

## FOREWORD:

**YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: HOPE, ACTION, AND FREEDOM**By **Alicia L. Moore & La Vonne I. Neal**

Each election cycle we are reminded of the differences between political engagement and electoral and institutionalized politics. This presidential election year, we are witnessing youth empowerment in action (e.g., the Movement for Black Lives Matter) and its impact on policy shaping through collective resistance using critical public intellectualism on college campuses and grassroots mobilization in communities. We agree with Alice Walker that “the most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.”<sup>1</sup>

Throughout this special issue, guest editor Conra D. Gist and authors (e.g., a political scientist, a teacher educator, a youth minister, and an artist) provide articles and culturally responsive lesson plans that reframe youth empowerment through narratives about (1) Black youth activism from the 1930s to the present, (2) intellectual activism, (3) the role of movement infrastructures, (4) the role of the arts in shaping thought, and (5) critical pedagogy. We must continue to inspire youth to think critically because “our children must never lose their zeal for building a better world.”<sup>2</sup> Critical pedagogy is one pathway to help them comprehend the political, social, and economic conditions that impact their freedom.

We conclude with lyrics from a song (“Rise Up”) by a contemporary singer, Andra Day, to be added to our Black Lives Matter youth mobilization soundtrack:

You’re broken down and tired  
Of living life on a merry-go-round  
And you can’t find the fighter  
But I see it in you so we gonna walk it out  
And move mountains

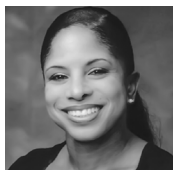
And I’ll rise up  
I’ll rise like the day  
I’ll rise up  
I’ll rise unafraid<sup>3</sup>

**Teacher Resources:**

- The Laura Flanders Show, “Building Movements without Shedding Differences,” video interview with Alicia Garza, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, March 24, 2015, accessed March 11, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5D3dMiCQL0>
- “How Unintentional but Insidious Bias Can Be the Most Harmful,” video interview of Derald Sue by PBS special correspondent Charlayne Hunter-Gault, *PBS NewsHour*, November 13, 2015, accessed March 11, 2016, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/how-unintentional-but-insidious-bias-can-be-the-most-harmful/>
- Paolo Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism* (London: Pluto Press, 2012).
- William Perez, *We Are Americans: Undocumented Students Pursuing the American Dream* (Sterling, VA: Stylus)
- Black Lives Matter: <http://blacklivesmatter.com/guiding-principles/>

**Notes:**

1. Alice Walker, cited in William P. Martin, *The Best Liberal Quotes Ever: Why the Left Is Right* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2004), 173.
2. Mary McLeod Bethune, in *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World, Essays and Selected Documents*, ed. Audrey Thomas McCluskey and Elaine M. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 61. Originally published in *Ebony*, August 1955.
3. Andra Day, “Rise Up Lyrics,” MetroLyrics, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/rise-up-lyrics-andra-day.html>



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