



New York Collective of Radical Educators'

INQUIRY TO ACTION GROUPS (ITAGS) 2013

The New York Collective of Radical Educators is pleased to offer an opportunity for teachers to build community and develop as activists. Educators will participate in Inquiry to Action Groups linking social justice issues with classroom practice. Small groups will meet weekly (for a total of six, two-hour sessions plus a kick-off and possible conference workshop) between January and March to share experiences, respond to readings, exchange ideas and develop action plans.

1. No Human Being is Illegal: Transforming New York City Schools into Supportive Spaces for Undocumented Youth

Participants in this ItAG will engage in critical conversations around the issues that undocumented youth and families face in New York City, as well as develop resources and tools for improving how educators and schools support youth entangled in our broken immigration system. We will explore topics including legal pathways (Deferred Action), applying to college, mental health, and advocacy and activism. This ItAG seeks to expand a community of educators who are committed to making our schools safer for immigrant youth and who hope to gain the knowledge, information and skills that are necessary to support our undocumented students at all levels of their K-12 schooling.



Facilitators: **Melissa de Leon** teaches Social Studies and ESL at the International High School @ Prospect Heights in Brooklyn, a school that serves recently arrived immigrants from over 20 countries around the world. **Rita Kamani-Renedo** is an educator and activist; she works as a Senior Trainer at Global Kids, a youth development organization committed to developing young leaders and civically-engaged global citizens.

Location: Manhattan High School, 317 West 52nd Street (Manhattan), Room 306

Dates: Wednesdays from 6:00-8:00 pm and one Saturday (3/2) from 1-4 pm. Kick off on 1/25; sessions following on 1/30, 2/6, 2/13, 2/27, 3/2 (Saturday), and 3/6.

2. What does Mayoral Control got to do with it?

The Mayoral election has already begun. With everyone happy that Bloomie is out after an unprecedented three terms, the question remains: who will replace him? And what will this mean for public education? In this ITAG both the facilitators and participants will engage in conversations in regards of the history of Mayoral Control in New York City. Within this timeline of facts, ideas and stories provided by activists, veteran/current educators, and many other resources; participants will have a critical lens on how Mayoral Control has negatively affected teacher, parent, and student involvement. Our goal is to form a safe space for these conversations among all participants in order to create an action plan to empower parents, leaders, educators, and students. Because of this goal, we strongly encourage teachers, parents and community members to take part in this ITAG to create genuine dialogue, education and action.

Facilitators: **Daralee Vazquez** is a Brooklyn native, parent, former Spanish/Global History DOE teacher, member of NYCoRE education and social justice activist. **Leia Petty** is a guidance counselor in Manhattan, NYCORE and MORE caucus member, social justice activist and contributor to SocialistWorker.org.

Location: Hudson High School of Learning Technologies, 351 West 18th Street (Manhattan), Room 128.

Dates: Tuesdays from 5:00-7:00 pm. Kick off on 1/25; sessions following on 1/29, 2/5, 2/12, 2/26, 3/5, and 3/12.

3. The Criminalization of Our Youth: What is it? Why is it happening? How can radical educators challenge it?

Nationally, a new consciousness is growing about the problems of mass incarceration and the criminalization of young people, popularized by Michelle Alexander's book *The New Jim Crow*. Students are under attack inside their own schools through over-policing, suspensions, and even in-school arrests. These policies are sold to our communities as necessary "safety" measures, and in some schools students and staff do not feel safe. Some say that police tactics don't create greater school safety nor do they solve the underlying problems that lead to violence. Other models of discipline, like Restorative Justice for example, empower students, educators and parents to help our young people grow and find non-violent solutions to their own problems, and develop critical social and emotional awareness, but these options are often not offered or explored. Instead, punitive, "zero-tolerance" approaches to safety are most common. So-called "color-blind" policies have led to stark racial disparities. As a result, our schools are feeding Black and Latino students by the thousands directly into the criminal justice system. The goal of this ITAG is to investigate the criminalization of our youth, find ways to challenge what has become known as the School-to-Prison Pipeline, and connect with grassroots activism.

Facilitators: **Marissa Torres** has been an elementary school teacher and a union activist since 2002. She is a member of the Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE), the social justice caucus of the UFT. She currently teaches 5th grade in Brooklyn.

Ashia Troiano was born and raised in Harlem NYC. She is a first year history teacher at West Brooklyn Community high school.

Location: Institute for Urban and Minority Education, 2090 Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard (Manhattan), 8th Floor.

Dates: Mondays from 5:00-7:00pm. Kick off on 1/25; sessions following on 1/28, 2/4, 2/11, 2/25, 3/4, and 3/11.

4. Listening to Marginal Voices: Exploring Queer Latino Identity

During this ITAG we will read the work and writings of (male identified) Latino men across the LGBTQ spectrum. Through close readings, discussions and reflective writing, we will listen for the varied schooling and educational experiences. What commonalities surface? What interlocking oppressions mark their unique experiences? Why are the often silent voices and lived experiences of queer Latino men important to consider—both in and outside of the classroom? Utilizing queer, borderland and intersectional theories, the goal of this ITAG is to explore and move towards an understanding of why and how can educators create safe spaces to better support queer Latino male youth in purposeful and intentional ways.

Facilitators: **Benny Vasquez** was born and raised in Brooklyn! He is currently the Director of Diversity at a local NYC independent school. Prior to his current position, Benny was the Director of Education at GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network).

José A. Menjivar was born in Honduras, and raised between Brooklyn and Queens. He is currently an advisor and an English teacher at a transfer high school in the South Bronx. José is also applying to doctoral urban education programs, and working on his first play and debut poetry collection.

Location: La Casa Azul Bookstore, 143 East 103rd Street (Manhattan), Lower level.

Dates: Wednesdays from 5:00-7:00pm. Kick off on 1/25; sessions following on 1/30, 2/6, 2/13, 2/27, 3/6, and 3/13.

5. Stand Up, Fight Back! Teaching Young Children to Take a Stand

Despite increasing pressures from standardized testing, teachers know that learning is more than memorization. Real learning means becoming an active and engaged participant in one's community and world, learning to love oneself and have respect for others. How can educators create situations in which students gain the knowledge and the tools to become agents for social change? How can we facilitate the process through which individuals come to know their own history, feel confident in their own identities, and listen to the stories of others? Focusing on the elementary years, this ItAG will explore frameworks for bringing social justice action into our classrooms and beyond. We will reflect and act on such themes as: developing awareness of social injustice, using classroom projects to create connections and change in the broader community, encouraging students to explore their own family histories and identities, developing love for themselves and respect for others, and sparking the passion to work for change.

Facilitators: **Nydia Rivera Mendez** has been teaching first grade for thirteen years at P.S. 24, a dual language school in Brooklyn. It is her belief that it is important for young children to learn not just to socialize and get along with each other, but to become active members of a community, willing and able to bring about change in their world. **Alanna Navitski** is a course instructor and fieldwork advisor in the Early Childhood General and Special Education Program at Bank Street College of Education. She has spent many fun, exciting, and complicated hours exploring big ideas with small people in early childhood classrooms, while also seeking to expand those explorations beyond the classroom walls through work on several NYC educational justice projects (The People's Board of Education, Occupy the D.O.E., NYCoRE).

Location: Project Reach, 39 Eldridge Street (Manhattan), 4th floor.

Dates: Mondays from 5:30-7:30pm. Kick off on 1/25; sessions following on 1/28, 2/4, 2/11, 2/25, 3/4, and 3/11.

ItAG Kick Off Meeting: A general kick-off meeting for all ItAG participants will be held Friday, January 25th, 6:00– 8:00 p.m. at NYU, Pless Hall @ 82 Washington Square East (between Greene and Washington Square Park). 3rd floor Lounge. Dinner provided. (Call Ariana @ 917.270.7901 if you have trouble finding the location). **Registration:** The registration fee is \$30. Multiple teachers from the same school can register together for the same ItAG for a reduced rate of \$25 each. This will cover the cost of materials and support NYCoRE's ongoing work. **To register, visit www.nycore.org Questions? Email natalia@nycore.org or ariana@nycore.org**