



# **PORTRAITS OF ANTI-RACIST ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO TEACHING IN THE U.S.**

Framing Teacher Development for Community,  
Justice, and Visionaries

**CONRA D. GIST, EDITOR**

*Portraits of Anti-racist Alternative Routes to Teaching in the U.S.: Framing Teacher Development for Community, Justice, and Visionaries* portrays how a critical teacher development framework for Teachers of Color can be applied to alternative routes to teaching and professional development program initiatives to actualize commitments to communities, social justice, and visionaries. The types of anti-racist structures, vehicles for justice, tailored and responsive preparation, and community-based partnerships and leadership identified by program initiatives provide a sketch of possibilities for school principals, policymakers, community organizers, teacher education programs, and district personnel to work together as key stakeholders to begin challenging and dismantling systems of oppression that restrict the recruitment and retention of Teachers of Color in schools. *Portraits of Anti-racist Alternative Routes to Teaching in the U.S.* compels us to stir-up a radical imagination to strengthen communities, work for justice, and grow visionaries.

**Conra D. Gist, PhD**, is Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Arkansas and holds a PhD in Urban Education at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center. Her research agenda integrates two key areas of study—racial/ethnic teacher diversity and teacher development—and takes an interdisciplinary approach to explore how culturally responsive pedagogy, critical social theories, and African American history intersect to produce just and transformative teaching and learning possibilities. She started her teaching career in Brooklyn, NY as a fourth grade teacher and currently serves as Principal Investigator for the Teacher Testimony Project, an initiative that challenges the silencing of Teachers of Color through the development and featuring of teacher testimonies. As a 2016 Spencer/National Academy of Education Postdoctoral Fellow, she is also Principal Investigator for a national study examining the experiences of Black Teachers in Grow Your Own Programs.

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ADVANCE PRAISE FOR

## **Portraits of Anti-racist Alternative Routes to Teaching in the U.S.**

“Given the ongoing debate regarding alternative teacher preparation, Gist challenges traditional teacher preparation with exemplars of routes that have successfully recruited, prepared, and retained underrepresented teachers committed to social justice. For each route presented in the chapters, commentaries are uniquely provided to extend the conversation. This volume will assist teacher educators in developing a vision of new possibilities without compromising our commitment to educational and social justice.”

—*Belinda Bustos Flores, PhD, Professor & Associate Dean of Professional Preparation,  
Assessment, & Accreditation, University of Texas at San Antonio*

“This is an enduring architectural digest that features structural innovations that support the entry of Teachers of Color to the profession. Critical teacher development that includes pillars—relational, intersectional and collective—makes this a timeless design for communities and teacher education visionaries.”

—*La Vonne I. Neal, PhD, Associate Vice President & Professor,  
Northern Illinois University*



Portraits of Anti-racist  
Alternative Routes to  
Teaching in the U.S.

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being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work  
in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ  
Philippians 1:6





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# Teacher Development for Community, Justice and Visionaries

CONRA D. GIST

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The preparation and development of teachers is contested terrain in the field of education. At stake is claim to who owns the right to license and develop teachers who will prepare future generations. As a consequence of this battle, the merits of alternative routes to teaching (ARTs)—characterized by troubling neoliberal policies and practices—are often sidelined, leaving possibilities for critical collaborative social justice work frequently overlooked. On the one hand you have neoliberal supporters highlighting research that asserts Teach for America (TFA) teachers, for example, are better at raising student achievement than traditionally prepared teachers (Clark, Chiang, McConnell, Sonnenfeld, & Erbe, 2013). On the other hand, you have critical researchers contending that although this appears to be a common sense line of inquiry, it represents the coalescing of increased private interest and competition (Lipman, 2002) and reduced government control and elitism (Kumashiro, 2010), all aligned to distort the work of justice by claiming to be vanguards of the New Civil Rights Movement (Duncan, 2009). Looking from the margins of the debate both sides appear stuck in a “dangerous dichotomy” (Grossman, McDonald, Hammerness, & Ronfeldt, 2008), and in the process, social justice alliances are weakened by the struggle. For one, the fact is alternative preparation programs are unlikely to be extinguished from the field of teacher education in the future. If critical researchers and scholars are to meet the challenge of reframing the dominant narrative towards the central issue of educational justice for marginalized youth in the United States, then we need a

vision of what critical teacher development can look like, not simply a clear picture of what it is not. To address this issue, this book presents program portraits of what ARTs and professional development initiatives can look like when focused on recruiting and retaining Teachers of Color (i.e., Teachers who identify as Hispanic, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, or multiple races). By featuring four distinct program initiatives, and the visions and designs that distinguish them, we can begin to better understand how alternative teacher development models for Teachers of Color can take shape.

## ALTERNATIVES ROUTES TO TEACHING

Alternative certification is a narrowly defined term used to note policy regulations that allow for sidestepping traditional licensing protocols to offer quick entry to the teaching profession. Typically such permissions are granted to program initiatives that recruit aspiring teachers to enter the profession outside of the traditional teacher education program design and structure (Feistritzer, 2011). However, all ARTs are not reliant on alternative certification as a means to certify teachers. Zeichner and Hutchinson (2008) explain that traditionally ARTs have been defined as “anything other than a four-or-five year undergraduate program in a college or university, a definition that classifies college and university postbaccalaureate teacher-preparation programs as alternative” (p. 17). Further, they note, “the choice between a traditional program and an alternative route is not a choice between some professional preparation and no such preparation, but rather a decision about the timing and institutional context for teacher preparation and the mix of professional knowledge and skills to be acquired” (p. 19).

Grossman and Loeb (2008) explain ARTs by differentiating between program models depending on the philosophy/mission, providers, recruitment and selection, labor market needs addressed, and timing and focus of preparation. This conceptual framing offers a useful interpretation of how all teacher development models can be conceived and executed across a range of models. Scholars and policymakers must more closely analyze the motives and outcomes associated with ARTs to understand how they address teacher shortages as well as their philosophical and justice commitments related to the mission and design of educator preparation and teacher development. Of particular interest in this volume are programs that take a critical stance on schools and communities by viewing them from strength-based perspectives, positioning education as a social reconstructivist vehicle for individual and collective agency, and advocate and/or advance strategies, coalitions, and practices that challenge broader systems of structural racism that rely on unjust power relations and social inequality.