


Chapter 2

Liberate Our Schools: Taking Back Our History With Critical Race Theory

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the issues of racial inequity and discrimination within the Central Valley of California PK-12 system, focusing on the experiences of both Black and Muslim students. The authors, Patricia Lane and Carolyn Lane, critique the current educational landscape, particularly the rise of anti-critical race theory (CRT) legislation, which undermines principles of democracy, equity, and social justice. Patricia reflects on her observation of Black students being marginalized in a classroom setting, while Carolyn utilizes critical Muslim theory (MusCrit) to understand the challenges faced by Muslim students in the Central Valley of California. Both emphasize the importance of dismantling oppressive structures in education and amplifying the voices of marginalized students to achieve social justice.

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OVERVIEW

Even though our personal testimonies of our PK–12 grade education vary, we share a similar story to which many marginalized and minoritized people can relate. The transgressions that we as educators have experienced transcend socioeconomic and gender barriers. From being a bi-racial (Black and White) student who was *othered* to the educator who is considered the *exception*, we understand the authoritarian power structures that are in place for grade educators. Our goal as higher education researchers and scholars is to break down authoritarian ideologies and power structures that exist within the educational landscape. Not only do these ideologies undermine the principles of democracy, equity, and social justice, but they also create a barrier between the *othered* educator and her students. Moreover, ideologies such as anti-CRT (critical race theory) silence diverse voices and perspectives and perpetuate systems of inequities within educational institutions. This chapter aims to reflect on our work and show that oppressed people seeking to dismantle the current colonial educational system are far too often silenced. Our research places a particular focus on amplifying the voices of Muslim and Black students in California’s Central Valley, contributing to the discourse of reform towards a more equitable and inclusive education system.

SEEKING OUT AND UPLIFTING THE VOICES OF MINORITIZED STUDENTS

In the current climate of anti-CRT, we recognize that minoritized students face an uphill battle in the US school system. With the rise of anti-CRT legislation that has swept the nation, the notion that the educator is the professional is now at risk. These ideologies undermine the principles of democracy, equity, and social justice and perpetuate oppressive systems that marginalize certain groups of students, teachers, and communities. As such, minoritized students experience various inequities, such as under-identification of talented and gifted programs, funds of knowledge, and their positive assets. We draw on the work of Ali, Beydoun, Essien-Wood, Ford, Harris III, Howard, Ladson-Billings, Paris, and Wood.

As scholars and researchers, we utilize critical race theory in varying ways. Patricia’s work primarily draws on critical race theory and its various intersectionalities. Moreover, Carolyn’s work utilizes critical race theory and its emerging subset, critical Muslim theory (MusCrit). MusCrit offers a robust framework for understanding the dynamics of anti-Muslim racism, anti-Black racism, and Orientalism in American public education, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of Muslim students and informing future practices in public education.

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