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If You Are Not Ready, Then Step Aside: Intentionally Centering the Black Male Body in Teacher Education

Cherrel Miller Dyce
Elon University, cdyce@elon.edu

Julius Davis
Bowie State University, jldavis@bowiestate.edu

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If You Are Not Ready, Then Step Aside: Intentionally Centering the Black Male Body in Teacher Education

Abstract

The conditions of Black male students in K-12 schools have been well-documented by scholars and clearly illustrate institutionalized anti-Black maleness that continues to go unaddressed or, in some cases, never addressed in most educator preparation programs and school systems in the U.S. We call for the centering of Black male bodies in teacher education and offer Afrocentric Assessment Mattering Pathways (AAMP) for guidance for intentionally centering the Black male body in teacher education: 1) critical anti-black self-reflection, 2) Afrocentric curricular change using Black history, and 3) engaging in off-campus Afrocentric environments.

Keywords

Anti-racism, Black male students, teacher education, anti-Black, maleness

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Introduction

We believe in the power of naming a thing as it is—Black pain, Black suffering, Black trauma, and violence to the Black body. According to Curry (2014), “For young Black boys, maleness in a white supremacist society is fraught with difficulty and the all too likely outcome of death” (p. 3). Historically, socially, and conceptually, the labels "Black" and "male" encompasses individuals who are African or of African descent who are diverse culturally, spiritually, academically, economically, socially, but still are impacted by systemic racism, which allows us to discuss the experiences this group faces in educational settings and society (Milner, Pabon, Woodson, & McGee, 2013). Whether present physically or psychically, the Black body has been the subject of oppression, degradation, disenfranchisement, violence, and trauma for over 400 years in the United States. The struggles of African-descended people in this country are a narrative situated in anti-Blackness and the dispensability of the Black body. As such, “antiblackness holds that the Black is not a relational being but is always already property” (Dancy, Edwards, & Davis, 2018, p. 180). This property thesis, which centers the relationships, life chances, and humanity of Black people as objects to be controlled, is present in many K-12 institutions, especially in the data around the academic and social success of Black males in these institutions. Anti-Black maleness is centered in the historical legacy and contemporary ways white supremacy devalues Black boys (ages 3-18) and men (ages 18 and over) in the U.S.

There is a constancy in anti-Blackness rhetoric that renders the Black male body as an engine of fear, terror, aggression, sexually overcharged, violent, untamable, and K-12 institutions through policies and practices such as zero tolerance, dress code, modes of conduct, and tracking have maintained white racial obsession and racist derailment of the Black boys they are charged to educate. Love (2014) argues “teachers’ perceptions of them as threatening, inevitably Black boys represented a large number of those referred for removal from the general education environment and funneled instead into labels such as ‘mentally challenged,’ ‘emotionally disturbed,’ and ‘learning disabled’” (p.302). Given Love’s (2014) sentiments, anti-Blackness in K-12 institutions echo white supremacy and false notions of Blackness and maleness. Thus, the white supremacist narrative around Black masculinity produces an equation where “lil Black boys become Black brutes” (Love, 2014, p. 299). We see this great perversion in the condition of Black male students in K-12 schooling.

The conditions of Black male students in K-12 schools have been well documented (Howard, 2014; Polite & Davis, 1999) and clearly illustrate institutionalized anti-Black maleness that continues to go unaddressed or, in some

cases, never addressed in most educator preparation programs and school systems in the U.S. There has been an overnight surge of instant anti-racist and “woke” teacher educators and teachers, but the subjugation, physical and soul dehumanization of Black male students’ experiences in schools persist. Our analysis makes no apologies for centering K-12 institutions and their postsecondary counterparts in maintaining and perpetuating anti-Black maleness. The correlation must be made between the educators who teach Black boys and the teacher education institutions that train teachers. Thus, we specifically call on teacher educators and their respective teacher education programs to assess how anti-Blackness and anti-Black maleness permeates their teaching philosophy, curriculum, climate, policies, practices, and the overall preparation of teachers.

Postsecondary institutions as sites of anti-Blackness are not a new phenomenon. Dancy et al. (2018) emphasizes that anti-Blackness in higher education institutions is persistent and trace it to the legacy of colonialism. They state, “...the history of U.S. higher education reflects a deep commitment to Black degradation as fundamental to the maintenance of a colonial order” (p. 177). In this order, Black bodies were seen as property and engines of labor (Dancy et al., 2018). King (2019) decries anti-Blackness in teacher education by calling for teacher education programs to prepare teachers with the paradigmatic lens to engage in Black history and calls for such programs to create an infused Black history to equip pre-service teachers with the knowledge, skills, and disposition needed to educate Black children. King (2019) states, “...it is important for teacher educators to examine what preservice teachers know about Black history to better prepare them to teach in culturally and racially diverse schools” (p. 371).

Similarly, Cedillo (2018) examines anti-Blackness in STEM education, calling for STEM educators, curriculum specialists, and researchers to examine the racial order. Likewise, Nxumalo (2020) examines the intersection of humanism, coloniality, and anti-Blackness in early childhood education and challenges higher education institutions to disrupt pedagogy for the betterment of marginalized communities. Anti-Blackness has also been examined in educational leadership preparation programs, and Waite (2021) encourages these programs to reimagine educational leadership practices. She asserts this will require that “the ideologies of white supremacy, racism, and anti-Blackness manifest in programs, departments, schools, and permeate institutions overall” (p. 14).

The profound words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s book *Why We Can’t Wait* (2000) expresses our message to teacher educators about why we can no longer wait to center Black maleness. The longer we wait, the more educational violence is perpetrated against Black male bodies by teacher educators’ pedagogy, and by default, the education of preservice teachers they prepared, which only exacerbates these students’ suffering. We call for the centering of Black male

bodies in teacher education as a necessary component of a successful teacher education program. Hence, we challenge teacher educators nationwide, "If you are not ready, then step aside." We seek to dismantle anti-Blackness against the Black male body in teacher education programs and schools nationwide as Black teacher educators. Black maleness is a holistic umbrella to value the multiple academic, cultural, and social identities they possess throughout the K-12 educational spectrum. This article discusses our positionality and theoretical perspectives that center Black male students in teacher education and offers guidance to teachers and educators.

Anti-Blackness in educational spaces is not new and must be eradicated. The time is now for a radical reframing and restructuring of teacher education programs and the faculty who teach in these programs to take accountability. The central message of this article, and more specifically, this section, is intended to chart a transformative pro-Black pathway for teacher education programs and their faculty and staff to decolonize how they teach and prepare preservice teachers to promote the academic and social success of Black males. Anti-Blackness is a crucial cornerstone of colleges and universities. Accordingly, the pathways and strategies included in this section are meant unapologetically to dismantle Euro-western epistemologies and white supremacy, thereby centering Blackness maleness as rich, relevant, necessary, and human. Consequently, the essential framing of the article and guidance section is counternarrative, serves as a narrative of centrality and visibility, and calls for teacher educators to undergo a hard racial reckoning to dismantle anti-Blackness.

As Afrocentric scholars, we offer guidance for teachers and teacher educators wrestling with anti-Blackness and maleness in their classes, curriculum, pedagogies, school climate, policies, practices, teacher and student identity, and positionality. We offer strategies based on an Asset Mattering Framework which "creates a space in the education lexicon for purposeful re-imagination of Black males' academic and social success—success that is based on a set of cultural and racially sensitive tools that are infused from pre-kindergarten to postsecondary education, in teacher and administrator preparation programs, communities, and family engagement outreach" (Dyce et al., 2021, p.12).

This article charts a transformative pro-Black pathway for teacher education programs and faculty to decolonize training and prepare pre-service teachers for Black males. The strategies are unapologetically meant to dismantle Euro-western epistemologies, white supremacy, thereby centering Blackness, and maleness, as rich, relevant, necessary, and human. As such, we present Afrocentric Assessment Mattering Pathways (AAMP) for intentionally centering the Black male body in teacher education: 1) critical anti-Black self-reflection, 2) Afrocentric curricular change using Black history, and 3) engaging in off-campus Afrocentric environments.

Centering Positionality and Theory as Constructs of Resistance

Epistemologically and ontologically, we center our discourse and much of our academic work and engagement from a Black-centric space. This is a space where Black bodies are cherished, whole, productive, creative, possess spiritual and prophetic voice, and are laden with possibilities. As Black academicians, parents of Black (male) children, and members of the Black community in the Diaspora, our work plants a counterargument in direct opposition to the rampant anti-Blackness in the U.S. and abroad. Anti-Blackness affects all Black bodies. However, we have dedicated much of our professional work to examine the intersection of Black male bodies, teacher education, and K-12 education (Allen, Davis, Garraway, & Burt, 2018; Davis, Anderson, & Parker, 2019; Dyce, 2013, 2015). As such, we bring this emic perspective to this article. Many scholars, such as Smith, Caruthers, and Fowler (2019), and Watson and Baxley (2021), have examined anti-Blackness and experiences of Black girls and women, and we see our work as complementary in the joint struggle to dismantle anti-Blackness and the Black liberation struggle. That is, Black women are essential comrades to the discussion of Black boys and men and the total liberation of Black people globally.

Black Woman Teacher Educator

As a Black woman, I bring to this work a personal and professional standpoint rooted in Black and Afro-Caribbean feminism, Black liberation theology, and Jamaican Maroon pedagogy centered on resistance to slavery, anti-Blackness, and colonialism. I echo Waite's (2021) sentiment as she discussed her positionality as a mother of Black children stating, "I view my role as a scholar-activist and my teaching praxis as an act of resistance" (p. 15). Like hooks (1994), my teaching and research transgress boundaries placed on the Black body. I use my voice in duality to envision a liberatory pathway (Dumas & ross, 2016) for both Black boys and girls. I have been working for the past few years directly and indirectly with the social and academic success of Black boys. I situate my fight against anti-Blackness, by paying homage to Queen Nanny, a Jamaican Maroon (Allbold & Dyce, 2016), whose resistance to slavery and colonization is legendry in Jamaica, making her the nation's only female national hero. Teacher education systems have long-ignored anti-Blackness, masking it in words like cultural diversity and multiculturalism. I aligned my scholarly activism with Norwood's (2013) sentiment that "like women in other regions in the Diaspora, Afro-Caribbean women have a long history of resistance" (p.233).

Additionally, my work examining anti-Black maleness at the intersection of the education system is rooted in James Cone's (2010) work on Black liberation theology, which positions my faithwork and motherwork and resistance to anti-Blackness as one unit. According to Cone (2010),

...the black experience is existence in a system of white racism... the purpose of the black theology is to make sense of the black experience... it also means blacks making decisions about themselves—decisions that involve whites. Blacks know that whites do not have the last word on the black experience. This realization may be defined as black power, the power of the black community to make decisions regarding its identity (pp. 25-26).

Black and Afro-Caribbean feminist thought, and Black liberation theology have sustained my battle with anti-Blackness and provided me a war chest of tools that combine knowledge and wisdom as well as the art of spiritual and prophetic resistance. In the words of Collins (1989),

Black women cannot afford to be fools of any type, for their devalued status denies them the protections that white skin, maleness, and wealth confer... The use of experience as the cutting edge... has been key to Black women's survival (p. 759).

As one of two Black faculty members in a historically white institution where approximately 95% of our preservice teachers are white and female, engagement in such a space requires me to channel my faithwork, motherwork, and resistance to anti-Blackness as one unit, realizing that my very presence is an affront to whiteness and white supremacy. My research, teaching, service, and consulting in race and racism are the core of my work with school districts, higher education institutions, businesses, and industry. This cross-section of race, racism, anti-Blackness, and education has culminated in my urgent call to confront anti-Black maleness in teacher education programs nationwide.

Black Man Teacher Educator

As a proud Black African man, my personal and professional identity is rooted in Pan-Africanism, Afrocentricity (Asante, 1991), Black nationalism (Ture & Hamilton, 1992), Nationbuilding (Akoto, 1992), and critical race theory (CRT) (Davis & Jett, 2019). At the core of my work as a man and scholar, I follow Karenga's (1980) guidance in Kawaida (ongoing synthesis of the best of African thought and practice), the cultural nationalist theory and movement to bring out

the best of what it means to be Black and African. Afrocentricity provides the framework for us to center Africa, emphasize African culture, traditions, and contributions (Asante, 1991). As someone who embraces Pan Africanism, I see my work in educational, community, and family spaces as concerned about Black adults and children all over the Diaspora. My reasoning for embracing this view is connected to my belief that racism (white supremacy) affects Black people worldwide (Welsing, 2004). Akoto (1992) describes nationbuilding as

the conscious and focused application of our people's collective resources, energies, and knowledge to the task of liberating... It involves the development of behaviors, values, languages, institutions, and physical structures that elucidate our history and culture... [to ensure] independence of the nation. Nationbuilding is the deliberate, keenly directed and focused, energetic projection of the national culture, and the collective identity (p. 3).

My work in the larger Black community and teacher education specializes in Black boys and men, but I do not do so at the expense or opposition of Black girls and women.

In many respects, I live, teach, and serve the community in Black spaces. I grew up and trained in predominantly Black urban communities in Baltimore city and have seen the impact of racism, gentrification, and oppression on Black people. I still live in a primarily Black urban community in Baltimore city; my children attend African centered schools that reaffirm who they are as Africans, and as Black children, I teach at a historically Black university and work in many different capacities in the Black community to serve Black adults and children. I make no apologies for centering Blackness, Black maleness, Africa, liberation, nationbuilding, Black adults, and children in my personal and professional life. In my analysis of history, in general, and the Black past, specifically, there has never been a period in American and international historical records where anti-Blackness or racism has ceased from existence socially, systematically, and institutionally. The true power dynamic remains racism (white supremacy) in all facets of life and education (Welsing, 2004). As a critical race theorist, anti-Blackness is constantly changing, much like how racism (white supremacy) operates—they are both omnipresent. Centering Blackness in my personal and professional life is a source of healing, an act of resistance, and true liberation (Ture & Hamilton, 1992).

Centering Black Male Students in Teacher Education

To contextualize anti-Blackness in teacher education, it is essential to center the extant research literature on Black males in schools and teacher education.

Black Males in Schools

No shortage of literature has focused on Black male students' academic and social experiences in K-12 educational spaces (Howard, 2014; Polite & Davis, 1999). The deficit and success and high achieving paradigms are two primary lenses used to better understand research, theory, and practice surrounding Black boys and young men in K-12 schools. In most schools and educator preparation programs, these two paradigms are not discussed or explored deeper with pre-and in-service teachers by teacher educators unless they have a personal and professional commitment to Black male students.

The deficit paradigm is the most used lens by teachers to understand Black male students in classrooms and school settings. Scholars describe the deficit paradigm in many ways, and it is responsible for the dominant narrative focused on the failure and problems of Black male students, families, and communities. Dyce et al. (2021) call this the underachievement thesis.

The underachievement thesis explains the tendency of teachers and administrators to focus on the underachievement data without questioning the institutional and structural conditions, academic pathways, teaching methods, classroom management techniques, assessments, and school and classroom culture that lead to Black boys and young men's academic derailment (Dyce et al., 2021, p. 3).

This line of thinking is anchored in the deficit paradigm and situates Black male students as less-than-ideal learners.

Critical Black scholars have been leading the charge to challenge deficit perspectives of Black male students in education (Howard, 2014). They have ushered in a paradigm that focuses on Black male students' success and high achievement to challenge and counter the pervasive deficit narrative about these students. The success and high achievement paradigm concentrate on the strengths and assets of Black boys and young men. This line of reasoning uses Black focuses on students' grade point average, standardized test scores, and college-level course participation to describe them as successful and high achieving. This body of scholarship has provided insight into their persistence in education by illustrating that the following play a significant role in their accomplishments: a) early opportunities to learn; b) family and guardian support and advocacy; c) participation in gifted and advanced courses and programs; d)

teacher and peer support and encouragement; e) involvement in extracurricular activities; and f) spiritual beliefs (Jett & Davis, 2019). Scholars have challenged the deficit discourse, inadequate conceptualizations of race and racism, privileged perspectives of content knowledge, substandard instruction, and mistreatment of Black male students in educational research, policy, classroom, and out-of-school spaces (Howard, 2014; Wright & Counsell, 2018).

Black Male Students in Teacher Education

A cursory examination of literature in teacher education shows limited scholarship about Black male students in teacher education. In teacher education, there is a wealth of scholarship on race, ethnicity, culturally relevant teaching, and other critical pedagogies, but many are not centered on preparing teacher educators to teach Black male students. Some Black scholars have shared their experiences and perspectives, preparing predominantly white and diverse teachers to teach Black male students. Given the institutionalized issues Black male students face in U.S. public schools, Milner et al. (2013) have called for teacher educators to prepare pre-service teachers to teach Black male students. As Black teacher educators, Milner and associates share the challenges they have faced in preparing pre-and-in-service teachers to teach Black male students. They face challenges with teachers wanting them to get over race, stop talking about Black male students, address pre-service teachers' misconceptions of Black maleness, not being racist, and disrupt deficit views of Black male students. They call for teacher educators to develop a deeper understanding of the heterogeneity of Black male students to support them in creating educational experiences that are more suited and responsive to Black male students.

In mathematics teacher education spaces, Sheppard (2009) reports an intervention that provided prospective teachers with an opportunity to get to know Black male students as a method to help them develop meaningful instructional experiences for the students. His study results suggest that pre-service teachers should be provided field experiences situated in contexts that allow them autonomy over the learning experience as a beginning stage to integrate Black male students' experiences into instruction authentically. Sheppard argued that providing teachers with authentic experiences with Black male students can improve their academic performance in mathematics.

Recognizing that racist social and educational imagery of Black male students impacts all teachers, Davis, Goings, and Allen (2019) call for teacher educators to reframe teachers' perspectives of Black male students. They argue further that teacher educators must take their role seriously in helping pre- and in-service teachers better understand and meet Black male students' academic and social needs. In their view, teacher educators have the power to shape the views

and expectations of teachers to see Black male students as humans and learners. Davis and colleagues (2019) argue that teacher educators must prepare pre-service teachers in class and in-service teachers in courses and professional development to nurture their brilliance and see the strengths and assets that Black male students bring to the classroom and school settings. In essence, teacher educators must prepare teachers to challenge the deficit paradigm pervading Black male students' educational experiences.

Black Male Students in Anti-Racist Discourse

From our standpoint, the surge of instant anti-racists in teacher education and educational settings by teachers and teacher educators in many disciplinary fields of study coincides with the recent interest in anti-racist publications, teaching, and professional development. The popularization of anti-racism in education concerns us, given that it is grounded in a global body of literature (e.g., books, articles, chapters) that spans 40 years. However, many teacher educators and teachers treat it as a new concept that only surfaced with a recent popularization of the anti-racism mantra. In our view, these educators should be grounded in the literature before blindly embracing a perspective that they are not fully educated. One book or professional development is not sufficient for teacher educators and teachers to fully understand anti-racism's strengths and shortcomings. For instance, Gillborn (2004), one of the leading scholars on anti-racism, argues that "Anti-racism is an ill-defined and changing concept" (p. 35). Essentially, what it means to be an anti-racist means different things to teacher educators and teachers.

Moreover, given the popularity, uncertainty, and unclarity of anti-racism with teacher educators and teachers, we raise questions about where Black male students fit in teacher educators' and teachers' conceptualization of what it means to be an anti-racist. This term has become a catch-all phrase to suggest that all educators who identify as anti-racist are totally against all forms of racism and inequity faced by students in schools and society. From our inspection of the anti-racist landscape, many educators have self-appointed themselves anti-racist without close examination of their whole body of work, in general, and more specifically, as it relates to Black male students. The conundrum is, what do we know about self-proclaimed anti-racist teachers' and teacher educators' records combating racism, fighting, or advocating for Black male students? Many teacher educators and teachers who consider themselves anti-racist have contributed to the historical and contemporary educational problems Black male students continue to experience in the deficit paradigm. They have done very little to support them in the success/high achievement paradigm. Are educators who consider themselves anti-racist committed to Black male students? How is their

commitment reflected in their work? Consequently, teacher educators and teachers should not read this paragraph and automatically assume that they are anti-racist and their colleagues are not.

Anti-racism as a field of study is nuanced, complex, and dynamic. It is not as simple as you are either racist or anti-racist. Any considerations for this field of study should be seeded in the complex ways racism, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism operate to dehumanize Black bodies and maintain white power structures. Whether you are a novice teacher educator/teacher or veteran educator, this work requires deep introspection of your body of work, the damage that you may have done, the position you currently occupy at your institution, how you benefit from anti-Black policies (e.g., hiring practices, admission policies, advanced programs), and what you are now doing in that position to combat systemic racism and inequity. Teacher educators and teachers should not look outward as they evaluate their anti-racist work but should start with themselves and their contributions to the field and whether it has hindered or forwarded the progress of Black males. The following are some essential questions for anti-racist teacher educators and teachers:

1. How do I engage with Black males regularly?
2. How do I engage with Black men in my teacher education program and school building?
3. Who are the Black males in my network, and how do I engage with them?
4. Who are the Black scholars that inform my work around anti-Blackness, race, racism, and Black male students?
5. What research and social networks do I belong to help me think through anti-Blackness, anti-Black maleness, and anti-racism?
6. What readings and assignments do I assign that deal with anti-Blackness and Black males in the courses I teach?

As teacher education faculty at historically white and historically Black higher education institutions, we address all teacher educators with this simple statement: “If you are not ready, then step aside.” The reality is that some teacher educators have already stepped aside because they are not addressing the systemic issues impacting Black males that are evidenced by large amounts of data. For those so-called anti-racist teacher educators, this article is directed towards you, if you are not ready to address the needs of Black male students, then step aside to reevaluate your commitment and knowledge of the issues impacting Black male students and determine how they fit into your conceptualization of being anti-racist. Educator preparation programs can no longer ignore the realities of institutionalized and systemic racism wrapped in anti-Black maleness in educational spaces. The reality is that racism and anti-Blackness impact Black

male students' academic and personal lives every day. We need serious teacher educators and teachers committed to dismantling these systems of oppression now.

Are you Ready? Guidance for Teacher Educators for Prioritizing Black Male

Students

This section builds on scholars' perspectives, guidance, and advice for teachers and teacher educators. In 2007, Based on his experiences with mathematics teachers of Black students, Martin (2007) asserted that teachers should (a) develop a deep understanding of the social realities experienced by African American students, (b) take seriously one's role in helping to shape the racial, academic, and mathematics identities of African American learners, (c) conceptualize mathematics not just as a school subject but as a means to empower African American students, and (d) become agents of change who challenge research and policy perspectives that construct African American children as less than ideal learners and in need of being saved or rescued from their Blackness. We encourage interdisciplinary teachers of Black students to reframe their instructional practices by taking the ideas developed by Martin seriously.

Thinking specifically about Black male students, we draw on Milner's (2013) scholarship to teachers and teacher educators to provide guidance. Building on Baldwin's 1963 speech "A Talk to Teachers," Milner talked to teachers from all racial and ethnic backgrounds about teaching and empowering Black male students. He argued that "...all teachers need to (re)consider their belief systems and consequently their instructional practices with [Black] male students" (Milner, 2013, p. 67). Milner offers three foundational ideas for teachers of Black male students that are similar to the arguments advanced by Martin (2007). The three ideas are that: "(1) teachers must remember the importance of identity in education; (2) teachers must deeply understand and remember the social context of their work; and (3) teachers must remember the interrelated nature of the mind and heart in education" (Milner, 2013, p. 71).

This section offers guidance for teachers and teacher educators wrestling with anti-Blackness in their classes, curriculum, pedagogies, school climate, policies, practices, teacher and student identity, and positionality. The strategies we offer in this section are based on an Asset Mattering Framework which "creates a space in the education lexicon for purposeful re-imagination of Black males' academic and social success—success that is based on a set of cultural and racially sensitive tools that are infused from pre-kindergarten to postsecondary education, in teacher and administrator preparation programs, communities, and

family engagement outreach” (Dyce et al., 2021, p.12). Such a framework has been the call of previous Black educators and theorists and echoes the spirit of Carter G Woodson in the *Mis-Education of the Negro* (2010), where Woodson critiqued curriculums and subject areas such as geography, literature, languages, arts, sciences, teacher preparation programs, and law programs for decentering Black contributions and perspectives from the curriculum. In the decentering of Blackness and Black perspectives and worldview, Williams, Coles, and Reynolds (2020) also drew similar connections about how education and K-12 institutions center Eurocentrism stating, “...by solely teaching from a Eurocentric framework and perpetuating the imagined inferiority of Blackness, education research and practice emphasizes how Whiteness is valued most in our educational system” (p. 253).

Critical Anti-Black Self-Reflection

A critical anti-Black self-reflection in teacher education programs involves faculty assessing their schemata, habits of mind, and problematic frames of references that enforce anti-Black racism while sanctioning any attempt by others to disrupt white supremacist ways of knowing, guilt, and derailment of the Black imagination. Teacher reflection is a common practice in teacher education and has been codified in professional teaching standards. We are calling for teacher educators and teachers to practice critical self-reflection for Black male students, encouraging them to examine their own beliefs, perspectives, experiences, and actions to challenge deficit-laden views and approaches to working with them.

In critically self-reflecting on anti-Blackness, teacher education faculty must merge the personal, familial, sociocultural, historical, and political influences that informed their praxis. Faculty should engage in critical anti-Blackness reflections, which should (a) examine your family history with anti-Blackness, (b) examine your K-20 schooling and professional experience with anti-Blackness and Black boys and men, and (c) examine the ways that anti-Blackness has benefited your personal life, career, publications, and service work. Secondly, assess your syllabi, textbooks, class activities, and materials for roots and tentacles of anti-Blackness stereotypes and biases. Thirdly, examine how your teacher education program’s policies, practices, and candidate populations for violence against the Black body and imagination. Key questions to ask in a critical anti-Blackness reflection are:

1. What do I know about the historical and contemporary Black experience in the U.S.?
2. What are my assumptions, stereotypes, and biases about Black boys and men?

3. What are my thoughts about the murder of unarmed Black boys and men?
4. What are my thoughts about the past and present educational inequities that persist for Black male students? Who or what is responsible for these inequities?
5. How have I benefited from anti-Blackness in my personal and professional life?
6. What am I willing to give up to eradicate anti-Blackness and racism?
7. How are Black (male) students and faculty treated in my teacher education program?
8. How do I center Blackness and Black maleness in my work?
9. How do I develop meaningful relationships and implement culturally relevant and Afrocentric practices with Black students?

Answering these questions for yourself will help you determine your stance, personal and professional learning needs, commitment, and advocacy for Black boys and men.

Afrocentric Curricular Change using Black History

Faculty in teacher education programs should actively dismantle the curriculum that centers on whiteness and white maleness. There is no attention or required course in Black history and the Black experience in most teacher education programs. Combating anti-Blackness means a re-imagining of the teacher education curriculum to intentionally focus on Black history and the Black experience in the U.S. and abroad. Black boys and men should be centered in Black history and the Black experience. Curriculum restructuring should be couched in an Afrocentric theoretical/conceptual framework to help guide instruction. Asante (1991) states, "Afrocentricity is a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person" (p. 171).

The AAMP curricular change calls for centering Black history in the teacher education curriculum. Introduction to education courses should intentionally focus on Black history and provide experiences in Black communities. Methods of teaching courses should anchor Black cultural practices and include Black history in all content areas to combat the rampant whitewashed curriculum taught in teacher education. King (2019) proposed a Black history framework for teacher education, not just as part of culturally relevant and other diversity pedagogies.

King (2019) points to three reasons why Black history should be a part of teacher education programs: a) Black history should be a natural fabric of contemporary education spaces, b) Black history creates racial literacy and awareness, and c) Black history can provide preservice teachers with a

counternarrative and re-imagination of Black (male) students. As teacher education faculty, using Black history to reshape how we prepare preservice teachers to engage with Black maleness is an essential aspect of Afrocentricity because "the Afrocentric approach seeks in every situation the appropriate centrality of the African person... In education, this means that teachers provide students the opportunity to study the world and its people, concepts, and history from an African worldview" (Asante, 1991, p. 171).

In decolonizing the teacher education curriculum, teacher educators and their programs should (a) require all faculty to learn about Black history, (b) require preservice teachers to take a course on Black history, (b) create partnerships with Black studies program or faculty who specialize in Black history, (c) infuse Afrocentricity in every course so that preservice teachers have an understanding of the framework and its tenets and use it to guide their instruction, (d) adopt common readings across the principles of teaching methods courses that prioritize race to prepare students in thinking about how race, racism, anti-Blackness, and anti-Black maleness affect methods of teaching.

Engaging in Off-Campus Afrocentric Environments

Teacher education faculty and, by extension, their students should intentionally engage in Black-centric spaces as a vehicle to combat anti-Blackness, anti-Black maleness, and as a paradigmatic shift to prepare racially literate preservice teachers. Off-campus engagement in Black communities is central to healthy Afrocentric engagement with Black males in K-20. Teacher education faculty and preparation programs should be responsible for creating meaningful partnerships with the Black community.

From an Afrocentric perspective, the partnership should be relational, centered on the Black community's needs, and not the need to have placements or service hours for preservice teachers. Deficit and Eurocentric perspectives of Black male students should be addressed before the experience. Engaging in the Black community should be fused, integrated into, and integral to the curriculum, policies, and practices for more nuanced approaches to preservice preparation. The teacher education program's outreach office, dean, or department chairs should be instrumental in providing teacher education faculty resources to engage the Black community meaningfully.

Black community engagement should be integrated into a) foundations courses, b) practicums, c) after-school placements, d) summer programming, e) capstone experiences, and f) research and inquiry sites. An example of off-campus Black community outreach is partnering with Black faith-based institutions. Teacher educators should partner with faith-based entities which have educational offerings. To further expand community engagement, Black museums

should be considered experiential education sites where the histories, experiences, and humanity of Black folks provide a tapestry to combat anti-Blackness (Woods, 2018).

Conclusion

In this article, we urge our colleagues in educator preparation programs and schools to shift away from the deficit paradigm and embrace Black male students' asset and strength-based paradigm. Antiracist maleness and institutionalized and systemic racism is pervasive in K-12 education and higher education settings and must be dismantled by committed educators. Join us in creating a radical reframing and restructuring of teacher education programs and the faculty who teach in these programs to take accountability for Black boys and men. We strongly believe that creating Afrocentric Asset Mattering Frameworks in higher education and school settings is one solution element. Teacher educators and teachers have to take personal responsibility for their development, commitments, and actions to support Black male students. Those who are unable or unwilling to develop are not qualified to teach and serve Black male students no matter how many degrees or certifications they have, including anti-racists. "If you are not ready, then step aside."

Notes On The Contributors

Cherrel Miller Dyce is an Associate Professor and Executive Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the School of Education at Elon University. With twenty years of experience in social justice work, she is a fierce social justice advocate, K-20 researcher, mentor, and social theorist. Dr. Dyce believes in uplifting marginalized communities through education. She emphasizes racial equity, social justice, and critical self-reflection in all research projects. Dr. Dyce is a diversity, equity, and inclusion consultant who provides professional development in the areas of racial equity for public and charter schools, higher education institutions, and private organizations. She has published many journal articles and two books. Her recent co-authored book is *Black Males Matter: A Blueprint for Creating School and Classroom Environments to Support their Academic and Social Development*.

Julius Davis, Ed.D., is the University System of Maryland (USM) Wilson H. Elkins Associate Professor of Mathematics Education and Director of the Center for Research and Mentoring of Black Male Students and Teachers at Bowie State University. He is the co-editor of the book *Critical Race Theory in Mathematics Education* (2019, Routledge) and co-author of *Black Males Matter: A Blueprint for Creating School and Classroom Environments to Support their Academic and*

Social Development (2021, Information Age Publishing). Dr. Davis has two main strands of research focused on Black male students and Black male teachers.

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