

# Educators' Vision

Published By the Social Equity Educators (SEE)

May 2018

## SEA Should Support a Moratorium on Standardized Testing

By Jeff Treisman, educator at Denny International Middle School

**E**ditors' Note: This was a New Business Item first proposed at the SEA Representative Assembly (RA) on Monday, April 16. It was tabled to be voted on no later than the June RA. That means it is in play and debatable. Please follow, like, and comment on the Facebook page Seattle Moratorium on standardized testing, #betterthantesting: <https://www.facebook.com/betterthantesting/>

**Whereas**, standardized testing has been well documented for decades as a racist tool that further widens the gap between students of color and their white peers. Stephen Jay Gould published *The Mismeasure of Man* in 1981 and in 2016 Ibram X. Kendi published *Stamped from the Beginning* as just two of the many excellent examples of the research that has been done on this issue. Kendi says, "Standardized tests have become the most effective racist weapon ever devised to objectively degrade Black minds and legally exclude their bodies."

**And whereas**, the SEA RA and the Seattle School Board have each unanimously approved resolutions in support of ethnic studies which are significantly hindered by the Eurocentric content and practices of standardized testing.

**And whereas**, test results reinforce the sense of entitlement for high scorers, the sense of worthlessness in low scorers and the sense of mediocrity for those in the middle. Since test results correlate most strongly with economic status, their use as an indicator of achievement or potential is completely invalid.

**And whereas**, they introduce unhealthy levels of stress into the school environment. This is true for every single member of the school community. It contradicts any goals of reducing stress levels to improve learning. There is already enough stress built into growing up. We don't need to add more.

**And whereas**, they reduce the learning experience to mere curriculum based on standards generated by distant technocrats. We have students taking two and three math and reading classes of the most crushingly boring type of rote learning instead of art, dance, expeditionary or experiential learning etc, in order to boost test scores.

**And whereas**, SPS and SEA have joined together to form race and equity teams across the district that recognize the barrier created by standardized testing and how it provides unequal results based on race and class.

**And whereas**, years have passed since the WEA and the NEA launched campaigns to end toxic testing.

**And whereas**, the King County NAACP resolved on April 15, 2016 to "strongly advocate for a multiple measures qualitative and quantitative community-based dashboard approaches to evaluate the success of states, district schools, teachers and students without the primary or majority focus being a high-stakes standardized exam" and to "support parents who decide to opt-out of testing as a social protest".

**And whereas**, standardized testing has and continues to degrade professionalism in our teaching corps.

Therefore, be it resolved that SEA call for a two year moratorium on all standardized testing, at the district, state, and federal levels and to open a public forum along with SPS on the best way to assess our students. Teachers will not be compelled to assess their students using any 3rd party assessment tools.

Be it further resolved that SEA will work with SPS to create waivers for any student barred from graduation due to state testing requirements during the moratorium. Ongoing work to delink high school graduation requirements from testing will continue.

(The moratorium will be considered a period of action research which will inform strategic planning for the authentic assessment of Seattle students.)

## Educators' Revolt Spreads to Higher Education Workers

By Matthew Maley, Substitute at Nova High School

**N**orth Carolina, Colorado, and Indiana all are on the brink of joining the uprising of educators around the country in what is turning out to be the most important strike wave in the U.S. since the 1970's. First, educators in West Virginia struck for nine days and won a 5% raise for all public-sector workers in the state. Then, Oklahoma educators won \$6,000 raises before striking for two weeks.

Next, Arizona educators struck for six days and won between 5-10% raises as well as around \$400 million in funding for public education. Meanwhile, Kentucky educators have been fighting to defend their pensions for the last couple months with multiple statewide actions. Now, the torch is being picked up by the higher education sector. Age-old lessons of the labor movement are being re-learned in real time: an injury to one is an injury to all and when we fight, we can win.

Columbia graduate students struck a few weeks ago in April, after a 93% strike authorization vote in the face of a litany of excuses and half-truths from the university administration, which has refused to recognize the GCW-UAW Local 2110 as representing graduate student workers. This was long after the student workers had won the vote to unionize by 72% back at the end of 2016. Now, their sister local of student employees at the New School, SENS-UAW, are on strike for a fair contract.

In the past week the fight has spread to the West Coast, with massive strike actions taking place in the University of California system, including over 50,000 healthcare workers striking for pay and a freeze to cuts in healthcare funding. This strike was called by AFSCME Local 3299 and they were joined on the picket line by the California Nurses Association and the Communication Workers of America, standing in solidarity.

In addition to bread and butter issues, one important current through these struggles is the expression of movements against sexual harassment and violence like #CarryThatWeight and #MeToo on campus and now in the workplace, as a labor issue. If we are to build trust and solidarity within the labor movement as a whole, it is paramount that unions fight for protections against sexual harassment and for avenues to deal with high status abusers who may use their standing to intimidate anyone who comes forward against them.

On Tuesday, May 15, the 4,500 graduate and undergraduate Teacher Assistants, Research Assistants, Readers, Graders, and Tutors who are members of the UAW 4121

at the University of Washington are planning a one-day strike if the UW administration fails to meet their demands. Amongst other issues, they are fighting for pay increases, child care subsidies, trans-inclusive health care and against sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination on campus. At the May 14 Representative Assembly, Social Equity Educators called on the Seattle Education Association to support a resolution in solidarity with our fellow union members in their fight for a safe, respectful workplace.

## My Experience as a First Time WEA Convention Delegate

By Tracy Castro-Gill, educator at Denny International Middle School

**T**he more I learn about the lack of racial justice, or even just the lack of awareness that racial justice is essential to our work as educators, the more compelled I am to work within our organization to fight for it. Working with the Center for Race and Equity has been both a curse and a rejuvenating experience. I love having the opportunity to work alongside educators of color on a common goal, but the emotional stress of being a woman of color fighting against forces that work to oppress our students and colleagues of color is a challenge I must recommit to daily.

I was encouraged to run for WEA representative at the state convention in Spokane so I could see what this fight looks like on the state level. I learned that "fight" is an understatement. Some people scoff at the use of the word "fight" to describe what we do, but I felt under attack every day in that room full of educators. I could list so many examples of the overtly racist statements made that night; everything from being booed at for reminding the room that calling the police on children of color can be deadly, to being called "colored people" by a white student-teacher, and many examples in-between. The racism was peppered with blatant displays of classism and elitism to boot.

I left that space every night after having gone on an emotional roller coaster ride. In a powerful show of solidarity, a group of educators of color came together to publicly demand an apology from the WEA leadership for allowing the racism to go unchecked, but later that same evening is when the room booed at the reminder of police brutality.

I did have the opportunity to speak on behalf of a New Business Item (NBI) written by Michael Peña from the Mukilteo Education Association calling for the WEA to work with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to build a model curriculum for ethnic studies, and it passed! I assisted in editing an NBI calling for the WEA to send yearly reminders about the Black Lives Matter at School curriculum which also passed. So, there were windows of hope that peered out past the hate.

The most satisfying moments of the representative assembly were those spent with my SEA colleagues getting to know them better. The rejuvenating moments came when we could leave that space and unpack our experiences, help each other understand how to cope with it, and how to keep pushing forward. I am grateful to teach in one of the more progressive districts in the State, and I am aware of how privileged I am to be working with strong leaders who share my passion for this work.

## As Told By Us

By Donte Felder

As Told By Us is a collaboration between The Intiman Theater, The Starfish Project, and the Columbia City Youth Theater Group.

Dates: May 18, 19, 25, 26 at 7pm

Where: Rainier Beach High School, 8815 Seward Park Avenue South, Seattle, Washington 98118

What: Youth voices from South Seattle highlight and connect community based stories, speak their truths and explore the technical aspects of professional theater.

This unique genesis of original scripts, choreography and scene production shares sincere youth voices that expresses social movement and growth.

Paul Robeson Performing Arts Center is experiencing a rebirth, youth power is real and rising, and will continue to impress the need to listen closely. [intiman.org/starfishproject](http://intiman.org/starfishproject)  
Suggested Donation: \$15 at the door, cash or check only please

For more information: [https://www.facebook.com/events/400569540410120/?active\\_tab=about](https://www.facebook.com/events/400569540410120/?active_tab=about)

## Join the Kshama Solidarity Campaign to Unite Against Racism and Police Intimidation!

By Stan Strasner, Seattle Substitutes Association Vice-President

Socialist City Councilmember Kshama Sawant is facing a defamation lawsuit from two Seattle police officers after speaking out against the police killing of Che Taylor, a 46 year-old father and Black man. Within seconds of exiting his vehicle in 2016, Che Taylor was shot and killed by Seattle Police Department cops while complying with every order given by the officers.

The officers dropped their first suit, tried to make the city pay them a settlement, and since have re-filed their frivolous lawsuit in an attempt to silence Sawant speaking out against police violence. The complaint filed claims that "Taylor did not comply. Instead, he ducked down and began reaching for his gun holster." But the inquest jury already unanimously agreed that this was not what happened based on video evidence.

From the beginning of this lawsuit, it's been a clear attempt to silence the wider Black Lives Matter movement against police violence and racism. With this in mind, a coalition of community members have come together to launch a Kshama Solidarity Campaign. We must stand in solidarity with Kshama Sawant and all Black Lives Matter activists fighting against police violence and racism.

**Please contribute to the Solidarity Fund:**

<https://www.gofundme.com/65qcf-kshama-solidarity-campaign>

## 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 two meetings are:

**When: Sunday, May 20; 10:00 am-12:00 pm**

**Where: Rainier Beach Community Center (8825 Rainier Ave S, Seattle, WA 98118)**

For more information check out:

[facebook.com/socialequityeducators/](https://www.facebook.com/socialequityeducators/)  
[socialequityeducators.org](http://socialequityeducators.org)

or text: 206.550.1609





### Educators' Vision

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### 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 [socialequityeducators.org](mailto:socialequityeducators.org) [info@seattlesee.org](mailto:info@seattlesee.org)

### Mission

Social Equity Educators is a rank and file caucus of Seattle Education Association educators that focuses on democratic, anti-racist, and anti-oppression policies and practices in our classrooms, schools, and communities. SEE engages in local, national, and international social movements for liberation and radical change by building alliances and addressing the roots of institutional racism and other forms of injustice.

### Points of Unity

- ◆ Organizing and bargaining for equity from the bottom up
- ◆ Anti-racist, anti-oppression pedagogy and practices
- ◆ Supporting social movements through community alliances
- ◆ Full and equitable funding for public education
- ◆ Opposing corporate education reform

## Inside Arizona's #RedforEd Uprising

By Darrin Hoop, educator/long term sub at Rainier Beach High School with additional reporting in Phoenix from Diana Macasa, Casie Stone, and Nathan Rosquist

**E**ditor's Note: On May 3, some 60,000 educators in Arizona ended a six-day statewide strike for higher pay and increased funding for education. While they didn't win all their demands, they won between 5% to 10% raises and around \$400 million in new education funding. Now they have shifted their organizing to a statewide ballot initiative, the Invest in Education Act (<https://investedarizona.com>). They have until July 5 to collect 150,000 valid signatures. If passed it would tax the richest 1% of households in Arizona and raise \$690 million annually with 60% directed to pay for teacher salary increases and employment related expenses and 40% towards maintenance and operations of public schools. Below is a short excerpt of an article published which describes the background of the strike as well as the electric atmosphere of the first couple days of it.

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**A** river of red flowed down Washington Street toward the Arizona Capitol building in Phoenix on April 26 as more than 75,000 people marched to send a message in support of educators and public schools.

This first day of a statewide walkout of educators, which will continue into this week, was [the culmination of two months of intense grassroots workplace organizing](#).

Led by rank-and-file educators in the newly formed [Arizona Educators United](#) (AEU) and supported by the main state teachers' union, the Arizona Education Association (AEA), teachers, counselors, librarians, school bus drivers, school psychologists, office staff, academic coaches and other staff united to demand higher pay for all school workers and increased funding for the whole public education system.

The buildings of downtown Phoenix echoed with chants of "The educators united will never be divided!" and "Show me what democracy looks like, this is what democracy looks like!" and the now-renowned slogan of this movement "#RedForEd!"

Parents, students, community activists and other supporters marched side by side with educators to let the Gov. Doug Ducey and state lawmakers know they won't stop until their demands are met.

The march provided ample evidence of an undeniable lesson learned this spring and over the last several years: Teachers' strikes have the best signs of any protest, hands down. Here is a sample:

- I'm not teaching history. I'm making it.
- Ducey: Teaching should not be a debt sentence
- AZ's top exports: Citrus, Copper, Teachers
- Arm teachers with funds not guns
- Starving the schools: Feeding the rich
- 35 is a speed limit, not a class size
- School Wars: The Educators Strike Back
- WTF = Where's the funding?

A Classroom Haiku: Teaching in a trailer / I had to buy my own desk / Just living the dream

James Lewis, a special education teacher at Sheely Farms Elementary School in the Tolleson Elementary School District in Phoenix, summarized the day succinctly: "Everyone's out here. It's historic."

Starting at Chase Field, home of baseball's Arizona Diamondbacks, the crowd marched around two miles to a massive rally on the grounds of the state Capitol. While there, they listened to leaders of both the AEU and the AEA.

From the stage, [Noah Karvelis](#), a K-8 music teacher in Phoenix, co-founder of the AEU and member of the AEA, [rocked the crowd with these words](#) filmed by socialist journalist Eric Blanc:

"If we don't stand up to today for our kids, who will? If we don't bring a change to this state, who will? Because clearly, and I think every single one of you here...understands this: If we don't stand up and bring a change, the people sitting in those chairs [pointing to the Capitol] right now will not do it.

We have to be the ones to stand up and fight back in this moment. We have the power, and you can look around and can say with confidence that a new day has dawned in Arizona, where the educators have stood up, and they have fought back. Today will be the day that we look back on as the day we came together and said: Enough."

On the first day of the walkout, Aude Odeh, an English teacher from Barry Goldwater High School in the Deer Valley School District in Phoenix, talked in an interview about what he hoped Arizona students would take away from the struggle--speaking for thousands of educators around the state and the country:

"I would tell my students that I'm doing this for them. I'm doing this for them right now and for their younger siblings. I'm doing this for the future of Arizona. This is a small-time sacrifice over the next few days, or however long it's going to last. But it's for years and years into the future so that we can fully fund education and make sure that we are training the best and brightest in America."

(Read the full article here: <https://socialistworker.org/2018/04/30/inside-arizonas-redford-ed-uprising>)

## Debating the Youth Jail with Dow Constantine

by Nikkita Oliver

March 28, 2018

**E**ditor's Note: Here Educators' Vision reprints Oliver's opinion piece in the South Seattle Emerald about her opposition to the \$233 million children's jail and the terms with which she'd agree to a debate on it with King County Executive Dow Constantine. SEE endorsed Oliver in her Seattle People's Party campaign for Mayor of Seattle and agrees with opposition to the new children's jail. That money should be spent on educating our youth, not incarcerating them.

already announced. Executive Constantine's announcement and acceptance of this debate comes after weeks of pressure from local organizers and a Court of Appeals decision which may result in King County having to pay back millions of dollars to taxpayers for illegally acquiring the funds to build a new children's jail in King County.

For the past six years we have been organizing to be heard; to have our experiences, as those most brutalized by mass incarceration and the school-to-prison pipeline, not simply acknowledged but understood as vital to any conversation about transformation of the criminal legal system. We are those whose families and communities are routinely over-policed, prosecuted and subjected to the most brutal practices and outcomes the criminal legal system can produce in the name of justice.

So in the name of justice we have been organizing and asking Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King County not to build a new youth jail, but to instead to work with us, those communities most negatively impacted by racism and the criminal legal system, to develop an effective and innovative alternative to the punitive and traumatizing system of criminalization and incarceration of children in King County.

Over the past six years, we have been overlooked and ignored — even demonized in the media and by city and county officials. As a result, we have had to organize our community, protest, and file successful lawsuits to be heard. After six years, King County Executive Dow Constantine, who has pushed full steam ahead on building a \$233 million children's jail, despite public outcry and social science, finally wants to meet with us and participate in a "debate" on the Seattle Channel with me.

Executive Constantine has not participated in a single forum led by those most impacted by the building of the new children's jail, and yet is willing to participate in a 30-minute "debate" with me which is to be filmed in-studio with no audience for "Inside Out" a Seattle Channel show hosted by Brian Callanan.

After much thought and conversation with other organizers, I will participate in the Seattle Channel debate if King County Executive Dow Constantine will participate in a public community forum with me, similar to what one would participate in during an election. This forum is to be accessible to the public and a space where young people

of color, those who stand to be the most impacted by the building of this new children's jail, ask us questions.

Executive Constantine is a public servant — elected by the people for the people — and yet has refused to account for his political decisions to those who stand to be most harmed by the building of this children's jail. Even more, his lack of willingness to engage all communities, including those with whom he may be uncomfortable, has created an inaccessible and inequitable situation further contributing to racial inequity and disproportionality in King County.

I have no doubts in my ability to effectively communicate in an accessible and thought-provoking manner the problems and long-reaching implications of this project. Even more, I know I can communicate a vision for effective alternatives and investments in services and strategies which keep youth out of the criminal legal system for good.

However, this is much more than a thought exercise. The building of this new children's jail does real-time harm to many Native, black and brown youth, children and families in King County. The continued investment in the racist punitive system stands in direct opposition to our ability to establish a system which is truly rehabilitative and restorative. Imagine if we invested more into building alternatives than into preserving the current punitive system? Imagine if we invested \$233 million into the neighborhoods and families we know are most impacted by racism and poverty?

To "debate" a highly visible black mixed queer womxn for 30-minutes in studio with no audience does not count as community engagement, accountability, nor transparency; especially after six years of avoiding any real public forms. If I participate in this debate but do not push for more accessibility for those most impacted I become complicit in a system, county, and city which often prioritizes the theory and discussion of justice over the actual act of being just and in right relationship with those who bear the weight of historical and present-day systemic injustices.

**Executive Constantine and Seattle Channel I am willing to participate in the debate if:**

- The in-studio debate is made available online in its entirety
- Any cut or edit made to the debate is only for the sake of time restrictions and these cuts are shaved directly off the end
- I am able to bring with me two advisors and someone to film the in-studio debate to ensure fidelity of the recording presented to the public
- Executive Constantine participates in a community forum as described above

In the political realm "closed-door discussions" continue to be the way in which many deals are made — a practice which only serves to further marginalize already disenfranchised communities. We must expect more from our elected officials. We must expect them to be present, accessible, transparent, and accountable; especially when making a decision that we know based on social science have a high likelihood of doing harm.

(Read the full article here: <https://southseattleemerald.com/2018/03/28/op-ed-debating-the-youth-jail-with-dow-constantine/>)