

Dr. Sister IAsia Thomas

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EdD University of Pittsburgh, School of Education

Advisor: Dr. Leigh Patel

MS Carlow University, High Performance Learning May 2017 Thesis: *Reinvesting in Learning Theories through High Performance Learning: Pushing Back in High Stakes Times*

Advisor: Pat McMahon

BS Carlow University, Political Science May 2015

HONORS AND AWARDS

Cultural Treasure Distinction for Children's Windows to Africa 2023

The Pittsburgh Cultural Treasures Initiative (PCTI) is a collaborative effort between The Heinz Endowments, the POISE Foundation, and Program to Aid Citizen Enterprise (PACE), in partnership with the Ford Foundation to “provide regionally significant cultural organizations of color with meaningful sums of operating support during this period of unprecedented upheaval, and to encourage related local efforts to strengthen cultural endeavors that reflect and benefit BIPOC communities over the next five years.

PRIDE Pop Up Arts Festival 2023

P.R.I.D.E Positive Racial Identity Development in Early Childhood Education is a multi-component early education program designed to support positive racial identity development in young Black children (birth through 8) by educating and training the important adults in their lives. Sister IAsia was selected to collaborate with an artist offering educational insights and inspiration.

RAISE Lead Teaching Artist 2023

Young Audiences Arts for Learning (Young Audiences), the nation’s largest arts in education learning network, has been awarded a \$9.2 million federal grant through the US Department of Education’s (DOE) Assistance for Arts Education (AAE) program. The project, Responsive Arts in School Education (RAISE), will bring Teaching Artists (TAs), School

Social Workers (SSWs), and classroom teachers into a partnership to develop healing-centered and culturally responsive-sustaining arts in education residency programs to enhance student learning and well-being across the country. Sister IAsia was trained in Social Emotional Learning with the first cohort and returned in 2023 as a lead teaching artist to support the learning of the second cohort members.

Pittsburgh Cultural Treasures Initiative Evaluation Sub-Committee

2023

As a cultural treasure, Sister IAsia Thomas was selected to participate in an advisory sub-group charged with reviewing evaluation submissions, interviewing firms, offering analysis and critique of the efficacy of each group, and participating in subgroup meetings toward selecting an evaluation firm for the Cultural Treasures Initiative.

Shifting Power Fellow

2022

Sister IAsia presented a collaborative body of autoethnographic research that centered on Black and African adult and student identities (*Witness: The Reframe of Educational Equity, The Case for Afrocentric Education* in terms of culture, gender, immigration, ethnicity, and power, as well as what it means to value epistemic diversity. Her work reflected the diversity that exists with Blackness and Black pedagogy. This work is part of a co-authored scholarly paper published in October 2022.

Arts Education Collaborative Leadership Academy Annual Presenter

2021-2022

AEC recognizes that culturally responsive arts education (CRAE) is among the most powerful tools educators can leverage to transform education systems, ensure that every student receives high-quality arts education, and calls on experts in the field to evolve and strengthen its efficacy and influence. I am an annual presenter and advisor to this process and critiqued and assessed AEC's theory of change.

Transformative Teaching Artist Award

2018

The Transformative Teaching Artist Awards recognized that quality teaching artists should be recognized for their important work in Pittsburgh's African American and "distressed" communities. Sister I was acknowledged as one that plays a critical role in the lives of the youth I serve, providing artistic skill building, caring, support and mentorship.

Heinz Endowments Children's Windows to Africa grantee

2019-2023

The Endowments have funded a summer program led by Sister IAsia for four consecutive years with awards cumulatively of \$230,000.00

Opportunity Fund

OF made a two-year commitment to Children's Windows of \$30,000.00 beginning in

the summer of 2022.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCES

Scholarly Paper, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 2022 Advisors: Dr. Lori Delaley-O'Conner & Dr. April Warren-Grice

- First scholarly paper co-authored
- Auto-ethnographic writing, completion of a fellowship
 - *Witness: The Reframe of Educational Equity, The Case for Afrocentric Education*

Scholarly Paper, Black Child Journal 2022 Advisor: Dr. Anthony Mitchell

- Second scholarly paper co-authored
- *Darisha LaWatoto Kwa Africa (Children's Window of Africa): Advancing the African Arts to Make the Future Brighter for the African Child*

18th International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (QI2022)

Co-presenter at the conference with Dr. April Warren-Grice

For *Witness: The Reframe of Educational Equity, The Case for Afrocentric Education*

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

RAISE Professional Learning

2022

Young Audiences Arts for Learning (Young Audiences), the nation's largest arts in education learning network, has been awarded a \$9.2 million federal grant through the US Department of Education's (DOE) Assistance for Arts Education (AAE) program. The project, Responsive Arts in School Education (RAISE), will bring Teaching Artists (TAs), School Social Workers (SSWs), and classroom teachers into a partnership to develop healing-centered and culturally responsive-sustaining arts in education residency programs to enhance student learning and well-being across the country. Sister IAsia was a fellow and trainee in this effort to date.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

~The Association of Black Psychologists, 2018-Present
Member

~Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Present

- ~Cheikh Anta Diop Institute for Scholarly Advancement, Present
- ~Black Transformative Arts Network, Present
- ~Council for Cultural Equity and Emancipated Education, Chair, Present
- ~Arts Education Collaborative
- ~Young Arts Audiences
- ~Practices of Freedom, University of Pittsburgh School of Education
- ~Genius, Love, and Joy, University of Pittsburgh School of Education

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Conference Organizer

Centering the Identity of the Black Child through Africa Conference, 2019 and 2020

Black Transformative Arts Network

Kwethu Lalikile: Zulu for the Missing/Visionary/Convener, Pittsburgh, 12/7/2019

Black Transformative Arts Network

Praxis Chair/Arts and Cultural Education/Personal and Communal Learning Curator, Pittsburgh, 2012-Present

Black Transformative Arts Network

Kwethu Lalikile: Zulu for the Missing/Visionary/Convener, Pittsburgh, 12/7/2019

Black Transformative Arts Network

Unite Africana Youth Chair/Visionary/Unifier/Organizer/Curator, Pittsburgh, 4/26/2022

LANGUAGES

English: Native Language

Afrikaans: Intermediate Listener, Novice Speaker

OTHER

Swimmer, diver, emerging researcher, doula, creative writer, teaching artist, Congolese dancer, life learner, activist, cultural thespian, immigration advocate, arts administrator, community organizer,

REFERENCES

Dr. April Warren-Grice

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Dr. Anthony Mitchell Smith, Emeritus

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