“GET UP STAND UP”:
FIGHTING SYSTEMIC INJUSTICE THROUGH TEACHING

Deborah Loewenberg Ball
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Long Island Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development • Thursday, November 19, 2020
The last few months have seen a huge rupture in everyday life.

“Echo,” written by Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon and performed by Sweet Honey in the Rock (available on Spotify [here](https://open.spotify.com/track/3wS57Qk89sW8gJGn8zWfEr?si=gsMvH3Qys1g90KdV6J_UQQ)))

November 19, 2020

TOTAL REPORTED  ON NOV. 11  14-DAY CHANGE
Cases  52.2 million+  618,441  +24%
Deaths  1.2 million+  9,841  +37%

Includes confirmed and probable cases where available. 14-day change trends use 7-day averages.
We are all enduring the same storm—but we’re not all in the same boat. It was PREDICTABLE abs PREVENTABLE that Black people would suffer more greatly from COVID-19 in America. Watch & share for facts & action.

“We are all enduring the same storm—but we’re not all in the same boat.”

–Brittany Packnett Cunningham
The rate at which black Americans are killed by police is more than twice as high as the rate for white Americans.
Is there a growing recognition that racism is systemic?
OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM NEEDS REFORM

Being uninsured is deadly.

A comprehensive review of studies, published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, confirms that thousands of people die each year because they don't have coverage. We need to close these gaps and cover everybody with improved Medicare for all.

PNHP

pnhp.org/mortality
DEMographic divide in the U.S.: K-12 teachers and students

Brown (2014); Carver-Thomas (2018); Gershenson, Hart, Hyman, Lindsay, & Papageorge (2018); Irvine (2003)

Landing on the Wrong Note: The Price We Paid for Brown
by Gloria Ladson-Billings

In the first case of this topic, the article from Aja McNeel's (2006) book Landing on the Wrong Note: Race, Difference, and Critical Pedagogy. I have chosen this material to convey the problems of this information given. In this manner, I plan to use this same manner. The article, McNeel, Supreme Court Justice, and civil rights activists, all presented legal arguments regarding Brown, and although playing one weak note, they were successful in achieving an institutional change. An inherent issue is the desire of the black student to make the black child's voice heard. The purpose of this article is to highlight the importance of this issue and to ensure that this child is heard.

ABSTRACT

We examine the impact of having a teacher of color on student achievement. Using student achievement scores on the Tennessee STAR standardized test, we find that black students randomly assigned to a black teacher in grades K-5 are more likely to graduate from high school and are less likely to be suspended from school. We provide evidence that this difference is not due to teacher ability, but rather due to teacher support. We examine the role that race plays in the formation of successful racial minorities. We provide evidence that race plays an important role in the formation of successful racial minorities. We provide evidence that race plays an important role in the formation of successful racial minorities. We provide evidence that race plays an important role in the formation of successful racial minorities. We provide evidence that race plays an important role in the formation of successful racial minorities.

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16 November 2020
Clip from July 14 episode
13:09–13:28
(Available online here)
RATES OF SUSPENSION: BLACK STUDENTS VS. WHITE STUDENTS

BLACK BOYS MAKE UP:
- 8% of school ENROLLMENT
- 25% of those SUSPENDED

BLACK STUDENTS MAKE UP:
- 15% of school ENROLLMENT
- 31% of those REFERRED TO LAW ENFORCEMENT or subjected to SCHOOL-RELATED ARRESTS
Clip from Fifteenth Annual Brown Lecture in Education Research
H. Richard Milner IV
10:17–11:19
(Available on YouTube here)
RATES OF SUSPENSION: BLACK STUDENTS VS. WHITE STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suspension Type</th>
<th>Black Students</th>
<th>White Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of enrollment</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of in-school suspensions</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of single suspensions</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of multiple suspensions</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Why Are “Bad Boys” always Black?**

**Causes of Disproportionality in School Discipline and Recommendations for Change**

CARA E. NORMIC

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**Clip from Fifteenth Annual Brown Lecture in Education Research**

**H. Richard Milner IV**

10:17–11:19

(Available on YouTube here)
So what would be involved in our title — to “get up and stand up” to fight systemic injustice through teaching?

What is involved in disrupting this very successful curriculum of white supremacy?
- Teaching is constrained by policies, curriculum, testing regimes. . .

- Teaching is highly idiosyncratic and individual.

Lipsky (1980), Shulman (1983)
Teacher: We would like to try to explain what we think the speaker is trying to do. And show you your meaning by drawing up to the board. And the best and try to run.
And you know, it might be that it’s trying to be a story.
I’ll show you how come, the next hand, and explain it. And then you are thinking about. There’s like to try to draw a map.

Teacher: Sleep, perhaps?

Other (all): Writing, talking, reading, listening, helping with homework.

Teacher: When someone’s presenting at the board, what should you be doing?

Student: Looking at the board.

Teacher: I’d also like to present at the hand.

Teacher: If there’s a question number 10, question on an individual student question.

Teacher: I said, you’re doing a second question?

Teacher: You’re doing the second question. You think this number to and stop. Now you grid it in.

Teacher: Listen closely and see what you think about what you just heard. (Repeat百合之, by the orange boat.

Teacher: I put one statement because that’s.

Teacher: Still don’t say, they seem.

Teacher: (pont Tania yeah, continue to talk. Because there’s short space, but, like, once, twice. But then, and then they stop. (Repeat orange to count, the pump on the number side.

Teacher: Before you agree or disagree, I want you to ask questions. It’s important to understand what you said. No agreement and disagreement, I say. If you don’t want to ask questions, who needs a question from her?

Teacher: Okay. That’s your question from her?

Teacher: You did it.

Teacher: Very, so. Shaded or colored with you say, something to your team, across the room.

Teacher: Get ahead, it’s your turn.

Teacher: Why did you pick one-second?

Teacher: You did it.

Teacher: Left hand to her answer now. That was a very good question.
Teacher: Who would like to try to explain what you think the answer is? And show us your reasoning by coming up to the board.

Dante: 20 in 1:28

November 19, 2020
TEACHING IS DENSE WITH “DISCRETIONARY SPACES”
What number does the orange arrow point to? Explain how you figured it out.
VIDEO: ANIYAH AND TONI

This video and additional supporting materials are available online here.
DISCRETIONARY SPACES IN JUST THESE FEW SECONDS

Toni

Did she say one-seventh?

Why did- (laughs at another student who says something to her from across the room)

Toni

Why did you pick one-seventh?

- Why did you pick one-seventh?

- Why did you pick one-seventh?

- Why did you pick one-seventh?

- Why did you pick one-seventh?
## DISCRETIONARY SPACES IN JUST THESE FEW SECONDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Talk</th>
<th>Description/Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>DISCRETIONARY SPACES IN JUST THESE FEW SECONDS</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCRETIONARY SPACES IN JUST THESE FEW SECONDS
SEEING INSIDE DISCRETIONARY SPACE #19

- Toni is asking a question of Aniyah.
- Toni is laughing and playing with her hair.
- Toni and Aniyah are Black girls, who are positioned with different statuses in the classroom, have different physical embodiments, and perform their meanings and understandings of their Black-girlness in different ways.

What to do next?

(Gholson, Evan-Winter, Neal-Jackson)
BREAKOUT ROOMS

What commonly would happen next?

What are the possible results?
WHAT TO DO NEXT IN DISCRETIONARY SPACE #19?

- “Toni, when you’re ready to participate appropriately by not playing with your hair and laughing, and have a question to ask, I will come back to you.”
- “You need to be a better listener, Toni. Aniyah already explained why she picked one-seventh. Who else has a real question for Aniyah?”
- “What do others think?”
WHAT DOES EACH OF THESE DIFFERENT EXERCISES OF DISCRETION DO?

POSSIBLE NEXT MOVES

- “Toni, when you’re ready to participate appropriately by not playing with your hair and laughing, and have a question to ask, I will come back to you.”
- “You need to be a better listener, Toni. Aniyah already explained why she picked one-seventh. Who else has a real question for Aniyah?”
- “What do others think?”

POSSIBLE RESULTS

- Toni is publicly excluded from the discussion.
- Toni is judged to not be listening, her question is judged as not good, and she is excluded from the discussion.
- Toni is excluded and her mathematical point is sidelined.
WHAT DO THESE THREE DIFFERENT TEACHING MOVES DO TO TONI AND THE OTHER CHILDREN?

- Toni’s contributions to the class are not read as appropriate or valuable.
- Her participation and mathematical attentiveness are made invisible.
- Her mathematical identity is not supported.
- These combine to eclipse her humanity.

- Toni is named as being a distraction, mocking Aniyah, and as playing with her hair.
- She is not seen as someone who contributes to math discussions, or who asks good questions.
- These combine to images of Black girls as “troublemakers” and not “good at math.”
LOOKING AT THE MICRO THROUGH THE MACRO: DISCRETIONARY SPACES AND THE CURRICULUM OF WHITE SUPREMACY

Epstein, Blake, & González (2017)
VIDEO: ANIYAH AND TONI

This video and additional supporting materials are available online here.
USING A DISCRETIONARY SPACE TO DISRUPT INSTEAD OF PERPETUATE THE PATTERN

- Reading Toni as asking a real question that she means
- Hearing Toni’s question as central to the advancing of the mathematical content
- Reinforcing her mathematical identity, not choosing to read her body as disruptive

- Other children hear Toni being read as asking an important mathematical question
- Toni is positioned as a contributor to the discussion
- Children see a teacher attending to a Black girl's thinking and not as someone making trouble
What would it take to learn to use the discretionary spaces in teaching in ways that disrupt the curriculum of white supremacy, instead of reinforcing and perpetuating it?
WHAT REGULARLY FILLS THE DISCRETIONARY SPACES IN TEACHING?

1. Teachers’ experiences in a society filled with racism and oppression.
2. Normalized practices in schools that institutionalize dominant values and habits.

Lortie (1975), Banks, Grant and Koskela, Moll
Anyon (1981), Heath, Martin, Tuck
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Professional education and teaching experience often teach these.
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO DISRUPT THE PATTERNS THROUGH WHICH A BLACK GIRL IS MARGINALIZED?

- Seeing Toni’s question as key to the class’s work
- Taking as axiomatic the brilliance of Black children, and thus Toni and Aniyah

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- . . . AND having something different to DO

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DISRUPTION REQUIRES COMMITMENT AND LEARNING

- Seeing how racism and white supremacy permeate us, our institutions, and our patterns of practice
- Understanding oneself and one’s identity and positionality in that history and experience of white supremacy
- Seeing the discretionary spaces that fill our practice
- Being committed to using those discretionary spaces to disrupt patterns of racism

- Understanding Black children as brilliant — instead of as “struggling” or “exceptional”
- Knowing content deeply to be able to hear and use children’s ideas
- Developing broad and sensitive capability with language and communication
- Having a repertoire of teaching practices and nuanced skills at using them responsively in contexts
- Developing language, reasoning, and skills for continuing to grow and learn
SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY IN BREAKOUTS
MOVING ON

Discretionary spaces describe the many spaces and moments in which teachers make subjective judgments that either:

- act from habit and from patterns of white supremacy institutionalized in experience and professional training; or
- act to dismantle anti-Black racism and white supremacy.
EXAMINING EVERYDAY CLASSROOM SCENARIOS

1. Where are discretionary spaces in the scenario?
2. What are normalized ways of dealing with, responding to, or acting in these spaces?
3. What influences or drives those?

4. With a persistent, consistent, and insistent* commitment to disrupting anti-Black racism, what options for interpretation, response, and action do you identify?

* Brandelyn Tosolt, Abolitionist Teaching Network
You are leading a class discussion of a math problem in your sixth-grade math class. You want to distribute turns equally to all of your students and so you are using “equity sticks” to pull names at random. You ask the class to share their ideas about the math problem that they have all been working on. When you pull the name of Darin, a Black boy in your class, he says, “pass,” and declines to respond to your question.

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SCENARIO #2

During your eighth-grade social studies class, your principal enters your class and interrupts the discussion to tell you that two of your Black girls were fighting at lunch and they need to come with him. One of them, Delia, is in the middle of explaining her thinking about one of the cases the class is discussing today. Other students go “Ooooh, Delia, you are in trouble now!” Lynette, the other girl whom he named, closes her book loudly and throws her pen down on her desk.

1. Where are discretionary spaces in the scenario?

2. What are normalized ways of dealing with, responding to, or acting in these spaces? What influences or drives those?

3. With a persistent, consistent, and insistent commitment to disrupting anti-Black racism, what options for interpretation, response, and action do you identify?
USING THE POWER WE HOLD IN DISCRETIONARY SPACES TO LEARN TO DISRUPT INSTEAD OF REINFORCE RACISM

- **Orient** to the foundational commitment to disrupting anti-Blackness and white supremacy: Determine powerful ways to center this.
- Using specific case(s) to ground the work, **uncover relationships** between patterns of anti-Blackness and white supremacy and micro-level actions and interpretations in practice:
  - See how these operate as a product of discretion, whether deliberate or habitual.
  - Probe influences on these actions in discretionary spaces.
  - Predict impact of actions in discretionary spaces.
  - Reflect continuously: (How) Is commitment to disrupting racism figuring in this action?
  - Develop alternatives deliberately aligned with commitment to disrupting racism.
- **Build muscle/habit** for continuously asking what is influencing my actions/interpretations and are these consistent/in tension with the commitment to center the work of disrupting anti-Blackness and white supremacy?
- **Build repertoire** of alternatives. Sometimes not-doing is the alternative.
There is no neutral.
We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes

Until the killing of Black men, Black mothers' sons
Is as important as the killing of white men, white mothers' sons

That which touches me most
Is that I had a chance to work with people
Passing on to others that which was passed on to me

To me young people come first
They have the courage where we fail
And if I can but shed some light as they carry us through the gale

The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on
Is when the reins are in the hands of the young, who dare to run against the storm

Not needing to clutch for power
Not needing the light just to shine on me
I need to be one in the number as we stand against tyranny

Struggling myself don't mean a whole lot, I've come to realize
That teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way my struggle survives

I'm a woman who speaks in a voice and I must be heard
At times I can be quite difficult, I'll bow to no man's word

Music: “Ella's Song,” written by Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon and performed by Sweet Honey in the Rock (available on Spotify here)
“To me young people come first, they have the courage where we fail . . .”

“. . . teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way my struggle survives . . .”

Music: “Ella’s Song,” written by Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon and performed by Sweet Honey in the Rock (available on Spotify [here](https://open.spotify.com/track/0JQzGk3Q45qYIwELd57y8N))
This is our work.
To build teaching as a force for justice.

Our power is in our collective efforts to get up, to stand up . . . . .

. . .to learn, to grow, to share, and to push forward with the fight.
What if we recognized this moment as also a possibility to reconfigure life towards the world we want? What kinds of new questions would we ask, what kinds of reimagining might we do together?

Na'ilah Suad Nasir and Megan Bang, Spencer Foundation (2020)
THANK YOU!

dball@umich.edu

Slides will be available on my website
https://deborahloewenbergball.com/
(“Google” Deborah Ball)
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“Ripped Fabric Image” by clker user >\SAS.

Graphics on slide 3:
Interactive Coronavirus map and graph from The New York Times

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Photo from “As hospitals focus on coronavirus, patients with other illnesses wait in fear,” by Ellie Kaufman, CNN

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Photo from “World virus cases top 6 mln as leaders disagree on pandemic response,” The Edition
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Photo from “Cuomo Allows Businesses to Deny Entry to Customers Not Wearing Masks” by Alexa Lardieri, U.S. News & World Report.
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Photo from “Should my kid wear a face mask? What parents need to know” by Grace Dickinson, The Philadelphia Enquirer

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Photo from “How the fatality rate of Coronavirus changes with age” by Niall McCarthy, World Economic Forum

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Photo from “Should your child wear a face mask in public? How do I get my child to wear a face mask?” by Amber Diaz and Sarah Cody, News 8 WTHN.
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Screen capture from Brittany Packnett Cunningham's Facebook page.
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Graph from “As Pandemic Deaths Add Up, Racial Disparities Persist — And In Some Cases Worsen,” by Daniel Wood,
National Public Radio
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Photo from "The Black Lives Matter protests preview the politics of a diversifying America" by Ronald Brownstein, CNN.
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Graphic from “Why don’t black and white Americans live together?,” by Rajini Vaidyanathan, BBC News

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Graphic from “Housing Segregation In Everything” by Code Switch, National Public Radio.
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Graphic from “The Criminal Justice Reform Plans of 2020: And Why Kamala Harris’ is the Best,” by Mia Brett, Medium

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Graphic from “Lack of health insurance and U.S. mortality,” PNHP

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Data on slide 16:

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Data on slide 21–23:
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Data on slide 21–23:

Data on slide 44: