

SUMMER 2025

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Kevin Simpson and Ashley Hazelwood



AIELOC: International Education Change Agents

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AIELOC: International Education Change Agents

Kevin Simpson, M.Ed., Founder of the Association of International Educators and Leaders of Color (AIELOC) and KDSL Global, Washington, D.C. and Dr. Ashley Hazelwood, first Fellow at the Association of International Educators and Leaders of Color (AIELOC)

“Without community, there is no liberation.” -Audre Lorde

“I wish this community existed when I taught abroad” is a statement I hear often. Eight years ago I created a new space in the international school community as a call to action. It takes into consideration this and many other experiences colleagues shared with me. Let’s dive into this new association we created, the work we engage in, our community commitments, and how we are addressing the current education climate.

What is AIELOC?

The Association of International Educators and Leaders of Color (AIELOC) began as an affinity group on Facebook on March 14, 2017 after one of Kevin’s colleagues was discouraged from applying for a leadership position at an international school due to her race and country of origin not matching the expectation. He was serving as her sponsor and a reference, and he wanted to know if she was experiencing this, then what was happening to others?

Today, AIELOC is devoted to amplifying the work of international educators and leaders of color with a focus on advocacy, learning, and research. In January 2020 the group moved to an association open to all past, present, and future educators and leaders around the world committed to speaking up, learning, advocating for change, taking action in addressing racism (and all -isms) and discrimination in the international school ecosystem. They are volunteer led and operate as a community in order to make changes globally.

What does the work of AIELOC look like in action?

Dr. Nadine Richards (she/her) brought remarkable creativity and vision to AIELOC by founding the Aspiring Leaders of Color Program, crafting a transformative space for emerging leaders to thrive. Her innovative approach continues to inspire and shape a more inclusive future in international education.

AIELOC fosters professional growth through learning opportunities such as webinars, an in-person conference, and a virtual conference, providing spaces for dialogue, collaboration, and skill development. Later this year the first African International School Educator Virtual Conference will be added. The association is now in year 6 of their AIELOC and Women of Color in ELT Virtual Conference. The Aspiring Leaders of Color Program supports emerging leaders by offering mentorship and tailored resources to advance their careers. Next year will be the fifth cohort. Alumni of the program have gone on to a variety of roles from Curriculum Directors, Head of Special Education, Assistant Director, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leaders and more.



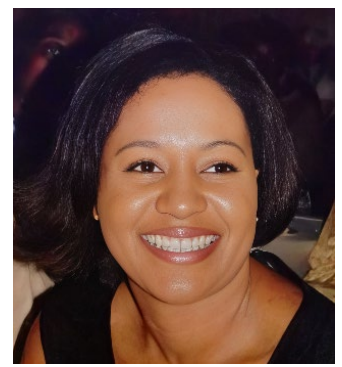
AIELOC's Advocacy Circle and Advocacy Community Collective are key initiatives that bring together educators to collectively advocate for themselves and others. The emphasis is on how to advocate for oneself and for others. The Research Collaborative contributes to the field by producing research that highlights the experiences of educators of color and addresses issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. This team shares new and upcoming the work of community members who are engaged in doctoral programs and beyond. Additionally, the DEIJ Leaders Program equips educators with the tools and strategies needed to lead transformative work within their institutions and communities. Together, these programs build a powerful network of change agents working toward a more just and inclusive international educational landscape.

Our AIELOC Affinity Space leaders are vital in creating brave, affirming spaces where members can connect, heal, and grow both personally and professionally. Their leadership nurtures belonging and strengthens our collective movement toward equity and justice in international education.



What does AIELOC commit to the community it serves?

Dr. Teneshia Taylor (she/her) has been a fierce and unwavering advocate for AIELOC members, consistently championing their voices and experiences. She also spearheaded the AIELOC Research Collaborative, creating a powerful platform for inquiry, knowledge-sharing, and transformative scholarship.



At AIELOC, our commitment to fostering a culture of dignity, respect, learning, and fairness isn't changing. We know that well-being, care and empathy are at the core of educational excellence, and we will continue to advocate for practices that uphold these values - no matter the challenges ahead.

We also recognize that new federal guidelines may bring about uncertainty for some of our global partners. That's why we're here to support and provide guidance as we all navigate these changes together. Our position is clear:



We stand by our values. No policy or directive will change our belief that dignity, respect, and fairness are essential to education. These principles will continue to guide our work and our community.



We're here for our partners. We know that compliance requirements can be complex, and we're committed to offering support, resources, and clarity with updated information to help institutions and educators meet these challenges while staying true to their missions.



We will keep advocating. Our work doesn't stop here. We will continue to push for policies that amplify underrepresented voices, ensure equitable opportunities, and promote meaningful, lasting change in international education.

No matter how the landscape shifts, empowering the community remains firm in our mission. We are here to support, advocate, and build a future where education is inclusive, equitable, and for all.



Juan Jacobs Sheblak (he/him) has played a pivotal role in inspiring and empowering leaders at AIELOC through his commitment to equity, inclusion, and authentic leadership. His mentorship and thought leadership have helped shape a more conscious and courageous community of global educators.

In what ways is AIELOC is staying engaged in the current education climate?

AIELOC is committed to staying proactive as the policies and conversations around international education evolve. We know that nimbleness, collaboration, and informed advocacy will be key to protecting our mission and our community.

Here's how we plan to move forward:

Keeping the conversation flowing. We want to create space for open and honest dialogue with educators, institutions, and policymakers about these changes and how we can respond effectively.

Staying informed. We will continue to monitor policy developments so that our community has the information and resources needed to navigate potential impacts.

Pushing for change. Advocacy has always been central to our work, and that won't stop. We'll keep fighting for policies that protect inclusive education and ensure that diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging remain core to learning environments.

Providing real support. We recognize that these shifts may create uncertainty, and we're committed to offering the guidance, tools, and training needed to help educators and institutions stay aligned with both regulatory requirements and their core values.

Yes, the landscape is shifting, but our dedication to this work is not. AIELOC will continue to stand with international educators and leaders of color and all, ensuring that our voices are heard and our impact is felt. We invite our community to join us in shaping the future, advocating for equitable education, and championing the well-being of all learners and educators.

AIELOC is proud to serve as a partnering organization in the International School Anti-Discrimination Task Force, standing alongside others committed to dismantling systemic inequities in education. Through this collaboration, we amplify our impact and continue to push for meaningful, lasting change in international schools worldwide.

The AIELOC Community gained global recognition through our powerful I Am Not a Virus campaign, launched during COVID to confront racism and xenophobia happening to members who identified as Black and who were residing in China. This bold, collective action sparked critical conversations and affirmed our commitment to justice, visibility, and solidarity.

To learn more about AIELOC please visit us at aieloc.org/



The Association of International Educators and Leaders of Color (AIELOC) is an official partner of The Worthy Educator.



Kevin Simpson is the founder of KDSL Global, an international education consulting company which launched in 2016 in the USA and in the United Arab Emirates serving schools, educators, and leaders in over 60 countries. Kevin then founded the Association of International Educators and Leaders of Color as an affinity group on Facebook then transforming it into an association open to all past, present, and future educators and leaders around the world committed to speaking up, learning, advocating for change, taking action in addressing racism and discrimination in the international school ecosystem, amplifying the work of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), researching topics of interest.



Dr. Ashley Marie Hazelwood is a dynamic thought-leader and project strategist, skilled in the areas of K-12 and higher education; diversity, equity and inclusion; and capacity-building. Dr. Hazelwood is a generalist, highly proficient in the promotion, accountability, awareness and implementation of equitable and inclusive strategies to facilitate actionable change in order to build community resilience. Dr. Hazelwood has served as an equity-centered researcher, having worked with organizations like Educational Testing Service (ETS), the Council for State School Chief Officers (CCSSO), the United Community Corporation and the Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions. Dr. Hazelwood is a trained college professor and facilitator, passionate about creating anti-racist environments in a variety of educational ecosystems. She was the first Fellow at the Association of International Educators and Leaders of Color (AIELOC).



Legacy is the official journal of The Worthy Educator, elevating the good work being done by leaders in education who are working to change the narrative on the profession and actively plan for impact that transforms its future to serve the needs of a diverse, decentralized, global society that is inclusive, equitable and open to all people as next generations adapt, evolve and contribute by solving problems and creating solutions that meet the needs of a world we have yet to envision.

Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis from educators who are implementing new and innovative approaches in the classroom and at the building and district levels. Information on specifications and instructions to submit can be found online at theworthyeducator.com/journal.