

I WRITE THE FUTURE!

A CALL TO ACTION, A CALL TO WRITE, A CALL TO GO PUBLIC FOR STUDENTS OF ISAW TEACHERS

REFLECT, CONNECT, WRITE, ACT, ADVOCATE

- ◆ *Our schools have long been held up as our most important democratic institution, pathways to class mobility and generational progress. A public educational system that is fully integrated and treats minorities and whites equally is the antithesis of the larger society, which has been and remains profoundly segregated and unequal.*

I once heard Minnijean Brown reflect on her experiences as one of the heroic Little Rock Nine who integrated Central High School in 1957. Someone asked why she kept coming back to school day after day, despite daily harassment and intimidation that would have driven most people away.

From the ferocity of her enemies, she said, "I knew there was something precious inside that school," and she was more determined to get it than they were to keep it from her grasp. Minnijean and the Supreme Court Justices who delivered and supported Brown understood schools as pathways to righting the wrongs of societal racism.

Julian Bond, "We Must Persevere," *Teaching Tolerance*

- ◆ *Fifty years after the Brown v. Board of Education decision outlawed segregated schools, many students today still find themselves attending segregated schools. Upon examining the statistics, it is safe to say that a major factor in today's segregation is poverty. According to statistics, "Only 15 percent of highly-segregated white schools have student bodies living in concentrated poverty. Some 88 percent of highly-segregated minority schools have student populations living in concentrated poverty." In addition to poverty, segregation also occurs inside integrated schools as well. Because of ability tracking, "You have Latino kids who go through their entire school day without seeing a white kid, and you have white kids who have almost no interaction with their Latino classmates, and it is all done within the same school," says North Hollywood High School teacher Randy Vail. Looking at these and other factors, we must examine ways to identify segregation within today's schools and make an active effort to combat against it in order for students to learn to work together."*

PBS *Beyond Brown: Pursuing the Promise*

- ◆ *We need to...stop apologizing for "the way things are" and begin imagining the way things can be, to think critically about the relationship between language, racism, education, and power in society. Schooling should be about the serious business of educating minds to deal with (and when necessary, on) a society of power politics and incredible complexity. Schooling should not be about convincing students to play the game but...helping them understand how the game's been rigged, and more importantly, how they can work to change it.*

Geneva Smitherman, *Real Talk*

- ◆ *To establish a new framework, we need to begin with a frank acknowledgement of the basic humanness and Americanness of each of us.*

Cornel West, *Race Matters*

- ◆ *...The thought comes to me that if America ever chose to live by a government of "We, some of the people" instead of "We, the people" at that very moment a great idea would begin to perish from this earth. How terribly fragile our democracy is, and how necessary it is that we all become fierce guardians of our constitutional form of government.*

Mary Tsukamoto, *We the People: The Story of Internment in America*

- ◆ *Let no one be discouraged by the belief that there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills -- against misery and ignorance, injustice and violence... Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation...*

It is from the numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man (or a woman) stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he (or she) sends a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

-Robert Francis Kennedy, speech at Day of Affirmation,
University of Capetown, South Africa, June 6, 1966

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