

Asif Wilson, who began his career as a middle school social studies and science teacher, is an Assistant Professor of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He recently produced a documentary short, *Towards Inquiry: Moving in Solidarity with Your Students*, that follows a day in the life of Seth Brady, a high school social studies teacher in Illinois, who uses inquiry to help students critically read and transform their worlds.¹

Q. Why did you become an educator?

A. My own K-12 experience was not very enjoyable—I never learned about myself or my culture. But as a Black male that never had a Black male teacher in my K-12 experience, I decided to go into teaching to fill a void. I wanted to create opportunities for future students (who looked like me) to build a more just world.

Q. What teaching success are you most proud of?

A. When I was teaching middle school, I remember how brilliant my students were when I turned power over to them to question, to investigate, and to act—like the time we created a music video about growing



up in their neighborhood, or the campaigns they created to get more resources into their school, or the times they encouraged elected officials to listen to children like them when making decisions, or how they lit up when they learned about the Black history/herstory/theirstory of their neighborhood. But none of

this would have happened if I didn't first do the internal work to challenge my power, my privilege, and my assumptions about the students, their families, and their community.

Q. When and why did you join NCSS?

A. I've been a member of NCSS for three years. I wanted to join a professional organization to continue building a squad and the knowledge and resources to continue advancing justice in P-20 educational settings. In NCSS, and CUFA, I have found that community and am excited about what these partnerships might emerge into in the future. 🌟

Note

1. For more on Seth Brady's work see, Seth Brady and Randy Smith, "Illinois Global Scholar: A Story of Teacher Advocacy for Student Transformation," *Social Education* 87, no. 1 (JanFeb 2023).

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