

## Black Lives Matter at School Spread from Seattle to Schools Across the Country

By Lauren Stark, educator at Cleveland High School

When educators rallied to welcome students at John Muir Elementary School as part of “Black Men United to Change the Narrative” on September 16, 2016, they inspired a movement that would spread from Seattle to cities across the United States. After inviting John Muir educators to speak at their monthly meeting, educators in Seattle’s Social Equity Educators (SEE) organized a city-wide Black Lives Matter Day of Action in solidarity with John Muir and the broader movement for Black lives. On October 19th, 2016, Seattle educators came together to honor Black lives, teach anti-racist curricula, and advocate for the day’s three demands: ethnic studies, restorative justice, and detracking in Seattle schools.

In the year that followed, educators across the country developed their own Black Lives Matter at School initiatives and Seattle educators set to work organizing around the demands highlighted in their day of action. Bellevue educators taught anti-racist curricula and wore Black Lives Matter shirts on January 31, 2017, educators in Philadelphia’s Caucus of Working Educators (WE) led a week of action organized around the 13 guiding principles of Black Lives Matter at School from January 23-28, 2017, and educators in Rochester, N.Y. developed book groups and curricula surrounding their own day of action on February 17, 2017.

In Seattle, educators organized around their three demands through community forums, reading groups, and collaborations with local community leaders such as the Seattle-King County NAACP. Most notably, SEE educators led the fight for ethnic studies in Seattle schools, winning a district task force that is now piloting ethnic studies curricula across all grades and content areas.

On August 4, 2017, SEE educators joined colleagues from social justice caucuses across the country in Los Angeles for the annual conference of the United Caucuses of Rank-and-File Educators (UCORE). At this conference, WE educators proposed organizing a national Black Lives Matter at School week in 2018. In the months that followed, representatives from SEE and WE participated in a series of biweekly conference calls with colleagues in Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Washington, D.C, and Wisconsin.

Together, they developed three national demands for the February 5-9 week of action: restorative justice, hiring more Black educators, and Black and ethnic studies in schools. Each group planned events and curricula for the week of action, allowing anti-racist pedagogies and organizing strategies to spread across the country.

During the 2018 week of action, Seattle educators wore Black Lives Matter at School t-shirts, taught lessons aligned with the 13 guiding principles, and participated in teach-ins and rallies. Philly educators organized a series of forums focusing on issues relevant to Black Lives Matter at School, including the importance of ethnic studies and the experiences of LGBTQ youth of color. Educators in Howard County, Maryland organized a town hall and led workshops on restorative justice and the school-to-prison pipeline. Likewise, educators in Washington D.C. developed curricula and resource lists to “bring social justice issues into the classroom” from February 5-10 and throughout the year.

Reflecting on the week of action, educators pivotal to the struggle for Black Lives Matter at School have noted their amazement at the way the movement has grown. At the February SEE meeting, Jesse Hagopian noted, “It’s amazing that it started with one day of action, spread to the east coast, and now is a national week of action.” At a press conference highlighting the week of action, John Muir Family and Student Advocate DeShawn Jackson reflected, “This is what I wanted it to be. I didn’t want the shirts to come off and it’s just a symbol or a fashion statement.” In the year to come, educators in SEE and caucuses across the country will be organizing around their 2018 demands, ensuring that the movement for Black Lives Matter at School is about much more than a t-shirt or a hashtag.

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alienation from education and contribute to the school-to-prison-pipeline. And it will undoubtedly end in tragic accidental shootings.

School workers and students deserve school safety. But school safety will not come from the barrel of a gun. It comes from teachers having the resources they need and students having their needs met at schools.

Families depend on schools for education, but also for meals, mental health and medical services, dental services, after-school programs, drug counseling, grief counseling, college guidance and much more. These services are the real sources of school safety.

In a tragic irony, Nikolas Cruz, the Parkland shooter, was trained to shoot at school in an ROTC program, supported by an NRA grant. In contrast, the #ArmMeWith movement is raising the demand to arm teachers with the books, computers, desks and the teaching supplies we need, not guns.

Emma Gonzalez, a high school senior and survivor of the Parkland shooting, put it this way:

“Teachers do not need to be armed with guns to protect their classes, they need to be armed with a solid education in order to teach their classes...If you want to help arm the schools, arm them with school supplies, books, therapists, things they actually need and can make use of.”

We support calls to protest these shootings and to demand real school safety. We want our voices to be heard louder than gun lobby money. We encourage students, educators, parents and community members to participate in rallies or walkouts in their cities and towns. We encourage teachers’ unions to take a stand in solidarity with this movement. We oppose discipline or charges being brought against any students, educators or school employees for participating in this movement.

We recognize that violence is endemic to our society--it destroys families and cuts down our young people, be it a mass shooting, or police brutality. We supported the students and young people standing up against the violence of the police in Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland, just as we support the students of Parkland, Florida, in their struggle to say #NeverAgain.

*This article was originally published at:* <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2018/03/02/armmewith-solidarity-against-nra-and-militarizing-our-schools>

# Educators’ Vision

Published By the Social Equity Educators (SEE)

March 2018

## #ArmMeWith Solidarity Against the NRA and Militarizing Our Schools

By Jesse Hagopian, educator at Garfield High School, and Jessie Muldoon, special education teacher in Portland, Maine

Dear Congress, who will die next because of your lack of action? Who will you murder next? Because your lack of action is causing people to die. The next person who dies because of an AR-15 will be on you!

— Sheryl Acquaroli, survivor of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, addressing the Florida legislature

This movement highlights what many have been saying for years: stricter gun control, which is supported by the majority of Americans, is blocked every step of the way by NRA-backed Republican politicians. This movement demands that politicians refuse NRA blood money.

We stand with the Parkland students in this struggle in opposition to the unregulated sale of semi-automatic weapons for profit, and against the stranglehold of the NRA on our political system.

When we say we oppose access to weapons like the AR-15, we truly mean everyone, including the police. Many students face the threat of gun violence most frequently in encounters with officers who view their communities as hostile territories to be occupied with military equipment and tactics.

Police officers killed 1,129 people in 2017. That means that police killed more than twice the number of people killed by mass shooters--428 deaths. Those killed by police were disproportionately people of color. Of the 147 unarmed people killed by police, 48 were Black and 34 were Latino/a.

In cities around the country, police forces have received weapons from the U.S. military. The Pentagon’s Excess Property Program has distributed more than \$5.1 billion in military equipment to some 8,000 federal and state law enforcement agencies since it was established in 1997. Since 2006, according to an analysis by the *New York Times*, police departments have acquired 435 armored vehicles, 533 planes, 93,763 machine guns and 432 mine-resistant armored trucks.

The world watched militarized police forces brutalize the Occupy Wall Street movement, target Black Lives Matter protests in Ferguson and Baltimore, and attack Indigenous water protectors at Standing Rock.

**MILITARIZING SCHOOLS** won’t keep our students safe. There were armed guards at Columbine High School and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, and they didn’t stop the shooters.

Worse, armed guards and police in schools have led to a dramatic increase in students arrested for small infractions. Predominantly Black and Brown children are being arrested and brutalized for scribbling on a desk, having a cell phone in class or violating the school dress code.

These commonplace behaviors are far better handled by a counselor than an armed officer. However, new studies show that school security officers outnumber counselors in three out of the biggest school districts in the country, including New York City, Chicago and Miami-Dade County. This is also true of Houston, the seventh-largest school district.

Trump wants to turn teachers into the security officers, claiming, “If you had a teacher who was adept at firearms, that could very well end the attack very quickly.” Yet this completely asinine suggestion would only further many students

### Upcoming Social Equity Educator (SEE) meeting

All Seattle Education Association (SEA) members who believe in bringing social justice ideas into our classrooms and union are welcome and encouraged to attend. Our next meeting is:

**When:** Sunday, March 25; 10:00 am-12:00 pm  
**Where:** Rainier Beach Community Center (8825 Rainier Ave S, Seattle, WA 98118)

For more information contact us: [socialequityeducators.org](http://socialequityeducators.org) or text: 206-550-1609



### Educators' Vision

Published By the Social Equity Educators (SEE)

SEE steering committee: Tracy Castro-Gill, Lauren Stark, Donte Felder, Jesse Hagopian, Ian Golash, Justin Vinson, and Darrin Hoop

Educators' Vision is a monthly newsletter of the Social Equity Educators

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### Mission

Social Equity Educators (SEE) is a new rank-and-file organization of educators inside the Seattle Education Association that seeks to transform education in terms that empower students, teachers, and the communities that our public schools serve. As members of the SEA we understand that the educator's union has a vital role to play in creating an equitable education system. As educators we understand the importance of using culturally relevant and holistic curriculum to empower our students. We have come together to fight against the corporate reform of our schools and to organize for a socially just education system.

## SEA Contract 2018: Racial Equity Teams Must Remain in Contract

By Roberta Lindeman, retired educator at Chief Sealth International High School/current Substitute

Well prepared and supported racial equity teams in each building can be the foundation for systemic change in the district. The racial equity teams, if trained, supported, and utilized properly, can serve as a bridge between other buildings and JSCEE (John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence). Racial equity team members have the ability to become leaders that affect change by communicating the needs of their students at the ground level, which is a perspective sorely lacking in JSCEE." -- Tracy Castro-Gill, Educator at Denny International Middle School and Racial Equity Team member.

A major victory in the last SEA contract negotiated in 2015 was that Racial Equity Teams (formerly referred to as Equity or Race and Equity Teams) would continue to be formed and supported in Seattle schools. Under ARTICLE II: PARTNERSHIP FOR CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP of the Certified Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), teams are established specifically "for purposes of eliminating disproportionate discipline; promoting stronger relationships between schools, their staff, parents, and students; and supporting student learning and the closing of achievement and opportunity gaps..."

In addition to the teams that were already functioning in 10 schools and supported by the Race and Equity Department, the last contract called for 10 more schools to establish Equity Teams in 2015-2016, and 10 more

in 2016-2017. The good news is that not only was this accomplished -- thanks to the concerted and collaborative efforts of those social justice minded teachers and administrators -- but 10 more schools formed teams during this school year, bringing the total to over 40 schools with Racial Equity Teams (RET's).

But...we have over 100 schools now in our district, and there's more work to be done. Not only must we strengthen and support these and future RET's; we must continue adding teams until every school and every Seattle student can benefit from their revolutionary work.

Seattle Education Association will soon be negotiating a new contract, whose term length is still to be determined. But clearly this important gain -- including support for the Center for Race & Equity -- must carry on in the new CBA, so we can be assured of continued district support for the Racial Equity Teams.

Educators who responded to our Social Equity Educators contract survey agree. The new contract must make sure a minimum of 10 schools are added each year of the contract. The goal is a team in every school.

But it isn't just a matter of adding school-level RET's. How well the teams are able to carry out their work depends largely on how much support they get -- not just from the educators in individual buildings, but also from the District. That means money, resources, staff time, release time, and a lot more.

The responsibilities of the Racial Equity Teams, according to the CBA, include creating "...strategies to reduce

disproportionality and inequity...and participate in and coordinate with District level efforts to address disproportionality and inequity." Currently, there is considerable flexibility for the teams at each school to plan and implement these strategies for their own schools. That must continue.

Also, the CBA states: "The District will convene Equity Teams at least twice per school year for training and collaboration on a regional or District-wide basis." That must also continue in the next contract, so teams can be creative at the school level and still learn from each other's work.

But is this level of support sufficient? We are now asking you! What about schools that want to form Racial Equity Teams but need guidance? Are the current three staffers in the Department of Racial Equity Advancement adequate for meaningful support for these schools? Will the Center for Race and Equity be able to maintain a high level of support with its current operational structure as the number of schools increases? Within the framework of support does SPS recognize Racial Equity Team members as partners and professionals who are capable of designing their own professional development?

Social Equity Educators is interested in your ideas and suggestions on how to keep this important work going forward. Please contact the editor of *Educators' Vision*, Darrin Hoop, at 206-550-1609 or [darrinhood@gmail.com](mailto:darrinhood@gmail.com) so we can have an open dialogue on the issue that can support the CBA negotiations.

Association has done pretty well at demanding respect from the SEA and the district by advocating for our members, but this isn't enough. We need to be more responsive to our members, and we need to provide opportunities for members to affect the direction of the SSA and our Union.

**Stan Strasner:** Vice-President, Seattle Substitutes Association

I'm running for election as Vice-President of the Seattle Sub Association. This is my third-year substitute teaching in Seattle Public Schools. I served for a year as an Association Rep before being elected VP of SSA in an interim position. I'm also a member of the Social Equity Educators and Socialist Alternative.

As VP, I have taken part in bargaining over sub sick leave, worked with the rest of the Substitute Board to plan Sub Association meetings, organized a delegation to the 2018 Labor Notes Conference, and helped reshape the sub newsletter.

I want to use this position to help build educator power. Right wing attacks against public education and unions are barreling towards us. Rank-and-file educators can drive SEA to struggle for a stronger union, great schools, for economic and racial equity, and a better world.

## NBI: SEA Supports Student Walkouts and the March for Our Lives

(Editor's note: The following New Business Item, submitted by Brynn Irish (Graham Hill Elementary) and Bruce Jackson (Aki Kurose Middle School), will be voted on at the March 12 Representative Assembly. Stan Strasner (substitute) and Lauren Stark (Cleveland High School) contributed to it.)

Whereas there have been more than 200 school shootings in the six years since the tragedy at Sandy Hook,

Whereas students in Parkland and across the country have called for action from the houses of congress to the streets,

Whereas militarizing schools won't keep our students safe any more than they did at Columbine or Parkland,

Whereas increasing armed guards and police in our schools would increase arrests and suspensions for children of color, contributing to the school to prison pipeline and higher dropout rates, and

Whereas arming educators with weapons would add to a culture of violence and put the lives of students of color at greater risk,

Therefore be it resolved that the Seattle Education Association will support the students leading walkouts on March 14th and participate in the March 24th "March for Our Lives" community rally; and

Be it further resolved that SEA will write a letter to the Seattle School Board, Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools, Seattle City Council, and Mayor of Seattle telling them that we stand in solidarity with our students and against disciplining students for participating in walkouts; and

Be it further resolved that SEA will advocate for policies that create an equitable culture of support (e.g. lower counselor ratios, wrap-around services) and against policies that militarize our schools in our bargaining sessions with Seattle Public Schools.

## NBI: SEA Should Sponsor at Least 3 Members to Attend Labor Notes Conference

(Editor's note: SEE member Lauren Stark proposed the following New Business Item for a vote at the March 12 Representative Assembly. If passed, the union would allocate at least \$1,500 to send at least 3 SEA members to the 2018 Labor Notes Conference from April 6-8 in Chicago, IL.) For more information on the conference, check here: <http://labornotes.org/2018>

Whereas the Labor Notes conference provides opportunities to connect with labor organizers across the country and learn advanced education organizing strategies,

Whereas the Substitutes Association voted to send three SEA substitutes to Labor Notes for \$1,500, and

Whereas the Seattle Education Association has developed initiatives that would enrich the work of locals across the country, such as the Center for Race and Equity and Black Lives Matter at School,

Therefore be it resolved that the Seattle Education Association will allocate at least \$1,500 to cover the travel, lodging, and conference expenses for at least three additional SEA representatives to attend the Labor Notes conference, including at least one representative from the Center for Race and Equity, at least one representative from the SAEOP association or Paraprofessional association, and at least one certificated SEA representative.

## SEA Elections: Vote SEE members for Executive Board

(Editor's note: Social Equity Educators would like to encourage SEA members to vote for the following SEE members running for the SEA Executive Board in the ongoing elections. In addition to the candidates below, vote for Vallerie Fisher for the Treasurer position and Justin Vinson, Substitute. Please, contact us with any questions about the candidates.)

**Tracy Castro-Gill:** Middle School Representative from Denny International Middle School

As an advisory board member of the Center for Race and Equity (CRE), I have had the pleasure to meet educators across the district. I have been inspired by the dedication of the educators I've had the opportunity to work with. My work with ethnic studies has built relationships between district officials and SEA through partnerships with CRE. Being in the center of that partnership has provided a window into the gaps that exist.

I have been working relentlessly on racial equity in our district because I care so much about the success of every student in our district. I believe that racial equity should be the lens through which we approach issues including special education, recruiting educators, funding, professional development, over-testing, and curriculum adoption. I believe in the power of educators to define our own profession. I have the experience, insight, and lens SEA needs to weather our current storm.

**Ian Golash:** High School Representative from Chief Sealth International High School

First of all, if there's candidates of color for this position, you should elect them before me. I'm a white male, and as a group, we've got plenty of representation already. I've been a strong advocate for equity in the district and in the union. I plan to continue to fulfill that commitment should I be elected to the board.

I also believe in developing and maintaining a strong union that uses its power to advocate for positive change in the schools and in the community. One example of this is the way that we advocated for and won Equity Teams in our contract. I think we need more of that sort of thinking and action. Our working conditions and our community conditions are our students learning conditions and community conditions. We should work as a union from that perspective. If elected, I would work to maintain and broaden that trend in our union.

**Peter Henry:** President, Seattle Substitutes Association

I am running for another term as President of the Seattle Substitutes Association (SSA) and a seat on the SEA board. I am a long-time member of SEE and my fundamental desire is to improve member voice in the Sub Association and the SEA, and to get more members engaged. Over the last few years the Sub