



*Thank you*

FOR YOUR  
INTEREST IN  
CORWIN

Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from Growing for Justice.

[LEARN MORE](#) about this title!

## INTRODUCING THE LEADERS IN OUR STUDY

As we move closer to sharing the stories, insights, joys, struggles, and triumphs of the leaders in our study, you might be wondering, “Who are these people? How did you pick them, and why are their stories important?” As we shared earlier, learning from these leaders—listening open-heartedly and with deep gratitude to their experiences, wonderings, insights, and hopes—has been, for us, a humbling honor. We feel confident that you, too, will feel wise for getting to “know” them through this book.

As you will soon see in Table 1.1, we were privileged to learn from a diverse group of teachers, administrators, former leadership students, professionals in the field we met through professional development work, educators recommended to us by trusted colleagues, and even people who reached out to us after reading some of our earlier pieces about the connection between adult development and social justice leadership. Our primary selection criterion for inclusion in this particular research study was that each participant had an explicit, espoused commitment to social justice. Our hope was not, per se, to generate a book of best practices culled from the most successful, most accomplished justice-centering leaders out there (although we do, we are happy to report, get to recount *many* promising strategies and approaches!). Rather, we were interested in learning from leaders across the *widest possible range* of perspectives, identities, experiences, roles, geographies, and ways of knowing that we could at the time.

For this reason, and as you can see in the list below and in Table 1.1, the leaders in our study were diverse across a number of metrics:

GROWING FOR JUSTICE

- *role* (e.g., principal, assistant principal, dean, teacher leader, assistant superintendent, former superintendent, teacher educator, central office/district-level leader, curriculum leader, consultant, coach, head of school, early childhood director, ESL coordinator, director of culture/language, admissions director, educational technologist, social worker, counselor, department chair, regional- /national-level leader, nonprofit leader)
- *organization/school type* (charter, public, independent; urban, suburban, rural; nonprofit)
- *race* (thirty-one people of color, including seventeen who identified as Black and/or African or Caribbean American, seven who identified as Latinx and/or Afro-Latinx, two who identified as Asian American, three who identified as bi- or multiracial, one who identified as Iranian American, and one who identified as Egyptian American; nineteen identified as white)
- *gender identity* (nineteen identified as men and thirty-one as women, with no participants identifying as nonbinary or transgender)
- *sexual orientation* (four participants self-identified as gay/queer)
- *age* (early thirties to seventies)
- *experience in education* (nine years to multiple decades)
- *religion* (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, agnostic, atheist)
- *location* (Arizona, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Washington D.C., with a large number of people [ $n = 32$ ] from the Tri-State area, as we began sampling by tapping our own networks of professional contacts. For this reason, many of the examples reflect the perspectives of participants in the Northeastern United States)

In addition to spotlighting many different dimensions of diversity the leaders brought so generously to our study, the list also reveals some of the broader limitations of our sampling, as it raises the ever-important question of, “Whose perspective is missing?” We recognize, for instance, that—because of the limits of our networks at the time—we were unable to benefit from the perspectives of any educators who identified primarily as Native American/Indigenous or South Asian, as just two examples of cultural groups under- or unrepresented. While a few of the leaders in our study described personal experiences within the special education system, none explicitly identified as differently abled, disabled, or neurodiverse. In addition, to our knowledge, none of our participants identified as nonbinary, transgender, or gender expansive/nonconforming, although we remain indebted to the students and colleagues who continue to teach us about and share these parts of their personal experiences. Your trust and collaboration also infuse these pages.

We likewise think it's very important to share a bit about our choices around language and naming different aspects of identity. Recognizing the complexity and deeply personal nature of who people "are," we list—in Table 1.1—the identifiers leaders *chose* to share with us in their interviews, as a way of honoring their specific words and choices at the time. That is why, in some cases, we use different terms (i.e., African American or Black, Latino or Latinx) to refer to race, and why certain identifiers (e.g., marital status, age, parenthood, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, years in education) appear inconsistently in the table. We thank you for honoring, as we do, the parts of themselves leaders felt most important to name and center.

In keeping with the most recent guidelines articulated by the Associated Press and our publisher, Corwin, when using participants' self-selected racial, cultural, and ethnic identifiers, we capitalize names of minoritized groups to honor and convey the shared sense of history and identity implied. Although there are different opinions on the current decision to leave "white" in lowercase, we do so now in keeping with current journalistic standards and with the understanding that language conventions are both evolving and important to name, as they carry significant weight. In addition, we intentionally use "they/their" as gender-neutral singular pronouns when describing unnamed individuals in illustrative examples (i.e., rather than "he or she" or "his or her"), to move our language beyond binary constructs. Later in the book, we also use the term *BIPOC*—meaning Black, Indigenous, and people of color—as an umbrella term to acknowledge the cultural and experiential diversity of different groups, as well as the solidarity that can exist between communities of color.

Also, in most cases, the names that appear in Table 1.1 and throughout the book are pseudonyms. These were often selected with care and intention by the participants to honor family, heroes, and ancestors. This, again, is the reason the names sometimes take different formats.

We have also been careful to remove any identifying information about people's schools, organizations, and colleagues from the text and quotes. In some cases, participants opted to use their real names—as Brent did—because it felt important and/or more comfortable. As Brent explained his decision,

To be honest, I'd like you to keep it as is. I spent a long time trying to be someone I wasn't, and I really value owning who I am now, and so part of me wants you to just call me Brent. This is who I am, and I'm totally comfortable with . . . everything I've said, even if it's challenging.

We trust and hope, as you get to know each of the inspiring leaders and people—who, like Brent, gave so generously of their time, expertise, hearts, wisdom, and personal journeys to make this book possible—that you will love and admire them as much as we do. What we share here is their gift to you.

**TABLE 1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE LEADERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY**

NAME/ PSEUDONYM	SELF-IDENTIFIED DEMOGRAPHICS	PROFESSIONAL ROLE/REGION
Adam	white, male, cisgender, forty-four years old father, married	assistant superintendent; suburban Northeast
Amaia	Mexican American female, eleventh year in education	teacher leader/coach, charter school; urban Northeast
Angela	thirty-one years old, African American with West Indian heritage, female, Christian, heterosexual, ninth year in education	district-level teacher development and evaluation coach, former teacher; urban Northeast
Bernard	fifty-seven years old, African American/Black, male, father	teacher educator, former principal/superintendent; urban Northeast
Brent	white, gay male, married, mid-thirties	assistant principal; urban Northeast
Brooke	white, cisgender female, late forties, gay, married	interim independent school head; suburban Northeast
Carter	thirty-one years old, white, male, cisgender, recently engaged	high school principal; urban Northeast
Celine	female, multiracial, partnered, mother, daughter of Chinese immigrant, physically and emotionally able, survivor	regional leader of national nonprofit; Mid-Atlantic
Charlotte	white, woman, married, thirty-three years in education	district-level leader (teacher leadership focus); urban Northeast
Cheryl	white, woman, wife, mother, eighteen years in education	district-level school improvement leader; urban Northeast
Christopher	forties, Christian, African American male, married, father	leader in national nonprofit philanthropic organization, focus on principal development and support; Northeast
D.	forty years old, Latino, first generation American, married with two kids	teacher leader; urban Northeast
Dana	African American male, father	elementary teacher leader; suburban Northeast
Donald	white, Jewish, married to a woman, seventy-five years old	retired high school teacher leader, higher ed; West Coast

*(Continued)*

(Continued)

NAME/ PSEUDONYM	SELF-IDENTIFIED DEMOGRAPHICS	PROFESSIONAL ROLE/REGION
Dr. B	forty-one years old, African American female, divorced, mother	teacher educator, former principal; Southwest
Elena	Latin American, born and raised in Dominican Republic, forty-five years old, mother	assistant principal, PK–5, ELL focus; urban Northeast
Ella	thirty-four years old, African American, woman, not married	director of culture/language learning, charter school; urban Northeast
Evan	white, cisgender male, thirty-six years old, thirteen years in education	district-level curriculum leader; urban Northeast
Gabriel	thirty-seven years old, African American male, married, father	CEO of a reading-focused institute, former principal; South
Harris	forty-eight years old, white, male, gay	principal, high school for English language learners; urban Northeast
Hazel	Filipino American, daughter of Filipino immigrants, married	college persistence counselor; Southwest
Henrietta	white, female, grew up on a farm, married	co-founder of education nonprofit company; Southeast
Ian	thirty-one years old, white, cisgender male	elementary teacher leader; urban Northeast
Irene	white, female, fifty-six years old, Jewish, mother left Vienna 1939, married, mother	director of admissions and enrollment, independent school; Northeast
Jack	Eastern European/Slavic, immigrant, fifty-four years old, male	assistant principal, former principal; urban Northeast
James	Hispanic, mixed race, male, born-again Christian	teacher leader, middle school department chair; suburban Northeast
Janae	Black, woman, mother	leader in national nonprofit philanthropic organization with education focus; Northeast
Jean-Claude	Asian American, male, forties, strongly identifies with values of his progressive West Coast city	district-level leader, coordinator of curriculum and teacher leadership; West Coast

NAME/ PSEUDONYM	SELF-IDENTIFIED DEMOGRAPHICS	PROFESSIONAL ROLE/REGION
Joyce	Caribbean African American woman, early thirties, single, Pentecostal, daughter to Jamaican immigrants	educational consultant; Northeast, national, and international
Kathy	white, woman	teacher leader; suburban Northeast
Kristina	Black woman, native of a Southern city well-known for its civil rights history, from a faith-driven family, married	consultant; South
Ladan Jahani	Iranian American, straight, female, partnered, thirty-nine years old, bilingual	social worker in a transfer high school; urban Northeast
Lee	forty years old, white, cisgender gay male, partnered, Jewish	national-level nonprofit leader; Northeast
Linda	Black, woman	educational consultant, former principal; Northeast
Lisa	thirty-seven years old, Black of Haitian descent, female, single, seventeen years in education	early childhood center director; Northeast
Loile	thirty-four years old, African American, cisgender female, Black woman of Caribbean/Jamaican descent, single	district-level leader, former principal; urban Northeast
Luz	Black Afro-Latina, cisgender woman, twenty years in education	high school principal; urban Northeast
Margot	white-presenting, multiracial	assistant superintendent; urban Northwest
May	white, woman, thirteenth year in education	academic dean in charter middle school; Northeast
Micki	Black, woman, fifties	assistant principal/dean of students, alternative school; Southwest
Nat	thirty years old, tenth year in education, Puerto Rican woman, cisgender (she/her), heterosexual, single	STEAM ed technologist, independent elementary school; Northeast
Nick	forty-one years old, white, male, heterosexual	independent lower school head; mid-Atlantic

*(Continued)*

(Continued)

NAME/ PSEUDONYM	SELF-IDENTIFIED DEMOGRAPHICS	PROFESSIONAL ROLE/REGION
Norma	thirty-two years old, white, cisgender woman, married, eleventh year in education, grew up in the South and Midwest with a single mother in a low-SES household, lived abroad (South Africa)	dean/ESL coordinator; Midwest
Rana	Egyptian American, Muslim woman	head of independent school; urban Midwest
Serena	thirty-one years old, cisgender, Caribbean American, woman	central office special education leader; urban Northeast
Shokry	thirty-four years old, mixed race Egyptian and Dominican, “American-ish,” Northeastern person of color	educational consultant; Northeast, national, international
Sylvia	thirty-eight years old, Puerto Rican, woman, Christian, mother	district-level teacher support administrator; urban Northeast
Thea	Black woman, married, tenth year in education	district-level leader with teacher leadership focus; urban Northeast
Yaacov	Orthodox Jewish father and husband, thirty-two years old, nine years in education	teacher leader, charter middle school coordinator; urban Northeast
Zora	African American woman (she/her), heterosexual, grew up in low-income community, experienced economic mobility, mother, wife	founder and CEO of nonprofit with national reach; urban Midwest

