

OUR **TURN**



CELEBRATING STUDENT POWER.

FY 2022
Impact Report

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and how we put it
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DEAR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS.

What is Education Justice?

For Our Turn, education justice means the centering of Black, Indigenous, and students of color in data, curriculum, culture, communications, and funding. We know we can only achieve education justice when students exert decision-making power in their education—by elevating what works for them. Students' experiences serve as the evidence base for all priorities and, importantly, resources must follow. It isn't enough to just listen; we must actually shift power by enacting policies and funding the demands students have for their education.

Last year we shared that COVID-19 created a pressure cooker, as systemic injustices in education—which **always** existed—were now made even worse by the pandemic. Black, Indigenous, students of color, and other marginalized young people were facing challenges like no other generation, and all **without a roadmap**.

Yet, they also rose up boldly and unapologetically to demand education justice.

Following their lead, we engaged in a unique year of (re)visioning—and doubling down on our model. We looked in the mirror and asked ourselves the hard questions...

Are we **actually** centering youth leaders in all facets of change-making? If we won a local battle, what impact did that have on the national culture of including—or not including—students at the policy decision-making table?

We recognized the enormous opportunity at hand. As community groups, educators, and administrators search for solutions now, who better to include than students?

We know students are powerful, and we lean into the challenge to shift the culture nationwide from ignoring their voices to including them as a “no-brainer” in education decision-making.

We want to see a world where district leaders, principals, and politicians think, **“Of course, we should collaborate with students,”** instead of “Why?” A world where we prioritize equity, versus incremental, one-size-fits-all approaches.

Nevertheless, even with all of the demand and pressure that compels us to look externally, we knew we also needed to look in the mirror. We are on a journey to discover the harmony between urgency and well-being for our full-time staff and student leaders. We're taking stock of the highs and lows along the way, as we endeavor to build a culture that supports the power of all in our orbit.

We've made real progress this year, which we hope you'll see in the following pages, and we're going to boldly persist in shaping an education system fueled by students.

Now more than ever, students need to be heard, we need to listen—and move to action.

With Power,

Mohan, Jaylen, & Syd

Mohan Sivaloganathan, CEO
Jaylen Adams, Executive Fellow
Syd Fryer, Executive Fellow



Mohan



Jaylen



Syd

SECTION 01

WHAT WE BELIEVE & HOW WE PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Let's face it: our education system is broken, and students know it.

Think about it. If you went to a restaurant, who is more likely to quickly identify that the service is slow or the food needs salt? **You**—or someone in an office miles away?

Students sit in classrooms every day and are just as capable of identifying and voicing their needs as you are when you eat at a restaurant. Their ability to generate solutions is unparalleled because they possess awareness, empathy, and purpose unlike any other generation.

That's why we put their knowledge at the center of all we do—determining our work, defining our priorities, and leading the way.

We recognize that solving our nation's education challenges is more complex than improving service at a restaurant. At the same time, we see that students from historically disenfranchised communities— Black, Indigenous, students of color, and queer and trans youth—are the key ingredient to shifting ingrained power dynamics and, most importantly, centering racial justice and equity-focused solutions.

A portrait of Amelia Federico, a young woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a white blazer with a small rainbow flag pin on the lapel. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a building.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT
AMELIA FEDERICO

Joined
2017

Key Projects

Colorado Mental Health Campaign
Colorado 2021 Electoral Campaign

**WE CAN'T REPAIR
GENERATIONS OF HARM
IF WE DON'T LISTEN
TO THE PEOPLE MOST
IMPACTED.**

"I see some movements and organizations advertising as 'student-led,' 'empowering young folks,' etc. But students are left out of decision-making spaces, are not given a real voice, or are just doing busy work in the background. Our Turn gave me the microphone I needed to advocate for the change I wanted to see in my community. I had the opportunity to shape campaign strategy, influence recruitment measures, and let my creative ideas come to fruition. Our Turn did this by creating a safe space to ask questions, bring new ideas forward, and exercise the humility to learn without the fear of not knowing."

At Our Turn, we work with students to create scalable systems so that including students at the decision-making table is second nature, not an afterthought.

To fuel our mission and create a more just and equitable education system, we focus on 3 impact areas:

- 1 Youth Leadership Development and Storytelling
- 2 Local and National Campaigns for Change
- 3 Building Capacity for Equity-Centered Youth Engagement

SECTION 02

OUR WORK IN ACTION.

Our Turn Youth leaders are bold, honest, and fearless. They inspire us every day.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT ARSHIA PAPARI

Joined
2022

Key Projects
Truth(Ed)

"I implore you...to have integrity, to have honor, and to act against fallacy and censorship."

Arshia is a Cadre Alum and TX Organizing Fellow who applied the messaging and school board advocacy training he received with his Cadre cohort to testify this summer at the Texas School Board Social Studies Standard Review for truth and transparency in Texas social studies curriculum.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND STORYTELLING.

Students already know what they need from their schools to be successful. They need a guaranteed seat at decision-making tables where adults are making plans and policy about—but largely without—they.

Our Turn helps students tell their stories and then pivot those experiences into action, raising their voices and demanding to be heard. For example, students may start by learning how to engage with political candidates and elected officials and then speak at their local board meeting on an issue that matters to them.

Our Recent Work

ROCK THE MIC. Through this initiative, students share their stories, reflecting on how their identity has shaped their educational experiences and what their dreams are for themselves, their communities, and future generations. We help share students' stories on social media, in local newspapers, and at public forums—and uses these lived experiences as fuel for our movement. This program can also act as an entry point to our local and national campaigns.

POLITICAL EDUCATION MODULES. From online Zoom classes to targeted trainings in partnership with local organizations, we equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to demand action, racial equity, and education justice.

FELLOWSHIPS. Critical to Our Turn's work are fellowships at the national and local levels. Our fellows serve in these leadership roles for anywhere from six months to four years, working alongside staff to engage partners, allies, and peers in strategic conversations. They also guide our campaigns and key priorities to ensure an active voice for young people at all tables.

In cities and states, we work closely with fellows in each coalition to address community problems with hyperlocal solutions. For example, in July, we launched our School Board Watch Fellowship in Atlanta, GA, providing intensive support to five student fellows over an eight-week period as they attended school board meetings, collected, analyzed, and shared data, and worked directly with board members, community leaders, and other allies to advocate for students.

We also strive to engage student leaders outside of our four coalitions. This summer, we launched our inaugural Cadre Leader Summer Cohort, which trained 12 high school students throughout the state of Texas to develop their organizing and leadership skills. Over a six-week period, Cadre leaders engaged in a variety of training, from power analysis in education decision-making to sharing their story of self and preparing testimonials for public comment. Across the country, we're convening cohorts of fellows with the tools and skills they need to fight for education justice in their communities.

No matter what, all that we do begins with students, and their experiences and needs become the fuel for our local and national campaigns.

"I see an Atlanta where the youth are well-informed and protected. Atlanta, and even the state of Georgia in general, is more diverse than it's ever been, and old practices must be updated to reflect this change. I am aware that a perfect Atlanta where no injustices never happen is hard to achieve, but that's why my vision for Atlanta is not perfection, but receptiveness, the ability to listen to the people, and grow and change appropriately with the times. I see an Atlanta where schools represent the needs of all students, and where school boards protect those needs, and if they aren't being met, the youth can trust that they can rely on those in power to act accordingly when attention is raised."

- Celine Liandisha, ATL Organizing Fellow

Our Turn Student Agenda

The Our Turn student agenda was developed through the collective power of young leaders. They know what a just, restorative, and equitable education system should look like, and have come together to define priorities and lead the way.

Nothing About Us, Without Us. Students - especially Black, Indigenous, and students of color - must be positioned as authentic partners in the decision-making process at every level of education.

Learning Centered on Justice. A just curriculum is truthful about our nation's history, affirms the intersectional identities of all students, and empowers us to be critical leaders—students deserve no less.

Prioritize Our Mental Health. Students deserve an education system that works to heal the generational trauma of years of systemic oppression. Mental health is not a luxury, it is a necessity

Our Schools, Our Culture. Students have the greatest understanding of what it takes to create a school culture that is safe and high-achieving. We reject one-size-fits-all thinking; we are intersectional beings who deserve to thrive. We demand restorative, collaborative, and culturally competent practices to fulfill our potential.

Fully Invest in Our Futures. Nowhere is systematic racism more transparent than in the unethical underfunding of our Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities and schools. We demand funding practices that meet the communicated needs and aspirations of our communities, regardless of zip code.

ITSOURTURN.ORG/STUDENT_AGENDA

LOCAL AND NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS FOR CHANGE.

As students hone their voices, learn about political activism tactics, and grow their power, they begin to spearhead the fight for the change they want to see.

Through local and national campaigns and coalition-building, students lead the way in achieving bold impact aligned with our youth leader-defined **Student Agenda**.

This year, students protested for demands at the intersection of education justice and environmental justice in Los Angeles; inspired bipartisan support for student-written tuition equity legislation in the North Carolina General Assembly; and participated in the creation and release of a school quality information dashboard for Denver Public Schools.

Local Campaign Impact in Progress

500+

Student and family health and livelihood will be protected at Jordan High School in Los Angeles

3,000+

Graduating high school seniors will be annually served by tuition equity legislation in North Carolina, including undocumented immigrants, DACA recipients, and those with Temporary Protected Status

90,250

Students served by Denver Public Schools in the 2021-2022 school year who now have access to a school quality data dashboard



"It's rare to even see a school district that even asks for students' feedback. That's why establishing a solid platform for students' voices is extremely crucial. I personally wasn't allowed or even encouraged to ever voice my opinions in the classroom because it was often viewed as a disrespectful thing and frowned upon. Which ultimately led me to feel unrepresented in the class and it was honestly very hard to even have a voice for myself overall. This is why I believe we need to do better as a nation to advocate and platform student voices so that every student feels represented. So I decided to join Our Turn."

*-Liza Akpoli,
TX Cadre Fellow*

09

Our Amazing Students

Youth leaders that participate are primarily high school and college aged, but often they advocate for systemic changes that benefit the entire K-16 education system



Identify with a marginalized group like BIPOC, LGTQIA+, and first-generation college attendees.

629

New Supporters
in FY2022



Student Fellows
in 10 States

TRUTH(Ed)

A national, student-driven campaign for education justice

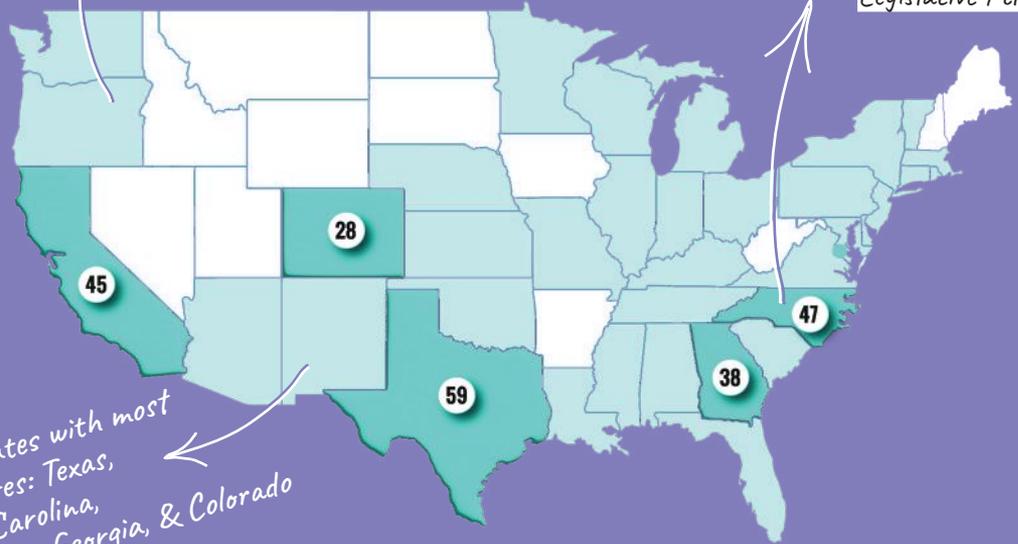
Nationally, Our Turn launched the **Truth(Ed)** campaign, with nearly 350 students (and counting!) pledging to join the fight for truth and justice in the education system and push back against growing anti-Critical Race Theory rhetoric and policies. Truth means the teaching of accurate history, the inclusion of culturally relevant curriculum, and the ability to have important conversations about the history of race and racism in our country. As politicians and pundits argue over teaching the facts about our country's racial history and deny the humanity of queer and trans youth, student voices are being ignored. We developed a toolkit to help students combat disinformation in their schools, track regressive education policies in their communities, and organize the collective power of young people to fight back.

This campaign saw a pivotal milestone with the Truth(Ed) Student Summit in April, which 39 students attended from 14 states across the country. Led by Our Turn student fellows, the event taught students core advocacy skills and dove deep into organizing around truth and justice in school curriculum. All surveyed student attendees reported high satisfaction with the trainings.

Nearly 350 Students & Allies Signed the Truth(Ed) Pledge From 35 States & Washington D.C.

"We have to work and organize to make education accessible as a true tool of liberation."

- Matt Grady,
Legislative Fellow



Top 5 States with most Signatures: Texas, North Carolina, California, Georgia, & Colorado

"We must work to be inclusive in our efforts to change education, unity over individualism, build your network and never be afraid to ask for help!"

*- Zeeshan Ali,
Former Campaign and
Community Fellow*



"It was a very empowering and enlightening experience being in a room full of individuals who wanted to hear what we as students had to say just as much as we wanted to hear what they had to say. When I was younger, and certainly before I got involved with Our Turn and organizing, I had never really even heard of a school board. This was such a nice opportunity to not only know school boards exist but have the chance to actually interact with the individuals comprising them in a comfortable, open space where I wasn't disregarded and discredited for being young as I have in the past. It was such an interesting set of conversations that held an amazing energy of solidarity and companionship with a group of decision-makers from all across the country who actually wanted to be there with us, listen, and commit to the betterment of the education system. I left feeling very valued, energized, and connected!"

***-Zaria Dempsey,
CO Organizing Fellow,
on speaking at a School Board Partners
event in July 2022.***



BUILDING CAPACITY FOR EQUITY-CENTERED YOUTH ENGAGEMENT.

Over the last year, we've set the building blocks for an education system co-designed by student leaders.

In the aftermath of COVID-19, as divisive politics and deepening racial tensions directly threaten the well-being and growth of young people, leaders are raising their hands and seeking allyship to advance equity- and student-centered strategies. We are answering the call by building from our base of activated student leaders and knowledge to advance audacious, transformative culture shifts in educational institutions and systems.

In the future, student input will be a required ingredient for education decision-making, and Our Turn is leading the way to advance this essential value through deep partnerships and strategic consulting.

We recognize that if we are the only ones centering students, then the broken education system will never be mended. But if we are able to shift power dynamics and mindsets, then long-term radical impact led by students will benefit generations to come.

Furthering this work is another way that we can ensure that including students in decision-making becomes second nature rather than an afterthought nationwide.

"We need to incorporate student engagement along with our efforts to improve the amount, depth, and scope of community engagement overall. In particular, rather than only responding to advocacy on specific issues, we need to think more about community views on our priorities, goals, and vision."

-SBP Cohort Member

Highlights

TRAINING & STRATEGY CONSULTING. Through partnerships with Education Trust Tennessee and the New Mexico Public Education Department's Equity Councils, we provided training, coaching, and strategy support for communities, leaders, and organizations looking to engage with students, particularly BIPOC students, more effectively.

TOOLKIT & DATA RESOURCES. To raise student voices and help adult leaders make student-informed decisions, we created and shared resources for organizations around the country. For an audience of superintendents, in partnership with Leading Now and TNTP, our students developed a Superintendent Road Map Toolkit, laying out strategies for administrators to ensure that we don't return to the "old normal" but instead move forward into the future of education as co-conspirators for education justice.

We also partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Atlanta Civic Site Youth Leadership Council to create, execute, and publish a survey of Atlanta youth's education and career goals, with a focus on Black students. The findings of the survey will be used to inform policymakers, funders, and youth-serving organizations in their missions to increase economic opportunities for Atlanta youth.

SCHOOL BOARD PARTNERS' SUMMER CONVENING. Our Turn student leaders traveled to Denver to engage in a critical, direct conversation with school board members from across the country during SBP's Summer Convening: Leading with Courage, Competence, and Impact. School board members from Miami, El Paso, and Chicago engaged in a fishbowl-style discussion with students, acknowledging the harms of white supremacy on the education system and discussing how to effectively engage youth, implement their feedback, and empower their voices to fight for education justice.

SECTION 03

ALLIES & OPERATIONS.

While our work centers on students, we know that we couldn't support them in their visionary advocacy without a strong group of partners, a dedication to operating in a way that lives our values, and the ability to effectively manage our financial operations towards impactful outcomes in the K-16 education system.



A SPECIAL THANKS.

We utilize strong partnerships with funders, policymakers, school boards, community leaders, thought partners, and youth at the local, state, and national levels. We also recognize the continued contributions of our board members.

We deeply appreciate your continued support in ensuring students nationwide are equipped to speak truth to power and advance education justice.

Board Members

Nicky Charles
Adam Cloth
Supreet Chinnan
Stuart Cobert
Josh Joseph
Chris Nicholson

Individual Donors

Supreet Chinnan
Adam Cloth
Stuart Cobert
Cathy & David Habib
Leslie Hume
Diana Nelson & John Atwater
Arthur Rock
Brian Spector

Foundation Donors

Annie E. Casey Foundation
Barr Foundation
Campaign for Our Shared Future
Carnegie Corporation of New York
Chan Zuckerberg Initiative
Colorado Health Foundation
The Education Trust - Tennessee
GPSN
New Mexico Public Education
Department
redefinED atlanta
RootED Denver
United Way of Central Carolinas
Walton Family Foundation
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

Strategic Partnerships

Adelante Education Coalition
American Business Immigration Coalition
America's Promise Alliance
Atlanta Thrive
Bridgespan
Campaign for Our Shared Future
Center for Racial Equity in Education
Children's Defense Fund - Texas
Coalition for Healthy Families
Colorado Youth Congress
Colorado Children's Campaign
DoSomething
Educators for Excellence (E4E)
Education Leaders of Color (EdLoc)
The Education Trust
The Education Trust - Tennessee
Equity in Education

Georgia Educators for Equity and Justice
Georgia Youth Justice Coalition
Great Education Colorado
Great Public Schools Now
Leading Now
Leading on Opportunity
Learn from History
NationSwell
New Mexico Public Education
Department
Next Generation Learning Challenges
Next Generation Men & Women
NYU Metropolitan Center for Research
on Equity and the Transformation of
Schools
ourBRIDGE for Kids
Partnership for Southern Equity
PIE Network
Picture Motion
Posse Foundation
RALLY
redefinED atlanta
Rodriguez Strategies
School Board Partners
Social Currant
Social Impact Exchange
Stand for Children
The Center for Black Educator
Development
TNTP
Transform Education Now
Unite Charlotte
The Whitaker Group

Foundation Spotlight



"redefinED atlanta is a 501(c)(3) public education non-profit founded in 2016 with the vision to transform Atlanta into a place where every student in every community receives a great K-12 public education. We do this work by engaging the community, advocating for equitable education and funding critical work. Prior to this year we were able to build relationships and coalitions with organizations that consist of parent and educator voices. However, we were missing the most important voice within the education community, the student voice. Partnering with Our Turn has been an honor. We were able to partner with Our Turn on the Students Issues Assembly and many of the issues that were elevated by students helped inform our advocacy strategies with district and school leadership. Not only has Our Turn given us the opportunity to have a complete coalition that uplifts all voices necessary in this work but the local organizer has provided perspective that has been invaluable. She has unapologetically advocated for students and shifted the mindset of many grassroots leaders within our coalition. Our space began as one of simply convening and has shifted to one of urgency, accountability and action."

"I believe youth leadership starts with community service, as service is crucial to building and empowering those around us. It starts with advocacy, as change does not come from being a bystander and waiting for someone else to start the conversation. It requires speaking out against injustice, and constantly fighting for change in school systems that are broken and need help. It means empowering and inspiring your peers to create a bigger movement to create more change."

*- Megan Sawatzky,
Culture and Community Fellow*

Financial Highlights

OPERATIONS & FINANCE.

Like many non-profit organizations, our existing challenges were compounded by COVID-19, while new ones arose. Despite the pandemic, we remained committed to maintaining a healthy financial position ensuring organizational stability and longevity.

You'll notice that in FY22 and FY23, Our Turn ended the year with a surplus that was allocated, in part, to fund a reserve that can support up to three months in operating expenses. The past two years have highlighted the importance of that reserve so we can continue our work amid economic uncertainty. Our Turn also secured a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan, which was forgiven, increasing revenue in FY22 and FY23.

The pandemic further highlighted the need to quickly mobilize and amplify student voices in the fight for education equity, and we're committed to maintaining operations to that end.

Finally, while we faced challenges, we also recognized that our students and staff may need additional support around mental health and professional development. We understood that we needed to shift our programs to better reflect the times.

It is never easy to face unforeseen challenges. At the same time, we rose to the occasion, fine-tuning our systems to ensure that we take care of our people, continue to align our funds to our values—for students and staff alike—and make a positive impact that will last for generations to come.

Together, we resiliently reflected, adapted, and reimaged our work.



Of revenue is contributed through individual gifts, corporate and foundation grants, as well as government grants

Because we value our student leaders, we commit to paying our Our Turn fellows, who often rise from the local advocacy level, a fair wage.



Of expenses directly support student leadership development, fellowship opportunities, and student-led campaigns



Year Ended

Revenues

	August 31, 2021	August 31, 2022*
Contributions & Grants	\$1,390,302	\$1,904,277
Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loan/ Grant	\$263,000	\$244,000
Program Service Revenue	\$0	\$73,333
Miscellaneous & In-kind Support	\$6,911	\$2,591
TOTAL REVENUES	\$1,660,213	\$2,224,201

Expenses

Program Services	\$1,037,905	\$1,237,171
Management & General	\$199,580	\$229,802
Fundraising	\$248,563	\$309,910
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,486,048	\$1,776,883

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS (SURPLUS/DEFICIT)	\$447,318	\$174,165
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$414,629	\$240,464
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	\$861,947	\$414,629

**Note, Fiscal Year Ending August 31, 2022 information is based on draft financials. To view our most up to date audited financial information, please visit www.itsourturn.org/financials*

SECTION 04

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE.

Our Turn and our youth leaders made real strides this year toward a more just, equitable education system that actually works for students. But we know that this fight is far from over.

In October, we welcomed our latest cohort of 17 new student fellows and 10 returning fellows. Coming from all across the country, our fellows will share their experiences, passions, and solutions with us. We are excited by their power and eager to share more of their stories and ideas with you in the coming months.

Underpinned by this base of student leaders, we will grow our leadership development work, focusing on fellow cohorts in cities and districts across the country. After the first convening of our Texas Cadre this summer, we're leaning into this model of student engagement and growth. We are launching Accountability Fellowships in Atlanta and Denver in 2023 and plan to expand and replicate these programs in more locations.

As the far-reaching impact of COVID-19 continues to grow, we're more committed than ever to holistic change in our education system. In order to put BIPOC students in the driver's seat when it comes to healing and liberatory education, **we need to widely share our practices—what we've learned through the course of our work and, most importantly, what students tell us works for them.**



WE HOPE YOU WILL JOIN US IN THE FIGHT FOR EDUCATION JUSTICE AHEAD.

"My vision of success for Atlanta involves not only supporting our students while they are in school, but putting out an education and resources to help them when they leave our schools as well. This also includes a community where all students are supported based on their individual needs, instead of a strict plan. Success would mean that the parents and other adult leaders who already left the education system would be willing to listen to students and open their minds to new ideas and suggestions."

*- Catherine Omeh,
ATL Storytelling and Social Media Fellow*

Remember the restaurant you visited—the one where you found the service lacking and the food underwhelming?

Students have told us loud and clear about the education they are being served. ***They've demonstrated, via their Student Agenda, that a one-size-fits-all model doesn't work.*** They expect a range of consistently high-quality solutions on their education menu, just like you expect a high-quality dish, no matter what you order.

Young leaders know exactly how their schools and adult decision-makers are failing them. It's past time to join forces with young people as they tell us that something isn't right—and if we give them the bullhorn to tell their stories and share their ideas for solutions, we can make a real impact for generations to come.

*Sincerely,
The Our Turn Team*

“The only way we can truly address the most pressing issues of our time—including racial and gender inequalities—is through educating our youth with the truth, rather than the whitewashed, sugarcoated version of American history that my and past generations were spoon-fed.”

—

*Maya Murali,
TX Storytelling and Social Media Fellow*



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GIVE
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