



## SCHOOLING FOR THE AMERICAN DREAM

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As a new member of the [Smart Cities and Connected Communities Initiative and Think Tank](#) of Dentons (the largest law firm in the world), I recently viewed a [Think Tank webinar](#) about the elite scientist Lewis Latimer that astounded me. Latimer was such a talent that Thomas Edison battled him for the first patent of the lightbulb (and hired Latimer after Edison won) and Alexander Graham Bell recruited him to be one of the leaders of Bell's team to invent the telephone. According to Steve Mitnick, author of a new book, [Lewis Latimer, The First Hidden Figure](#), Latimer could well have been credited with both inventions—if he hadn't been African-American. I graduated from Harvard with a B.A. in American history; read a range of history, politics, and racial justice books and articles; and have taken five antiracism online course in six months—but I never knew anything about Lewis Latimer. If we are so unaware of such an influential American scientist's role in two transformational American inventions, imagine how many other hidden figures of color there are in American history.

For most of the last century, America has been a world leader, spurred on by political, economic, educational, scientific, and military power. Within the last year, America has become something of its own "hidden figure" on the world stage, facing what President Biden called "cascading crises"—the pandemic, racial justice, the economy, and climate. In order to reclaim our leadership role in the world and to fulfill the American Dream, our country will need to tap much, much more of our whole population's potential. In that process, populations of color are some of the most *valuable* even as they continue to be some of the most *vulnerable*.

Over the past forty years, I enjoyed a career of re-energizing a wide range of under-resourced, whole-child private schools serving predominantly white, upper/middle class students and families. For each school community, I started my leadership tenures with inviting several constituencies to celebrate the school's strengths and accomplishments; inviting the same constituencies to identify a few critical challenges the school faced; and working with leaders to design and implement inventive solutions to address those challenges. This process released new energies in each of several schools.

After finishing the latest turnaround project as a school leader, I founded a nonprofit called Schooling for Hope, to provide affordable consulting services to private schools serving predominantly students of color. Schooling for Hope partnered with Randolph Carter (founder and associate director of [East Ed](#)), Kelly McMurray (founder and creative director of [2communique](#)), and Jeremy Besch (former head of Park School of Buffalo and founder of [Stone Bench Consulting](#)) to do a *pro bono* pilot project with the [NativityMiguel Coalition](#)—facilitating creating the Coalition's next strategic plan in June 2021. Nationwide, the 49 NMC schools average 46% Latinx students, 40% African-American students, and 5% AAPI students. NMC students have untapped potential that this country needs to access now, AND their families are at or below the poverty line. Schooling for Hope will solicit foundation and individual grants so that NMC schools (and other private schools serving similar populations) will be able to afford consulting services that will transform schools as well as students.

In my last year heading a school, we hired a Boston-area firm to do a diversity/equity/inclusion climate assessment and training for faculty, staff, board, parents, and the DEI committee. That was worth every penny of the \$30,000 charge; at the same time, that fee is beyond the reach of the schools that SfH now serves. With Schooling for Hope support, private schools serving predominantly students of color will access re-energizing consulting services—turning loose the vast potential of their students, allowing a fuller range of our citizens to access the American Dream, and helping this country Rise Up.

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