about your child. What are your hopes and dreams? What do you want them to get out of this year?' Teachers learn about the family and student as people, something they would not have been able to do if the conversations were solely about test scores.

'I actually know someone at this school. If something happens, I have someone I can talk to.' Home visits create new kinds of connections between schools, families, and communities.

Families immediately feel more comfortable with those teachers. Parents say, 'I actually know someone at this school. If something happens, I have someone I can talk to.' Home visits create new kinds of connections between schools, families, and communities.

ELECTORAL POWER

In 2013 CEJ launched a campaign to make improving public education a key issue in New York City's mayoral race. How do we shift away from the punitive school-closure model and toward infusing resources and support into struggling schools? We wanted to steer candidates toward community schools as a solution.

We took a good-guy/bad-guy approach – or, as I like to say, it was like a Labrador retriever and a pit bull. The Labrador is sweet, and you want to build a good relationship with her. The pit bull is the opposite.

The bad guy, or pit bull, was New Yorkers for Great Public Schools. NYGPS created wedge issues in public education to move candidates as far away as possible from Mayor Michael Bloomberg's policies of school closures, charter schools, and disinvestment. The closer you were to supporting the damaging things he did, the worse it seemed for you. NYGPS held continuous press conferences to keep the wedge issue in the news, to elevate public education as one of the top voter issues in the city.

The Labrador was 'PS 2013', our campaign to uplift positive policy solutions. The coalition operated an online policy hub that talked in depth about changing outcomes for students of color. It featured the best things to do for students with special needs and promoted community schools. Contributors created policy papers that were just two or three pages long, making them accessible to a cross-section of readers.

We also ran a citywide charrette, or intensive planning process, which involved more than seventy-five community meetings with parents, students, community members, teachers, principals, and superintendents around the city. We asked questions like 'What would you like to see in your ideal school?' and 'What are the things you would want the next mayor to do for public education?' These were simple but direct questions that helped identify what people wanted to see happen. It is amazing how simple the questions are, yet they are often never asked.

Community members wanted art, music, and better physical education. They wanted more robust community services and better school food. These are all core tenets of community schools.

We then took the top twenty things that people wanted to see in their schools, and we created an installation in a bright blue bus that traveled around the city, providing an attractive container for all these ideas. Each idea had a different basket, and people would walk through the bus with a packet of tokens and vote for what they wanted to see in their schools. It was a way of engaging folks in a democratic process that is very much missing with public education in New York, because we have mayoral control instead of elected community school boards or local governance.

With the help of a design team of policy experts, we put out a road map for the next mayor that highlighted all the top ideas, including community schools. All the major candidates came to the mayoral forum at which we presented our platform. Throughout this time, parents from CEJ had been meeting with elected officials and with candidates to raise our issues. CEJ cannot endorse candidates, but we have the power to meet with folks and put before them a platform supporting community schools.

Because of all the talk and energy behind our campaign, candidates started to endorse community schools as an important strategy. Mayoral candidate Bill de Blasio pledged to open 100 community schools in his first term. De Blasio won the 2013 mayor's race, and by the end of his first full school year he transformed 130 schools into community schools; since then he has added nearly 100 more.

VICTORY

These are black, brown, and immigrant families, and some of the leaders are monolingual Spanish speakers. We are not the usual folks who influence mayoral candidates. Our ability to influence the mayoral race in such a pivotal way speaks volumes to the impact of community organizing and to our vision for community schools.

The fact that parents were so pivotal at bringing the community school model to New York City was a huge victory. These are black, brown, and immigrant families, and some of the leaders are monolingual Spanish speakers. We are not the usual folks who influence mayoral candidates. Our ability to influence the mayoral race in such a pivotal way speaks volumes to the impact of community organizing and to our vision for community schools.

Mayor Bill de Blasio's victory did not mean we could just walk away. After calling for 130 community schools, we began to support the transition of traditional schools to the new model, implement new parent-teacher relationships, and improve the quality of the instruction in those schools, among other initiatives.

We recently shifted our attention to another part of our community school platform: culturally responsive education. Now is the time for school communities to go deeper and shift their curricula to better represent and engage the history and culture of the students of color they serve.

LESSONS FOR ACTIVISTS

Getting someone to say they will create community schools is the easy part. The hard part is this: after they say yes, then what?

There are three lessons to take away from our community school campaign in New York. The first lesson is that even when you have a friendly administration that is seemingly giving you what you want, the work doesn't stop. It shifts and changes and gets harder. Never let up.

The second lesson is to be thoughtful and mindful about the type of schools and the number of schools your organization can support. New York has more than 1,700 schools, so even the current total of 225 community schools does not seem like a lot. But that actually is a lot of schools to have taken on all at once; in fact, it is the largest school improvement plan in the country. And because these were some of the schools that struggled most in the city, we were asking a lot of them. In hindsight, I think creating smaller cohorts and building a bit more slowly would have worked better. Our children cannot wait, but they also deserve strong improvements that will work.

The third lesson is that planning is critical. I think we should have pushed for implementation to start after a planning year. The schools had little knowledge about how to transition to the new model, community-based organizations did not always know the best ways to support the schools, and there

was no real training for community school resource directors. There needed to be a strong planning year when staff could learn their roles before diving into the deep end. Better preparation increases the likelihood of success.

A bonus lesson is that you must have your own definition of success. If you leave it up to your critics, they will never say you're successful. If you leave it up to test scores, those scores will not tell the full story.

A bonus lesson is that you must have your own definition of success. If you leave it up to your critics, they will never say you're successful. If you leave it up to test scores, those scores will not tell the full story. Start by figuring out in year one what success means. How does that shift in year two, and year three, and year four? What are all the measures of success that matter beyond test scores?

We must make community schools high quality, always raising the bar. Those are our babies, nieces, nephews, and our neighbors' children in those classrooms. We want to make them the best that they can be.

CHANGING A PARK AND THE WAY OF LEARNING IN FRENCH SCHOOLS

Dr Hélène Balazard

On a bright October morning, a dozen 8- to 10-year-old pupils are meeting a deputy mayor of their borough of Lyon, in France, in a small neighbourhood park. The deputy mayor is not alone; she came with four people working within the 'technical services' of the city of Lyon. Most importantly, they also came with a recycling bin.

The adults are asking the children where they think they should install the bin in the park. After a few minutes of discussions, they agree on the location and the technicians start using their tools to fix the bin into the ground. This is the first ever and (as we write these words) only recycling bin in a local park in Lyon.

It didn't get there by magic; rather, it got there after a campaign run by a group of children started a few months earlier in a local school which decided to become the first one in France to experiment with Community Organising.

It didn't get there by magic; rather, it got there after a campaign run by a group of children started a few months earlier in a local school which decided to become the first one in France to experiment with Community Organising. Introducing school-based organising in France not only can promote campaigns and changes led by children but it can also strongly disrupt the way educators, and more generally adults, relate to their students. Adults are agitated to consider children as equals. One of the other consequences of adopting such methods is that learning can be taken outside the classroom, or even outside the school gates.

Typically, in France, curriculum experiences tend to asymmetrical and vertical: the teacher is the custodian of knowledge which establishes their authority. In addition, the knowledge transmitted tends to be decontextualised and separated from practice, because its legitimacy does not depend on its 'usefulness' but, rather, on its conformity with the principles of reason which define the 'general interest'.

Les Enfants s'Organisent

The project starts at the beginning of each school year with a listening campaign. The young leaders listen to the other children in their school during midday breaks, whilst having lunch, at snack time, during class council meetings, or even in some lessons. The children, with their notebooks or pre-made questionnaires, ask each other children what they want to change in their school and their neighbourhood. Some also have the time to go and listen to adults across their immediate school community: their parents/carers, as well as members of staff working at the school (cleaning technicians, canteen staff, teachers, etc.).

Then, after gathering people's views, the children work out what it is that they should focus on. This, according to criteria distinguishing various levels of power:

- unachievable as it is (which is a superhero thing)
- the responsibility of the school
- under the jurisdiction of another institution or company beyond the school

Putting aside unachievable proposals, they then organise a vote to prioritise the two or three campaigns they want to run.

The children then reach out to other children to build action teams which will focus on various strategies: signing petitions in the schoolyard, presenting their project during class council meetings, displaying posters, suggestion boxes for parents/carers. They make their group visible by creating a mailbox, a logo, a blog, a newsletter sent to parents/carers, etc. The majority of the groups have their own name (e.g. the children-led civic action group, the children of justice, the children of the round table, the club of children in power, the children of resourcefulness).

Outdoor learning

A few months before the action in the park, the same children started a listening campaign in their school. The main subject that emerged was the cleanliness (waste, glasses, dog faeces) of the park near the school. Beyond tackling this problem, the children were very excited to get out of their school on Wednesday mornings during their *Les Enfants s'Organisent* (LEO) workshop. Quite quickly, they came up with the idea of inviting elected officials in charge of green spaces to organise with them a cleaning of the park. Beyond the objectives of this action for their project (convincing elected officials of the need to install recycling bins, and repairing the water fountain), this was an opportunity for them to understand how the management of green spaces is organised in their city.

A person from the green spaces department explained to them: *'When we talk about organisation, we are in green spaces and there are plenty of services involved in this area, so we have to consult each other. We have a fountain service, a tree service. You see the labels with numbers on the trees, when you go to the computer, you know everything about the trees. I manage the people who mow the grass and we also deal with a company that comes for the rubbish collection.'*

The elected officials present at this meeting play the game and take ownership of the process by removing themselves from their role as decision-makers and asking the children for their opinion on the problems raised which have no obvious solutions:

'*In your opinion, what should be done so that the dog owners are much more responsible, so that they pick up their dog's mess? This is the approach we want in this process and in giving everyone a voice, especially you children. We are interested in ideas that could possibly improve the situation since that is the objective of the approach, to propose realistic and achievable ideas to improve our daily lives for all.*'

When the children put forward some of the solutions they have thought of, one of the elected officials returns to her role of decision-maker and tries to propose another solution which she believes would make things possible. And this is where the negotiation begins:

Child leader: *'We would like to see a small area designated for dogs. That's because the park is actually a place where dogs aren't allowed in. We also want to see poo bags made available so owners can pick up the poop. Then, at least, the dogs can enjoy spending some time in their own playground and have fun.'*

Elected official: *'We can't have a designated area for dogs. But we could have you make a few signs saying 'wait , this park is for children, not just for dogs.'*

On this point, a child will later on remark that:

'*I think sometimes she would tell us 'yes, yes' except that right after saying 'yes', she would give us some advice instead of doing it herself. Sometimes she would start with a good intention, it seemed, but then she'd ask us to sort it out.'*

Meeting new people and physically leaving school are key stages of the campaign process (for surveys or negotiations). They're also a source of great motivation for the students who participated in the LEO project in Lyon.

Learning how institutions work

The fact that students experience these different stages makes it possible to understand the way democracy works and, more broadly, the way politics happens. It also enables them to reflect on the way society is structured. A Head of Recreational Services for the city of Lyon commented that this project allows this kind of 'democratic' learning much more than other more traditional mechanisms engaging children in decision-making processes (such as student councils, for instance, which are often tokenistic):

'I find it interesting that children realise that it is not enough to ask for one more basketball hoop in the playground for it to succeed the next day. It's like that in everyday life. When we run student council meetings, they have lots of proposals and sometimes, when we come back to the student council the following week, they say 'but we didn't get that, that, and that that we had asked for!' and they don't understand why. The children who did this project now realise that you can't get the stuff right away. It takes decisions, convincing several people. It takes money. Usually, we don't have enough time to go far enough with them, to explain to them, to go in depth as we did in this project.'

This is also what two elected officials and a technician explained during their meeting with the children in the park after cleaning it:

Child: *'Could the new bin be put in place by the end of the summer holidays?'*

Elected official 1: *'So... (embarrassed laughter) we'll try to do it as soon as possible but we don't have an exact date.'*

Technician: *'We will talk about it to the person who takes care of putting the benches and the bins and then she will tell us if it is feasible.'*

Elected official 1: *'We will do it as soon as possible. You can't go as fast as when you're at home and you go buy a bin at the supermarket.'*

Elected official 2: *'I think it is important in this citizen engagement process to make it clear that there is indeed a whole process to go through so as not to generate frustration.'*

Technician: *'You see, there are lots of parameters and we have to coordinate so sometimes it takes a little time for us all to agree.'*

This excerpt from a discussion which took place between the group of children and the representatives from the city of Lyon also illustrates the roles that the various parts of the system can play to participate in the civic education of young people.

Reversing the very top-down style of French education

In France, a key challenge, to enable such community organising processes to happen, is to tackle the very top-down model of education. For those children involved in the project, the contrast to their typical school experiences is stark, right from the beginning.

In France, a key challenge, to enable such community organising processes to happen, is to tackle the very top-down model of education. For those children involved in the project, the contrast to their typical school experiences is stark, right from the beginning. Their first words, during the evaluation of one of the first workshops, refer to the contrast between the freedom of tone and the status of legitimate interlocutor conferred in LEO with their passivity within their normal classroom. In a way, they discover their new position as citizens by contrast and by measuring the distance that exists between their ordinary status as pupils within the school and their new-found status as active citizens.

The interplay of contrasts introduced by these free and horizontal activities and processes leads the children to underline the active nature of their experience, the importance of being listened to and heard, the freedom to do and to say things they otherwise wouldn't, contrasting all these with their ordinary status, where they must listen, rather than intervene, remain passive, rather than engage, respond to obligations and be serious, rather than take a lead and have fun.

The interplay of contrasts introduced by these free and horizontal activities and processes leads the children to underline the active nature of their experience, the importance of being listened to and heard, the freedom to do and to say things they otherwise wouldn't, contrasting all these with their ordinary status, where they must listen, rather than intervene, remain passive, rather than engage, respond to obligations and be serious, rather than take a lead and have fun.

- *'There, we can express ourselves, we can say what we think when we are in the project compared to when we are in class. In class, we don't really work on this kind of things.*
- *In fact, we are freer here because there are fewer people, we are less afraid to speak. In class, we must do compulsory things. In our LEO project, we can do different things, and we can do them differently.*
- *In class, I'm generally serious, I don't talk much, so I'm calm, whereas there I'm more active.'*

By having the children become themselves, the facilitators of their approach, they will in turn allow other students in the school to speak. The listening campaign (and then the investigation), which the children must carry out, makes them develop speaking and listening skills, like 'journalists' (a term which was used spontaneously by the children), able to get their classmates to testify, as a student from a school in Lyon explained:

'It also allows you to know the opinions of other people, of other students for whom it is sometimes a bit hard to talk to the adults, to tell them that they are not well in their school or when they have a problem. When we became 'journalists', it enabled them to bring out all their emotions.'

During negotiation meetings with decision-makers, it is the children who speak. The facilitator is only there to accompany them and possibly encourage them, as this educator explains:

'Faced with other adults, sometimes we need to make reminders, 'So, did you not forget to say something?' 'And you, what do you think?' And for that, you have to keep in mind what we have prepared, what they are supposed to say.'

Indeed, assuming children have the necessary skills does not mean ignoring preparation time with students before they are confronted with new experiences. Role plays, in the form of forum theatre for example, allow students to reveal their skills in a caring and known setting and to find the role in which they will feel most comfortable. This same educator explains how he enabled children to choose which roles they wanted to take on:

'*A child secretary, a child spokesperson, a child who supports. We do a forum theatre to find our role, the one we like the most and we practise*.'

Children spontaneously explained what the trust placed in them meant to them and how it led to greater self-confidence:

- '*I think it's because they trust us, this project shows that we can also have confidence in ourselves and that the educators can have confidence in us.'*
- *'The educators trust the children, the children also trust each other*.'

Conclusion

The pedagogies of citizenship stemming from the traditions of popular education and critical pedagogies insist on the self-formative properties of the practice of democracy, and propose to implement learning logics based on 'doing'. The few observations gathered here confirm this intuition: the young people implement and refine the deliberative skills called for by the situations in which they are placed: they seek to regulate their discussions, identify the underlying rules, learn to listen to each other, take into consideration the opinions of others, etc. These skills are the result of an explicit pedagogy. It is because they are positioned as legitimate interlocutors, put in a position to be listened to, that they seize the word as an instrument of action and that they decipher the rules of use. This type of project empowers the children by recognizing their skills, defining them *a priori* as competent, and enabling them to act as active, democratic, agents.

POSTSCRIPT

THE VALUE OF EDUCATION, POWER, AND CHANGE

Dr Derron Wallace

[A] robust education in the methods and practice of community organising provides us with the tools to identify, challenge and change the manifestations of inequality and injustice.

It is no secret that inequality and injustice are among the most significant political challenges of our time. In fact, they have been for centuries now. It would be foolhardy to even think that the maldistribution of resources in our schools and the all-too-frequent miscarriage of justice in our local neighbourhoods are new features of society – as if they are merely emblematic of the COVID-19 pandemic. Inequality and injustice are complex social problems that knee-jerk responses, short-term policy advances, and one-off service programs cannot fix. They are firmly entrenched in the structures of society. Yet, we can change them, develop our institutions, and transform our communities. As this timely new collection, *Education – Power – Change*, suggests, if we want change, we need power in our schools and the wider society. The authors of this important volume affirm that a robust education in the methods and practice of community organising provides us with the tools to identify, challenge and change the manifestations of inequality and injustice. This, to my mind, is a truly higher education – the kind of that promotes power for the common good.

Education – Power – Change is replete with moving stories about the power of ordinary people to transform their local communities and the social condition that animate them. They are the kind of rich testimonies and hard-won victories often ignored in the media. It showcases the grit and organising brilliance of pupils, parents, teachers and community member deeply disenchanted with the status quo and firmly committed to transforming the world as it is to the world as it should be, as activist-organizer Saul Alinsky suggested. The leaders highlighted in this volume are effective because they are organised. In a social and political context where all too many have resigned their wills to current state of affairs as inevitable, or feel powerless despite their individual desires for change, *Education – Power – Change* illuminates the power of collective leadership to address social challenges in our institutions and in our wider communities. Crucially, it highlights some of the very best insights of broad-based community organising. This includes the importance of listening, the impact of conducting power analyses, the value of building power based on relationships, the benefits of research to identify the connections between personal problems and public issues, the centrality of local public actions for holding leaders to account, the contributions of negotiations led by local people to local and national politics, and the purposes of conducting evaluations in order to sustain education, power and change.

To some, there is perhaps a secret to the kind of education noted in this collection: education occurs in schools, but education does not necessarily require schooling. This is because schooling and education are not synonymous, as critical education theorists and activists such as Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal, Angela Davis, bell hooks, Rigoberta Menchu and Dorcas Howe have suggested for decades. Schooling refers to the process of teaching and learning that frequently takes place in primary and secondary school classrooms and university lecture halls. However, education is the lifelong project of formal and informal learning that occurs within and beyond schools. The kind of deeper, community-engaged education promoted through community organising cannot be relegated to a classroom, to textbooks, or to lectures. This kind of knowledge is best acquired through action for the public good. While most of the case studies in this edited collection highlight strategic organising in schools such as St. Mary's CE Primary School and community-based organisations like English for Action, such model organising work also occurs in a range of civil society organisations – from mosques, churches, synagogues, temples, medical centres, diaspora alliances, further and higher education institutions, among many others. It is an education that crosses geographical, cultural, and political borders.

What makes *Education – Power – Change* an important contribution is that it focuses strategically on schools as sites of power for the development of young people, teacher-leaders, and parents and ultimately for the improvement of society. No other civil society institution is as consistently impactful in as many young people's lives as schools. As such, it is inspiring to know that concerted attention is begin given to schools as critically important institutions for community organising and shaping the future of civic engagement for years to come. Another distinctive feature of this collection is that it considers the power of community organising in and around schools within and beyond the UK. By including case studies from Lyon, France; London, Bradford and Manchester, England; Cardiff, Wales; and Los Angeles and New York City, United States, all while celebrating the leadership and action of diverse groups of people – English language learners, Black teacher-leaders, immigrant women, among others, *Education – Power – Change* highlights the local and global power of community organising to make meaningful changes. Amidst health challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, along with economic and cost of living crises, supply chain delays and food shortages, all of which have global implications, *Education – Power – Change* reminds us of the circuits of hope developed through community organizing that links people across borders, communities, and institutions.

The stories that fill the pages of *Education – Power – Change* are at once stirring and sobering. Yet, the case studies in this collection are just a snapshot of the full range of rich organising work happening in and through schools in Britain and around the world. Undoubtedly, there are more to stories to be shared about education, power and change in schools. And that's where you and I come in. It's *all our responsibility* to develop those stories of collective action for the public good and tell them. The ultimate charge of this book, in my view, is not only to inspire careful reflection on the power of community organising in schools, but to encourage current and future leaders to *be* a part of the larger story of public action. If we are to challenge inequality and injustice, we must work together to develop new stories of organising that reflect the value of education, power, and change. Let us do it together, now!

Undoubtedly, there are more to stories to be shared about education, power and change in schools. And that's where you and I come in. It's all our responsibility to develop those stories of collective action for the public good and tell them.

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DR VALERIE BARRON [Community Development Worker – Durham Diocese | Organiser – Tyne & Wear Citizens]

Val has worked as a community practitioner for eighty years, supporting projects and congregations as they respond though loving service to the high levels of poverty in Durham Diocese. After training as a community organiser Val felt more able to challenge the injustice of poverty. Working with Tyne & Wear Citizens on the Living Wage campaign and they have quadrupled the number of accredited Living Wage employers in the regions. Val has also chaired the Just Change action team. Val is also a William Temple Scholar researching the role of social enterprise in Christian social action.

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KASIA BLACKMAN [ESOL Teacher and Organiser – English for Action London]

Kasia began working for English for Action, a London-based charity that supports migrants to learn English and take action to improve their lives and communities, in 2017. Since then, she has been teaching English and organising with her students and colleagues on issues around housing, healthcare, employment rights and access to ESOL. Kasia has also worked on research and training projects, teaching, learning, and experimenting with theatre methods to confront social problems and oppressive practices.

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NATASHA BOYCE [Associate Assistant Headteacher for Community Participation – The Winstanley School]

Natasha started working at The Winstanley School in Leicester in August 2017. Since then, she has developed relationships between the school and members of the Leicester Citizens alliance. The Winstanley School is on the border of the city and county within a predominantly white student

population. However, Natasha has been driving anti-racist work through student leadership from this base. Students at The Winstanley School have formed a strong ambassadors group working within the local Leicester alliance, and alongside Baroness Doreen Lawrence and the Stephen Lawrence Research Centre. This network of relationally powerful collaborations has enabled these student leaders to find their voice whilst promoting anti-racism in education within their school, across the LiFE Multi-Academy Trust and across the city of Leicester.

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DERMOT BRYERS [ESOL Teacher, Organiser, and Executive Team Member – English for Action London]

Dermot set up and co-runs English for Action, a London-based charity that supports migrants to learn English and take action to improve their lives and communities. EFA combines participatory learning with community organising in order to help their ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students become more powerful, connect with others and effect change. In addition to teaching and organising alongside his colleagues and students, Dermot carries out research into different aspects of participatory pedagogy collaboration with King's College London and delivers training to ESOL teachers and volunteers around the UK.

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NATASHA CAPERS [Director – Coalition for Educational Justice]

Natasha Capers is the mother of two children and are a native of Brownsville, Brooklyn, and the Director of the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ). They know first-hand the problems and the promise of NYC public schools, especially those in under-resourced communities. Natasha has served as School Leadership Team Chair, Parent Association President, and Vice President for a Community Education Council.

Natasha began their work with CEJ when their children's school was placed on the NYC Department of Education's list for closure. After a successful campaign to prevent the closure of that school, they became a dedicated CEJ parent leader and then took on the role as the Coordinator.

They have helped to lead the fight for culturally responsive education and curriculum in NY City, State and Nationally. Their work with CEJ led to the $23 million investment in implicit bias training for all NYC Department of Education educators and staff and the investment of over $200 million for the creation of the Universal Mosaic Curriculum, which will be NYC's first culturally responsive ELA and math curriculum built in partnership of community, parents, students, and educators.

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DR SEBASTIEN CHAPLEAU [Assistant Director and Headteacher-in-Residence – Citizens UK]

Sebastien has been involved in Community Organising since 2005, when, as a teacher in Greenwich, he got involved in the early days of South London Citizens. As a Community Organiser, Sebastien has worked across South London, East London, and is currently supporting alliances across North London and Brighton and Hove. He is also supporting Citizens UK's work with schools and colleges, working closely with Organisers and Leaders across Citizens UK's national network.

Sebastien founded La Fontaine Academy and was its Headteacher between 2014-2020, establishing what quickly became a thriving community school focused on student leadership and on ensuring that parents, teachers, students, and neighbours work together to take responsibility for the wellbeing of their neighbourhood. He was also, until recently, the Executive Headteacher of an all-through Special School in North London.

Sebastien's positive contributions to civil society were recognised in 2012, when he received a Community Champion Award from then London Mayor Boris Johnson. More recently, the Company of Educators – a Livery Company in the City of London – decided to give him their Inspirational Educator Award for his contribution to education in the UK.

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MAISIE CHIN [Co-Founder and Former Executive Director – CADRE, Los Angeles, USA]

From 1999-2022, Maisie devoted 23 years as the co-founder and eventual founding executive director of Community Asset Development Re-defining Education (CADRE), an independent, grassroots parent membership organization in South Los Angeles, California comprised of Black and Latinx parents and caregivers. CADRE pioneered a transformative parent organizing model that produced ground-breaking systemic changes in school discipline policy; significantly reduced student suspensions; decriminalized schools through parent-led policy change and monitoring; and redefined parent participation in educational justice in Los Angeles, California and nationally. Maisie is now doing independent consulting in continued service of racial justice and liberation, focused on radical and transformative participatory problem-solving and strategy development.

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DAME JULIA CLEVERDON DCVO, CBE [Vice-Chair – Fair Education Alliance]

Julia is a passionate and practical campaigner who has gained an international reputation for 'connecting the unconnected', inspiring individuals and organisations to work together for the common good in the most challenged communities. During her tenure as Chief Executive of Business in the Community from 1991 to 2007, Julia worked closely with the President HRH The Prince of Wales and built a movement of 850 member companies. Julia later served as Special Adviser to The Prince's Charities and focused efforts on disadvantaged communities as well as co-founding the #iwill campaign aiming to make youth social action a part of life for young people across the UK.

As Chair of Teach First from 2007 to 2014, and now Vice Patron, Julia has pioneered efforts to address educational disadvantage. She serves on the boards of the Careers and Enterprise Company and Youth Futures Foundation, is Deputy Chair of the Fair Education Alliance, and was Chair of the National Literacy Trust from 2014 to 2022. She is Patron of Right to Succeed and chairs Place Matters.

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WILHELMENIA ETOGA NGONO [Pastoral Manager and EDI Coordinator – Brighton, Hove, and Sussex Sixth Form College]

Wilhelmenia is a pastoral manager with a background in the Social Sciences which she taught for 14 years. Wilhelmenia supported a BAME leadership project in coordination with Sussex University in 2020-2021 and implemented a new leadership project within her institution for the 2021-2022 academic year working collaboratively with colleagues at Sussex University. With a background in Union activity for the National Education Union where she represents sixth form colleges both in the regional and national council, Wilhelmenia is passionate about bringing social change to her communities and giving the young people she works with a voice and an opportunity to engage with their wider communities.

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HANNAH GRETTON [Senior Community Organiser – Citizens UK]

Hannah is a Senior Community Organiser at Citizens UK, leading a team of wonderful organisers, building power and making change in South-East London. Hannah has worked on national campaigns

around immigration status and leads a stream of work supporting schools – particularly parents – to organise for local and national change, in partnership with legal centres, Multi-Academy Trusts, and charities. She is most proud of her role in the successful campaign to secure free school meals for children regardless of their parents' immigration status. Before working for Citizens UK, Hannah worked in the migrant justice sector both in the Middle East and the UK.

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DR TIM HALL [Academic-in-Residence – Citizens UK]

Dr Tim Hall is Academic in Residence for Citizens UK, Development Organiser for Cambridge Citizens and the Founder of Peterborough Citizens. Prior to this he taught Politics in the University of East London and worked with TELCO, the founding chapter of Citizens UK. His main area of interest is higher education and encouraging universities to be more expansive civic actors

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LOIC MENZIES [Visiting Fellow – Sheffield Institute of Education | Senior Research Fellow – Intellectual Forum, Jesus College, Cambridge]

Loic is currently researching and writing his second book *How Policy Happens: Understanding the Decisions that Shape our Education System*. His first edited collection *Young People on the Margins* was published by Routledge in 2021.

Loic was previously CEO of the 'think and action-tank' The Centre for Education and Youth and is now a Visiting Fellow at Sheffield Institute of Education and a Senior Research Fellow in the Intellectual Forum at Jesus College Cambridge. Prior to moving into policy and research he was a teacher, youth worker and Tutor for Canterbury Christ Church University's Faculty of Education.

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JAMES O'CONNEL-LAUDER [Assistant Vice-Principal and Civic Responsibility Lead – Dixons Academies Trust]

Jim has been teaching for over ten years, in the Thames Valley, Essex, London and now Bradford. He moved to the UK from New Zealand as a child and went to secondary school and university here. He joined the Future Leaders programme in 2015 as a senior leader in Brent, before moving to Dixons Trinity in 2017.

As Assistant Vice Principal at Trinity he leads on the school's cradle to career hub programme and is part of the safeguarding team. He also leads on civic responsibility for the Dixons Academy Trust, and is a leader with Bradford Citizens. He sits on the board of Bradford's Alliance for Life Chances.

Outside of teaching, Jim has experience working in policy, politics and community organising in the UK, US, and New Zealand.

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REVD JOANNE THORNS [Project Co-ordinator – Durham Diocese | Organiser – Tyne & Wear Citizens]

Joanne has been ordained in the Church of England for over twenty years. Prior to that, she worked as a Pharmacist. She has always lived and worked in the North-East of England and is committed to the people and place. She has worked across many communities in the region, building partnerships focusing

on bringing equality for all. She is a key member of the Living Wage campaign with Tyne & Wear Citizens and currently chairs the Just Change action team.

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KATH WADE [Leader – Tyne & Wear Citizens]

Kath is a member of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. She has always been passionate about justice. She has been active in a variety of ways, doing what would fit in with family life. She was drawn to Tyne & Wear Citizens because it enabled her to put her Christian faith into action in a concrete way. While continuing to support other organisations by way of letter-writing, petition-signing and taking part in demonstrations, Tyne & Wear Citizens enables her to work with those directly affected by injustice. She has been actively involved in the Just Change campaign, supported students in their action to change unfair bus fares, and continues to take action on climate issues. The great emphasis for her is in journeying *with* people to effect the change that they want to see rather than imposing a solution *upon* them.

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DR DERRON WALLACE [Assistant Professor – Brandeis University, Boston, USA]

Derron is an assistant professor of sociology and education at Brandeis University (USA) and research fellow at the Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity at the University of Manchester. He is a sociologist of race, ethnicity and education who specializes in cross-national studies of academic and police profiling, focusing specifically on the experiences of Black youth. Prior to joining the Brandeis faculty, he served as a National Director at the Posse Foundation and as a professional community organizer with Citizens UK, working on youth safety, living wage, fair housing, and immigrant rights campaigns.

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RICHARD WEAVER [Community Organiser – Citizens UK]

Prior to joining the staff team at Citizens UK in 2015, Richard was a member of the Wales Leadership Team in Cardiff and South Wales through Citizens UK, helping establish two alliances in 2014. As an Organiser Richard led on founding a new Citizens alliance in Somerset in 2019, the first in the south-west of England, and one of the first in a predominantly rural area. Richard leads on Citizens Cymru Wales organising with schools and colleges and has played a key role in local and national campaigns in Wales on improving public transport, Living Wage, youth safety, welcoming refugee families, and voter registration.

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GERAINT WILLIAMS [Sixth Form College Leader – St David's Catholic College, Cardiff]

Geraint teaches Chemistry and Medical Science and has responsibility for the holistic formation of staff who work at St David's Catholic College. He has also had roles developing enrichment of curricula for learners and currently sits on the College's Senior Leadership Team as part of a novel Social Partnership model. He is also an active trade unionist and Assistant Secretary for the Cardiff District of the National Education Union.

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IF OUR SOCIETY, AND THE NEXT GENERATION IN PARTICULAR, ARE TO STAND A CHANCE OF BOUNCING BACK, THEN A REINVIGORATED COLLECTIVISM IN SOME FORM OR OTHER IS SURELY OUR ONLY HOPE, OFFERING A POWERFUL ALTERNATIVE TO POPULIST ANGER, POLARISATION AND DISEMPOWERMENT.

LOIC MENZIES

BUILDING THICKER AND DEEPER CHAINS OF INFLUENCE TAKES [TIME] – BUT EVERY LINK IS WORTHWHILE. THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT THE CITIZENS UK MOVEMENT IS SO POWERFULLY NURTURING [...].

DAME JULIA CLEVERDON DCVO CBE

INEQUALITY AND INJUSTICE ARE COMPLEX SOCIAL PROBLEMS THAT KNEE-JERK RESPONSES, SHORT-TERM POLICY ADVANCES, AND ONE-OFF SERVICE PROGRAMS CANNOT FIX. THEY ARE FIRMLY ENTRENCHED IN THE STRUCTURES OF SOCIETY. YET, WE CAN CHANGE THEM, DEVELOP OUR INSTITUTIONS, AND TRANSFORM OUR COMMUNITIES. AS THIS TIMELY NEW COLLECTION [...] SUGGESTS, IF WE WANT CHANGE, WE NEED POWER IN OUR SCHOOLS AND THE WIDER SOCIETY.

DR DERRON WALLACE

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