Critical Education

"The Poetry of the Future"
Black Anarchism, Abolition, and an Imagined Future for Critical Black Education

Rachel McMillian et Reginald BoClair

Citer cet article

McMillian, R. & BoClair, R. (2025). "The Poetry of the Future": Black Anarchism, Abolition, and an Imagined Future for Critical Black Education. *Critical Education*, *16*(2), 227–246. https://doi.org/10.14288/ce.v16i2.186985

Résumé de l'article

Discussions of Black anarchism are rarely, if ever, found in the fields of educational theory and research. Characterizations of Black anarchism often paint it as a philosophy and praxis to be feared—as a movement that promotes violence and chaos. Yet, as the authors of this piece argue, Black anarchism is exactly the opposite: promoting a vision of a world that is free from the control of the State, absent of white supremacy and capitalism, and anchored in radical community care. Therefore, drawing from the rich lineage of Black anarchist thought, the imprisoned Black radical tradition, and abolition; the authors present an invitation for educators to utilize Black anarchism as a lens for curriculum, pedagogy, and praxis. This conceptual piece aims to not only demystify the concept of Black anarchy within the field of education, but points to the radical promises inherent within Black anarchy during the most recent, intense attacks on critical Black education within the United States.

"The Poetry of the Future"

Black Anarchism, Abolition, and an Imagined Future for Critical Black Education

Rachel McMillian

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Reginald BoClair

Northeastern Illinois University

Abstract

Discussions of Black anarchism are rarely, if ever, found in the fields of educational theory and research. Characterizations of Black anarchism often paint it as a philosophy and praxis to be feared—as a movement that promotes violence and chaos. Yet, as the authors of this piece argue, Black anarchism is exactly the opposite: promoting a vision of a world that is free from the control of the State, absent of white supremacy and capitalism, and anchored in radical community care. Therefore, drawing from the rich lineage of Black anarchist thought, the imprisoned Black radical tradition, and abolition; the authors present an invitation for educators to utilize Black anarchism as a lens for curriculum, pedagogy, and praxis. This conceptual piece aims to not only demystify the concept of Black anarchy within the field of education, but points to the radical promises inherent within Black anarchy during the most recent, intense attacks on critical Black education within the United States.

Introduction

At the time of this writing, Black educators from early childhood to the university level are facing increasing attacks from white supremacists; millions of people continue to be incarcerated in violent, inhumane prisons throughout the United States; and more than 46,000 Palestinians[1] have been identified as killed since October 7, 2023—in a genocide that is funded by U.S. interests. There is both trepidation and anger in response to the U.S. presidential election, families across the globe are experiencing forced migration, and we are *still* dying. Although this might be viewed as a dismal introduction, we believe that it is necessary to place ourselves in this moment to not only recognize and grieve the immense loss of life that we are currently experiencing, but to also ask ourselves: what are we willing to do to achieve liberation? Will we begin to choose freedom, or will we continue negotiating with oppression? When will we, as educators, become as "unrelenting as the resolve of the deadly oppressive forces [that] we're up against" (Anderson, 2021, p. 5)?

While education scholars have long applied critical pedagogy as a lens for analysis of hierarchical power, race, and class in classrooms (Anyon 2005; Apple, 2000; Freire, 1993; Giroux, 1988; Giroux, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; McLaren, 2006), there has been little room created for educators and students to critically ask such questions. Yes, there have been significant gains from critical pedagogy including the application of critical race theory as an analytic in educational research (Ladson-Billings, 1998) and the introduction of abolition as pedagogy and curriculum (Love, 2019; Rodríguez, 2010), but most educational research continues to be "confined to 'liberal' and 'conservative' ideological debates" (Haworth, 2012, p. 3). As such, our search for a space to ask these questions (and many others) has led us to Black anarchism—the inspiration for this work.

To start, we find it necessary to define classical (white American/Eurocentric) anarchism so that we might more clearly delineate Black anarchism and its ideological underpinnings. Anarchism, in the simplest of terms, means the organization of society without a ruler. But, for the purposes of this article, the term is best defined for us by anarchist Emma Goldman (1911), who states:

> Anarchism […] really stands for the liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion; the liberation of the human body from the dominion of property; liberation from the shackles and restraint of government. Anarchism stands for a social order based on the free grouping of individuals for the purpose of producing real social wealth; an order that will guarantee to every human being free access to the earth and full enjoyment of the necessities of life, according to individual desires, tastes, and inclinations. (p. 16)

Anarchism, in this sense, signifies the organization of a society and community that stands in direct opposition to political, social, and economical hierarchies—hierarchies that always result in various forms of oppression.

While several scholars have introduced anarchist thought and criticism to critical education spaces (DeLeon, 2008; Haworth, 2012; Spoto, 2015; Suissa, 2010), anarchist thought continues to be glaringly "absent from texts on the philosophy and history of educational ideas—even amongst

---

[1] This number, provided by the Palestinian Health Ministry, is modest by most counts and continues to rise daily.

those authors who discuss 'radical' or 'progressive' education" (Suissa, 2010, p. 1). Examples of anarchist schools and educational spaces, while they are few, have "emphasized the free-flowing nature of learning, and abhorred intellectual regimentation, viewing this as the death nell of independent thought" (Mueller in Haworth, 2012, p. 26). Yet, there continues to be a deep misunderstanding by the general public of anarchy as "[an ideology of] chaos, a reign of rape, murder and total disorder" (Ervin, 2021, p. 33). Howard Zinn (1971) describes this misunderstanding as a fear of anarchy, stating:

> The word anarchy unsettles most people in the Western world; it suggests disorder, violence, uncertainty. We have good reason for fearing those conditions, because we have been living with them for a long time, not in anarchist societies (there have never been any) but in exactly those societies most fearful of anarchy—the powerful nation-states of modern times. (p. ix)

This fear of anarchy thereby translates into its explained absence from educational spaces and literature. And this is even more true for Black anarchism—a political philosophy and praxis that developed autonomously from classical anarchist thought.

Black anarchism, while having commonalities with classical anarchism, is "rooted in Black struggle, Black history, and Black radical movements" (Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022, p. 21). It should never be viewed as an attempt to diversify classical anarchism but is instead deeply rooted in the Black Radical Tradition, recognizing the specificity of Black people's experiences and conditions (Anderson, 2021). Black anarchism, as we explain further in this article, is a movement for Black liberation, self-determination, and autonomy that is anchored in both historical and contemporary struggles against white supremacy and all forms of domination (Anderson, 2021; Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022). So, it does not surprise us—especially in this current political moment—that even the most thorough scan of educational literature reveals that there is little to no mention of Black anarchism related to curriculum and pedagogy. We find this absence to be extremely problematic not only because it ignores so many critical voices in the field of education, but because Black anarchism offers imaginations and action steps to abolish the old world and shape a liberated future that is free from all forms of domination and oppression. Through that understanding, we approach this work through two guiding questions:

- What can critical Black educators learn from Black anarchist thought?

- In what ways could Black anarchism transform curriculum, pedagogy, and praxis?

These are not research questions, per se, but questions that reflect our own wonderings as we recognize the state of the world in which we live and continue to fight for a more liberated future.

That said, we begin this article by discussing our positionalities—our different lived experiences and the points at which we began to think critically about Black anarchism. We then present the grounding of our conceptualization by discussing the Incarcerated Black Radical Tradition and abolition as praxis and pedagogy. Following this, we discuss the origins and meanings of Black anarchism; explaining why we believe it is necessary to consider Black anarchism within the field of education during these critical times. Lastly, we offer our imaginations and conceptualizations of Black anarchism as curriculum, pedagogy, and praxis in the section titled "The Poetry of the Future." Within this section we also offer recommendations and strategies for Black educators as we all navigate increasingly hostile educational environments.

Within this work, we do not aim to offer definitive or absolute truths, nor do we push educators to pledge allegiance to any political ideology. That is never our goal, and it is certainly not the goal of Black anarchism. For we operate in the understanding that while "Black anarchism holds a special place in [our] analysis, it does not hold [us] in place" (Anderson, 2021, p. 3). Or, in other words, while there are some ideas within Black anarchism that we do not agree with, it does not hinder us. Black Anarchism is an analytical tool, "an open and incomplete word" (Hartman in Anderson, 2021, p. xv), that provides a possible path towards liberation not bound in old frameworks. Therefore, our desire is that through this work, Black educators can begin to see the potentialities of incorporating Black anarchism into classrooms. We desire that Black educators might fully recognize "the centrality of [those incarcerated] in generating the strategies, tactics, analyses, and sacrifices" (Critical Resistance, 2021, para. 8) in the fight against white supremacy and oppression. And we desire for Black educators–*all* educators–to collectively work towards completely abolishing the State[2] with all its violent permutations, creating "a society where safety and abundance rule over us, not violence" (Anderson, 2021, p. 185).

Positionalities

Rachel McMillian. I arrived at Black anarchism out of rage—rage against the continued genocidal nature of the United States; rage against the system of mass incarceration that affects so many of my loved ones; and rage against methods of "liberation" that continue to be tied to the death-dealing State. These feelings were intensified during the most recent legislative initiatives targeting Black education and Black educators in the United States as well as the continued U.S. sanctioned genocide of the Palestinian people.

Politically, I have never fallen to the left nor to the right; finding little to no virtue in either the Democratic or Republican parties. Yet still—as a former high school social studies teacher—I always avoided topic of anarchy within my classroom, viewing it as a taboo, highly politicized topic that contradicted many of my personal values against violence. It wasn't until the Summer of 2020—following the extrajudicial murder of George Floyd—that I began to seriously pay attention to anarchy. But to be clear, all of my understandings of anarchy continued to be derived from popular culture and media, leading me to further cement my understanding of anarchy as an ideology that was synonymous with chaos and violence. In all honesty, I really had little to no knowledge of what anarchism and, more explicitly, what Black anarchism really was.

Recently, while at a dinner with colleagues, I was invited to read *The Nation on No Map: Black Anarchism and Abolition* (Anderson, 2021). Although I have an unfortunate habit of collecting books and not reading them, I was so intrigued by the cover photo of Black children scaling a tall wire fence that I immediately opened it and began to read. And I soon found that, while I would have never labeled myself as a Black anarchist, each word in the text confirmed that which was already within me—feelings of non-citizenship as a Black American woman, a longing for Black autonomy, and a desire to abolish the prison industrial complex.

---

[2] Our definition of "State" is derived from William C. Anderson's (2021) essay, "A Note on the 'Failed' State." Anderson argues that the State is "an apparatus that was structured with our domination and deaths as an intended result" (para. 4). Thus, we understand the State as a weapon that maintains its' power through horrific and sustained violence against oppressed peoples. We capitalize the term throughout this article as a recognition of the violent power that the State holds and a deep understanding that, because of the power that it holds, the State cannot be reformed—it must be abolished.

As someone who is directly and deeply impacted by the incarceration of loved ones, studying the work of Black anarchism has helped me to process everything that Black people are currently facing in the United States, including the issues of mass imprisonment, disposability, erasure, and premature death. It has helped me to more clearly understand the current attacks on Black education as being part of a long historical attack against Black autonomy. But also, the study of Black anarchism has pointed me to infinitely more radical paths toward Black self-determination and liberation that I had never before considered within the confines of educational research. So, while I arrived here from a place of rage, I now find joy in the possibilities for radical transformation that Black anarchism offers for classrooms, communities, and the world in which we live.

Reginald BoClair. My introduction to the idea of Black anarchism was unexpected. I was given the titled work *Black Anarchism and the Black Radical: Moving Beyond Racial Capitalism* (Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022) being told that "it is something that you would be interested in knowing." My initial thoughts after receiving the book were that Black anarchism was probably Black people engaged in what I perceived as a "white form of protest"—violence and chaos. This was simply because I did not know what anarchism meant and I made assumptions. Nevertheless, I soon learned that I was wrong. I discovered that "anarchy" means without ruler or hierarchy. I began to understand that Black anarchism is a political movement and ideology that developed in the streets and in the prisons in response to anti-Blackness—in response to Black people being excluded from the social contract. And my exposure to Black anarchism soon caused me to internally reflect upon my life; realizing that, unbeknownst to me, my entire life has been one lived in Black anarchy. From my marginalized childhood growing up on the South Side of Chicago to having spent the last thirty-four years in a 12x9 cell, I've embodied a life of resistance and anti-authoritarianism. I've resisted against that which renders me as a commodity, "enslaveable," and marked for death. And since my initial encounter, Black anarchism continues to inform my life; reminding me that the path that I travel is not new.[3]

The Incarcerated Black Radical Tradition and Abolitionist Pedagogy and Praxis

Prior to introducing our conceptualization of Black anarchism as curriculum, pedagogy, and praxis we find it necessary to discuss our theoretical grounding. Even from our vastly different places in the world, the Incarcerated Black Radical Tradition and abolition are foundational in our ways of making sense of the world; centering our collective lived experiences and offering us what is most nourishing in this moment and beyond.

The Incarcerated Black Radical Tradition

Our conceptualization of Black anarchism within the field of education is first and foremost grounded in the Incarcerated (Imprisoned) Black Radical Tradition. We do this in the understanding that "when academics dominate abolitionist print culture, it becomes possible to forget the alchemical lineage of radical street and prison movements" (James, para. 10, 2023). Therefore, it is through this lens that we aim center the work of people who have experienced

---

[3] We recognize the preciousness of communication between us and, as such, we cannot—at the moment—share where or how we met. There is always a very real and dangerous risk of retaliation within prisons.

incarceration. In fact, we fully understand that we would not have any true conceptualization of abolition or Black anarchism if it weren't for the embodied knowledges of the incarcerated. So, we write this in efforts to honor and privilege those knowledges—centering the texts, voices, and imaginations of those who have experienced incarceration.

The Incarcerated Black Radical Tradition is created from American enslavement and "spans the centuries from the first kidnapping/purchase of Black Africans to the present moment of mass protests" (James, 2023, para. 8). Its theoretically rich legacy includes centuries of first-hand narratives of chattel slavery, abolitionist speeches, prison letters, and even zines that are not tethered to academia (Bryan et al., 2022; James, 2023; McMillian & Bryan, 2023). As Joy James (2023) asserts, "[These] narratives are not pretty or reassuring. They are powerful, disturbing, and disquieting. Neither pessimistic nor optimistic, their realism dominates. The Incarcerated Black Radical Tradition's past manifests in the present" (para. 16).

While most critical prison studies scholarship originates from those who have never experienced incarceration, we understand that "those impacted by prison are a socially constructed minority group" (Sanchez, 2019, p. 1654) and that their narratives are fundamental in understanding the anti-Black foundations of the United States. Therefore, the Incarcerated Black Radical Tradition causes us to look to the texts and epistemologies that are produced by those who are incarcerated. More importantly, however, the Incarcerated Black Radical Tradition requires educators and researchers to not only read the literature that arises from carceral sites, but to constantly engage in painstaking dialogue with those who have experienced incarceration (Bryan et al., 2022; McMillian & Bryan, 2023).

The goal of the incarcerated Black radical is always, *always* liberation and, as Stephen Wilson (2020)—an incarcerated intellectual—states, "No one has more intimate knowledge of policing and imprisonment than those who live at the most concentrated point of the prison-industrial complex. But that knowledge often goes unheard, a detriment to the cause of Black liberation" (Wilson, 2020, para. 6). We know, however, that the insight of those who have experienced incarceration, as James (2023) argues, is key to understanding the United States' symbiotic relationship with policing and imprisonment as the continuation of chattel slavery. Such insights point to the anti-Black/death-dealing nature of prisons, but also to the radical agency of the incarcerated and the urgent necessity of abolition—the need to imagine and then create a world without prisons.

Abolition as Pedagogy and Praxis

The term "abolitionist" has become an increasingly popular identity in recent years, yet academic discourse on abolition has become watered down and defanged; shifting further and further away from the site of origination—from those who are incarcerated. As Stephen Wilson argues, "We [the incarcerated] are not part of the conversations. We are afterthoughts" (in James, 2023, para. 12). The spirit of this statement undergirds our conceptualization of Black anarchism as curriculum, pedagogy, and praxis as we urge educators to both imagine and work alongside those who have experienced incarceration in a path towards Black liberation.

As both abolitionists and educators, we fundamentally understand schools and prisons to be inseparable sites of anti-Black violence. For, schools have historically and contemporarily failed Black children through dehumanizing disciplinary practices, curricular violence, and what is commonly known as the school-to-prison pipeline or the school-prison nexus (Meiners & Winn,

2010; Stovall, 2018)—in which Black children are seen as disposable. So, abolitionist teaching—with its roots in the project of prison abolition—"seek[s] to end the conditions that sustain and support white supremacy through an endemic system of training rooted in dehumanization and white supremacy" (Stovall, 2018, p. 57). It calls for centering the humanity of all children and a pursuit of educational freedom (Love, 2019). Abolitionist teaching is also, given its terminology, located within the long political genealogy of the Black freedom struggle which "positioned the abolition of 'slavery' as the condition of possibility for Black—hence 'human'— freedom (Rodriguez, 2010, p. 15).

While there are some who understand abolition as simply a project of tearing down prisons, Bettina Love (2019) tells us that "[abolition] is as much about tearing down old structures and ways of thinking as it is about forming new ideas, new forms or social interactions, new ways to be inclusive… and new ways to establish an educational system that works for everyone, especially those who are put at the edges of the classroom and society" (p. 88). And, as Dylan Rodriguez (2019) argues,

> Abolition is and was a practice, an analytical method, a present-tense visioning, an infrastructure in the making, a creative project, a performance, a counterwar, an ideological struggle, a pedagogy and curriculum, an alleged impossibility that is furtively present, pulsing, produced in the persistent insurgencies of human being that undermine the totalizing logics of empire, chattel, occupation, heteropatriarchy, racial-colonial genocide, and Civilization as a juridical-narrative epoch. (p. 1578)

Thus, abolition helps us to realize the ways in which Black people continue to engage in the cultural traditions of hope, dreaming, resistance, reimaginings, and renewal (Meiners and Winn, 2014); helping us to construct alternative forms of reality and stand in direct opposition to anti-Blackness.

The Urgency: Why Black Anarchism in Education?

In developing this work, we have had countless phone conversations and written many letters to each other so that we might begin to conceptualize Black anarchism within the field of education. As someone living in the "free world" and as someone who is incarcerated, our vantage points and positionalities are vastly different. However, we both cannot help but recognize the urgency of the moment in which we live—the urgency to not accept what is happening around us, to fight for liberation, and to cause systems and institutions to "feel the fire of our collective rage" (Anderson, 2021, p. 1). As we consider all of this, we point to the Summer of 2020, as not only increasing this urgency within us, but also creating a point for us to even consider Black anarchism as curriculum, pedagogy, and praxis.

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was murdered by the Minneapolis Police Department. His murder—and the subsequent murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Rayshard Brooks—sparked international uprisings against the continuous murder of Black people by the hands of the State. Characterizations of the uprisings of 2020 included words such as "riots," "antifa", a "racial reckoning," and even "anarchy" (Kaplan & Glueck, 2020). Former President Donald Trump tweeted during the uprisings, "Anarchists, we see you!" (Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022; Ries, 2020). Even then-presidential candidate Joe Biden stated, "Peaceful protesters should be protected, and arsonists and anarchists should be prosecuted, and local law enforcement can do

that" (Kaplan & Glueck, 2020, para. 26). While this moment in history has, in many ways, been mischaracterized, we cannot deny the impact that the year 2020 had on education.

During these uprisings there were increased calls—primarily led by youth—to incorporate more Black history and Black studies courses in K-12 schools. At the same time, however, the presidency of Donald Trump incited calls to "ban critical race theory" in K-12 schools. The moments coinciding with one another point to a clear attack on the teaching of Black history and Black studies. To date, 44 states and counting have introduced bills that would restrict the teaching of critical race theory (CRT) and 18 states have passed such legislation. This legislation limits and places restrictions on the teaching of "divisive topics" such as race, gender, and sexuality.

Henry et al. (2023) term these attacks on CRT as "white epistemological capture"— "a tactic used to foreclose emancipatory thought and solidify violent white ways of knowing and being" (p. 34). White epistemological capture is both supported and strengthened by structural racism; serving to demonize any knowledge that is deemed "Other" or "subversive knowledge" (Henry et al., 2023). By historicizing the current attacks on CRT as white epistemological capture, Henry et al. (2023) illustrate the insidious, malignant nature of white supremacy and the ways that it controls curriculum narratives by attacking Black ontologies and epistemologies. With that said, the Summer of 2020—and the subsequent effects on Black education—have led us to ask many questions, yet the one most impressed upon us is: *what are we willing to do to achieve liberation?* Noting the unrelenting nature of the white supremacist State has caused us to seek our guidance from the margins of the margins: Black anarchism.

So, Just What is Black Anarchism?

As discussed, Black anarchism is a widely misunderstood and mischaracterized term and political ideology. Mischaracterizations of Black anarchism often paint it as a philosophy and praxis to be feared—as a movement that promotes violence and chaos. Yet, as we argue, Black anarchism is exactly the opposite: promoting a vision of a world that is free from the control of the State, absent of white supremacy and capitalism, and anchored in radical community care.

From the moment that Black people were captured and forcibly transported from the shores of Africa, there was resistance—there was anarchy. That said, the meanings and definitions for Black anarchism are simple, yet deeply contoured and vast, "shaped by the long struggle for Black liberation, by the centuries-long resistance to racial slavery, settler colonialism, capitalism, state violence, genocide, and anti-Blackness" (Hartman in Anderson, 2021, p. xiii). And with that understanding, we believe that Saidiya Hartman's (in Anderson, 2021) articulation of Black anarchism deserves to be stated here in full:

> [Black] anarchism is the inheritance of the dispossessed, the legacy of slaves and fugitives, toilers and recalcitrant domestics, secret orders, and fraternal organizations. It is the history that arrives with us—as those who exist outside the nation, as the stateless, as the dead, as property, as objects and tools, as sentient flesh. In meeting the heinous violence of the colony and the plantation, we have resisted, we have battled, we have fought to defeat our oppressors, we have struggled to live and to survive. In this protracted war, we have created networks of mutual aid, maroon communities, survival programs, and circles of care. We are Black in anarchy because of how we have lived and how we have died. We are Black in anarchy. (p. xvii)

This statement guides us because, through this, we are able to see that Black people have been engaged in anarchism—even without terming it as such—since arriving on these shores (Anderson, 2021).

The Origins of Black Anarchism

Again, Black anarchism did not originate within classical or white American/Eurocentric anarchism, but instead developed autonomously; reflecting the lineage of Black Marxist-inspired movements for liberation (Anderson, 2021; Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022; Williams, 2015). In fact, while there are some similarities and shared ideas between white American anarchism and Black anarchism, the effects of white American anarchism on Black anarchists are largely negative (Anderson, 2021; Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022). Consequently, Black anarchism is distinctly separate from white American anarchism or, as Williams (2015) pointedly describes it, "Black anarchism is 'black' in a similar way that Black feminism is—it places an emphasis upon Blackness in the anarchist milieu, or a 'pole' from which to critique [whiteness] in that milieu" (p. 691). As noted in many Black anarchist writings, white American/Eurocentric anarchism provides a critique of hierarchy and the oppressions of the capitalist State yet fails to recognize the importance of the Black radical tradition, structural racism, and racial capitalism. In fact, white American/Eurocentric anarchism does not even have the capacity or capability to "deal adequately with the materialities of racism and revolutionary politics" (Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022, p. 9). And while more contemporary forms of white American anarchism make attempts to address issues of racism, there is still not an adequate analysis of racialized capitalism or the effects of anti-Blackness.

Writings on the origins of Black anarchism differ in some degree as some scholars point as far back to Lucy Parsons, a Black radical anarchist organizer in Chicago during the late 19th century (Anderson, 2021; Black Rose Anarchist Federation, 2016). Parsons (1886), however, simply claimed "I am an anarchist" and did not offer an analysis of white supremacy or racial capitalism throughout her activism. Most scholars and Black anarchists though, point to the prison as a birthing place of Black anarchism following the imprisonment of Black radicals during the 1960's and 1970's (Alston, 2003; Balagoon, 2001; Ervin, 2021; Williams, 2015). For example, utilizing the theoretical frameworks of radical factionalism and critical race theory, Williams (2015) discusses the origins of Black anarchism as a fractioning or fragmentation of the Black Panther Party in "Black Panther Radical Factionalization and the Development of Black Anarchism." In this work, Williams (2015) provides a detailed history of the Black Power movement of the 1960's and 1970's, particularly focusing on the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army.

The Black Power movement, along with the Civil Rights movement, both relied heavily on centralized organizational structures and charismatic political leaders (Ervin, 2021; Gershon, 2020). As such, during the late 1960's, the Black Panther Party began to fracture due to increasing violence from the police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation as well as internal discord among leaders. Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin (in Black Rose Anarchist Federation, 2017)—a former Black Panther Party member who became a Black anarchist—states,

> [the Black Panther Party] partially failed because of the authoritarian leadership style of Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale and others on the Central Committee… There was not a lot of inner-party democracy, and when contradictions came up, it was the leaders who decided on their resolution, not the members… I do

not want to imply [though] that the internal errors were the primary contradictions that destroyed the BPP. The police attacks on it did that, but, if it were better and more democratically organized, it may have weathered the storm. (para. 1)

Describing Black anarchism as "a third-order variation of Black American movements for social change" (Williams, 2015, p. 679) following the Black Panther Party, Williams further discusses how imprisonment caused some Black radicals to critique the Black Panther Party as being a patriarchal, liberal, reformist organization.

During their incarceration, Black anarchists—including Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, Ashanti Alston, and Kuwasi Balagoon—developed an anti-authoritarian analysis of the Black Panther Party; noting that the Black Panther Party was "very hierarchical" (Alston, 2003, para. 1). Alston (2003) describes his introduction to anarchism and his subsequent analysis of the Black Panther Party as follows:

I learned about anarchism from letters and literature sent to me while in various prisons around the country. At first, I didn't want to read any of the material I received—it seemed like anarchism was just about chaos and everybody doing their own thing—and for the longest time I just ignored it. But there were times—when I was in segregation—that I didn't have anything else to read and, out of boredom, finally dug in (despite everything I had heard about anarchism up to the time). I was actually quite surprised to find analyses of peoples' struggles, peoples' cultures, and peoples' organizational formations—that made a lot of sense to me.

These analyses helped me see important things about my experience in the Panthers that had not been clear to me before. For example, I realized that there was a problem with my love for people like Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seal, and Eldridge Cleaver and the fact that I had put them on a pedestal. After all, what does it say about you, if you allow someone to set themselves up as your leader and make all your decisions for you? What anarchism helped me see was that you, as an individual, should be respected and that no one is important enough to do your thinking for you. Even if we thought of Huey P. Newton or Eldridge Cleaver as the baddest revolutionaries in the world, I should see myself as the baddest revolutionary, just like them. Even if I am young, I have a brain. I can think. I can make decisions. (paras. 2-3)

Balagoon (2019) shared a similar analysis from his experiences with authoritarian chapters of the Black Panther Party; initially finding the ten-point program and community-based initiatives of the Black Panther Party to be "a good thing." After his incarceration for his involvement with the Black underground, however, Balagoon noted that:

[The Black Panther Party] turned away from its purposes of liberation of the [B]lack colony to fundraising. At that point, the leadership was imported rather than developed locally and the situation deteriorated quickly and sharply…The leaders began to live high off the hog while the rank and file sold papers, were filtered out leaving behind so many robots who wouldn't challenge policy… (pp. 75-76)

This disillusionment of the Black Panther Party, and any organization that was hierarchical with centralized leadership, reflects a key theme that runs throughout Black anarchist thought—the rejection of authoritarian structures and vanguardism even within Black organizations. This should be understood as a foundation for Black anarchism (Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022) and what Ervin (2003) frames as *Black autonomy*.

Contemporary Black Anarchism

> Our struggles are not just against capitalism. Too simple. Our struggles are not just against racism. That's also too simple. There are all kinds of negative "isms" we are fighting against and, just as important, all kinds of worlds we are fighting for. (Alston, 2002, para. 9)

More modern-day Black anarchism is informed by several revolutionary and radical frameworks including, but not limited to: Black Marxism, Black Nationalism, Queer politics, Black Feminism, Pan-Africanism, Abolition, and the Black Radical Tradition (Afrofuturist Abolitionists of the Americas, 2019; Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022). Recognizing that it is not enough to "simply center Blackness in our understanding of resistance to subjugation" (Samudzi and Anderson, 2018, p. 68), these frameworks enable Black anarchism to fight against "all kinds of negative 'isms'" (Alston, 2002) or, as Ervin (2021) describes:

> [Black] Anarchism means that we will have more democracy, social equality, and economic prosperity. I oppose all forms of oppression found in modern society: patriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, state communism, religious dictates, gay discrimination, etc. (p. 98)

Additionally, scholars such as Zoé Samudzi and William C. Anderson (2018) extend previous scholarship and articulate Black anarchism through a Black Feminist lens in *As Black as Resistance*, centering their scholarship within Black radical thought and no mention of white American/Eurocentric anarchists. While Samudzi and Anderson do not arrive at Black anarchism from a point of political incarceration that shaped the experiences of such figures as Martin Sostre, Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, Kuwasi Balagoon, or Ashanti Alston; their analysis is closely aligned with the movement for prison abolition.

Lastly, the uprisings after the murder of George Floyd mark an essential chapter in Black anarchist history in that it is the "most important contemporary example of Black resistance to racial capitalism" (Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022, pp. 1-2). This is important to note because the uprisings of 2020 not only led to the aforementioned "white epistemological capture" (Henry et al., 2023), but a critical resurgence of Black anarchist politics as well (Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022). Through zines, organizing networks, fugitive meetings, and podcasts such as the *Black Autonomy Podcast*, the movement for Black liberation has been kept alive "long after the flames of 2020" (Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022, p. 2).

The Benefits of Black Anarchism for Black Educators

While there are many differing voices within Black anarchism and even different waves of thought throughout its lineage (Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022), for the purposes of this initial work we focus on the following themes as being beneficial for both Black educators and students in this critical moment:

1. A focus on Black self-determination and autonomy.

2. A critical analysis of the world that is anchored in the revolutionary prison organizing tradition and abolition.

3. Mutual aid that is deeply rooted in Black struggle, Black history, and Black radical movements.

We utilize these three themes as a launching point for our imaginations of Black anarchism as curriculum, pedagogy, and praxis. For we believe that Black anarchism (along with the incarcerated Black radical tradition and abolition) offers Black educators a blueprint of possibilities, portraying a world of co-existence and healing—a world devoid of oppression and exploitation.

The Poetry of the Future

> [We need] to seek our poetry from the future rather than the past. Anarchism is one form of this poetry of the future. (Hartman in Anderson, 2021, p.xv)

Black anarchism insists on always finding new and creative ways of looking at things, feeling, and organizing (Alston, 2004). Black anarchism is, as Sadiya Hartman (in Anderson, 2021) states, "[a way] to perceive possibilities not yet recognizable, it hints at what might be, at modes of living and relation that are unthinkable in the old frameworks" (p. xvi). And, as Ashanti Alston (2004) in *Anarchist Panther* states:

> I think of being Black not so much as an ethnic category but as an oppositional force or touchstone for looking at situations differently. Black culture has always been oppositional and is all about finding ways to creatively resist oppression here, in the most racist country in the world. So, when I speak of a Black anarchism, it is not so tied to the color of my skin but who I am as a person, as someone who can resist, who can see differently when I am stuck, and thus live differently (pp. 7-8).

Through that understanding, we offer the following as our initial imaginations of Black anarchism as curriculum, pedagogy, and praxis. We present these imaginations not as a plea or as a mandate, but as an invitation for educators to think differently and see the possibilities of Black anarchism in these times—an invitation to be oppositional and creatively resist oppression. We recognize though that this initial conceptualization is incomplete—as most new frameworks in education are (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Therefore, we urge educators to continue to build upon this work and join with us in struggle; recognizing that Black anarchism only happens in community and that anarchy cannot fight alone (Balagoon, 2001).

A Curriculum of Statelessness

Blackness is the anti-state, just as the state is anti-Black (Anderson & Samudzi, 2018, p. 112).

On the evening of November 10, 1963, Malcolm X stood before a large crowd at the *Northern Negro Grassroots Leadership Conference* in Detroit, Michigan. At the time, Malcolm X was still the leading spokesperson for the Nation of Islam and the second most influential Black Muslim behind Elijah Muhammad. Therefore, his speech at the conference—*Message to the Grassroots*—is seen by many as a seminal statement on Black Power during the rise of Black

Nationalism. *Message to the Grassroots* is at once a scathing and inspiring speech; outlining Malcolm's critique of whiteness, the Civil Rights Movement, and—while not expressly emphasized—the American prison State. It is within this speech that Malcolm X, uncompromisingly, paints a clear picture of the ontological positioning of Black people in America, stating, "We are all Black people, so-called Negroes, second-class citizens, ex-slaves. You are nothing but a ex-slave. You don't like to be told that. But what else are you? You are ex-slaves" (in X & Breitman, 1990, p. 4). Furthermore, Malcolm X tells the audience, "You're still in prison. That's what America means: prison (in X & Breitman, 1990, p. 8).

For we who are racialized as Black, these statements are no stretch for the imagination. In fact, these statements may serve as confirmation; helping to elucidate exactly "what it means to be marked as Black in an anti-Black world" (ross, 2020). While this is a speech that definitively reflects Black Nationalism and the revolutionary movements of the 1960's, it is an important listen even today. Because it is not only from within the context of this speech that we hear the narration of a global history of oppression; but through which we also see how slavery and criminality are encoded onto Blackness (James, 2005). Furthermore, the contents of this speech clearly indicate how Black people are positioned outside of the social contract.

Black anarchism teaches us this. It reminds us that Black people "are *residents in* but not *citizens of* the United States" (Anderson, 2021, p. 5) and that regardless of any sort of "liberal progress," we have a continued violent relationship with the State. Saidiya Hartman (in Anderson, 2021) displays this in the following:

> …As Black folks our existence has been relegated outside the state and social contract. For centuries, we have been abandoned by the state and not included within the embrace of person or citizen. We have lived inside the nation as eternal alien, as resource to be extracted, as property, as disposable population. We have been the tool and the implement of the settler and the master; we have existed as the matrix of capitalist accumulation and social reproduction; we have been the "not human" that enabled the ascendency of Man. Our relation to the state has been defined primarily by violence. Our deaths, spectacular and uneventful, have provided the bedrock of the white republic. (p. xiv)

Hartman (in Anderson, 2021) continues by stating that for Black people in America, "any pledge of allegiance is eclipsed by the charge of genocide and massacre, by stolen life and surplus death" (p. xv).

To this point, Anderson (2021) argues that Black Americans experience *statelessness*, in that "Black people in the United States and throughout the world experience the extraordinary brutality of being people with no place on the map" (Anderson, 2021, p. 101). Statelessness, according to Anderson (2021), is much more than a lack of rights that are granted through citizenship; it is existing in the darkness as a shadow. It is forever being relegated to this "afterlife of slavery" (Hartman, 1997) and the "untiring practice of trying to live when you were never meant to survive" (Hartman, 2019, p. 227). This begs the curricular question then, what would it mean to educate within the framework of statelessness? As educators—particularly social studies educators—continue to educate for citizenship, what would it mean to teach *against* citizenship?

Pointing to citizenship as a tool of oppression, Anderson (2021) argues that citizenship is an invention that holds no redeeming qualities for Black people—that American "democracy" is an illusion. Anderson continues by stating that fighting for the ideals of citizenship have "done

much more harm than good. Anything that affords some people more rights than others based on borders, race, or class should be abolished" (p. 21); noting the experiences of those who are undocumented, refugees, and migrants in addition to the experiences felt by Black Americans. Education for citizenship—or civic education, even within communities of Color (Duncan, 2023), does not often allow for such critique or even give space to teach against citizenship.

While statelessness means existing in the shadows, the act of being stateless can be extremely liberating. Anderson (2021) notes this by asking readers the following:

> …why not embrace the darkness we're in, the darkness we are, and organize through it and with it? *Use* the conditions that the state has placed on us to inform our most radical incursions, rather than asking the state to change, when we should know by now that it certainly won't. The state is not for us. (p. 35)

So, what then would it mean for educators to teach for the abolishment of borders, maps, and citizenship? What would it mean for educators to organize through darkness? Where would we even begin?

Looking to the principles of Black self-determination and autonomy, Black anarchism would tell educators that we begin by embracing the concept of becoming "ungovernable" (Ervin, 2021). Becoming ungovernable, according to Ervin (2021) means creating a new political system separate from the State, creating cooperatives that provide housing and material resources for those who need it most; putting power in the hands of the people; and creating a survival economy. Further elaborating, Ervin (2021) states:

> Tell the youth to build movements from the grassroots up. Build resistance movements and build a large enough movement that cannot be controlled by the state so that, as I said before, it's *ungovernable*. And ungovernable means a number of things to people in the movement right now: it means the kind of tactics you engage in in the street, it means how the community is organized that they don't have to depend on these politicians, it means a mass boycott of capitalist corporations, a new transitional economy, and many other things as part of a resistance. (p. 191)

For educators, this means creating a curriculum alongside students that begins to explore citizenship as a "dangerous fiction" (Anderson, 2021). It means freeing oneself from the "strangleholds of the problems that come with reform, citizenship, and patriotism" (Anderson, 2021, p. 6). It means centering a political education to support Black autonomy, yet recognizing that we cannot vote away caging, killing, or any other brutalization that comes through oppression. It means a collective detachment from all "positive identification with the United States" (Anderson, 2021, p. 5) and working in the meantime, in between time to create a society that is ungovernable. Lastly, it means asking along with students, how do we—as a collective—work to abolish the State?

A Pedagogy Rooted in the Revolutionary Prison Struggle

In our conceptualization of Black anarchism as pedagogy, we're reminded of the work of Dylan Rodríguez (2010). Rodríguez (2010) argues that there has been a "disorientation of the teaching act," in that teaching is "no longer separable from the work of policing, juridical discipline, and state-crafted punishment" (p.8). If this is the act of teaching, what does this mean

for those willing to consider Black anarchism as pedagogy? How do we begin to teach in ways that are divorced from policing while honoring the stories of those who have experienced incarceration?

In previous articles, the first author has discussed the importance of centering the voices of those incarcerated into PreK-12 curriculum in order to help develop children's and youth's critical consciousness about the American carceral crisis (Bryan et al., 2022; McMillian & Bryan, 2023; McMillian, 2024). And, noting that Black anarchism is inextricably linked to the revolutionary prison struggle and abolition (Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022; Williams, 2015), we find it important to extend this work and begin to center the voices and perspectives of Black anarchists who have experienced incarceration.

Black anarchism "resides within a culture of oral tradition, letters from jailed and/or exiled revolutionaries, and self-published literature in the form of zines, primarily because many initial Black anarchist intellectuals emerged from prison struggles" (Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022, p. 3). Therefore, it is important for educators to look to other texts besides those that are deemed "academic" as well as engage in dialogue with those who are currently experiencing incarceration through letter writing, visits, or phone calls as we did in the construction of this article (Bryan et al., 2022; McMillian & Bryan, 2023; McMillian, 2024). Additionally, we believe it is important for educators to not only study the pedagogies of Martin Sostre, Kuwasi Balagoon, Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, and Ashanti Alston (among others), but to include their writings in the classroom. We view this as powerful pedagogical move, signaling the anarchist tradition of "deed over theory" (Bagby-Williams & Za Suekama, 2022, p. 24). Their pedagogies, anchored in Black anarchism, can be studied through the letters that they wrote while in solitary confinement, the zines or newspapers that they created —such as *Black Autonomy: A Newspaper of Anarchism and Black Revolution*, or their articulation of their lived experiences with incarceration. And, as such, their pedagogies display the ways in which educators can resist and work to change the world's social order—even in the most confining conditions.

Lastly, although the popularization of abolition has caused it to be somewhat defanged in recent years, we believe that the Black anarchist lens will provide the necessary addition to abolitionist pedagogy. As Mariame Kaba (2019) articulates in the introduction to *As Black as Resistance*:

> As an abolitionist, [Black anarchism] resonates with me. Abolishing the prison industrial complex (PIC) is not just about ending prisons but also about creating an alternative system of governance that is not based on domination, hierarchy, and control. In that respect, abolitionism and anarchism are positive rather than negative projects. They do not signal the absence of prisons or governments but the creation of different forms of sociality, governance, and accountability that are not statist and carceral.

Abolition, as Rodriguez (2010) argues, is "a praxis of liberation that is creative and experimental rather than formulaic and rigidly programmatic" (p. 15). Love (2019) echoes this argument, by stating that abolition is "a way of life, a way of seeing the world, and a way of taking action against injustice" (p. 89). That said, Black anarchism coupled with abolition pushes us to consider increasingly urgent curricular and pedagogical questions such as: How do we teach in ways to collectively create a world without hierarchical/anti-Black/carceral State violence? How do we teach towards abolish the State? And how do we create Black communities and schools that are

autonomous? Such questions are action-oriented; pointing to the need for both educators and students to be creative, imaginative, and speculative in efforts to eliminate all forms of terror that are implemented through carceral State violence including—but not limited to—schools and prisons.

A Praxis of Radical Community Care

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1993) defines praxis as "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed" (p. 51). Denise Taliaferro Baszile (2017) extends this thought by defining a "revolutionary praxis"—a dialectical process through which we are radically imagining better futures, engaging in community building, fighting for liberation from systems of oppression, and working from a place of love and not fear (McMillian & Bryan, 2023). With this understanding of praxis, we believe that Black anarchism necessitates a praxis of radical community care. For, instead of an individualized narrative, Black anarchism aspires to incarnate the collective person—giving rise to radical care, revolutionary love, and mutual aid.

As Ashanti Alston (2004) argues, "there is so much potential for anarchism in the Black community: so much of what we already do is anarchistic and doesn't involve the State, the police, or the politicians. We look out for each other, we care for each other's kids, we go to the store for each other, we find ways to protect our communities" (p. 8). So, as we look towards the future and "perceive possibilities not yet recognizable" (Hartman in Anderson, 2021, p. xvi), it is important that we first recognize that which is already being done in our communities. It is imperative that we, as educators, identify the networks of mutual aid in our communities. Where are resources being shared unconditionally? And how do we expand and build upon these sites of radical community care while fighting for liberation? We believe that these questions point us to "the opportunity to advance a richer vision of freedom than we have ever had before" (Alston, 2004).

Anarkata (2019), a coalition of anarchic Black radicals, notes that these new, richer versions of freedom can be seen within the Black struggle for liberation today; stating that there is a growing concern for the most vulnerable in Black communities, an increase in the exchange of mutual aid, and a renewed kinship with the environment. Anarkata (2019) labels this as a forerunner to "Afro-futures" and their conceptualization of an Afro-future tomorrow is anchored in a praxis of radical community care. We believe that their conceptualization of Afro-futures fully encapsulates the benefits and joys of centering Black anarchism as curriculum, pedagogy and praxis. Therefore, we include their statement here in full:

> We foresee horizontal futures where hierarchy is abolished, and collaboration occurs across people, localities, and networks. We foresee the abolition of prisons and the emergence of communal arbitration to settle disputes. We envision autonomous localities that govern themselves through direct democracy, critique, and consensus. We foresee futures where the people have access to their needs and are not subject to bare survivalism, exploitation, or intracommunal violence. We envision communal and liberatory education for our children. And we envision a Black masses who have the political education and leadership capacity to be autonomous. These futures are not utopias where no problems exist, but they are futures in which our adaptability to new problems are heightened by the strength and health of our communities. It is up to us to build these futures and lay the groundwork for them today. It is the

Black revolutionary work of today that will nurture the possibilities of an Afro-future tomorrow.

Mapping a Path Forward: Toward Black Anarchism as Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Praxis

What we have presented in this work is daunting, for sure, but we believe that Black anarchism provides a map to a new society—one that that is devoid of State-sanctioned oppression. Ultimately though, our fight is for liberation regardless of the name, and so we close by asking the same questions that we asked at the beginning: what are we willing to do to achieve liberation? Will we begin to choose freedom, or will we continue negotiating with oppression?

These questions continue to guide us as we recognize that this is just a start—a work in progress that will continue to evolve and grow. So, as we continue to explore Black anarchism within education, we hope to do it in community with others, becoming an ungovernable mass fighting to abolish the State and all its violence. We hope to examine what a curriculum of self-defence looks like without a fetishization of guns. We aim to explore how Black educators might create sustainable Black anarchist maroon communities alongside their students. And we are eager to see what Black anarchy can teach us about our ties to the land and the environmental crisis that we are currently facing. We do not limit ourselves here, however, because there is so much potential in introducing Black anarchism into educational research. If nothing else it teaches all of us in this moment that in order to achieve freedom, we *cannot* continue negotiating with oppression no matter the political party. It teaches us that we, as educators, must become as "unrelenting as the resolve of the deadly oppressive forces [that] we're up against" (Anderson, 2021, p. 5). And most importantly, it teaches us, as Assata Shakur (2001) tells us:

It is our duty to fight for our freedom.
It is our duty to win.
We must love each other and support each other.
We have nothing to lose but our chains.

References

Afrofuturist Abolitionists of the Americas. (2019). *Anarkata*. The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/anarkata

Alston, A. (2002). Beyond nationalism but not without it. *Onward*, *2*(4).

Alston, A. (2004). Black anarchism. *Anarchist Panther* [zine].

Anderson, W. C. (2021). *The nation on no map: Black anarchism and abolition*. AK Press.

Anderson, W. C., Samudzi, Z., & Kaba, M. (2018). *As Black as resistance: Finding the conditions for liberation*. AK Press.

Anyon, J. (2005). *Radical possibilities: Public policy, urban education, and a new social movement*. Routledge.

Apple, M. (2000). *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age*. Routledge.

Armaline, W.T. (2009). Thoughts on anarchist pedagogy and epistemology. In R. Amster, A. DeLeon, L. Fernandez, A. Nocella II & D. Shannon (Eds.), *Contemporary anarchist studies: An introductory anthology of anarchy in the academy*, 136–46. Routledge.

Avrich, P. (2006). The modern school movement: Anarchism and education in the United States. AK Press.

Bagby-Williams, A., & Za Suekama, N. (2022). *Black anarchism and the Black radical tradition: Moving beyond racial capitalism*. Daraja Press.

Balagoon, K. (2019). *A Soldier's Story: Revolutionary Writings by a New Afrikan Anarchist*. PM Press.

Baszile, D.T. (2017). In pursuit of the revolutionary-not-yet: Some thoughts on education work, movement building, and praxis. *Educational Studies*, *53*(3), 206–215. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2017.1307197

Bryan, N., McMillian, R., & LaMar, K. (2022). Prison abolition literacies as Pro-Black pedagogy in early childhood education. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *22*(3), 383–407. https://doi.org/10.1177/14687984221122990

Critical Resistance. (2021, August 13). *Reflecting on the roots of Black August & George Jackson*. https://criticalresistance.org/updates/roots-of-black-august/

DeLeon, A. (2008). Oh no, not the "A" word! Proposing an "anarchism" for education. *Educational Studies*, *44*(2), 122–141. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131940802368422

Ervin, L. K. (2021). *Anarchism and the Black revolution: The definitive edition*. Pluto Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2114fp4

Ervin, L. K. (2011). *The progressive plantation: racism inside white radical social change organizations*. True Leap Press & Distribution.

Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Penguin.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Rowman and Littlefield.

Gershon, L. (2020, September 5). The real story of Black anarchists. JSTOR Daily. https://daily.jstor.org/the-real-story-of-black-anarchists/

Giroux, H.A. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals: Towards a critical pedagogy of learning*. Greenwood Publishing Group.

Giroux, H.A. (2004). The terror of neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the eclipse of democracy. Paradigm Publishers.

Givens, J. (2021). *Fugitive pedagogy: Carter G. Woodson and the art of Black teaching*. Harvard Press.

Goldman, E. (1911). *Anarchism: What it really stands for*. Mother Earth Publishing Association.

Hartman, S. V. (1997). *Scenes of subjection: Terror, slavery, and self-making in nineteenth-century America*. Oxford University Press.

Haworth, R. H. (Ed.). (2012). *Anarchist pedagogies: Collective actions, theories, and critical reflections on education*. PM Press.

Henry, K. L., Jenkins, D., White, M., & Greer, C. D. (2023). Conjuring the devil: Historicizing attacks on critical race theory. *Thresholds in Education*, *46*(1), 33–47.

James, J. (Ed.). (2003). *Imprisoned intellectuals: America's political prisoners write on life, liberation, and rebellion*. Rowman & Littlefield.

James, J. (2023, March 28). The alchemy of abolitionisms. *Inquest*. https://inquest.org/the-alchemy-of-abolitionisms/

Jones, C. E. (2005). *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*. Black Classic Press.

Kaplan, T., & Glueck, K. (2020, July 28). 'This is about justice': Biden ties economic revival to racial equity. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/28/us/politics/joe-biden-racial-justice-economy-plan.html

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *11*(1), 7–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236863

Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon Press.

McMillian, R., & Bryan, N. (2023). "Living within it all": Black Critical Theory, Imprisoned Black Radical Tradition, and the art of *BlackCrit Portraiture* to center voices from sites of incarceration. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2023.2258099

McMillian, R. (2024). Our eyes are watching god: Bearing witness to Black life and the complexities of Black joy on death row. *Urban Education*, *0*(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/00420859241227949

Meiners, E. R., & Winn, M. T. (2014). *Education and Incarceration*. Routledge.

Ries, A. L., Brian. (2020, June 3). *Protester who Trump called an 'anarchist' on Twitter says he was just trying to help out*. CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/03/us/ohio-protester-anarchist-antifa-trump-twitter-trnd/index.html

Rodriguez, D. (2006). *Forced passages: Imprisoned radical intellectuals and the U.S. prison regime*. University of Minnesota Press.

Rodríguez, D. (2010). The disorientation of the teaching act: Abolition as pedagogical position. *Radical Teacher*, *88*(1), 7–19. https://doi.org/10.1353/rdt.2010.0006

Sanchez, A. E. (2019). In Spite of Prison. *Harvard Law Review*, *132*, 1650–1683.

Shakur, A. (2001). *Assata: An autobiography*. L. Hill Books.

Stovall, D. (2018). Are we ready for 'school' abolition?: Thoughts and practices of radical imaginary in education. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education*, *17*(1). https://doi.org/10.31390/taboo.17.1.06

Suissa, J. (2010). *Anarchism and education: A philosophical perspective*. PM Press.

The Books 4 Prisoners Crew. (n.d.). *Black August: Origins, History, and Significance* [zine]. True Leap Press & Distribution. Chicago, IL.

Williams, D. M. (2015). Black Panther radical factionalization and the development of Black anarchism. *Journal of Black Studies*, *46*(7), 678–703. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934715593053

Wilson, S. (2020). The imprisoned Black radical tradition. *In The Belly* [zine]. Special issue.

X, M., & Breitman, G. (1990). *Malcolm X speaks: Selected speeches and statements* (1st Grove Weidenfeld Evergreen ed). Grove Weidenfeld.

Zinn, Howard. 1971. "Introduction: The art of revolution." In Read, Herbert. *Anarchy & order: Essays in politics*, edited by Herbert Read, ix–xxii. Boston: Beacon Press.

Authors

Rachel McMillian is an assistant professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. As a curriculum theorist and educational researcher, her work broadly explores two intersecting avenues: Black Education and Critical Prison Studies. More specifically–through counter storytelling–she focuses on 1) the schooling and educational experiences of Black people who were incarcerated as children/youth and, 2) Black liberatory education and curriculum that occurs within spaces of confinement and enclosure. Her interdisciplinary scholarship is inspired by her years of experience as a social studies teacher, her relationships and work with both formerly and currently incarcerated people, and her lived experiences as someone directly impacted by mass incarceration.

Reginald BoClair is an incarcerated multimedia artist in the literary, visual, and the performative arts. He is a son of Chicago and a graduate of Northeastern Illinois University's *University Without Walls* program, earning a bachelor's degree in Restorative Arts with a focus on "African-Centered Transformative Justice Public Education" (ACTJE). As a writer, thinker, teacher, and poet, he is dedicated to understanding both the law and African-centered approaches to social transformation. Through his work, he explores such topics as abolition, Black feminism, Black anarchism, violence, and gender studies, all while continuing to fight for his physical freedom.

Critical Education