

EmpowerEd Families: The Mind Trust's Neo-colonial War on Parents

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Parent Power: A parent organization created *by* parents

[Parent Power--Indianapolis](#) was founded in 2010 by IPS parents Star Adita (formerly Delana Ivey) and DeShawn Waiss. Each had children in classrooms at the Francis W. Parker Montessori School 56 at 2353 Columbia Ave. They lived in the neighborhood and No. 56 was just what they needed. Soon though, they found their children's teachers were not certified Montessori. They went to the principal and then to the downtown Ed Center. Eventually, certified teachers were in the classrooms.

Out of this experience, Star and DeShawn formed Parent Power which went on to become the Indianapolis affiliate of Parents Across America in 2012.

EmpowerEd Families: A parent organization created *for* parents

In a May 20, 2021 *Indy Recorder* story, "[Parent group unveils 3-year education platform](#)," The Mind Trust (MT) parent group was introduced to the city.

[EmpowerEd Families](#) is a parent group organized for parents. It is organized by MT. Parents did not self-organize and approach MT and have it organize them.

MT's concern for parents of color is from its "othering" mentality. MT must create an "other" which is "needy" by definition. It's part in its colonial-minded DNA. *See, without the "other" there would be no reason for MT to exist.*

In early 2019, Mind Trust put out a call for a parent organizer. [Ashley Virden was hired](#) and worked from July 2019 to December 2020.

Ontay Johnson took up where Ashley left off. He's now the executive director of EmpowerED Families. According to MT, Ontay will build family power through relationships while rallying behind the strengths of parents to weave together the home, school and community, to fight for high quality education.

In other words, from view of this study, Ontay is simply organizing parents to enable the privatization of IPS. This has been the goal of MT since 2011 when it issued its [\\$700,000](#) education report, [Opportunity Schools](#). See, "Transforming IPS into a system of high-performing Opportunity Schools" on p. 146 of the MT report.

For MT, school success is high test scores. Since standardized tests sort and rank students on how white, male, and wealthy they are,¹ under MT's EmpowerEd Families scheme, the value of parents will depend on how they get students of color to assimilate towards the cultural normative dogma of whiteness.²

Since there is no Indy organization on the other side of the on-going local debate around traditional schools vs. charters with the amount of [big money controlling MT](#) it is necessary that someone point out the flaws in MT's EmpowerED Families initiative. This is what this analysis with commentary does.

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1. [Standardized tests: The politics of school reform and its Hoosier connections](#)
2. [The Mind Trust as whiteness](#)

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