

THE POWER OF TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING TO DISRUPT RACISM, MARGINALIZATION, AND INEQUITY: THE ROLE OF FACULTY AS TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERS IN THE ACADEMY

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Michael G. Morris Endowed Chair Transformative Leadership Speaker Series

Eastern Michigan University

Monday, March 19, 2018 • Ypsilanti, MI



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THE POWER OF TEACHING

- For students' academic learning
- For students' sense of belonging
- For students' sense of themselves as smart, capable, and for their perseverance



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BUT—

It works both ways.

Listen to the power of teaching through the voices of students.



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It works both ways.

Listen to the power of teaching through the voices of students.

Was there a teacher who had a significant impact on you?



We leave the power of teaching to chance.



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(HOW) CAN WE DELIBERATELY MAKE TEACHING'S POWER A FORCE FOR JUSTICE?

- How do we harness the power of teaching for individual flourishing, and for a just society?
- How do we educate so that we stop wasting lives, stop hate and killing? (Maisha Winn, Ihab Hassan)
- How do we use the opportunity of our times?

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION (2017)



PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen the student educational experience
2. Increase completion and reduce inequities
3. Control costs and increase affordability

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION (2017)



PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen the student educational experience

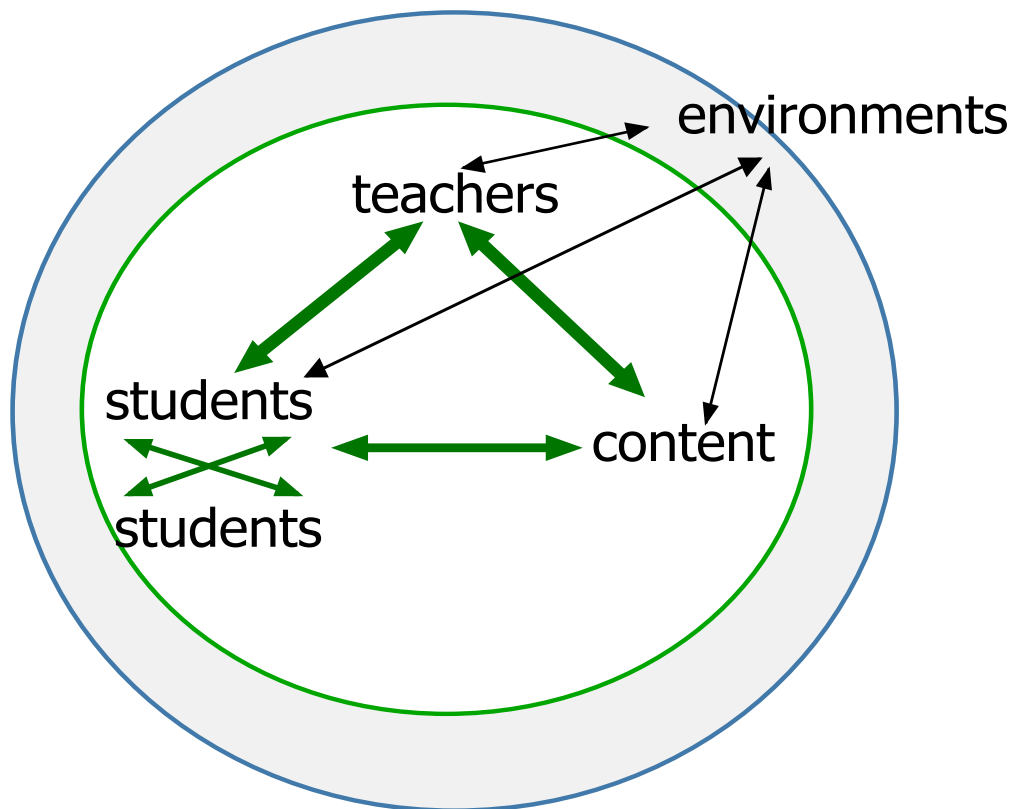
2. Increase completion and address inequities

... and increase

... quality

This means teaching.

WHAT IS TEACHING?



The work of teaching is co-constructed

- . . . in broad socio-political, historical, economic, cultural, community, family environments
- . . . through the interpretations and interactions of teachers, students, and “content”

Cohen, Raudenbush, and Ball (2003), Ball & Forzani (2007)

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY: A “PEDAGOGY OF OPPOSITION”

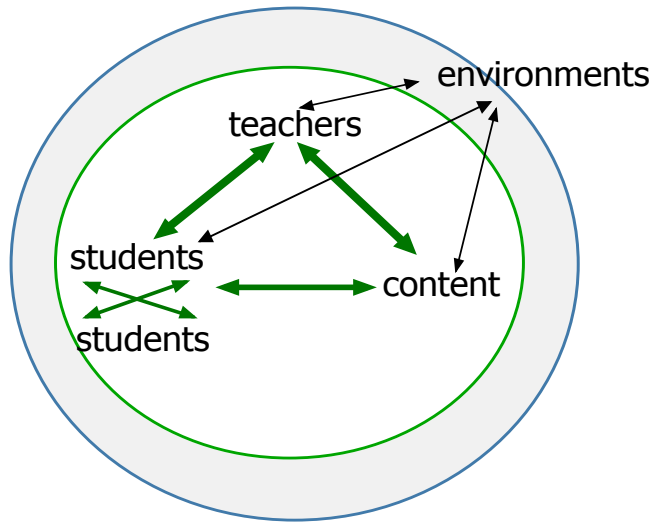
- Academic success
- Cultural competence
- Critical consciousness for change

-
1. Teachers’ conceptions of knowledge, community, themselves as teachers
 2. Teachers’ core beliefs in students’ competence and commitment to each student’s success
 3. Teachers’ reciprocal relations with students and their communities



Gloria Ladson-Billings

THE WORK OF JUSTICE LIVES INSIDE THE WORK OF TEACHING



- By understanding one's identity and role as part of a broader system of oppression that is historical and persistent
- By knowing what “normally” happens and how these patterns reproduce oppression, and by deliberately doing things that counter those patterns
- By seeing and affirming each student—their strengths and their academic work
- By opening up “content” and possibilities for students to connect with and do academic work

Mann, Willis, Hickman, Ball, Goffney (2017)

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March 19, 2018



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(Professional) teaching is unnatural work.



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WHY IS (PROFESSIONAL) TEACHING UNNATURAL WORK?

Knowing content
for teaching

Disrupting deep
societal biases

Orienting to
others

Communicating
across difference

Connecting with
communities and
also buffering the
larger society

Using high-
leverage practices
of teaching that are
different from
“natural” instincts

It's not about
oneself

Requires
professional, not
personal
judgments

March 19, 2018



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DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE



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MEET ANIYAH AND TONI, RISING FIFTH GRADERS

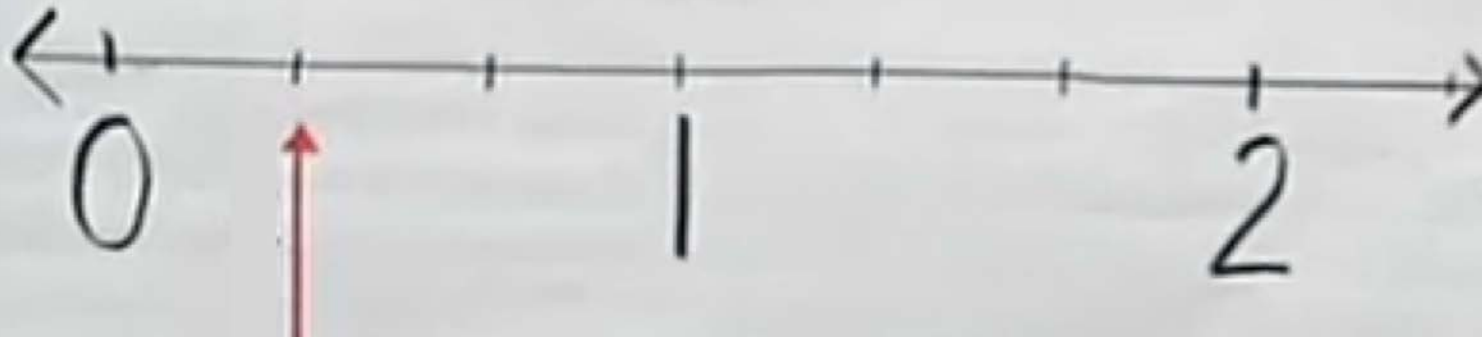


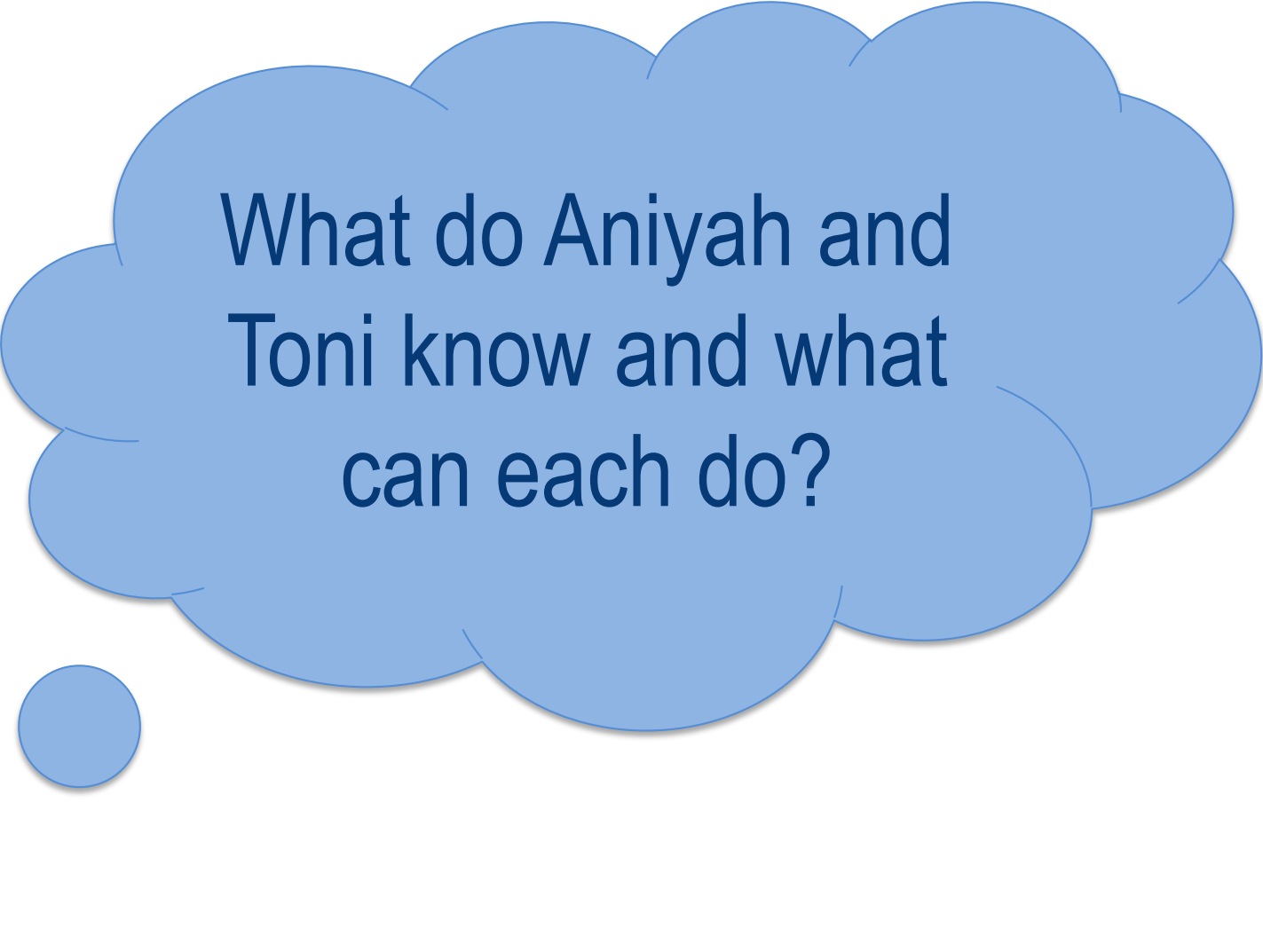
ANIYAH



TONI

What number does the orange arrow point to?
Explain how you figured it out.





What do Aniyah and
Toni know and what
can each do?

VIDEO: ANIYAH AND TONI

What number does the orange arrow point to?
Explain how you figured it out.

ive numbers

le numbers and O

Teacher: Listen closely and see what you think about her reasoning and her answer.

WHAT DO MANY “HEAR” IN ANIYAH AND TONI?

ANIYAH

- She has the wrong answer: 1/7

TONI

- She is playing with her hair and trying to get attention
- She is trying to embarrass Aniyah

WHAT *DO* ANIYAH AND TONI KNOW AND WHAT CAN EACH DO?

ANIYAH

- Uses the definition for a fraction to explain
 - She identifies the “whole”
 - She makes sure the intervals are equal
 - She counts intervals and not tick marks
 - She knows how to write “one-seventh”
- Produces a mathematically well-structured explanation
- Presents her ideas clearly

TONI

- Listens closely to a classmate’s presentation
- Uses the definition for a fraction to ask
 - How Aniyah decided on 7 parts
- Asks a pointed mathematical question

(HOW) CAN TEACHING WORK FOR JUSTICE?

INVISIBLE WORK

- Purposefully and efficiently reads students' work while circulating
- Selects a student to present who will push the conceptual understanding forward, and for whom this positioning will be significant
- Disrupts racist and gendered patterns by:
 - Believing that Black girls are smart; knowing Aniyah and Toni and their smartness
 - Trusting the children to think, be engaged, try to learn
 - Making choices about how to read children and what not to make an issue of

VISIBLE WORK

- Supports Aniyah to present skillfully at the board, using representations; encourages Toni to ask her on-point question
- Disrupts marginalizing patterns that focus on “error” and focuses instead on concepts and reasoning
- Expects other children to listen and to ask questions and creates structures that support children to listen to others' ideas
- Models and names “good questions” as an important mathematical practice
- Strategically names and highlights particular children displaying specific forms of competence

(HOW) CAN TEACHING WORK FOR JUSTICE?

INVISIBLE WORK

- Purposefully and efficiently
- Eliciting and interpreting students' thinking
- Building respectful relationships with and among students
- Believing that Black girls are smart
- ... about how to read
- ... children and what not to make an issue of

Modeling and explaining content

Eliciting and interpreting students' thinking

Building respectful relationships with and among students

VISIBLE WORK

- Leading group discussions
- Disrupts marginalizing patterns that focus on procedures instead on concepts
- Establishing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work
- Strategically names and highlights particular children displaying specific forms of competence

Leading group discussions

Establishing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work

Strategically names and highlights particular children displaying specific forms of competence

DEVELOPING THE PROFESSION



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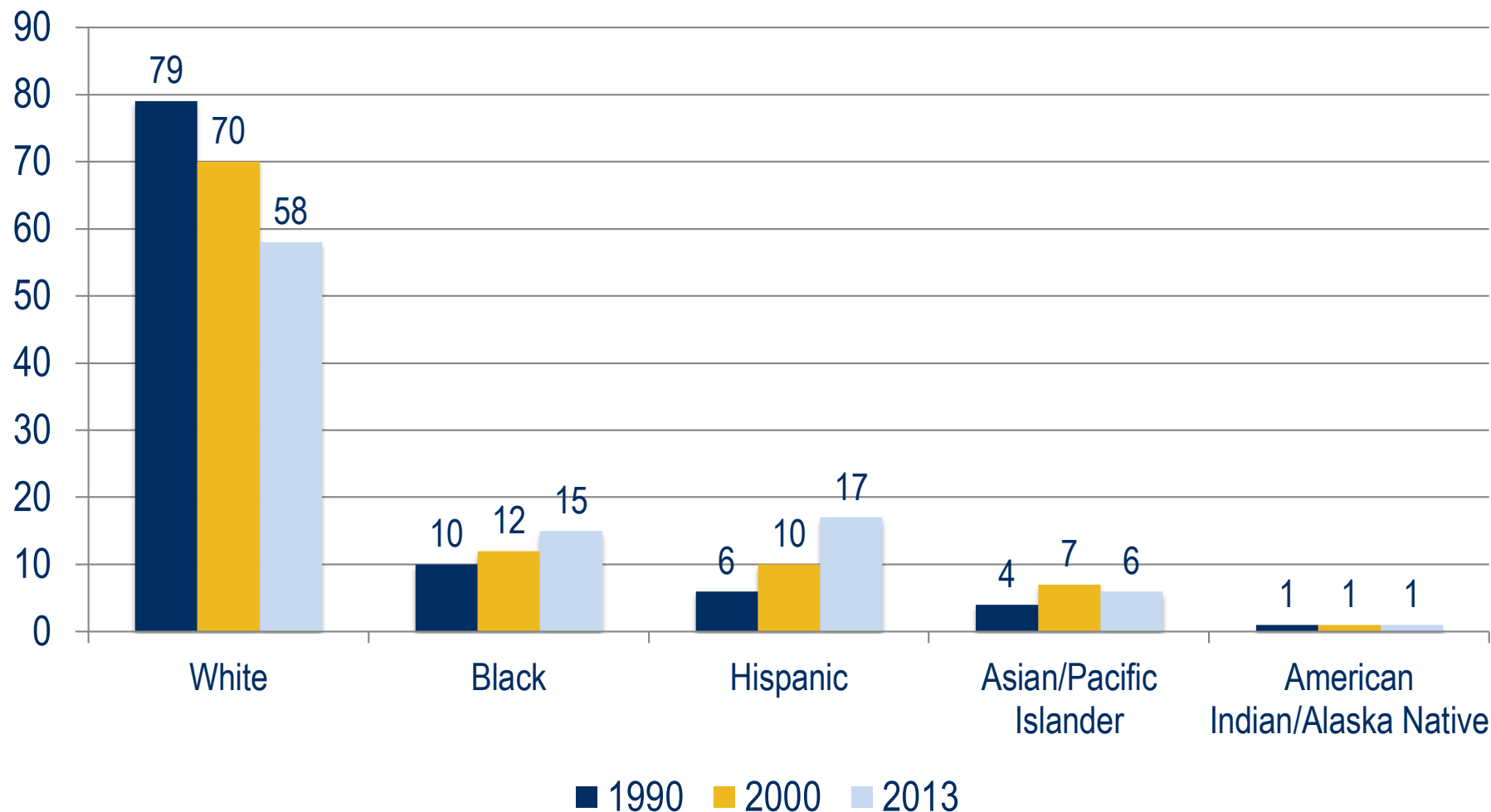
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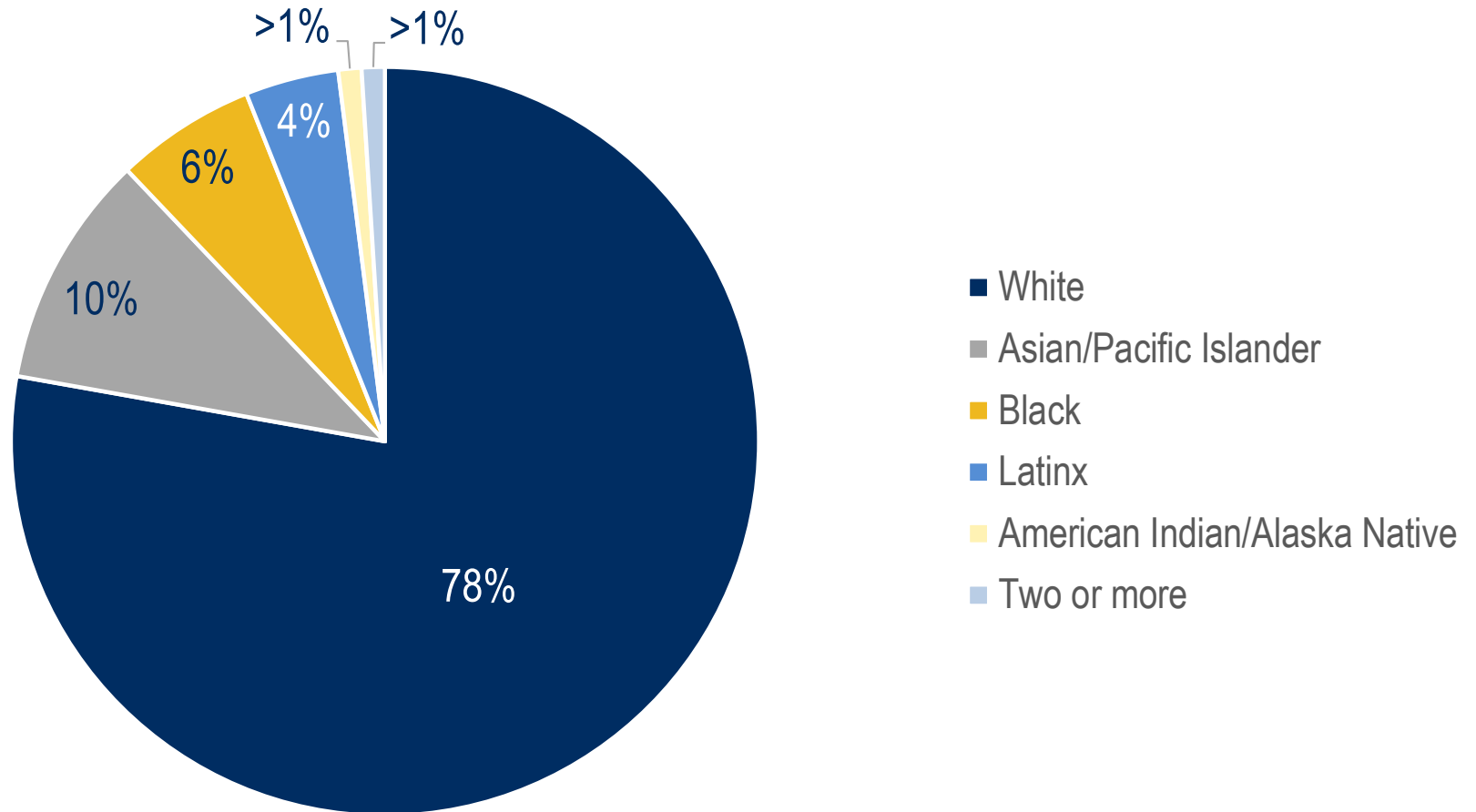
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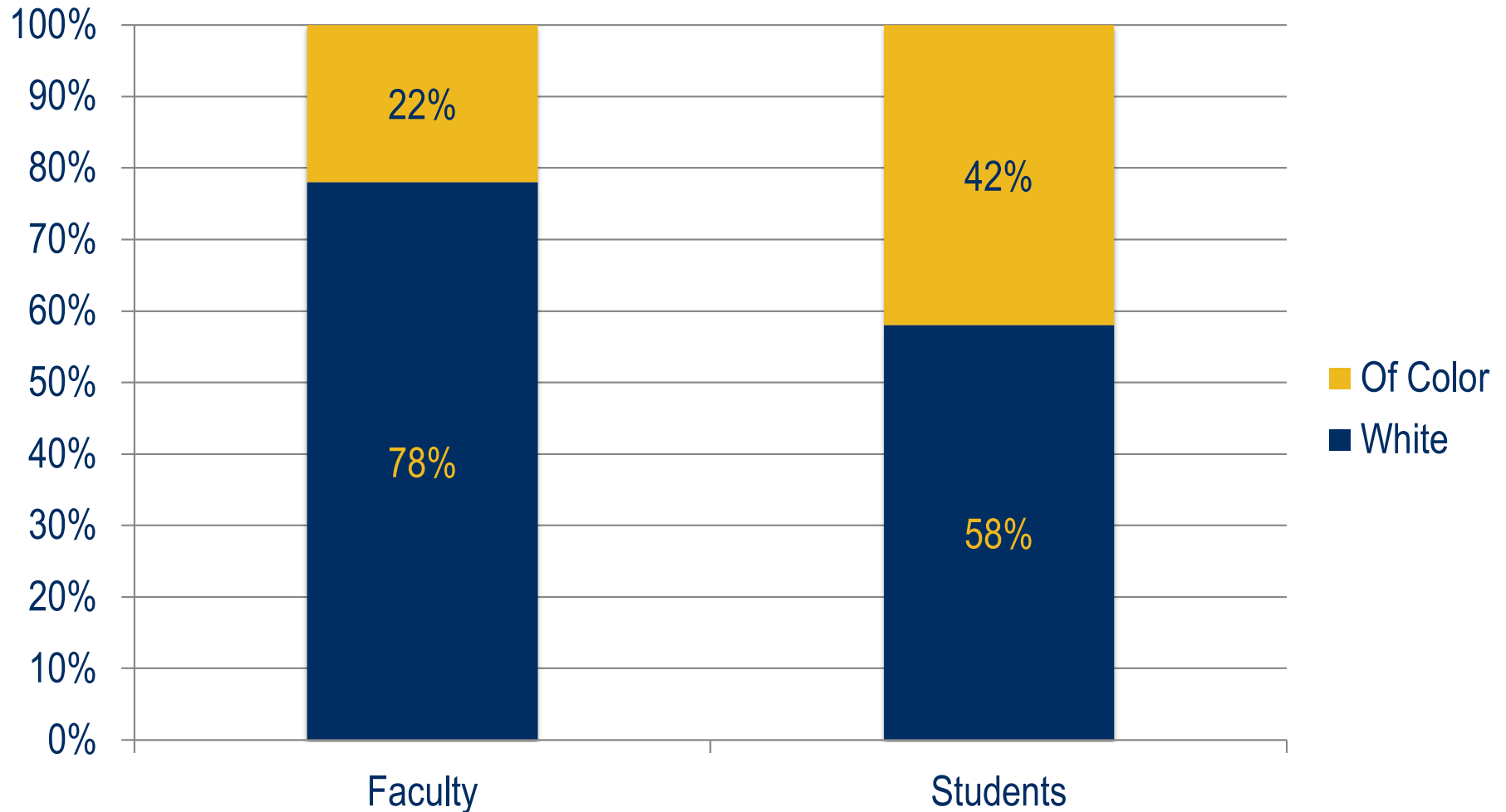
CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS



RACE/ETHNICITY OF FULL-TIME POSTSECONDARY FACULTY MEMBERS



DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDE IN THE U.S.: FACULTY AND UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS



WHY IS THIS GAP SUCH A CRITICAL PROBLEM?

- The profession responsible for developing the primary human capital of our society should reflect our population
- Importance of students interacting with faculty members with whom they can identify
- Expanding the diversity of faculty members with whom students interact in college
- The knowledge base of the profession requires the expertise and experience of people who are diverse with respect to race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, language, gender

Let's review the core
argument of this talk.



WHAT DOES SUCH A TEACHER, WHO BELIEVES AND HOLDS THESE AIMS, *DO*?

This is the value of the teacher, who looks at a face and says there's something behind that and I want to reach that person, I want to influence that person, I want to encourage that person, I want to enrich, I want to call out that person who is behind that face, behind that color, behind that language, behind that tradition, behind that culture. I believe you can do it. I know what was done for me.



Maya Angelou

MY ASKS OF YOU

- Question “the canon.” Select course readings and materials that extend and challenge the representations scholars in your field.
- Ensure that the contexts, content, and people of the examples, representations, illustrations, readings, and other media used in your courses regularly represent communities of color and non-dominant groups.
- Explicitly surface and discuss the ways in which racism underlies many taken-for-granted and normal practices in schooling and classrooms.
- Support students and colleagues to understand their identities and roles as part of a broader system of oppression that is historical and persistent (note: this includes explicit attention to White privilege and White supremacy)
- Directly challenge deficit views of students of color and low-income students

THANK YOU!

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Slides will be available on my website

<https://deborahloewenbergball.com/>

(“Google” Deborah Ball)



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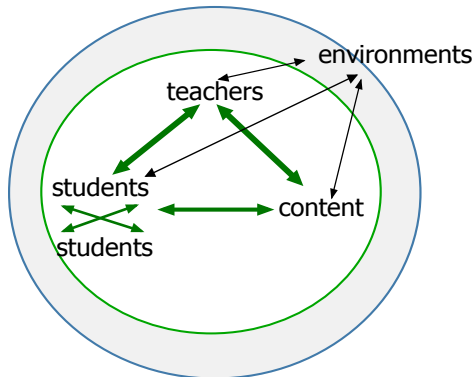
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Photo of Gloria Ladson-Billings. Retrieved from

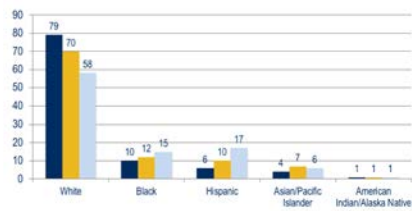
<https://ci.education.wisc.edu/ci/people/faculty/gloria-ladson-billings>



Graphic on slides 9 and 11:

Cohen, D. K., Raudenbusch, S., & Ball, D. L. (2003). Resources, instruction, and research. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25 (2), 119–142.

Ball, D. L., & Forzani, F. M. (2007). What makes education research "educational"? *Educational Researcher*, 36(9), 529–540.



Data on slide 24:

National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups 2016*. Retrieved from

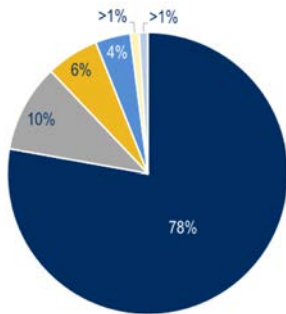
<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016007.pdf>



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Data on slide 25:

National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *The Condition of Education 2017*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=61>



Image on slide 29:

“Maya Angelou visits YCP! 2/4/13” by Flickr user York College ISLGP
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