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Why Black Teachers Will Persevere through the Anti-Truth Movement

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Why Black Teachers Will Persevere through the Anti-Truth Movement

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Abstract

The current anti-truth context, in which discussions of race and racism in K-12 schools are rendered illegal, is just the latest iteration of anti-Black legislation that impacts schools. In this article, we historicize the contemporary moment by using BlackCrit and fugitive pedagogies to discuss how Black teachers have navigated discussions of race and racism with Black students through previous anti-Black contexts, noting that we believe contemporary Black teachers will continue in this rich tradition, despite current legislation.

Introduction

During the summer of 2020, following the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd at the hands of police officers and police-adjacent vigilantes, the Black Lives Matter movement gained massive momentum as protesters took to the streets in each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and several nations across the globe.[1] During this time, the Black Lives Matter movement became what is possibly the largest protest movement in US history, with between 15 million and 26 million people participating (Buchanan et al., 2020). Books that centered race and racism like Ibram X. Kendi's *How to Be an Anti-Racist* saw skyrocketing sales (Flood, 2020), and for the first time in decades, it appeared that structural changes to alleviate racial oppression were a real possibility just beyond the horizon.

As has been the case throughout US history, however, this perceived racial progress was met with a swift backlash rooted in white supremacy (Neal-Stanley et al., 2024). And like in previous historical eras, schools and school policies were placed at the center of this retaliation. Whereas previous backlashes involved firing Black teachers, closing schools, and various forms of racial terror (Butchart, 2013; Fenwick, 2022; Williams, 2005), backlash in the twenty-first century focused on whether and how teachers should discuss matters of race and racism with their students. As *Time* magazine noted, the nation appeared to be having "a long overdue awakening to systemic racism" (Worland, 2020, n.p.), and the architects of this 21st century retaliation wanted to ensure that this awakening did not spill over into their children's classrooms. In response to perceived progress after the Black Lives Matter protests, lawmakers across the nation began to pass legislation banning classroom discussions of race and racism and several books about race and racism. They also banned books that reference matters of gender and sexuality. Often referred to as anti-critical race theory (CRT) laws, such bans have been introduced through statewide legislation in 44 states, with bans passing in 18 states and pending in several other states at the time of this writing (Schwartz, 2023).

Research has shown that Black teachers have made a point of discussing race and racism with their students since arriving on North American soil (Foster, 1997; Walker, 1996; Williams, 2005).[2] Black teachers often view engaging their students in these topics as their responsibility (Duncan, 2022) and engage in this work as a way of exhibiting care for their students (McKinney de Royston et al., 2021). In this article, we use Black critical theory (BlackCrit) (Dumas & ross, 2016) and fugitive pedagogy (Givens, 2021) as a theoretical framework to discuss how Black teachers have engaged students in this work for centuries, arguing that they will continue to do so despite contemporary legislation that makes engaging in this work a punishable offense.

Theoretical Framework

As Stovall & Moseley (2023) noted, "Anti[B]lackness is foundational to the construction of the United States, and it is the pervasive and permanent positioning of Black people as chattel,

[1] The Black Lives Matter movement began in response to the acquittal of vigilante George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Black teenager. The movement seeks to end police violence towards Black Americans.

[2] Both Black teachers and Black educators are used throughout this article. While the term Black teachers refers to Black people who provide direct instruction to students, Black educators includes Black teachers, principals, counselors, and other Black school officials who are directly involved in students' education

as unworthy of mattering" (p. 299). Thus, explaining what it means to withstand and counter such anti-Black structural harm in education is appropriately framed through BlackCrit (Dumas & ross, 2016) and fugitive pedagogy (Givens, 2021). While BlackCrit shares some of critical race theory's core tenets, it departs from CRT in its focus on Blackness. Specifically, "BlackCrit was born out of a desire to explore these 'more detailed ways' that Blackness continues to matter, and to highlight how a theory of race cannot account for what it means to be racialized Black in an anti-Black world" (ross, 2019, p.1). BlackCrit's framing ideas are: 1) anti-Blackness as endemic and permanent, 2) Blackness existing in tension with the neoliberal-multicultural imagination, and 3) creating space for liberatory fantasy (Dumas & ross, 2016). Each of these is useful for this analysis of Black teachers discussing race and racism with their students despite individual, institutional, and systemic anti-Black racism. Moreover, as we discuss the salience of Black teachers' resistance against racist systems, BlackCrit is fitting because of its critical theorization of anti-Blackness as an embodied lived experience of social suffering and Blackness as a loathed thing within itself (ross, 2019).

One such way Black educators have resisted oversimplifying the importance of race is by creating space for Black liberatory fantasy. When framing BlackCrit in education, ross (2019) asserts that Black liberatory fantasy involves "making space for Black people, who for example, navigate the constant threat (and reality) of police terror, to conjure various scenarios that may disrupt total subjugation and serve as a ray of hope for larger systemic change" (p. 3). To alleviate suffering for Black students in schools, Black teachers have always had to imagine and enact a broader fugitive vision (Dumas & ross, 2016). This entails both rejecting and escaping from historical narratives that do not hold white supremacy accountable for racial domination, brutality, murder, rape, and mutilation (ross, 2019).

Aligned with the concept of Black liberatory fantasy, Givens (2021) frames fugitivity as a fugitive pedagogy, which derived from a long tradition of Black education in America as subversive acts of resistance against law and custom - even under the constant threat of violence. Givens (2021) reminds us that teaching against the ills of antiracism is only the onset of much greater instruction when seeking liberatory education. As such, the counternarratives of Black teachers stand in resistance to white supremacist propaganda that has always loomed over US schools (Givens, 2021; Sankofa Waters, 2022). Be it through historical misrepresentations or educational mandates, Black educators have traditionally had to rely on fugitive pedagogies to improve narrowly constructed systems that exclude the ways of knowing and being of Black children (Givens, 2021). The banning of certain content, outlawing inquiry into truth, nor even the stripping of personhood has ever slowed the creative process of Black teachers. What is perhaps more impressive is that they have cultivated networks of solidarity and developed approaches that have stood the test of time.

We argue that in this ongoing time of criminalized learning through anti-CRT and anti-Black legislation, Black teachers will continue the historical legacies of the many educators who came before them with freedom dreams. Despite the odds being stacked against Black people in the United States, freedom dreaming (Kelley, 1993) is an essential part of how Black teachers created a Black liberatory fantasy and developed fugitive pedagogies. Trafi-Prats (2020) states, "An ontology of fugitivity thinks of Blackness as a performance of resistance to systems of knowledge that have persistently situated Blackness as placeless and outside sovereign power" (p. 359). This is also to say that Black educators have been forced to create spaces where new knowledge and Black community strong points have been woven into curricula to help students

learn, adapt, and think deeply about systematic inequalities (Lewis, 2023; Mims, et al., 2022). We draw from the notions of BlackCrit and fugitive pedagogies (Givens, 2021) to theorize how Black teachers have and continue to engage in providing truthful knowledge about systems and institutions that Black students will encounter throughout their lives.

Mapping as Method and Methodology

We utilized mapping as a critical qualitative research method (Denzin, 2017) to record ties between historical and present-day issues in teaching Black students in anti-Black social and political contexts (Marx, 2023; Neal-Stanley et. al., 2024). Mapping has been used in a variety of ways in educational research, most often involving various aspects of geography and space. Here, we utilized mapping in a way that connected past, present, and future, taking up mapping as a methodological approach in a way that "places historically oppressed people, underrepresented experiences, and marginalized voices" at the center of our analysis (Neal-Stanley et al., 2024, p. 37). Mapping was most appropriate as it values participant knowledge and aligns with critical theoretical and/or methodological frameworks (Marx, 2023). Here, mapping uncovered themes that illustrate how various aspects of education, including pedagogies and policies, have transformed or remained unchanged over time.

Using mapping as both method and methodology, we utilized data collected from historical documents, popular media, and educational research. Like other Black education scholars who have used mapping to document connections between historical and contemporary issues in Black education (Mustaffa, 2017; Neal-Stanley et al., 2024), we were able to identify major historical eras in Black education following data analysis. The six eras are: 1) Enslavement, 2) Reconstruction, 3) Jim Crow segregation, 4) Civil Rights Movement, 5) Post-Civil Rights Movement, and 6) New Millenium. In each of these eras, anti-Black education violence (Mustaffa, 2017) presented itself differently and therefore, Black teachers resisted it in different ways. Mapping as method and methodology helped us see the continuity in both anti-Black oppression and Black resistance in the changing landscape of Black education over centuries.

Black Teachers Navigating Anti-Black Contexts throughout History

Education has always been a form of resistance and a path towards liberation for Black Americans. To add, education for Black Americans has always included, whether covert or not, instruction preparing them to navigate racially restrictive contexts (Cornelius, 1983; Duncan, 2022; Foster, 1997; Givens, 2021; Walker, 1996; Williams, 2005). Here, we discuss how Black teachers have taught to transgress (hooks, 1994) throughout the history of the US, despite social and political landscapes in which such teaching had serious material consequences.

Enslavement (1619-1865)

At no point in US history was the social and political climate around teaching more consequential for Black people than the time of chattel slavery. During this period, state legislatures throughout the US South passed laws making it illegal to teach enslaved people to read and write. Some states even went so far as to make literacy illegal for *all* Black people, free or enslaved, whereas other states made teaching literacy to enslaved people punishable by death (Williams, 2005). In these instances, anti-Blackness was prescribed into law in the most extreme ways. These anti-Black education mandates signaled "the broader antagonistic relationship

between Blackness and the possibility of full humanity" (ross, 2019, p. 3). Moreover, this legislation helped to cement the notion that anti-Blackness would remain a permanent fixture in American society (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Anti-literacy legislation and its consequences, however, did not deter Black people from seeking to learn or teaching each other to read and write, as they saw literacy as a necessary tool on the path to freedom. For example, free Black people set up schools to teach literacy skills to enslaved Black people, despite laws that criminalized learning for enslaved people. In South Carolina, Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne, a free Black man and senior bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church wrote in his memoir, *Recollections of Seventy Years*, that he used a home in the late 1820s to teach free and enslaved Black people. Whereas it had been illegal to teach enslaved people to read when Payne opened his school, white enslavers would use the state legislature in 1835 to pass legislation criminalizing learning for both enslaved persons and free persons of Color (Cornelius, 1991; Span, 2005).

Not only did Black teachers resist anti-literacy laws by helping Black students gain literacy skills, but they also used the classroom to teach about race and racism. The diary of Charlotte Forten, a Black woman who came to the South in 1862 to teach, spoke directly to this. Forten was a member of the Philadelphia Port Royal Relief Association, an organization that was designed to increase the literacy of Black people, both free and enslaved (Lapansky, 1989; Taylor, 2005). In a diary account, she described her experience coming to St. Helena and Port Royal, Union-occupied islands of South Carolina, to teach enslaved students and recounted:

> I never before saw children so eager to learn, although I had had several years experience in New England schools…After the lessons, we used to talk freely to the children, often giving them slight sketches of some of the great and good men. Before teaching them the "John Brown" song, which they learned to sing with great spirit, Miss T. told them the story of the brave old man who had died for them. I told them about Toussaint thinking it well they should know what one of their own color had done for his race. (Forten, 1864, p. 591-592)

Forten demonstrated resistance to anti-Blackness by not only educating Black students, but also by teaching her students about Black revolutionary figures. By incorporating lessons about Toussaint Louverture, a prominent Haitian general and leader of the Haitian Revolution, she would help her students see how Black people navigated anti-Blackness and allow them to envision liberatory futures.

Together, the historical examples of resistance by Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne and Charlotte Forten reveal the ideas of Black liberatory fantasy (Dumas & ross, 2016). Each of them demonstrated what it means to make space for Black education despite the constant threat of violence, which can be considered as contributing hope and promise for "larger systemic change" (ross, 2019, p. 3). Additionally, their dedication to education is indicative of a fugitive pedagogical tradition, where teaching and learning for Black people was both subversive and freedom-seeking (Givens, 2021).

Reconstruction (1865-1877)

Following the end of the Civil War, many anti-literacy laws were voided (Green, 2016) and anti-Blackness in education took new forms. While anti-Blackness was not codified into law the

way it had previously been, it remained a foundational aspect of the social order. As Black communities sought education for their children, they fought numerous assumptions of Black inferiority, from both white organizations and white teachers (Williams, 2005). With that, many of the historical narratives regarding the teachers in schools established by the Freedmen's Bureau suggest that all Freedmen's Bureau teachers were white women from the North who traveled to the South as a form of missionary (Alderson, 1952; Hornsby, 1973; Richardson, 1962). Although many of the teachers who taught Black students during Reconstruction were white, there were also Black teachers who traveled from the North and Black teachers who had already lived in the South who also taught Black students (Williams, 2005).

In North Carolina, most of the teachers who taught Black students from 1862 through 1875 were Black, and many of them saw teaching as an opportunity to support the educational attainment of newly freed Black people and as a form of racial uplift (Brosnan, 2019). Black teachers who taught during Reconstruction navigated teaching in an anti-Black context by holding high standards for their students and refusing to use certain curricular materials. White teachers often had low expectations for Black students, whereas Black teachers understood that their students were capable of learning if given the opportunity. Additionally, although there was a continual shortage of readers, Black teachers refused to use materials that conveyed messages of Black inferiority (Williams, 2005). Many of the readers had content that suggested that slavery was best for Black people, but Black teachers refused to have students engage with these anti-Black messages, regardless of how desperately they needed materials (Williams, 2005).

Still, while it was no longer illegal for Black people to acquire an education after the Civil War, southern white elites implemented tactics and strategies that denied or extremely limited the educational attainment of newly freed Black people (Williams, 2005). In essence, Black educators were forced to continue engaging fugitive pedagogies, as they were now tasked with rewriting the dominant scripts of knowledge (Givens, 2021). Therefore, it remained important for Black teachers to convey such knowledge to their students from a social, historical, and emotional context that centered their lived experiences (Givens, 2021).

Jim Crow Era (1877-1954)

After the Freedmen's Bureau ceased operations in 1871 and after Reconstruction ended, Jim Crow laws and Black codes were passed and implemented throughout the South (Vaughn, 1946). When the Freedmen's Bureau ended its operations, the federal government no longer provided oversight regarding the schools it had established through the Bureau which meant that states were responsible for educating Black citizens. Anti-Blackness would now present though segregated and inequitably funded schools, a curriculum that focused on obedience, and the refusal to build more schools for Black students (Vaughn, 1974). The curriculum local school boards provided for Black students was primarily industrial, meaning it was designed to teach Black students to be diligent and work hard at manual labor and trades, lacking any focus on race, culture, history, language, or critical thinking (Anderson, 1988). Industrial education prepared Black students for work in industries that were oftentimes owned by or invested in by primarily wealthy white men (Anderson, 1988; Bradshaw & Bohan, 2013; Watkins, 2001). Watkins (2001) described the curricular decisions made and implemented during the Jim Crow era as being driven by "white architects" who were wealthy white men more concerned with their personal profits than with the progress of Black people.

Despite facing new forms of anti-Blackness, Black teachers worked to navigate the restrictions of that era just as they had before, during, and after the Civil War. Black teachers in legally mandated segregated schools saw their jobs as a point of "collective racial uplift" (Walker, 1996, p. 149), and they understood helping Black students navigate anti-Black racism at the individual and structural levels to be amongst their responsibilities (Foster, 1997; Walker, 1996). These teachers constructed a counternarrative that instilled racial pride in their students, as opposed to the narratives of Black inferiority that were so pervasive in society. They worked to help students understand the roots of their racialized oppression and held high expectations for their students (Foster, 1997; Walker, 1996), in addition to teaching their students Black histories and centering Africa and the diaspora in their curriculum (Foster, 1997). In some schools, Black teachers concealed literacy tests from polling places and used those literacy tests to prepare their students for what they would experience when attempting to register to vote (Loder-Jackson, 2015). Some teachers, like Tessie McGee, who taught history in an all-Black school in Louisiana, enacted fugitive pedagogy by using Carter G. Woodson's textbooks to teach about race and citizenship, despite such concepts being excluded from the curriculum (Givens, 2021). Black teachers engaged in this work while also advocating for better learning conditions for their students at the state level and teaching their students the importance of democracy in a nation where they were caste as second-class citizens (Preston-Grimes, 2007).

Seeing classrooms as sites for teaching how to overcome oppressive conditions, Black teachers also practiced situated pedagogies (Lather & Ellsworth, 1996). This involved creating real-time "responses and initiatives" to the historical oppression their students endured (Lather & Ellsworth, 1996, p. 71). For Black learners, situated pedagogies transferred to the "acquisition of skills and knowledge for future success and opportunities" (Kelly, 2010, p. 342). Both fugitive and situated pedagogies are indicative of the "hidden transcripts" that were created in Black schools and communities (Kelley, 1993). "Hidden transcripts" were ways of resisting in the face of power structures, which usually "manifest[ed] itself in daily conversations, folklore, jokes, songs, and other cultural practices" that Black teachers used to engage their students and to prepare them to navigate anti-Black societal institutions and structures (Kelley, 1993, p. 77). This ideology countered the notion that all-Black schools were inferior to white schools by promoting academic excellence in safe and nurturing environments (Kelley, 1993; Ramsey, 2011). This dissident culture served as acts of daily resistance to de jure and de facto anti-Black policies.

Civil Rights Era (1954-1975)

Black teachers remained steadfast in their resistance and, in most cases, used their classrooms as spaces to model and practice activism. Black teachers taught the ideals of democracy and freedom using pedagogies and curricular materials that combated anti-Blackness (Givens, 2023; Loder-Jackson, 2015). Their efforts, along with the efforts of others, played a significant and direct role in the civil rights victories of the time, including the *Brown v. Board of Education* US Supreme Court decision. However, although *Brown I* (1954) officially rendered segregation in US public schools unconstitutional and *Brown II* (1955) mandated public schools be integrated "with all deliberate speed", one of the most unfortunate implications of these decisions was the closing of many all-Black schools and the firing of many Black teachers and administrators who engaged in fugitive pedagogies (Fenwick, 2022; Irvine & Irvine, 2007). Many of these teachers were replaced by less qualified white teachers, and few were selected to teach at the newly desegregated schools (Fenwick, 2022).

As Black teachers were fired en masse, the Black teachers who remained in classrooms found themselves teaching multiracial groups of students alongside white colleagues. Black teachers, however, knew that Black and white students attending school together did not mean that anti-Black racism had come to an end (Foster, 1997; Hayes et al., 2014). The anti-Blackness in schools no longer existed solely on a structural level, as Black teachers faced anti-Black racism from their students and their students' parents for the first time (Alridge, 2020; Foster, 1991, 1997; Las & Ratcliffe, 2014). Black teachers quickly understood that they would be unable to discuss race and racism with their students as they previously had, but they knew that they needed to continue engaging students in that work. For this reason, Black teachers often turned to alternative spaces to discuss race and racism with their students. This sometimes involved encouraging students to participate in extracurricular activities where students who would be interested in discussing race could self-select into the space, and on other occasions Black teachers created programs outside of schools where they could help students understand the historical causes of and contemporary manifestations of racial oppression (Foster, 1997). Additionally, some teachers continued to discuss racial oppression with their students during the school day, but they did so individually or with small groups of Black students (Foster, 1997). While they found themselves in new circumstances and contexts, these teachers understood that despite purported racial progress, it was still imperative that they help Black students understand the root and persistence of their oppression, while helping them develop ways to address it, just as Black teachers of previous generations had. Through the liberatory fantasy lens of BlackCrit, we see Black teachers' continued fight to alleviate Black suffering in the nation's schools as a result of continuing to imagine the "wonderous possibilities" for Black children (Dumas & ross, p. 431).

Post-Civil Rights (1975-1999)

Schools and school districts continued to desegregate though the 1970s, often using programs that bussed students of Color from their communities to white schools outside of their communities to have Black students and white students attend the same school (Lord & Cateau, 1976). In the next decade, however, Ronald Reagan was elected President of the US and in 1983, the Reagan administration released a report titled A Nation at Risk. This report painted the nation's schools as the rocky foundation that could potentially lead to the crumbling of US democracy, providing the public with a false narrative of failing US schools (Love, 2023). Following the release of A Nation at Risk, the Reagan administration used the report to lobby for education reforms that included school vouchers, educational savings accounts, and tuition tax credits, despite the report's failure to mention any of these. The release of A Nation at Risk, alongside the War on Drugs, led to punitive education policies that imposed on inner city schools (Weisman, 1983). Still reeling from the effects of the implementation of school desegregation, this period also experienced a dearth of Black teachers.

Despite education reforms that portrayed Black students as problems to dealt with (or avoided) and decimating the Black teacher population, the Black teachers who remained in classrooms continued to provide their students with what they deemed necessary for the societal position that Black students occupied. Black teachers understood their work as imperative, because they believed that their classrooms were places where students' ideologies were shaped (Black, 1996; Wilson, 2023). Black teachers in the post-Civil Rights era understood that anti-Blackness was woven into every aspect of their students' schooling, so they made a concerted effort to provide students with culturally relevant content and implement community knowledge in an effort to

empower their students (Foster, 1993). Irvine (1989) referred to these culturally relevant and responsive practices as Black teachers engaging in the work of cultural translators. Like their predecessors, these teachers taught Black students about their oppression, helping them understand oppression as structural as opposed to individual (Wilson, 2023). They also used students' real lives as curriculum and made a concerted effort to help students understand their present oppression in the context of historic oppression (Wilson, 2023).

New Millennium (2000-present)

As we hit the turn of the new millennium, teachers found themselves in a standards and accountability context that placed a heavy emphasis on high stakes testing. Federal legislation like No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RTTP) left teachers and school districts narrowing their focus on standardized tests that essentially determined a school's fate. One of the primary outcomes of this teaching context is that teachers who taught in schools where students performed well on standardized state exams (usually schools where students were economically privileged) were able to continue their regular teaching practices. In schools where the majority of students were Black, Latinx, or poor, however, teachers were told to focus solely on state curriculum standards and low-level test taking skills, eliminating many, if not most, opportunities for students to learn beyond the standards (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Essentially, educational policies that were implemented under the guise of closing the achievement gap between Black students and their white peers actually reinforced anti-Blackness by limiting Black students' learning opportunities and focusing on preparation for high stakes exams.

Many Black teachers, however, understood that their students needed to experience a curriculum suited for their lives that existed beyond what was included in state curriculum standards (Stanley, 2024). And just as their forebears did, they found ways to navigate this anti-Black policy and provide students with what they needed. These teachers were devoted to doing what was best for Black students, and many of them found ways to engage in this work within the bounds of the standards and accountability context. For example, Black teachers found nuanced ways to navigate the heavy surveillance of this teaching context by changing the ways they addressed racial issues depending on the context in which they found themselves (Chisholm, 2021; Duncan, 2022). This includes having direct discussions about the intersection of race and government in a civics course (Duncan, 2020) or finding innovative ways to connect discussions of race and racism to state standards by connecting the right to protest in the US to the rights and freedoms of people in other countries in a global studies course (Duncan, 2022). Black teachers have also utilized the curricular materials their schools made available to them to both teach the state standards and teach students to critique the materials and the historical narratives that they present to students (Esposito & Swain, 2009). Additionally, Black teachers have helped students make connections between the role race has historically played in the United States and contemporary racial issues (Milner, 2014). Black teachers understood that state standards and other accountability policies merely led to a transformation of anti-Blackness in schools, and they found ways to navigate these new, anti-Black structures.

Even when they could not find ways to connect issues of racial justice directly to the state standards or curricular materials already in use, Black teachers have continued to address issues of race and racism with their students. This includes pausing instruction to discuss racial oppression with students and remind them that their abilities are greater than any of the barriers they may face (Johnson et al., 2013). This also includes swapping canonical texts for hip hop lyrics

in an English course to cultivate a "[B]lack space" and instill a sense of racial pride in students (Hill, 2009, p. 55). Additionally, Black teachers continue working towards their racial justice aims by culturally validating their students (Milner, 2016), showing vulnerability and allowing students to see the seriousness of their concerns (Duncan, 2022), and using hip hop to help students develop a critical consciousness and critique the systems they live within (Stovall, 2006).

Despite educational policy that emphasized high-stakes standardized testing, Black teachers have continued to see discussing race and racism with their students as one of their primary responsibilities (Duncan, 2022). Just as Black teachers have for centuries, Black teachers in the new millennium have found ways to discuss race and racism with Black students, despite the way anti-Blackness manifested in educational contexts. Next, we discuss why Black teachers will continue this practice in an anti-truth context that legally limits the teaching of Black histories coupled with book bans specifically geared toward Black authors.

Navigating Anti-Blackness across Time

Throughout their time on this continent, Black teachers have continuously worked to prepare Black students to navigate an anti-Black society. And because anti-Blackness is endemic to this nation (Dumas & ross, 2016), Black teachers have never done this in a climate that was favorable to Black children or Black education. Essentially, Black teachers have never taught void of an anti-Black context, and therefore, they have always seen preparing students to understand and navigate anti-Blackness as a necessity for Black children to survive and thrive. Just as Black folks have used fugitivity in numerous aspects of their lives in our time on this content, Black teachers have engaged fugitive pedagogies to continue their work, no matter how the anti-Blackness of the time appeared.

While the manifestations of anti-Blackness have changed over centuries, from chattel slavery to Jim Crow and beyond, the fact that anti-Black racism is woven into the fabric of this nation and its educational systems has not. Black teachers of each historical era have understood this and therefore have seen discussing race and racism with Black students as and their responsibility (Duncan, 2022) or their calling (Milner, 2014). Black teachers feel this responsibility to their students, because they see themselves in their students. This goes beyond notions of fictive kin or whitewashed notions of community, as Black teachers have historically embodied the African spiritual notion of Ubuntu, which literally translated means "I am because you are" (Battle, 2009, p. 3). At the core of Ubuntu is the notion of interdependence, as Black teachers know their students depend on them, and they simultaneously depend on their students. Throughout the history of the United States, Black teachers have seen their fates and the fates of their students as intertwined, so they refuse to let anti-Black legislation deter them from doing the work they deem necessary. Essentially, Black teachers understand that helping Black students understand how to navigate and resist anti-Black racism is a requirement for advancing an entire race of people, so they engage in this work because the future of Black Americans depends on it.

Looking Forward

The title of this article comes from a gospel song titled "I Don't Feel No Ways Tired," originally recorded by James Cleveland (1978). The lyrics of the chorus state:

I don't feel no ways tired

I've come too far from where I started from.

Nobody told me the road would be easy,

I don't believe He brought me here to leave me.

This song is emblematic of why Black teachers continue to engage in this work, despite the ever-changing landscape of anti-Black racism. While some racial progress has undoubtedly been made, the journey continues. Black teachers know this work is challenging, but they did not come this far to only come this far. Just as Dumas and ross (2016) call for BlackCrit to *carry it on*, we argue that Black teachers have carried it on for centuries.

Essentially, Black teachers have never taught void of an anti-Black context, and therefore, they have always seen preparing students to understand and navigate anti-Blackness as a necessity for Black children to survive and thrive. No matter what the anti-Black context looked like or what legislation upheld it, Black teachers have ceaselessly worked to make sure their students understood how to move about an anti-Black society in ways that would allow them to not only survive, but to flourish. They have continued this work, despite the possible consequences. For this reason, we contend that Black teachers will continue to carry it on, despite state legislation that outlaws discussing concepts and ideas like racism that could make white students uncomfortable and laws that ban books about race by Black authors. Just as the teachers of enslaved students taught in clandestine schools in the dark of night and Black teachers in newly desegregated schools pulled individual students aside to have critical conversations about anti-Blackness, Black teachers will continue to engage in this work, because they see it as *their* work.

Therefore, we offer three recommendations for educational stakeholders to immediately consider and reflect upon. First, we call on state legislatures and local school boards to overturn legislation and other policies that ban the discussion of race and racism in classrooms. As we have noted, such policies are rooted in anti-Blackness and limit all students' opportunities to learn about the role race has played in the nation's history and the role it continues to play contemporarily. Second, we call on district and school building administrators to support Black teachers and to trust that Black teachers will enact pedagogies that engage all students in content that promotes critical thinking and preparation for civic life. Finally, we call on teacher educators to see the importance of this work and help preservice and in-service teachers see it as well. When teacher educators value this work, they design teacher education programs that develop teachers who see the value in all students. This means that teacher education programs would provide space for preservice and in-service teachers to interrogate the role race has played in both educational policy and educational outcomes, in addition to learning to engage in culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Teacher educators who value the fugitive pedagogies of Black teachers also help preservice and in-service teachers figure out how to engage in this work while navigating an anti-Black teaching and political context. Black teachers, however, will not wait for other educational stakeholders to do what is best for Black students. In the meantime, they will continue doing *their* work.

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