

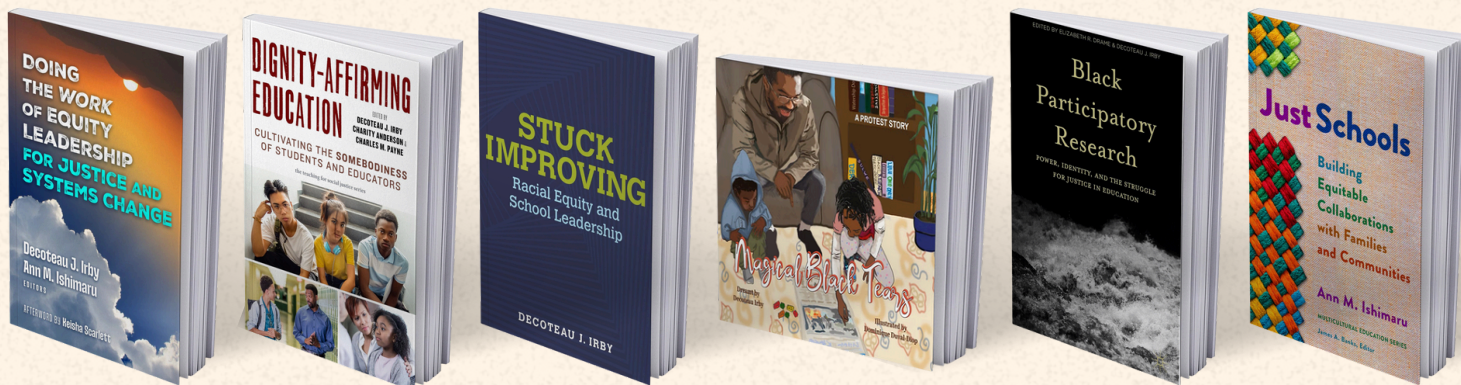
Dr. Decoteau J. Irby
& Dr. Ann M. Ishimaru

MEDIA KIT



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For media inquiries contact:

Nanda Dyssou, Publicist
nanda@corioliscompany.com
(424)-226-6148

ABOUT DR. IRBY



 @DECOTEAUBLACK

 @DECOTEAUIRBY

 DECOTEAU J. IRBY

Dr. Decoteau J. Irby is a father, author, artist, and educator who works each and every day to advance education equity and justice for Black and Brown children and youth in community spaces, schools and districts, and higher education. His core philosophy is that when you improve learning conditions and opportunities through providing abundant resources and affirming support, children and young people's aspirations, efforts, and high level academic performance will follow.

A professor at the University of Illinois Chicago, he teaches in the College of Education's top-ranked Urban Education Leadership program, co-directs the UIC Center for Urban Education Leadership, and leads the Brothers Teaching Initiative. He organizes Bronzeville's Juneteenth Youth Baseball and Softball Tournament, tends community gardens, and advocates for vibrant public spaces on Chicago's South Side. A self-taught guitarist, songwriter, and occasional performer, he has released three music projects under the name Decoteau Black, exploring Black love, struggle, and liberation.

LONG BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Decoteau J. Irby has spent his entire career advancing education justice for Black and Brown students, be it within community-based education spaces, classrooms of academia, or alongside educators in schools and districts. He is a father, author, artist, and educator who works each and every day to ensure Black and Brown children and youth get life experiences, learning opportunities, and resources that affirm their human dignity.

Dr. Irby began his career as an educator in Philadelphia, PA, supporting first generation high school students and their families in their efforts to gain access to four year colleges, while designing and teaching hip-hop based education courses at life skills centers with formerly incarcerated youth, and supporting them in turning their lives toward more positive directions.

Whether working with college, college-bound, adjudicated, or out-of-school students, Dr. Irby continually learned two important lessons. First, with the right support and encouragement, Black and Brown students of all backgrounds and abilities can surpass almost any educational demand. Second, the conditions and resources in the learning environment directly shape Black and Brown students' experiences, aspirations, and ultimately their efforts. If you improve the learning conditions and opportunities, then increased aspirations, efforts, and performance will follow.

Dr. Irby combines these valuable lessons from Philadelphia with his formal studies at College of Charleston and Temple University, and his personal experiences growing up in South Carolina to partner with school, district, and higher education leaders to bring about transformative changes in schools, non-profits, and neighborhoods. In all he does he carries with him a commitment to racial and social justice, cooperativism, creativity, and radical optimism that it is possible to create a more racially just world.


A professor at the University of Illinois Chicago, he teaches in the College of Education's top-ranked Urban Education Leadership program and co-directs the UIC Center for Urban Education Leadership. He is the university's 2024 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Faculty Award recipient, in recognition of his fearless leadership and advocacy to make UIC a welcoming and inclusive place to work and learn.

ABOUT DR. ISHIMARU



 @ANNISHIMARU

 @PROF-ISHIMARU.BSKY.SOCIAL

 ANN M. ISHIMARU

Dr. Ann M. Ishimaru is an award-winning scholar, writer, educator and the Killinger Endowed Chair and Professor of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Policy at the University of Washington College of Education. Through her work, she cultivates the leadership and solidarities of educators, organizational leaders and racially minoritized youth, families and communities to realize more transformative futures. In addition to many peer-reviewed articles in top-tier educational research journals, she is also the author of *Just Schools: Building Equitable Collaborations with Families and Communities* (Teachers College Press, 2020).

LONG BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Ann M. Ishimaru (Japanese American Yonsei/she/her) is a researcher, writer, educator, and the Killinger Endowed Chair and Professor of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Policy at the University of Washington College of Education. Through her community- and practice-engaged scholarship, she cultivates the leadership and solidarities of educators and racially minoritized youth, families and communities in pursuit of dignity, justice and wellbeing.

Dr. Ishimaru's body of work unfolds from two key premises. First, leadership plays a crucial role in transforming the longstanding racial injustices reproduced by US public schooling policies, practices and everyday interactions. Second, we arrive at better understandings and solutions to systemic inequities when those directly affected by these problems influence key processes and decisions. Drawing on solidarity-driven codesign methodologies and deep research-community-practice partnerships, Dr. Ishimaru's scholarship and teaching support leaders and collaboratives in realizing more humanizing educational systems, data literacies, relationalities and futures.

Dr. Ishimaru directs the Just Educational Leadership Institute, which hosts the annual Leading towards Justice Symposium as well as numerous research partnerships. She is a Principal Investigator with the Early Literacy Collaborative (ELC), a Research-Community-Practice Partnership with Seattle Public Schools, the Black Child Development Institute, and Seattle Public Libraries. Funded by the W.T. Grant Foundation, the ELC fosters Black family and educator transformative agency to codesign identity-affirming critical literacy practices with and for elementary Black boys. Dr. Ishimaru is also a co-PI of the Measures that Matter Project, a collaborative supported by the Spencer Foundation to transform how formal educational systems develop and use community-driven measures in educational improvement efforts. In partnership with Dare2Be and Renton School District, she also supports the Aunties and Uncles in the School Initiative to tap collective childrearing practices of fictive kin in supporting middle school youth wellbeing. With Dr. Megan Bang, she also led the Family Leadership Design Collaborative from 2015 to 2023.

Dr. Ishimaru is the Faculty Research Director of the Leadership for Learning EdD program. She serves on numerous advisory and editorial boards, is a member of the AERA Distinguished Contributions to Research in Education Award Committee, and for the past 7 years, has been a Jackson Scholars of Color Program Mentor with the University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA). Within that same professional association, she co-founded the Asian American Pacific Islander Educational Leadership Special Interest Group (SIG). Her work has been recognized by numerous awards, including the 2017 Exemplary Contributions to Practice-Engaged Research Award from the American Educational Research Association. In 2023-2024, she served as the UW College of Education Faculty President.

In addition to peer-reviewed articles in top-tier educational research journals, Dr. Ishimaru published *Just Schools: Building Equitable Collaborations with Families and Communities*, with Teachers College Press in 2020. Her latest book, with Dr. Decoteau Irby, *Doing the Work of Equity Leadership for Justice and Systems Change*, will be published this September by Teachers College Press. She lives in Seattle, Washington, with her husband, 3 children, 2 cats, and 4 chickens. Outside of work, you can find her cheering from the sidelines at youth soccer or ultimate games, supporting the taiko performance group she co-founded in Portland, trying new foods in her global travels, or serving up shaved ice at her temple's Obon festival.

DOING THE *WORK* OF EQUITY LEADERSHIP FOR JUSTICE AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

"This incredible resource is filled with experiences, tools, and frameworks. I know my own copy will have tattered pages from how often I reference it."

—Lynnette Mawhinney, professor of urban education, and founder and director of Visual Studies in Education Lab, Rutgers University—Newark

"This powerful resource equips readers with strategies and hard-won lessons for leading systemic change."

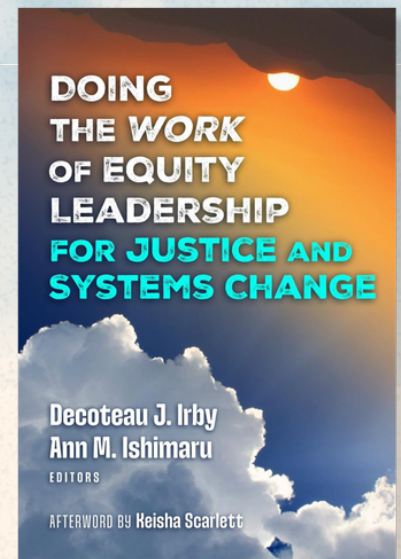
—James Earl Davis, Bernard C. Watson Endowed Chair in Urban Education, Temple University

Publisher:
Teachers College Press

Price:
Hardcover \$129.00 | Paperback \$42.95

Publication Date:
September 26, 2025

ISBN-13:
978-0807787496 | 978-0807787489



This book reveals the complex and crucial work of sustaining justice-focused educational systems change in the face of subtle resistance and outright attacks.

Scholars and practitioners, who have worked together in various capacities across different school systems, examine systemic equity leadership in U.S. public schools over the course of nearly a decade and across a time of profound racial and historical change.

This volume weaves together real-world insights, research-based strategies, and practical tools for transforming P–12 education systems into more equitable and just learning spaces. Contributors explore the early days of district equity leadership sparked by the Obama administration's focus on civil rights in education; Black Lives Matter (beginning with the Million Hoodies Movement for Justice); the proliferation of formal equity director roles, policies, and priorities; and the recent politically driven anti-DEI backlash.

This book is important reading for school leaders, district personnel, policymakers, and everyone who cares about a public education that works for all students.

Book Features:

- Provides bird's-eye and on-the-ground accounts of equity leadership to address broad questions and map invisible trends that have influenced how equity leadership happens.
- Explores approaches to district-wide equity leadership that emerged on the heels of Trayvon Martin's death, in what we now understand as the era of Black Lives Matter.
- Uses a frame of mornings, middays, and evenings to account for the cyclical nature of equity leadership and the limits and possibilities of working from within school systems to affect transformative change.
- Goes beyond the experience of any one school leader or team by illuminating organizational conditions, routines, networks, and practices.
- Includes insights on establishing district equity offices and institutionalizing equitable processes; using data to influence change and create accountability; and designing formal and informal networks that support the day-to-day work.





SPEAKERS



DR. DECOTEAU J. IRBY

Dr. Decoteau J. Irby is a father, author, artist, and educator who works each and every day to advance education equity and justice for Black and Brown children and youth in community spaces, schools and districts, and higher education. His core philosophy is that when you improve learning conditions and opportunities through providing abundant resources and affirming support, children and young people's aspirations, efforts, and high level academic performance will follow.

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 decoteauirby.com  [@decoteaublack](https://www.instagram.com/decoteaublack)  [@DecoteauIrby](https://twitter.com/DecoteauIrby)  [Decoteau J. Irby](https://www.linkedin.com/in/DecoteauJ.Irby)

DR. ANN M. ISHIMARU

Dr. Ann M. Ishimaru is an award-winning scholar, writer, educator and the Killinger Endowed Chair and Professor of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Policy at the University of Washington College of Education. Through her community-engaged scholarship, she cultivates the leadership and solidarities of educators, organizational leaders and racially minoritized youth, families and communities to realize more transformative futures. In addition to many peer-reviewed articles in top-tier educational research journals, she is also the author of *Just Schools: Building Equitable Collaborations with Families and Communities* (Teachers College Press, 2020) and co-editor of *Doing the Work of Equity Leadership for Justice and Systems Change*, with Decoteau J. Irby (Teachers College Press, 2025).

 annishimaru.com  [@annishimaru](https://www.instagram.com/annishimaru)
 [@prof-ishimaru.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/prof-ishimaru.bsky.social)  [Ann M. Ishimaru](https://www.linkedin.com/in/AnnM.Ishimaru)



SPEAKING SUBJECTS:

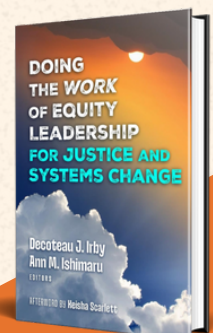
- Policy vs. practice in equity leadership
- District equity offices and equity directors under political backlash
- Embedding equity in daily school routines
- Community-designed educational futures
- Justice-centered accountability systems and youth as leaders in education
- Participatory action research in leadership
- Conditions that sustain equity change
- Protecting equity efforts amid hostility
- The emotional labor of equity work

"With its timely and unapologetic call to pursue transformative leadership within K-12 schools and systems, the book does not retreat from the necessary work of equity and justice leaders as they navigate the shifting and revisionist terrain of social movements and political pressures."

—James Earl Davis, Bernard C. Watson Endowed Chair in Urban Education, Temple University

"It is an incredible and much-needed resource, filled with critical, storied experiences, as well as tools and frameworks for doing equity work and critically caring for each other in the process."

—Lynnette Mawhinney, professor of urban education, and founder and director of Visual Studies in Education Lab, Rutgers University—Newark



CONTACT:

Nanda Dyssou, Publicist

nanda@corioliscompany.com | (424)-226-6148

TALKING POINTS

1. Equity work isn't comfortable. If you're not ready for pushback, you can't do it.
2. The work of equity leadership is also not about sprinkling diversity into a broken system, but about rebuilding the system itself, because systems produce the results they're designed to produce, so if we want more equitable results, we have to redesign the system. We have to move strategically and be willing to color outside the lines of what is traditionally acceptable.
3. Diversity is who's in the room; equity is who shapes the agenda discussed in the room. If a school system's equity plan doesn't disrupt power, it's not a plan for true equity, rather it's surface level tokenism or performative inclusion, designed for optics.
4. You can't be neutral in a system that produces injustice because that neutrality will always favor the status quo. When leaders benefit from inequity, dismantling it takes more than good intentions. It takes true courage and risk.
5. Black women leaders are often at the forefront of progress, and take the brunt of the attacks when the radicalized and gendered backlash comes.
6. This work isn't about individuals. We have to work together and build networks to succeed.
7. Struggle is necessary. Progress is possible. Equity is imperative.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. Tell us about the “morning, midday, evening” arc of equity leadership, and what can it tell us about sustaining momentum after a policy victory?
2. How can the framework of “spheres of control and influence” apply to gender-inclusion, to racial justice, immigrant rights, or other equity efforts?
3. What are the unique challenges and strategies for advancing equity when the pushback comes from inside the very system you’re trying to change?
4. How are national political currents, especially escalating anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation, reshaping what’s possible for district-level equity leaders?
5. Can you share an example where a “shock” to the system successfully catalyzed lasting equity reforms in a school or district?
6. How should leaders prepare themselves and their communities to act strategically when unexpected disruptions occur?
7. How can parents and educators recognize when a district’s equity agenda is more symbolic than substantive?
8. What does redistributing power actually look like in practice? Please share some examples.
9. What are the most common ways white, middle-class norms show up invisibly in school governance?
10. With the rise of anti-DEI legislation, how can the strategies for “reshaping the system” still gain traction?
11. In light of Supreme Court rollbacks on affirmative action, how should equity leaders adjust their advocacy?
12. How do you avoid equity work becoming another layer of bureaucracy, where endless planning documents are passed around with little material change?
13. What’s the single most common mistake equity leaders make when they try to reshape the system, and how can they avoid it?
14. How can leaders realistically push for deep systems change when even minimal reforms face political backlash?
15. What happens when leaders themselves are the main beneficiaries of inequity—can they ever truly dismantle it?
16. How do you reconcile the often slow pace of “doing the work” with the urgency of harm happening to students right now? What should we be doing at this moment to avoid losing any of our hard-won games?
17. How can the strategies you outline for reshaping educational systems still gain traction today when legal and political forces are actively working against them?
18. What’s the strategy when stakeholders fundamentally disagree on whether systemic inequity even exists?
19. Some of our listeners might be parents in predominantly white, middle-class school districts. In school board leadership and town halls, they might be outnumbered by anti-DEI advocates, or those only superficially in support of DEI in education. How can these listeners advance a serious equity agenda, rather than more performative policies?
20. Can you tell me about your own experience with advocacy and equity leadership?

PUBLISHED BOOKS

By Dr. Decoteau J. Irby

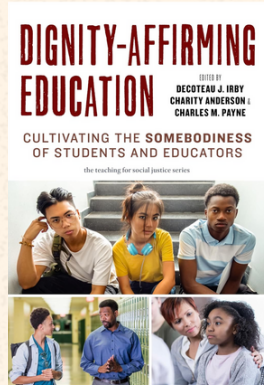
Book Title: Dignity-Affirming Education: Cultivating the Somebodiness of Students and Educators

Publisher Name: Teachers College Press

Publication Year: 2022

Price: Hardcover \$105.00
Paperback \$34.95

ISBN: 978-0807766538
978-0807766521



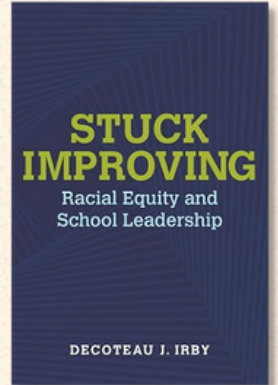
Book Title: Stuck Improving: Racial Equity and School Leadership

Publisher Name: Harvard Education Press

Publication Year: 2021

Price: Paperback \$34.00

ISBN: 978-1682536575



Book Title: Magical Black Tears: A Protest Story

Publication Year: 2021

Price: Hardcover \$16.95

ISBN: 978-1736543603



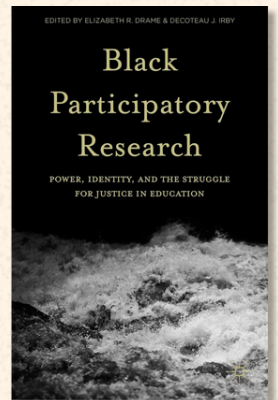
Book Title: Black Participatory Research: Power, Identity, and the Struggle for Justice in Education

Publisher Name: Palgrave Macmillan

Publication Year: 2015

Price: Hardcover \$105.30

ISBN: 978-1137468987



By Dr. Ann M. Ishimaru

Book Title: Just Schools: Building Equitable Collaborations with Families and Communities

Publisher Name: Teachers College Press

Publication Year: 2019

Price: Hardcover \$111.00
Paperback \$36.95

ISBN: 978-0807763209
978-0807763193

