

HEALTH JUSTICE ON THE MOVE

By: Nae Nhae Pasahahnunwut &
Erynne Jackson
Department of Epidemiology



What IS OUR GOAL?

Our goal is to create a children's book that explores real-life historical events related to social and health justice in New York City, focusing on issues of racial justice, health equity, and civil rights that are often left out of children's education.

Most children understand health in the traditional context of medicine, not public health. After reading our book, we hope we have made it clear that you can advocate for health in many different ways, in many different contexts, and for many different communities.

To equip young leaders with the knowledge and skills to engage thoughtfully with social issues, empowering the next generation of compassionate, informed leaders who will advocate for health and social




CALL TO ACTION!

Who's reading?

- Children ages 6 to 9 years
- Children of all backgrounds, but specifically in states, counties, cities, or school districts where the teaching of racial and health inequality is banned or lacking in quality.
- Both for children who are native born and foreign born.

Why Children? Because they are at a formative stage in their lives, where early exposure to important health messages can shape their attitudes, behaviors, and





Brown v. Board made it illegal to segregate schools based solely on race, but the promise of racial equity in education remains unfulfilled, including the nation's largest school district, New York City.

Today, 83% of Black students and 73% of Latinx students in the NYC public school system attend a school that is 90% nonwhite, while 34% of white students attend a



Epidemiologic, Social, & Behavioral Justification

We must address how our institution perpetuates systems of harm entrenched by **systemic racism**. Access to a quality education—a fundamental right—has been historically denied to marginalized communities, perpetuating cycles of inequality. Literacy plays a critical role in **advancing racial equity** and **justice in education**. This is especially important at a time when **critical race theory**, **social justice**, **public health**, and **ethnic studies** are under attack.

For young readers, learning is about understanding the world and creating a fairer future. The **life course perspective** shows how early barriers, like limited access to education, impact people throughout their lives. By addressing these issues early, children can build a strong

To align with the NYC Reads goals!

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical race theory is an academic concept that recognizes racism not as an individual bias or prejudice, but something that is heavily embedded in institutions, laws, and policies that uphold racial inequalities.

Why does the banning of critical race theory matter?

The banning of critical race theory suggests that we live in a colorblind society. However, we are far from it. Choosing to ban CRT ignores the roles that institutions, policies, and laws have played in the production of racial inequity. It ignores the root cause of health disparities and inhibits our ability to address and improve social determinants of health for

18 States

Have signed into law or similarly banned the teaching of critical race theory. The banning of critical race theory has been proposed in

As of 2025



Why a Children's Book?

The Storytelling Project Model



Lee Anne Bell and Rosemarie Roberts, *The Storytelling Curriculum: Learning about Race and Racism through Storytelling and Arts* (New York: Barnard College, 2008).

We chose to write a children's book for our health messaging product as storytelling is a powerful tool to engage young minds and encourage early understanding of important health topics, fostering empathy, awareness, and positive behavioral change from a young age.

We used the framework of Resistance Stories to highlight the resilience of individuals and communities who have fought against racism and inequities throughout history. These stories focus on unsung heroes and "sheroes," many of whom have been overlooked or vilified in mainstream historical narratives, yet their actions have shaped our ongoing struggle for



Why a Children's Book?

Focusing on 6 to 9 year olds as children this age are in developing logical skills and are more capable of grasping concrete concepts. This makes it the ideal time to introduce and reinforce health and social justice messages in a way that is meaningful and relatable, setting up a strong foundation for the formal development stages of

Concrete Operational Stage: Major turning point in the child's cognitive development as it marks the beginning of logical or operational thought.

...to set up foundation for Formal Operational Stage/Abstract Thinking!

Constructivist Approach to Learning: Children actively build understanding by exploring their environment as "little scientists," rather than passively absorbing information.

Assimilation: Integration of new information into existing schemas.

Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development
THEORY

What's in OUR story?

Harlem Hospital Protests
Racial Equity

All of our storytelling principles and choice of events relates to health justice through a lens of social determinants, systems thinking, and public health! The events are ordered in a realistic route that readers can follow in real-life (map attached at the end)

Garbage Offensive
Social Determinants of Health

ACT UP Protests
Discrimination & Marginalization

Stop Asian Hate
Miscommunication & Mental Health

Stonewall Riots
Human Rights

Occupy Wall Street
Economic Inequities & Power Dynamics



WHO'S IN OUR STORY?

We wrote these stories based around two main characters, based in New York City, to reflect ourselves and the experiences we wish we had seen in our own early education. Through these characters, we explore the lessons, support, and opportunities that could have empowered us as we grew up. By sharing these stories, we hope to inspire young readers to see themselves in the narrative, recognize their own potential, and imagine a future where education is inclusive, equitable, and accessible to all.

Through research on cognitive development, we explored how children the ages 6 to 9 process their world. We reflected on their challenges, questions, and curiosity to create stories that capture how young minds think, feel, and engage.

The narrative we want to tell with our public health message is one of empowerment, awareness, and collective responsibility. We aim to highlight how health and well-being are influenced by the environment and social issues around us, especially in marginalized communities. Through this message, we hope to emphasize that positive change begins with awareness, understanding, and action of anyone and everyone.



Sharing the Story with NYC... AND the world!

Phase 1: NYC and Health Justice Specific

Main Dissemination Target: Parents, Community, & Schools

- Disseminate to parents in libraries, PTA meetings, town halls, schools, etc.
- Collaborate with local libraries, middle schools, community events, and book fairs to discuss book submissions, readings, and talks
- Utilize social media to showcase book and share author insights
- Contact publishing company for edits and illustrations for PHASE 2





Phase 2: other social justice Issues, Other States, and Potential for Global iMPACT

- If successful publication of “Health Justice on the Move”, we hope to create a series of children’s books that discuss major health and social justice movements in other states, and eventually, throughout the world.
- With the expansion of our series, we would utilize social media outlets, Amazon Kindle, and other digital outlets to reach our global population.
- Potential to make this into an activity book with spaces for stickers (book is their passport for the journey), real life activities, and interactions for children and their parents or anyone to participate in.



Societal Impact

Our hope is that our book inspires children to learn more about health justice and to take action in their own communities. They may not have the opportunity to learn about inequality in the classroom, but that does not stop them from taking their education into their own hands.



At the end of our book, there are QR codes that readers can scan to learn more about the specific events discussed in our book. To make the book more interactive, there is a specific QR code that provides a GPS route through all of the landmarks in our book, from the Harlem Hospital Center to the Brooklyn Bridge. We will measure our impact and behavioral goal by the number of QR scans and links clicked, also which links are most visited.

thank you!

