

Jennifer Ortigoza - My Personal Theory of Change

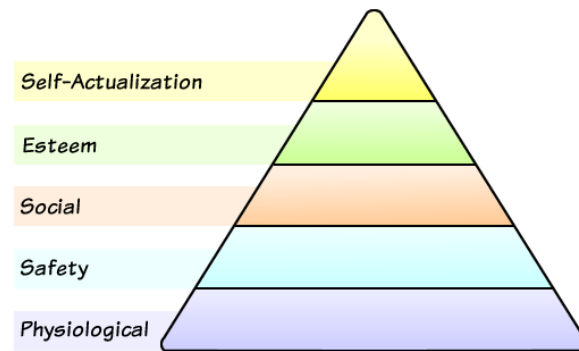
WHY AM I HERE? WHY DID I JOIN TEACH FOR AMERICA?

I am here because I have a **powerful belief in the potential for positive change that lies in passionate, pro-active learning.**

I am here because, as a newly certified educator, I have been chomping at the bit since student teaching to **put my pedagogy into practice.** I have a driving faith that, in my classroom, **students will learn how to love learning.**

I joined Teach For America because I have a larger belief in **pro-actively working towards human progress.** It is my desire to see, in my lifetime, **a renaissance of artistic and scientific enlightenment.** I believe this can only be possible when we lift each other up and provide a high quality of life for all, so we can together grow intellectually, without focus on basic, human needs.

As of now, this is not the case, and Teach For America serves communities who need a powerful surge of educational growth by their youth in order to begin a change towards a higher quality of life for their community and families. I believe this potential for positive change lies in passionate, pro-active learning, which is inspired by dedicated, passionate teachers. **The root of all change and progress lies in education.**



Maslow's Hierarchy

WHAT DO I THINK IT WILL TAKE TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN MY LIFETIME?

I believe that a **countrywide conversation and increase of awareness** of the gaping achievement gap is initially needed to bring education to the serious forefront of politics. Secondly, I think an embracement of the movement, as inspired by Teach For America, by the **teacher's unions [NEA and AFT] and US Department of Education** will be needed to pose a unified front against the achievement gap. Thirdly, a dramatic overhaul of the United States' educational system will need to occur. States will need to relinquish a **majority of educational control to the national government**, government funding towards public education will need to dramatically increase, and sweeping, research-backed initiatives such as smaller student to teacher ratios, a more generous division of resources [up to date textbooks, special needs/reading resource teachers, technologies, etc.] across communities, and a system of accountability will need to be set in place.

Fourthly, state standards must cease to exist, and **national education standards** not limited to Title 1 schools [as NCLB/ESEA is] must be introduced to allow a standardized set of expectations to exist in classrooms rather than the current numbers game tied to today's widely differing state standards. Finally, and most importantly, we must continue

to educate **all** students regardless of disability, gifted, or special needs to their highest potential; students must never fall through the cracks in our quest to see mass growth in the classroom.

WHAT WILL BE MY ROLE IN CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP AS A CORPS MEMBER? AS AN ALUM?

As a corps member **my role is “in the trenches”** one might say. I will inspire passionate, pro-active learning in my students by **providing the tools and skills necessary to succeed in the education system** [such as study and organizational skills], as well as **content-based differentiated learning**. When learning is differentiated, success and growth become real possibilities. As a corps member I will dedicate one hundred percent of my time and energy to my students and their community, providing a potential for positive change from the inside.

As a future Teach For America alum, I cannot yet say what my role in closing the achievement gap will be. For now, **I strongly believe my path will continue in the field of education**. It may continue to lay in the classroom or school setting, or move on into another role where I can inspire more positive change than where I currently am.
My future is yet to be determined.