

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Educational Leadership Against Racism: Challenging Policy, Pedagogy, and Practice

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As the year 2015 has begun, a worldwide racialized conversation continues about the inability of police, judicial systems, and public policy to address what Derrick Bell (1992) has long framed as the “permanence of racism” (see also Knaus, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Race riots and police brutality in Ferguson and the Charlie Hebdo murders and their aftermath in Paris punctuate a constant backdrop of racialized policy-making, violence, and inequity. While small, short-lived protests sprang up in reaction to these events, systemic and long-term responses to the larger global context of racism are less common and largely not deemed media-worthy. Within the U.S. context of charges of sanctioned, racialized police brutality representing American racism being framed around the killing of individual Black men, larger arguments about the role of public education in challenging the very conditions that lead to such racism become silenced. As the world focuses on the killing – and judicial validation of

such – of dozens of men in the United States, globally people of color are often killed *en masse*. In 2014 alone, the world has watched multiple school shootings, witnessed mass child abductions, and uncovered additional mass graves from previous genocides. Most of these examples of inhumane violence are racialized: victims are often people of color.

Meanwhile, conversation about the failures of schools to account for and address societal inequalities persists amidst efforts to increase the standardization of schooling. For those who survive through violent atrocities or navigate through the slow trickle of hunger, poverty, or demeaning racism, the educational debates about what content to teach, how to teach such content, and how to measure its effectiveness seem entirely irrelevant. For many immersed in the struggle for physical, emotional, and intellectual survival, much of the contemporary debate and discussion about the direction of education, particularly about increasing the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches, appears removed from helping them live day to day.

It is within this racialized context of seeming global despair that we conceived of this special issue on the topic of “Educational Leadership Against Racism.” The focus on “Challenging Policy, Pedagogy, and Practice” was intentional: in order to transform the current purpose of schooling into one that can be flexible to local needs while being culturally responsive to a globally diverse range of multilingual students, educational leaders must transform the global conversation about education. While educational leaders must be excellent managers of bureaucratic procedures, align curricula to local, state, and national priorities, and be adept at adult education, all of these idealized skill sets do not alone lead to transformation, or even to good schools. Underlying leadership preparation and practice must be a deeper commitment to educational leadership as a route to addressing racism at the local, national, and global levels.

This issue clarifies how, across the globe, educational leadership is being conceptualized in response to the overarching racialized infrastructure. The articles within this issue focus on taking responsibility for shaping local, national, and global conversation about an anti-racist purpose of educational leaders, and for integrating social justice into development and structures of schooling. We, the editors and authors, ultimately argue that educators must be supported in developing culturally responsive leadership approaches and must in turn use those skills and resources to reflect the values of multicultural education, to respond to the needs of local communities and particularly children and youth, and to transform the infrastructure of schooling and educational policy. The ultimate goal of educational leadership is to create the conditions for children and youth to engage in and lead conversation about their very survival and, when society appears oriented against them, to challenge racism as agents of change.

These articles are arranged around two key threads: a) culturally responsive leadership; and b) a localized context of leadership in which anti-racist efforts take place. The articles also frame a globalized discussion to situate school practice within conceptual conversations about culturally responsive and

equity-driven leadership approaches as the purpose of leading education. In the first article, “Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Leadership for School-Community Culture,” Nicole Fraise and Jeffrey Brooks situate the field of educational leadership in conversation with culturally relevant pedagogy and provide a theoretical framework to move forward, as well as suggestions for next steps in the field. Lorri Santamaría and Andrés Santamaría follow with an analysis of how applied critical leadership can challenge racism in their article, “Counteracting Racism with Applied Critical Leadership: Culturally Responsive Practices Promoting Sustainable Change.” Tonya Milligan and Craig Howley report on a leadership study of principals of White-staffed schools that serve predominantly Black U.S. students. Their article, “Educational Leadership in Our Peculiar Institutions: Understandings of Principals in Segregated, White-staffed Urban Elementary Schools,” cautions that the racialized context in which school leaders operate can directly shape both the role and purpose of being a school leader. Indeed, not all urban-focused principals claim a commitment to social justice, and the authors suggest this may be a global phenomenon.

Sue Feldmans and Ilana Winchester, in their article “Leadership and the Social Practice of Racial Equity Policy,” analyze a U.S. school district policy context and suggest that local policy development around equity-focused efforts can serve as a needed tool for educational leaders who are committed to social justice. In “Challenging the Dominant Narrative: Critical Bilingual Leadership (Liderazgo) for Emergent Bilingual Latin@ Students,” Joseph Wiemelt and Anjale Welton argue for bilingual leadership that serves as the foundation for school practice, and integrate voice as central to understanding institutional racism. Relatedly, Camille Wilson and Lauri Johnson discuss historical trends from Black educational activists in London, Toronto, and Detroit. Their article, “Black Educational Activism for Community Empowerment: International Leadership Perspectives,” ultimately argues that Black educational activists serve as key change agents and underutilized resources to challenging racist school practices. The final article, Christa Boske’s “Preparing School leaders to Interrupt Racism at Various Levels within Educational Systems,” returns to a more traditional school leadership preparation and support. Here Boske outlines the impact of a curriculum, specifically the “Leading for Social Justice” course, on the development of anti-racist leaders.

This first set of articles frames a larger conversation about how a variety of strategies, including district equity policies, culturally responsive pedagogy, a comprehensive foundation for bilingual inclusion, and awareness of the social context in which school principals operate, can all be integrated into a culturally responsive leadership context.

The second set of articles is arranged around a theme of local engagement as a specific leadership strategy. These articles explore the idea that the specific context in which leaders operate shapes resistance strategies, as leaders are forced to navigate Western-framed realities while also challenging the assumptions within Western knowledge. Focusing on the context in which school policy maintains racially exclusive practice, Katherine Mansfield, in the

first article in this section, situates gifted education as a practice of maintaining White privilege. Her article, "Giftedness as Property: Troubling Whiteness, Wealth and Gifted Education in the United States," ultimately clarifies how gifted education could be transformed towards inclusive, democratic schooling. Khalid Husny Arar, in "Leadership for Equity and Social Justice in Arab and Jewish Schools in Israel: Leadership Trajectories and Pedagogical Praxis," focuses on the role of school principals in fostering equitable education. His study ultimately raises concerns about principal practice within national education policy contexts that limit social justice efforts.

In "Fostering Movements or Silencing Voices: Learning from Egypt and South Africa, Leading Against Racism," Tyson Marsh and Christopher Knaus situate Western-framed education as limiting a context of local leadership social justice efforts and provide a conceptual analysis suggesting that supporting local leadership is one way to foster critical multiculturalism. Next, extending the work of Marsh and Knaus, David Henderson, Jioanna Carjuzaa, and William Ruff report on a study they conducted of American Indian reservation school leaders. Their article, "Reconciling Leadership Paradigms: Authenticity as Practiced by American Indian School Leaders," clarifies ways in which leaders navigate racialized Western educational leadership preparation through a balance and integration of traditional forms of knowledge.

Taken collectively, these articles suggest that anti-racist leadership is historically rooted, spread across the globe, and operating within difficult, often punitive contexts. Yet efforts to further develop school leaders, to integrate community leaders into the operating of schools, and to integrate inclusive school structures and linguistic practices also abound and remind readers that all is not lost, even if much more needs to be done. These articles largely frame racism, and efforts to counter racism, as context-specific, collaborative struggles, even as themes across boundaries and hemispheres. As readers reflect on Charlie Hebdo, wherein a very small-circulation satirical print newspaper was violently targeted, issues of cultural barriers and conflicts become highlighted. Indeed, something so seemingly simple as the French tradition of irreverent satire, in the tradition of Rimbaud and others, clashes directly with many Arabic contexts wherein critique of Islam can be taken as sacrilege or an attack on religion itself. While the institutional and even national context must be taken into account when considering how to address racism, the field of educational leadership must think of racism as a transnational and global phenomenon. This special issue raises the need for cross-cultural, comparative, and international research on local and global education, with a particular focus on the types of leadership that effectively, locally and globally, prepare youth to navigate and transform schools into integrated, inclusive models.

References

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