

Teaching to Transgress During COVID-19 and Beyond for Racial Justice and Decolonization

Robin Phelps-Ward
Ball State University

Laila McCloud
Western Illinois University

Erin Phelps
Pierce College

Abstract: *This article is born from our desire, as three Black women teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, to reaffirm teaching practices that transgress, resist, and value education as a practice of freedom for the most marginalized students we teach. Through this article we define what it means to teach to transgress from the perspective of bell hooks, offer our strategies for bringing hooks' theorizing into praxis, discuss the ACPA's Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization Framework, and provide a set of recommendations for educators centered in love.*

Keywords: Black feminism, teaching, praxis

Robin Phelps-Ward is an Assistant Professor in the Higher Education Department at Ball State University.

Laila McCloud is an Assistant Professor in the College Student Personnel Department at Western Illinois University.

Erin Phelps is an Assistant Professor in the Sociology Department at Pierce College.

Copyright © 2021 by *The Journal of the Professoriate*, an affiliate of the Center for African American Research and Policy. All Rights Reserved (ISSN 1556-7699)

Introduction

The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (hooks, 1994, p. 207)

Though published in 1994, the pedagogical call from Black feminist, activist, and professor, bell hooks in her book *Teaching to Transgress* resonates on a deeper and more imperative level in light of the current sociopolitical context shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter activism against police violence, and the events surrounding the 2020 United States presidential election. Not only did the pandemic spur quick transitions to teaching in a virtual context, the state-sanctioned murder of numerous Black people by the police demanded educators (on all levels) address the legacies of racial injustice within the United States.

Labeled by NPR as a “Summer of Racial Reckoning” (Chang & Martin, 2020), the months of May, June, and July 2020 represent a time when protestors of all races insisted on national efforts to acknowledge, dismantle, and educate about the systemic racism within the country. From healthcare to sports, protestors and activists engaged in a collective outcry about the need to reckon with the United States’ past, removing racist symbols and practices while reshaping institutions for racial equity. Postsecondary education and faculty were not excluded from this discourse as leaders from national educational associations like the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and ACPA (College Student Educators International) called for faculty to both affirm that Black lives matter and engage in anti-racist practice—all during a time of teaching during COVID-19, which launched many into online teaching. As Watt (2020) explained in an ACPA Black Lives Matter Blog post about the how of anti-racism work,

Authentic anti-racism work pays attention to ‘how’ we are engaging with each other and is not just concerned with displaying ‘what’ we are representing to others. We must intentionally create ‘ways of being’ in

relationship that involves having difficult dialogues about how to deconstruct racist systems. We must not get seduced by showing how we are not racist, individually or as organizations, ahead of actually attending to how to not be racist. (para. 30)

In an effort to focus on the ^ of the anti-racist work required of educators in postsecondary education, we (three Black women faculty members) argue for more educators who teach to transgress, pushing beyond the boundaries of dominating and oppressive ideologies of pedagogical practice (Croom & Patton, 2012; Griffin et al., 2013). From our own unique standpoints and angles of vision as Black feminists, we use hooks' (1994) *Teaching to Transgress* and ACPA's "A Bold Vision Forward: A Framework for the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization" (Quaye et al., 2019) to discuss faculty pedagogical practices for anti-racism, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Such strategies carry new and more pronounced meaning in a context influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has not only led to higher rates of hospitalization and death for Black, Latina/o/x, Indigenous, and Asian American people in comparison to white people (CDC, 2020), but more adverse economic outcomes for Black and Brown communities (Gould & Wilson, 2020). The pervasive and enduring racism within the United States, coupled with the hegemonic ideologies promulgated by the most powerful global leaders and institutions have intensified the devastating effects of the coronavirus. Thus, systems of oppression cannot be separated from current conversations about COVID-19 and shifts in teaching and learning in the professoriate. Critical analyses of racist, sexist, classist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, and religiously oppressive practices, policies, and programs are necessary to forge change within colleges and universities in the U.S. and abroad.

This article is born from our desire, as three Black women teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, to reaffirm teaching practices that transgress, resist, and value education as a practice of freedom for the most marginalized students we teach. Through this article we define what it means to teach to transgress, offer our strategies for bringing hooks' theorizing into praxis, discuss the Racial Justice and Decolonization Framework (Quaye et al., 2019), and provide a set of recommendations for educators centered in love. Ultimately, through this work we contend that teaching to transgress is as much about what educators do in the classroom with students as it is about the practices

educators engage outside of the classroom to bring together the often disparate parts of themselves (i.e., mind, body, and spirit). The neoliberal academy (Squire, 2016) has supported the separation of these aspects of the self through calculated means to exploit and maintain oppressive systems (Giroux, 1985), but we have a choice to transgress and move beyond the socializing confinements of our profession for ourselves and for our students.

Teaching to Transgress

Through a series of essays about her experiences as a student, teacher, and feminist inspired by critical thinker and Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, bell hooks wrote *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994) as an imploration to educators to self-actualize as a means for more effectively teaching and empowering students. While oft-cited in educational and psychological fields, hooks describes self-actualization as a goal and quest for educators. In her view, self-actualization is about being wholly present in mind, body, and spirit to achieve one's personal success (however they define it). She explained, "the objectification of the teacher within the bourgeois educational structures seem[s] to denigrate notions of wholeness and uphold the idea of a mind/body split, one that promotes and supports compartmentalization" (p. 18). Such compartmentalization not only creates hostile responses to students who yearn for liberatory educational experiences (those that enrich and enhance their personal lives), but creates educational spaces of domination and control in which educators wield their power against students stealing joy and excitement from the learning process. Self-actualized educators actively pursue activities that promote their own well-being to bring into union the mind, body, and spirit, which academics are so often rewarded for separating (Wagner & Shahjahan, 2015).

Through self-actualization, educators can create spaces for learning outside of the typical classroom confines (e.g., the cafeteria or the quad), engage in vulnerability through confessional narratives that situate and make relevant academic discussions, demonstrate how students can listen and hear each other, value the diversity of students' expressions, and encourage excitement in the learning process. Such actions exist counter to deficit approaches of teaching and learning (Django, 2012), which

“viewed the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being of many students and communities of color as deficiencies to be overcome in learning the demanded and legitimized dominant language, literacy and cultural ways of schooling” (p. 93). Teaching to transgress means not only holding space for serious conversations related to power, privilege, and oppression so students have opportunities for healing through education in which they can make concrete meaning of their learning, but valuing the wholeness of all parties (students and teachers) within the learning situation. However, what does teaching to transgress look like during the time of COVID-19?

We endeavor to answer this question in the next section sharing our own strategies during the current period of multiple socio-political crises impacting citizens’ physical, psychological, and economic livelihoods (and more). We narrate our experiences and perspectives as three tenure-track Black women faculty working at three different institutions (with varying institutional identities) in the United States because we believe, “Given this agenda, it is crucial that critical thinkers who want to change our teaching practices talk to one another, collaborate in a discussion that crosses boundaries and creates a space for intervention” (hooks, 1994, p. 129). We share our experiences as educators, scholars, and feminists operating from an Afrocentric feminist epistemology (Collins, 1990) to share our praxis (connections between our reflection and action) and invite more faculty into the dialogue to transform our pedagogical practices and foster social justice in our work and teaching (Fernandez et al., 2020).

Robin’s Praxis

Tension. Contradiction. Conflict. Discord. These words describe some of what teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic has felt like since March 2020 when the governor of Indiana issued stay-in-place regulations and my graduate-level student affairs courses quickly transitioned to synchronous online instruction. As I reflect on what it means to transgress in my role as a Black woman and an advanced assistant professor of higher education during a pandemic, I focus on hooks’ notion of self-actualization and my efforts to self-actualize (resist disembodiment while empowering and transforming learners’ thinking) within a context that feels constraining at every turn. What does teaching to transgress look like when promotion and tenure guidelines insist on

continued productivity during a collectively traumatizing and stressful time? What does teaching to transgress feel like when you are bombarded with constant images and messages that are violent, dehumanizing, and demoralizing (particularly to Black women)? What is the work of teaching to transgress when students share very real and concerning experiences about how they are struggling to navigate a global pandemic while remaining focused on their academic studies and simultaneously supporting undergraduate students in their roles as graduate assistants? These questions roll through my mind and feel hypocritical for me to answer and ironic for me to write about at a time when I have felt less whole than I have ever felt while trying to traverse the ethical tensions of operating and resisting within the neoliberal academy. However, exercising such vulnerability with students and among colleagues supports the self-actualization necessary to advance education as a practice of freedom. Pretending as if I smoothly transitioned into online teaching, maintained high levels of productivity, and kept my emotions and feelings at bay amidst turmoil and state-sanctioned police violence does not push postsecondary environments toward liberation or justice. Thus, I expose my difficulties navigating this time of teaching during COVID-19 while also celebrating collective resilience.

In many ways, teaching to transgress during COVID-19 has drastically shifted what it means for me to care, share power, and facilitate conversations about oppression in a postsecondary context. Within the current climate—in which I feel at constant odds with the values of the academy—teaching to transgress is as much a goal as it is an ongoing practice. Much like my days as a flutist rehearsing for a concert, warming up, practicing scales, and committing melodies to memory until my fingers remembered before my mind could comprehend, teaching to transgress feels like an exercise of lifelong engagement to respond to the context in ways that assert my own humanity and that of my students as we work toward envisioning liberatory futures together.

Emphasizing Care

Through the pandemic, I have gained an intensified desire to do more to express love and care for students and help them care for themselves. The spring 2020 semester not only led students to worry about degree

completion and participating in graduation festivities, it left them concerned about their future career prospects (for those graduating) and the shifting realities of their future graduate assistantship positions (for those returning for the 2020-2021 academic year). In an effort to validate students' legitimate worries, concerns, frustrations, and fears, my teaching and work as a graduate program director during this time resulted in constant efforts to create space for students to share their emotions (e.g., through online polls in programs like PolleEverywhere and AhaSlides) and connect with students in platforms where students regularly engage (i.e., Instagram). These moments helped me to not only see the range of emotions students are experiencing, but allowed students to learn their peers' experiences while simultaneously validating each other. Figure 1 illustrates 37 student responses to an April 2020 prompt: "share one word that describes how you're currently feeling" and demonstrates the complexity and range of their emotions during the time.

Figure 1

One Word to Describe Feelings

Share one word that describes how you're currently feeling



Along with efforts to create additional and more consistent spaces for students to share experiences, emotions, and worries, the COVID-19 pandemic has encouraged me to lead with care, empathy, and love in my interactions with students. For example, one tradition within the master's

program includes a ceremony in which students receive a stole commemorating the completion of their degree, which is placed on them by an individual who provided a great deal of support during their time in the program. Given the pandemic, the program faculty could not facilitate an in-person event. Thus, I worked with a three-person team of students to find a creative way to celebrate 2020 graduates via a Zoom video conference. While students were not able to receive a graduation stole as part of this event, I created and mailed each graduate a personalized bookmark that included their name and a quote. Although time-intensive, this was one way I was able to express my love and care for students during what I knew was a frustrating time.

The pandemic not only launched me into thinking more critically about making spaces for students to present themselves as more whole (people with emotions and worries) within the classroom space, teaching to transgress has also led me to emphasize that same value for self-care and self-love for myself. When I formerly would have made myself “power through” a long week despite feeling physically, emotionally, and mentally spent, I have allowed myself (and students) more grace and flexibility during this pandemic through course policies for late work that encourages students to ask for additional time, reach out for support, and not feel required to have their video on throughout our synchronous Zoom sessions for class. As an example of the self-care and grace I practice for myself and model for students, during a week that would have been fall break within the fall 2020 semester, I sent the following email:

Hi Good People,

If you're like me, then you've had a busy week that keeps getting busier (and more stressful). Thus, in honor of self-care, listening to our bodies, and reclaiming fall break, I am cancelling class this evening. However, your [assignment] for the day is still due (please take until midnight though).

If you haven't already started working on your literature review, please use the checklist below to help you with your work and let me know if you'd like to connect to discuss the paper.

- Select theory
- Locate 10-12 scholarly articles and/or books explaining and applying my chosen theory (see list of HESA journals attached to help you find articles, but your sources don't have to come from these journals)
- Read 10-12 scholarly articles
- Develop notes about each article identifying relevant pieces of information to write about
 - history and origins of the theory (and its theorist/s)
 - basic tenets (components) of the theory
 - uses and application of the theory in the current higher education and student affairs literature
- critiques of the theory
- Build an outline for my paper using the worksheet Dr. Phelps-Ward shared (see attached)
- Expand my outline adding detail, examples, citations, transitions, and APA 7th Ed. references
- Proofread my paper
- Have a peer review my work and share feedback
- Turn it in

I'll be available today via Zoom, 2:30-3:30 pm if you'd like to drop-in to ask any questions about the assignment.

I hope you take some time to rest and re-center during what would have been class. Please give me a thumbs up or reply if you received this message.

In the moment, deciding to write and send this email to students felt like an unimaginable act that signified my defeat as an educator. I worried whether students would think I was giving up, that I did not care about them or their learning, or did not have anything valuable to teach them that day. Ultimately, I resisted stereotype threat and messages of misogynoir playing in my head, and honored my body and spirit. In hitting send on the email I not only affirmed all parts of my being (i.e., I am more than a teacher and not a machine meant to work tirelessly), but I gave myself a rare opportunity in the middle of a weekday to rest, gather my thoughts, and spend time with my family.

Sharing Power

In addition to my increased attention to the exercise of care and love in the educational contexts during the pandemic, teaching to transgress has also encouraged me to be more self-reflective about the role of power in the classroom space, which includes Zoom and the learning management system (i.e., Canvas). Admittedly, I had few role models of faculty who decentered themselves and truly created communities of practice learning (McDermott, Wenger, & Snyder, 2002) within the classroom context. Up until late into my graduate studies, my perceptions of faculty characterized them as the ultimate purveyors and holders of power and knowledge. The educational space (both metaphorical and physical) was theirs to control. In my naive view, the most significant role of the faculty member was to profess and dictate how to write, speak, act, and think. However, reading more about engaged and critical pedagogy from a range of liberatory pedagogues, and experiencing some examples in practice from faculty, led me to reimagine the control and power I felt I should have as a faculty member. Of course, I knew I should always grade, have a deadline for assignments, and provide clear instructions on what students should do for each assignment, but the COVID-19 pandemic challenged my thinking in new ways. For example, the pandemic made me think more critically about the kind of learning that should be valued during times like global pandemics and whether punitive practices like grading (i.e., taking points off for infractions, errors, or late submission) actually support students learning.

With more self-reflection about my teaching practices regarding my assessment (i.e., Am I measuring the outcomes that are truly important in the current context?), grading (i.e., How can I grade in ways that affirm and encourage rather than highlight deficits?), and management of the classroom space (i.e., What can I do to make students feel comfortable, engaged, and able to be themselves in a virtual learning environment?), I began sharing more power with students by engaging in more frequent process check-ins and adapting the content, assignment requirements, and schedule to be more flexible and in tune with students' experiences and needs. While some might view this practice as giving up power, I believe I engaged in a practice of sharing power as I allowed students to choose topics of personal relevance to them, listened and incorporated their feedback and ideas about how they wanted to engage with each

other in class (i.e., using breakout rooms more often, encouraging video mute during various periods throughout class sessions, and creating course Flipgrids), and devoted time to talking with students about the why of our collective decision-making and my actions as an instructor.

Discussing Oppression

Given my work as an educator who teaches developing student affairs professionals, I remain engaged in conversations with students (and faculty and staff within the larger university community) about identity, power, privilege, and systems of oppression. Given the sociopolitical dynamics surrounding COVID-19, class constantly feels like a living case study in which I encourage students to examine their own social identities (privileges and disadvantages), critique the operating assumptions and choices, and problem-solve as a class about what they would do to ensure more equitable and just outcomes. This practice not only provides space for a range of perspectives, but allows students to grow in their own consciousness about the context shaping higher education. Teaching to transgress as educators during COVID-19 means encouraging students to critique and question the systems that have led to a pandemic disproportionately killing and affecting poor people and communities of color. Such critique and examinations of universities as organizations should be the work of student affairs educators; however, the shifting context has made such vocal opposition much more contentious and riskier. Nonetheless, we discuss such risks as a class to support students' meaning-making and personal axiologies. The combined efforts of care, sharing power, and discussion of oppression within the context of colleges and universities represent a few of the ways I teach to transgress during COVID-19.

Laila's Praxis

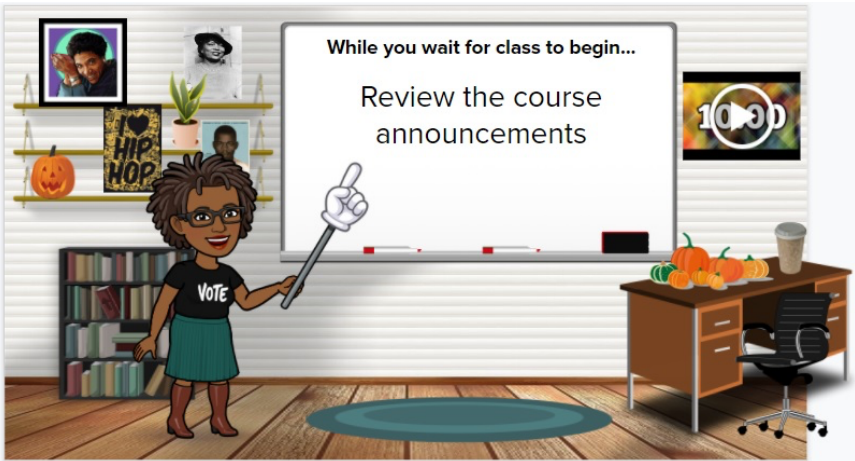
As a professor, I am keenly aware of my position as the only faculty member of color in my department and specifically as a Black ciswoman professor. My pedagogical choices are tied to my understanding of the content and the world I am trying to co-create with my students. I am deeply committed to critiquing and dismantling anti-Blackness and misogynoir within higher education, so I engage these issues in the classroom. The courses I teach are designed to help students make critical connections between the theories and their practice. The COVID-

19 pandemic has presented an opportunity for me to reimagine some of my pedagogical choices in a virtual setting.

Since moving my courses online, I am conscious of the energy students (and I) have to expend to navigate the virtual classroom using technologies like Zoom and WebEx. Many students like to log onto the virtual meeting room before class. I use this time to set the tone for class by using a Google slide that indicates any tasks they can complete while they are waiting (see Figure 2). These tasks can include responding to their colleagues' comments on the group discussion board or reviewing announcements on the course management system. The Google slide is also an opportunity to replicate my classroom in a virtual setting. On the shelf behind where my Bitmoji character stands are photos of Black feminists and activists, Audre Lorde, Zora Neale Hurston and John Lewis. Next to a snake plant, which is native to western Africa, sits a poster with the words "I love hip hop." This slide welcomes the students to a virtual classroom that centers Black ways of knowing and being. There is also a countdown timer that lets students know how much time they have before the class will start. This is one way to allow students to get settled with the materials they need for class.

Figure 2

Image of a Virtual Classroom Created on a Google Slide



While students are waiting for class to begin, they hear music playing in the background. I created a playlist on YouTube that includes instrumentals and lyric versions of hip-hop and R&B music. On any given week students will hear Earth, Wind, Fire's September or Kendrick Lamar's We Gon' Be Alright. For example, one class featured the instrumental of Kanye West's Flashing Lights from his 2007 album Graduation and once class began, a student sparked a lively discussion about his music career and his political commentary. This is one example of how music (and the associated musical artist) played in a postsecondary education classroom can promote students' critical thinking skills and help them make connections among local and national events.

In these examples, teaching to transgress during COVID-19 means reimagining what a virtual classroom can be through images and sound. When I am teaching face-to-face, I have limited control over the physical space in which I teach. However, in a virtual setting I have the ability to create an image of a classroom that not only allows me to share who I am as an instructor, but the type of environment I hope to create. Integrating music, and specifically hip-hop and R&B, is one way that I amplify the cultural capital of racially minoritized people. Hip-Hop, with roots in R&B music, emerged in the 1970s as a cultural movement among Black and Latina/o/x youth to share their experiences with the world. I believe in the power of hip-hop, particularly the language and music, to help students with their understanding of theories and concepts.

This reconceptualization of space is one way to affirm who I am as a Black ciswoman academic and the cultural capital of Black and Latina/o/x communities. I am aware that for many of my students, I may be the only or one of a handful of Black women professors with whom they have come in contact. Teaching during COVID-19 has caused me to reflect more about students' expectations of me as a Black woman academic because I feel increased pressure to be even more creative, engaging, and clear in a virtual environment. In my attempts to not only respond to students' often unspoken perceptions, which are harder to discern through a computer screen, I hold tight to opportunities where I can show them who I am as an educator through the digital space I create.

Erin's Praxis

Although fresh in my teaching journey as a current assistant professor, I developed an understanding of how I wanted to feel and be treated as a doctoral in the initial years of my program. Transparency is one of the ultimate tools of liberation (hooks, 1994). With that, I aim to be transparent of the processes involving class and the institution as a whole. Thus, I share with students what I know about the conversations we have as faculty about plans to support students—currently and in the future—as we navigate remote work and online teaching. Transparency becomes mandatory via Patricia Hills Collin's (1990) Afrocentric feminist epistemological framework. I am accountable to my students; when unjust processes arise, it demands action on my part. However, in that transparency I must be honest about my capacities, resources, and scopes. I talk with students about my role, political position at the institution as a pre-tenure faculty member, and discuss the limits to my influence. This honesty begins with dialogue and vested interest in my students. As they understand my teaching style and who I am as a person through the personal stories I share in class to help them get to know me within a digital setting, I help them see the demarcation between myself as an autonomous person and the institution. This demarcation creates an invisible contract that holds me accountable to the most marginalized; there is no hiding behind inequitable practices of the institution after the contract has been conceived.

As an educator, I also find it important to also emphasize moments of joy and pleasure (Phelps & Phelps-Ward, 2019) in the classroom. It is hard to be Black or any minoritized individual in 2020. As alluded to prior, the sociopolitical context has made unnecessary human suffering normative. Celebration of living is of the utmost importance for students' well-being and for their development as learners. Thus, I share my experiences of joy with students during class as we begin sessions and encourage them to share their stories as well. Living in an oppressive world and having to operate via structures designed to reproduce white supremacy, is not normal or just. Anti-racist education or education via an equitable framework demands that oppressed and disenfranchised people (specifically, students of color) find rest, pleasure, and joy (brown, 2019). Embodying frameworks that prioritize joy, safety, and

success for historically minoritized students has looked all sorts of ways given the dynamism the classroom demands.

The Racial Justice and Decolonization Framework

We offer our own teaching strategies shaped by hooks' theorizing about teaching to transgress to advance more dialogue among those of us called to the professoriate. However, to further expand our thinking about transgressing boundaries as educators, not only during the COVID-19 pandemic, but beyond, we next discuss the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization (SIRJD) Framework (Quaye et al., 2019). Written and conceptualized by a group of student affairs educators and faculty holding a range of social identities, the framework proverbially answers the call from ACPA's Governing Board and provides guidance for the organization's strategic imperative for racial justice and decolonization. Quaye et al. (2019) discuss the complexity and inextricable connections between racial justice and decolonization given the current and past societal maintenance of settler colonialism, which is "the process by which land and bodies become property, something to be owned and used... open for consumption, exploitation, production and destruction" (p. 6). Thus, working toward racial justice is an active position that critiques, dismantles, and transforms systems and structures of white supremacy that subverts settler colonialism. Further, decolonization shares similar goals to racial justice, and emphasizes the repatriation (or the return of) Indigenous land and life. In essence, the two ideas exist as interconnected goals and projects for educators to undertake. Quaye et al. (2019) explain:

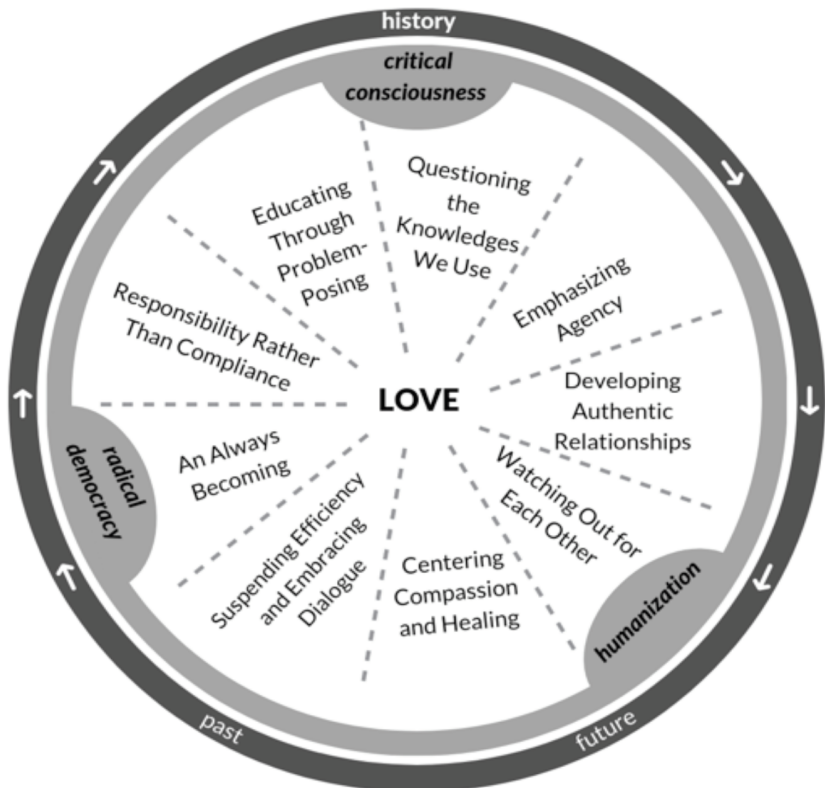
Racial justice and decolonization are not oppositional or unrelated. Rather, they work together to call out the settler colonialism and its material effects that have shaped the histories and presents of both Indigenous peoples of sovereign nations and the racializing totalities of white supremacy. Both racial justice and decolonization seek to unsettle past and current injustices and their realization seeks to upend and realize new possibilities. (p. 8)

Although connected to the higher education and student affairs profession, Quaye et al.'s (2019) scholarship incorporates and valorizes hooks' (1994) theorizing to support the critical praxis of all educators

from preschool to doctoral education. Through a four-part framework—which we describe next (See Figure 3)—Quaye et al. (2019) center history, love, principles of racial justice and decolonization, and outcomes of the framework (i.e., critical consciousness, radical democracy, and humanization). Together, we believe the elements of the framework provide a guiding set of ideals for educators across disciplines as they work to resist the neoliberal academy that has worsened during the COVID-19 as institutions continue to ask faculty and staff to do more with less. Thus, we offer examples throughout the next section within the context of the professoriate.

Figure 3

Framework for Racial Justice and Decolonization



History

To work toward racial justice and decolonization in higher education, educators must start by recognizing the history and legacy of colonialism connected to the institutions, disciplines, fields, and programs they work within (Hurtado et al., 1998; Patel, 2015; Quaye et al., 2019). Through such acknowledgment, educators can initiate the necessary work of both situating themselves as part of the colonial past and present, but engage in conversations with students about decolonization. Although ahistoricism may feel like the path of least resistance (particularly in courses in which conversations about power, privilege, and oppression are not readily obvious), educators must remain dedicated to revising histories that celebrate oppressors (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Patton, 2016). Such revisionist histories bring the voices and experiences of those long-pushed to the periphery from the margins to the center. Such pedagogical practices not only require additional work on the part of educators to learn revisionist histories, but to help students see themselves as a part of unlearning and relearning majoritarian interpretations of historical events (e.g., Columbus Day and Hurricane Katrina). We suspect a similar ahistoricism when dominant narratives recount the events of 2020 and institutions' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Educators must address the historical context connected to this period of time within their teaching and the impact this history has on students and faculty alike. Resistance to the dominant and hegemonic historical narratives and renouncement of ahistoricism comprise two major ways educators can advance racial justice and decolonization.

Love

While history wraps the entire framework and supports educators' efforts to address the past, present, and future histories connected to the learning situation, love operates at the center of the framework. In the context of working toward racial justice and decolonization, Quaye et al. (2019) explain that educators must be in love with justice and love each other through practices of investing, supporting, challenging, and committing to others. Although not heavily emphasized in the framework, we include an emphasis on self-love, which means "giving ourselves the love we are dreaming about receiving from others" (hooks, 2000, p. 67). Not only this, we view self-love as essential for self-actualization as the sustained act of giving ourselves love, acceptance, and affirmation supports the

union of the various parts of ourselves so often torn apart. Through discipline, concentration, patience, faith, and an ability to overcome narcissism as educators, we can operate from spaces of love not only for and between students as they care enough to hold each other accountable within a learning environment, but for colleagues with whom we must collaborate to transform postsecondary spaces. Love and self-love remains imperative during the pandemic as educators must strive to be well enough to support and facilitate learning for their students. This means saying “no” to the tenth Zoom call for the day, choosing to extend a deadline for students, eliminating assignments, and even resisting the temptation to return to “normal” post the pandemic.

Principles of Racial Justice and Decolonization

Surrounding the core of love, which emanates from the center of the framework, exists nine vanes that represent principles of racial justice and decolonization. These vanes include the following principles: (a) responsibility rather than compliance; (b) educating through problem-posing; (c) questioning the knowledges we use; (d) emphasizing agency; (e) developing authentic relationships; (f) watching out for each other; (g) centering compassion and healing; (h) suspending efficiency and embracing dialogue; (i) an always becoming. Within these principles, which Quaye et al. (2019) discuss in detail, lives a value for action that entreats educators to act or take initiative in ways that resist injustice, critique dehumanizing policies and practices, and center liberation and dialogue all while building relationships and communities that move forward together in trust care, and accountability for one another. Despite the nine interconnected principles, which inform each other and work together, Quaye et al. (2019) emphasize the evolving nature of the framework as racism and white supremacy continue to transmorph in the current zeitgeist of public discourse and societal behavior. Thus, the framework operates from a value of eternal becoming as dialogue extends possibilities for dismantling racial injustice and colonization. Educators have much to grapple with connected to the principles imbued within the framework. Thus, we turn to outcomes linked to the larger model before finally discussing implications.

Outcomes

Through the aforementioned principles, which center love and begin with the recognition and reconciliation with past historical traumas, educators can advance the outcomes of critical consciousness, radical democracy, and humanization. By exercising the principles within the framework, which resist, subvert, and advance dialogue, educators nurture spaces for critical consciousness (e.g., the awareness of one's own social and political position in connection to their identities and the systems of oppression surrounding their realities) (Quaye et al., 2019). Further, the principles within the framework support radical democracy which not only challenges the preconceived notions of how to engage in practice as a faculty member, but reinforces the notion that faculty should commit to self-reflexivity, fighting for justice by removing barriers, and maintaining hope and belief that another world and world-making (through teaching) is possible. "To see the possibility for enacting racial justice and decolonization requires educators to develop a mindset that is rooted in personal agency, humility, curiosity, intellectual transformation, and the joy of considering what can be" (p. 11).

Conclusion

COVID-19 has presented profound challenges for higher education. The pandemic has caused us to think deeply about how we teach and who we are teaching. It has also encouraged us to think about who we, as Black women, are as educators and how we can show up as our authentic selves with our students. We have shared how COVID-19 has shaped our understanding of what a racially just and decolonized learning environment can look like. We have shared examples of possibilities that bell hooks (1994) has lovingly pointed us toward. Given the unpredictability of COVID-19 and our local and national government's responses, it may feel as if we are left with more questions than answers. However, this moment has provided opportunities for us to lean into our Black feminist interpretations of academia and pedagogy.

It is not enough to have ten actionable items reflected in a set of clear-cut bullet points. Teaching to transgress captures an essence of humanness that is necessary in the classroom. Decolonization and anti-racism 'work' at the institutional level becomes more and more difficult to legislate.

Thus, we ask: How do we teach in such a manner that codifies decolonization via love, care, and compassion?

References

- Brown, a. m. (2019). *Pleasure activism: The politics of feeling good*. AK Press.
- Chang, A., & Martin, R. (2020, August 16). Summer of racial reckoning. <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/16/902179773/summer-of-racial-reckoning-the-match-lit>
- Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Routledge.
- Croom, N., & Patton, L. (2012). The miner's canary: A critical race perspective on the representation of Black women full professors. *Negro Educational Review*, 62(1-4), 13-39.
- Fernandez, M., Lee, K. J., Larson, L., Johnson, C. W., Mowatt, R., Bush, K., Robinett, J., Sharievska, I., & Stewart, W. (2020). Deepening diversity: A collection of teaching perspectives and strategies from social justice advocates. *SCHOLE: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education*, 1-18.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.
- Giroux, H. A. (1985). Critical pedagogy and the resisting intellectual: Part II. *Phenomenology + Pedagogy*, 3(2), 84-96.
- Gould, E., & Wilson, V. (2020, June 1). Black workers face two of the most lethal preexisting conditions for coronavirus-racism and economic inequality. <https://www.epi.org/publication/black-workers-covid/>

- Griffin, K. A., Bennett, J. C., & Harris, J. (2013). Marginalizing merit?: Gender differences in Black faculty D/discourses on tenure, advancement, and professional success. *The Review of Higher Education, 36*(4), 489-512. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2013.0040>
- Hardy, J. W. (1997). *The ethical slut*. Ten Speed.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2000). *All about love*. Harper Collins.
- Hurtado, S., Clayton-Pedersen, A. R., Allen, W. R., & Milem, J. F. (1998). Enhancing campus climates for racial/ethnic diversity: Educational policy and practice. *The Review of Higher Education, 21*(3), 279-302.
- Mills, C W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. Oxford University Press.
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher, 41*(3), 93-97.
- Patel, L. (2015). *Decolonizing educational research: From ownership to answerability*. Routledge.
- Patton, L. D. (2016). Disrupting postsecondary prose: Toward a critical race theory of higher education. *Urban Education, 51*(3), 315-342. <https://doi:10.1177/0042085915602542>
- Phelps-Ward, R., & Phelps. E. K. (2019). Sisterly personal narratives from two black sisters in the academy. In K. K. Hope (Ed.), *Speaking from within: Black women in higher education* (pp. 93-111). Peter Lang.

-
- Squire, D. (2016). Engaging race and power in higher education organizations through a critical race institutional logics perspective. *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs*, 2(1), 106-123.
- Taylor, L., & Beatty, C. (2018). Toward a liberatory praxis for new Black faculty. In R. Jeffries (Ed.), *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity in Contemporary Higher Education* (pp. 108-121). IGI Global Publishing
- Wagner, A. E., & Shahjahan, R. A. (2015). Centering embodied learning in anti-oppressive pedagogy. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20, 244-254. doi:10.1080/13562517.2014.993963
- Watt, S. K. (2020). When addressing anti-racism—Not just what, but how: Introducing the theory of being. <https://www.myacpa.org/blogs/black-lives-matter-blog/not-just-what-how-theory-being-process-oriented-principles-anti-racism>