

Black Gaze Framework: Centering & Celebrating Blackness in Education for Liberation

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ABSTRACT

Black Gaze Framework (BGF) is a promising pathway to center and celebrate Blackness in education for liberation. We provide an overview of anti-Blackness within education and teacher education, share the BGF, and apply that framework to courses within teacher education, we have taught. Like BlackCrit, BGF calls for “the specificity of the Black” (Dumas & ross, 2016) and moves into action to center Blackness for liberation in education. BGF has five tenets: 1.) Honoring the OGs: Black history & wisdom; 2.) Elevating our Stories: Black multifaceted experiences; 3.) Preaching Points: Action steps for Black folx; 4.) What You Doin’ With Yo’ Life?: Black thought past & present; and 5.) I See You!: Black acknowledgement & elevation.

Keywords: Blackness, Teacher Education, Anti-Blackness

In June 2019, we attended the Institute of Teachers of Color Fellowship at the University of California, Riverside. This fellowship provides an opportunity for both teachers and teacher educators of color to come together and focus on racial justice, healing, and community building through facilitated workshops and activities. During a session at the institute a facilitator asked the room, "What does it mean to be free? Will you know what it feels like when you are free?" As two Black women teacher educators who have never been provided space or even thought about freedom in this way, we looked blankly at each other as neither of us could envision what it would feel and look like when we finally arrived at, or experienced, freedom. We couldn't help but feel the 400+ years of anti-Blackness in this country, that although we love our Blackness deeply, we have felt and experienced it growing up in Lumberton, NC and Cincinnati, OH. We both grew up in low-income but asset rich communities that are plagued by socioeconomic challenges and racism. Furthermore, we experienced anti-Blackness in our educational trajectories, as students and educators.

We began to journal our thoughts and when we connected again during lunch, we compared notes and discovered we had come to the same conclusion. We were spending a lot of time teaching white pre-service teachers about equity and social justice, but we were neglecting our own freedom and the freedom of Black folk. As former K-12 educators in primarily Black urban public schools, we struggled with feeling like sell-outs for not working directly with Black teachers and students. At one point in our conversation, we returned to Toni Morrison's seminal work, *Playing in the Dark* (1993). We anchored ourselves in her discussion of the white gaze, overwhelming presence of whiteness and her argument that it cannot exist without Blackness.

Her words inspired us to move from reflection to action. We began to brainstorm what freedom would be for us personally, in educational settings, and for Black children. We looked to the scholars of the present and past who center and elevate Blackness and were reminded of the words from an essay in the July 15, 1837 edition of *The Colored American* "Things which concern Colored Americans," quoted by Gholdy Muhammad (2020):

There is perhaps, no other people in the world. So much interest in all the measures of moral and intellectual improvements, as the colored people of these United States. No other people have been so completely robbed, of all the rights of man, as have colored Americans. We have suffered

bondage in the midst of freedom--we have been borne down in poverty, and disgrace, whilst wealth and honors have abounded in our land. We have been kept in darkness and ignorance, while other classes of our fellow citizens have enjoyed light and learning, and liberty, unequalled in the history of nations. And now, I speak advisely, the set of time of our redemptions is come. How shall we think, and feel and act? We live not in an age of miracles, but in an age of faith and works (p. 103).

The excerpt acknowledges how anti-Black violence is woven into the fabric of the US and part of that fabric is teacher education. The reality is that teacher education programs oftentimes cause emotional and psychological harm to both Black pre-service teachers and Black faculty (Porcher, 2020). In addition, there is usually a lack of focus on the Black experience, nor opportunities for pre-service teachers to explore what liberty and learning looks like for Black students. Although there are efforts in teacher education programs that focus on social justice, urban education, equity and inclusion, these efforts often ignore the unique role of anti-Blackness within teacher education programs (Bertrand & Porcher, 2020). In this article we provide an overview of anti-Blackness within education and teacher education, share a framework that centers and elevates Blackness, and apply that framework to teacher education courses we have taught (Literacy & Technology and Social Studies Methods with a Multicultural Perspective).

Anti-Blackness

America is founded on the dispossession of Natives and the exploitation of Black labor for economic gain (Warren & Coles, 2020). Racism against Black people became codified through the founding documents of the country and states, rendering the Black body as having no value beyond their contribution to America's wealth contribution (Browne, 2015; Kendi, 2016; Warren & Coles, 2020). Black people were positioned in the social imagination of white people as innately inferior slaves. Black men, women, and children were treated as a thing to be possessed as property with little rights to live and breathe (Hartman, 1997, 2008; Sexton, 2008; Wilderson, 2010). Black people are assumed as a suspect, targeted for violence and death against the Black body (Patterson, 1982). Anti-Blackness as a construct refers to a broader antagonistic relationship between

Blackness and (the possibility of) humanity (Dumas & ross, 2016). It has been socially constructed to render Black people as inhumane, disposable and inherently problematic (Warren & Coles, 2020). These purposeful acts of anti-Blackness both shaped, and were shaped by, education systems. As a result, humanizing Black teachers, students and their communities in schools and teacher education, remains a challenge. Educational spaces are sites of perpetual suffering (Warren & Coles, 2020), violence (Baker-Bell, 2020; Love, 2019) and anti-Blackness.

Anti-Blackness in Education

The roots of anti-Blackness in education can be found during the eras of chattel slavery when white landowners recognized that any form of academic learning would spoil enslaved subservience. Black people fought to learn to read and write as tools to actively subvert their subordination and take back control of their bodies and minds (Warren & Cole, 2020). The lasting impact of anti-Blackness is that American school systems have inundated Black minds with deficit perspectives about their academic abilities (Muhammad, 2020), language (Baker-Bell, 2020), and presence (Ferguson, 2000), which in turn has stunted their political, economic, social progress (Givens, 2016) and freedom (Sojoyner, 2016). The language that is utilized to describe Black students, teachers, communities and contexts, is pejorative. For example, using words such as urban, at-risk, underperforming, underrepresenting, minoritized, etc. inadvertently places the blame of racism, inequities, anti-Blackness, and discrimination upon Black people. When using language such as urban to describe communities, schools and students, it is sometimes not used to define a geographical location such as a city, but instead is often used as a euphemism for Black students from impoverished backgrounds (Howard & Milner, 2013). Furthermore, there is a lack of accountability on *who* and *what* systems have put students at-risk, or *who* and *what* is under-representing Black students.

Formal education has been weaponized against Black children by sending false lessons of Black worthlessness (Coles, 2018). Simply put, schools are anti-Black. They operate with the assumption that Black life is a problem that must be fixed as opposed to a resource to be leveraged (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Kirkland, 2021). These actions of anti-Blackness in schools have meant Black students internalize anti-Blackness, which then fuels white supremacy (Givens, 2016). American schooling crushes the spark of Black genius (Muhammad,

2020) by making students feel that their race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of whiteness (Woodson, 1933). Kirkland (2021) argues that Black children are punished for not being white and not conforming to a system that was not built for them. Over the past five years, the media has aired the following incidents of anti-Black violence in schools:

- 1) *a deputy wrapping his arms around the neck of a Black student while tossing her and the desk backwards on the floor in South Carolina;*
- 2) *a 6-year-old being arrested at school by an Orlando, Florida police officer for having temper tantrums (Kessler, 2020); and*
- 3) *a student in Osceola, Florida being slammed on the concrete by a school resource officer and appearing to be unconscious as she was being handcuffed at school.*

These incidents of anti-Blackness violence in schooling not only negatively impacts Black students, but also white students who through these incidents receive messages of Black inferiority (Wynter-Hoyte & Smith, 2020). The examples above demonstrate the violence and surveillance that Black students experience in classrooms, to control their bodies through physical attacks, suspension, expulsion, and behavior plans. Moreover, negative messages about Black children in general cause teachers to develop fear and inaccurate perceptions about the Black students in their classroom (Ramsay-Jordan, 2020).

Spending time in the US renders educators vulnerable to internalizing messages about anti-Blackness that unconsciously shade the unfortunate professional decisions that lead them to reproduce harsh, inhumane policy and practices documented by over a half century of Black education research (Warren & Coles, 2020). Kirkland (2021) asserts that, for Black students, schools are sites of perpetual and deep oppression. This is exacerbated when Black excellence is not explicitly taught and embedded in teacher education programs that prepare pre-service teachers to teach Black students.

Anti-Blackness in Teacher Education

As anti-Blackness is pervasive in K-12 education, it is also present in teacher education programs. Whiteness is the norm for students, curriculum, expectations and standards in most teacher education programs (Bertrand & Porcher, 2020; Tanner, 2017). The racial demographics of pre-service teachers align with

in-service teachers, which is about 80% white, monolingual, cis-gender women (Bazemore-Bertrand & Handsfield, 2019; Ingersoll et al., 2018). Whiteness is also prevalent in the curriculum, with the overwhelming presence of theories created by white men and Eurocentric approaches to teaching and learning in teacher education programs (Muhammad et al., 2020). Many of the only experiences of any Blackness are surface level diversity, multicultural literature courses and urban education courses (Bertrand & Porcher, 2020). Baker-Bell (2020) highlights the anti-Black linguistic violence that takes place in teacher education programs, in the acknowledgement of other languages and dialects, but still teaches only white Mainstream English as the standard and norm. Along with the research, we have personal experiences with anti-Blackness in our own teacher education experiences.

Dr. P's Experience in Teacher Education

As a student in the teacher education program at Spelman College, I learned about the history and excellence of Black education. Yet, in courses on educational psychology, the names we learned—Piaget, Maslow, Erikson, etc.—were all white. The psychology textbooks centered whiteness as the norm in educational excellence, with no space of acknowledgment of Black thinkers. While not the fault of Spelman College, it would have been advantageous to learn about other theorists who had a major impact on education. This was not prevalent in our textbooks, and our faculty members had to supplement our learning outside of the textbooks to understand the importance of centering Blackness. We were required to learning this knowledge to prepare for our state licensure exams. When I continued this work in my graduate program, the only time I learned about the contributions of Black scholars and theorists was when Black faculty members explicitly included them in their courses. Too often, Black people were discussed using deficit ideologies, unless and until the framing was deliberately interrupted by Black students in the classroom. I knew early on that it would be my responsibility to center Blackness, as I learned from faculty at Spelman College and other Black faculty as a graduate student, when I entered the classroom, regardless of what the perceived standard was. I had enough knowledge from my experience at Spelman College to know that it was most important for my students to see their complex and beautiful selves in the curriculum. This was the foundation of the work and not skills students needed to know for the subject I taught.

Dr. B's Experience in Teacher Education

My educational journey is different than most because I did not go through a traditional teacher education program. Instead, I attended a Predominantly white Institution (PWI) for my initial teacher licensure and master's degree in Elementary Education and then pursued my Ph.D. As I reflect on the education programs I completed, I do not remember a time when we intentionally focused specifically on Black theorists or Black ways of being. Every course discussion focused on white theorists such as Vygotsky, Gardner, Skinner, and Bruner and white pedagogical practices. Even in my doctoral program there were no Black theorists mentioned and learning about white theorists was the norm. I had to be my own teacher and research Black theorists and Black ways of being. As I explored the OGs (Original Gangstas) that laid the foundation for Black education, I realized that Blackness is what will save our education system. Black theorists have provided us a Blackprint for education and what it means to effectively teach all children. Black Scholars like Dr. James Anderson (2004; 2010) and Dr. Vanessa Siddle Walker (1996; 2001) have shared what Black educators and theorists have done to support Black students. As I think about what I did not get in my education programs and what teacher candidates need, teacher education needs to move to a place where pre-service teachers learn, understand, and apply the concept of centering Blackness in education.

Our personal experiences and research described above, highlight the importance of centering Blackness, and the need for the Black Gaze Framework. The lack of visibility of one's own race and culture, contributions, intellectual knowledge, and ways of being, learning and teaching, negatively impact Black students and educators. So much so, that we struggle to identify what freedom is inside and outside of education spaces. The future of Black education research and practice hinges on both documenting barriers to Black student school success and identifying promising pathways to actively dismantle such barriers (Warren & Coles, 2020). This means educators need to create a space of intellectualism where students and educators see themselves as the next generation of thinkers. This will come through in their study of Black history and thinkers, language use, topics taught, and the texts they engage with (Muhammad, 2020) in teacher education programs.

Toward a Framework for Centering Blackness: Black Gaze Framework

We propose the Black Gaze Framework as a promising pathway to centering Blackness in education, regardless of education context (urban, urban-adjacent, suburban, rural). For the purpose of this article, we will focus specifically on centering Blackness in teacher education courses we have taught (Literacy & Technology and Social Studies Methods with a Multicultural Perspective). Muhammad (2020) and Baker-Bell (2020) argue that the only way forward in education liberation is to center Blackness (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). We propose this framework to build upon the other frameworks (Critical Race Theory [CRT] & BlackCrit) that conceptualize the experiences of Black people. CRT emphasizes the importance of exploring history and how it connects to current problems, elevating oppressed voices, and counter-narrative storytelling. CRT has four tenets: (a) race as a normal fact of daily life, (b) theory of interest convergence, (c) historical contexts and (d) counter-narratives (Taylor, 2009). CRT gives attention to counter-narrative storytelling, through the lived experience of minoritized groups (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2005) and it is a “tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 29).

Dumas and ross (2016) argue that CRT cannot fully employ the counter-narratives of Black peoples’ experiences of structural and cultural racism, because CRT on its own does not capture how anti-Blackness constructs Black subjects. It aggregates the experiences of Black people, into the experiences of people of color. The framings of BlackCrit are: (a) anti-Blackness as endemic to all dimensions of human life; (b) Blackness existing in tension with the “neoliberal-multicultural imagination”; (c) creating space for Black liberatory fantasy; and (d) resisting revisionist history that erases whites from a history of racial dominance (Dumas & ross, 2016). BlackCrit emphasizes the specificity of Blackness, and loving Blackness.

We offer this framework as an act of political resistance by loving Blackness (hooks, 2001). Dumas and ross (2016) remind us that it is essential we show constant, unwavering love for Blackness to counteract the unrelenting attacks on Blackness. Loving Blackness embraces a conscious act of care, power and healing (Dumas & ross, 2016) and can work to mute these consistent attacks on Black people that have caused many to internalize anti-Blackness and racism (hooks, 2001). Many Black theories focus only on critically theorizing race,

which is imperative; however, we focus on centering Blackness, amplifying the voices and experiences of Black people, and offering next steps to disrupt anti-Blackness. We use the words disrupt because we will not and cannot dismantle an education system that we did not build and was not built for us. Our goal is to interrupt whiteness and center Blackness in the education system.

Like BlackCrit (Dumas and ross, 2016; Wynter, 1989), the Black Gaze Framework calls for “the specificity of the Black.” When we say that the Black Gaze Framework specifies Black, we mean all Black lives, not just respectable Blacks that have been mythologized and tragically over-romanticized by a fictive Black past (Coates, 2018; Kirkland, 2021). In defining Blackness, we lean on the work of Johnson (2019), who defines Blackness as an embodied experience that is connected to Black people’s culture, race, ethnicity, language, literacy, relation, and humanity. In addition, Dumas and ross (2016) define Blackness as an act of self-care, collective care, and resistance. Blackness is not monolithic but multifaceted; it is dynamic and fluid (Johnson, 2019). It is intertwined with joy, struggle, hope, love, pain, light (Johnson, 2019) and genius (Muhammad, 2020). It is an example of the both-and; the beauty and the struggle. Blackness is symbolic of the fight for liberation from oppression, racism, xenophobia, linguistic violence, economic justice, white supremacy, and patriarchy (Johnson, 2019).

As an OG in this work, Morrison (1993) intentionally centered Blackness in her work and urged us to shift from the white gaze. Morrison (1993) poses the question, “Who are we outside of whiteness?” (p. 47). The consequences of equity and diversity work has meant that the experiences of Black people have been lumped together under the umbrella of “people of color.” This act has made Black people unnamed, our experiences denied and forsaken (Noguera, 2003; Kirkland, 2021). To a certain extent, as Kirkland (2021) argues, the opposition to whiteness requires people of color to work together, but the cost of this collective action has been the forced abandonment of our unique differences and histories. Furthermore, the equity, diversity and inclusion work typically focuses on ensuring white people understand their role in racism, which leaves out or sidelines Blackness, and thereby centers whiteness yet again (Bertrand & Porcher, 2020). Black people require different treatments for our problems (Kirkland, 2021) and specific frameworks to elevate our experiences and dismantle anti-Blackness. Many of us have not considered who we are outside of the standard of whiteness, and

the Black Gaze framework provides the space for us to do so. It provides the opportunity for us to determine who we are, through our past, our personal stories and experiences, wisdom of next steps for generations now and to come, and to elevate others who are on this journey for liberation too.

The Black Gaze Framework emerged from a conversation based in self-discovery around the idea of freedom. We offer it to begin the journey of self and historical identity and to continue forward into action, with the goal of elevating the people who have and are doing the work of centering Blackness. This framework answers Kirkland's (2021) call for a pedagogy for Black people, rooted in freedom, focused on the development of consciousness, imbued with value for Black life and Black lives. The Black Gaze Framework answers the question posed in the introduction, "What does freedom look like for Black people?" It is useful for the social, emotional, intellectual, physical, and political emancipation of Black bruised bodies and tethered souls (Kirkland, 2021). We've developed the Black Gaze Framework to enrich our collective understanding of concepts already developed by BlackCrit and Critical Race theorists and facilitate movement into specific actions that center Blackness and move toward liberation. Through the Black Gaze Framework, "we put Black Lives Mattering and the spirit of Sankofa (Sankofa is a word from the Akan tribe in Ghana which means "to back and to get it.") into action" (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023, p. 30).

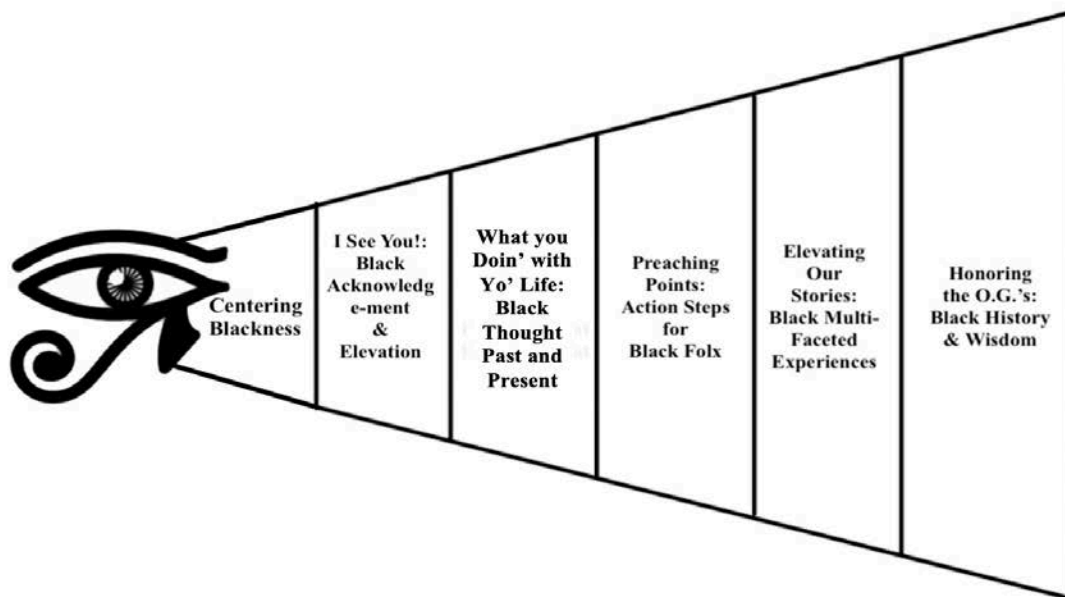
Black Gaze Theoretical Framework

The Black Gaze Framework has five tenets. While there are five tenets, we make room for this framework to change and evolve, through collective learning and lived experiences of Black folx in education. As a framework that centers and elevates Blackness, it is only right that we utilize Black English to name those tenets. The tenets are as follows:

1. Honoring the OGs: Black History & Wisdom
2. Elevating Our Stories: Black Multifaceted Experiences
3. Preaching Points: Action Steps for Black Folx
4. What You Doin' With Yo' Life: Black Thought Past & Present
5. I See You!: Black Acknowledgement & Elevation

Figure 1

Black Gaze Framework



In the following sections, we define each tenet of the Black Gaze Framework and apply the tenets to teacher education courses we have taught (Literacy & Technology and Social Studies Methods with a Multicultural Perspective).

Honoring the OGs: Black History & Wisdom

There are many ancestors and elders who have paved the way for the ongoing liberation of Black folk. We refer to our ancestors and elders as OGs. In the Black community, our elders and ancestors are held in high regard; we honor their wisdom and presence in our community (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). Love (2019) describes it succinctly, "We who are dark want to matter and live, not just to survive but to thrive. Matter not for recognition or acknowledgement but to create new systems and structures for educational, political, economic and community freedom" (p. 1). Every generation is fighting for this liberation, but there are Black OGs who created the Blackprint for us. We envision the Blackprint (Bertrand & Porcher, 2020; 2023) as a path laid down by the Black ancestors and elders who showed us how to center Blackness for liberation. The Blackprint is imperative because without it, we move through the world as if we are the first to do it; meaning we work

harder, not smarter. We recognize there are those who have come before us, who have been on this journey longer, who understand what to expect and have done the work for us. By honoring the OGs we elevate and study the Blackprint of our elders and ancestors for liberation.

Too often in educational spaces, Black people are denied the histories of the Black advocates, educators, activists, adults, and children who have come before us. Furthermore, as a result of the enslavement of our ancestors, many of us have been denied access to our ancestral knowledge. Muhammad (2020) argues that even though there were intentional actions in ensuring that we as Black people do not have access to our ancestral knowledge, our ancestors have left behind primary documents that we can access to identify the Blackprint (Bertrand & Porcher, 2020). Furthermore, we can be in conversation with our elders to learn about and elevate their stories. Muhammad (2020) reminds us that Black people need to know we are capable of the intellectual greatness our ancestors practiced and promoted. In this tenet of the Black Gaze framework, we advocate for looking to and at the wisdom of our OGs for guidance on what it means and looks like to center Blackness as liberation. Below, we provide an example of honoring the OGs in teacher education.

Honoring the OGs: Black History & Wisdom in Action

We were never taught about the Black OGs as educational theorists in teacher education programs as the foundation of teaching and learning.our educational experiences. We learned about white theorists such as Vygostky, Piaget, Erikson, Montessori etc. Muhammad et. al (2020) captured the wisdom of Black women theorists who should be included in our teacher education programs, such as Anna Julia Cooper, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Nannie Helen Burroughs. In both of our teacher education experiences as students and faculty, pre-service teachers are not exposed to Black theorists as the foundation for teaching and learning. In the Black Gaze Framework, we purposefully center Blackness by elevating the Blackprints of our OGs as theorists and knowledge bearers as our north stars (Love, 2019) toward freedom.

In Table 1, we offer two Black OGs who we have centered as educational OGs in our teacher education courses (Literacy & Technology and Social Studies Methods from a Multicultural Perspective). Abbreviated information about the OG, courses where the OGs are centered, and abbreviated examples of how they are centered within the courses we teach are listed within the table. These OGs deserve to be centered in teacher

education programs because they are critical thought leaders in the fields of racial literacy development, as well as teaching and learning Black history in schools and society. They have utilized best practices and theories that were successful with Black children and adults despite the racism and oppression that surrounded them. If their practices and theory were successful under violence, then there is something that we can learn as educators on our journey to liberation.

Table 1

Black OGs in Teacher Education

Black OG Brief Bio	Course & Topics	Application in Teacher Education Course
<p><i>Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz</i></p> <p>Dr. Sealey-Ruiz is an award-winning professor of English Education at Teachers College Columbia University. Her research focuses on racial literacy in teacher education, Black girl literacies, and Black and Latinx male high school students (Sealey-Ruiz, 2023).</p>	<p>Literacy & Technology</p> <p>Literacy Racial Literacy</p>	<p><u>Assignment:</u> Pivotal Moment of Racial Identity</p> <p><u>Discussion Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What is your race? How did you come to an understanding of your race? ◆ Identify the pivotal moment in your life when you realized your race?
<p><i>Dr. James A. Banks</i></p> <p>Dr. James A. Banks is known worldwide for his pioneering scholarship in the field of multicultural education. He is an expert in social studies education and multicultural education and has written widely in these fields.</p>	<p>Social Studies Methods from a Multicultural Perspective</p> <p>Dimensions of multicultural education</p>	<p><u>Assignment:</u> Create a table that shares how the dimensions of multicultural education can connect to teaching about Blackness.</p> <p><u>Discussion Question:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What connections can you make between teaching about Blackness and the dimensions of multicultural education?

Elevating our Stories: Black Multifaceted Stories

While the foundational tenet of the Black Gaze Framework is to Honor the OGs who laid the Blackprint for us, there is also space for Black people to share and Elevate Our Multifaceted Stories as Black folx. We lean upon the work of counter storytelling (Bell, 1987) and Black Story Work (Coles, 2020) to frame this tenet. The purpose of narratives in CRT is to “redirect the dominant gaze, to make it see from a new point of view what has been there all along” (Taylor, 2009, p. 8). As such, CRT elevates the voices of people of color about their experiences with racism and challenges the experiences of whiteness as the standard. The Black Gaze Framework specifies Blackness, in which CRT does not. We intentionally redirect the dominant white gaze to the Black Gaze.

We expand upon counter-storytelling with Black Story Work (Coles, 2018). Coles (2018) defines Black Story Work as the individual or collective stories that emerge from the lived experiences of Black people and communities. It uses Black knowledge(s) as a tool to extend and author oneself beyond the conditions of anti-Blackness. Black Story Work is a direct response to overcome society's “refusal to acknowledge Black peoples as human, and worthy of regard, recognition, and resources” (Dumas, 2016, p.8). As Muhammad (2020) argues, Black people do not wish to merely exist in this country. We want to exert our presence and make our mark on history by sharing, elevating, and amplifying our own narratives. We encourage Black folx to share their multifaceted stories of love, pain, joy, genius, brilliance, culture, experiences of social constructs, hope and liberation in education. Below, find our stories and lived experiences as Black teacher educators in the courses we have taught in teacher education programs.

Our Stories as Teacher Educators in Teacher Education Programs

Elevating Dr. P.’s Stories in Literacy & Technology Course

In the Literacy and Technology course, we focus on redefining, expanding, and reimagining literacy practices in 6th - 12th English Language Arts classes. On the day that we were exploring Hip-Hop Literacy, I was being observed by my colleagues for tenure and promotion. I had informed my students that we wouldn't do anything new, that we would continue to show up as our authentic selves, interrogate knowledge, and uphold our community expectations. As I began the lesson, I warned students that Kendrick Lamar's The Heart 5 lyrics

that we would analyze had explicit lyrics. Explicit lyrics such as 'curse words' and the N word. One student responded, "This is one of the reasons why I wouldn't feel comfortable teaching Hip Hop literacy, because it is so violent."

One student interrupted, "You don't feel comfortable teaching Hip-Hop literacy, but everyone is comfortable teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which uses the N word, and is violent towards Black people!" I interjected using Black language, "You are speaking a word!" Also, many white people listen to Hip-Hop music, sing the "offensive" lyrics, and use the phrases and Black language within the music in conversations. I posed the question to the class, "Why is it ok for white people to make money off of Hip-Hop music or engage in cultural appropriation of our language, music, and swag, but it can't be taught as a literacy in ELA classrooms?"

This exchange that occurred between me and the students, is an example of elevating our stories within teacher education classrooms. Within our community of learners, our community expectations were:

- 1) *Be Present & Participate*
- 2) *Be Prepared: Complete Readings, Assignments & Read Announcements*
- 3) *Opportunities for creativity & hands-on experiences (Individually & Group Work)*
- 4) *Lean into Discomfort*
- 5) *Be Open (Giving & Receiving Constructive Feedback)*
- 6) *Communicate what you need*
- 7) *Inform Dr. P. when you need more time 24 hours in advance*
- 8) *Respond to Revisions within 48 hours*

The specific expectations, Lean into Discomfort, and Be Open (Giving & Receiving Constructive Feedback) provided space for me to share stories about the Black experience, and we grapple with our own perspectives concerning Blackness and anti-Blackness.

Dr. B's Stories in Social Studies Methods from a Multicultural Perspective

One of the goals of my Social Studies Methods from a Multicultural Perspective course is to provide pre-service teachers with ways to examine the purposes and methodology of teaching social studies in an elementary classroom. On the first day of class, I asked pre-service teachers to answer the following questions:

- *What is the purpose of social studies?*
- *Whose story is often told in social stories?*
- *Whose story is often missing?*

Pre-service teachers' responses were that the purpose of social studies is to make good citizens; white people's stories are often told; and historically disenfranchised and marginalized groups of people's stories are often untold. Once they responded, I followed up with, "why?" and the pre-service teachers got quiet. I then put on the white board the names: Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks. I asked pre-service teachers to use their laptops and spend 15 minutes researching each person. After 15 minutes I asked them to share about each person. As students shared aloud, I recorded their responses on the whiteboard. I then asked them to explain what elementary students can gain from knowing these stories. Pre-service teachers responded with words such as: resilience, inspiration, vision, love for people, liberation, etc. I used this activity with them to illustrate the importance of elevating Black stories in the classroom. Oftentimes half of the pre-service teachers in my course have never heard of some of these OGs, which shows the importance of elevating the stories of Black people. In all my courses I share the story of a Black person who connects to the topic being covered.

Preaching Points: Action Steps for Black Folx

By following the Blackprint from our OGs and elevating our stories, we can envision the action steps that show us how to shift from the white gaze to centering Blackness and moving toward liberation. To connect to the Black culture, we refer to this process, the third tenet, as Preaching Points: Action Steps for Black Folx, an intentional use of Black language and rhetoric that is commonly embedded in Black preachers' sermons (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). The preaching points include but are not limited to rhythm, cadence, pauses, repetitions, satire, metaphors, signifying, storytelling and Black language (Alim & Smitherman, 2012; Johnson, 2019). Most Black pastors begin their sermon with a story (like our second tenet, Elevating Our Stories: Black Multifaceted Experiences) and make clear connections to the Biblical text. They typically end with three to five poignant points that the congregation can use and propel them into action in their personal lives (Bertrand &

Porcher, 2023). For this tenet of the Black Gaze Framework, we provide preaching points on how to center Blackness in educational spaces.

The purpose of the Black Gaze Framework is to build upon the experiences of Black people by sharing our stories and advocating for others to listen to our advice and action steps to center Blackness and push toward freedom. It is one thing to read and listen to our stories, but the next level happens when our advice is used to make systematic change. Muhammad (2020) argues that Black people did not just want to accumulate knowledge to hold in their minds, but they sought to act with the knowledge they gained. We have the experiences of living and breathing in our Black bodies; we know what we need to matter. Connecting back to the first tenet of the Black Gaze Framework, the OGs left us public addresses, writings, and learning which have been passed down from generations (Muhammad, 2020). This tenet provides the opportunity for us to not only do research and read the knowledge but do something with it. Intelligence is connected to action (Muhammad, 2020). Below, find some preaching points that can be utilized to center Blackness and fight for freedom in teacher education.

Preaching Points: Action Steps for Black Folx in Teacher Education

On any given day, in the courses that we teach, we are providing preaching points for students to consider as they think critically about how to center Blackness in their future classrooms. We utilize course assignments and discussions to share these preaching points. Examples of three preaching points are highlighted below, and their connections to one of the courses that one of us taught. The list below is start and not exhaustive.

Examine the White Gaze

In order to center Blackness in teacher education, there must be an understanding of what is currently being centered and why it needs to be decentralized. White pedagogical practices and norms are centered in most teacher education programs (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). In order to move to centering Blackness in these spaces, it must be acknowledged and understood that these practices and norms can be biased, dehumanizing, and anti-Black. This means there must be disruption in the system and harmful pedagogy. We must call out the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness and demand the elimination of it in teacher preparation programs.

In the Literacy and Technology course, Dr. P. informed students that one characteristic of white supremacy in pedagogical practices is the worship of the written word (Jones & Okun, 2001). Worship of the written word indicates that if it is not written down, it doesn't exist. Especially in the English Education teacher education programs, there is a focus only on writing papers. I inform students that in the Black community we love the arts, and love to express our learnings using the arts. One of the assignments that students were assigned was a playlist for being, learning and teaching. Instead of writing a paper, students were expected to develop a playlist that illustrates who they are as a future ELA educator, what they have learned throughout the semester about multiple literacies and technology tools, and their future plans for a reimagined ELA classroom that does not enact violence of any kind, upon students. The students really struggled with this assignment as they had to creatively demonstrate their learning, which isn't the norm in our program.

OGs Got the Blackprint

Ensure that OGs of Black educators and theorists are central to the foundational courses in teacher education programs such as: Introduction to Education, Educational Psychology, Adolescent Child Development to name a few. Pre-service teachers should be required to learn about Black theorists, their ways of being, learning and teaching for the liberation of Black children in schools.

In the Social Studies Methods from a Multicultural Perspective course, Dr.B. asked pre-service teachers to create a list of all the Black people that they have learned about in social studies. In most cases they share a short list that includes Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Harriett Tubman. She then shared photos and biographies of Carter G. Woodson, Mary Mcleod Bethune, W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Sojourner Truth, and Frederick Douglass. She facilitated a discussion about the OGs, with the following questions:

- *What have these OGs contributed to the field of education?*
- *What can we learn from these OGs when it comes to teaching today?*

After recording their responses, Dr. B. shared with the students the importance of studying the ways of Black educators and theorists to inform their social studies instruction. It is from these educators and theorists that we can find ways to support Black children in their learning and development.

Listen to Black Folx

Invite Black scholars, authors, educators, alumni to your courses to share their research on Blackness and ways that Blackness can be centered within your educational spaces. Provide opportunities for discussion, collaboration and idea generation to sustain the focus of centering Blackness for liberation within teacher education.

Throughout the semester in the Social Studies Methods from a Multicultural Perspective, students watched the Black Gaze Podcast live recordings of Conversations with the OGs so that they can hear from Black scholars about their research and ways to best support Black students. Dr. B. provided students with critical reflection questions to help them think about what they are hearing from these scholars and how it can be applicable in their own classroom spaces. In addition to listening to live recordings, Dr. B. invited Black educators to Zoom into the course to share not only how they are teaching social studies in their elementary classes, but the challenges that they are experiencing as they focus on Blackness and what they wish teacher education would have provided for them. We have also worked collaboratively using Twitter Chats, to engage our students in discussions about the intersections of social studies and literacy. Students are given the opportunity to learn from the both of us, and peers at different institutions.

What You Doing with Yo' Life?: Black Thought Past & Present

The What You Doing with Yo' Life?: Black Thought Past & Present tenet connects with the other tenets because of its emphasis on attaining knowledge about the multidimensions of Blackness, both past and present. This tenet encourages Black folx to operate in a space of Black liberation through Black racial multiliteracies (Porcher & Edwards et al., forthcoming). This tenet celebrates the work of Black authors, creatives and scholars. This includes reading and analysis of existing and new texts that focus on Black racial literacy (Porcher & Edwards et al., forthcoming; Sealey-Ruiz, 2021). The What You Doin' with Yo 'Life? tenet is not just about reading text, but engaging with different modalities. Engaging in analysis of Black thought fosters open mindedness, commitment to inquiry, reflection, and exploration of ideas (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021) connected to centering Blackness of freedom and liberation in education spaces. Black racial literacy (Porcher & Edwards et al., forthcoming) is a skill and practice by which individuals can probe the existence of anti-Black racism and

examine the effects of anti-Black racism institutionalized systems on their experiences in US society and schooling (Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Sealey-Ruiz, 2011; Sealey-Ruiz, 2021). A desired outcome of Black racial literacy is for Black folx to understand the past and present to advocate for liberation. It is through the work of Black authors, creatives and scholars that the Blackprint for education is strengthened.

What You Doing with Yo' Life?: Black Thought Past & Present in Action

There is no way teacher education programs can center Blackness without including different modalities of Black thought that address the Black experience and genius of Black people. We recognize that in most teacher education programs the articles, books, media and other resources used by faculty do not include Black scholarship, authors, or content that centers Blackness. In fact, as previously mentioned, most of the readings we were assigned to read in our teacher education programs centered whiteness. It is imperative that the work of Black scholars and authors are elevated and celebrated in teacher education programs to begin the work of decentering whiteness and creating a space that centers Blackness. The Black Gaze Framework in courses cannot happen without the foundation of Black ways of being, knowing, learning and teaching (Porcher, 2021). Teacher educators must continuously read, reflect, view and apply what they are reading if they are going to embody the Black Gaze framework in their courses.

Below we share a few "texts" that center Blackness and that were incorporated into teacher education courses that we taught, Literacy and Technology and Social Studies Methods with a Multicultural Perspective., In addition, we include how to use these "texts" in teacher education courses.

I am here for a hard re-set: Post pandemic pedagogy to preserve our culture (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

Synopsis: This article speaks to the need to fundamentally rethink education and consider the pandemic as an opportunity to restart, or more precisely re-set, education using a more robust and culturally centered pedagogy. It provides examples of the new ideas that scholars and practitioners are employing to

ensure academic, cultural, and social success for students who were regularly placed at risk of failure because of their racial, cultural, and socioeconomic status.

Application in Literacy & Technology course: For this specific text, the students explored hybrid, in-person and virtual learning experiences of students of color. More specifically, the text focused on ways that students could use the Covid-19 pandemic to finally create an equitable learning experience for students of color. A pair of students presented an infographic on this article, and how they had been miseducated on the experiences of Black students during the pandemic.

A talk to teachers (Baldwin, 1963)

Synopsis: This talk highlights how educators must address racism in America and empower Black students to continue their fight for justice. He argues that responsible Americans must use education to address injustice in society.

Application in Social Studies Methods from a Multicultural Perspective course: Students read this speech on the first day of class. The goal is for them to identify salient points that Baldwin made and compare it to the realities of Black children in schools today. Students come to their own realization that the arguments that Baldwin made in 1963 are the same challenges of Black children today. From this, students explore how to create equitable and inclusive educational spaces for Black children.

Black Gaze podcast: Drs. P. & B.

The Black Gaze Podcast was co-created by us to provide a space of healing, liberation, teaching, learning, and joy for Black people. The podcasts address topics in education and current events. It provides a Black perspective for processing these topics/events.

Application in Literacy & Technology course: Dr. P. used the following podcast episodes to discuss laws impacting classroom practices, best practices for teaching students during the pandemic, and students' socioemotional health.

- [*Bans Will Make Em' Dance: CRT, Masks, Banning Books & Removing History in Schools*](#)
- [*How are the Babies?: Amplifying the Voices of Middle School Students' Mental Health*](#)
- [*Learning & Teaching in a Panorama: Amplifying Black Youth & Educator Voices*](#)

Application in Social Studies Methods from a Multicultural Perspective course: Dr. B. used the following podcast and live event recordings of "Conversations with the OGs" in her course to discuss the current state of social studies education.

- [*Bans Will Make Em' Dance: CRT, Masks, Banning Books & Removing History in Schools*](#) (podcast)
- [*Solidarity Needed Between Blacks and Asians*](#) (podcast)
- [*Cultivating Genius and Brilliance with Dr. Ghody Muhammad*](#) (live event)

I See You!: Black Acknowledgement & Elevation

When we think about the 400+ years of racism against Black people in this country and the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness, the work to disrupt or dismantle can seem daunting and impossible. However, there are those using the Blackprint of our OGs, sharing and elevating their stories, and providing action steps to intentionally center Blackness. In many instances, Black people are not receiving the recognition that they should for doing this work. At times, we wait for approval in white spaces, forgetting it is our job to elevate each other. This final tenet of the Black Gaze Framework is I See You!: Black Acknowledgement & Elevation. It is important for Black educators to support each other and by doing this, we center the work of Black scholars, educators, community members, students, families, and others. Next, we will illustrate how to enact this tenet in teacher education.

Black Acknowledgment & Elevation in Teacher Education

Below is a short list of Black scholars that we have elevated in teacher education courses we have taught, who embody the tenets of the Black Gaze Framework in their professional work.

Dr. Edmund Adjapong, Associate Professor of Education

His research focuses on issues of race, class, inequities in education and misperceptions of urban youth. He also focuses on how to incorporate youth , and Hip Hop culture into educational spaces.

Hip-Hop Elements

(Adjapong, 2017)



Element	Definition
Rapping	The verbal art of expression through rhyming lyrics or spoken word.
Breakdancing	An athletic, high-energy dance style set to the break, or the beat patterns, of hip hop music.
Graffiti	Writings, draws or personalized signatures (tags) inscribed on walls or public buildings.
Deejaying	The use of music to set the tone, educate, and excite partygoers.
Knowledge of Self & Community	The study of hip-hop culture, music, and elements, alongside the examination of issues within one's surroundings to create positive change in one's community

Application in Literacy & Technology course: Students were introduced to Hip-Hop Literacy, as a form of literacy, through the work of Dr. Edmund Adjapong. Students focused specifically on the five elements of Hip-Hop. which are rapping, breakdancing, graffiti, deejaying, and knowledge of self and community (Adjapong, 2017). For the lesson, we focused on knowledge of self and community.

Dr. Lauren L. Kelly, Associate Professor of Urban Social Justice Teacher Education

Her research and teaching focuses on youth identity, culture, and social justice in ways that empower young people to shape their worlds rather than simply find a place in it. Her research is centered in the development of culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy for pre-service teachers.

Application in Literacy & Technology course: Students were introduced to Hip-Hop Literacy, as a form of literacy, through the work of Dr. Lauren Kelly. Students focused specifically on the four curriculum pathways for Hip-Hop Literacy: literary devices, language, storytelling and social critique (Kelly, 2013). For the lesson, we focused on social critique. See example below.



Dr. Tiffany Mitchell Patterson, Manager of Social Studies for a Public School District and Instructor in Racial Equity & Educational Justice

Her research focuses on racial and social justice in education, education activism, and teaching diverse Black histories, people's history and underrepresented narratives in PreK-20 education.

Application in Social Studies Methods from a Multicultural Perspective: Students are introduced to the work of Dr. Mitchell Patterson through her co-authored article, "Reckoning with white supremacy and anti-Black racism in the Virginia US history standards." Students engaged in a discussion focused on anti-Blackness in social studies standards. Then they explored the social studies standards in our state. Students identified how anti-Blackness and white supremacy are prevalent based on the model shared in the article.

Dr. LaGarrett King, Associate Professor of Social Studies Education

He is an internationally recognized award-winning scholar of Black history education. His primary research interest examines the teaching and learning of Black history in schools and society. He also researches critical theories of race, teacher education, and curriculum history.

Application in Social Studies Methods from a Multicultural Perspective: In this course we cover the topic, "Blackness in elementary social studies." One of the assignments is to have pre-service teachers explore the ways Black people are talked about in elementary social studies. Pre-service teachers read several articles written by Dr. King. Students created a list of Black people who they have discussed in their elementary social studies classes. Then they create a list of Black people that should be discussed in elementary social studies. Students then discussed ways this list of people can be discussed with elementary students. Finally, students respond to the following questions:

- *How can you center the diverse experiences of Black people?*
- *How can you teach history in schools?*

Conclusion

At the end of their seminal work on *BlackCrit* (2012), Dumas and Ross utilize Assata Shakur's (1987)

poem titled "The Tradition." They highlight:

*. . . In tales told to the children
In chants and cantatas.
In poems and blues songs
and saxophone screams,
We carried it on.*

*In classrooms. In churches
In courtrooms. In prisons
We carried it on*

*On soapboxes and picket lines.
Welfare lines, unemployment lines.
Our lives on the line,
We carried it on . . .*

*On cold Missouri midnights
Pitting shotguns against lynch mobs.
On burning Brooklyn streets.
Pitting rocks against rifles,
We carried it on . . .*

*Carried on the tradition
Carried a strong tradition
Carried a proud tradition
Carried a Black tradition.*

*Carry it on.
Pass it down to the children.
Pass it down.
Carry it on.
Carry it on now.
Carry it on
To Freedom! (pp. 264-265)*

We offer the Black Gaze Framework to carry it on; to carry on the foundation of Dumas and Ross (2016), Morrison, Cooper, Woodson, Love and more. The Black Gaze Framework carries on the traditions of our OGs as our wisdom goes forth. Despite efforts to silence us, it carries on our unique and beautiful Black stories. Black Gaze carries on elements of our culture and language by inviting preaching into our spaces. It honors our mode of communication and inspiration for our Black community. It upholds Black racial literacy (Porcher & Edwards et al., forthcoming; Sealey-Ruiz, 2013), by pushing our folk to read about our histories, past, present, and future. Black Gaze recognizes and celebrates the folk who are carrying it forward, letting them know that we see them, and their work is not in vain. We carve a path forward, shifting from the white gaze (Morrison, 1993), to the Black Gaze, "where Black [folk] dream weightless, unracialized, and human. Where language flows freely and existence is nurtured, and resistance is breath. Where the Black educational imagination dances wildly into the night—quenching the thirst of yearning and giving birth to becoming" (p. 436), where we are free.

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