

**The John Dewey Society  
and  
*The Journal of School & Society*  
announce:  
A Call for Public Scholarship**

**Issue #5: Are we really ‘bout that life’?: Urban educators as  
activists in, and for, their urban school communities**

The John Dewey Society, founded in 1935, created *The Journal of School & Society* in order to meet one of its central aims: to support a vibrant public education system by fostering intelligent inquiry into problems pertaining to the place and function of education in social change, particularly among teachers, parents, and community activists.

**We invite all those interested in engaged public scholarship  
to contribute to this exciting venue!**

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Over the past few months, increased attention has been dedicated to police violence occurring across the country on, disproportionately, black and brown bodies—largely due to the Black Lives Matter movement. And, with the heightened criminalization of black and brown girls (both in and out of schools), mass incarceration, the poisoning of water in Flint, Michigan, massive deportation of immigrants from Latin America, and issues of gentrification and displacement in urban centers across America,

urban educators, specifically, are presented with urgent and necessary opportunities to engage with, and advocate for, the communities in which they teach.

Often, the term “urban,” employed within an education context, evokes conceptions of deficiency and inadequacy. In this issue, we obviously wish to reject such thinking, recognizing the many talents and possibilities of such communities. We also recognize that it is not the magnitude of population alone that defines an urban space. Many communities may share characteristics of urban spaces—characteristics such as cultural diversity, massively uneven capital accumulation and investment, and intensified policing and surveillance.

As it relates to schooling, residents in urban communities have become increasingly disempowered through appointed school boards and school superintendents as well as the increased implementation of state-appointed emergency managers—all of which collectively serve to marginalize and silence the voices of these citizens. And yet, urban teachers—who are often armed with greater economic resources, a functional linguistic compatibility with Power, greater access to decision-makers, and greater knowledge of the mechanics of Power—are uniquely positioned to aid their school’s surrounding community in ways many urban low-income minority residents cannot. With the understanding that teaching is inherently political, educators are either consciously fighting oppression and marginalization, or passively sustaining it.

As urban educators looking to be agents of positive change, we need only look outside our classroom windows for abundant opportunities to practice needed, meaningful activism. And though often, we may think that we are affecting change by teaching the next generation of potential leaders and social justice fighters, it is quite possible that we could be, and should be, doing much more to participate as change agents outside the school community: with, and on behalf of, the communities we where we work.

Expansive literature explores the often-divergent backgrounds and lived experiences between urban teachers, their students, and communities in which they work. It has also sought to understand the racial, cultural, social, and linguistic disconnects between urban schools and they communities they serve. Too often, an adversarial relationship between educational systems and urban communities is the result.

Conversely, research also suggests the positive impacts of teachers employing critical pedagogy for their traditionally marginalized students in urban contexts. School-based activism can improve academic outcomes and feelings of agency among low-income minority students. In short, there is a profound potential for urban teachers to practice social justice advocacy on behalf of their students.

While we know the impact that teachers can have in the classroom, what is less explored are the experiences of urban educators who advocate for societal change beyond the walls of the schoolhouse to combat oppressive conditions present in the communities where they teach—for the betterment of the community.

The aim of this special issue of the *Journal of School and Society* is, therefore, to explore and unpack the role of urban teachers as community advocates for social justice. In particular, this special issue seeks to explore:

- What responsibility do urban educators have to the schools' surrounding community?
- What role, if any, do urban teachers have in community resistance efforts?
- What does community-based activism involving teachers look like?
- How can teachers help urban community members in their struggle to achieve social justice and equity?
- What are the possibilities for increased partnership between urban educators and urban residents for unified advocacy?
- What do urban communities expect of their teachers as partners in community-based struggle?

Ideal contributors to this Special Issue would be any urban educator, urban education researcher, or urban community member involved in advocating for social justice, and representatives from nonprofit and charitable organizations working in urban contexts to achieve greater equity on behalf of residents. As people working to ensure a more equitable urban society, this issue seeks to better understand how you believe urban educators can assist residents in their community-based struggles. What does authentic partnership look like? What would the outcomes be if urban educators fought alongside urban residents? What promise does such educator-resident hold?

### **How to Contribute to the Issue**

Unlike many academic journals, this publication actively seeks out both its contributors and its readership. Working in the spirit of Dewey, we seek to create the dialogic spaces and public engagement that we believe is sometimes missing from educational debate. We view our work as broadly educative, in that we want to help connect practitioners in public dialogue. To do so, we work closely with educators and community activists to bring out their voices and stories. We also work closely with academics who wish to contribute their expertise and insight to the conversation.

### **Invited Pieces**

Work from educators and other community members are welcome. This work may take either standard article form or may be submitted in alternative formats, such as a video interview or presentation. A grounding in scholarship is not necessary, although the author will want to situate their work clearly within the scope of the theme of the issue. Ordinarily, articles in this category will range from 2,000-5,000 words, although both longer and shorter submissions may be appropriate. Authors should expect to work closely with the editorial team to produce their submissions.

### **Peer-Reviewed Scholarly Articles**

Submissions for the peer-reviewed section of the journal are expected to conform to scholarly standards in their use of theory and empirical research to ground discussion of educational issues. Expected article length is ordinarily in the 5,000-8,000 word range, but both longer and shorter pieces can be considered. In addition to

the Editors, articles in this category will be read by a minimum of two peer reviewers.

### **Submission Guidelines**

Please see [our journal website](#) for specifics. Submissions and inquiries should be emailed to Keith Benson, Guest Editor of *The Journal of School & Society* and Secondary Educator at Camden High School in Camden, New Jersey. Keith's email is [keith.benson@gse.rutgers.edu](mailto:keith.benson@gse.rutgers.edu). Submissions should be received by February 1, 2017.