


9-16-2021

Black Liberation in Teacher Education: (Re)Envisioning Educator Preparation to Defend Black Life and Possibility

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Recommended Citation

Coles, Justin A. and Stanley, Darrius (2021) "Black Liberation in Teacher Education: (Re)Envisioning Educator Preparation to Defend Black Life and Possibility," *Northwest Journal of Teacher Education*: Vol. 16 : Iss. 2 , Article 6.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15760/nwjte.2021.16.2.6>

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Abstract

Current configurations of teacher education programs are insufficient in attracting and producing teachers equipped to teach through the permanence of antiblackness, instead still relying on race-neutral or color-evasive pedagogies that perpetuate the misrecognition of antiblackness. As evident by the sustained inequities experienced by Black children and the routine marginalization of Black (teacher) educators in the field, we recognize that teacher education programs, and subsequently P-12 classrooms, are not designed nor equipped to reduce the harm caused by persistent anti-Black racism. Despite the ways Blackness is derided and invisibilized in educator preparation, Black students, families, and communities have long countered anti-Black schooling processes through methods grounded in Black liberation. Specifically, throughout the history of Black education, Black people have engaged in resistance and subversion, spiritual innovation, intersectionality, Black fugitive thought, and Afrofuturism to culturally sustain Blackness amid ongoing racial oppression. Through a multidisciplinary analysis, in this reflective and conceptual essay, we offer the framing of Black Liberation in Teacher Education (BLiTE) to help re/envision the cultivation of classrooms that refuse Black suffering and defend Blackness.

Keywords

Anti-racism, Black liberation, teacher education, antiblackness

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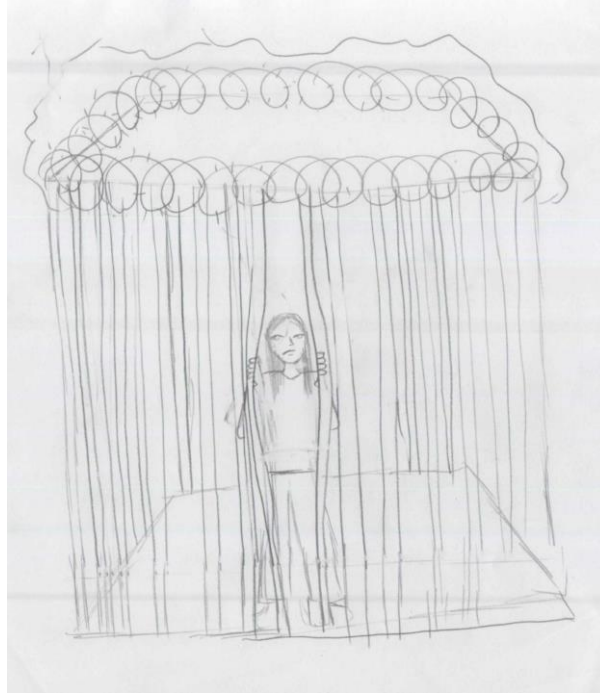
Introduction

Current configurations of teacher education programs are insufficient in attracting and producing teachers equipped to teach through the permanence of antiblackness, instead still relying on race-neutral or color-evasive pedagogies that perpetuate the misrecognition of antiblackness. As evident by the sustained inequities experienced by Black children and the routine marginalization of Black (teacher) educators in the field, we recognize that teacher education programs, and subsequently P-12 classrooms, are not designed nor equipped to reduce the harm caused by persistent anti-Black racism. Despite the ways Blackness is derided and invisibilized in educator preparation, Black students, families, and communities have long countered anti-Black schooling processes through methods grounded in Black liberation. Specifically, throughout the history of Black education, Black people have engaged in resistance and subversion, spiritual innovation, intersectionality, Black fugitive thought, and Afrofuturism to culturally sustain Blackness amid ongoing racial oppression. Through a multidisciplinary analysis, in this reflective and conceptual essay, we offer the framing of Black Liberation in Teacher Education (BLiTE) to help re/envision the cultivation of classrooms that refuse Black suffering and defend Blackness.

Cutting Open the Belly of the (Educational) Ship

How do Black children and adolescents experience liberation in a nation-state characterized by antiblackness, which is the legacy of capture and unfreedom? We enter thinking through this question to consider the possibilities of Black youth living rich and expansive lives amid a legacy of capture, while simultaneously being educated by teachers that may reinforce the same system/s of containment Black youth are relentlessly working to live beyond. In a research study conducted by Coles and Powell (see Coles & Powell, 2020), which dealt with the ways Black youth experience disproportionality in school discipline, Coles had all of the participants draw an image that represented the ways Black youth are policed in schools via disciplinary actions. One student, who we will refer to as Denita, drew a student in a square cell, behind bars with barbed wire on top (Figure 1). In Denita's image, it appears that the student (perhaps Denita themself) is attempting to break free from capture, which we interpret as breaking free from the containment of anti-Black schooling processes.

Figure 1: Denita's Concept of School Discipline



We understand antiblackness as a global structure, characterized by the ways societies have ideologically and institutionally embedded conceptions of Blackness and Black people as less human than non-Black peoples, which is reinforced through gratuitous violence. While we examine the influence of antiblackness in U.S. based teacher education and its impact on Black youth of the African diaspora, we see our work as linked and in conversation with critiques of antiblackness throughout the world. As institutions that are part and parcel to the nation-state's functioning, schools, and the educators responsible for teaching and learning, are innately producers and/or enablers of antiblackness, which operationalizes in a myriad of forms: the absence of Blackness from curriculum (Ohito & Coles, 2020), curriculum-based violence (Jones, 2020), linguistic antiblackness (Baker-Bell, 2020), the suppression of Black education space (Warren & Coles, 2020), the policing of Black play (Bryan, 2020), teacher actions and dispositions (Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015), surveillance and policing (Wallace, 2018), and an overarching climate of Black suffering (Dumas, 2014). The entrenched nature of anti-Black violence in schools is thoroughly captured through Sharpe's (2016) conception that the education of Black children is a cycle of traumatizing and retraumatizing, as a result of Black education taking place in the belly of the slave ship or the ship's hold. Leaning further into the metaphor of Black education in the hold, we are reminded of Sojoyner's (2016) illumination that the intersection of ideology and violence connect schools and prisons, with both functioning as punishment apparatuses for Black people as enclosed spaces (p. 69). For Sharpe (2016), the schooling of Black children taking place in the hold represents how the unresolved unfolding of slavery in the U.S. transforms education spaces into sites of "containment, regulation, punishment, capture, and captivity" (p. 21). While U.S. teaching and learning are bound up in a deep anti-Black history (Brown & Brown, 2020), Black students, educators, and community

members have long worked to cut open the belly of the hold—akin to the way Denita imaged herself breaking through the bars of her confinement.

Considering the recent surge in educational institutions (and broader U.S. society) putting forth efforts to be *anti* antiblackness, particularly in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement that catalyzed in 2013, the systemic racial suffering experienced by Black students is far from a novel phenomenon. And yet, current configurations of educator preparation programs are insufficient in attracting and producing teachers equipped to teach through the permanence of antiblackness, instead still relying on race-neutral or color-evasive pedagogies that perpetuate the misrecognition of antiblackness (Allen et al., 2017; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Howard & del Rosario, 2000; Sleeter, 2017). As evident by the sustained inequities for Black students (e.g., lack of access to resources and disproportionate punishment) and the routine marginalization of Black (teacher) educators in the field, we recognize that teacher education programs (and subsequently P-12 classrooms) are not designed nor equipped to reduce the harm caused by persistent anti-Black racism. Despite the ways Blackness is derided and invisibilized in educator preparation, Black people have long lived through anti-Black schooling enclosures (Sojoyner, 2016) by enacting Black-centric educational philosophies that have worked to defend Black life and possibility (Asante, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Love, 2019; Payne & Strickland, 2008; Shockley & Cleveland, 2011; Watkins, 1993; Williams & El-Khawas, 1978). Building with and on the historical and contemporary ways Black people have fought for educational liberation that counters antiblackness, we offer *Black Liberation in Teacher Education* (BLiTE). In this reflective and conceptual essay, we ask: How can educator preparation committed to lessening antiblackness be (re)imagined for and in solidarity with Black liberation?

On Black (Educational) Liberation: A Conceptual Research Note

We enter this work illuminating the ways Black people’s cultural heritage and intellectual independence is suppressed through anti-Black racism, which “distort[s] the professional education of teachers, school leaders, and researchers,” leading to an obstruction of human freedom (King, 2017, p. 99). Therefore, our reliance on Black liberation provides a foundation for us to illuminate and disrupt the antiblackness that has become embedded within teacher education practices (Faison & McArthur, 2020; Frank et al., 2021; King, 2019; Mayorga & Picower, 2018; Torres & Johnson, 2019), which directly works to structure classroom settings. Here, we do not put forth the idea that educational space, and teacher education specifically, can dismantle antiblackness. Rather, understanding that education has always represented hope for Black people in the U.S. (Perlstein, 2002; Rickford, 2016; Williams & Ladd, 1978), we see teacher education as a space that must work with and in service to Black students’ struggles toward liberation through reducing harm in schools that are inherently bound to Black suffering (Dumas, 2014). While schooling serves as a site of antiblackness (education as being in the hold of the slave ship), being committed to the conceptual and axiological stance of Black desire (Coles, 2021b), we also know that “Black people have been triumphant in the face of continuously being

regarded as broken” (p. 2). Our stance of Black desire led us to explore how Black people experience suffering and have lived through (and above) suffering help inform a teacher education that counters all roadblocks to Black freedom. Schooling is a site of anti-Black oppression that needs to be disrupted and we see teacher educators as being able to help reduce harm to Black children by changing the ways they prepare all teachers to engage in practices that are attuned to Black liberation.

Working to counter antiblackness meted out against Black children in schools is a component in educating in the Black liberation tradition, but such a tradition is far greater than countering harm. Beyond solely fighting against the forces of antiblackness, Black liberation centers on restoring the historical and cultural consciousness of Black people in critical ways (King, 2017). A major part of this restoration of consciousness, centers on preparing educators with the capacity to build classrooms that allow Black students to uncover the “purpose and meaning in their lives far beyond the terror and temptations of their immediate situation” (Harding, 1990, p. 164). Sizemore (1973) explained education for liberation as “a continuous process of uncovering that environment which denies natural growth and development, and of discovering new sets of knowledge and reinterpreting old sets to accelerate renaming the world” (p. 402). What might it look like for teacher educators to develop in teachers the capacity to support and affirm their students’ re/imagining and re/naming of a new world? As noted by William and Ladd (1978), “a kind of self-educative process has worked more effectively in the Black community than has formal education (p. 275),” which we see as foundational to understanding education in the Black liberation tradition. Such self-education really manifested when and wherever learning was connected to the Black experience, in some way (William & Ladd, 1978). Blackness cannot be shut out of teaching and learning, but must be central.

In thinking of teacher education, learning from the self-educative ways of Black people—learning how Blackness is inextricably linked to Black living and learning (Coles, 2021a)—is a necessity in enacting liberation pedagogies. Through understanding ongoing school and societal-based efforts designed to disempower Black people and Black resistance to such efforts, teacher education might better train teachers to “provide students with the academic grounding to take the first steps to using their education as a tool for personal and collective political liberation” (Wallace, 2016, p. 36). Teacher education that sets out to help students see their Blackness as valuable and a liberatory tool embodies a humane education that aligns with African epistemology, where learning is guided by the head and the heart, all to benefit the Black community (Nkulu-N’Sengha, 2005). Teacher education informed by Black liberation must be grounded in the belief “that education is unequivocally political and Black education can ill afford to be less so” (McClendon, 1974, p. 15). Foundational to the political nature of Black education for liberation is how it is used as a method to achieving “Black resistance; Black solidarity, social improvement, and political power; and, most of all, freedom” (Anderson & Kharem, 2009, p. xi). Our framing of BLiTE is a collaging of the myriad ways scholars within and outside of the field of education have theorized and documented Black liberation to inform educator preparation.

We understand that our theorization of BLiTE is not exhaustive of all the ways education for Black liberation exists. Our aim in this paper is to engage in foundational work to aid teacher educators in being knowledgeable of and more responsive to the ways Black liberation can and must inform the preparation of teachers in an anti-Black world.

Literature Review

Incrementalism in Perpetuity: State of Teacher Education Programs

Currently, teacher education programs are “fundamentally entangled” in the maintenance of white supremacy and antiblackness in education (Mayorga & Picower, 2018, p.217). In an age of neoliberal incrementalism, predominantly white, aspiring teachers graduate from programs unprepared to see Black humanity and educate Black students. Specifically, scholars identify: pervasive whiteness in the curriculum and program design (Matias, 2016; Sleeter, 2017), exclusion of racially minoritized teacher candidates (Brown, 2014; Gist, 2017, 2018; Madkins, 2011), and neoliberal, diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives (Mayorga & Picower, 2018) as key contributions to the ineptness of teachers. Teacher education programs have long-standing alignments with whiteness ideologies and sensibilities (Sleeter, 2001). Curricula in these programs are replete with white-washed perspectives, pedagogies, and pigeon-holed diversity courses. Additionally, these programs are filled with overwhelmingly white faculty and students whose *emotionality* guide content and programmatic decisions (Matias, 2016). Although many teacher education programs have added courses on multiculturalism and social justice, these programs are susceptible to white comfort rather than interrogations of whiteness, white supremacy, and antiblackness in education (Sleeter, 2017). Another key issue in teacher education, is the continuous exclusion of Black teacher candidates from their programs. The absence of: targeted recruitment strategies, tuition supports, support for certification exams, and culturally informed mentoring serve as unnecessary hurdles for aspiring Black educators (Brown, 2014; Madkins, 2011). Hence, Black teacher candidates must navigate white fragility from classmates, social isolation in cohorts, and the absence of cultural affirmation in the classroom (Brown, 2014; Gist, 2017).

Recently, many Colleges of Education have adopted renewed visions and commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). These DEI initiatives come as a response to social unrest and the associated rise of Black counter movements (e.g., Black lives Matter). However, scholars have critiqued these “commitments” to DEI, calling them an “All Lives Matter” approach at best (Mayorga & Picower, 2018, p. 214). “Even with the progressive trajectory that teacher education has traveled, from being ethnocentric, to additive of multiculturalism, to “social justice” oriented, teacher education still works institutionally in ways that answer to and uphold White supremacy...” (Mayorga & Picower, 2018, p.214). In other words, the embeddedness of white supremacist institutional logics, overwhelming presence of white instructors and students, and the exclusion of aspiring Black educators collude in the stagnancy or gradual

incrementalism of teacher education programs. Hence, we offer BLiTE as a way to re-envision teacher education programs, through the lens of Black freedom dreaming (Kelley, 2002).

Countering Antiracism in Teacher Education

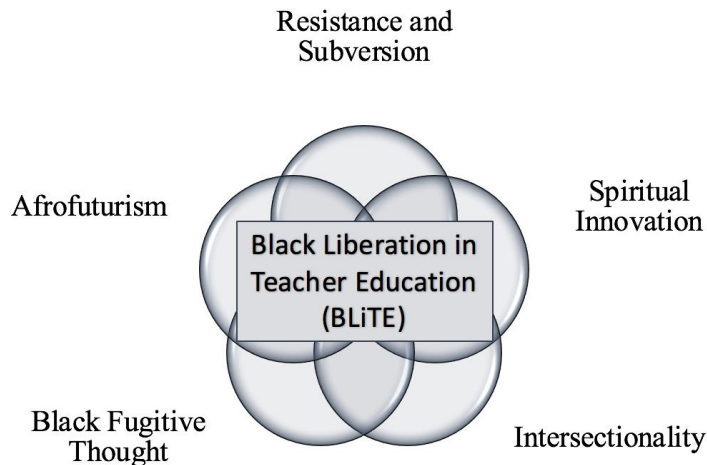
While white supremacy and antiracism are separate regimes, they are interlocking: Antiracism “is rooted in environments that are laden with White supremacist attitudes” (Hines & Wilmont, 2018, p. 64). Education scholars committed to Black liberation have documented the ways U.S. schooling is inextricably tethered to whiteness and white supremacy (see Asante, 1991), which makes it clear that antiracism is also embedded within schools and classrooms. Taking place in what can be characterized as the Black Lives Matter era, research on Black education in the last several years has more pointedly critiqued antiracism in P-12 classrooms (Baker-Bell, 2020; Brown & Brown, 2020; Coles, 2019, 2020; Coles & Powell, 2020; Dumas, 2016a; Dumas & Ross, 2016; Gilmore & Bettis, 2021; Jenkins, 2021; Nxumalo, 2020; Parker, 2017). As Dumas (2016b) explained, Black Lives Matter presents a necessary challenge to education research as it unapologetically focuses on Black life, yet education research and practice “tend[s] to research and talk more broadly about race, racial difference, multiculturalism, and diversity” (p. 7). Theorizations of antiracism allow us to understand the ways Black people are imaged as inferior in relation to all non-Black people, opposed to how they are imaged as inferior to and apart from whiteness (Sung, 2018). As represented through the aforementioned scholarship, recent research has helped the field understand the structural and violent nature of antiracism and its impact on Black children and communities. Additionally, there has been a complimentary wave of research that has grounded the field in understanding the ways joy and possibility manifest in Black educational journeys despite the ongoing presence of antiracism (Anyiwo et al., 2021; Coles, 2021a, 2021b; Ohito & Coles, 2020; Williams et al., 2020; Warren, 2021; Warren & Coles, 2020). Through both branches of scholarship--theorizing antiracism and theorizing the ways Black people live through antiracism--educators come to understand a core axiom in the Black liberation tradition, which is that anti-Black “racism is terrible. Blackness is not” (Perry, 2020). As Zaino (2021) explained, “schools are structured by racial capitalism, but within them, students find spaces of refuge that can be collaborative, generative, and enjoyable” (p. 76). In striving for equity through BLiTE, our aim is to build with scholars committed to loving and humanizing Blackness (Dillard 2017; Jackson, 2020; Wynter-Hoyte & Smith, 2020) in efforts to counter the ongoingness of school-based Black degradation.

Framing Black Liberation in Teacher Education (BLiTE): An Offering

While schooling in the U.S. has been predicated on the non-living and learning of Black people (Coles, 2021a), characterized as decentering Blackness from the educative experiences of Black students, Black people have engaged education in ways that have allowed them to hold Black genius as an axiomatic truth by

enacting methods of Black liberation. Black liberation is a complete untethering from the ways white systems of dominance position Blackness as inherently deficient and backwards. There has never been a moment in history where Black people were not enacting *resistance and subversion*, *spiritual innovation*, *intersectionality*, *Black fugitive thought*, and *Afrofuturism* to culturally sustain Blackness amid ongoing antiblackness, both in schools and society. At the center of Black liberatory thought, which has been used as a compass to cultural sustainability, lies Black joy and/as restoration. Black liberation is grounded in the belief that being Black is not terrible (but a gift), which catalyzes the creation of methods and actions to re/claim power over one’s life and education in ways that bring about a culturally restorative joy. Here, we align with Love’s (2019) conception of Black joy as “the radical imagination of collective memories of resistance, trauma, survival, love, and cultural modes of expression.” Black liberation births a unique line of sight that we believe can position teacher education to re/vision new ways forward that refuse Black suffering. In the following section, we put forth five pillars that serve as the foundation for teacher education learning from concepts and movements that have been key to Black liberation efforts.

Figure 2: Black Liberation in Teacher Education Pillars



Resistance and Subversion

The original educational movement was fueled by Black people(s) dreams and aspirations for self-determination. DuBois states “Public education for all at public expense was, in the South, a negro idea” (in Anderson, 1988, p. 6). However, the subsequent system designed was not meant for Black people to

thrive (Dumas, 2016); hence, the *resistance* and *subversion* pillar of this framework acknowledges the ways Black educators frame liberation through education and consistently challenge anti-Black narratives of Black incapability. Despite the evils of chattel slavery, anti-literacy laws and anti-Black terrorism, Black people(s) pursued education as a practice of freedom from bondage (physical and psychological). Initial resistant efforts included: subversive, grassroots literacy campaigns in the shades of plantations and pre-emancipation, self-sustained schools for Black people (Anderson, 1988; Williams, 2005). Mattie Jackson, after learning to read and freeing herself through the Underground Railroad, published a book outlining that Black people were, in fact: educable, eager to learn, and intellectually curious, by nature (Williams, 2005). White supremacist philanthropists sought control over the minds and bodies of Black students through large-scale investments in segregated, under-resourced, industrialized Black education, intended to tie Black peoples to the land (Watkins, 2001). Industrialized Black education spaces became a reincarnation of physical and psychological bondage. Yet, in the Jim Crow South, Black communities subverted these oppressive educational systems by pooling resources and challenging their students to reach their highest potential despite exclusion from “elite,” academic white schools and districts (Horsford, 2011; Savage, 2001; Walker, 1996). As an act of subversion, Black educational leaders found unique ways to leverage white donations to prepare Black students for high academic achievements, in our own elite institutions. In some cases, Black school leaders would hide rigorous academic programs in the basements of the school and present the highlights of industrial programming during state visits (Anderson, 1988). Today, Black teachers leverage their pedagogies as forms of resistance to and subversion of anti-Black policies, procedures and curricula (Dixon, 2003; Duncan, 2019; Loder-Jackson, 2011; Stanley, 2020). These protective philosophies shield Black students from systemic and institutionalized harm, sanctioned (initiated) by neoliberal reform efforts (e.g., scripted curricula, district take over, school closure). Regardless of space and time, resistance and subversion characterize Black people’s efforts to educate themselves, by any means necessary.

Teacher education programs that teach candidates that Black people were passive recipients of education rather than foundational architects are deeply misguided. Black resistance philosophies and subversion practices, which catalyzed and sustained universal public education, must be at the center of programmatic efforts intended to reduce the harm done to Black minds and bodies. Imagine if Black students were taught that their ancestors were the founders and framers of universal public education? Educator preparation should be permeated with Black counterstories that detail the histories of Black social movements around education that have worked to lay the foundation for access to education *for all* within this country.

Spiritual Innovation

“...to understand the power of the Black church, it must first be understood that there is no distinction between the Black Church and the Black Community. The church is the spiritual face of the Black subculture” (Lincoln, 1999, p. 96).

At the core of Black liberation, is spiritual consciousness and participation in the collective body that is the Black church. Dantley (2005) states, “spirituality in the Black community has been the effectual foundation upon which many African-Americans have built projects of resistance” (p. 654). Historically, Black people leveraged their religious capital (Park, Dizon, & Malcom, 2019) to navigate oppressive social, political, and institutional conditions. Many grassroots socio-political activist, literacy and school fundraising campaigns originated in the Black church. Black spirituality fueled counter-movements and grounded the leaders of said movements, like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Ella Baker and Medgar Evers. Hence, a key pillar of this framework is *spiritual innovation*, which recognizes the ways Black spirituality informs hope, freedom-dreaming, and conscious-raising educational praxis.

Black educational philosophers have intently theorized the role of spirituality in liberatory education. Since Reconstruction, the Black church has had key roles as the “central coordinating unit” of Black educational movements (Jordan & Wilson, 2017). Jordan and Wilson (2017) offer prophetic activism to frame the way that Black churches address social injustices in the community. One example is the role that Black churches play in providing kinship, cultural safety, as well as internal and external forms of motivation to Black youth outside of the school structure (Toldson & Anderson, 2010). As Black students experience anti-Black discipline policies and other exclusionary practices, Black churches provide culturally appropriate safe spaces for these students to be affirmed. Relatedly, Emdin (2016) discusses the pedagogical lessons that should be gleaned from Black churches. Specifically, Emdin (2016) suggests that Pentecostal Pedagogy is about creating a shared dialogic space which leverages call and response practices evident in Black church culture. This form of pedagogy directly centers Black student and community knowledge which are the pretext for engaging Black students in classrooms.

Additionally, Black educational theorists have always believed that the path to self-determination was a complex mix of literacy and increased spiritual understanding. Particularly, Black women educators have been key leaders in the movement which centers spirituality in educational praxis. Williams (1993) explains “any attempt to discern the meaning of African American women’s faith and action would be incomplete without reflection upon the Black church” (Williams, 1993, p. 204). Historically, Black women educators believed that “teaching was a sacred calling...” (Cooper, 1892 as cited in Fairclough, 2009, p.236). Black women theorists, educators, and leaders have always seen their work as deeply tied to their cultural, spiritual and activist roots in the Black church. Witherspoon (2014) leverages womanist theology to explore Black women educational leaders’ spiritual praxis through: radical subjectivity, redemptive self-love, traditional communalism, critical engagement, appropriation, and reciprocity. In short, Black educators have always known that

for Black students to thrive, learning could not be disconnected from the community and/as the sacred.

The Black church produced pedagogies of self-awareness, criticality, and possibility, which catalyzed grassroots movements throughout history. Contemporarily, these pillars of Black communities provide the emotional hope and intellectual safety necessary to navigate anti-Black institutions (e.g., schools). Teacher education programs that are striving to be aligned with Black humanity, must engage the pedagogies and philosophies that are intertwined with Black spirituality. Here, we do not intend to communicate that teacher educators must become experts of Black spiritual beliefs, but we do assert that possessing and awareness of how Black spiritual innovation has served as a central liberatory tool in the Black educational struggle is a necessity.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality was coined to name the specific experiences of being both Black and woman in an “imperialist, white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (hooks, 2013, p.17; Crenshaw, 1989). Given the rise of Black girl criminalization in schools (Hines & Wilmot, 2018), the continued murdering of Black men and women, and the under-theorization of LGBTQ youth of color (McCready, 2010), teachers must be trained to understand intersectional forms of oppression. Black scholars have leveraged intersectional perspectives in educational research, including but not limited to: Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and Womanism (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Dixson, 2003; Loder-Jackson, 2011; Nyachae, 2016), Other-Fathering (Lynn, 2002, 2006), and Queer OC, (Brokenbrough, 2016; Love, 2017). Collectively, these scholars help catalyze an educational movement for Black people who exist at multiple margins.

Black Feminism, Womanism.

Black women have consistently stood at the frontlines of movements for racial and gendered justice (e.g., #BlackLivesMatter). Given the liminality of the feminist movement, Black women gathered to co-develop Black feminist thought (BFT), as a way to frame the particularized experiences of Black women and girls. Collins (2000) outlined three major tenants of BFT: self-definition, understanding the interlocking nature of oppression, and redefining culture. In teacher education, Dixson (2003) centers BFT to outline the: public advocacy, relationship building, warm demander principles, other-mothering and conscious-raising praxis embedded in Black women’s pedagogies. Moreover, Nyachae (2016) highlights how Black women teachers specifically leverage Black Feminist Pedagogy to develop dialogic spaces for Black girls to thrive. Differently, Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002) highlights Black women teachers’ womanist ethic of care which is leveraged to subvert oppressive institutional structures through: maternal roles, political clarity and connecting school experiences to life outcomes.

Black Male Positionalities.

Recently, scholars have discussed the various roles that Black male teachers play in educating Black students (Brokenbrough, 2015; Bristol & Goings, 2019; Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Milner, 2016; Lynn, 2006). Unfortunately, Black male educators must navigate organizational pigeon-holing, deficit discussions of Black males' intellect, and they are often labeled as the de facto disciplinarian (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Bristol & Mentor, 2018). Despite these challenges, Milner (2018) portrays Black male teachers as culturally responsive validators who can leverage their affirming and reflexive pedagogical techniques to build reciprocal relationships with students. Lynn (2006) offers "other-fathering" as a praxis leveraged by Black male educators which centers "tough love, discipline, and caring" (p.2517).

QueerOC.

The aforementioned perspectives are necessary yet insufficient in supporting Black Queer youth of color. Even within the scholarship on Queer issues in education, there are few studies which center the experiences of BIPOC Queer youth (see McCready, 2010). Love (2017) addresses this gap in research, with Black ratchet imagination as a theoretical lens intended to uplift the complicated and fluid experiences of Black Queer youth. This scholarship leverages Hip-Hop and Black feminisms, "to define an imaginative, agentive, creative, performative, uplifting transitional space established and occupied by queer youth of color in the hip-hop community" (Love, 2017, p. 541; Stallings, 2013). Black ratchet imagination considers ways that Black Queer youth express the fluidities of their multiple identities (sexual and non-sexual) through cultural expression (e.g., New Orleans Bounce culture). Similarly, Brokenbrough (2016) offers Queerly Responsive Pedagogy which extends conceptualizations of culturally responsive pedagogy by: 1) centering the shared cultural experiences of Queer youth of color, 2) situating the unique ways that Queer youth of color navigate oppression, and 3) acknowledging the diversity among Queer youth. Examples of pedagogy include Black and Latino Urban Queer Youth (BLUQY) engaged in queer informed, sex positive, health education, and house ball culture, which gave them familial structures for belongingness which challenge heteronormative ways of knowing and being (Brokenbrough, 2016).

Collectively, the aforementioned intersections of Black educational philosophy(ies) challenge white supremacist, hetero-patriarchal, binary, homo/trans-phobias inherent in the field of education. Moreover, these perspectives push the field of teacher education beyond traditional notions of cultural responsiveness, into deeper, more fluid interpretations of what it means to engage Black youth who exist at multiple, under-theorized margins. Hence, teacher educators must realize that alignment with Black lives, means critically engaging with all facets of Black life, not just ones that assuage white discomfort. In preparing teachers to cultivate and sustain classrooms that defend Black youth life and possibility, teacher educators must teach and research the nuances of Blackness, as this social positioning intersects with other identity markers that result in antiblackness being enacted in unique ways.

Black Fugitive Thought

In a world where Blackness is understood through the logics of confinement and capture (Vargas, 2018), engaging in *Black fugitive thought* (Black fugitivity) by cultivating life that refuses such a carceral existence has been part and parcel to the lifeways of Black communities (Campt, 2019; Hames-Garcia, 2004; Harding, 1981; Maynard, 2019). The white settler colonial context of U.S. society (Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Grande, 2018; Smith, 2012), which is also a context of antiblackness, has constructed Blackness as always enslaveable (Smith, 2012) and has worked to reinforce such a structure through anti-Black violence. As a pillar of white supremacy, Black enslaveability which anchors antiblackness, creates a total climate where antiblackness is both a permanent feature and an ongoing structure that traumatizes and retraumatizes Black people (Sharpe, 2016; Smith, 2012). Black confinement is not simply a metaphor for anti-Black oppression, but it works to capture the real and tangible ways that Black people are surveilled, disenfranchised, and policed as a result of recurring technologies of anti-Black violence—“the institutional structures and social processes—that maintain Black subjugation” (Dumas, 2016, p. 14); which operate from the ideology that Black people are less than other, human beings.

It is important that we emphasize how the context of confinement antiblackness produces is not simply the result of racist ideologies, while that is the basis for the structure. Rather, Black confinement in the U.S. is structurally embedded and codified within U.S. institutions, backed by policy and legislation that justifies the harmful treatment against Black people in both overt and covert ways. From Jim Crow laws codified in the post-civil war era to the Election Integrity Act of 2021 (Georgia Senate Bill 202) that has been referred to as Jim Crow 2.0 (Morel, 2021), U.S. society can be characterized as a nation-state both ideologically and structurally grounded in restricting the liberties and freedoms of Black people (whether born in the U.S. or elsewhere).

As a primary institution of socialization birthed within this larger context of anti-Black restrictions, P-12 schooling directly mirrors society, creating and sustaining the denial of Black freedom in diffuse, yet violent ways (Coles & Powell, 2020; Dumas, 2014; Gilmore & Bettis, 2021; Hill 2021; Jenkins et al., 2021). Sojoyner (2017) understands the education of Black children as taking place “in a brutal system of punitive containment and curricular evisceration,” which he argues is responsible for schools functioning as enclosed spaces (p. 516). As discussed earlier, Sharpe (2016) conceptualized the education of Black children, in the wake of chattel slavery, as taking place in the hold of a slave ship. Here, the keepers of the hold (educators and larger process of schooling) engage the cargo (Black students) through various languages and technologies of violence. Understanding the enduring presence of school-based violence, Black fugitivity can and has served to counter such violence and act as a “conduit out of the multiple forms of violence central to education as enclosed places” (Sojoyner, 2017, p. 516). Patel (2019) reminds us that “throughout the history of this settler nation and other places of colonization,” fugitivity has always been present in institutionalized spaces of learning (p. 257). For instance, Patel explained (2019),

When enslaved peoples were outlawed from being literate, the teaching of the alphabet and literacy continued, secreted away through many means, including the poetic action of an adult tracing the letters of the alphabet onto the palm of a child (p. 257).

In his research on Black youth curricular un/makings, Coles (2021a) discussed how fugitive thought propelled their participants to counter containment through their resistance and refusals to an education that demands their death. Central to Black fugitivity in education, is the cultivation of Black space, which becomes an embodiment of “the ways Black students and educators enact educational fugitivity through the social production of Black space in the margin” (Nxumalo & ross, 2019, p. 508). Oriented towards teaching and learning that exists outside enclosed space, “Black space becomes a mode of imagining Black educational futurities that respond to the realities of settler colonialism and antiblackness” (p. 508). Black fugitivity then, can be understood as an ongoing, future-forward departure from anti-Black school structures guided by hope for a free tomorrow and actions to attain such freedom (Hames-Garcie, 2004). Teacher educators can aid in Black fugitivity efforts by engaging teachers in readings and activities that allow them to trace the history of schooling as a place of confinement for Black youth that has worked to undermine Black liberation efforts. Moreover, teacher educators should work to create and support existing Black spaces, which could look like reserving curricular space to center Black educator voices (e.g., laying the foundations for coursework with voices like Anna Julia Cooper instead of John Dewey).

Afrofuturism

Black liberation has always been grounded in *Afrofuturism*. Core to struggles for freedom have been engaging in a past-future visioning (Nelson, 2000), being informed by the past to navigate both the present and future, as a pathway to more liberatory existences. Within Black visions of futurity, there is a great sense of “urgency to see possibility in the tiny, often minuscule crinks and crevices of what appears to be the inescapable web of capture for black women and men alike” (Campt, 2017, p. 16). When coining the term Afrofuturism in an interview, Dery (1994) was capturing the ways Black people have other stories to tell in relation to “culture, technology, and other things to come.” In Hampton’s (1987) documentary *Eyes On the Prize*, viewers are taken through a journey of the anti-Black history of the U.S. and how Black people at varying levels (individual, organizational, and institutional) fought back against the ongoing violences caused by such history. *Eyes on the Prize* makes it clear that, historically, Black people have not simply waited for possibilities to emerge, but more often than not, created the “crinks and crevices” to escape antiblackness and create new futures (the other things to come).

While the concepts of hope and possibility are often connected, we align with Campt’s (2017) assertion that futurity is not necessarily concerned with questions of hope, but rather is better understood through the notions of tense. Here, creating new futures in an Afrofuturist sense “strives for the tense of possibility that grammarians refer to as the future real conditional or that which

will have had to happen (Campt, 2017, p. 17). We look to the founders of Black Lives Matter (Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi), who in response to racial terror in the wake of Trayvon Martin's death, created a movement to intervene into the gratuitous violence committed against Black peoples under the guise of law and order, declaring that Black life matters (Lebron, 2017). We see this as not only an intervention into the present, but a Black-specific visioning that spans the past, present, and future declaring that Black life has and will always matter; despite the ways institutions work to dehumanize Black life and Blackness. After centuries of seeing police enact violence against Black communities (Hattery & Smith, 2021), these three Black women declared that a new future will have to happen, propelling a community forward to begin to radically vision what that future will be. In regards to teacher education, Afrofuturism is much more than an orientation to preparing educators to create classrooms that aid Black students in surviving the onslaughts of anti-Black violence in a settler colonial nation-state. Rather, it is more so an orientation to understanding that Black people are of great significance to both the nation and the world, and that their presence is a necessity, and always has been.

Conclusion: Implications for Black Joy and Restoration

How might we leverage a re/visioning of educator preparation that stems from Black liberation and affirms Black humanity, rather than denying it? The permanence of anti-Black racism in society is humbling; yet, as Derrick Bell (1992) states, "our failure to act will not change conditions and may very well worsen them" (p.198). Across time and space, Black people and communities have leveraged the five pillars of BLiTE (*resistance and subversion, spiritual innovation, intersectionality, Black fugitive thought, and Afrofuturism*) to change their material conditions in an anti-Black society, in ways that allowed them to recreate society on their own terms oriented more towards Black joy and restoration rather than Black suffering. When we speak of Black joy, we think to the "pleasure derived from controlling the narrative of one's Black life; being able to live for one's own Black desires, knowing that there are structures in existence to block any joyous relishing in Blackness" (Coles, 2021b). Curriculum in U.S. schooling "meted out within a nation birthed through white settler colonialism and antiblackness, naturally works to uphold whiteness and white supremacy by centering the everyday lives of white people" (Coles, 2021a). A major way upholding whiteness and white supremacy manifests in relation to teacher education is represented in the fact that roughly 80% of public school teachers identify as non-Hispanic white (NCES, 2020). As a pillar of white supremacy, antiblackness flourishes within teaching and learning settings, because of the overabundance of whiteness, which shapes the curriculum and how the curriculum is taught. To understand that teaching and learning takes place on lands where antiblackness is a signifier of white supremacy, yet to exclude Black conceptions of living and learning through such a structure, only worsens our schools and makes it impossible for equity to be achieved. Although the persistence of whiteness in teacher education and the teaching force serves as a barrier to safe and equitable Black educational futures, BLiTE offers a counter

framing to such barrier by mapping the central ways Black being and knowing in educational spaces, the world, directly work to disrupt it.

Coming back to Denita, BLiTE propels us to be about the work of breaking from containment, cutting open the belly of the educational system, and ensuring that the teachers that we prepare are about the work of disrupting anti-Black schooling processes. To that end, teacher education should embrace BLiTE if it hopes to help prepare teachers (and the students they will teach) for educational freedom praxis. To reach this freedom praxis, teacher educators must be committed to structuring coursework and programs through the logics of Black joy and restoration; logics that make teachers aware of antiblackness in ways that compel them to build counter structures (e.g., classroom structures, policies, rules, activities, etc.) to resist the violent regime at all cost. We believe BLiTE offers a synthesized way to envision Black humanity, joy, restoration and liberatory fantasies. In particular, the BLiTE framework (re)members agentive Black possibilities and re-writes deficit-laden master narratives of Black people's inherent (in)educability. Our offering of Black liberation philosophies to teacher education works to break the "hold" and leverages the voices of those who have been pushed to the bottom of the well (Bell, 1992). We recommend that teacher education programs:

- Center BLiTE as a framework that guides program curricular decisions;
- Explicitly discuss the possibilities of Black people in coursework and training;
- Decenter whiteness through critical self-reflection, hiring more Black faculty, and increasing BIPOC student recruitment efforts;
- Create measures that prevent harmful educators from entering the field;
- Engage in ongoing dialogue with exemplary in-service Black educators, leaders, and community members; and
- Center Black liberation literature in course syllabi for aspiring educators and doctoral students interested in becoming teacher educators.

While we see BLiTE as a necessary framework for teacher education, we understand that BLiTE and our associated recommendations do not capture the totality of Black liberation philosophies and that our framing alone will not eliminate anti-Black racism. Hence, we caution teacher educators to not misunderstand and/or misapply this framework as *the* fix to the problem. Instead, we simply ask that teacher education programs engage this scholarship in ways that might help aspiring educators see the lives and possibilities of Black people(s) and center that life and possibility in pedagogical praxis.

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