

# BEYOND BROCHURES

## Practicing “Soul Care” in the Recruitment of Teachers of Color

by Jonathan Osler  
SAN FRANCISCO TEACHER RESIDENCY



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# INTRODUCTION

This report identifies two interrelated problems: (1) although more than half of students in the United States are young people of color, their teachers are predominantly white; and (2) this gap is getting worse.

## Historical Context

The growing gap between the proportion of students and teachers of color was in some ways set in motion nearly 70 years ago. In the 1930's and 40's, there were many Black teachers working primarily in southern schools, though they earned 80% less than their White counterparts.<sup>1</sup> By 1950, half of Black professionals were teachers, the majority of whom worked in highly segregated schools. After *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided in 1954, more than half of these Black teachers were fired as Black students were sent to integrate schools with White students and predominantly White teachers.<sup>2,3</sup> It was also during this era when the first National Teacher Exam was developed, an exam that was soon adopted by nearly every major Southern city, and whose author knew that Black test-takers were likely to perform worse than their White counterparts.<sup>4</sup>

Although women already comprised the majority of the teacher force by the turn of the 20th century, married Black women were five times more likely than their White counterparts to work outside of the home at that time.<sup>5</sup> In the late 1940's, large numbers of White women began working and replaced many Black women in the labor force, especially in fields like teaching which increasingly required a formal education.<sup>6</sup>

Decades later these issues were still plaguing Black educators: teacher certification exams and teacher preparation program admissions requirements were responsible for an estimated 21,515 Black teachers losing their jobs between 1984 and 1989.<sup>7</sup> After

Brigitte James  
SFTR Science Resident



World War II, 79% of Black female college graduates worked as teachers; however, by the mid-1980's that rate had dropped to 23%.<sup>8</sup> In Chicago, the number of Black teachers has fallen from 40% to 23% since 2000.<sup>9</sup> In New York, racially discriminatory teacher licensure tests led to an estimated 15,000 teachers being demoted or terminated.<sup>10</sup> And in San Francisco, the Black composition of the teaching force dropped 20% from 2003 to 2012.<sup>11</sup>

### Extreme Racial Disparities between U.S. Students and their Teachers

There are vast disparities between the race of students and teachers in the United States, with teachers of Color significantly underrepresented in the field compared to the racial composition of the student population. Youth of Color comprise more than 50% of public school students, yet only 18% of teachers are people of Color.<sup>12</sup> While Black youth comprise 16% of public school students in the United States, only 7% of all teachers are Black<sup>13</sup>, and only 2% of all U.S. teachers are Black men.<sup>14</sup> In New York City, the nation's largest school district, 85% of students are racial/ethnic minorities, but only 40% of teachers are non-White. 34 states have racial demographic divides between students and teachers of 20 percentage points or greater.<sup>15</sup>

### Racial Gap Between Students and Teachers is Growing

As the percent of U.S. students who are youth of Color has grown, the gap between the rates of students and teachers of Color has worsened. The Brookings Institute estimates that in order for the country to achieve parity based on it's current racial composition of students, 1,000,000 retiring White teachers would need to be replaced by 300,000 Black and 600,000 Latino/a teachers. Projections suggest that the percent of the nation's students of Color will grow from the current 50% to 66% by 2060, so the U.S. will actually need many more teachers of Color to join the profession (and at a faster rate than White teachers) in order to achieve parity in the future.<sup>16</sup>

## Overview of this Report

Reversing the widening racial chasm between our youth and their teachers is an issue that should be addressed by stakeholders at all levels of government, across school districts and teacher preparation programs, by the philanthropic and business sectors, and within local communities themselves.

Two of these sectors are the primary audiences for this report.

First are those in the world of teacher recruitment and preparation. While there are many forces and systems beyond the immediate control of individual programs that create barriers to diversifying the teaching force, there are many actions that can be taken by individuals and as a field, some of which are highlighted in this report. Members of this professional community should strongly consider amplifying the perspectives shared in this report to elected officials. Your voices, and those of the teachers you work with, can have a powerful impact on shaping policies in these areas.

Jessica Villalobos  
SFTR Biology Resident

The second audience for this report are policymakers, especially those in local school districts and in state/federal Departments of Education. There is only so much that practitioners can accomplish inside an echo chamber constructed with policies that make all but micro-level changes impossible. Bold leadership is required to create the systemic changes that the most marginalized young people need and deserve.

This report summarizes some of the reasons offered by people of Color for why they would hesitate to choose teaching as a career, along with reasons why those who do become teachers are most likely to leave the profession. These examples are offered so that others can listen, learn, and begin the process towards making significant changes in their own practices. Although the ideas explored in this report are relevant to both teacher recruitment and retention, they are offered with a greater focus on recruitment. This focus is intentional, and is largely because teacher retention is also the responsibility of school districts and governments, and can not be addressed as directly as teacher recruitment practices can be by universities and preparation programs.







# Wisdom Cole

## Residency Placement

Chemistry

June Jordan School for Equity

## Currently Teaching

Algebra

June Jordan School for Equity

### When did you first consider teaching?

*I first considered teaching in 2013. I took a class in college (UC Santa Cruz) about the education of immigrant, Black and Latino students in math and science. In that class I heard a lot of things that related to my own life and decided I would like to be a person who does something about those issues and works towards equity within education.*

### What barriers did you encounter on your path to becoming a teacher?

*I only had a few teachers of Color, so I'd never really seen myself as a teacher or relatable to teachers. It became more of a realistic goal when I thought about where I'd like to serve as a teacher to really serve the students that I want to work with.*

### What helped you persist and overcome these barriers?

*There were some people who believed in me; people who wanted me in the profession. Meeting people like Loran Simon, the Assistant Director at SFTR. That really pushed me to think of this as a more realistic career, and that people like me deserve to be in these kind of programs and profession. Having teachers of Color at my university who really supported my idea of becoming a teacher within math and science helped a lot too.*

### What ideas do you have about helping more people of Color become teachers?

*At my school, a lot of teachers of Color were organizers, had leadership roles in student organizations, and recognized that the act of being a person for social justice is heavily intertwined with education. So we need to reach out to people who are doing that work so they can kind of intertwine it. If they're doing work for Black Lives Matter, they can teach that in ethnic studies class. If you do work around environmental justice, it intertwines with how that's affecting food deserts within low income communities.*

Broad, systemic changes are necessary to ensure that people of Color are as proportionately represented in the teaching field as they are among the student population. Yet there are areas where teacher preparation programs have the power to dramatically change their practices, and it is within these areas that this report is focused.

### Beyond Brochures: A Critique of Quick-Fix Solutions

This report does not engage at length in a well-deserved critique of some approaches to recruiting teachers of Color that are gimmicky and tokenizing. For example, using stock images of “Black teachers” in brochures, developing flashier social media strategies, and including buzzwords like “equity” in program literature are, as standalone practices, insufficient for bringing about the outcomes this paper calls for. These approaches may help get the attention of a more diverse audience. However, those who care about recruiting, preparing and supporting teachers of Color must attend to the underlying conditions within their programs that affect the daily lives and future prospects of the teachers they serve. Until these conditions are addressed, diversity recruitment “strategies” are unlikely to make a significant difference.

Ran Suzuki  
SFTR Elementary Resident

### Soul Care in Action

This report articulates a theoretical framework for applying a concept called “Soul Care” to the recruitment of teachers of Color, and identifies specific practices that exemplify this approach. The San Francisco Teacher Residency is not a religious institution, and has not adopted the concept of Soul Care to advance a religious agenda. Rather, this report seeks to highlight practices associated with Soul Care because it has been demonstrated that they positively impact efforts to recruit people of Color into the teaching profession.<sup>17</sup>

To illustrate these practices in action, the paper present two case studies of organizations that are committed to recruiting teachers of Color and have demonstrated success in accomplishing this goal. It also include conversations with four teachers of Color in San Francisco who offer personal testimony about their journeys back to the classroom.





# WHY ARE PEOPLE OF COLOR SO UNDERREPRESENTED IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION?

"Sometimes, I consider not teaching anymore. Not having any mentorship or support has made me question myself and why I became a teacher . . . I'm just not able to see my strengths, and feel I wasn't meant to do this. I feel like I am operating in complete isolation and I'm exhausted."<sup>18</sup>

The goal of this paper is not to document a comprehensive list of reasons why there are not more people of Color represented within the teaching profession. A full analyses of these issues would require a thorough dissection of the legacies of racism and capitalism in our country. This paper also attempts to avoid rhetoric, such as pointing towards lower educational attainment rates for people of Color, as the cause of these problems. This is done purposefully to avoid deflecting responsibility from teacher educators and policymakers by shifting the blame back to students and their teachers.

## Not Enough New Teachers of Color

The issue of underrepresentation of people of Color in the teaching field has two basic causes: (1) not enough people of Color are becoming teachers, and (2) not enough people of Color are remaining in the classroom. This paper focuses more on the first of these causes. Some of the many reasons commonly cited by people of Color for why they chose not to become teachers are below, along with personal experiences shared by Wisdom Cole, Andy Castro, Kimberly Rosario, and Betty Flores, the four SFTR teachers who were interviewed for this report.

1. The **prohibitively high cost** of attending many teacher preparation programs, especially those housed at private universities.

*"Coming from a low income family was a big struggle just getting into college. And as a first generation college student from my family I struggled a lot with knowing if I could afford higher education." - Betty*

## BOSTON TEACHER RESIDENCY

The Boston Teacher Residency (BTR) started in 2003, and was one of the first teacher residency programs in the country. Since that time, BTR has prepared over 600 educators for Boston public schools.

One of the central tenets driving BTR's approach to recruiting new teachers is that there is tremendous value in having a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse teaching force. BTR both draws on, and has conducted research to demonstrate, that such diversity can positively impact achievement for all students, especially Black and Latino students. For example, BTR recognizes that teachers of Color are well positioned to help students of Color see themselves as scholars and potential teachers, that they are very likely to be culturally responsive, and that they are deeply committed to student's long-term success.

As a first step in putting these beliefs into action, BTR intentionally and publicly sets goals around diversity recruitment, stating, for example, that at least 50% of incoming residents will identify as people of Color. According to Emily Harris, the Director of Talent for the Boston Plan for Excellence (the organization that runs BTR), they've been successful in meeting this goal, with an average of 49% participants of Color since their first cohort in 2004.

### Recruitment Strategies

The Boston Teacher Residency employs a variety of strategies designed to attract people of Color to their program. Their website showcases the success of teachers of Color in their program, and provides these teachers with an opportunity to blog about their experiences to share stories of what it's like to be a teacher in Boston public schools. They also partner with local organizations that work with college-age people of Color, including the Breakthrough Collaborative and the Posse Foundation.

Other special recruitment activities include: (1) outreach to faith and community-based organizations such as the YMCA and Boys & Girls Clubs, (2) prioritizing college fairs that have a higher percent of students of color, and (3) connecting with local alumni networks from Historically Black Colleges & Universities and professional organizations such as the National Society of Black Engineers and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers.

Once a person of Color completes a BTR prospect form or starts an application, program staff provide them with very targeted follow-up support to ensure that they don't face any barriers in completing their applications. The BTR team makes sure to be very "high touch" with these focal applicants in order to cultivate strong relationships right from the start.

### Soul Care in the Boston Teacher Residency through Racial Affinity Groups

In 2011, Dr. Travis Bristol, a former teacher in the New York City public school system, was a Clinical Teacher Educator at BTR. Bristol, who at the time was working towards his Doctorate at Stanford (and is now an Assistant Professor at Boston University), was conducting research about the experience of Black male teachers (like himself). He was particularly interested in their school-based experiences and how those affected their job satisfaction and retention.

Bristol launched the Boston Teacher Residency Male Educators of Color Network<sup>19</sup> a group comprised of 15 core participants. He created monthly professional development for the group to help them develop tools and strategies to navigate their school environments. They also took up dilemmas of practice which included: what practical strategies will help engage boys of Color, how do you get all students to do high-cognitive demand thinking, and what does it mean that Black male teachers receive a disproportionate number of unsatisfactory ratings on the district's evaluation system?

2. **Teaching is often no longer perceived by individuals and/or their family members as an honorable or “high-status” career.** This perception may be based on negative narratives about teachers that play out in the media and are advanced by certain education reformers, but it is also influenced by the decimation of the ranks of teachers of Color over the past seven decades.<sup>20</sup>

*“I think a lot of my family and friends... it’s weird, but a lot of people don’t look at teaching as a worthwhile career. Questions I often get are: why do you want to be a teacher, and how are you going to support yourself?” - Wisdom*

3. Teaching is **not perceived as a financially sensible career**, especially when it’s contrasted with other professions that also require graduate degrees and pay substantially higher salaries.<sup>21</sup>

*“One thing that I always hear is the money thing, like ‘you don’t make a lot of money, and I’m trying to do things within my life personally.’ As a teacher you don’t make a lot of money which is true, though I think there are ways to work around it.” - Wisdom*

4. **State-mandated exams** that are required for admission into many teacher preparation programs are expensive, can be challenging to pass (which further adds to the potential costs an individual may need to incur before even applying to a teacher preparation program), and can feel burdensome to study for. The PRAXIS tests, for example, are required in 34 states to gain entrance into a teacher preparation program. Black and Latino candidates pass these exams at much lower rates than White and Asian candidates<sup>22</sup> and they are commonly cited as biased<sup>23</sup> and a key reason for the decline in the number of Black teachers.<sup>24</sup>

*“Testing is hard for me personally. Maybe it was just my own schooling that affected that. I’ve always thought that I was a bad test taker and maybe it was that vicious cycle, so passing the tests was definitely a process for me - just getting in the time to study for it was difficult.” - Andy*

5. Teaching is (accurately) not regarded as a diverse profession, and people of Color understand that they would likely be one of very few faculty members of Color at their school or participants in a teacher preparation program,<sup>25</sup> and are consequently likely to face **hostile racial climates**.<sup>26</sup>

*"As a teacher of Color, I am more successful with my students than many teachers that are not of Color and – not to make over-generalizations – but some other coworkers come in and complain about students who are always students of Color. I'm wondering if they are really stepping aside from their biases and looking at why they're upset with the students that they're always constantly calling out?" - Kimberly*

6. People of Color **do not want to be agents of dehumanizing schools** where youth of Color feel unwelcomed, where the curriculum fails to respond to their needs and interests, and where they are excessively punished and disproportionately suspended.<sup>27</sup>

*"My first year has been very, very real. There is urgency because of how gentrification and community violence and state violence are happening within this country. So I need to keep asking: am I really being a teacher for social justice? Or am I just recreating the cycle that has continued for years and years?" - Wisdom*

7. Teacher education programs may be perceived (a perception that is often accurate) as overwhelmingly white (students and faculty) and with **irrelevant curriculum**.<sup>28</sup>

*"I have a friend in another teacher prep program. When he started I think he was sold something else, like basically told that it was this radical program. But it's not what he needed as a person of Color." - Wisdom*

Donald Bursey  
SFTR Elementary Resident





# ANDY CASTRO

## Residency Placement

Multiple Subjects

El Dorado School Elementary School



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### When did you first consider teaching?

*I first considered teaching three years ago while I was working in an after school program. There were 105 students in the program and I fell in love with it; that's when I knew that I wanted to be in education, specifically primary education. So I started speaking with teachers at the school, seeing what they were about, seeing what they did, and I thought that that was my path.*

### What barriers did you encounter on your path to becoming a teacher?

*For some of us, just getting through college is a challenge. Graduating high school is a challenge. I think a lot of folks would want to be a teacher and find it a good fit but the financial aspect of getting a credential is almost too much to overcome. Also, taking the extra steps to study for the tests was definitely a challenge, especially as an older student.*

### What ideas do you have about helping more people of Color become teachers?

*There are a lot of really, really talented people who are kind of falling through the cracks. In my experience as a coordinator in after school programming, there are a lot of really amazing folks who are doing great things who I know would be spectacular teachers. But it was tempting for a lot of them to jump into other fields. They need a clear pathway to teaching because otherwise the system itself is really complicated and tricky.*

### Are there recruiting tactics that are tokenizing or are dehumanizing to people of Color?

*Sometimes there are flyers that aren't representative of what the school is about or what the program is about. So you have this rainbow or coalition of folks who are just at their computers laughing – stuff like that. And it's just not authentic and it's not a real representation of what's going on. That could definitely be a turn-off for a lot of folks.*

## Schools are Unable to Retain Teachers of Color

In a recent study from the Learning Policy Institute, Richard Ingersol showed that while 47,600 new teachers of Color entered the profession in one year, 56,000 had left teaching the following year.<sup>29</sup> Retention rates for Black and Latino/a teachers are lower than that of their colleagues; put another way, they have a 24% higher attrition rate than their White counterparts.<sup>30</sup> Other studies have documented that 28% of teachers of Color leave the classroom each year.<sup>31</sup> Although some characterize this issue by explaining that teachers of Color leave the profession at disproportionately high rates, this passive language should be reframed to instead suggest that these teachers have been *pushed out* of the profession. It is our nation's schools, districts, and cities that are unable to retain teachers of Color.

As with issues of teacher recruitment, there are many reasons cited by teachers of Color for why they leave (or feel pushed out) of the classroom. These issues impact recruitment of new teachers, and therefore must be understood and addressed by anyone serious about diversifying the teaching profession.

Teachers of Color commonly face hostile racial climates in schools which get manifested in many ways including through colorblindness and racial micro-aggressions.<sup>32</sup> United States Secretary of Education John King notes another factor: the “invisible taxes” imposed on many teachers of Color as a consequence of being the only person of Color on the faculty.<sup>33</sup> These ‘taxes’ include (1) an expectation to serve as disciplinarians, rather than academic instructors, for Black boys<sup>34</sup>, (2) uncompensated time spent in informal leadership roles as the unofficial liaison with families of Color, (3) being skipped over for more formal (and often paid) leadership opportunities, and (4) being expected to teach remedial instead of advanced courses. In Ingersol’s recent study, school working conditions were cited as the biggest factor influencing teachers of Color to leave the profession, though financial issues (including low salaries and the high cost of living) play key roles also.

Jade Meza  
SFTR Bilingual Elementary Resident



## SEATTLE TEACHER RESIDENCY

The Seattle Teacher Residency (STR) focuses on developing a diverse pipeline of teachers specifically for Seattle Public Schools. They've trained three cohorts of teachers, and are preparing a fourth this year. 20% of STR residents identify as Black, and the percent of STR participants who are teachers of Color is more than double the rates in the larger school district.

### Organizational Values

STR as an organization has a culture that centers on race and equity - they see teacher recruitment as a component of their larger mission. STR believes that to effectively serve communities of Color, they need to recruit and prepare teachers that reflect these communities and deeply understand the community needs.

Seattle is a very racially segregated city, and STR partners with schools that serve many immigrants and English language learners from countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. STR believes that teachers from these same communities can best understand the experiences their students are having and empathize with them and their families. Furthermore, STR strives to recruit from within these communities because it sends an important message to students when they see people who look like themselves in successful roles and positions of power. And that message is a shift in the traditional narrative about who is able to learn and be educated.

### Recruitment Strategies

STR employs multiple strategies for recruiting teachers of Color.

High Touch Recruitment. STR maintains a database and asks prospective applicants to self identify within racial categories. Their recruiter then prioritizes sending personal emails and/or makes personal phone calls to certain people.

Application Ambassador. Once identified, the STR recruiter spends a lot of time with focal applicants on the phone and/or in person, walking them

through the application, talking about the program, advising on what they should highlight about their own experiences in their resume and essay responses, etc. This also allows the applicants' stories to emerge which helps the recruiter build authentic relationships with them.

Partner with the Right Organizations. STR intentionally partners with local organizations that have demonstrated their own success recruiting professionals of Color. For example, City Year is a national service organization with an office in Seattle that recruits a diverse corps of AmeriCorps members and is already working in local schools. The organizations work together to help ensure that people can make an easy transition from City Year into STR.

Addressing Structural Barriers. In addition to their recruitment strategies, STR has been very explicit about identifying structural barriers that keep people of Color out of teaching that they seek to dismantle. "Many college graduates of Color are first generation college goers, and a lot of them have taken out significant student loans," says Michael Nguyen, STR's Recruitment and Retention Coordinator. "Financially it is difficult for a lot of them to not work right away and take out more loans to attend graduate school and the certification program." STR understands, therefore, that applying for graduate school takes some additional social capital, as well as financial resources.

Therefore, STR staff – and Nguyen in particular – see their role as comparable to high school guidance counselors. By providing certain applicants with one-on-one attention during the admissions process, such as helping track down old transcripts, he incentivizes people to continue with the process and helps break down barriers like navigating the financial aid process

### Soul Care at the Seattle Teacher Residency

Michael Nguyen was himself a teacher before taking on this role. He is the child of immigrants and was the first in his family to attend college and get a degree. So he understands what many prospective teachers of Color are experiencing because of his own journey. For example, Nguyen sees information sessions as an opportunity for shared storytelling. "I put relationships first," he says. "I start with my story, and I like to hear their story – and I'm really able to connect with people in that way."

"The pool of applicants of color is small. We're not just trying to draw from the pool, but rather we are seeking out more people to put into the pool in the first place."

- Michael Nguyen

# THE BENEFITS OF RECRUITING & RETAINING TEACHERS OF COLOR

"As a teacher of Color, I have had to juggle many hats, aside from just my teaching—I'm the faculty advisor to many clubs, the teacher that writes most students letters of recommendation, the one that stays late to help students, the one who drives them places. Many students call me mom, something common to several women of Color teachers on campus."<sup>28</sup>

Significantly increasing the number and relative percent of teachers of Color is necessary in order to dramatically improve student experiences and outcomes – especially for our most marginalized and historically underserved youth.

## Teachers of Color Improve Outcomes for Students of Color

Multiple studies have shown that non-Black teachers have lower expectations for their Black and Latino students than their White and Asian students.<sup>35</sup> By contrast, Black teachers are more likely to believe in Black students' abilities to be successful<sup>36</sup> a phenomenon that also holds true for teachers of Color from other racial backgrounds.<sup>37</sup> Because a teacher's expectations can have a significant effect on student academic performance<sup>38</sup> as well as their development of a positive self identity (especially within an educational context) - the race of the teacher matters, especially for groups of students for whom school has often been an unwelcoming and hostile place. In one of the most widely recognized studies that compared racial student/teacher matching with academic outcomes, Thomas Dee at Stanford University demonstrated that Black children with Black teachers had increased achievement over Black children with non-Black teachers.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to contributing to positive identity development, teachers of Color are more likely to, and are generally better able to use culturally relevant teaching practices, draw on student vernacular, address pressing and present issues for students within the curriculum, and build strong relationships with their students through advocacy efforts.<sup>40</sup> They are also more likely to come from the communities that their students live in, which enables



them to draw on personal experiences, funds of knowledge,<sup>41</sup> and relationships in service of their students. Emerging research also provides evidence that students of Color, including Black boys, are less likely to be suspended when they have a teacher of the same race.<sup>42</sup>

## Teachers of Color Improve Outcomes for White Students

It is also important for White students to have teachers of Color. As author Gloria Ladson-Billings has noted, White children, from an early age onwards, need to experience “black competence.”<sup>43</sup> Such experiences can disrupt implicit racial bias from forming. Through daily interactions with more people of Color, including those in positions of authority, White students (like all students) will be better able to recognize problematic stereotypes they hold, and develop more nuanced perspectives about people from other racial backgrounds. Furthermore, through increased exposure to multiple perspectives and cultures, White students will be able to more easily navigate spaces within a multiracial society and relationships among a populace where they are increasingly in the minority. New research also suggests that White students, like their peers of Color, often prefer teachers of Color.<sup>44</sup>

An Phan  
SFTR English Resident

## Teachers of Color Create Broader Benefits for Schools and Communities

In 1978, Nancy Arnez at Howard University famously identified at least 12 significantly detrimental consequences that came as a result of policies adopted after *Brown v. Board of Education* which included the loss of jobs for Black teachers, the loss of millions of dollars in earned income for Black teachers and communities, disproportionate numbers of Black students suspended and expelled from school, and the victimization of Black students by their misclassification into special education classes.<sup>45</sup> While significantly increasing the number of teachers of Color in the U.S. would not immediately or automatically reverse these problems, it would likely serve as a catalyst for such change to begin occurring on a broader scale.



There is not only a shortage of teachers of Color in this country, but a shortage of teachers in general.<sup>46</sup> In California, the number of people attending teacher preparation programs has plummeted by nearly 75% during the last decade.<sup>47</sup> Investing resources and attention towards increasing the number of teachers of Color would help address this looming national crisis as well.

José Padilla  
SFTR Bilingual Elementary Resident



# "SOUL CARE" AS A GUIDING VALUE IN THE RECRUITMENT OF TEACHERS OF COLOR

*Soul Care  
involves  
relationships,  
personal  
spiritual growth,  
inner healing  
and change,  
rest and  
rejuvenation... It  
slows down the  
frenetic lifestyle  
to make time for  
the soul.<sup>48</sup>*

## The Concept of Soul Care

The concept of Soul Care originates from religious institutions, particularly churches, and is an articulation of the commitment that community members make to deeply caring about each other. While this language originates from the church, it has been applied in non-religious settings, for example by organizations working with veterans or providing grief counseling<sup>49</sup> and by other describing effective approaches to recruiting teachers of Color.<sup>50</sup>

Educators, policymakers, and others who work with and care about children often talk about caring for the "whole child", but rarely are the needs of the "whole teacher" addressed. The concept of Soul Care is an invitation to recognize that teachers, including prospective teachers, are also whole beings, and ensuring that people are whole and healthy requires the community around them to attend to their physical, emotional, and often spiritual needs. For some, these spiritual needs are in fact religious; for others, their spiritual needs are fulfilled through meditation, connection with the environment, creation of art, dancing, cooking and eating communal meals, and engaging in community organizing.

## Applying the Concept of "Soul Care" to Recruiting Teachers of Color

Any organization, university, or preparation program that is serious about recruiting teachers of Color needs to be committed to creating conditions where they can thrive individually and collectively. Before people can thrive (akin to what Abraham Maslow characterizes as "self actualization")<sup>51</sup>, they need their immediate needs met. For teacher preparation programs, this means ensuring that new teaching candidates will have stable

# Kimberly Rosario

## Residency Placement

Math

Bessie Carmichael Middle School

## Currently Teaching

Math

James Lick Middle School



### When did you first consider teaching?

*I started right out of high school working with the AVID program – Advanced Via Individual Determination – as a tutor. I still had a desire to go into science, research, or vet medicine. But I realized that I felt happier working with and motivating students to understand the math concepts that I was teaching so I made the decision about 4 years out of high school that I wanted to be a teacher.*

### What barriers did you encounter on your path to becoming a teacher?

*One of the barriers was getting into a program because of the testing. I had gotten my degree in mathematics and I specifically went through a degree program at Sacramento State that allowed me to waive the CSET, but despite my waiver I still had to pass the CSET to get into a program. I also have a child, and one of my concerns was how I would make the program work and still be a full time parent.*

### What supports do you feel set you up to be successful as a teacher of color?

*Working with Maggie Dominguez, my incredible mentor teacher, I was able to experience what classroom management was like in her classroom and implement those practices in her classroom through my residency year. Because I was able to learn those management techniques that really focused on being culturally responsive and keeping the student in the classroom, I'm able to implement them in my classroom now. And I think I'm having a better experience than some of the new teachers at our school who are first year teachers and didn't learn those techniques.*

and affordable places to live and enough money for food, transportation, and other amenities. Thinking even more broadly about addressing peoples' needs, this paper draws from practices that are commonly held in churches about attending to the "souls" of community members. This principle speaks to values that are often absent from initiatives and efforts to recruit people of Color into the teaching field.

### Focusing On What Matters Most

One feature of Soul Care is to focus on what matters most to people. In this context, it is the responsibility of teacher preparation programs to learn about the people they meet and demonstrate care about their values, families, and stories. The San Francisco Teacher Residency strives to learn more deeply about prospective applicants, and asks questions such as: *What practices do you rely on to stay physically and emotionally healthy? What makes you laugh? What are your hobbies and activities you enjoy doing with some spare time? Who are the important people in your life?* SFTR believes that asking these personal questions is a way to demonstrate care, which is especially important to prioritize with applicants of Color. Furthermore, SFTR has a goal of helping prospective applicants develop a belief they wouldn't have to compromise on or abandon any of these soul-nourishing aspects of their life in order to pursue a teaching career.

The San Francisco Teacher Residency intentionally separates learning more about prospective candidates from the application and admissions process so that people never feel that they are being formally assessed on answers to personal questions. Staff may pose these questions when meeting someone at a tabling event, during one-on-one program tours, or during an informal conversation after a group information session. Prospective applicants are also given a place to provide some of this information, at their discretion, through a contact form on the program's website. Finally, applicants are told explicitly that the information they provide is meant to help the program tailor support as they consider applying.

Maiya Coilton  
SFTR Elementary Resident





## Collectivism

Embedding elements of Soul Care into teacher recruitment requires practitioners to demonstrate to prospective applicants of Color that in addition to the individual support they'll receive, structures are in place to support their success as a group. It is important to demonstrate to prospective new teachers, especially people of Color, that they will be part of such a community. This could include:

- Communicating directly to prospective applicants that the program has a commitment to supporting participants of Color as a group;
- Hosting recruitment events that are explicitly for teachers of Color to speak about their needs, learn about the program's commitment to meeting them, and for the purpose of beginning to build community;
- Developing a program to connect prospective teachers of Color with current teachers of Color who can serve as paid mentors during the application process, as well as throughout the preparation program;
- Create and/or identify spaces for teacher preparation candidates of Color to study and lesson-plan together. This could also involve purchasing food for groups of people when they get together for such purposes.

Amber Walker  
SFTR Math Resident



## Rituals

There are a variety of ways that organizations can demonstrate that they are committed to their participants as “whole people”. For example, there may be rituals practiced by program staff (especially staff of Color) that prospective applicants can be invited to participate in, or participants can be supported to share their own practices with peers. For example, the San Francisco Teacher Residency sometimes ends sessions with a “unity clap” (also called *Isang Bagsak*) which was used by Filipino/a and Latino/a organizers during the United Farm Workers Movement, and creates space for participants to offer public appreciations for people in their

immediate or broader communities. Using community circles and facilitated discussions at recruitment events as opposed to the traditional desks-in-rows structure can symbolize an organization's values to prospective participants.

### Storytelling

Another approach that is rooted in practices of Soul Care is storytelling. Staff members can share personal stories with prospective applicants, and vice versa, which demonstrates that the organization is one that values the full set of experiences that individuals bring with them. Recruiters can share their own journeys, demonstrate vulnerability, and to invite prospective applicants to share their stories as well. These stories can also be shared through visual art, social media, performance, poetry, etc., as well as in person or in writing.

Bianca Shui  
SFTR Science Resident



# Betty Flores

## Residency Placement:

Bilingual Elementary

Cesar Chavez Elementary School



### When did you first consider teaching?

*I first considered teaching as long ago as I can remember, since I was little. I would always be asked what I wanted to do when I grew up and I always answered with: teacher. Initially it was more like I want to be in the classroom and teach students and I thought, 'Oh it's such an easy job or something that is fun, right?' Later in my adult life it just took a different turn where I saw there's a lot of injustice in my own narrative about education and I was sure that other people were feeling this or experiencing this.*

### What barriers did you encounter on your path to becoming a teacher?

*I think one of the biggest barriers was income. As a first generation college student within my family I struggled a lot just with knowing if I could even afford higher education. Also not having counselors or even just examples of people like me moving up into these higher paying jobs or a career path. There was no example in my own life of someone that was getting into teaching.*

*Also, growing up I only had White teachers so I never fit into the stories that we were reading or writing about, and it took me some time to realize that I could be a teacher.*

### What helped you persist and overcome these barriers? What might help others?

*Having a community and a support team that motivates us into really believing this is possible. Community is definitely needed to support what we're feeling or what we're thinking about that may seem impossible. Having that guidance and those teachers is important to this work, which then creates this full circle of how we get into and stay in this work.*

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

## I. Get your house in order before inviting guests over

If you set up a beautiful table to host a dinner party but the rest of your home is a mess, your guests will see beyond the spread in front of them to the chaos in the background. Efforts to recruit people of Color into the teaching profession need to begin with changes to the structures and conditions within a university, preparation program, and partnering school districts, thereby making the recruitment efforts an extension of the practices that are already in place.

Questions that programs could ask themselves when conducting such an internal audit include:

- What percent of our faculty members and school leaders identify as people of Color?
- Do our teacher preparation courses prominently feature scholarship by researchers and theorists of Color?
- What structures exist to help credential candidates forge deep relationships with peers and faculty?
- Do we have committees or organizations within our school of education or program specifically for teachers of Color?
- Do we co-coordinate community events with local non profit organizations?

## II. Recruit communities, not individuals

Coordinate community events with and for educators of Color who teach in your local district, work on your staff, and have

DeVaughn Exum  
SFTR Elementary Resident



participated in your program, along with their families, friends, and guests. Provide food, host the events in a welcoming environment (which might not be on a university campus), and include speakers, films, poetry readings, etc., that are relevant to the experience of students and educators of Color. Find ways to share your program, but don't only invite people so that you can pitch the opportunity to them.

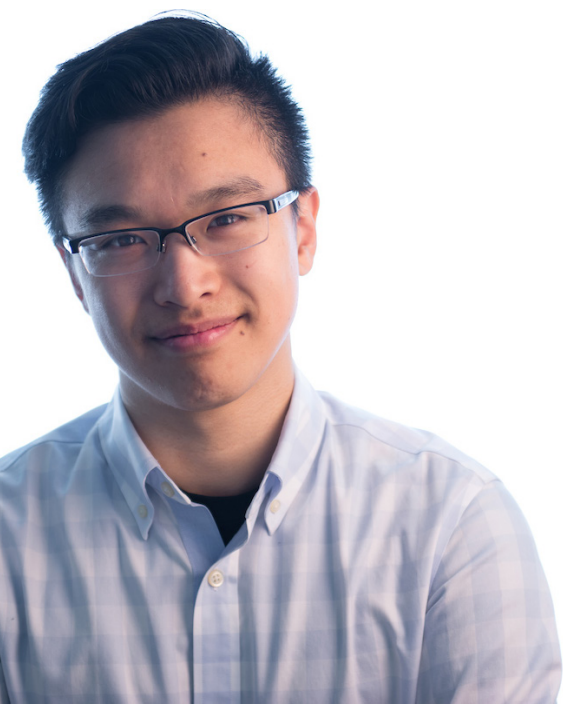
### III. Admit conditionally yet support unconditionally

Don't place the burden entirely on prospective program applicants to become eligible and complete their application process alone. Instead, conditionally admit prospective candidates who can meet a minimum threshold, ideally based more on dispositions, aspirations, values, and/or experience than test scores and undergraduate pedigree. Once these applicants are admitted, provide them with support to meet the terms of their conditional admission, including group and one-on-one tutoring/mentoring to support them with test preparation, completing application documents, and writing admissions essays.

Offering conditional admissions does not mean you are lowering expectations or compromising quality; the requirements for admission don't need to change, but rather the timeline for demonstrating program readiness becomes more flexible and personalized. For example, California requires that teacher candidates pass several tests before they earn a credential, but we believe that teacher preparation programs have the discretion to interpret these policies in ways that would allow them to conditionally admit more candidates while they are still working on passing the exams.

Along with its university partners, the San Francisco Teacher Residency provided conditional admissions to 14 candidates of Color (as well as additional White candidates) for the 2016-17 year, and paid for tutoring and test fees for some of them. Nearly 80% passed their exams and joined the program. Furthermore, program staff have stayed in communication with the applicants who did not pass, offering ongoing support as they prepared to re-take their exams.

Kendrick Chow  
SFTR Chemistry Resident





# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- I. Allow aspiring teachers to demonstrate subject matter competency in multiple ways, and advocate for the development of assessment measures that do not maintain or exacerbate racial disparities.

Expand the list of ways that prospective teachers can demonstrate subject matter competency, not just through multiple-choice examinations like the PRAXIS or the California Subject Examinations for Teachers. For example, explore the use of portfolio assessments and other authentic assessments as alternatives to testing, and expand the use of university waivers based on course completion in a comparable subject area. Simultaneously, provide prospective teachers with the ability to demonstrate cultural competence in multiple ways, and validate that such competence is as important as any other type of competency that we expect teachers to possess.

- II. Develop statewide strategies for eliminating racial disparities in pass rates on teacher licensure exams.<sup>52</sup>

Invest in programs that support people of Color in preparing for and passing the required exams, while simultaneously overhauling the exams to ensure that they are not racially biased against people of Color.

- III. Incentivize teacher preparation programs to invest in diversifying the teacher workforce.

Teacher preparation programs need to demonstrate that they are committed to diversifying their candidate pool by taking certain actions and allocating resources to support these outcomes. States should provide matching funds to such programs to

coordinate and hire mentors who can support prospective teachers through the eligibility and application process, reimburse qualifying candidates for testing and application fees, and coordinate community-based recruiting events.

#### IV. Support high-school teacher academies and paraprofessional-to-teacher programs.

These programs already exist in many school districts, but they would benefit from additional state funding. Efforts to recruit teachers of Color will not have a widespread impact if they focus only on college students. High school-based teaching academies can help encourage more students overall, especially youth of Color, to consider and access teaching careers. In many school districts, the paraprofessional workforce tends to be more racially diverse than it's teachers, but more barriers - especially financial ones - need to be dismantled before larger numbers of paraprofessionals can reasonably prepare for and transition into teaching positions.

#### V. Invest in collective action through partnerships

In order to significantly increase the number of teachers of Color in our country, we can't just look to teacher preparation programs to solve this problem. Because prospective teachers are influenced by factors that include teacher salaries and working conditions in schools, a collective effort is needed between a variety of stakeholders to address these multifaceted challenges. For example, teacher residency programs are typically partnerships between school districts and preparation programs; 45% of teacher residency participants identify as people of color, far ahead of national rates.<sup>53</sup>

JZ Gong  
SFTR Biology Resident



# CONCLUSION

There is strong evidence which suggests that students of Color would be better off if they had more teachers who reflected their own racial backgrounds. Unfortunately, this disparity is not widely recognized as a cause for inequitable student outcomes, and is not therefore seen as a crucial component to addressing these problems. While many in the education and teacher preparation communities purport to believe in the importance of teacher diversity, as a field we have failed to walk our talk. Many pay lip service to this issue and lament the racial imbalance between teachers and students, but collective efforts are far from commensurate with the scale of change that students deserve. As individual organizations and as a field, we need to look in the mirror and answer this question: what are we really doing, beyond our brochures, to make our community a place where teachers of Color can thrive?

The significant underrepresentation of people of Color in the teaching field is an issue that must be addressed by practitioners and policymakers. Those involved with teacher recruitment and preparation would benefit by investing more time and resources into their prospective teachers, akin to the way that churches demonstrate care for their parishioners. In order to do this successfully, more resources and greater flexibility is needed from policymakers. Some of the resources needed are financial – for example, money to establish mentoring programs for aspiring teachers of Color and to pay for their test preparation and fees. And some of the resources are structural, such as overhauling the teacher licensure exam process entirely.

Beyond having slick brochures and savvy social media strategies, we need to do a better job of caring for and about the people employed to help raise our children. Conditions need to be

created and nourished within our districts, schools, and teacher preparation program, where educators can give so much of themselves while also having their own needs met and spirits constantly replenished. It is our responsibility to care for the whole personhood of our teachers, and until this is happening, teacher shortages – especially the racialized ones – will persist.

We hope that readers of this report can draw from the ideas, examples, and recommendations shared herein and feel obligated, inspired, and empowered to take action right away. Our young people are all depending on us to do so.

Tori Tamu  
SFTR Math Resident



# ORGANIZATIONS

## Institute for Teachers of Color

[www.instituteforteachersofcolor.org](http://www.instituteforteachersofcolor.org)

The Institute for Teachers of Color (ITOC) is an annual three-day professional development institute that supports the growth, success and retention of teachers of Color who work in public schools serving students of Color. A unique collaboration between the disciplines of Teacher Education, Educational Leadership and Ethnic Studies, this national conference rigorously selects approximately 80 ITOC Fellows each summer to cultivate their racial justice leadership capacities as educational change agents.

## Black Teacher Project

[www.BlackTeacherProject.org](http://www.BlackTeacherProject.org)

The Black Teacher Project (BTP) recruits, develops and sustains Black teachers. Their premise is that Black educators offer indispensable insights into the lived realities of navigating schooling institutions, as well as into the social structures of the United States. The BTP (1) develops specific recruitment strategies for future Black teachers, (2) develops data driven supports for Black teachers to sustain themselves personally and professionally, and (3) conducts research on Black teacher sustainability.

## People's Education Movement

[www.peoplesed.weebly.com](http://www.peoplesed.weebly.com) (Los Angeles)

[www.facebook.com/peoplesbayarea](https://www.facebook.com/peoplesbayarea) (San Francisco Bay Area)

The People's Education Movement (People's Ed) seeks to build autonomous communities through transformative love and justice. They recognize mis-education as a vehicle of oppression because they believe schooling was created to colonize and dehumanize our/their communities. People's Ed works to create a critical educational approach that is culturally-responsive and linguistically validating.

Alejandra Reynoso  
SFTR English Resident





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The San Francisco Teacher Residency (SFTR) improves academic and social emotional outcomes for students in San Francisco public schools by recruiting, preparing, and supporting excellent and equity-centered teachers. Through an innovative partnership between the San Francisco Unified School District, the United Educators of San Francisco, the University of San Francisco, and the Stanford Teacher Education Program, SFTR has trained over 150 teachers in and for high-needs schools in San Francisco since 2010. 95% of SFTR graduates are still teaching, and the program has a 5-year retention rate of 80%. Two-thirds of SFTR teacher residents identify as people of Color.

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