

# Education as a Fundamental Right

## A Speculative Narrative About Educational Dignity

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### INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of the State of Colorado was drafted in the spring of 1876 and approved by voters on July 1st of that year. Only 19,505 ballots were cast in that election; most, if not all, presumably by white men (Dunham, 1959). Article 9 of the Colorado Constitution concerns education, with Section 2 the “Establishment and Maintenance of Public Schools.” It states:

The general assembly shall, as soon as practicable, provide for the establishment and maintenance of a thorough and uniform system of free public schools throughout the state, wherein all residents of the state, between the ages of six and twenty-one years, may be educated gratuitously. One or more public schools shall be maintained in each school district within the state, at least three months in each year; any school district failing to have such school shall not be entitled to receive any portion of the school fund for that year.

We write 146 years after the Colorado Constitution was approved.<sup>2</sup> Article 9, in our estimate, is anemic for it lacks any mention of learning, equity, or dignity. Ambiguity of the “thorough and uniform” mandate has, for example, been referenced when upholding school finance policy that perpetuates funding disparities and other statewide inequities (Engdahl, 2013). We represent the Right2Learn Dignity Lab, or R2L, a community-based research and political advocacy group. Our practices center educational dignity (Espinoza & Vossoughi, 2014; Espinoza et al., 2020), and include efforts to create more dignity-affirming classrooms and school policies (i.e., Childress et al., in press; Sanchez, 2022). Furthermore, we seek to amend Article 9,

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Section 2 of the Colorado Constitution through a citizen-driven ballot initiative process, so that it may read:

Education is a fundamental right held by all human persons; it is a means for achieving social equality and necessary for the fulfillment of freedom, justice, and peace. The Colorado General Assembly shall protect, respect, and support this right. Public schools are sanctuaries, spaces where the inherent and inalienable dignity of the human person is inviolate, spaces where compassionate guidance abounds. In its effect, education for human growth and dignity strengthens the individual and community, it fosters agency rather than servitude, and promotes solidarity among all human persons. Furthermore, education enables the actualization of human potential through the arts, sciences, and humanities. The Colorado General Assembly shall create and maintain public schools as safe and healthy spaces where all human persons will experience their inherent dignity and understand the rights flowing from it. Guided by the principles of integrity and equity, the Colorado General Assembly shall ensure that all public school students have ongoing and diverse opportunities to meaningfully participate in their education. As a paramount requisite of education, meaningful participation fulfills the promise of the public schools as havens for learning and growth, crucibles for inquiry and experimentation, forums for dialogue and dissent.

We imagine that the forthcoming vignettes presented in this chapter take place in 2074, 50 years after the Colorado Constitution has been successfully amended.<sup>3</sup> It is necessary to amend our state constitution for many reasons, including the fact that students living in underresourced districts may not prosper to their fullest potential; we believe that everyone deserves an education that affirms their human dignity and worth regardless of race, ethnicity, social class, ability, nationality, sexual orientation, gender expression, and religious affiliation. We present educational concepts proposed in our amendment—such as actualization of human potential, meaningful participation, and educational dignity—as they may manifest in reality for people of different ages and backgrounds. We write in the speculative tense (Toliver, 2020) inspired by examples of counterstory (Martinez, 2020) and youth activism (e.g., Mirra & Garcia, 2020; Tivaringe & Kirshner, 2021). We presume that the state’s education clause has come to include the language of human dignity for half a century, and that it serves as a foundation for fulfilling the promise of freedom, justice, and peace for current and future generations (UNICEF, 1990).

## A HISTORY OF R2L

The following conversation occurs in 2074 among a class of students about the Right2Learn Dignity Lab, and what these students have learned about the group’s efforts. It is narrated by Luis, a 10th-grade student.

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“R2L started their work in the early 2000s. They believed everyone deserved an education that recognized and affirmed their dignity and worth. They amended our state’s educational clause to include the language of dignity. Today, on the 50th anniversary of that amendment passing, we continue their efforts and fight to secure a fundamental right to education that centralizes our inherent worth as human beings all over the world,” Ms. Padilla-Chavez began as she relaxed into her swinging chair, the ropes attached to the ceiling taut in her hands as she gracefully rocked back and forth.

To the class, she posed a question, “Does anyone have any more important background on R2L before we share some of our favorite highlights from what we’ve learned?”

A pause overtook the room as we all sunk into our ruminations. I didn’t have much to add, since I would be hosting the ceremony commemorating the anniversary later in the day. I was itching to hear what everyone else had to say.

Sweeping my eyes across the room, I looked across the circle at my friend, Frida, eyes unfocused, lost in thought, body slack in the big bean bag. The light from the afternoon sun shone through the big windows as similar looks of concentration filled the room.

To gain our attention, another student, Diego, raised his hand before carefully adding, “I thought it was so cool that their leadership in educational dignity was a product of agency to change the conditions around marginalization, isolation, and oppression within the U.S. public school system at that time. All R2L members were students, family members, and educators whose zip codes, immigration status, home languages, skin colors, family education, genders, or abilities determined the quality and access of their education. That was wild to me, to imagine the experiences they went through and had to bear witness to.”<sup>4</sup>

Nods of agreement went around the room.

Katie replied, “How about the fact that most of them started out as students in Professor Espinoza’s classes? Every year they’d add new members who shared the same passion for education. No initial funds, just a dream and a longing for the world to make sense, that led them to feel like family to one another.”

“I couldn’t even find anything about educational dignity before they started their handbook!” exclaimed Spencer. “Yet, they were able to create a small bubble of educational dignity when the state still stood behind ‘thorough and uniform.’”

Lema spoke: “I read an interview with one member who said they’d been influenced and inspired by enslaved people securing the right to learn in secrecy while harnessing its power to unfit us for servitude.<sup>5</sup> They also mentioned a Du Bois quote, their North Star:

Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental. If a people has preserved

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this right, then no matter how far it goes astray, no matter how many mistakes it makes, in the long run, in the unfolding of generations, it is going to come back to this right.<sup>6</sup>

“They were those folks’ dreams, and we are theirs,” Soraya observed.

Ms. Padilla-Chavez asked, “What other parts of the amendment do you live out today?”

Arliss joined the discussion: “They defined sanctuary as, ‘A sacred space of community to which one belongs, where our humanity is affirmed through the creation of meaningful social interactions.’<sup>7</sup> We live that now! They believed in dignity and sanctuary as concepts that held validity in human rights efforts, and wondered why in education these terms were nonexistent. We gain a sense of our dignity through learning experiences that recognize and cultivate the mind, humanity, and potential. Our inherent and inalienable dignity of a human person is inviolate. Those concepts provided the parameters for spaces we inhabit today. Environments where joy is cultivated through the sacredness of human connection and a validation of self.”

“I read,” noted Charla, “that they imagined a future where children are seen as capable beings whose curiosities and longings direct their journey and learning. That there would be a shared understanding that insatiable curiosity grows when nourished, and would be plentiful and in many forms. Learning spaces as sanctuary also lead to meaningful participation. Nowadays, we have agency, we can determine the course of our education, we can choose our own paths in life, cocreate our environment, and solve problems to make a difference in the world.”

Victor spoke, “Is there not also a link between equity and potential? Dignity requires governmental recognition of and respect for the potential of the human person. Equity is a pragmatic principle that can guide the fulfillment of the moral duty to create the most dynamic environment for all people.”<sup>8</sup>

Ms. Padilla-Chavez brought our conversation to a close by reminding us: “You are all far nobler than the prior education clause of our state’s constitution. Across the decades, the kind of public education made possible by the clause had shown itself to be inadequate to the imperative of social equality and susceptible to narrow interpretations that aided in the maintenance of caste. The clause was oriented toward the minimum duties of the government and not the existential demands of the human, how education was regarded as governmental service and not an essential activity of human and political life. The only conception of education that can plausibly satisfy the demands of dignity is one that embraces the majesty of life and the splendid potential of the human person.”<sup>9</sup>

## PRESENTING EDUCATIONAL DIGNITY

Following their class discussion, our narrator Luis reflects on their education while preparing to moderate a presentation about R2L that honors the 50th anniversary of successfully amending the Colorado Constitution.

The wheels of my chair glide against the carpet as I stand and shuffle my papers together, taking the sheets of my carefully crafted speech and sliding them into my folder. I really appreciate Ms. P. for lending me the plant room for the last 2 hours before my speech. I love learning near nature, my mind stimulated by the sheer beauty. Even at school, I still feel connected to the outside world.

I walk past the childcare center and take the long way to my locker, through the atrium where plants line the walls, and small trees adorn the pathways. I let my fingertips graze the green leaves. The lives of these plants represent the generations of students who sprouted from the seeds of life, hopes, and dreams planted by R2L members. Seeds they imagined atom-by-atom, seeds that previously did not exist. We are no longer seeds. We are a generation of strong trees and plants ready to flourish.

School was different before my time. The stories of suffering are, for me, just that—stories. I have never felt a lapse in my abilities, never had severely outdated books, or been told I would never make something of myself. The three interviews I conducted for today’s anniversary presentation were long! That was probably the hardest part with this assignment, and this privilege. I am eager to share stories of how profound education is, and what it meant to be denied dignified learning. An oral history of humble dreams, not for themselves, but for my generation and the generations to come.

I wait at the stage and peek at the audience of familiar faces. Principal Rose finally introduces me and the crowd erupts into cheers as I walk out into the spotlight. With each step, I feel magnified in my abilities because of the confidence and reassurance I have always felt at school. The expectation to do well is more of a comfort than a burden because my opinion has always held value with my peers and teachers.

“Thank you! I’m honored to be MCing the 50th anniversary of the amendment passing in our state that uplifted education to a fundamental right, an accomplishment much bigger than us. We’ve been learning about the Right2Learn Dignity Lab. Their story is one of family, passion, love, sacrifice, and bravery. A noble fight that changed the course of education. Not just for us, but for the generations before us and the generations that will come after us.

“I’d like to take us on a journey through time. This is an oral history from people of different ages and different walks of life. In their stories, a clear resonance of love, care, and trust embrace the senses: memories of

teachers and peers who have shaped who we have become because of the spaces and communities that were collaboratively created there. It is our belief that without these qualities, the sanctuaries we envision would not exist nor be sustainable.”<sup>10</sup>

I move to the side of the stage. A hologram pixelates from small devices on the floor, projecting the image of an elderly gentlerperson sitting in their rocking chair on a porch.

“I’d like to introduce Skye, who described to me their university education before the amendment passed. They were 20 at the time, in 2024, from a generation of learners whose right to education had yet to be defined by meaningful participation. We spoke about a world set up with oppressive systems. With our intersectional identities, experiencing indignities was prevalent. The experience of dignity is contingent. True to this, there lives a yearning for the recognition of our humanness, for safety, and for being seen and accepted. This is what comes through in their story. The promise of the inherent, inalienable, and inviolate recognition and protection of dignity as a chalice of fresh water to those who have walked the desert for generations past.”<sup>11</sup> Their story represents power and perseverance. They can help us understand a time when learning pathways were not designed to consider your potential, were not designed to make you feel welcomed in a school.”

### A FORMER STUDENT REMEMBERS

The projection of an elder with wrinkled hands holding a journal crackles to life onstage. They begin to read.

“My worst nightmare, a class mixed with undergrad and grad students. A perfect potion for my friend anxiety, whose favorite pastime seemed to be eating away at my already fragile self-confidence. His toxic voice filling my ear drums with loud doubts, my willingness to drown the sound out with my positive encouragement dwindling with every step towards my mini group of grad students. Must have been my stupendous luck, my professor volunteered herself to join as our fourth member.

“Sit down. Say Something. Don’t make yourself small.

“I couldn’t shake the unmistakable feeling of discomfort in university spaces. As if I was a computer and written into my programming was a code making me inherently incompatible with the software for belonging there.

“After a few minutes of silence, I remember offering up an idea, my once dim eyes lit up with wonder. The welcoming smile from my professor and the keen interest of my peers burned forever to memory. I said something about the book we were reading.

“At first nobody said anything. Even though they seemed so welcoming, I immediately began to second guess myself. Wishing I had kept my silly mouth shut.

“Only to realize their pause wasn’t one of dismissal, but one of quiet intricate thought and understanding. For the first time I was left baffled in a classroom, people actually heard me . . . saw me . . . considered ME!

“For the first time I felt valued as someone who could offer substance. Not merely the filler person or simple outsider I’d always considered myself. They weren’t looking down on me as I’d imagined myself looking up at them. They were looking straight across at me, treating me as an equal.

“As I continued with my university courses, I experienced this same shock over and over again as if the first time never happened. Each time my mind would be blown like a child getting their entire Christmas list from Santa under the tree. Because the feeling was never constant, the comfort was temporary, left for special occasions and specific classes.

“I’m hoping students never experience that shock anymore because all they’ve ever known was that feeling of belonging.”

*Luis pauses for a few moments while the audience members’ faces turn serious and introspective. Then he addresses the audience.*

“Schools were once treated as a means to an end. Students were merely given the basics to get through school and into the workforce. Today, students are treated as seeds of potential. When we walk into a class, the barriers to equitable resources and supplies are gone. The burden of inferior access is lifted from our shoulders. Teachers have pledged a lifelong commitment to address, reflect upon, and heal our schools of bias, racism, and prejudice. No more are students tasked with mustering the courage to face a classroom where they doubt themselves and feel others doubting them as well. Instead, schools and their communities take on a collective challenge to constantly and consciously uphold one another’s dignity.

“Our next speaker is Ms. Ari. As a teacher, she wrote a letter to her former students. The letter was written in 2026, two years after the amendment passed. R2L made a wish for everyone—including the educator—to go beyond recognizing. That we must also act and provide so that fundamental rights are given and protected as sacred. Because we are advocates for the protection of students’ dignity. R2L knew dignity was a responsibility to be enacted—and argued for—every day. Through her we can see one perspective of a teacher who took this challenge seriously.”<sup>12</sup>

## A TEACHER’S LETTER

A hologram of a woman with a gypsum complexion appears at the center of the stage. She takes a moment to regard the audience and then begins to read from the paper she holds.

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“Dear companions,

“One of you asked recently why I’m a teacher. Actually, one of you asked, ‘If we stress you out so much, why are you even here?’ I told you all that I needed time to think about my answer. I hope you do not think that I needed time to make something up because what I needed was time to give you a real and honest response. Here’s my roundabout answer:

“I started teaching almost 15 years ago now. In my first year, I made great connections with students, and though I felt challenged, I had a strong feeling that I had chosen the perfect career. In my second year, all of my strategies and techniques were challenged by a group of students that I simply was not prepared for. The call-and-response that my previous students loved was met with scoffs, my storytelling received eye rolls, and I often felt defeated because I felt like I was not building strong connections like I had before. More than anything, I tried my hardest not to blame the students. After all, I was the adult, and it was *my* responsibility to create a great learning environment. We all soldiered on, and somehow we made it through that tough year. In that same fashion, though with fewer challenges, another five groups of students went by. During my first 7 years, I worked hard. I got along well with students, and felt quite successful. I was even named ‘Teacher of the Year’ at our school a couple of times. Yet through all of it, I knew something was missing, and felt that my craft as a teacher was not without fault.

“Beginning my 8th year, our principal said we would be using the newly passed amendment to the education clause to plan for a new year with students. The amendment had been passed 2 years prior, and I remember thinking that it was a big victory. I’m not proud to admit this, but the amendment soon started to slip from my mind as I fell back into my routines.

“We were asked that day to get into groups by content, and to brainstorm new and creative ways to meet the new requirements of the education clause. As I joined my group, my principal pulled me aside and said, ‘I wouldn’t stress this too much, you do a great job already.’ What should have been pride actually felt more like guilt. I felt a strange pit in my stomach, thinking, what does that even mean?

“At home that night, I did my own work with the language of the amendment. I read it over and over, and continued to find holes in my practice. The amendment called for meaningful participation, and I thought of all the times I’d brushed off student comments when they said a lesson was boring, insisting that it was not my job to entertain them. Is it not though? Am I not here to make learning enticing and worthwhile?

“I thought of the amendment’s promise to ‘foster agency’ and remembered that I still required students to ask for permission to use the restroom, something that felt so weirdly controlling. So how much of the amendment was I actually following? Not enough, in my opinion. I decided then that I would reach out to like-minded educators and continue to work on my



practices. I promised myself, and all future students, that I would not be the teacher who got by with the bare minimum. I started meeting with other educators, and together we came up with new structures that allowed for a safe classroom environment while also putting student dignity at the forefront. We had honest conversations with students about what their experience was like in school, and received invaluable feedback from them.

“So, to answer the initial question, I am here because that principal was partially wrong. Maybe I was doing a great job at teaching before the amendment. But I certainly was not doing a great job with implementing the new education clause. Now, it is my personal wish to leave this profession feeling like I genuinely gave it my best effort. I was frustrated the other day because I am a human, and sometimes I get frustrated. That does not mean, however, that I do not cherish all my time with you all, and that I am not fully invested in bringing to life our education clause to the best of my ability.”

*Luis returns to the stage.*

“Thank you, Ms. Ari, for showing us how the act of questioning opens the gates for dialogue and change. As Professor Manuel Espinoza observed about meaningful participation, ‘When you ask a question, especially in the classroom, you have the power to control the future, for at least the next few seconds.’”

The crowd chuckles and some students lovingly raise their hands. Luis gestures appreciatively at them and continues.

“A couple weeks ago I was at parent–teacher conferences when I saw my friend’s mother. She’s a woman I admire and respect. While walking with her through our school, something compelled me to ask her about her perspective. The amended constitution is an argument for the human fully realized. What does a mother or father do with their understanding of the amendment? Do they walk through the schoolhouse door differently? What do their children demand? What do adolescents insist upon? How have parents allowed themselves to imagine education as an odyssey through which a child acts as a full participant in their own life, education as a means for becoming the person they imagine themselves to be?<sup>13</sup>

“Please help me welcome Mrs. Valencia.”

### A PARENT’S STORY

As applause fills the room, Mrs. Valencia steps onto the stage, nervous but determined, and starts reading from a piece of paper.

“A few weeks ago, I was participating in my child’s parent–teacher conference. It was hard to fathom how much things have changed since I was in grade school. Like most things in life, there are pros and cons. However, I was fixated on systemic challenges I experienced rather than the good;

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overcrowded schools, lack of funding, crumbling infrastructure, more innovation in teacher education, even outright disrespect for students and their potential. I recall once when I was in 7th grade. A social studies teacher popped his head in our English as a Second Language classroom and stated—for all of us to hear—that resources were being wasted on us because we wouldn't ever amount to anything and would not attend college.

“What a long way we have come. I am surprised at how the education system has shifted positively for this generation. Parents, like me, are more engaged in our children's education because we feel more welcome and invited to help foster academic success through at-home activities and in-class participation. We feel valued as integral pieces of this learning community.

“My child has never come home with stories of institutional disregard of their human worth. On the contrary, everything in the school building is engineered to let them know that they are at the center and in charge of their educational path. It is clear that teachers are also more financially sustained and given better resources and social and emotional development training. Through these investments, students now have an equal chance for success because anyone that steps into educational spaces does so with the understanding of educational dignity and the utmost regard for every little human life in their hands. What a difference it makes to have schools be supported in recruiting, training, and offering overall support to teachers, educators, and administrators. The switch to a new standard and process for public school education based on the needs of dignity-bearing and rights-holding persons. When education is seen as a fundamental right, our obligations to students are more durable, and the duties of the state more heightened.<sup>14</sup>

“Schools today are places of human growth and potential, sanctuaries built around compassion, community-building spaces that are safe and healthy, and abound with meaningful participation.<sup>15</sup> Since this was not always the case, at times these hallways have felt foreign to me. The contrast is vastly different. Nowadays, students work on a solar greenhouse, graphing plant growth, classifying and comparing plants, and harvesting food and flowers. Applicable stuff. They learn about physics from the structure of the building, and they investigate visual electrical-mechanical systems to learn about input and output similar to the arteries and veins in their bodies. The problems they study in this ‘classroom’ are real-world efforts, not bits of abstract work. Rather than completing worksheets, students participate in the concrete experiences that underlie mathematics, engineering, science, and social studies.

“The classrooms have been redesigned into a new system that includes several modular interdisciplinary pavilions: a design studio for drawing and painting; a spatial relationship environment for construction, movement, music, drama, and cognitive skill development; a garden; a portable cooking

center; a media center with computer and audiovisual instruments; the ‘nest,’ a soft and flexible environment with subdued color, texture, and sound, for listening and role-playing; a showcase environment for drawing, creative dramatics, and learning about light, color, reflection, and refraction; and a trash management center for developing ecological understanding. Real-life and applicable learning in an environment that is a functional art form, a place of beauty, and a motivational center for learning.<sup>16</sup> The landscape and cultural community are part of the learning environment, too. The structure and spaces where our children go to school matter. Today, our children feel belonging—from the chair where they sit to the way they engage with curricula—that’s the embodiment of our state’s education clause.”

### A CURRENT STUDENT SPEAKS

Following these remarks, Luis introduces a current student named Emilia Valentina, the last speaker at the celebratory presentation whose comments conclude the event.

“We are grateful to our speakers who joined us physically, holographically, and through writing. Their experiences not only help us celebrate this occasion, they remind us of the unique beauty of the human experience. We thank them for sharing with us tonight.

“Today, as we celebrate this anniversary, I think it’s important to acknowledge how far we’ve come since the days of our ancestors. When some people ask me about this, I find it hard to describe because so much is a feeling. But, as we’ve heard, examples help, too. I think of our school’s design and how our classes and curriculum are structured. I feel love and care. I see how much thought is put into the different aspects of our education. Consider, were you surprised that we get to choose what time to arrive at school by taking our chronotype into consideration? It’s incredible how much our teachers care about so many aspects of our well-being, including how our biological rhythms affect our energy levels and performance.<sup>17</sup> Or how when we first entered this school, we were given the time to get to know one another deeply as individuals to a point where we are encouraged to share our vulnerabilities, daily challenges, and learn the aspects of communicating emotion to strengthen our bonds.<sup>18</sup>

“To us, some of what I mention may be things that we take for granted because it’s part of our everyday lives. These things are normal to us, but they were things that our predecessors dreamt could be reality, and as a community we live these dreams into being by virtue of how we consistently uphold and value one another’s dignity.

“As we close this evening, we invite you to stay in this space of dignity. Behold one another and the community we have created together, built

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upon the foundations created by our ancestors. Remember the work that was done before us, and take it with you everywhere you go. Dignity isn't contained within school, nor should it be. It was the dream of R2L that schools would be dignified spaces, yes; but that was only the beginning. Imagine a world where the dignified experiences of school are so commonplace that you expect them everywhere else. What a vision that would be.”

### CODA

What is preventing us from fighting to secure an education that affirms our human rights? What does dreaming these possibilities provide for our sociological imagination? We, the Right2Learn Dignity Lab, envision the prior vignettes as both plausible and necessary. Our dreams took shape, in 2018, when we decided to channel all we had learned from the interdisciplinary study of educational dignity toward amending the Colorado Constitution. In 2020, we drafted the amended clause shared at the beginning of this chapter. In 2021, alongside members of the Student Bill of Rights working group from Denver Public Schools, we testified before the Colorado Legislative Council about our amendment. At present, we are building a grassroots network to collect required signatures from Colorado residents that will place our citizen-initiated proposal on the November 2024 state-wide ballot.

We are not on this journey alone. While imagining and writing about the future can be challenging, we held onto possibilities and broke through our own walls of limitations, whether perceived or real. Together, we each broke down our mind blocks and stepped into the future; within R2L, the feeling of dignity in an academic setting is no longer a dream, it is an embodied reality. As a group, we have participated in various exercises to help us share our dreams of the future. For example, we once asked one another to recall indignities encountered in the educational system. We did this not to easily identify the opposite, for that is not dignity; rather, this helped us think about the most delightful ways that future generations of learners could experience educational dignity. This exercise, like others, and including our writing of this book chapter, allowed us to see ourselves as already triumphant while, day-to-day, we continue an arduous journey to change the law and educational practices as we know it. We have derived comfort and joy knowing that we trust in each other's dreams, that we treasure potential and humanity, and that we are journeying with others in the pursuit of educational dignity.

We invite you to find us online at [www.educational-dignity.org](http://www.educational-dignity.org), on social media, and to send us mail<sup>19</sup> to learn more about our campaign to amend the Colorado Constitution's education clause and foster dignity in schools. This work is not just for R2L, but for all of us. We would love nothing more than to connect with others about these important topics.

## NOTES

1. Founded in 2007, the Right2Learn Dignity Lab (R2L) is part research collective and part political campaign whose complementary scholarly and civic efforts are grounded by cultural–historical perspectives on learning as a dignity-conferring human right. In addition to the authors of this chapter, R2L members include Manuel Luis Espinoza, Frida Silva, Adria Padilla Chavez, Lema Alali, Charla Agnoletti, Soraya Latiff, Katie Ruiz Gonzalez, Spencer Childress, Victor Sanchez, Skye O’Toole, Verinique Moua, Valencia Seidel, Tamara Lhungay, Diego Ulibarri, and Arliss Howard. R2L is thankful for the mentorship, over many years, from Edeline Burciaga, Enrique Lopez, Rene Galindo, Shirin Vossoughi, Walter Kitundu, Rebecca Kantor, and Mike Rose.

2. This chapter was written throughout 2022.

3. Throughout this chapter, we reference R2L’s original research and prior writing, referred to in our footnotes as “microessays.” We note microessay authors where appropriate. We also reference our scholarly influences using footnotes to preserve the narrative flow of our speculative vignettes.

4. Adapted from a microessay by Charla Agnoletti.

5. See, for example, Patel (2016).

6. Du Bois (1970).

7. Adapted from a microessay by Adria Padilla Chavez and Tania Soto Valenzuela.

8. Adapted from a microessay by Professor Manuel Espinoza.

9. Ibid.

10. Adapted from a microessay by Verinique Moua, Frida Silva, & mandy wong.

11. Adapted from a microessay by Adria Padilla Chavez and Tania Soto Valenzuela.

12. Adapted from a microessay by Katie Ruiz Gonzalez and Soraya Latiff.

13. Adapted from a microessay by Karina Sanchez Velasco and Professor Manuel Espinoza.

14. Adapted from personal communication with Professor Manuel Espinoza.

15. Adapted from a microessay by Professor Manuel Espinoza and Lema Alali.

16. Our interest in the material design of schools as built environments is influenced by Taylor (1993).

17. Pink (2018).

18. Brown (2021).

19. R2L can be contacted at: 1380 Lawrence St., Room 734, Denver, CO 80204.

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