



# Restoring Our Roots

2020-2021

## who are we?

Restoring Our Roots (ROR) is an inter-district network of Black, Indigenous, People of color (BIPOC) Minnesota educators. We sought out a collectivist space to “restore our roots” by cultivating community, utilizing our cultural capital and centering our collective assets as practices of sustainability and liberation.



## vision

Members of ROR created of healing and learning to fill a void that our current school organizations lacked in their teacher retention initiatives. During the 2020-2021 school year, we [met virtually with critical race scholar Dr. Rita Kohli](#) and initiated opportunities to collaborate to strengthen our relationships as a collective grounded in ourselves and communities as sources of strength that shifts pedagogy and practice in teaching and in learning.

## Intention & Outcomes



TEACHERS  
of COLOR  
RESISTING RACISM  
AND RECLAIMING  
EDUCATION

RITA KOHLI  
FOREWORD BY DANIEL G. SOLÓRZANO

Teachers of Color  
Use code TCSP21  
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The establishment of ROR was a means to formalize much of the network that has organically grown between MN Educators and [Institute for Teachers of Color Committed to Racial Justice \(ITOC\)](#). ITOC co-founder [Dr. Rita Kohli](#) facilitated professional development to ROR to strengthen our racial literacy skills to navigate our district and school's racialized climates. Grant funding was also used to provide interdistrict mentorship opportunities for us to strengthen our organizing capacity.

Unlike traditional mentorship programs that pair early career teachers with experienced teachers, ROR sought out a mentorship model rooted in black feminist and women of color epistemologies. ITOC uses the term "Femtorship", which decolonizes structural hierarchy in mentorship while being rooted in care, healing and centering our whole selves in our practice. Femtorship is circular and reciprocal rather than hierarchical and transactional. Therefore, experienced teachers also trust the wisdoms and assets of early career educators.

Based on our exit survey, ROR was especially supportive to teachers during the 20-21 school year and met a need that was lacking in our local organizations. PD was effective because it:

- Centered and catered to needs of BIPOC educators
- Increased Racial Literacy of BIPOC educators
- Provided a Community of Educators that was healing and authentic
- Centered Assets of BIPOC Educators

In addition members reported that mentorship opportunities:

- Were voluntarily sought out by teachers to connect
- Provided means for educators to learn from one another
- Translated their reflections to pedagogy and practice

This network was especially valuable. We intentionally sought out ways to teach safely, creatively, flexibly, and responsively, with educators with shared visions and goals to support BIPOC students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest.



## Reflection



Restoring Our Roots  
Participants Tools

## acknowledgements

ROR has been a labor of love by many educators who felt that organizing and building community added so much to the work they do for students and families in their schools. HUGE thank you to this year's planning team: Verna Wong, Roberta Hernandez, Jalen Giles, Michaela McCoy, and Solveig Harriday, and Sung Ja Shin. Thank you to the various funders who have supported ROR: PESLB's Teacher Mentorship and Retention Grant, Minnesota Humanities Center, and Education Minnesota Foundation. Thank you to Education Minnesota for being our fiscal sponsor. Special thanks to Mauri Friestleben and Dr. Rita Kohli for sharing their love and brilliance with us.