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# FOREWORD

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The great storyteller Virginia Hamilton described herself as a writer of “liberation literature” which widens readers and their worlds, making it possible for them to see beyond their circumstances. In *Get Free*, Tricia extends a vision of educational liberation that is grounded in scholarship and rooted in love, challenging and changing the world before her by making it possible for educators to liberate themselves and their students.

The world is on fire. In this moment, we’re all being asked to think about what we value, which struggles we are willing to lend our voices, time, and energy to, and where we can find community to keep going. This was not unlike when we first met Tricia. We were experienced educators working in different schools across the country, trying to figure out how to uphold what we knew was excellent literacy instruction for often the most marginalized children, how to navigate our complex practitioner identities, and, perhaps most importantly, how to find others who would walk beside us, and even carry us, on the days when we were exhausted, disillusioned, and troubled.

Tricia has guided us forward, putting into action the words of Toni Morrison: “The function of freedom is to free someone else.”



Tricia has taught us that liberation is a complex mixture of reflection and action, of internal work and communal work. *Get Free* provides research and strategies that teachers can explore on their own and in their communities with students and colleagues. And in inviting us into the work she has done with her students, Tricia challenges us to be a part of a larger, global community of educators doing the work necessary to create the liberatory world we want and need.

From Tricia, we have learned to (re)examine not only the curriculum, but our instructional practices. She has taught us that a willingness to ask *why* opens up possibilities for identifying inequities, confronting them, and radically (re)imagining how things can be otherwise. We've learned to put these reimaginations into action and to hold ourselves accountable for evaluating the effectiveness of our work. We accomplish this by building relationships with children where power dynamics are fluid, by humbling ourselves to listen, being accountable for our mistakes, and addressing harm. We achieve this by working in community with one another—even and especially during times of tension.

To be in community with Tricia is to be deeply loved, continuously challenged, and called into a lifetime of deliberate action.

Tricia calls us to reckon with ourselves, asking us to interrogate our role in the perpetuation of injustice. She does not ask us to do it alone, though. Every time she challenges us to experience discomfort, Tricia invites us into her own journey with the vulnerability getting free requires of us. Most importantly, Tricia demands we do this work in community; otherwise, we cannot hope to dismantle broader systems of inequity.

As we have walked hand-in-hand with her toward freedom for all of us over the years, Tricia has often quoted Gwendolyn Brooks from her poem, “Paul Robeson,” as her aspirations for our relationship as colleagues and sister friends:

that we are each other's  
harvest:  
We are each other's  
business:  
We are each other's  
magnitude and bond.

Certainly, we are responsible for each other and for our world. *Get Free* is an urgent opportunity for us to realize liberatory educational spaces where all children thrive. May we accept this generous invitation that Tricia has provided and do the work for justice and liberation.