

C3 Hawai'i: Making Our Social Justice Education Mission Explicit

In 1916, John Dewey wrote, “As a society becomes more enlightened, it realizes that it is responsible *not* to transmit and conserve the whole of its existing achievements, but only such as make for a better future society. The school is its chief agency for the accomplishment of this end” (Dewey, 1916, p. 20).

From this standpoint, teaching is a political act and schools have the power to promote a more socially just society through the curriculum, pedagogies, and institutional structures that they develop and maintain. This is social justice education—“full and equal participation of all groups in a [school]...[through educational practices that are] democratic and participatory, inclusive and affirming of human agency and human capacities for working collaboratively to create change” (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007, p. 1-2).

Social justice education is at the heart of the C3 Teachers movement in Hawai‘i, and in the past couple of days, one of my mentors, Dr. Maya Soetoro-Ng reminded me that we need to make this mission explicit. In correspondence from her position [Matsunaga Institute for Peace & Conflict Resolution](#), she called on various organizations to craft and post statements on their websites, social media, and other spaces of influence and connection that directly speak to their commitment to education for the enhancement of civil liberties, social justice, and personal peace.

So, in the words of Dr. Soetoro-Ng, we at C3 Hawai‘i would like to make clear that:

“We are part of an American institution of culture and conscience. Our mission speaks broadly of the commitment to human rights, civil liberties, environmental stewardship and positive peace. In order to nourish these commitments, we seek to deepen our understanding of one another and our common humanity, to learn of and teach about the powerful experiences and

universal needs of myriad and diverse peoples. We are firmly against any action that discriminates against or unfairly targets refugees, immigrants, women, native peoples, people of color, Arabs and Muslims, because such actions undermine the integrity of the nation and fail to reflect the moral courage that is owed to its people” (M. Soetoro-Ng, personal communication, January 29, 2017).

With this in mind, it is our belief that C3 inspired social studies education can help us all move forward in our collective pursuit for a *better future society*.

Adams, M., Bell, L. A., Griffin, P. (2007). *Teaching for diversity and social justice*. New York: Routledge.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and Education: An introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: The Free Press.