

## Message From the TODOS President September 2023

Colleagues,

In the August 2023 enews I wrote about the way that I've come to know the work of the late Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, Tanzania's first president (1961 - 1985); described as an anti-colonial activist, political theorist, politician, and teacher. I came across this quote as I was writing and used it as the final quote in that piece:

*"If a door is shut, attempts should be made to open it; if it is ajar, it should be pushed until it is wide open. In neither case should the door be blown up at the expense of those inside."* (Julius Kambarage Nyerere, from his Stability and Change in Africa speech given to the University of Toronto, Canada, 2 October 1969.)

I want to start with this quote for this September Enews as it has lingered with me all month. It is a quote that really spoke to me, in particular as a member, and President, of TODOS, and thinking about systemic change.

I'll share the context first. Over the past two years, as I shared in the [2023 Annual Report](#) at the Conference, TODOS has been working to "develop and strengthen its infrastructure to escalate its efforts to advocate for equity" in order to focus TODOS Resources on creating systemic change. This work has been generously financially supported by the Heising-Simons Foundation.

As I think about TODOS' mission and goals I return to the quote and I wonder - is TODOS on the outside of the door or on the inside of the door? And I wonder....who/whom is inside the room or where is the door leading?

If TODOS is outside of the door, then in what ways does TODOS' advocacy 'open doors or push doors wide open' to ensure high quality mathematics education is available to ALL. If TODOS is inside the door, then in what ways does TODOS 'open doors or push doors wide open' to ensure high quality mathematics education is available to ALL?

As I've further reflected on this quote; I see that TODOS: Mathematics for ALL is both inside the door and outside of the door. If the door is leading to 'system of mathematics education or mathematics' then our mission and goals would suggest that TODOS is on the outside - opening doors and pushing them wide open for those humans who are underrepresented in the field of mathematics education.

TODOS: Mathematics for ALL is also inside the door, that is we are a part of the 'system of mathematics education or mathematics,' as its members primarily identify as mathematics educators, we were all educated in the very system that we are trying to change, and the organization itself was founded within the system.

But I suppose it depends on which way individuals and organizations 'see themselves' - is it about 'entering through the door' or 'leaving through the door'?

As TODOS has been working to "develop and strengthen its infrastructure to escalate its efforts to advocate for equity" to focus on systemic change I realize that this means being on two sides of the door simultaneously.

And, what I've not yet come to make sense in the way that I've been reflecting on the quote, is what Nyere might have meant by "*In neither case should the door be blown up at the expense of those inside.*"

I name the 'work of' advocacy as 'heart work,' it is about the experiences each of us carry as we navigate colonial systems that were established to 'keep out' particular humans. This walk recognizes that advocates and equity-focused work, within the 'system of mathematics education or mathematics' is opening doors in both directions - asking questions like, "What might a decolonized system look like? Would it include a different type of mathematics? What new structures might exist?" and creating new paths in the walking.

I invite you to think about the path that you lay down in your 'heart work' as you reflect on the late Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyere's quote.

Respectfully,

Florence Glanfield, President  
TODOS: Mathematics for ALL