

Punished for Dreaming

How School Reform Harms Black Children
and How We Heal

BY

BETTINA L. LOVE

ENGAGEMENT GUIDE BY

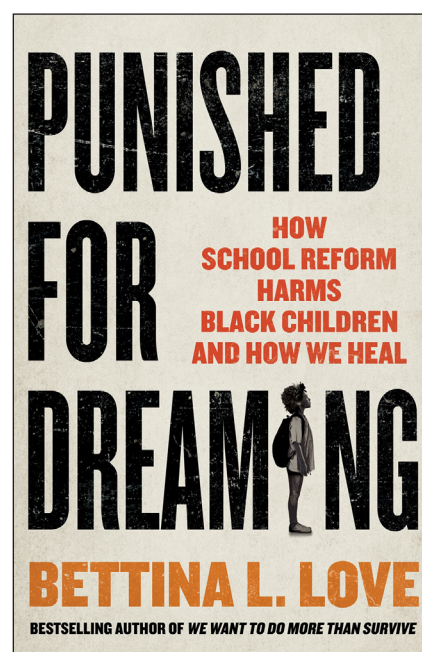
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“Blends brilliance, warmth, and a deep commitment to the pursuit of justice for all our nation’s children.”

—Brittney Cooper, bestselling author of *Eloquent Rage*

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

In her introduction of *Punished for Dreaming: How School Reform Harms Black Children and How We Heal*, Dr. Bettina Love suggests this book is a “road map to healing and transformation through the arduous and intensely emotional work of reparations” (p. 13). If the book is our map, this guide is an offering of routes, pit stops, and considerations for your journey. While this guide was written with the hope you will embark on this reading journey in community, it can certainly also be engaged independently. Within this guide, a variety of prompts, paired texts, and extension activities invite you to extend your learning beyond the pages of *Punished for Dreaming*.

Beloved ancestor Audre Lorde said, “Revolution is not a one-time event. It is becoming always vigilant for the smallest opportunity to make a genuine change.” This guide invites your intentional, long-term engagement in a journey toward healing, justice, and revolution. The prompts and activities are designed for return engagement and ongoing reflection. The reminders to take care and invest in community are evergreen and always relevant. Paired with *Punished for Dreaming*, this guide encourages readers to sit in and with the stories, analyses, and dreams found within the pages.

Punished for Dreaming is an invitation to listen, critique, heal, and fight for the schools and world we deserve. May the contents of this guide provide space for your reflection, rage, sorrow, dreams, and questions. May it be a companion that encourages you to feel, think deeply, and engage in meaningful dialogue and action. Above all else, may it serve as a reminder to take good care of yourself and your people in this struggle.

BONUS: LOVE NOTES
(FOR YOUR EARS)

In lieu of traditional acknowledgments, Love offers “Love Notes” at the end of *Punished for Dreaming*. Each note includes a song dedicated to those instrumental to her work and livelihood. Consider listening to the [Love Notes playlist](#) to gain an even deeper understanding of who and what informs Love’s brilliance, creativity, and dedication to her work.

PRE-READING
ENGAGEMENT

ESTABLISHING MODES OF SELF AND COMMUNITY CARE

Some stories, data, and details in this book might be difficult or heavy. If reading alone, consider establishing modes of self-care you will practice as you read and process. Perhaps you might journal while you read, plan activities outside, gather with friends or family, or engage in arts/crafts. Take breaks when you need to and return when you are ready and able. If reading in community, consider incorporating check-ins, non-book discussions and activities, and grounding activities that invite stillness and reflection (journaling, meditation, yoga, and naps).

A SPECIAL NOTE TO BLACK READERS

Dear Black Readers:

Above all else, this book is a love letter to us, Black folks — an affirmation of the complexities, joys, and pains of what it means to be Black and schooled in the United States. *Punished for Dreaming* offers a raw and fierce indictment of the people, systems, and structures within the educational reform movement. The recollection of the violence, trauma, and disparities in the narratives and analysis in this book has the potential to evoke rage, sadness, grief, or overwhelm. Please take good care of yourself while reading. Make time to laugh, dance, get outside, eat good food, and attend to your needs as you grapple with the ideas and stories in this text. If possible, consider reading and discussing it in a community where you feel safe and affirmed. If you are reading and discussing this book with white folks or non-Black POC, prioritize your own safety, development, and care.

Some of the stories in *Punished for Dreaming* may resonate with your own schooling experience; others may not. Black kids (and those of us who are all grown up) are not a monolith and this book makes space for that. As you read, I urge you to make intentional space to reflect on your own story — not just the violence and trauma, but also the wins, joy, and communities that have held us along the way. More than anything, know that this book and the accompanying guide were written with Black joy, struggle, and dreams in mind.

This system was never meant for us and yet you have persevered.

As you read, please remember:

You matter.

You are loved.

You are brilliant.

You are defiantly here.

And we are so grateful for it.

YOUR SCHOOLING JOURNEY: A “BEFORE READING” REFLECTION PROJECT

Each person’s schooling experiences are different. This book focuses on the K-12 schooling experiences of Black people in the United States — but even within that context, there is no monolith. No two students’ experiences are the same and we acknowledge that. Whether you read this book in Louisiana, Brooklyn, Australia, or China, we hope that you begin your journey into *Punished for Dreaming* by reflecting on your own schooling experiences. Our experiences as young learners inevitably affect how we view schooling, learning, and the world today. Before you begin reading, take some time to reflect upon, journal, sketch, or discuss your schooling experiences with others. The prompts below are offered as guidance as

you embark on your own reflection and reading journey.

- Think of your most memorable interactions with adults in your K-12 schooling experience. Were they positive or negative? How did they impact your view of school and learning?
- Which grade or grades were your favorite in school? Why?
- Which subjects were your favorite in school? Why?
- What’s the most memorable assignment, book, or event in your K-12 schooling experience? What makes it stand out among the others? How did it shift your orientation to the people, places, and world around you?
- Did you like school? Why or why not?
- Did you feel safe in school? Why or why not?
- Did you feel affirmed in school? Why or why not?
- How was success defined in your K-12 schooling experience? How was it defined at home? In your community?
- Draw/sketch the most memorable school building or classroom throughout your K-12 experience. What did it smell, feel, sound, and look like? Who was there? Who was not there? How did it impact how you view schooling and learning?

INTRODUCTION

When detailing **Zook’s** experience, Love writes, “She told me that through thirteen years of schooling, she could not recall a single teacher who ever took an interest in her or positively impacted her life” (p. 1). Think back to your own K-12 schooling experience.

Who were the adults—in school, community, or at home—who cared for, loved, or positively impacted your life?

READING QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS

In your own schooling experience, how did you receive feedback about your progress and/or growth? What did affirmation or recognition look like in classrooms and schools you attended?

What do the schooling journeys of Zook and Love reveal about the disparities, assumptions, and harm within K-12 schooling and beyond?

How do you understand what Love terms the “educational survival complex?” (p. 9). How does it resonate with or differ from your own experiences in schooling? What questions, confusions, or curiosities do you have about the framing?

FOR BIPOC READERS: How does your schooling journey compare to those of Zook and Love? What impact did your schooling journey have on how you

perceived your racial identity, abilities, and goals?

FOR WHITE READERS: Identify the stereotypes and tropes of Blackness you have learned and/or internalized. Consider how the stereotypes and tropes of Blackness affect your perceptions of Black people, particularly children. Be honest with yourself in your reflection and think about where you learned these ideas. How do they manifest in your relationships, understandings, and decision-making? What are you doing to unlearn and shift your behavior?

FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

- Love writes, “For us and Black kids like us, school, instead of being a place of learning, was a place of harm” (p. 7). Consider your schools and/or classroom. Are they places of learning or harm for Black children? Do they affirm or diminish Black genius, joy, and histories? Are they sites for learning about Black genius, joy, and histories? What space is made for Black children to grow, heal, and develop?
- What do “safety” and non-punitive “accountability” look like in your classroom and school? Whose safety and success do they prioritize? What are the impacts of these on Black children?

PAIRED TEXTS

BOOKS: [*We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* by Bettina L. Love](#)
ARTICLES: [Dumas \(2018\) “Beginning and Ending with Black Suffering”](#)
SHOW/EPISODE: [“We Want to Do More Than Survive \(A Talk\)” by Dr. Bettina L. Love \(C-SPAN\)](#)
READ: [“What ‘A Nation At Risk’ Got Wrong, And Right, About U.S. Schools” \(NPR\)](#)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES /
RESOURCES

When thinking about alternatives for learning spaces rooted in Black liberation and joy, it may be helpful to have some guidance on what is possible. Consider engaging with the following resources to guide your reflection and shifting orientation.

- [Woke Kindergarten](#)
- [Cultivating Genius](#)
- [Dunn et. al’s \(2021\) “A Radical Doctrine: Abolitionist Education in Hard Times”](#)
- [Lessons in Liberation: An Abolitionist Toolkit for Educators \(The Education for Liberation Network\)](#)
- WATCH: [Lessons in Liberation: Toolkit Event Series \(Critical Resistance\)](#)

CHAPTER 1:
SETTING THE STAGE: EDUCATIONAL WHITE RAGE

“White rage doesn’t have to wear sheets, burn crosses, or take to the streets. Working in the halls of power, it can achieve its end far more effectively, far more destructively.”

—Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*

Take some time to reflect, journal, or draw in response to the following prompt: What images, experiences, people, or events come to mind when you imagine White rage? How is it similar and/or different from Anderson’s description of “working in the halls of power?”

READING QUESTIONS
AND PROMPTS

Mrs. Ali has fond memories of attending all-Black schools in the Jim Crow South. She discusses the benefits and affirmation that came with having teachers that looked like her and cared for her, particularly Mrs. Ruth Archie. Did you have teachers who looked like you growing up? What was the impact?

Consider the funding and resource disparities Love details between Black and White schools before *Brown*. Do you find this surprising? Do some research about your own neighborhood’s schools (and surrounding areas). How do today’s funding inequities compare/contrast to pre-*Brown* era inequities?

How has White rage manifested through schooling throughout the last centuries? What connections can you make to far-right organizing and legislation in today’s sociopolitical context?

How does Love’s contextualization of school desegregation complicate, affirm, and/or disrupt your understanding of the *Brown v. the Board of Education* ruling and outcomes?

According to Love, in what ways have economics, capital, and race impacted how schooling is designed and funded in the United States?

In Chapter 1, Love “names names” (p. 33). What is the power of naming and knowing who is responsible for harm and violence? How might this shift how we approach our understanding and work toward justice?

How does Love’s refashioning of Super Predators complicate and disrupt our understanding of violence, Blackness, and power within our history of schooling, crime, and policy?

FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

- When writing about her schooling experience, feminist icon bell hooks remarked,

“my teachers made sure they ‘knew’ us” (p. 21). In the context of an education that centers Black liberation, what might knowing entail? Do you know your students? Why or why not?

- Consider the racial, ethnic, and linguistic makeup of the student population of the school. Does your faculty/staff represent your student population? How many Black teachers does your school have? What might be the effects of a lack of diversity and representation on students’ learning, safety, feelings of affirmation, and goals?
- For those within homogeneously white schools: How does the lack of diversity impact understandings of racism, inequality, and preparation for living in a pluralistic society?
- What are your current understandings of “education reform?” How have you engaged this concept in pre-service training, professional development, or informal conversations with other educators?

PAIRED TEXTS

READ: [White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide by Carol Anderson](#)
WATCH: [Carol Anderson on Democracy Now!](#)
LISTEN: [Nice White Parents The New York Times](#)
READ: [Jim Crow’s Pink Slip: The Untold Story of Black Principal and Teacher Leadership by Leslie T. Fenwick](#)
LISTEN: [The aftermath of Brown vs The Board of Education in ‘Jim Crow’s Pink Slip’ | Book of the Day \(NPR Podcasts\)](#)

CHAPTER 2:
BLACK CHILDREN AT RISK

FRAMING PROMPT

In *Lose Your Mother*, Saidiya Hartman writes, “slavery persists as an issue in the political life of black America . . . because Black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. This is the afterlife of slavery—skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment” (p. 42).

FOR BLACK READERS: How might the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of navigating the afterlife of slavery impact you daily? What healing practices, communities, or rituals help you sustain yourself?

READING QUESTIONS
AND PROMPTS

Consider **Mr. Roc’s** experiences working in New York City’s public schools and Rikers Island. How does this schooling experience compare and/or contrast to your experiences as a student or educator?

How does the “criminal punishment system” manifest in Mr. Roc’s experience? What connections do you notice between schooling, community experience, and incarceration of Black youth?

Mr. Roc compares school to a “plantation” and remarks, “It’s a hard place to be in if you are really thinking about liberation or freedom” (p. 46). Think back to your own experiences and Mr. Roc’s stories. Do you agree or disagree with his sentiments?

Love extensively details how the Reagan administration’s war on drugs and education spurred many of the harmful practices within school reform. What impact did these tactics, specifically the data and rhetoric within *A Nation of Risk*, not of Rick, have on Black children’s schooling and well-being? What remnants of these ideologies and policies do you see in today’s educational landscape?

As a whole, how does this chapter impact your understanding of the complexities of politics, education, and policing? What connections might you make to your own experiences? The current sociopolitical context?

FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

- How do your pedagogy and praxis serve children, particularly Black children? How does it serve the system? What shifts might you have to make in your context to truly serve children, particularly Black children?
- Consider the Reagan administration’s efforts to control communities through disciplinary measures and data. How do you view or define discipline in your learning spaces? What experiences and/or beliefs inform this definition? What does your data say about who is disciplined and the reasoning behind punishments? What shifts might you need to make with equity or liberation in mind?
- In the last section of the chapter, Love discusses George H.W. Bush’s introduction of the America 2000 strategy. The bill had the support of many Democrats, including then Arkansas governor Bill Clinton. How does the bipartisan nature of this educational failure complicate your understanding of politics and education in history?

PAIRED TEXTS

LISTEN: ["Centrality of slavery in the making of American society w/ 'genius' Saidiya Hartman" \(Law and Disorder\)](#)

LISTEN/READ: ["This Supreme Court Case Made School District Lines A Tool For Segregation" \(NPR\)](#)

READ: [The Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Fraud, And The Attack On America's Public Schools](#) by David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle

CHAPTER 3: SCRAPS

FRAMING PROMPT

FOR BLACK READERS: Consider the chapter’s epigraph: “Raising Black children — female and male — in the mouth of a racist, sexist, suicidal dragon is perilous and chancy. If they cannot love and resist at the same time, they will probably not survive.” —**Audre Lorde**

Before beginning to read, reflect/journal on the following questions:

- What does it mean to love and resist at the same time? How have you done it?
- Who or what taught you to resist and love? Think back to a specific moment or person from which you learned this lesson. Consider writing an ode of gratitude or appreciation for that moment or person.

Before you picked up this book, what ideas and/or beliefs did you hold about school choice? What experiences or understandings informed those ideas?

The Urban-Suburban program’s goal is to “decrease racial isolation, deconcentrate poverty and enhance opportunities for students.” What does **Aja’s** schooling story reveal about the risks, benefits, and impacts of programs like this? In general, what are the impacts of economic disparities and schooling policies on Black youth like **Aja**?

Consider the experiences of Leo and Tia’s children in Georgia’s schools. How do racist tropes, stereotypes, and inequitable practices impact their education?

In her interview, **Isa** discusses the impact of the presence/absence of Black teachers in her schooling experience. Think back to your own educational journey. How many Black teachers did you have in your PK-12 journey? Looking back, what was the impact of their presence or absence on your own experience?

Isa recounts her teacher’s racist assumption about her father’s absence. Love writes, “The racist myth believed by **Isa’s** teachers is that Black men are not a part of their children’s lives; however, research shows that Black fathers are more active fathers compared to White fathers” (p. 72). How have you seen this racist myth play out in pop culture, news, and your own lived experiences? What might be the continued impact of this myth on Black children and families?

How does parent/caregiver involvement impact **Isa’s** schooling experience? Reflect on the “additional labor” (p. 74) of being a Black parent in a historically racist country and schooling landscape. What barriers and/or obstacles make it difficult for Black parents to advocate for and celebrate their children in the traditional learning spaces discussed in Love’s chapter?

FOR BLACK PARENTS/CAREGIVERS: You are appreciated. Reflect on a

time when you really advocated for your child. What was the result? List the ways you contribute to your child’s holistic learning, well-being, and growth on a daily basis. If you can, find a way to pause and celebrate yourself — go for a quiet walk, grab lunch with friends, have a solo dance party, or book that adults-only vacation. You deserve it!

FOR ALL: Send a note of gratitude to your caregivers or ancestors for their advocacy and love. Consider thinking beyond biological connections — who showed up for you, loved you, and fought for you during your schooling experience?

FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS: How might your school culture and policies position parents/caregivers as partners in students’ educational journeys? How do you invite parent input and engagement, particularly from Black parents/caregivers? What accountability avenues exist in your school to address parents’/caregivers’ concerns regarding equity, justice, and inclusion?

FOR BIPOC READERS: What was your experience of learning your history in schools? At home?

- Did you have elders who took teaching your history into their own hands? If so, what was the impact on your understanding of the world and yourself? If not, what might you have missed and/or still be missing?

How does Love’s discussion of the fusion of corporate America, philanthropic giving, and charter schools align with and/or complicate your understanding of school choice?

Consider reading [Gloria Ladson-Billings’ extended remarks on the education debt](#). What are your thoughts on calling the harm enacted on generations of Black youth a “debt” that needs to be repaid?

BLACK READERS: What do you think you are owed based on your own schooling experience?

PAIRED TEXTS

LISTEN: The Problem We Live With (*This American Life*, 2015)

- [Part 1](#)
- [Part 2](#)

READ: [Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and Danger to America’s Public Schools](#) by Dianne Ravitch

READ: [Cutting School: The Segrenomics of American Education](#) by Noliwe Rooks

WATCH: [Noliwe Rooks on Cutting School](#) (Brainwaves Anthology)

READ: [Dale Russakoff’s The Prize: Who’s in Charge of America’s Schools?](#)



CHAPTER 4: NO ENTREPRENEUR LEFT BEHIND

FRAMING PROMPT

The chapter begins with an epigraph from legendary Black educator, Marva Collins: “No one experiments on other children the way our children are guinea pigged. I want for our children to get what the best get.”

SKETCH OR WRITE: Set a timer for 10 minutes. Write or draw a scene from a classroom that shows “what the best get.”

- What does it look, smell, feel, and sound like?
- Who or what is there? Who or what is not there?
- What makes it worthy of “the best?”

READING QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS

Love offers **Shani’s** experiences as a Teach for America Corps member to provide a scathing critique of the organization. What were your understandings of (or experiences with) TFA before reading this chapter? What does Love’s critique reveal about the impacts of the organization on students, communities, and teachers?

Wendy Kopp, the founder of Teach for America, has called the program a “leadership development program” (p. 93). Does this definition surprise you given the organization’s focus on teaching? Why or why not?

FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

- Love argues, “Black and Brown prospective educators deserve high-quality teacher preparation, and so do their students” (p. 94). In your opinion, what shifts might need to be made to teacher preparation and development to truly prioritize the needs, goals, and outcomes of Black and Brown students and teachers?
- Administrators: How are you supporting Black teachers in your school? What added layers of development, mentorship, and encouragement do Black teachers receive, if any?
- How do your curriculum, culture, and school policies center the joy, histories, growth, and creativity of Black students?
- How are you ensuring that Black students receive “what the best get” given your resources and context?

How have the educational policies of Clinton and the Bush brothers shaped public education? According to Love, what have been the impacts on Black youth?

- U.S.-based readers: How have you engaged with schooling policies created by Clinton and the Bushes’ schooling ideologies?
- International-based readers: What differences and/or similarities do you notice between how schools and government interact in the United States and your

home country? What is surprising or intriguing?

Many of the policies discussed in this chapter encourage greater forms of accountability. What is your understanding of accountability outside of schooling or testing? How is that understanding similar or different in how it's defined by lawmakers regarding schooling?

- Compare/contrast the accountability (or lack thereof) required of traditional public schools and charter schools (particularly those associated with for-profit entities). How does a malleable definition of accountability serve to benefit corporate interests?

When discussing the educational policies of Jeb Bush, Love argues, [Bush] “publicly shamed students and the communities they lived in by ranking schools by letter grades based on test scores and mandating that those grades be published yearly in local newspapers” (p. 100). How might this ranking and public announcement impact the dreams, outcomes, and well-being of those within a community? In this act of power and accountability, what is the impact of shame and shaming?

Think back to how the schools you attended were perceived by others in your communities. What was the impact on how you viewed the school? Your teachers? Other students? Yourself?

How does Bush's NAACP address and plagiarism of Marian Wright Edelman's sentiment impact his framing and rationale for No Child Left Behind?

What connections can you make between NCLB, the Bush administration's commitment to “morals” and “family values,” and the continued criminalization of Black youth?

When you hear the phrase “get tough on education?”, what comes to mind? Who/what is most impacted by toughness? Who is already assumed to be tough?

Under NCLB, the humanities and teacher-student relationships were deprioritized in favor of basic skills and test preparation. Think back to your own schooling. What words, images, or feelings come to mind when you think of the following words: testing, skills, humanities, relationships? How did these aspects of school impact your experience? What was deemed most important or least important on a day-to-day basis? How did you know?

How did NCLB fuel school closures and community inequities?

What were the fallacies within the NCLB system of accountability and reward? Who won? Who lost?

How do standardized tests exacerbate the racial and economic inequities within public schooling?

What does Love mean when she calls post-Katrina New Orleans “an education reformer’s dream” (p. 110)?

How does the story of the post-Katrina educational restructuring illuminate the importance of community-led/centered decision-making in education?

Love’s discussion of President Obama’s Race to the Top Initiative, foundation support, and Super Predators like Michelle Rhee demonstrates the impact of educational reform on not only students but also teachers and families. How does this “race” reframe and extend NCLB? What is the impact on students, teachers, and the educational landscape?

PAIRED TEXTS

ENGAGE: [Atlanta Teacher Campaign \(Abolitionist Teaching Network\)](#)

READ: ["How Teach for America Evolved Into an Arm of the Charter School Movement" by Annie Waldman \(Pro Publica\)](#)

READ: ["Chartered for Profit: The Hidden World of Charter Schools Operated for Financial Gain" \(Network for Public Education\)](#)

MEET: [Shani](#)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES /
RESOURCES

In this chapter, post-Katrina New Orleans takes center stage. In honor of the legacy of New Orleans’ Black joy, genius, and art, view Tank and the Bangas’ Tiny Desk performance. As you view it, pay close attention to their performance of “Rollercoasters.” What connections might you make between the song’s framing and Love’s discussion of post-Katrina life in New Orleans?

- ["Tank and the Bangas" \(NPR Tiny Desk\)](#)

CHAPTER 5:
ERASURE

READING QUESTIONS
AND PROMPTS

What is your understanding of Critical Race Theory? When/where did you gain this understanding? How have you seen CRT discussed or employed in media, dialogue, or education?

What has been the impact of the Trump administration’s targeted attack on “CRT,” LGBTQ+ students and content, and DEI initiatives on public schooling in the United States? Consider the continued far-right rhetoric, legislation, and violence that continues today. How might this impact students’ holistic development and well-being?

Consider the story of **Cecilia Lewis’** journey. How did White rage impact her ability

to do her job? How does White rage show up in today's context on and offline?

Reflect on the drastic shift between summer 2020's #BlackLivesMatter uprising and the anti-CRT backlash that followed. What does this reveal about the grounding of United States history, politics, and values?

Love asserts educational White rage not only exists but is “also gendered” (p. 131). What examples come to mind when thinking about gendered educational White rage? What have been the outcomes of that gendered educational White rage? Note: If none come to mind, consider looking into the names listed by Love on page 131.

Trump's education secretary, Betsy DeVos, had a track record of advocacy for limited oversight of charter schools. What is the impact of reducing oversight for charter schools? Who does it affect most?

Love notes in 2016, “79% of all charter schools in Michigan were in Detroit, a city with a predominantly Black population” (p. 133). What questions and/or reactions do you have in response to this data? What does this data suggest about the relationship between the charter movements, Black communities, and the schooling of Black youth?

How did DeVos' leadership and Trump's administration explicitly shift the conversations and culture of public schooling in the United States? What intrigues you? Worries you? Surprises you?

Reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic, Love writes, “The pandemic showed how badly this nation's education system is in dire need of more funding, more resources, more teachers, more training, less testing, higher teacher pay, and a contraction of the police state” (p. 135). Consider the schooling landscape today — are schools safe, equitable, and inclusive places for youth? For Black youth? How are teachers treated? How are Black teachers treated?

FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

- How has the legacy of Trump-era rhetoric and policies impacted your ability to make your classrooms and schools more equitable and inclusive?
- Consider the wave of legislation targeting inclusive curriculum and schools, such as Ron DeSantis' “Stop Woke Act.” How do threats and implementation of bans and restrictions on what or how you can teach impact student skill development, well-being, and feelings of belonging in your school?
- If you are a White teacher, what are you doing to support BIPOC teachers and students in your schools right now? How are you speaking out, showing up, and fighting every day?
- What networks of support are established in your school or district for teachers and/or administrators?
- How are you caring for yourself on a daily basis? How might you build more rest, play, and joy into your weekly routine while teaching?

PAIRED TEXTS

READ: [1619 Project](#)
ENGAGE: [1619 Project educational resources](#)
READ/ENGAGE: [Guide for Racial Justice & Abolitionist Social and Emotional Learning \(Abolitionist Teaching Network\)](#)

CHAPTER 6:
CARCERAL INEVITABILITY

FRAMING PROMPT

Set a timer for 3 minutes and make a list using the following prompt:

Blackness/Black is . . .

When you're done, review your list. What phrases, images, or reflections came to mind? How have your lived experiences shaped how you view Blackness?

READING QUESTIONS
AND PROMPTS

After reading **Kia's** story, reflect on her Black girl magic that comes from "getting knocked down and gracefully getting back up with a determination never to fall again." (p. 141). How do this definition and Kia's story illuminate the heaviness and trauma accompanying Black girl magic?

Black readers: Each of us who has survived schooling in the United States has "lasting scars" (p. 142). What are the scars you carry on your body and soul? What is the salve that helps you find joy, magic, and healing?

Given Kia and Ma'Khia Bryant's parallels, how might extensions of the criminal punishment system (like school or foster care) increase the violence experienced by Black youth?

How does society view Black children versus their non-Black counterparts? What is the impact on their experience of childhood, innocence, and schooling?

After reading data about in-school policing, School Resource Officers, and inequities of violence experienced by students, do you think police belong in schools? Why or why not? Who benefits from the presence of SROs? Who suffers? *Imagine an alternative to in-school policing in underresourced schools.* What does it look, sound, and feel like?

How does **Sam's** story of a schooling journey riddled with suspensions and punishment illuminate the carcerality of the school system, particularly for Black children?

How do truancy laws exacerbate the pressures on low-income students and parents

while engaging in schooling journeys?

Reflect on your own schooling experience. Where was carcerality present? How did your own teachers disrupt or reinforce carcerality in your journey? How might it impact your views on schooling, punishment, or “good students” vs. “bad students?”

Love discusses the D.A.R.E program’s blurring of community policing and in-school education. How do programs like D.A.R.E. reinforce stereotypes of certain community members and contribute to an overreliance on surveillance and policing?

- If you experienced D.A.R.E in your schooling journey, what do you remember about its framing, lessons, and/or your perception of it as a child?

Love writes, “Children and young adults need nurturing spaces . . . where everyone feels safe and cared for” (p. 157). What spaces nurtured you as a child? What was the impact on your journey?

- If you work in a school, are your classrooms nurturing spaces for Black and Brown students? If not, what shifts are needed?

After reading **Johnnie’s** story, reflect on (and discuss) the prison industrial system’s impact on many Black children’s schooling, family life, and socioeconomic status.

How does **Marcus’** story complicate the narrative of SROs in schooling? What reflections or questions do you have after reading Marcus’ story?

FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

- How does carcerality show up in your school, classroom, and pedagogy?
- What is your school and/or district’s position on police or carceral technologies in schools?
- Do you have police in your school? If so, how do students engage with the officers? How do teachers engage with the officers? What might be the lasting impact of surveillance and policing in a learning space?
- What needs to be challenged on a policy level? What can you do differently tomorrow to challenge the carcerality present within your practice?

PAIRED TEXTS

READ: [The Gossamer Wings of Ma’Khia Bryant by Robert Jones, Jr. \(Son of Baldwin\)](#)

READ: [Pushout \(Monique W. Morris\)](#)

READ: [The Military Invasion of My High School: The Role of JROTC \(Rethinking Schools\)](#)

READ: [Making Black Lives Matter at School by Jesse Hagopian \(The Progressive Magazine\)](#)

READ: [“The Truancy Trap” by Annette Fuentes \(Atlantic\)](#)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES /
RESOURCES

EXTEND WITH FILM: In this chapter, Love discusses several instances of Black folks being perceived and positioned as threats in everyday life, schools, and media. As you continue to reflect on the inevitable carcerality associated with Blackness, consider viewing one of both films below to extend your learning.

- [Pushout \(2019\)](#)
- [Out in the Night \(2014\)](#)

MAKE AN ALTAR OR OFFERING: Love has detailed many instances of how the carceral system has stolen the joy, dreams, and lives of Black children. Consider making an altar or offering to that or those who have been lost. This altar or offering can look a variety of ways but should be authentic to how you honor those who have been lost or experienced loss.

CHAPTER 7:
STANDARDIZING CARCERality

FRAMING PROMPT

Chapter 7 begins with an epigraph from Barbara A. Sizemore that reads, “The new lynching tool [standardized tests].”

What are your feelings about (and experiences with) standardized testing? How does testing impact your body, mind, and spirit? What impact has it had on how you view your abilities and aspirations?

READING QUESTIONS
AND PROMPTS

How is **Rob’s** journey shaped by his teachers, school environment, and what’s required of him, specifically testing?

In the section, “Justifying Punishment,” Love outlines an abbreviated history of standardized testing. How did racial bias influence the creation of tests like IQ tests and the SAT? How do those biases manifest in today’s schooling landscape?

What connections might you make between highly lauded texts like *The Bell Curve*, Moynihan’s report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, Coleman’s *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, and *A Nation at Risk*? How does access to data, publishing, and power influence which perspectives are celebrated and which narratives drive policy and pedagogy?

Unpack Love’s assertion that “the achievement gap is not about White students outperforming Black students; it is about a history of educational White rage” (p. 178). How does this framing (and Love’s discussion of Coleman’s report) compare/contrast to your previous understanding of what is meant by the

achievement gap?

Given the use of standardized tests and high exit exams to push Black students out of schools, what might be the impact of eradicating these exams? How might this eradication shift how we think and dream about what is possible in schools, specifically for Black youth?

Love notes that the testing market is currently valued at \$25 billion. What might be the overarching effects of the profitability of testing on students' dreams, wellness, and outcomes?

Consider the use of algorithms to surveil, police, and determine the futures of Black youth. What might the impact of this technology be on their engagement with a carceral world?

FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

- How are your pedagogy and praxis driven or determined by standardized testing and/or expected outcomes?
- What non-assessment-related systems of affirmation, celebration, and feedback are in place in your learning space?
- How might your own schooling experiences impact what you deem to be an ethical approach to assessment, grading, and intelligence?
- After reading this chapter, what additional learning and/or reflection might you want to do about the impact of assessments and possible shifts?

PAIRED TEXTS

READ: [The Racist Beginnings of Standardized Testing \(NEA\)](#)

READ: [Wayne Au's Unequal By Design: High-Stakes Testing and the Standardization of Inequality](#)

READ: ["Will Little Sally Go to Yale or to Jail? There's an Algorithm For That" \(Education Week\)](#)

CHAPTER 8:
WHITE PHILANTHROPY

READING QUESTIONS
AND PROMPTS

How does Harriet Ball's mentorship of David Levin and Mike Feinberg further extend Love's critique of Teach for America and other educational philanthropic efforts?

Levin and Feinberg shift the language in Harriet Ball's "knowledge is power" chant when introducing it in their charter schools. How does this shift impact the sentiments behind the chant and its roots?

Reflect on the divergence of Ball, Levin, and Feinberg’s journeys. How did race, privilege, and access to resources impact their outcomes? What lessons might White allies learn from this co-option of Black genius and pedagogy?

How do KIPP’s model, board of directors, and policies reflect a disconnect between its current state and Ball’s pedagogy?

What does Harriet Ball’s story reflect about the treatment of Black teachers, especially veteran Black teachers, within schools and the larger educational landscape?

Consider Love’s overview of race philanthropy and foundations, particularly in the “progress” of Black communities. How have these organizations contributed to and/or stalled the progress of Black communities?

Historically, how has capitalism impacted and interacted with the goals of Black civil rights and empowerment movements?

How did celebrity, wealth, and shows like *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* (or *MTV Cribs*) impact your own goals or ambitions in your youth?

Consider Love’s overview of wealthy philanthropic endeavors with other narratives you have learned of rich folks’ giving. What surprises or intrigues you about this discussion of philanthropy, corporate giving, and the power of foundations in schooling?

Examine Bill and Melinda Gates’ widespread impact on education. How has their wealth shaped schooling practices, policies, and opportunities? Consider: What makes someone qualified to influence schooling in this country — educational training, wealth, Whiteness, power?

Compare the Gates Foundation’s failures with that of Black students in underresourced schools. What are the consequences for the Gates Foundation’s failures? For Black students in underresourced schools? How do the similarities and differences in your answers interact with ideas about fairness and accountability?

Consider Joe’s story of teacher support, scholarship, and success while attending an underresourced school in Columbus, Ohio. What might happen if all Black students got the support and care Joe received?

FOR READERS WHO MAY BE BIPOC, FIRST-GENERATION, OR FROM LOW-INCOME BACKGROUNDS (OR SHARE PIECES OF JOE’S EXPERIENCE):

How have imposter syndrome and/or survivor’s guilt impacted how you’ve navigated your life? What supports and/or reminders do you use to remind you of your worth and excellence?

- Set aside 15 minutes and make a list of your strengths and talents. Post the list

somewhere accessible and visible for the days when you need a reminder.

How do histories of racist and anti-Black housing, banking, and labor policies impact the wealth and debt of Black folks now? What might be the impact of this on the higher education and career choices of Black folks?

Throughout this book, Love has discussed several instances where coded language has been used to drive crucial educational practices and policies. What is the coded language that impacts your day-to-day experiences and ideas about others? How might you work to disrupt those beliefs about yourself and/or others?

How does Love’s argument about meritocracy and merit-based scholarships trouble your own ideas and beliefs about who deserves recognition, scholarships, and support in obtaining higher education?

FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

- Is there evidence of philanthropic giving or corporate engagement in your schools? What necessitates this? How does it impact the technology, resources, and programs you offer to students? If this support exists, does it help your school have access to what other schools consider the basics, or does it help your schools have access to opportunities and support that few schools can provide?
- Reflect on Joe’s story. How are you showing up for your students in your schools — those similar to Joe and those not? What are your students’ strengths and gifts? How does your pedagogy prioritize the elevation of students’ strengths and gifts?

PAIRED TEXTS

READ: [Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy by Tressie McMillian Cottom](#)

READ: [Watkins’ The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865—1954](#)

CHAPTER 9:
THE TRAP OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

FRAMING PROMPT

What do the following words mean to you? What weight do they carry? What experiences and/or feelings come to mind when you read them?

DIVERSITY
EQUITY
INCLUSION

Love begins Chapter 9 by recounting the anti-racist education and equity focus that followed the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. Think back to your own experiences during that time. How did you engage in this moment? What beliefs, convictions, or experiences guided how you showed up? How has your “showing up” and understanding shifted since 2020?

DEI initiatives are often framed as movements to support BIPOC people, but Love argues otherwise. What are your experiences with DEI programming and development? Whose voices are prioritized? Who leads DEI work? Whose growth and development are prioritized? What has accountability looked like in those spaces? What was the impact of those spaces?

How does Love define “real equity work” (p. 216)? Have you seen models of this in action? What have been the effects on communities and systems?

FOR BIPOC READERS: Consider the stories of **Lia and Mya’s** stories of engaging in DEI work in their workplaces. What resonates with you from these experiences? How did/will you take care of your body, mind, and soul when having to work in systems not designed with your wellness or genius in mind?

FOR WHITE READERS: Lia shares an email sent by a White colleague expressing concern about an incident. Reflect: What are your relationships to BIPOC at your workplace? How have your actions enacted harm or violence? How have your actions supported BIPOC and/or intervened when violence has occurred? What learning and/or growth might you still have to do? How might you set about repairing the harm and violence you have enacted or not interrupted? How might you achieve this growth without further burdening BIPOC coworkers?

When discussing Black students’ experience of trauma at her overwhelmingly White private school, Lia says for Black students, “the trauma outweighs the diploma.” How might trauma impact students’ ability to experience schooling, youth, and dreaming?

How does **Mya’s** experience as a DEI leader in Kansas exemplify the fallacies within equity movements and diversity initiatives in education from Brown until now?

How does Love’s discussion of New York City schools segregation and testing disrupt or confirm what you knew about school segregation in urban cities in the North?

How does **Ivy’s** experience of navigating the NYC school system reflect the heaviness and resilience Black students must have to achieve in traditional public schools? Consider the barriers to success. How might facets discussed previously in the book — housing policies, economic disparities, testing, and accountability measures — impact access to quality education for students like Ivy?

FOR WHITE READERS: Love writes, “White parents may be uncomfortable with school segregation, but the worries, anxieties, and fears of losing their privilege supersede any desire for racial justice and impede Black children’s educational choices” (p. 229). Reflect: What does your privilege afford you on a daily basis? Does your fear of losing your privilege supersede your commitment to racial justice? What might you have to give up to strengthen your commitment?

What are the impacts of racism on Black bodies, souls, and minds? How do you make space and give grace to those around you who are navigating and healing from that impact?

What does it mean for you to divest “in the project of White?” What actions might you take? What support and/or resources might it require?

At the end of the chapter, Love proposes the idea of reparations as a shift toward justice. What is your current understanding of reparations? How might that understanding apply to reparations within an educational context?

FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

- Who has access to your most advanced courses, most seasoned teachers, highest-performing schools, and opportunities in your school or district? What does your access and/or entrance policy say about what races, ethnicities, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds are most represented in those spaces? How might you work to make those spaces even more equitable and inclusive?
- Consider Love’s discussion of the toll racism takes on Black bodies. How does your curriculum, culture, and learning space prioritize safety, wellness, and healing for Black children and/or adolescents?

PAIRED TEXTS

READ/LISTEN: [Hope is a Discipline: Mariame Kaba on Dismantling the Carceral State \(The Intercept\)](#)

READ: [Sanchez Loza’s \(2020\) “Dear ‘good’ schools: White supremacy and political education in predominantly white and affluent suburban schools”](#)

READ: [Peggy McIntosh’s “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”](#)

CHAPTER 10:
WHITE PEOPLE, SAVE YOURSELVES

FRAMING PROMPT

Chapter 10 begins with an epigraph from Toni Morrison: “If you can only be tall because somebody is on their knees, then you have a serious problem. And my feeling is White people have a very, very serious problem, and they should start thinking about what they are going to do about it. Take me out of it.”

WHITE READERS: What are you willing to do about this problem?

BIPOC READERS: What must you release (because it ain't your problem)?

READING QUESTIONS
AND PROMPTS

What do you learn about White, media, and violence through Love's conversations with her students concerning the Sandy Hook massacre? What does this recounting reveal about Far Right rhetoric, engagement tactics, and the real work that White folks must engage in?

For White readers: What might saving yourself look like? What steps are you taking to do so?

How has the racial contract contributed to the violence and oppression experienced by Black people throughout history? How does that same racial contract permeate schooling policies?

What might it mean to embrace justice work as liberation work in your everyday life? With your family? Friends? Colleagues? Neighbors? Students?

Imagine creating a community that in Mariame Kaba's words, is "not grounded in punitive justice and . . . actually requires us to challenge our punitive impulses while prioritizing healing, repair, and accountability" (p. 244). What might that community look, sound, and feel like? What structures of accountability and support might exist?

At the end of Chapter 10, Love revisits her notion of co-conspiratorship from her 2019 book, *We Want to Do More than Survive*. What strikes you about Newsome and Tyson's collaboration in this effort? What differentiates Tyson's actions from that of traditional allyship?

Consider Love's expansion of her definition of co-conspiratorship. How might inward work shift one's understanding and orientation toward healing, justice, and community? How might you make this inward work in organizing a part of your practice and commitment to this work?

Quoting Robin D.G. Kelly, Love writes, "Without new visions, we don't know what to build, only what to knock down. We not only end up confused, rudderless, and cynical, but we forget that making a revolution is not a series of clever maneuvers and tactics, but a process that can and must transform us" (p. 246).

What are the new visions, freedom dreams, and goals that ground your practice and process?

At the end of chapter 10, Love offers this quote by Prentis Hemphill: "We are challenged with growing and building Black movements that can push back the onslaught. How we protect and care for each other along the way and come

through connected and stronger on the other end are possibly the most critical and meaningful questions we face” (p. 247).

How are you protecting and caring for those around you? Who shows up and cares for you?

FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

- On page 243, Love offers this reflection on White teachers and racial justice work: “The work of racial justice is a hat they wear from 8 am to 3 pm, but once they get home, they take the hat off. To most of my White students, racial justice is only for work. It is not how they live their life, because the fear of being disposed of is real and always present.” How might this apply to you, your colleagues, and/or administrators? How does this orientation to racial justice work limit what is possible within our schools and communities?
- Review the [Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture](#). How do these characteristics show up in your school or classroom expectations, culture, and practices? What shifts need to happen to make your learning spaces more liberatory and just?

PAIRED TEXTS

WATCH: [Interview with Charles Mills \(Intersections: Critical Issues in Education\)](#)
READ: martin’s (2021) [“What Do We Do with the White \[Cis\] Women?: Juliet Takes a Breath as the Blueprint for Reimagining Allyship in Literacy Instruction”](#)
ENGAGE: [Fire in Little Africa, a multimedia hip-hop project commemorating the 1921 massacre of Tulsa’s Greenwood neighborhood known as ‘Black Wall Street’](#)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES /
RESOURCES

A large focus of this chapter is focused on really engaging what it means to do this work in community with others, whether in classrooms or communities. As you work in community, consider engaging with the following resources and tools:

- [We Do This ‘Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice by Mariame Kaba](#)
- [“Developing a Liberatory Consciousness” by Dr. Barbara J. Love](#)
- [Let This Radicalize You: Organizing and the Revolution of Reciprocal Care by Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba](#)
- [Cultivating Genius by Dr. Gholdy Muhammad](#)

CHAPTER 11:
LET US CELEBRATE

FRAMING PROMPT

FOR BLACK READERS: Write a love letter to the people, moments, art, or places that make you feel safe, affirmed, or proud.

READING QUESTIONS
AND PROMPTS

How does Love’s framing of Black joy, laughter, and affirmation as resistance complicate your ideas of what it means to disrupt the violence of White?

Extending Dr. Leigh Patel’s reminder that “Blackness is greater than anti-Blackness,” Love reminds readers, “Our history does not start with George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, or enslavement” (p. 252). What is your practice of remembering? How do you engage in learning about and affirming the complex and rich histories of Black folks of the world?

FOR BLACK READERS: What might it mean for you to embrace all that constitutes your humanity?

Love writes, “If this country truly wants justice, it will celebrate us!” (p. 254). What might it look like to celebrate Blackness in your everyday life? In your classroom? In your work? With your wealth?

In the chapter’s final section, “Abolition,” Love makes the case for investing in an expansive fight for justice. How do you orient to this call for abolition? What are your views on abolition and the work it might take?

Are the communities and ecosystems in which you exist invested in abolition? Why or why not? What shifts might you want to make in your orientation toward community after reading this text?

FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

- Based on Monique Morris’s assertion about schools being locations of learning for Black students, how might you shift your classrooms and schools toward being “locations of healing?” What barriers might prevent this? What support and/or resources might you leverage as you work toward this shift?
- What kind of worldmaking do you engage in your practice?

PAIRED TEXTS

READ/REFLECT: [Lucille Clifton’s “Won’t You Celebrate with Me?”](#)
[Joy as Resistance: The Founders of The Lay Out \(NYT\)](#)
[Roya Marsh - “Black Joy” \(@WANPOETRY\)](#)

READ/ORGANIZE: [“Fifty-Seven Years After its Enactment, the Voting Rights Act is in Peril” \(ACLU\)](#)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES /
RESOURCES

AN INVITATION TO FREEDOM-DREAM:

Independently or in community (preferable), engage in a freedom-dreaming exercise in which you imagine a world full of learning, connections, and communities fully divested from carcerality. Dream beyond simply the absence of a barrier/violent obstacle. For example, instead of simply thinking, “no police,” also imagine what liberatory process of accountability we might introduce or build in the place of policing.

- What does the world look like?
- How does it smell? Sound? Feel?
- What activities or services are prioritized?
- What do schools or learning spaces look like?
- Who/what is there? Who/what is not there?

This is an invitation to dream, laugh, cry, draw, sketch, paint, dance, write, and discuss with liberation and justice in mind. When done, save your dream, return to it, and revise it as often as necessary.

CHAPTER 12:
A CALL FOR EDUCATIONAL REPARATIONS

FRAMING PROMPT

How do you define reparations? What do you know about reparations movements throughout history? What questions might you have about how possible plans for reparations may be achieved?

READING QUESTIONS
AND PROMPTS

“Wealth begets wealth,” writes Nikole Hannah-Jones. What is your relationship to wealth? How has your wealth been bolstered or hampered by those of previous generations? How does your wealth (or lack thereof) impact your day-to-day life? Are you surprised by the enormity of the racial wealth gap? Why or why not? How do you see that gap manifesting in your neighborhoods, schools, and workplace?

How does Love’s definition of atonement compare or contrast with your understanding of accountability and repairing harm? What might it mean to apply it to your own work in your own relationships with people, communities, and the systems in which you exist?

Consider the fallacies and successes of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation

Commission. What might we learn from that process as we think about reparations in the United States?

Love details several government reparations and reconciliation programs proposed and completed in the past. What have been the benefits and drawbacks to the peoples harmed — their communities, histories, opportunities, or spirits?

Dr. Robin D.G. Kelly writes, “Without a rudimentary critique of the capitalist culture that consumes us, even reparations can have disastrous consequences” (p. 269). What is your understanding of capitalism—its benefits, effects, and complexities? What might be the disastrous consequences that arise if moving forward with reparations without this critique?

Review Love’s methodology for calculating educational reparations. Who/what is included? Who/what is left out? What are the implications of these choices in the methodology? Do you agree or disagree with the methodology? What questions do you have? What shifts might you make given your own lived experiences and orientation to public education?

Toward the end of the final chapter, Love argues for a shift from DEI initiatives to Community and School Reparations Collectives (CRSC). How do these collectives differ from typical DEI committees or programs? What possibilities exist within CSRCs that might not be accessible within a traditional DEI framework?

In the last section of the book, “The Future,” Love writes, “Public education can be different if our values are different.” What are the values that guide your relationships with the people in your communities and schools? How might you shift them more toward a practice of “love, generosity, accountability, truth, freedom, belonging, and redemption?” (p. 287)

PAIRED TEXTS

- ["The Case for Reparations" by Ta-Nehisi Coates](#)
- ["It Is Time for Reparations" by Nikole Hannah-Jones](#)
- [Interview with Pumla Gobodo Madikezela: What Can America Learn From South Africa About National Healing?](#)
- [Dumas and ross' "'Be Real Black for Me': Imagining BlackCrit in Education"](#)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES /
RESOURCES

PROPOSALS FOR REPARATIONS: THEN AND NOW

In this chapter, Love joins a lineage of activists and scholars who have long called for reparations. Visit the links below to learn more about past reparations movements and arguments. As you learn more, consider their contexts, similarities, differences, and aims.

- [Audley "Queen Mother" Moore's "Why Reparations"](#)
- [The Black Panther Party's Ten Point Program](#)

- [Jim Forman's "Black Manifesto" presentation](#)
- [M4BL Reparations Toolkit](#)
- [Origin of Everything: The History of Reparations \(PBS\)](#)

CLASSROOM EXTENSION: LEARNING ABOUT REPARATIONS

["How to Make Amends: A Lesson on Reparations" \(Zinn Education Project\)](#)

This lesson offers high school teachers insight, suggestions, and tools for teaching engaging students in conversations about reparations. Consider retooling this lesson to include Love's argument for educational reparations as well.

["The Rock Collectors: A Story About Systemic Inequity and the Need To Create Change" by Jess Lifshitz](#)

This story and lesson were designed by classroom teacher, Jess Lifshitz as a means to engage elementary-aged learners in discussions about inequities, justice, and redistribution. Consider using it with younger learners to start conversations about reparations in your classroom.

"CLOSING" ENGAGEMENT

A FINAL PROMPT
FOR REFLECTION

In the final pages of the book, Love includes the following quote from Dumas and Ross' (2016) article, "Be Real Black for Me: Black Crit in Education":

Not just a love for the Harlem Renaissance or the Civil Rights Movement, but love for loud colors and loud voices. Love for sagging pants, hoodies, and cornerstore candies. Love for gold grills and belly laughs on hot summer porches. Carry it on as a site of struggle — as engaging with the historical and contemporary yearning to be at peace. As forging refuge from the gaze of White supremacy — where Black children dream weightless, unracialized, and human. Where language flows freely and existence is nurtured and resistance is breath. Where the Black educational imagination dances wildly into the night — quenching the thirst of yearning and giving birth to becoming. (p. 436)

As you reflect on these truths, histories, harm, and joys within the pages of the book, what might it look like for you to refine your love for Blackness in all its complexities? What might it take to build a future that allows the vision offered by Dumas and Ross to become reality?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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DR. BETTINA L. LOVE is the William F. Russell Professor at Teachers College, Columbia University and the bestselling author of *We Want To Do More Than Survive*. In 2022, the Kennedy Center named Dr. Love one of the Next 50 Leaders making the world more inspired, inclusive, and compassionate. She is a co-founder of the Abolitionist Teaching Network (ATN), whose mission is to develop and support teachers and parents fighting injustice within their schools and communities, having granted over \$250,000 to abolitionists around the country. She is also a founding member of the Task Force that launched the program In Her Hands, distributing more than \$15 million to Black women living in Georgia. In Her Hands is one of the largest guaranteed income pilot programs in the U.S. Dr. Love is a sought-after public speaker on a range of topics, including abolitionist teaching, anti-racism, Hip Hop education, Black girlhood, queer youth, educational reparations, and art-based education to foster youth civic engagement. In 2018, she was granted a resolution by Georgia's House of Representatives for her impact on the field of education.

ABOUT THE CREATOR



shea wesley martin is a Black, queer, gender-expansive scholar-teacher raised at the intersection of gospel and go-go. A product of public schooling and community college, they are currently completing their doctoral studies in Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University. shea's work explores the ways queer and trans folks of color disrupt and reimagine notions of literacy, archive, and schooling. A former classroom teacher, shea's orientation to this work will be forever informed by some of the dopest youth in Texas, Florida, and Massachusetts.

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