

The Enduring Fight for Justice

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This special issue of *Voices in Urban Education (VUE)* is a powerful tribute to the life and work of our friend, mentor, and colleague, Norm Fructher, who we unexpectedly lost late last year. Norm was a giant in the education justice movement here in New York City, and across the river in Newark, New Jersey. His career spanned decades, and included a variety of roles in and around education policy and practice. From a community organizer, to a school leader, to a funder, to a member of the NYC Panel for Education Policy, Norm's commitment to bridging the world of education policy research and grassroots community organizing seeded and helped shape decades of work here at the NYU Metro Center. In 1994, He co-founded The Institute for Education & Social Policy (IESP) at NYU. Norm's insistence on equity in education did not waver. It was while at IESP, that Norm would make significant contributions to two lasting, cornerstone projects that would remain impactful for years to come, namely, the ASD Nest Program and the Campaign For Fiscal Equity. Norm helped foster inclusive learning environments for all students, and in supporting parents in their lawsuit against New York State to ensure a quality education for their children, he would have a key role in the state legislation that would, years later, allocate billions of additional dollars for New York City and State Public Schools. In time Norm would bring the IESP team to the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) at Brown University, and eventually return to NYU Metro in 2017 to solidify NYU Metro's commitment to grassroots community partnerships and the education justice movement. Today, the Education Justice Research and Organizing Collaborative (EJROC) represents Norm's vision and belief in the power of deep community partnerships between universities and education justice movements. Our work continues to strengthen grassroots parent and youth organizing here in NYC and across the country. We have been long standing partners with [Coalition for Education Justice \(CEJ\)](#) and the [Alliance for Quality Education \(AQE\)](#), supporting their campaigns for Culturally Responsive Education and full funding of New York schools. We have also been crucial to building grassroots pushback to the national attacks on anti-racist curriculum, LGBTQ students, and other diversity and equity initiatives through [HEAL Together](#). We've also doubled down on Norm's commitment to supporting and amplifying youth justice work, continuing our support for the [Urban Youth Collaborative \(UYC\)](#) in their demand for Police Free Schools, and expanding our community of partnerships to include [IntegrateNYC](#) and other youth organizing groups fighting for school integration. Norm's legacy lives on through our work and the many lives he's impacted.

While Norm's direct role in the various education justice movements evolved through the years, his influence and impact remain prominent. His writing served as a consistent reminder of his wisdom and insight into the generational challenges plaguing education. As a Senior Consultant at NYU Metro Center, Norm was a regular contributor to our blog series, [Perspectives](#), authoring 35 essays addressing various topics related to educational equity and school transformation. This special issue of *VUE* is a compendium of these contributions. We want to thank Dr. Ann Marcus, NYU Professor of Higher Education and dear friend of Norm's, for the idea to collect all of Norm's brilliant critiques, insights, and inspiration in one place. As it turns out, Norm had previously spoken to his friend and colleague Bob Gottlieb, Emeritus Professor, Occidental College, about wanting to pull his pieces together for a publication, and Bob assured us Norm would have been happy to have his work honored in this way. We give our thanks to Bob and Norm's other collaborators on some of these essays, Dr. Christina Mokhtar-Ross, independent scholar of education research, and Dorothy Siegel, co-founder of the ASD Nest Program at NYU Metro Center, for permission to include the

essays they co-authored with Norm, and for their dedication to educational justice as well. We are also deeply grateful to Norm's wife, Dr. Heather Lewis, for her blessing on this project.

Norm's legacy lives on through his writings and in so many other ways, including through the vast networks of education justice organizers in NYC and across the country who stand on his strong shoulders. His impact is felt in the relationships he nurtured, the research-informed organizing campaigns he continues to inspire, and in every step, large and small, toward greater equity and racial justice in our schools. We miss him and will honor his legacy by continuing to build upon his enormous contributions toward a better world.