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THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

A Thesis Presented

by

Catherine McKenna Cane

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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Abstract

Teaching is a profession. Education is a social responsibility. The idea that teachers should be solely responsible for educating an entire population places a heavy burden on those who have chosen to dedicate their lives to a single profession. To create a more stable, successful, and socially conscious society it is imperative that every individual sees themselves as an educator; for, a socially neglected education system leads to weak socio-cultural ties, which results in social upheaval and heavily fractured social systems. This is not to say that we are all teachers, but rather to argue that because our education system is so tightly bound to our society's choices that it becomes imperative that we all understand our responsibility to our communities and get comfortable holding the title: educator. It is when the general public removes itself from understanding, valuing, and holding space in education that systems of education, especially public education, begin to fail.

The title "educator" is a social responsibility because education is tightly bound to a history embedded in socially constructed racial divisions. These racial divisions have created conditions within our society that have affected economics and steered political policy. By understanding that society as a whole is responsible for the conditions of education, it becomes clear that we, as a society, have placed unrealistic expectations on the teaching profession. The social, cultural, political, and economic systems within our society have directly shaped how education is administered and the varying types of educational instruction people receive. Especially based on race. Through race-based educational deprivation, which derives from socially constructed policies, our society has determined people's economic status and has perpetuated systemic racism. How are we, in today's world, able to argue that education is the sole responsibility of the *teacher* when the *education system* itself has been constructed on a foundation of socially supported discrimination?

Table of Contents

Thesis Outline	1
Chapter I: Processing Socially Constructed Education	2
Bridging the Gaps in My Education.....	4
Social Impacts Determining My Educational Access.....	7
Understanding Education as a Social Responsibility.....	11
Chapter II: Educational Responsibility Requires Critical Examination of Racism ..	15
The Social Foundation of Education.....	17
Academic Neglect Based on Socially Supported Racism.....	20
Conflicting Educational Views and Social Responsibilities within the Black Community.....	22
Woodson’s Response to Socially Constructed Black Education.....	26
Shifting the Responsibility of Education on to Society.....	28
Chapter III: The Implications of a Socially Neglected Education System Perpetuating Educational Inequity	30
Social Activism as a Means of Perpetuating Racism.....	31
Recognizing Social Redlining as the Foundation of Racist Educational Policy.....	35
Educational and Social Exploitation Based on Racially Segregated Communities....	38
Social and Racial Status’ Determining Access to Education.....	41
Chapter IV: The Future of Education is Socially Responsible	44
Critical Race Theory and Our Responsibility to Socially Just Education.....	47
The Social Responsibilities Embedded in Education.....	54
A Call to Action: Our Responsibility as Educators.....	58
References	61

Thesis Outline

This thesis will argue that education is a social responsibility. I argue that it is all of our responsibility to situate ourselves within the education system, claim responsibility for education, and recognize our historical positions of power and influence that have shaped education and consequently shaped the current education system we have today. I make this argument and continue its themes over four chapters. The first chapter is designed to help situate the argument of socially-responsible education by offering up my personal educational history. I use personal narrative within this to help unpack why I see education as a social responsibility rather than the individual responsibility of teachers. Throughout the second chapter, I explore how critical social and educational theorists have drawn connections between schools and society. Through exploring social class with the help of John Dewey, I then draw on several influential Black scholars to examine how class structures have been determined by race, and race has determined educational access. The third chapter is centered around how political policies are often shaped by social sentiment, as a way of connecting those impacts to how they affect educational access. In the last chapter, I tie the ideas of race, educational access, and social influence together as a call to end social neglect when it comes to educational access.

Chapter I: Processing Socially Constructed Education

Education is much like an intricately woven spider's web. A laborious task, managed with care, and careful consideration. As each see-through strand is spun and delicately connected to the next, an unforeseen pattern emerges. Much like the individual lines of silk in a web, the ties within the education system are similarly connected to a much larger and delicate social structure. This intricate educational web is woven through patterns of intentional educational efforts, lived experiences, and social attitudes. Much like the web of a spider, the patterns within our education system are almost invisible. There are no solitary actors in education. Just as there is no lone strand of silk capable of trapping insects. There is no teacher independently responsible for shaping and educating minds. Education is the connection individuals have to one another. It is a process created by a collection of experiences that get deconstructed and revealed to us within classrooms. There is no path to education that is independent of our social environment. Everything that we learn is not just due to the work of a teacher, but to a broader social network.

To understand the complex and interconnected nature of America's public education system, and how large of an impact it has on our society, it is imperative to understand our educational journeys. How our educations have been woven together seamlessly with society, without our knowledge or understanding. If we can understand how our educational path has been spun then perhaps we can understand that, no matter how distant the connection, we are all responsible for shaping and continuing this exquisite labyrinth of knowledge societies are built upon. It is critical to recognize that there is more to the pub-

lic education system than just a schoolhouse and those who work within its walls. It is crucial to understand that education is not the sole responsibility of a teacher. We are all actors in shaping our societies. We cannot design a successful community by ourselves. We cannot possibly continue to leave the work of educating society, consequently the future of our communities, upon the shoulders of those who take the charge of being teachers. We are all part of an intricate network, which leads back to education being the keystone to a successful and equitable future for all.

When we think about school, education, and those who *should* be providing knowledge, the image of an apple sitting on a wooden desk, a dusty chalkboard, and neat rows of chairs and desks come to mind. However, in today's world, our system is complex. More connects us than divides us. In classrooms, we use more Smart technology than ever before and would need to explain what a chalkboard is to our current generation of elementary students. Today, even throughout a global health crisis, teachers pace excitedly throughout their classrooms, rather than using their desks as barricades from students. Apples have been replaced with half-empty coffee cups as teachers pour over assignments, the next day's materials, and stay up far past their students' bedtimes, trying to figure out the best way to reach even just one struggling student. Despite the ways, education has changed and the massive educational adaptations that have occurred even just within the last year to meet the needs of a world in the grips of a lethal virus, the public's image of *who* is responsible for education has, for the most part, remained stagnant. What we need to ask ourselves is this: *is education the sole responsibility of the classroom teacher?* I argue: no. Even if the schoolhouse is at the center of the educational web, and

you find yourself five times removed, you are in connection with the system as a whole. A city planner, even if they have no children, is still responsible for taking up the charge to ensure that roads and sidewalks help lead a student to the doors of a school. The designers of bus routes must undertake the responsibility of ensuring students can find their way safely to the front doors of a school and back home again. Even if you find yourself more than ten times removed from the chaos of classrooms and hallways, it is your responsibility, at the voting booth, to understand the implications of the choices that your vote may have on another's ability to unlock a successful future. In this way, we are all educators. We are all responsible for educating, shaping, and continuing to weave together a web of knowledge that allows not just the individual to succeed, but allows us, as a society, the ability to thrive. Alone a teacher can only do so much. A community working together has a much better chance of helping every individual gain access to a stable, healthy, and secure future and thus repay that dedication to the next generation.

Bridging the Gaps in My Education

I do not make this argument to undercut the importance of teachers, school administrators, and those who find themselves at the epicenter of learning. I do this to argue that there is not a single person who should feel like they have the right to abdicate their responsibility in spinning together these very fragile social strands connected to education. As a way of displaying how much of our education is shaped by our societies and not just our classrooms, I offer up my own background. In considering the complexities of my own educational history what stands out to me the most is how every class seemed to be

taught in isolation. Subjects taught in isolation made it hard for me to apply what I was learning in school to my life, future, and my other classes. I remember the day this all changed. And it truly was one particular moment when all of a sudden I understood that education was not just individual repositories of facts, but instead a network of intricately spun fibers, all entwined to create a sticky net in order to catch more knowledge. This day occurred during my senior year of high school. That year, I had decided to take environmental studies instead of calculus. This course was much more than just the study of water pollution and carbon emissions. We explored the environmental impacts of poverty, war, and global commerce. We examined tourism, and the toll our food system has on land. On one ordinary day, I was chatting with my teacher and remember giving him a big smile. I remember excitedly informing him that his lessons were connecting to my other subjects. At that moment, I understood that all of my classes, no matter how seemingly different, were all connected. After sharing this epiphany I realized he was looking at me with concern. Then with mild frustration. I remember he ran his fingers through his beard as he often did when he struggled to find the right words. All he could manage in response, in a mildly shocked and defeated tone, was: "wow...we have failed you." After lengthy reflection, I now know that he was not talking about his, individual, failure, or that of his colleagues. He was talking about the failure of a system. An education system that has been designed to neatly pack information into silos. He was talking about how when teachers are to be the only recognized educators, the web breaks and societies begin their slow decline. All those finely and thoughtfully crafted strands of knowledge break under the weight of individualism.

It was because of the global connections made within this environmental studies class that I ended up getting a degree in International Development. I studied global politics, global conflicts, economic systems, organizations, languages, religions, and a variety of cultures. I read about and researched wars, poverty, environmental catastrophes, and how nations are directly impacted by the decisions made by strangers halfway across the globe. What I ended up taking away from my Bachelor's degree was much like what I ended up getting out of my environmental studies class. It was the understanding that everyone is inextricably linked through a sticky web of politics, history, economics, and social issues. I began to find a pattern within my thoughts as I examined global issues. My answer to solving most of the problems I was challenged to examine seemed to always narrow down to education. Placing the responsibility of education on communities and empowering them with the ability to provide access to learning seems to be one of the best solutions to creating a positive social network, rather than depending on the few to bear the weight of a nation's intellectual future. When people are provided with the tools to question their surroundings, their leaders, and the systems of power they operate within, they are able to create mass change. Reversely, when people are denied access to think and challenge their systems, those with the power of intellect are then able to manipulate systems for personal, rather than collective, gain. Education is the world's most powerful weapon. However, for too long has education been placed into neat, sterile packages to the point that we have lost our ability to purposefully utilize all that it has to offer us.

Social Impacts Determining My Educational Access

If I were to truly examine my path to this educational epiphany though, it took place years before my senior year. The road to forming my worldview is not the sole result of classroom participation. When I think about it, I did not start out with the most advantageous academic prospects. I was born in the early 1990s in Texas, biracial, Black presenting. If I had remained within these circumstances my education would have been vastly different from the one I received. My educational circumstances would not have been determined by my own lack of educational capacity, but rather because those who are poor, racial minorities, or part of other stigmatized minority groups experience less educational stability and access (Rooks, 2017). There is such a wealth of evidence proving the lack of educational supports, that one researcher coined the term “segronomics” to describe the malicious intent behind providing minorities with a subpar education (Rooks, 2017, p. 2). “Segrenomics is as much of a business strategy as it is an [educational] ideology...[as it is aimed at] profiting specifically from high levels of racial and economic segregation” (Rooks, 2017, p. 2-5). Even though I will never know, nor will I ever be able to prove that the circumstances I was born into would have caused me to receive a lesser education, I can confidently presume that I would have been more easily resigned to a “...severely limited educational [experience, which would have] consigned [me] to...lower rungs of a racial and economic caste system...” (Rooks, 2017, p. 3).

Today, as we examine inequity and the larger social structures influencing educational outcomes, it is hard not to examine the past in an attempt to understand how we have arrived at such a future. Looking back at the ideas behind integration and desegre-

gating classrooms it is now clear that the intentions behind this movement missed the mark on what was truly needed. “Black...parents were never fighting to have their children sit beside white children in the belief that integration would automatically create equitable education. Instead, they understood that resources followed white children; and if there were any chance that their children would receive those benefits, they would have to attend white schools” (Ladson-Billings, 2017, p. 84). The politicized nature of race, how skin color has determined the make-up of neighborhoods, schools, and economic opportunity has not diminished over time. Rather, those in power have created a system that is directly designed to uplift certain communities, and purposefully neglect the needs of others (Ladson-Billings, 2017). As I reflect upon my educational opportunities it is clear that the social and economic conditions into which I was born would have created far more barriers to my academic success than the one I was fortunate enough to receive.

My accomplishments in education, despite the many marks against me from birth, are only partially due to my teachers. The first major determining factor in my educational success was perhaps my adoption. In an attempt to try and untangle my own messy web of understanding the various academic barriers in my life I wrote a letter to Adoption. Personified as an Angel guiding me through life, it became quite clear that my adoption was the single most significant educational gift I have ever been given. I wrote:

Dear Adoption,[...] Because of you I have had extraordinary experiences. When I was six and my family moved to Germany, you were there. Because of you, I traveled the world at a young age. [...] As I basked in the Mediterranean sun, and cooled down in its beautiful sea, you were the hidden catalyst for all those events. Because of you, I was able to fall in love with languages. Becoming

fluent in one, studying many others. Never once was I prevented from exploration. Adoption you made all of this possible.

So much of what I have learned in life has nothing to do with what I have learned in a classroom. My worldview has been shaped by travel. My appreciation for languages, cultures, food, and life, comes from my family taking me on trips and roaming throughout Europe. Experiences, I can once more confidently assume, would have never taken place had I remained in the circumstances of my birth. The web of education does not only include my teachers, who helped me better understand my views, but also: adoption agencies, travel agents, chefs, and hotel managers. My web of knowledge grows as more and more strings are woven by those who may not have considered assigning themselves the title: educator.

My education is not just the personal experiences that led me to the path I'm on now. It is also a socially constructed narrative of how we are taught to live our lives. In a different letter I wrote to the Buddhist philosophy of "clinging" (Nhat Hanh, 2007), I unearthed a socially constructed account of how we, as individuals and a society, are expected to live our lives. This narrative is heavily embedded in how we view our own education. Through evaluating my own tendencies to "cling" (Nhat Hanh, 2007) to these socially constructed views I wrote:

When I was in high school I remember wishing I was in college. In college, I wished to be done with my degree and in the workforce. Time and hard work ensured that each of these milestones was met, however, I was never satisfied when my wishes came true.

This shows how we, as a society, are often chasing the next step. Instead of connecting the fine fibers of our webs to one another, we instead attempt to construct a feeble and narrow ladder. The idea of always needing to reach the next rung rarely allows us to fully appreciate the present circumstances we are engaging with. When students seek to rush past the phase of education they are in, they often miss the point of the lessons they are learning. When students “cling” to receiving certain grades, or teachers are forced to “cling” to student achievement scores for their schools to receive funding, the true meaning behind education is lost (Nhat Hanh, 2007). I have to wonder if my inability to see the connections between all of my classes, until I was eighteen, has something to do with this socially constructed narrative that forces us to need to be striving for the “next step” rather than engaging in a web of knowledge that can offer a vast array of tools to help engage us with the world as a whole.

The idea behind clinging (Nhat Hanh, 2007) to narratives, false or otherwise, often causes disillusionment (Frankel, 2006). This state alters how individuals view their futures in such specific ways that when their fantasies or expectations do not come true they slip into a state of depression, and subsequently find themselves further from their intended goals (Frankel, 2006). We have constructed an education system that tells students that grades and not learning is what is important. A system that tells teachers high test scores rather than critical thinking is what is needed for building successful futures. A system that has allowed all those who do not consider themselves a student, parent, or teacher to relinquish their responsibility in helping shape a future for the communities in which they live. This abdication of the title “educator” has led us to live within a society

that praises those with power rather than ensuring we all have equitable access to intellect and find meaning in our lives. This has left teachers and school faculty high and dry when it comes to fighting and advocating for student needs. It has also greatly weakened the social, cultural, and economic infrastructure of our society.

Understanding Education as a Social Responsibility

This brings me back to asking, *who is responsible for education?* I believe most people would argue that teachers are. After all, they went to school, received degrees, and have chosen to dedicate their lives to take charge of this sole responsibility. However, the idea that teachers are solely responsible for educating an entire population places a heavy social burden on them. “When we consider the many ways the entire society is arrayed against...[majority minority students]—segregated housing, substandard schools..., health threats, lack of access to healthy food, and inadequate healthcare—we cannot reduce [the students] academic problems to individual failings [of themselves or a teacher] (Ladson-Billings, 2017, p. 86). What goes unrecognized far too often is the interconnected nature of education, health, economic access, and social support needed for teachers to fully do their jobs and educate students. Teachers are in fact the unacknowledged backbone of every society. Without a kindergarten teacher to help a young mind learn how to read and write, we would be without doctors. Without a school, librarian to introduce young readers to different literary themes we would be without journalists. But thinking that teachers are the only educators does not just burden them with shaping minds, it also perpetuates the assumption that others are not responsible for sharing in some of the re-

sponsibility. It assumes that students are only learning in classrooms, rather than through lived experiences shaped by the societies around them. Teachers help form the building blocks of a person's intellectual capacity and are often charged with being the sole providers of students' social, emotional, and academic upbringing. However, this is too narrow a definition of what it means to be an educator. Leaving a fraction of our society holding space in education.

By placing all educational, social, and cultural responsibilities on the shoulders of teachers the rest of our society has virtually removed themselves from assuming even a small portion of the responsibility of participating in students' education. This narrow view of what an educator is also forcing teachers to pick up the socio-economic slack our communities face. Those who do not identify as teachers have the ability to relinquish any and all responsibility to help take up the charge of education simply because they do not identify with a profession. Therefore, concluding that they have no role in education altogether. Because of this limiting definition of what an educator is seen to be, our society has burdened teachers with unrealistic and unachievable expectations. What we need to begin to do is expand our view of what it means to be an educator. We need to recognize that even just by showing up to vote whether it be on a school budget or for a local official or president, we are interacting with systems that connect to and directly impact educational outcomes.

To create a more stable, successful, and socially conscious society every individual must see themselves as an educator; for, a neglected education system leads to weak socio-cultural ties, resulting in social upheaval and a fractured socio-economic system.

Teaching may be a profession; however, being an educator surpasses what can be done in a classroom, and educational change is deeply rooted in individuals recognizing that they are always participating in the educational success of their societies. Education is life's group project. Teachers are currently working on the front lines of a never-ending battle to provide students with the best they can give. However, everyone must recognize that they also have a place in education and that they are influential actors in the system as a whole. It is only with this understanding that we have a chance at creating a more equal, equitable, and just society.

The idea that education is more than just those who hold a teaching license or find themselves compelled to engage with academics is not new. However, over time it seems as if our society has dropped the ball on seeing the importance of an equal and equitable education system. The scales of education have been greatly tipped due to the general public abandoning their responsibilities. Public schools are filled to the brim with those who often find themselves towards the bottom of a slippery economic slope and private schools have swooped in to capitalize off of another's persons willingness to purchase knowledge at an inflated rate (Rooks, 2017). What is missing from our current education system, that is leading to its downfall, is community investment and social responsibility. We are all educators what this means is that we all have a responsibility to recognize how our own education and socialization have impacted how we approach educational, economic, and political structures. With this understanding, we need to move forward and focus on re-educating and re-socializing ourselves and push ourselves to take up an unwavering charge as educators. To build successful societies and education systems, we

need to get comfortable understanding our own biases and being to be willing to confront our own prejudices in order to ensure that younger generations have the chance to live in a more just society.

Chapter II: Educational Responsibility Requires Critical Examination of Racism

There have been many scholars who have pleaded on behalf of education being a potent force for progressive social change. That the need for education is truly at the heart of all social progress. Critical thinkers such as John Dewey, W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington have argued resolutely on behalf of education being used as an influential tool to prevent social, cultural, and political conflicts. Some of the most powerful sentiments for a more complete understanding of the deeply rooted connections of education to the larger society are most potently described by the haunting pleas of the German playwright Bertolt Brecht. Brecht saw firsthand the effects of complacency sweep across his nation and watched as stagnant attitudes yielded disastrous results and in his writings, he underscored the importance of education as a means of ensuring safer societies.

Much like other scholars, poets, modern thinkers, and social progressives, Brecht (1932, 2017) bore witness to the social oppression seep into his society resulting in critical thought being severed from the broader social and political picture. As Brecht witnessed the general populace of Germany become subdued due to a lack of critical thinking, he took charge. In his attempt to rouse a nation from an impending nightmare, Brecht contended that a well-rounded education can be used as a weapon in the face of a deteriorating and dangerous social atmosphere. Brecht (1932, 2017) pleaded:

Learn the simplest of things! For those/ Whose time has come It is never too late!// Learn the ABCs, it is not enough, but learn it!// [...]// Begin now! You must know everything!// [...]// See for yourself! What you do not know yourself/ You do not know./ Check the bill/ You have to pay it./ Lay your finger on every charge/ Ask: how did this get here? [...]

(Brecht, 1932, 2017)

These words are historically rooted within a context of extreme political upheaval and recount the fear of the eventually devastatingly lethal cost of a society being starved of critical thinking (Brecht, 1932, 2017). These words now serve as a terrifying reminder of the toll that comes from denying society the ability to think freely and critically (Brecht, 1932, 2017). Brecht's message holds true no matter the time period. No matter the context. We must educate ourselves, ensure everyone's right to question systems of power, and forge a society where everyone can not only survive but thrive. It is our responsibility as a society to "check the bill" and ensure that we are paying for not only what we want but that what we are charged with is a true reflection of services rendered (Brecht, 1932, 2017).

Therefore, it is imperative that each of us sees ourselves as educators, and we recognize those around us as educators as well. As individuals hold a priceless and important collective role in education. When the alarm bells are sounded from the writings of poets demanding that all persons, no matter their social standing, recognize the political power and urgency that education holds, it is clear that the matter of education is not a stale and stagnant occupation reserved only for those who stand in front of classrooms. It is only when societies recognize the importance of ensuring everyone's education, and recognize how each and every individual is working as an actor in education, that we can truly ensure everyone's basic human rights. We must strive to not only educate ourselves and question the systems we live in but also fight to secure those same rights for those who

live within our communities. Being an educator is a promise to consistently and collectively work towards an equitable future for all.

The Social Foundation of Education

Long before Brecht's plea for a nation to wake up, look around, and begin to question the decisions being made by those in power there was John Dewey. Dewey (1900, 1902, 1990) explored the relationship societies and social structures have in connection to educational systems and argued that the structure of education, more specifically the United States' education system, is far too individualistic. Dewey (1900, 1902, 1990) argued that one of the most important connections for a prosperous society would be an unyielding tie between communities and systems of education. He would argue that one cannot thrive, nor possibly exist, without the other (Dewey, 1900, 1902, 1990). "It is our present education [system] which is highly specialized, one-sided and narrow. It is an education [system] dominated almost entirely by the medieval conception of learning" (Dewey, 1900, 1902, 1990, p. 26). The "medieval conception of learning" Dewey (1900, 1902, 1990, p. 26) is referencing is the isolated nature in which learning takes place. The lone educational institution examines the theories of social structures yet isolates itself from those same structures; consequently, doing neither the institution nor the society any good (Dewey, 1900, 1902, 1990). Since Dewey's (1900, 1902, 1990) time our educational model has only become increasingly more individualistic. As Dewey eloquently describes, with our stiff and unyielding conception of education, being only a relationship that just includes teachers and their pupils, the real meaning of education has

been erased and what it should be, is a relationship that connects a whole community rather than just a few community actors (Dewey, p. 6-7, 1900, 1902, 1990).

Societies are only as powerful as their utilization of education. This power can only be unleashed when the general public sees that no matter their profession, they will always play a significant role in educational systems. Only when each member of society recognizes that everyone continues throughout life as both a teacher and a student, can progress and social change be made. For without everyone's active participation in education the whole system begins to collapse in on itself. Dewey (1900, 1902, 1990) asserted this same point. He recognized that only when members of a community see themselves as agents of educational change can there be social progress (Dewey, 1900, 1902, 1990). Without everyone taking up the charge of education and situating themselves as an educational actor, the slow, tedious death of a society sets in. The will to create an equitable social environment becomes asphyxiated once people abandon their educational duties. “[T]he fundamental organization is that of the school itself as a community of individuals, in its relations to other forms of social life...Organization is nothing but getting things into connection with one another, so that they work...” (Dewey, 1900, 1902, 1990, p. 64). Our schools and communities have fallen out of “connection with one another” (Dewey, 1900, 1902, 1990, p. 64) and to mend this disconnect we can no longer afford to see ourselves as individuals with professions isolated from structures of education, but rather we need to see that we will always have and need to continue to cultivate, a vital role in educational systems in order to ensure social progress.

Part of the issue with our current educational model, as identified by Dewey (1900, 1902, 1990), is how it was initially constructed as an indication of class, reserved for the few and denied to the many. From the very beginning, American education has not been offered nor accessible to all persons within society. Education in America developed outside of the dominant social culture and was used as a tool to maintain power by those who had already monopolized it (Dewey, 1900, 1902, 1990). “If we go back a few centuries, we find a practical monopoly of learning...Learning was a class matter [class often being determined by race in the United States]...But as a direct result of [modernization], this has changed...Knowledge is no longer an immobile solid; it has been liquified. It is actively moving in all currents of society itself” (Dewey, 1900, 1902, 1990, p. 24-25). It is due to this “liquefaction” (Dewey, 1900, 1902, 1990) that everyone must see themselves as an integral part of what has become a social necessity. No longer is knowledge held stagnant. Caged within the confines of upper-class libraries. Times have shifted and education has become fundamentally essential to the success of society as a whole. It is no longer a luxury afforded to the few, but rather a crucial part of life for all. So why is it that, if education is so important, we, as an American society, still act as if teaching is something that occurs only within the strict confines of school buildings? Why do we assume that teachers are the only ones responsible for educating minds? Can we not recognize that these perspectives have been based on a past narrative of how knowledge *was* distributed and not how it *should* be distributed today (Dewey, 1900, 1902, 1990)?

Academic Neglect Based on Socially Supported Racism

With Dewey's (1900, 1902, 1990) insights on a classist educational model, dictating the undercurrent of educational standards, it is crucial to understand where these class divides have stunted educational growth within the United States. Perhaps one of the most distinguished voices on America's class problems is W. E. B. Du Bois. Du Bois investigated the history of race, and class within the United States and thus has helped to navigate an overly complicated narrative of education in America. It is no secret that race and more specifically racism, in America has determined the fate and status of generations of minority groups. It is in this history that we can see how socio-cultural mindsets influence public policies, and consequently determine, in a myriad of ways, access to educational benefits for those deemed racially inferior. The history of race in America, a history not only created but perpetuated by social and racial hierarchies, has consequently determined the educational, therefore economic, fates of countless lives. "And above all, we daily hear that an education that encourages aspiration, that sets the loftiest of ideals and seeks an end culture and character rather than bread-winning, is the privilege of white men and the danger and delusion of black" (Du Bois, 1903, 2012, p. 84).

Du Bois (1903, 2012) unraveled the race/class system embedded within education. Education has always been "...the privilege of white men and the danger and delusion of black [men]" (Du Bois, 1903, 2012, p. 84). How are we, in today's world, able to argue that education is the sole responsibility of the *teacher* when the *education system* itself is predicated on discrimination, built by those seeking to maintain power rather than distribute it equitably? There are policies that have been constructed in atmospheres of so-

cial, cultural, and historical discrimination which seek to interrupt and alter the lessons written upon the blackboard. The web of education includes underlying and unfortunately unyielding historical patterns of discrimination, and it will take more than a single teacher on the front lines to not only educate but reeducate historically constructed and generationally reinforced social mindsets.

Today, our social charge as educators, a distinction that must be applied to all, not just a select few, is to ensure the rights of all persons. “Progress in human affairs is more often a pull than a push, a surging forward of the exceptional man, and the lifting of his duller brethren slowly and painfully to his vantage-ground” (Du Bois, 1903, 2012, p. 85). Historically, this slow march towards progress has consisted of facets of individual activists, those who have been most directly impacted by injustice. It has been their charge and responsibility to fight for what should have been given freely. That is why it has been so slow. With systems “pushing” against those who seek to “pull” along others who do not know how to affect change, progress and molasses compete in a comical sprint (Du Bois, 1903, 2012, p. 85). When progress finally pushed society to deign to consider the impact of a nation divided by race it was education, first and foremost, that was needed to continue to pull a class out of their circumstances (Du Bois, 1903, 2012). “...[T]he mass of the freedmen at the end of the [Civil] war lacked the intelligence so necessary to modern working men. They must first have the common school to teach them to read, write, and cipher...” (Du Bois, 1903, 2012, p. 85). The one consistent and potent force for social progress is and always will be education.

Conflicting Educational Views and Social Responsibilities within the Black Community

By Du Bois' (1903, 2012) own account there were plenty of Black intellectuals during his time who did not agree with nor support his ideas of how to pull the Black community to a higher social standing. One such voice was Booker T. Washington, who Du Bois (1903, 2012) disagreed with quite adamantly. As Du Bois (1903, 2012) aimed to *dramatically* uplift the Black community within America, Washington had other, more subdued, plans. Washington's vision was essentially the continuation of the "separate but equal" argument which has had disastrous effects that can still be seen today (Du Bois, 1903, 2012). Washington argued: "In all things purely social we can be as separate as the five fingers, and yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress" (Du Bois, 1903, 2012, p. 41). The danger Du Bois (1903, 2012) saw in Washington's compromising view of what Black excellence could be in America was how Washington encouraged the Black community to give up fighting for basic rights that would lead to social progress. As Du Bois stated, "Washington distinctly asks that black people give up, [...], three things, — First[:] political power, Second[:] insistence on civil rights, Third[:] higher education of Negro youth, — and concentrate all their energies on industrial education..." (Du Bois, 1903, 2012, p. 48). Du Bois (1903, 2012) was by no means the only Black leader to want to create and shape what progress looked like for the Black community at the time. However, he understood that, despite his best intentions, Washington was essentially perpetuating a class system based on race (Du Bois, 1903, 2012). This system still continues today.

Despite Du Bois' and Washington's oppositional views on the social advancements of the Black community at the time, their views were not necessarily as oppositional when it came to the needs of Black education. Du Bois (1935) understood the necessity, to some degree, of separation, to protect future equality. When it came to the question of education, Du Bois (1935) understood that some form of separation was needed in order to *ensure* Black students were taught properly. "The proper education of any people includes sympathetic touch between teacher and pupil; knowledge on the part of the teacher [on the pupil's]...surroundings and background, and the history of [their] class and group..." (Du Bois, 1935, p. 328). Du Bois (1935) is not only suggesting, but explicitly stating that in order to properly educate Black students there needed to be a full and holistic understanding of that student and their unique position in society. Not only was this true in the time of Du Bois, but these were Dewey's (1900, 1902, 1990) sentiments exactly. Schools cannot operate independently from society, nor society independently from schools as they have direct impacts on one another (Dewey, 1900, 1902, 1990). They are inextricably linked.

The only way Du Bois (1935) could fathom agreeing to any form of segregation was based on the fact that he understood that in order for education to be successful it needed to be situated in a society's culture and have a deep understanding of social history. Therefore, when examining American public education through a lens tainted by racist social policies, Du Bois (1935) understood that the best way to support the needs of the Black community was educational segregation. A segregated educational system for Du Bois (1935), meant that Black students had a chance of surviving in an unjust society be-

cause at a minimum it would ensure their academic success and prepare them for a more successful economic future.

...I am no fool; and I know that race prejudice in the United States today is such that most Negroes cannot receive proper education in white institutions. If the public schools [...] were thrown open to all races [...], the education that colored children would get in them would be worse than pitiable. It would not be education...To endure bad schools and wrong education because the schools are 'mixed' is a costly if not fatal mistake.

(Du Bois, 1935, p. 328-330)

So, more and more societies must step up and bear the responsibility for the education of students. Societies are made up of a collection of educators, not just teachers. Unfortunately, the history of education in America is that of an institution built on a class system determined by race. This system has forced the Black community, and other affected minority groups, to adapt to the dominant social culture, which has only provided a lackadaisical form of education because there as there is no longer any “sympathetic touch” or social and historical understanding between White teachers and minority students (Du Bois, 1935, p. 328). It is the efforts of communities as a whole that create the educational environment in which students learn. Social attitudes, perpetuated by generational perspectives and historical class designations, all play a significant role in how we, to this day, educate students. Therefore, how can any of us relinquish the title of educator, when we as individuals play a critical role in the educational foundation of our communities?

Du Bois (1935), although not in support of the segregation of races as a social necessity but rather as a tool to ensure that Blacks would receive proper educational bene-

fits, understood the educational, economic, and social implications of turning Black students over to a White education system that cared, and to a degree still cares, little for them.

The motivations for bias vary; the disadvantage to black victims is the same...Racial policy is the culmination of thousands of these individual practices...In this last decade of the twentieth century, color determines the social and economic status of all African Americans, both those who have been highly successful and their poverty-bound brethren...We rise and fall less as a result of our efforts than in response to the needs of a white society that condemns all blacks to quasi citizenship...

(Bell, 1992, p.7-10)

When performing a study in the 1930s about differences in test scores between White and Black students, outcomes were on average the same between the two groups: “[e]qual resources, curriculum, expectations, and infrastructure — even in a segregated environment — produced equal outcomes” (Rooks, 2017, p. 76). In this moment segregation within education was proving Du Bois’s (1935) theory correct. However, fast forward to a more socially contentious society and the outcomes were as Du Bois (1935) feared: racial policies continue to determine the social, economic, and educational successes of Blacks based on the needs of White society (Bell, 1992). Du Bois’s (1935) fears were not rooted in favor of segregation, but in what would happen if Black students were left to the mercy of a system that abhorred them. Again, we see social policies and practices influencing educational outcomes.

Woodson's Response to Socially Constructed Black Education

This leads back to the pressing question: *who is responsible for education?* Or perhaps more fitting: *which systems are dictating education, therefore indirectly dictating who qualifies as an educator?* Perhaps a mind not so far from Du Bois' has a slightly more cautious take on this very question. Despite Du Bois' (1935) insistence on the limited benefits of segregated education and his hesitation to leave Black students vulnerable to a system that was intentionally constructed without them in mind, Carter G. Woodson points to other implications for separate schooling, no matter how well-intended. As Woodson stated in his 1933 book *The Mis-Education of the Negro*: "Somebody outside of the race has desired to try out on Negroes some experiment which interested him and his coworkers; and Negroes, being the objects of charity, have received them cordially" (1933, 2009, p. 63). Here, Woodson (1933, 2009) explores two themes tied to the racial integration of education.

The first theme is how education for Blacks in American has never been so much a right as it has been a social experiment and the education for Black minds has never been considered important, by the White community (Woodson, 1933, 2009). The second is that due to Black education being left to White systems of power Black students have been subjected to patterns of cultural erasure and forced assimilation (Woodson, 1933, 2009). This forced assimilation "Such has been the education of Negroes. They have been taught facts of history, but have never learned to think. Their conception is that you go to school to find out what [White] people have done, and then you go out in life to imitate them" (Woodson, 1933, 2009, p. 65). This demonstrates one of the main ways societies

have dictated people's education, through reinforcing a racial dominant narrative as a way of maintaining supremacy. Woodson (1933, 2009) further argues that education as an experiment leading to forced assimilation results in the annihilation of Black culture and history. These deeply rooted social patterns have left gaping educational divisions that persist today.

Woodson (1933, 2009) is unearthing the continuation of a framework that determines the educational outcomes of Black Americans. "A Negro with sufficient thought to construct a program of his own is undesirable, and the educational systems of this country generally refuse to work [with] such Negroes in promoting their cause" (Woodson, 1933, 2009, p. 63). The foundation of our education system has socialized a mindset that is comfortable applauding a single successful Black person, who has managed to assimilate to White culture rather than reconstruct itself to help uplift marginalized communities and alter the balance of social dominance (Woodson, 1933, 2009). The result of this type of education system is that when Black individuals try to promote themselves in their communities, all members of their community have been conditioned by the same education system to ignore, shame, or even demonize Black intellectualism (Woodson, 1933, 2009). The historic behavioral conditioning of deciding a liberated Black mind is undesirable for dominant society is how we have managed to continue to promote the socio-cultural aspects of a segregated nation whilst simultaneously preaching racial justice (Woodson, 1933, 2009). Once again education and society find themselves continuing in a unique and perverse dance as they attempt to repel one another, whilst simultaneously resisting the fact that they are not only compatible but dependent on one another.

Shifting the Responsibility of Education on to Society

Just as Dewey (1900, 1902, 1990) suggested that education and the pressing need for all to become educated has become increasingly “liquified” in all professions, so too has the necessity of education in every aspect of our society. The implications of choices made in every profession, whether it is intentional or not, are felt within the walls of schools. The implications of choices made by society are constantly felt within educational systems. These choices can connect every job and social institution to student outcomes. It is easy to question the idea that we are all, equally educators. In fact, such a notion should draw suspicion. It should draw suspicion because countless individuals spend their academic careers studying the best ways to educate young, eager minds. It is hard to imagine lumping everyone together, as these institutionally trained individuals have been certified to provide the world with their singular skilled directive: teaching. However, as these social theorists have suggested, there is a lot more to a student’s education than simply learning within the walls of a classroom. Passing the charge of education off to those who have decided it is their life’s calling, has only created deeper social, economic, and academic divisions. If everyone assumed the title of educator, would we not find our communities as a whole to be more successful?

These theorists and social thinkers have shown how race, class, historical patterns, and social mentalities have formed the education system we have today. Therefore, it is on all of us, as a society, to reshape this system to reflect the society we wish to have, rather than continue to live with the consequences of a past riddled with social injustice. The issues that we deal with now within the political sphere be it race, economics, class,

gender are all inherently perpetuated since the system we depend on to teach us how to behave is deeply embedded with discrimination. "...[P]ublic schools are overtly shaping the minds of...civilians of all types...Educational institutions that are not intentionally 'learning organizations,' ones that evolve through a quest for knowledge and social change, end up...[maintaining] the status quo" (Morris, 2016, p. 25-26). We have learned, and today students are learning, in an environment which was not built to support difference, but rather denigrate it. Our minds have been unknowingly molded to fit within the confines of a segregated social narrative. The only way out is to shift educational responsibilities. With education being so tightly bound to a history embedded in socially constructed racial conditioning which has affected class, economics, and political policy, it becomes clear that we, as a society, have placed unrealistic expectations on the teaching profession (Bell, 1992). Being a teacher is a profession. Being an educator is a social responsibility. If there is one system that can make the largest difference in bridging the gaps within social, cultural, and economic divisions, it would be education. It is up to us to break the toxic mold of the past and forge a new one for a future deemed just for all.

Chapter III: The Implications of a Socially Neglected Education System Perpetuating Educational Inequity

The foundation of our education system today is woven into all aspects of historical and social narratives. Our society has directly shaped how education is administered; the types of education people receive; and subsequently, through race-based educational deprivation, our society has determined people's economic status' (Bell, 1992). Historic lack of educational support, based on race, has led to unstable economic conditions resulting in mass socio-cultural upheaval (Anderson, 2015). There is perhaps no better example of how social attitudes regulate classrooms than that of aspiring progressive social policies because historical public policies, based on socially progressive intentions, have fed mass education inequalities (Anderson, 2015). If a society fails to arm its citizens with the ability to thrive then those citizens not only become dependent on social resources but are subjected to exploitation, for they are left vulnerable to the will of a capitalist market (Rooks, 2017). This is the exact situation Brecht (1932, 2017) warned about. When education is limited, and a population's ability to question the systems it must function within is deprived, societies are left to the vagaries of skewed and often corrupt power structures (Woodson, 1933, 2009). This is the impact of leaving education to a singular profession, rather than ensuring that the goal of education is a social responsibility.

This is not a call for everyone to become teachers, but rather an urgent need to lay a base of understanding that we are all in fact educators, because our actions, choices, and professions influence the quality and equity of the type of education our society. What we need to be collectively recognizing is that: teaching is a profession but education is a so-

cial responsibility. It is our social responsibility to recognize how we, as individuals, fit into the larger education system based on the decisions being made within our personal and professional lives. This sounds like an oversimplification of a much more complex issue. But what it entails is for the same social atmosphere that has disenfranchised so many people's education to reassume the responsibility of changing the hostile social environment schools operate within and, subsequently, the toxic environment many students have to learn in.

Social Activism as a Means of Perpetuating Racism

One professional realm that is undeniably linked to education is that of politics and the policies that are created based on political biases. One of the most important educational policies, which was brought about due to changes in the socio-political atmosphere that ended up drastically altering educational discourse, was *Brown v. Board of Education* (National Archives, 2021). The *Brown* case was an indicator of a shifting social plane. This change in the social atmosphere demanded more progressive political momentum and ended up having direct impacts on the educational and economic outcomes of the Black community (Anderson, 2015). The results of this case were not necessarily as positive as it had intended, for the social implications of *Brown* ended up causing overwhelming social backlash from, predominantly White southerners (Anderson, 2015). A case seeking to examine the unequal nature of education based on race, was interpreted by policymakers' who ultimately failed to fully evaluate the social tensions within Southern states ended up creating a system where it became more challenging to

access education for the Black community (Hannah-Jones, 2017, p. 2). Shifting educational policies began to superimpose socially progressive race relations onto an unwilling populace, causing the Black community to lose the educational footing they had previously gained through community efforts. In Alabama, for instance, "...among the most heavily black states...reacted to...Brown...with a full-on revolt...no black child was deemed fit [to enter a white school] and [Alabama] became a model as a...means of avoiding integration [for other like-minded states]" (Hannah-Jones, 2017, p. 2). Du Bois' fears were coming to fruition: the negative implications of social progress in the name of equality for Black education were turning out to be catastrophic for the Black community (Du Bois, 1935).

As *Brown* began to be enforced throughout Southern states, the backlash brought about the closing of public schools to prevent integrated classrooms (Anderson, 2015). In places where forced integration began to occur there was also a slow erasure of Black employment, culture, and educational access (Anderson, 2015). "Consequently, in 1968, when court-ordered desegregation finally came to the south...[t]he large majority of historically Black public schools...were shut down..." (Anderson, 2015, p. 330). What was supposed to be a social movement that pushed political policy to uplift the Black community ended up thrusting that very same community into a period of rapid cultural and educational annihilation (Anderson, 2015). For the most part, it can be said that "...civil rights movement[s] changed the manifestations of racism but not the racialized social structure..." and *Brown* provides a clear example of this (Martin & Varner, 2017, p. 4). Not only did the Black community lose schools, but it also lost Black educational leader-

ship, cultural representation, and consequently a means of sustainable economic mobility (Anderson, 2015). “Black communities repeatedly had to sacrifice their leadership traditions, school cultures, and educational heritage for the other benefits of desegregation” (Cecelski, 1994, p. 7-8). Black students lost the ever-important “sympathetic touch” of being taught within a system that not only cared for them, but also understood their unique historical, cultural, and social positions (Du Bois, 1935, p. 328). This massive loss for the Black community was not due to a failure in schools themselves, but a social atmosphere dictating the level and type of access certain students were allowed to receive. “[One] of the harsh realities of school desegregation [was] the loss of employment by Black educators...many Black teachers, principals, and to a lesser extent, Black superintendents lost their jobs as a result of the *Brown* decision” (Tillman, 2004, p. 285).

The intention of *Brown* was rooted in a place that sought to equalize educational access for Black Americans. However, the aim and predominant focus of this policy was not directed at the Black community itself. Rather, *Brown* was created to change the behaviors of White citizens who had little intention of addressing the racial divisions set in place by segregation. If the implications of *Brown* are further scrutinized it can be seen that the only ones who truly paid the price of social progress were part of the Black community (Tillman, 2004). Social policies, no matter how well-intended often leave those who are already disenfranchised, to the mercy of those who have no interest in giving up power, and this was overwhelmingly seen in *Brown v. Board* (Anderson, 2015). *Brown* is one of many socially influenced policies that have caused major educational impacts and implications. With the passage of *Brown* also came the illusion of equality

within education. “The conception of equality of opportunity is still held by many persons; but...it implicitly assumes that the existence of [public] school eliminates economic sources of inequality of opportunity. ...” (Coleman, 1968, p. 11). The fact that public education has been made available to all persons has not removed or reversed the economic and social disparities that are fueled by discriminatory social and political policies. “... [Those] children from educationally strong families would enjoy educational opportunities far surpassing that of others. And because such educationally strong backgrounds are found more often among whites than among [Blacks], there would be very large over all [Black]-white achievement differences—and thus inequality of opportunity...” (Coleman, 1968, p. 19).

With *Brown v. Board* as part of our educational history, it is important to recognize how socio-political decisions have impacted classrooms. How is it that we can assume that teachers can be solely responsible for the education of students when the aspects of education are rooted in the ever-changing social tides of our society? Citizens, as a collective, need to recognize their position in determining the atmosphere that students must learn in and teachers have to teach in. Racial and historical patterns throughout the United States display how deeply rooted society is in education, and therefore why it is imperative that all, not just a select few, take up the charge of being educators. Again, not all of us have to be teachers, but all of us must be willing to hold space within the educational system, through recognizing our own individual and vocational impacts on student outcomes.

Recognizing Social Redlining as the Foundation of Racist Educational Policy

Brown is one example showing the social connections we all share and their ties to systems of education. It is not a far leap to understand that policies targeting education, influenced by social movements, hold significant connections to schools and student outcomes. However, there are other professions whose policies have been socially constructed, and whose impacts on education hold a significant, but perhaps less obvious impact on determining educational access. One such profession, which has had an unimaginably significant, and profoundly negative, impact on the education of minority students is the real-estate industry. Under the New Deal, the segregation of neighborhoods became more rigid and apparent (Rothstein, 2017). “Despite its nominal rule of respecting the prior racial composition of neighborhoods — itself a violation for African Americans’ constitutional rights — the [Public Works Administration] segregated projects even where there was no previous pattern of segregation” (Rothstein, 2017, p. 21). As an influx of federally funded housing projects was developed, so too developed the increasing divide between Black and White neighborhoods (Rothstein, 2017). The results of this federally-funded segregation were that Black Americans faced a social and economic removal from their communities, as they were forced into crowded ghettos and hidden from their White counterparts (Rothstein, 2017). Black Americans were forced towards the socio-economic perimeters, subsequently perpetuating the dominant White narrative of segregation, as Black Americans were forced to live in “...packed...high-rise[s]...where community life was impossible...[and where] access to jobs and social services was more difficult...” (Rothstein, 2012, p. 30-31). Housing policies, banks, and the real estate mar-

ket as a whole began to dictate the racial make-up of neighborhoods, thus determining the racial and economic make-up of classrooms (Martin & Varner, 2017).

Not only did Black Americans face physical removal from cities, but federal government departments assisted in perpetuating educational segregation through housing segregation (Rothstein, 2012). “The IRS has always had an obligation to withhold tax favoritism from discriminatory organizations, but...sixteen years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, the IRS granted tax exemptions to private white-only academies that had been established...to evade the ruling” (Rothstein, 2012, p. 102). Black families were being herded into neighborhoods specifically designed to perpetuate economic, social, and educational failure for African Americans, and this was all subsidized by local, state, and federal levels of government. At all levels of government from the local up to federal, extraordinary measures were being taken in order to push out Black individuals and families, increasing social isolation, and restricting access to social supports and economic mobility (Rothstein, 2012). This “...included routing interstate highways to create racial boundaries...[along with] choosing school sites to force families to move to segregated neighborhoods if they wanted education for their children” (Rothstein, 2012, p. 122). Examining these events of blatant discrimination and social neglect, not as singular but as a collective pattern, “...we can see that they were part of a national system by which state and local government supplemented federal efforts to maintain the status of African Americans as a lower caste, with housing segregation preserving the badges and incidents of slavery” (Rothstein, 2012, p. 122).

As social policies influenced the housing market and spurred an uptick in segregated neighborhoods forcing minorities out of the general realm of society, so did their chances of receiving an equal and equitable education. “As public housing packed African Americans into urban projects...federal loan insurance [was helping to] subsidize white families [so they could move] into single-family suburban homes...[reinforcing]...the segregation of metropolitan areas” (Rothstein, 2012, p. 101). For the majority of Black students, their zip code began to directly determine, and to this day still determines, their access to an equitable education (Martin & Varner, 2017). The lack of supports, social isolation, and residential segregation has had devastating impacts on the economic and educational access afforded to Black people (Martin & Varner, 2017). Arguably the only reason there is a current public education crisis, in terms of access and outcomes, is due to the socially constructed and *predatory* nature of residential segregation (Martin & Varner, 2017). The social atmosphere manifested in segregated housing policies, has direct ties to educational outcomes (Martin & Varner, 2017). Socially influenced policies and attitudes have had and continue to have impacts on education, which are outside of a teacher’s control, forcing the responsibility of securing equitable education on society itself. There is no individual who can claim exemptions from participating within the education system because it is ingrained in the outcomes of the social policies we construct.

Educational and Social Exploitation Based on Racially Segregated Communities

Historically embedded in education is an inherent call for social responsibility that often gets glossed over forcing a single profession to assume all responsibility. Once again we go back to education being life's group project, and somehow teachers have been solely tasked with the work. However, this forgotten call of public responsibility and educational support is only partially based on underlying public disinterest. As has been previously explored, Dewey (1900, 1902, 1990) outlined how education has been inherently based on class, and class systems in the United States have often played out along racial lines. In order to ensure an equitable system of education, it is in fact the society, not just the teacher or school, that needs to begin to reexamine how educational systems are working directly against certain populations.

The current status of educational achievement in the United States is a cyclical cycle of educational and social deprivation for minorities. The cycle flows much like this: schools are predominantly located in neighborhoods which have been constructed on historical patterns of socially reinforced racial segregation and economic deprivation; due to this, predominantly minority neighborhood schools suffer from underfunding (Rothstein, 2017). And the cycle continues, over, and over again. "And because of [this cycle of] socioeconomic segregation [perpetuated by racial segregation], many schools have student bodies drawn almost entirely from poor families...[and] the challenge of equipping them to meet the demands of modern society [is near] impossible to meet" (Wexler, 2019 p. 38). Our society has failed an unimaginably large portion of citizens, as we have consigned and thrust them into purposefully failing neighborhoods, forcing them to attend

what will inevitably be a failing school. “These persisting differences in educational outcomes [and opportunities] between African American students and their White peers are important because they translate directly into social inequalities later in life including future earnings, employment status, and incarceration rates” (Hartney, Flavin, 2014, p. 4). Yet, despite these known cycles of socially constructed educational deprivation, we assume that because students are being offered an education it is either their own fault or the fault of their teacher if they do not succeed. However, never does the responsibility of education seem to fall on the shoulders of a system that is rigged to perpetuate inequity. “...[Demand] for education reform among the public is largely shaped by the public’s perception of the quality and overall health of the public school...When citizens perceive that student performance is lagging..., only then are they likely to agitate...policymakers...to pursue controversial educational reform...the vast majority of the public will rarely become alarmed over the state of K-12 education, and almost never over the outcomes of African American students...” (Hartney, Flavin, 2014, p. 8)

This rigging is not by accident. The cycles of educational and social neglect, reinforced by segregation, are specifically designed to exploit the most vulnerable populations, in order to enable predatory educational experimentation, and to make companies money (Rooks, 2017). In order to meet the current needs of predominantly minority students, companies across the nation have designed alternative schooling methods (Rooks, 2017). However, much like the unforeseen implications of *Brown v. Board*, these alternative educational methods, which are advertised as socially progressive, are not inherently designed to create the educational equity that they claim. Today some of the most vulner-

able students suffer from neatly packaged neoliberal schooling alternatives, which are sold to their communities as socially responsible education (Rooks, 2017). One such alternative education method that was perhaps intended to provide underserved students with better educational access is Teach for America (TFA). Upon further examination of an organization like TFA, it becomes clear that despite its intentions to help disadvantaged students it really only helps "...privileged students interested in educational change in poor communities of color...[TFA is focused] on privileged college students and their futures [at the expense of the disadvantaged students they are supposed to teach]" (Rooks, 2017, p. 26-37). This structure is inherently embedded in the education of minorities. "Educational experimentation [such as TFA] is part and parcel of the educational history of the poor and children of color" (Rooks, 2017, p. 11). It is also worth pointing out that the educational alternatives and experimentation is offered almost exclusively to minority communities "...are rarely if ever prescribed as an educational panacea for white students...." Never would the education of White students be left to an external organization running what can be described as an educational experiment (Rooks, 2017, p. 4).

How did this happen? If Du Bois (1935) was so adamant that there was potential for Black students to learn in environments which accepted them, rather than forcing them into a system that abhorred them as a means of social progress, how are we now in a phase of mass educational experimentation on minority students? It is because the experimentation of education is deeply rooted in our social, cultural, and economic attitudes (Rooks, 2017). Throughout American history minorities, especially Blacks, have been

society's guinea pigs. This cycle of neglect will continue if the general public continues to shirk its social responsibility to keep accessible and equitable education at the forefront of every decision made. Minority populations will continue to be beggars rather than choosers when it comes to securing educational opportunities. This means that minority populations will continue to suffer from forms of neoliberal educational experimentation which they currently suffer.

While not ensuring educational equality, such separate, segregated, and unequal forms of education have provided the opportunity for businesses to make a profit selling schooling...[students] who live in segregated communities and are [predominantly minorities]...are more likely to have severely limited educational options that consign them to the lower rungs of a racial and economic caste system from which the likelihood of escape becomes ever more dim.

(Rooks, 2017, p. 2-3)

Social and Racial Status' Determining Access to Education

“Education is supposed to enable everyone to [succeed]. It represents our best hope for breaking the cycle of multigenerational poverty...we'd all like education to act as a true engine of social mobility, but no one has been able to figure out how to make that happen” (Wexler, 2019, p. 22). Although it seems that we as a society have failed to figure out how to properly educate all students equally (Wexler, 2019), this is not the case. We know-how. But in order to fix a seemingly broken education system, it would require fixing the real issue: a neglected and fractured social system. Succinctly put in a report for *This American Life*, Nikole Hannah-Jones makes it clear that “all sorts of people are trying to rethink and reinvent education, to get poor minority kids performing as

well as white kids. But there's one thing nobody tries anymore, despite lots of evidence that it works: desegregation" (Rooks, 2017, p. 44). The previously examined thinkers, like Du Bois (1935) were arguing for segregated Black education as a means of preserving Black education in an already segregated society. At the time thinkers like Du Bois (1935) and Woodson (1933, 2009) were operating within both a social and educational system that provided (although limitedly) the Black communities access to experiencing excellence. However, what can be applied today, with our apparently integrated and "equal" educational and economic systems, has more to do with providing disadvantaged students a more holistic education (Du Bois, 1935). As Hannah-Jones the division between the haves and the have-nots has become so wide that one of the best ways to solve issues relating to educational and economic mobility is to reintegrate the haves with the have-nots (Rooks, 2017).

In today's educational climate we are feeling the effects of segregation. In the past, racial segregation in schooling was overt. "In 1956, Alabama passed a law allowing school boards to shutter public schools altogether rather than let a single black child sit in a classroom with white children" (Hannah-Jones, 2017, p. 2). The segregation in schools that Black students face today is much more covert (Hannah-Jones, 2017). "Instead, the main thrust of [some] district's — and thus local campuses — approach [has been] to focus on race-neutral 'instructional' and 'interventionist' responses...The focus, therefore, by district leaders [has been] on perfecting instruction in a race-neutral way, rather than altering instruction and school practices to be more culturally responsive" (Welton et al., 2015, 708). What is broken in education today is less about underperforming schools than

it is about the unchanging social atmosphere which has caused schools, and their faculties, to assume total ownership of the care and education of students whilst simultaneously operating within a social environment that refuses to share any amount of responsibility.

Chapter IV: The Future of Education is Socially Responsible

Within the last two years, the social responsibilities of education have been highlighted in the form of the many adaptations we have all had to make in order to accommodate for the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has shown us, more than any other moment in recent history, that our education system plays a vital role in our communities, and the work that is performed within the walls of schools goes far beyond what the intended purpose of public education is. Due to lockdowns creating the need for remote learning, we have all found ourselves holding some form of accountability in taking more of an intentional role in participating, developing, and ensuring a socially responsible education system. In many ways, the pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to make positive educational changes. Through school closures alone, there was a forced shift in the social attitudes about who should be considered responsible for education. No longer can an individual teacher be seen as the only responsible party for educating minds. Especially when instruction went remote and became completely reliant on the technology industry for affordable access to electronic devices and online platforms. Internet companies were held more accountable for providing reliable Internet connections so students could connect to their virtual classrooms. In many ways, communities across the nation have been forced to adapt and come together to offer young minds support as school-aged students faced, and continue to face, massive educational disruptions due to the challenges brought on by COVID-19. The evolving ideas about *who* is responsible for education is a positive result of the challenges of these past two years because the answer is clearly: we are all responsible.

Yet, despite some of the positive social shifts the pandemic has provided, it also exposed the many disparities and inequities that continue to be engrained within our educational system. These disparities are not unknown or new to those who interact with schools on a consistent basis. "...[The] structure of dominance and the socially reproductive function of schools tells us that schools may [and often do] reinforce and reproduce social hierarchies that undermine the development of people who occupy a lower societal status" (Morris, 2016, p.188). The inherent design of our education system has supported and perpetuated classist disparities since its initial construction (Dewey, 1900, 1902, 1990). What COVID-19 did was highlight and expose, on a national scale, one of the largest educational challenges, predominantly affecting disadvantaged, historically minority communities: economic instability. "Students who attended schools that were majority Black or Hispanic were six months behind where they normally would have been in math...low-income schools ended...behind their typical performance..., compared with...schools where families were financially better off [and predominantly white]" (Mervosh, 2021). Although economic disparities have always affected students' access to stable, affordable, and equitable education, COVID-19 exposed just how large the equity gaps are when access to stable Internet and affordable technology became the leading platforms of education (Egede, Walker, 2020). No longer could social problems be hidden from the broader public behind the walls of school buildings and left for teachers and administrators to figure solutions out with minuscule budgets. "Structural inequalities (underfunded schools, fewer records to support positive educational outcomes, less access to quality education), past negative school experiences, and...children's cur-

rent experiences...negatively impact [students] ability to be a high performer” (Morris, 2016, p. 48). These structural inequities (Morris, 2016) never went away once COVID-19 hit, rather they were exacerbated by it.

For so many Americans, these structural and economic inequities within education, as in many fields, are often determined by race. “Structural racism shapes the distribution of social determinants of health and social risk factors...The Covid-19 pandemic clearly illustrates the intersections of structural racism, [and] social risk factors...The history of inner cities has left Black Americans with few economic and educational opportunities...and has exposed [the Black community] to social risks...[and a] lack of financial resources resulting from years of structural racism...” (Egede, Walker, 2020, p. 1). The Black community’s ability to adapt to a COVID-19 stricken world has been drastically compromised, not based on an unwillingness to change, but due to structural oppression constraining people’s abilities to access the tools needed for change. For the Black community operating within oppressive systems is not new. Operating in oppressive systems, which are being clobbered by a global pandemic, however, threw a wrench into already challenging systems.

By just understanding the clear educational and social inequities based on historical economic asphyxiation, it is a reasonable reaction that communities across the nation reverted back to brick and mortar schools once the threat of the virus felt less daunting and more manageable. It is not unreasonable for school personnel to want to revert back to a system, no matter how biased, in order to access even the most minimal of resources, and provide for students in the most consistent way possible. However, the shift back into

the classrooms, although solving some issues related to childcare and absenteeism, has not solved the issues our system faces when it comes to the social responsibilities of education. “Our racial history is part of our present, it is in our structures, its legacies can be felt in the ways schools are organized, in how our neighborhoods are laid out, in the composition of our family trees...” (Lewis, Diamond, 2015, p. 6). In many ways, our dominant social culture has reverted back to seeking the stability and simplicity that ignorance often provides.

Critical Race Theory and Our Responsibility to Socially Just Education

Due to the increased challenges that underserved communities across the nation have had to deal with in the last two years, it is no surprise to find that our nation has woken up to the reality of facing two pandemics. One: a global virus killing and attacking indiscriminately. The other, a disease as old as the nation itself: racism. The resounding cry, “I can’t breathe” is embedded within the roots of a nation’s history wrought with racial exploitation and indifference. One pandemic is brand new to not just the United States, but also the world. The other is a lethal reality that has been present and persistent in the lives of minority communities for generations. A disease that ebbs and flows with the interests of those determining the dominant social narrative. In this new wave, one virus courses through communities indiscriminately taking lives, and the other more intentionally targets a specific population. Interestingly enough we can see in real-time how one is adapting and reflects on how the other continues to mutate. However, despite the COVID-19 variants showing how this virus is changing to become more potent, the con-

stant fluctuation in the presentation of racism is serving us an old narrative of colonialist power structures.

The pandemic has allowed for a revision of our ideas about educational responsibility. The idea that we are all educators does not just play to the benefit of one political party, no matter how socialist of an idea it may seem. With this new understanding of education, there has been an influx of unqualified cooks entering the kitchen. Much like COVID-19, racism within the United States has yet again come out with a new variant in the form of revising the curriculum taught to American students. Today, “[y]ou have a combination of state legislatures that are interfering with the work of professional educators in a politically tendentious way, combined with a national organization that wants to water down the education of American children” (Schuessler, 2021, p. 1). Limiting curriculum, altering historical facts, and watering down a history rife with violence is not new to American education. These patterns can be seen throughout American history. The newest wave of academic whitewashing has come in the form of removing critical race theory (CRT) from the curriculum (Schuessler, 2021). Communities across the nation have swept through classrooms with the specific goal of removing anything that could cause controversy so that education can remain palatable mainly to one specific demographic (Schuessler, 2021). Over twenty states have begun to restrict and even remove materials educating students about racism under the guise of it being too controversial (Schuessler, 2021).

The removal of CRT from educational curriculum provides a perfect example of how “...education policies and practices in the United States [continue to] contribute to

inequitable educational outcomes for students of color...[resulting in]...larger inequitable social and political systems that [are] premised [in] the subordination of people of color..." (Dixson, 2018, 233). The threat of removing CRT from public education only reinforces the interconnected nature of education, racial tensions, inequity, and a social system perpetuating historical oppression (Dixson, 2018). We are just experiencing the modern twist of a continuously prejudiced society. Unfortunately, the revision of the curriculum and removal of CRT is predominately based on a misunderstanding. This misunderstanding has many believing that CRT increases racism more than it provides pathways of connection. However, this is not the case. "There is a general consensus among historians of the United States that racism has been central to the evolution of American institutions and American culture...but teaching that doesn't mean that you are teaching students to hate [one another]. It means you are teaching students to understand [each other]" (Schuessler, 2021, p. 1). What CRT is intended to do is:

...[recognize] that racism is endemic to American life... [express] skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness and meritocracy...[challenge] ahistoricism and insist on a contextual/historical analysis of the law...adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantaged and disadvantaged...[insist] in [the] recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society...[it] is interdisciplinary...[it] works towards the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression.

(Dixon & Rousseau, 2006, p.9)

With this as the basis for understanding CRT, it is easier to see that what it provides is the ability to better understand systemic oppression past, present, and future. This is not a

lens that should be neglected, as it is a valuable method for students. Yet if, or rather when, CRT is removed from public classrooms and treated as a social disease, what happens is it eliminates Black students' access to not only an equitable education but also the potential of living in a more just society (Dixson, 2018).

What we teach in our classrooms plays out on our streets, in our courtrooms, and in statehouses. It impacts the social narrative constructed around certain communities. Taking CRT out of the classroom is the removal of critical thought and the possibility of creating and mending socio-cultural bridges. By removing CRT we lose the ability to question the social, cultural, and historical foundations that we all have to navigate every day (Dixson, 2018). It is the removal of self-reflection. More importantly, the removal of CRT allows for, “[the] dominant group to [tell] stories that are designed to ‘remind [itself] of its identity in relation to outgroups and provide a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural’” (Dixson, Rousseau, 2006, p. 11). Once again, the implications of the loss of a “sympathetic touch” (Du Bois, 1935, p. 328), has become overwhelmingly apparent as Black students attempt to navigate identity politics in conjunction with historical foundations of discrimination.

For African Americans, the fight for equality began in hush harbor during slavery with enslaved Africans learning to read and write...In contemporary times, the struggle for equity is waged in city centers, not only to learn to read and write but also for the very right to attend a high-quality and well resourced school with expert teachers...Related to this fight for educational equity are the fights for safe and affordable housing, gainful employment with a livable wage, access to health care, and rather ironically, considering the rhetoric of racial progress...protection from police violence.

(Dixson, 2018, p. 232)

The erasure of a community continues in a classic historical pattern, as social issues are being denied an existence, therefore the need to address social inequity, especially as it pertains to education, becomes obsolete.

It should be obvious that racial tensions do not disintegrate with neglect, but rather increase levels of harm. “Decades after legal battles were fought to dismantle legalized racial segregation in education, African American students are still disproportionately enrolled in schools without access to quality resources, credentialed teachers, rigorous course offerings, and extracurricular activities” (Morris, 2016, p. 69). Cultural understanding, or a “sympathetic touch” (Du Bois, 1935, p. 328), is still only bestowed upon those who hold the elusive, and self-prescribed pedestal of socio-cultural dominance. The language has changed to be more politically acceptable to our modern, socially conscious ears. The presentation has changed so it is no longer overt. Yet, the realities of racism and neglect have remained strong in every aspect of our society, because they are embedded in how we educate our communities. A society cannot rid itself of social ills if the system designed to educate citizens refuses to recognize that it is sick in the first place. What CRT provides is the ability to teach and educate people to self-reflect. What we need to become more comfortable with is understanding that “... it is important to remember that implicit bias is often inconsistent with a person’s stated values, so [we as individuals] may believe that [we treat everyone] the same even while aspects of [our] engagement are reflecting latent biases” (Morris, 2016, p. 51). Without CRT helping to reveal racially-biased histories and attitudes, false narratives surrounding American history are spun and

continue to perpetuate systems of oppression. Without CRT as a teaching tool a “...distortion of American history [continues, and] serves a more insidious purpose of rendering all demands for equity by African Americans as unwarranted claims for special treatment and unearned favors” (Dixson, 2018, p. 236). Without the ability to think, examine, and uproot historical narratives born out of discrimination we continue to perpetuate cycles of modernizing racism. We cannot educate ourselves, as a society, if we refuse to acknowledge that which we are willingly ignorant of.

Societies cannot function to their full potential and progress without a strong and equitable educational foundation. “Schools serve a greater social function than simply developing the rote skills of children and adolescents. As Black [students] become adolescents, the influence of schools is critical to their socialization” (Morris, 2016, p. 51). This same statement can be made about members of other marginalized communities. Schools are enforcing, socializing, and reflecting dominant cultural narratives. Re-examining our social foundation provides us with perhaps the most effective path towards creating an equitable and stable public education system. It also provides a full circle where once schools have been stabilized and the playing field leveled out, our communities begin to reflect similar patterns. It is time for individuals to recognize their responsibility to systems of education through self-reflection. When curriculum seeking to investigate historical levels of trauma and discrimination is stripped from the conversation, we need to begin to ask ourselves *who* education is serving, and *what* its ultimate purpose is. I cannot stress enough the importance of expanding our view of the term *educator* and how it should be understood, not as a profession, but as a call for social responsibility.

An underlying issue with suggesting that CRT be removed from the curriculum is the fact that it is often predominantly the minority communities themselves that not only experience the disenfranchisement but are also keenly aware that it exists. “Compared to African Americans, Whites...view the education achievement gap as less of a policy concern. White respondents are 12 percentage points less likely than African Americans to think that the achievement gap is ‘very important’...White citizens are less likely to identify that the education achievement gap exists, less likely to think it an urgent or fixable problem...there seems to be a distinctively racial considerations that drive White public opinion about educational opportunity” (Hartley, 2014, p. 20). The willingness to rewrite history comes at the detriment of not only creating a false narrative of American history but fuels divisions in society itself. For example, “[t]he Texas Board of Education,... has sought to rewrite history...by recasting U.S. chattel slavery as a ‘work program’ and enslaved Africans as ‘voluntary workers’...it is significant that the official curriculum in the State of Texas is not only revisionist but wholly inaccurate...this curriculum will have far-reaching impact[s] on generations of students who will believe that American slavery was a benign work program for immigrants” (Dixson, 2018, p. 236). The message being sent to the Black community by states seeking to remove CRT from their school’s curriculum is clear. You are under attack. At the same time, the “...move from rigidly enforced racial exclusion to much more subtle processes means that racial dynamics and the mechanisms of racial exclusion are now harder to see and thus harder to challenge” (Lewis, Dimond, 2015, p. 8). It shows just how comfortable some communities are with the continuation of historical oppressions that continue to threaten the very

lives that have been marginalized by similar laws. This is unfolding today, as social justice moments push for not just equality but equity, and the resulting backlash from the dominating American culture has been to erase teaching about the negative impacts and often lethal consequences enforced by the United States on minority communities.

The removal of CRT from our curriculum allows for the literal whitewashing of American history to spare the feelings of those who do not have to deal with the constant modernization of subjugation and continuous systematic oppression. Removing CRT is removing critical thinking about how slavery can be taught to protect and support White fragility, it will be taught in a manner where students are told that those enslaved were happy about working for free. We need a narrative that reads: *human beings in America were enslaved by other humans based on the color of their skin and assigned what was perceived as racial inferiority by those who sought to own them. Due to this Black American's have had and are still going through the process of reclaiming their ability to access their rights to humanity, which has been historically dealt out to them at the con-
vance of the historically slave-owning class and self-proclaimed dominant race.*

The Social Responsibilities Embedded in Education

Socially responsible education is the recognition that the decisions being made by policymakers, influenced by voters, and enforced by politicians influence access to equitable education and the creation of a just society. To change a structure that underserves a large percentage of students, we need to push for an examination and redistribution of the social responsibilities schools have been charged with to create a more equitable education system. “What can (and should) be developed and nurtured in educational settings,

but almost never is, is a deeper awareness of the numerous social factors — related to race, gender, sexuality, . . . , or other identities — that have the power to . . . shape [students] . . .” (Morris, 2016, p. 86). With schools being a multifaceted social reflection we stand in a unique position to completely revise, readapt, reinvent, or even completely dismantle so many of the dysfunctional systems we have been bound to. Changing systems, uprooting racism, or even dismantling institutions built by, but not for, minorities, sounds like a nice revolutionary stance for the modern abolitionist. However, tearing down a system comes more from an intellectual, social, and cultural shift rather than the physical destruction of spaces. It is dismantling socially reinforced beliefs about the superiority and subsequently the inferiority of certain members of our communities. It is acknowledging a history that has disadvantaged so many and recognizing that the current dominant narrative is not the only story in what is a multifaceted history.

Race is a contentious topic in America. We discuss it often. We argue about it with the singular goal of attempting to prove our point over others’ opinions. However, this way of entering a conversation will never be met with any type of forward positive momentum. One way to engage in socially uncomfortable conversations is to introduce them within schools. To educate people on how to listen without judgment and speak without signing blame. Unfortunately, the lack of socialization surrounding controversial topics within our schools helps perpetuate the superiority and inferiority complex that then seeps within our social systems. As our education system mimics our society, we need to be more cognizant of how our school environments are reflecting larger social systems. We need to recognize that there is a need for re-socialization within education systems so

we can, "...develop schools that our [minority students] don't describe as 'jails' or 'prisons.' This terminology has become so ingrained in their consciousness and experiences [it is hard for them to consider] what a school that is not governed by discipline looks and feels like" (Morris, 2016, p. 192). The normalization of associating minority students with criminalization perpetuates stereotypes about minority communities and their place in the broader society. Especially when these stereotypes are not examined as part of a complex historical web of discrimination. For example:

According to the [FBI]...White males between the ages of thirteen and eighteen are the most likely to initiate school based shootings. However, schools in which the student population is largely composed of youth of color have the highest degree of implementing metal detectors, security officers, SROs, and other police forces...The increased surveillance of Black youth in particular has led to increased contact with law enforcement, and in some cases, the juvenile court, for actions that would not otherwise be viewed as criminal, even if they violated school rules — such as refusing to present identification, using profanity..., or 'misbehaving.'

(Morris, 2016, p.75- 77)

Despite the evidence suggesting that minority students, specifically Black students, are not the biggest threat to the broader society, they are still treated as criminals before they have even broken any laws. "These practices, ..., lead to disproportionate disciplining of minority students, especially for low-level behavioral offenses" (Simson, 2014, p. 6). Policies relating to school discipline "...are not only ineffective in creating an environment conducive to the academic and social development of all [students] but also contribute to...systematic problems that disproportionately affect minority communities and

African American youth in particular” (Simson, 2014, p.6). What is happening is that historical patterns of prejudice “...and implicit biases arising from a long history of racial prejudice and dominance continue to infuse seemingly objective standards of what is considered appropriate behavior as well as the practices- such as punitive school discipline - that are used to enforce such standards” (Simson, 2014, p. 6). It is almost as if our laws and the way we handle student behaviors have been designed specifically to break those living in Black bodies.

Schools are microcosms of our collective society. We are teaching students what they are worth. We are teaching them where their places and positions are in society. More importantly, students are being taught how to treat their peers based on socially reinforced narratives of perceived and perpetuated narratives of race and criminalization. This is all predicated on the social conditioning housed within educational environments. Unfortunately, our educational system, much like our social system, is predicated on assigning worth based on race. “A sizable body of literature documents considerable inequities in the distribution of teacher quality....[The] New York State education workforce database [was used] to examine the distribution of teacher qualifications throughout the state...they found that low-qualified teachers in New York are much more likely to teach in schools with higher proportions of poor, minority, and low-performing students, particularly in urban areas (Goldharber et al., 2015, p. 294). As we assign lower-quality teachers to the most underserved demographics, as a society how can we expect to create equitable social conditions?

Yes, it is true that many districts across the nation have been making attempts to correct many of the social, educational, and economic inequities found within their classrooms. However, for those who are continuously marginalized, those in power are not reflective of those in need of support. “Policy elites...[have] gained a disproportionate authority over educational reform” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 8). We need new educational tools if the so-called “policy elite” (Tyack, Cuban, 1995 p. 8) is to understand diverse perspectives. CRT is one invaluable tool for revealing the structures of dominance as a way of shedding light on patterns of historical oppression. Not all “policy elites” dig in their heels (Tyack, Cuban). In some cases, districts attempt to incorporate equitable instruction but miss the mark due to a lack of understanding, or perhaps comfort in not confronting their own biases. “...[R]esearch suggests...[that]...contextual forces often work to put pressures on school leaders to continue inequitable practices...[there is] a disconnect between the ‘value’ given to equity and inclusion, and what actions are taken on the part of school leaders to ensure the two occur” (Welton et al., 2015, p. 697).

A Call to Action: Our Responsibility as Educators

“While clearly race has consequences for our individual understandings of self, it matters much more — with deep and broad consequences for the very organization of social institutions...[Race] has been a fundamental organizing principle since before this country’s founding...” (Lewis, Diamond, 2015, p. 5). What we need is the understanding, connection, and critical examination of how our education system has been designed to disenfranchise minority communities. In examining the educational system, it can be seen

that there have been massive forward movements towards change but also moments of regression. Right now, with COVID-19 disrupting every industry and exposing the deep furrows of inequity, we need to change our patterns of understanding about how to design an equitable society. For instance, "... the formal and legalized structures for maintaining separate schools ended decades ago, [but] they were never replaced by a truly integrated educational system that could provide high quality educational opportunities to all" (Lewis, Diamond, 2015, p. 8), so this is one place we could potentially begin to shift archaic systems of education to meet the needs of our modern reality. Education was never made equal nor equitable, as integration provided only the erasure of one set of social, historical, and cultural understanding with the forced assimilation to perceived dominance. This is what must change. This is what we can change.

If we are all to take charge and consider ourselves educators, then every one of us can begin that work by re-educating ourselves on how we have been socialized. "Our racial history is part of our present, it is in our structures, its legacies can be felt in the ways schools are organized, in how neighborhoods are laid out, in the composition of family trees..." (Lewis & Diamond, 2015, p. 6). It is time that we see and acknowledge how integrated and ingrained race is within all aspects of our lives. It is time to reorganize how we approach systems like education, bringing to this process a deeper understanding of how systems of power have historically marginalized some voices and allowed for the writings of a dominate narrative about who is allowed to have access to success. There is a good chance that many people recognize that this is what is needed to make a more equitable society. However, what is needed now is a greater investigation

into educational methods, the reeducation of social norms, and the humility in understanding that, for many, historical trauma is now playing out as exhausted anger.

Our call to action is to re-educate, re-socialize, and remain unwavering in our charge as educators. To shift not only other perspectives but simultaneously unpack our own biases, to be willing to confront our own prejudices by simply acknowledging that they exist, that we are aware of them, and doing our best to not allow them to negatively impact the lives of those around us. It is time for us to actually live up to being the home of the brave by standing up and being willing to take on social change as educators so that we can create a society that is truly the land of the free for all. Moving forwards, hopefully towards a more equitable society, we need to recognize that in order to get there we need to reevaluate how we construct educational systems, and that comes with intentionally holding space within education to create change. One place tangible change can be made is by redistributing who has access to quality education. “As policymakers encounter mounting evidence that the most disadvantaged students are much more likely than their peers to face low-quality teachers, they will need to define their ‘ideal’ distribution teacher quality” (Goldharber et al., 2015, p. 305). As a society part of our responsibility is to ensure that those who have taken up the charger to educate within classrooms are qualified to do so and are fulfilling their responsibilities. Part of community-centered education is ensuring that all members of society are aware of who is teaching the most vulnerable and ensuring that all students have educational advocates both within their classrooms and in their broader community.

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