



## Remembering Dan Liston



This newsletter carries sad news. Having recently celebrated his 71<sup>st</sup> birthday, NEPC Fellow and CU Boulder professor emeritus Dan Liston died suddenly at his home in Rochester, N.Y., on December 28, 2024, of a heart attack.

Dan came to CU Boulder 34 years ago, having previously taught at Washington University in St. Louis. At CU, he received a top award and recognition for his own teaching, but he was best known for his insights into the wellness and teaching life of K-12 educators. His research and professional-development efforts helped teachers connect with others—particularly their students and those students’ families and communities—in loving and caring ways. He helped us understand the importance of teachers’ passion for their work.

We asked some NEPC Fellows to share some brief thoughts about Dan and his work that inspires them and may inspire you.

“This is a very hard note to write. Dan was a special person—deeply committed educationally, politically, and ethically. There were times in our relationship when he was my student and then over the years that followed when it was not clear who was the teacher and who was the student. My respect for him will continue undiminished even after he is no longer with us.”

— Michael Apple, professor emeritus at UW-Madison

“Dan and I wrote and published together for many years. One of his many admirable qualities was his passion for good and thoughtful teaching in schools and in teacher education programs. Two examples of work in this area that we did together that stand out for me are *Reflective Teaching* (2014, Routledge) and *Reflective Teacher Education and Moral Deliberation* (*Journal of Teacher Education*, 1987). He was very kind and very committed to connecting theory to practice and in doing good and morally sound work that would help bring about greater justice and equity in the world. It was easy to work and have fun with him. Dan could always make me laugh. His moral compass provided a model for both his students and colleagues. I will miss him a lot.”

– Ken Zeichner, professor emeritus at UW-Seattle and UW-Madison

“Through his scholarly work, in conversations and bantering, Dan taught me about how important it is to place love, compassion, and courage at the center of our work and interactions.”

– Prof. Kathy Schultz, dean emerita at CU Boulder

“Amazingly, it took the discipline of psychology 100 years to realize that motivation and cognition were not separable fields or opposite capabilities, but Dan knew from the very beginning of his career that emotion and reason are completely entwined in learning and in life. We have lost a profoundly insightful and principled teacher and scholar.”

– Prof. Lorrie Shepard, dean emerita at CU Boulder

“Dan Liston was one of my heroes. He somehow managed to write critically about teacher education while also bringing to the work and field a deep sense of humanity, morality, and care. As a teacher educator and teacher education scholar, I am so grateful to have worked with and learned from him.”

– Prof. Jamy Stillman, CU Boulder

“As an MA student I had the opportunity to take Dan’s ‘Radical Theories’ class in 1996, which deeply impacted me; I first read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in that class. Dan introduced me to so many of the foundational theories I continue to draw from in my work. He also made time to come and see me perform in a play when we brought it to campus. I now get to teach the Radical Theories in Education class and am grateful for the short time I got to be Dan’s colleague after coming back to join the faculty at CU in 2016. He was always a kind and generous mentor and colleague.”

– Prof. Liz Meyer, CU Boulder

“Dan enacted what he studied and wrote about—he took seriously the intricacies, contradictions, and ethical demands of what it means to ‘build community,’ whether in schools, on research teams, or among our faculty.”

– Prof. Ben Kirshner, CU Boulder

“I came to this university in 2012 seeing Dan as a ‘famous person’ who had published really

important and influential scholarship. I then had the privilege of being Dan's colleague in the School of Education and treasured the way he piped up in meetings and either gently or with laugh out loud humor reminded us of what our priorities were or should be. I remain so grateful for his warmth, care, support, and humor."

– Prof. Joe Polman, CU Boulder

"Dan was the consummate professor, his research was engaging and cutting edge, he never gave up on a student, and he was a colleague whose opinion I greatly valued."

– Kathy Escamilla, professor emerita at CU Boulder

"Dan's scholarship, whether he was writing about radical theories of curriculum or about the importance of love and emotion in teaching, never strayed from the essence who he was: a remarkably caring human being."

– Kevin Welner, professor emeritus at CU Boulder

As a way of honoring Dan, [donations can be made to A Queer Endeavor](#), a project in Colorado he helped mentor that focuses on equity and justice in schools, or to the [Rochester Imagination Library](#), an organization addressing childhood poverty by sending a free book each month to any child in Rochester, NY. Please read his [obituary](#) to learn more about Dan and his family.

This newsletter is made possible in part by support provided by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice: <http://www.greatlakescenter.org>

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