

Chapter 6

It Is Only Love That Teaches: Disrupting Anti-Blackness and White Supremacy in Education Systems of the United States

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a potent combination of personal testimony and scholarly analysis that highlights the unyielding resilience of Black youth navigating the challenging landscape of American educational institutions. The chapter's narrative emphasizes the crucial roles of familial love, community support, and cultural affirmation as defenses against the damaging effects of systemic bias and the pervasive anti-Blackness within our schools. This chapter delves into the harmful influence of anti-Blackness on both students and teachers, advocating for the revolutionary concept of centering love in our teaching methods. The author presents a sociological exploration of the transformative power of love, understanding, and resilience in education. This chapter serves as a powerful testament to the revolutionary potential of love to disrupt the machinery of anti-Blackness and white supremacy in America's educational landscape.

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NAVIGATING ANTI-BLACKNESS, DEFYING ERASURE, AND EMBRACING BLACK JOY

I am a proud African-American man, born to two African-American parents, and I have always navigated the world through this particular lens. My identification as Black, African-American, and African interchangeably illuminates the multi-layered complexity of my identity, reflecting the interconnectedness of these identities within the context of my life. From our earliest years, Black children are thrust into a harsh reality steeped in anti-Blackness, a pervasive force hell-bent on stifling our potential and self-exploration (Alexander, 2010). Our pursuit of academic excellence becomes a battlefield, where our burgeoning Black identity is met with envy and scorn by white teachers who should be nurturing our growth (King, 1991). This struggle for acceptance is not an individual odyssey but a shared narrative endured by most Black children in the United States. The resilience we exhibit is not an innate trait, but a response forged by the necessity of surviving a barrage of white-centric hatred, prejudice, and malice, all designed to silence our true selves (Milner, 2013).

In our contemporary world, the expression of Black joy remains an enigma to white individuals, subjected to scrutiny and vilification, as if it deviates from the expected norm (Hooks, 2001). This reality has ignited a movement within our community, a crusade committed to illuminating the true essence of Black joy, aiming to take space to celebrate one another and dismantle deep-seated societal misconceptions that suppress and render our joy invisible (Turner et al., 2022). This movement stands as a testament to the resilience of our community, unyielding in the face of attempts to erase our joy.

My personal journey has been marked by continuous negotiation of chronic trauma since early childhood, a reality often overlooked by those outside our community (Dennis-Brown, 2016). The resilience that has become my armor in the face of anti-Blackness was forged in a hostile and overtly racist environment. Raised in a household that valued self-reliance, I learned to navigate a predominantly white world with resilience, fortified by my parents and community elders (Alexander, 2010).

My admission to Morehouse College in 1997 signaled a significant evolution in my identity exploration (Bristol, 2014). I had been raised in a predominantly white, lower-middle-class neighborhood, because my parents' believed assimilation and relocation would provide me with the best opportunities. This choice on their part shielded me from certain adversities but left me grappling with questions of identity and belonging (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Despite being immersed in primarily white environments, I held steadfastly to our Black identity, even when confronted with physical assaults and racial slurs from white peers (Taylor, 2016).

My teenage years were marked by pivotal moments of self-discovery and self-acceptance. When I found racial slurs etched across my locker, it left me emotionally

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