

CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP:

Black Children Thriving in Schools



A COMMUNITY GATHERING EXPLORING BEST PRACTICES AND SOLUTIONS
THAT SUPPORT POSITIVE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES FOR BLACK YOUTH

Saturday, September 14, 2019
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Asheville

OUR SCHOLARS

Dr. Summer Carrol is an Associate Professor of Education at Lenoir-Rhyne University and the Coordinator of the Instructional Studies program. In her over 16 years of service to the education field, she has served as a middle and high school English teacher, testing coordinator, team leader, and currently as a teacher educator. Her research interests include teacher identity and reflection, history of education, educational equity, the impact of school desegregation on Black teachers and students, as well as qualitative research methods. Dr. Carrol was awarded the 2011 National Council of Teachers of English Cultural Diversity Award for her presentation and publication on linguistic diversity and African American Vernacular English. Her publications include entries on desegregation and school busing in *People of Color in the United States: Contemporary Issues in Education, Work, Communities, Health, and Immigration*, an article on black teachers and black student achievement in *The Journal of Negro Education*, as well as an article on embracing linguistic diversity in NCTE's *School Talk* publication. She has presented locally, regionally, and nationally on topics such as teacher reflection, the opportunity-to-learn gap, linguistic diversity, and teaching as a career choice. Dr. Carrol also serves as a reviewer for *Teachers College Record*, *The Journal of Negro Education*, *Urban Education*, and *Palgrave Publishing*. She currently teaches both pre- and in-service teachers as well as students interested in teaching in settings beyond the public school classroom. She also teaches general education courses in the university's CORE curriculum, including Introduction to College Writing, Writing and Critical Thinking, and a humanities course, Schooling in America. Dr. Carrol was a 2016 recipient of Hickory's Top 10 Professionals Under 40 award and continues to be active in the community as a member of the board of directors for the Catawba County Department of Social Services and as a volunteer facilitator for the Darkness to Light Child Abuse Prevention training through the Catawba County Child Advocacy and Protection Center. She is passionate about teaching, protecting, supporting, and inspiring youth and adults. She is the first teacher to a 2.5-year old daughter and 4-year old son.



Dr. Brandi Hinnant-Crawford is an Assistant Professor of Educational Research at Western Carolina University. As a mixed-methods methodologist, she believes in the complimentary nature of quantitative and qualitative research, and seeks to use research in transformative ways (such as with improvement science). A native of Goldsboro, North Carolina, Brandi entered the profession of education as a NC Teaching Fellow where she taught English in Wayne County Public Schools. Brandi has studied and worked in K-12 and higher education for the last 12 years, doing research, evaluation, and policy analysis with the University System of Georgia, Syracuse City School District, the Boston Education Collaborative, and the New Tech Network.



Employing an advocacy framework, Hinnant-Crawford seeks to expose policies and practices related to exploitation, domination, and marginalization—while simultaneously exploring remedies to alleviate the impact of those policies and practices. Her broad research interests include: multicultural education and asset based pedagogies, culturally responsive school leadership, educator activism, and improvement science. Dr. Hinnant-Crawford's work has been published in diverse venues such as *Urban Education*, the *Journal for Multicultural Education* and *Black Theology*. Brandi holds a doctorate in philosophy from Emory University in Educational Studies, a master's degree in Urban Education Policy from Brown University, and bachelor degrees in English and Communication (media concentration) from North Carolina State University. While she loves research and teaching, her first priority is being the mother of her seven-year-old twins, Elizabeth Freedom and Elijah Justice Crawford.

This year, **Dr. Tiece Ruffin** begins her 15th year as a teacher educator. Dr. Ruffin has past teaching experiences as a licensed special educator and reading educator teaching youth with and without disabilities from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in both rural and urban contexts, and as a public school administrator for a large urban school district monitoring placement and educational services for students with disabilities who attended private schools. Her K-12 classroom teaching experience spans various educational settings such as the public school, correctional institution, and home/hospital. Her research interests include disability, reading, diverse learners, pedagogical approaches for the diverse and inclusive classroom, service learning, and the internationalization of teacher education, and she has authored and/or co-authored several publications and presented at both National and International Conferences in these areas.



In her local community of Asheville, NC, Ruffin melds her roles as an educator of tomorrow's teachers, as a parent, and as an active citizen of the community. She serves on many local boards, has authored a series of guest columns in the

Asheville Citizen-Times to mobilize community action on issues of social justice in education, and recently authored a book chapter in the Handbook of Research on Effective Communication in Culturally Diverse Classrooms on promoting equity and inclusion in today's diverse and inclusive 21st century classroom. Past accomplishments include four notable fellowships -- the prestigious honor of being selected as a Martin Luther King Jr. Scholar in the U.S. Department of Education, a Past-President's Fellow of the National Association of State Director's of Special Education, a North Carolina – West Education Policy Fellow by the North Carolina Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP), and a U.S. Fulbright Scholar funded by the U.S. Department of State to Ghana, west Africa. Currently, she is an Associate Professor of Africana Studies and Education, and the Coordinator of Diversity Intensive Courses for the University's Liberal Arts Core at the University of North Carolina Asheville.



Dr. Darrius Stanley is an assistant professor of educational leadership at Western Carolina University. He is a native southerner from Tallahassee, Florida where he attended his hometown historically Black college, Florida A&M University. Generally, his research agenda explores school leadership practices and how they impact issues of race, gender, and equity in today's public schools. His work centers historical, critical race and gender lenses to uplift the testimonies of minoritized school communities. His current research examines the impact that school and district leaders can have on teacher diversity in public schools. Further, his scholarship conceptualizes the possibilities for Black and other minoritized students' success when Black teachers are retained, supported, and valued in school communities. Darrius also has an array of teaching, coaching, research, and leadership experience in Urban school contexts.

OUR FACILITATORS

Dr. Joseph Fox, Fox Management Consulting Enterprises President and CEO, possesses an Ed.D. and an MBA from Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC, and a B.S. degree in Business Administration from Pfeiffer University, Misenheimer, NC. He also possesses the Professional in Human Resources Management (PHR) National Certification, Achieve Global Leadership Training Certification, and the Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning (REAL) Certification.



Dr. Fox's doctoral dissertation focused on a review of literature related to economic development, elements of a successful collaborative model, examples of successful economic partnerships, and economic development and entrepreneurship. Dr. Fox examined variables including whether or not students who completed the REAL course started a business, number of individuals employed by start-ups, years of operation, types of products offered, and average annual sales. Additionally, he examined the likelihood of individuals' propensity to start a business in the future if one were not started at the end of the entrepreneurship course.

Dr. Fox believes in giving back to his community. He continues to speak on various topics related to entrepreneurship, empowerment, and planning for retirement. He is currently the Vice President at Roseland Community Center (Tryon, NC), serves as a member of the Eastside Citizens' Advisory Committee and the Nina Simone Steering Committee, also in Tryon, NC. Dr. Fox is also a member of the Certified Entrepreneurial Communities Leadership Team for both Tryon and Black Mountain, NC.

Cortina Jenelle Caldwell is a queer, Two-Spirit descending from generations of Southern, West African, Latinx & Native American peoples. Cortina is an artist, activist, community organizer, creative facilitator, social designer, and communication architect. Cortina is the Founder & Creative Director of Artists Designing Evolution, LLC (adé PROJECT), an artistically rooted black + brown led, intergenerational grassroots cooperative catalyzing racial equity through re-imagination, reparation, and reclamation.



Since 2007, Cortina has designed, produced, or facilitated hundreds of trainings, workshops, programs, and community events centered on authenticity, community building, creativity, entrepreneurship, innovation, and leadership across the Southeast. In that time, Cortina has worked alongside nonprofits, entrepreneurs, educators, community leaders, artists, festival producers, conference organizers, small businesses and activists alike. Cortina holds a Master of Arts in Management & Leadership; a Bachelor of Science in Business, Education & Social Science; and a Certification in Creative

Facilitation through PYE Global's Art of Facilitation program. Throughout her career, Cortina has received recognition as the WNC Minority Enterprise Development's Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year (2012); 40 Under Forty: Asheville (2013); and inductee to Leadership Asheville (2014). Cortina's work is informed by her lens as an artist and deep belief in the power of community as well as authentic relationship building. With a background in tourism, hospitality, marketing, education, nonprofit management, art, and community organizing, Cortina has served on numerous Boards and Advisory committees, including MLK Jr. Association of Asheville & Buncombe County; YMCA 21st Century Horizons Program; Asheville Area Arts Council; Bele Chere; and Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club. Ultimately, Cortina's work is fueled by their personal mission – to shift community, business and organizational culture through authenticity, creativity, entrepreneurship, equity, and collective leadership.

AGENDA

Itiyopiya Ewart – Welcome & Logistics
Dr. Dwight Mullen – Affirmation and Blessing
Youth Presentation – Tyja Lassiter and Kellis Sanders, YTL (Youth Transformed for Life) participants
Dr. Darrius Stanley – <i>Addressing Unseen Suffering and Reimagining Possibility through Community Engagement: Lessons from the Back of the Bus</i>
Dr. Summer Carrol – <i>Teachers as Gap Closers: Challenges and Opportunities</i>
BREAK - 10 MINUTES
Dr. Tiece Ruffin – <i>Remove Systemic Barriers, Engage in Systemic Reform, and Implement Systemic Solutions: Transformative Justice, Identity Safe Classrooms, and Good Teachers</i>
Dr. Brandi Hinnant-Crawford – <i>Cultivating Critically Conscious Teachers: An Essential Role for School Leaders in Alleviating Educational Opportunity Gaps</i>
LUNCH – Questions for Reflection
Dr. Joseph Fox – Community Member Response
Cortina Janelle Caldwell – Whole group discussion on practical implementation strategies
Dr. Tiece Ruffin – Closing remarks

Lunchtime Questions for Reflection:

1. What were some of your deepest take-aways from the presentation?
2. What opportunity gaps do you see in your school and/or community? What would be needed to close these gaps?
3. What opportunities do you see within our local schools that support Black children thriving?
4. What practical steps can be implemented immediately that would change academic outcomes for Black children in our area?

OUR EMCEE

My name is **Itiyopiya**. I am a lover of family, language, arts and culture. I am mother to the loving and precocious duo, Tatek and Trelawney. I identify as Black, woman, cis-gendered, hetero. Born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, I grew up on the edges of where academia met with street life, where Rastafari met with the Southern Black Baptist church and where incessant injustice was met with unrelenting hope. I hold a love and curiosity about people and their personal stories. I have deep roots in radical alternative living blended with customs considered traditional and normative. I have a Master of Arts in Teaching degree and am currently working on my Master of Social Work degree. I believe in my ancestors, freedom fighters, the ability to disrupt white supremacy. I am human. I am working to dismantle beliefs that are harmful to my well-being and my quality of life. My life is the intersection of race, resilience, authenticity and empathy. I look to share what I have learned with the world.



ABOUT YTL



YTL Training Programs support disenfranchised communities as they strive to succeed in an inequitable system. As educators, mentors, advocates, and neighbors we create bridges for children and families to overcome the current gaps of disparity. We are guardians of the rights of children and their families, and we will make sure all community members are informed of those rights. By meeting community members where they are, physically and emotionally, we develop trust and offer tools they can choose to employ as they work towards prosperity. Our ultimate goal is to cultivate a contagious community of compassion in which all human beings are guaranteed access to proper education, health services, safety, and economic stability. YTL was founded in 2014 by Asheville natives Libby Kyles, Tony Shivers, and Yashika Smith.

“You are young, gifted, and Black. We must begin to tell our young, There's a world waiting for you, Yours is the quest that's just begun.” ~ James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)

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Sponsored By

**Expanding Equity In Our Schools
and
The Africana Studies Program At UNC Asheville**



With Support From

**Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Asheville (UUCA)
Asheville City Schools Foundation
ReCommitting to Black Lives Matter @ UUCA
Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church
Joy McConnell**

A super big "Thank You!" to everyone who attended, our volunteers, childcare providers, UUCA staff, UNCA staff, Cortina Janelle Caldwell, Inkwa Ewart, Dr. Joseph Fox, Libby Kyles, Eleanor and Robert Lane, Tyja Lassiter, Henry Ligon, Jr., Dr. Dwight Mullen, and Kellis Sanders.

CATERING BY



Wadadli Dessert Oasis is the result of hard work and vision. Our services include individual vegan meal planning, catering, classes, special orders which are available for scheduled pickup or delivery, and retail/wholesale production.

Our menu items include vegan interpretations of traditional savory Caribbean dishes, CBD infused edibles, island patties (turnovers with a savory filling), and of course tropical desserts.

Wadadli Dessert Oasis' delicious and nutritious products are made in the beautiful mountains of western North Carolina.

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