

# TODAY'S LEARNING: LIVING HISTORY

BY JOSIE FAASS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It turns out that heat and mosquitoes alone don't make a summer. With backyard BBQs, summer camps, and vacations replaced by mask-related drama, viral surges, and profound uncertainty about what comes next, this summer has been less like a glass of sangria, and more like a (not so) heady cocktail of boredom and anxiety.

For those (like me) with young kids in the mix, the end of this particular summer comes with an agonizing and decidedly unfamiliar choice. Do I send my children back into the scrubbed-with -perfume-induced-disinfectants classroom in September, where they'll spend their days masked and physically separated from peers and teachers until (pretty much inevitably) they close the whole school down due to yet another outbreak? Or do I continue to keep them home, enduring more months of that special kind of torture known as "remote learning"?

Of course, in the bizarro world that is 2020, these terrible choices are actually a luxury. Many school districts won't be attempting in-person instruction in the fall. In the districts that are braving the in-person teaching model, many parents have no choice but to load their kids onto the bus each morning (after the obligatory temperature checks), so they can go to work themselves.

How did we get here? A pandemic, yes. But the pandemic only laid plain what was already out there to see for anyone who cared to look: in our verve for individualism, our love of "the self-made man," and our starry-eyed belief that American greatness is somehow preordained, we have allowed the systems that protect our collective good to atrophy to the point where the "collective" has all but vanished, and each is left to fight for their own "good" without much in the way of guidance, let alone substantive supports, from our government.

THE GREAT WORK OF THE  
PRESENT FOR EVERY MAN.  
AND EVERY ORGANIZATION  
OF MEN. WHO WOULD  
IMPROVE SOCIAL  
CONDITIONS. IS THE WORK  
OF EDUCATION — THE  
PROPAGATION OF IDEAS.  
IT IS ONLY AS IT AIDS  
THIS THAT ANYTHING ELSE  
CAN AVAIL.

- Henry George



*Remote learning may be right around the corner, but nature (especially the creek by our house) is my boys' favorite summer classroom. Frogs, salamanders, and worms better watch out for these two!*

In the midst of all this global and national turmoil, July 2020 was also marked by the loss of a great thinker, a great activist for social and economic justice and a great friend to our RSF family: Dr. Mason Gaffney. Inspired at a young age by the writings of Henry George, Gaffney went on to inspire countless others as a teacher, writer, colleague, and friend, whose commitment to the idea that the Earth's bounty can, and should, provide for all never wavered.

I attended a virtual event recently, at which Mason's children were present and spoke eloquently and lovingly about their father. Music was very much a part of his life - a source of regular joy and connection with those around him. There is no question he was filled with courage and bravery. Bravery in speaking truth to power.

Bravery in holding fast to a set of fundamentally just, fundamentally righteous ideas, regardless the opposition he faced in sharing them.

I often end my monthly updates with a call for hope. I do so again this month in spite of our losses, or perhaps because of them. Remember, we don't need comfort or security to know what is just. We don't need acceptance to champion our ideals. And we don't need anyone's permission to make the music that brings us joy and connects us.