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LEARNING TO TEACH UNDER FIRE: FOSTERING DEMOCRATIC CLASSROOMS THROUGH BLACK FUGITIVE PEDAGOGIES

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ABSTRACT

As primarily conservative politicians aim to discredit and outlaw curricula centered on discussions of systemic racism, complex historical topics, gender equality, and other related issues, it is especially significant in today's contemporary context for educators to engage in pedagogical practices that center marginalized students for improved learning and flourishing in pursuit of a multiracial democracy. In this conceptual article, we suggest a set of recommendations to help educators conceptualize and execute their work under censorship laws in what we refer to as politically tense spaces. We recommend unlocking principled resistance, adapting curriculum for critical consciousness, sustaining Black fugitive pedagogical practices, engaging in union and community involvement, and preparing teacher learners for navigating such environments. We argue that educators' central responsibility to students remains unchanged by educational gag orders. We center the Black teaching model, anchored by Jarvis Givens' (2021) notion of fugitive pedagogy, highlighting how Black educators and communities sustained teaching practices under slavery, often covertly and at great personal risk. Following emancipation, Black teachers formalized and extended this tradition through the Jim Crow era, continuing to educate despite ongoing threats to their safety and autonomy. We contend that educators can draw from the Black teaching tradition to design lessons within democratic classrooms. This approach helps students understand the past while equipping them to navigate the broader realities that also shape teachers' work in politically tense spaces.

Keywords: fugitive pedagogy, democracy, Black teaching, censorship laws, teachers' work

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INTRODUCTION

"A teacher who is not free to teach is not a teacher," argues writer and activist James Baldwin (1973) in a televised conversation with acclaimed poet Nikki Giovanni (p. 75). In this dialogue, the pair discussed topics from Black manhood and racism to the roles of writers and teachers in a free society. Baldwin stressed the importance of having a society where true education allows its citizens to think deeply and question the world in which they live, in hopes of improving it for the betterment of all people. Baldwin's reference to teachers being free to teach whatever they like does not insinuate a departure from grade-level and curriculum expectations but emphasizes that teachers should be able to teach their content accurately and honestly without being restricted by external political agendas—making this a revolutionary act. One of the most visible manifestations of this politicization is the resurgence of book banning, which is a tactic historically used to silence dissenting perspectives and control classroom narratives.

Book censorship has long been used to silence dissent and suppress narratives that challenge dominant power structures. The first documented case dates to 1637, when *New English Canaan* was suppressed for its critique of Puritan leadership, including its religious authoritarianism and poor treatment of Native peoples (Blakemore, 2024). In 1873, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* faced widespread bans for exposing the evils of slavery (Connolly, 2023). In the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent protests in 2020, this trend has intensified, with a growing number of states banning books and restricting conversations on race, gender, sexual orientation, diversity, equity, and historical truths about racism, often under the pretense of disbarring critical race theory (CRT) and "wokeness" (Clark, 2022; Crenshaw, 2021). Difficulties and stress arise for many K–12 teachers as they attempt to teach effectively while adhering to vague laws masking anti-Blackness, homophobia, and xenophobic attitudes (Kahn, 2024; Pollock et al., 2022; Shearer, 2022). Consequently, since January 2024, at least 20 states and 140 districts responsible for approximately 2 million teachers and 50 million public school students have instituted censorship and discriminatory laws to regulate how and what K–12 schools should teach (Feingold & Weishart, 2024). Additionally, according to UCLA CRT Forward Tracking Project (CRT Forward, 2023), there are a little over 800 anti-CRT efforts introduced at the local, state, and federal levels. A case in point is Florida, where culture war attacks have challenged the very notion of academic success and critical thinking skills. The state's efforts to ban how race issues are taught in public K–20 educational systems through the Stop the Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees Act (i.e., Stop WOKE), along with the banning of Advanced Placement classes in African American studies, illustrate this trend (Hartocollis & Fawcett, 2023; Kuelzer, 2023; Russell-Brown, 2023).

An extensive history lies in political tension between what and who public education in America is for and the unrealistic demands placed on teachers to carry it out with minimal social investments and support (Goldstein, 2014). In short, the war on teachers is not new. Historically, many Black educators in the United States have faced similar challenges and achieved great success, even amidst the oppressive structures of Jim Crow, by establishing schools of academic excellence that produced successful graduates despite limited resources (Walker, 2005, 2018). In particular, through the legacies of Carter G. Woodson (1933), W.E.B. Du Bois (1903), and Mary McLeod Bethune (McCluskey, 1994), to name a few, Black educators were fully cognizant of their dual identity as both Black and American in prejudiced school systems and how to navigate them amid political pushback on behalf of their students, while undermining white supremacy. Jarvis Givens (2021), in his book *Fugitive Pedagogy: Carter G. Woodson and the Art of Black Teaching*, captures this point by writing about Black educators in segregated schools and, during slavery, Black educational practitioners who taught covertly while walking a fine line when challenging social systems. Looking ahead, through the art of Black teaching, all teachers, regardless of background and experience level, can adopt or strengthen dispositions toward antiracist and anti-oppressive strategies that counter fascist politics threatening civil liberties, education, and democracy (Giroux, 2024).

When considering the meaning, purpose, and possibilities for democratic education where critical perspectives are acknowledged and shared to disrupt the normalization of white supremacy and anti-Blackness (Diamond & Gomez, 2023), how might the Black teaching tradition guide novice, veteran, and teacher learners of all racial backgrounds when educating for a multiracial democracy and not an antidemocracy (Bowie, 2021) where social hierarchies persist? Scholars have highlighted that "a multiracial democracy foregrounds inclusive participation, respectful engagement across lines of difference, and coalitional work in politics, civic life, and the workplace" (Rogers et al., 2022, p. 4). If this is the case, how can public schools be sites for this type of social transformation if they are institutions charged with instilling these democratic principles? How can teachers, especially those who work with predominantly Black and Latine students who are disproportionately impacted and targeted by censorship and discriminatory legislation

(Feingold & Weishart, 2024), approach their work to serve all students equitably and effectively? How can teachers boost learning outcomes under unreasonable surveillance and suspicion?

Hence, in this conceptual article, we center the legacy of work by Black teachers to help all educators develop a pedagogy that endures across generations, drawing its strength from resistance and the Black teaching tradition. We explore where we find ourselves in this heightened political era, uncovering what it may mean for teachers' praxis within the Black pedagogical lineage toward a multiracial democracy. We do so in the face of reactionary movements and political contentiousness, underscoring a pedagogical approach that leverages the past and present in the call for teacher resistance. We accentuate the purpose of teachers in this work and provide granular recommendations for teachers and teacher education. To ground this conceptual framing in lived experience, we offer positionality statements that reflect our identities, commitments, and perspectives as Black educators.

POSITIONALITY STATEMENTS

We bring our firsthand accounts, cultural knowledge (Tillman, 2002), and professional insights to our work in urban classrooms, fully committed to equity, justice, and social transformation for schools and underserved communities. We pay attention to the dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen in our analyses, as Milner (2007) suggests, of our own racialized and cultural systems and how we come to know and experience the world in relation to others.

The first author, a Black man, brings his decade of experience in education, including teaching mathematics to predominantly Black and Latine fourth-grade students in an urban Memphis school. He witnessed and felt firsthand the pressures of censorship legislation in 2021 that aimed to limit divisive concepts related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), as well as teachings related to race and racism under the banner of CRT (Kelly et al., 2024). School districts that failed to adhere to the Tennessee law risked having their funding withheld. Due to external pressures from mostly right-leaning personnel, the Tennessee Department of Education's Commissioner eventually resigned, citing statewide culture war battles over COVID-19 masking policies, as well as race and gender issues in the classroom (Jacobson, 2023). During that period, the first author understood CRT was not being taught in his classroom or school, and he often wondered if any topic dealing with diversity, cultural responsiveness, equity, or race in his or his colleagues' classroom could be misconstrued as breaking the law. This uncomfortable reality nevertheless did not prevent him from doing what was best for students while upholding rigorous mathematics instruction that was both equitable and inclusive.

The second author, a Black woman, brings her experience as a high school English teacher who taught Black and brown students in South-Central Los Angeles. During her five years, she taught during the COVID-19 pandemic and experienced one of the largest strikes in the nation. In 2019, The United Teachers Los Angeles went on strike to demand higher pay for educators, smaller classes, and more school nurses (Anderson, R., 2020). As the Chapter Vice-Chair at the time, she knew firsthand the power of bargaining and collective strength to mobilize large school districts to respond to teachers' and students' needs. While she did not experience teaching in a school district that implemented a ban on CRT or any curriculum on race, gender, and the truth about America's history, she does know the value of organizing and working with others horizontally to achieve change, a skill necessary for navigating contentious times.

NAVIGATING POLITICALLY TENSE SPACES: TEACHERS' ROLE IN FOSTERING A MULTIRACIAL DEMOCRACY

We begin the conversation by considering school districts and/or states that target teachers with distrust and surveillance, resulting in school sites that are *politically tense spaces*. In the educational context, we define politically tense spaces as spaces where teachers must navigate political polarization. More specifically, this polarization is crystalized in restrictive educational policies that block teaching on diversity, racism, historical content deemed controversial, and other issues of equity and justice, impeding the implementation of democratic education grounded in inclusive participation and dialogue across difference (Brezicha et al., 2023; Rogers et al., 2022). Currently, as we write this paper, laws restricting CRT, DEI, and other frameworks for addressing systemic inequity dominate the political landscape, while "patriotic education" is promoted by the Trump administration under Secretary Linda McMahon, rooted in American exceptionalism that elevates national triumphs over confronting historical injustice. As a result, we recognize that, given the moving-target nature of Trump's second administration priorities, federal policy focus areas will continue to shift over time. We also note that many state-level agendas, especially in states

aligned with the administration's policy priorities, are likely to persist and evolve regardless of federal transitions. Without a clear strategy for novice, veteran, and teacher learners to navigate politically tense spaces, added stressors of an already difficult job may be compounded by unfounded claims of legal violations. These stressors can exacerbate the already high teacher turnover rates and decreasing satisfaction, interest, and prestige of the profession pre- and post-COVID-19, particularly in underserved neighborhoods that serve predominantly students of color and low-income students (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Kraft & Lyon, 2024; Pressley et al., 2023).

Teachers who educate for a multiracial democracy encourage broad participation from every learner, honor and value the diversity in their classrooms across race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, origin, and socioeconomic status, among others, while encouraging students to express themselves freely in a respectable manner about the content without fear of making mistakes (Rogers et al., 2022). Teachers and teacher educators have a unique role in this multiracial democracy to teach with deep and flexible pedagogical knowledge of content, understanding differences across race, culture, and family origins, respecting and challenging all learners in an advancing world that is becoming more diverse with varying societal demands (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Shulman, 1987). Unfortunately, as American society becomes more diverse, conflict arises over how the curriculum is taught, including censorship of content that addresses systemic injustices (Crenshaw, 2021; Jamnah & Zimmerman, 2022).

Some parents, society, and even the teaching profession often assume that teachers, especially those committed to equity and inclusion, maintain a neutral stance in their pedagogy, avoiding controversial topics (Jayakumar & Kohli, 2023; Maxwell, 2023). Yet such misconceptions obscure what truly is a controversial issue and what is reasonable impartiality, as teachers remain responsible and fair, yet effective in their craft with challenging topics, understood through particular lenses. Often, these mischaracterizations manifest as white grievances and discomfort to willfully ignore past injustices to avoid conversations of systemic repair (Kahn, 2024).

Despite these challenges, teachers continue to serve as foundational experts, relied upon by all other professions as living resources for cultivating learning environments that promote democratic values, respect diversity, and nurture independent thought (Dewey, 1903). Rogers and Oakes (2005) remind us of John Dewey's democratic call for experts and those most impacted by social inequality to gather, interpret, and debate nuanced and sometimes uncomfortable topics. This process builds competence about today's social problems and moves us toward egalitarian reforms in education and society. Thus, educating for a multiracial democracy, particularly in these politically tense spaces, is a teacher who models democratic values of honesty, equality, justice, freedom, acceptance of difference, and cooperation in their direct instruction that respects student rights, preparing students to be informed citizens, while maintaining rigorous and honest teaching (Howe & Kovell, 2007; Kincal & Isik, 2005; Rogers, 2022).

THE CASE FOR FUGITIVE PEDAGOGY

For decades, researchers and stakeholders have expressed concern about teachers' already challenging, demanding, and stressful work environments (Anderson, M. D., 2020; Highet, 1950; Kyriacou, 2001; Santoro, 2011). Hence, educating for a multiracial democracy becomes even more arduous and less of a desirable profession amid partisan policy preferences and debates (Anglum et al., 2023). According to research by Leung-Gagné et al. (2024), when examining teacher conditions across states, teacher attractiveness and teacher equity were low for 16 states. Leung-Gagné et al. define teacher attractiveness as supportive working conditions like fair compensation and adequate school resources that help recruit and retain qualified teachers, and teacher equity as all students, no matter the racial makeup or poverty level of their schools having fair access to experienced, certified, and well-qualified teachers. Unsurprisingly, 13 of the 16 states had at least one adopted anti-CRT measure, which included Mississippi, Idaho, Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Arizona, Tennessee, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas (CRT Forward, 2023).

We argue that today's oppressive political movement is a pivotal era that may require learning from the Black education tradition through Jarvis Givens' (2021) concept of fugitive pedagogy, a framework he traces through the Black teaching tradition exemplified by educator and historian Carter G. Woodson. Givens defines fugitive pedagogy as a pedagogical approach rooted in resistance. It is characterized by Black teachers from those formerly enslaved during Reconstruction to those active during the Civil Rights Movement who learned to read, write, and compute while disrupting white supremacy through clandestine instructional practices, often in defiance of the law amid violent intimidation. The idea of clandestine, instructional practice is not unfamiliar to experienced teachers, who understand

the dynamic and evolving nature of the classroom, which often requires a little resistance, disagreement, and limited compliance with district-mandated practices that do not aid the learning environment in real time (Britzman, 2003; Burke & Adler, 2013; Kelly, 2018). As with African American teaching in the South during the early 1900s through the Civil Rights era, Black teachers overcame working in segregated and unfair environments, limited autonomy, and unreasonable surveillance to teach Black children with high expectations and adapting the curriculum to their students' needs in defiance of white opposition and legislation (Baker, 2011; Foster, 1997; Walker, 2001).

For numerous years, many Black scholars have attuned themselves toward pedagogical approaches and frameworks that are academic, innovative, liberatory, spiritual, equitable, antiracist, linguistic, critical, and culturally conscious, challenging educational norms that have historically functioned to marginalize groups (Baker-Bell, 2020; Dillard et al., 2000; Emdin, 2016; Gay, 2018; Howard, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Love, 2019; Mentor & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021; Muhammad, 2023; Paris, 2012). For example, Love (2019) advocated for abolitionist teaching, where teachers design a "safe space or homeplace in their classrooms, fight standardized testing, restore justice in their curriculum, or seek justice in their own communities" (p. 89).

These wrongful norms manifest as an educational debt when they intertwine with structures and practices, as Ladson-Billings (2018) contends. Harmful ideologies gain force when they are wedded to what happens on the ground, marking the status quo in education for too many Black students with cumulative disadvantages of sociopolitical, economic, moral, and historical injustices that stifle transformative progress, especially in politically tense spaces.

Fugitive pedagogy aligns with these democratic ideals, moving teachers away from complacency and complicity when unjust policies and laws seek to muzzle inconvenient facts at the expense of student learning. We adopt Player et al.'s (2020) fugitivity definition as "an orientation towards liberatory consciousness which propels a radical departure from the enduring failure of a nation (and the nation's institutions) to protect, affirm, and love racially minoritized peoples, predicated on our imagined non-humanity" (p. 141). Along with Givens (2021), other scholars (Patel, 2016; Patel, 2019; Stovall, 2023; Zaino, 2021) have applied this notion of fugitivity to how teachers navigate oppressive schooling structures and policies and promote powerful teaching and learning. A *fugitive teacher* in this context is a teacher who is "wholly aware of oppression and the myriad ways it manifests and then uses that knowledge as a routine catalyst for departure from the violent manifestations of oppression" (Player et al., 2020, p. 142). As a practiced form of resistance in Florida, the Black church engages in fugitivity, allowing teachers to teach Black history freely and truthfully to their children in response to the state's limits on African American history in public schools (Prieur, 2023).

Relatedly, Caldas (2021) adopts fugitive pedagogy as a form of decolonial pedagogy for Mexican American and Latine teachers to challenge racism, xenophobia, and linguistic oppressive systems within schools. Caldas presents the case with a cohort of bilingual preservice teachers who reimagine the ontological underpinnings of what equity and excellence mean for minority, Spanish-speaking students and families. Coles et al. (2021), contribute to this case by leveraging teaching strategies of fugitivity that contest xenophobic, ableist, classist, racist, and homophobic sentiments toward students thriving in politically tense spaces that infringe upon the humanness of others. Other research has also accentuated the work of Indigenous peoples in settler colonies (Patel, 2019) and Southeast Asians through Hmong refugees' histories (Vang, 2020) who have engaged in forms of fugitivity to challenge dominant pedagogical practices for centuries. Given the research on fugitivity, we uplift fugitive pedagogy as a praxis that supports all marginalized students of color.

TEACHERS' PURPOSE IN A MULTIRACIAL DEMOCRACY

Next, teachers' purpose in progressing toward a multiracial democracy is multifaceted and extends beyond the classroom. So, we begin here with another question: Is the purpose of teachers when embracing fugitive pedagogy to deliver the information and facts for students to remember with little engagement? Philosopher and educator Paulo Freire (1978) critiqued this sort of education establishment as the "banking model of education," where teachers deposit information into the containers or minds of students as passive recipients. Freire provides an example of a situation where the teacher provides the answer to a multiplication fact and the capital of a country outside of the United States, where students receive information detached from significance and a real-world context. This is akin to teachers being told by law to state the facts of Rosa Parks giving up her seat on the bus in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955, but not to explain the reasons why. Freire would argue that this is how education becomes a system where

teachers just give information to students, who passively receive, memorize, and repeat it without real understanding or interaction. If education for a multiracial democracy is the north star, then the role of teachers as mere depositors of knowledge, operating under ideologically narrow frameworks, falls short of this goal. Students are not developing the critical consciousness needed to transform that democracy into a just and inclusive one.

Extensive scholarship demonstrates that a teacher's purpose is to facilitate learning, develop understanding, reflect on instructional practice, adapt to change, and empower students to become independent learners and thinkers (Farrell & Ives, 2015; Love, 2019; Newton, 2011; Rajagopalan, 2019). Adopting a fugitive pedagogical stance implies the need to take risks so that students can mature into independent, critical thinkers, as part of a teacher's purpose in educating for a multiracial democracy. In this context, teachers in 21st-century classrooms are expected to model risk-taking for students, which encompasses creativity and pedagogical innovation (Howard et al., 2018). Teachers of color, especially Black teachers for Black students, are not only instructors but also role models for aspirational goals and moral virtues. Their roles in understanding, collaborating, and caring for others with different backgrounds and viewpoints are pivotal to raising academic achievement (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Lumpkin, 2008; Maylor, 2009; Shirrell et al., 2023).

Some scholars have explored how John Dewey views the purpose of teaching, where teachers promote growth and development and assist learners in organizing, directing, and maximizing their life experiences within a structured learning environment (Greenwalt, 2016; Schmidt & Allsup, 2019). Maximizing a child's life experience occurs within and beyond the classroom in a multiracial democracy, demonstrating the purpose of teaching where students and not just the teacher have agency. As Dewey (1937) notes, democracy is fundamentally about the active involvement of all individuals in shaping the values that govern society that benefit each individual's personal growth. Yet this vision has long been pursued under constraint by Black educators whose pedagogical resistance exemplifies democratic classrooms.

LESSONS FROM BLACK TEACHERS' RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE

Ms. McGee: Moving Beyond Banned Literature

Givens (2021) introduces fugitive pedagogy through Tessie McGee, a Black history teacher from Webster Parish, Louisiana, during the early 1930s. At the time, Webster Parish was home to a Klan-led Department of Education and school board that permitted specific guidelines on what teachers could do with their students. Consequently, Black teachers and families were granted little to no autonomy to make curricular decisions that best served their Black students. Based on Ms. McGee's teacher intuition and counsel from other Black teachers, she furtively acted alone over the curriculum by reading banned literature to her students in her lap from Carter G. Woodson when white surveillance was not present for classroom visits.

It was pertinent for Ms. McGee to open avenues for her Black students to know truthfully about themselves and their history that was not tainted with dehumanization, subservience, and disinformation, a critical lens needed to develop students' aspirations and Black identity. Though Ms. McGee was aware of the potentially severe disciplinary consequences of her decisions, sometimes even risking whippings, she viewed the risk as necessary to fill the gap in Black education that was lacking compared to the education of white children. As Givens (2021) reiterates, "McGee escaped this official curriculum by way of the 'hidden transcript' literally resting on her lap. The public display of the 'official' outline was a masked performance of complicity" (p. 6). This masked performance showed McGee learning how to navigate the unjust, racist expectations from her state and district to keep her employment. At times, with the assistance of her Black principal as a lookout for unexpected visitors, she could provide high-quality instruction for her Black students covertly when applicable.

Through the lens of Carter G. Woodson and other literary scholars (Best & Hartman, 2005), Givens highlights that secrecy and subversion were strategic responses in Black education, echoing the tactics of Black resistance from the Antebellum South through the Jim Crow era in the quest for freedom and equality. Similarly, during slavery, Black individuals often taught each other to read and write through secret gatherings and coded language, using traditions, parables, and songs (Baumgartner, 2009). Building on this legacy of ingenuity, Black communities have long relied on creativity not only to educate but also to preserve and communicate truth in the face of systemic oppression.

Mrs. Hall: Challenging Eurocentric Curriculum

In the modern era, Melinda Anderson's (2020) book, *Becoming a Teacher*, exemplifies this resistance by highlighting Mrs. LaQuisha Hall's classroom. Mrs. Hall, a Black English language arts teacher and 2018 Baltimore City's Teacher of the Year in Baltimore City Public Schools is showcased for her innovative and inclusive teaching practices. At one point in time, Mrs. Hall was fearful of legitimizing Black culture and identity that was absent in her curriculum with fear of being reprimanded by school and district administration. She no longer holds this fear because, in her words, "I'm doing what's best for kids," understanding that every student in her class cannot be fully served when instruction relies solely on Eurocentric reading materials, especially with Black urban students (Anderson, M. D., 2020, p. 78). She then states, "I break the scripted curriculum tradition to ensure that the future of my students has some cushion to it…we talk so much about academia and there's not enough to prepare them for what's waiting for them on the other side, outside of academia" (p. 79).

Mrs. Hall viewed education as not only preparing for statewide assessments and earning grades but also preparing students for the real world that awaits them. Mrs. Hall found ways to share culturally relevant material, like Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give*, to help develop a love for reading books that connected to issues her students cared about in society, while lowering the anxiety and pressure of raising test scores. Though not as covertly as Ms. McGee, Mrs. Hall found ways in the legacy of the Black teaching tradition to still increase student achievement in literacy, aligning with fugitivity or an orientation of liberatory consciousness (Player et al., 2020) to support and affirm her Black students.

MODELING MULTIRACIAL DEMOCRACY

Building on this legacy, teaching for a multiracial democracy in a fugitive manner necessitates forming and modeling values that avoid alienating traditionally marginalized students due to harmful legislation and differentiating these students from others perceived as the norm (Devine et al., 2008; Kumashiro, 2000). Fugitive practice does not mean miseducation, nor does it prevent teachers from being responsible for executing their curricular standards with explicit instruction and other administrative tasks. However, this idea allows teachers to cultivate civic-minded, critically engaged students who can live in peace with their neighbors and community (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). As a growing number of largely Republican-led states continue to restrict what can be taught by fear of K–12 indoctrination (Scussel & Norris, 2023), teachers have a unique purpose in advancing democratic ideals in their classrooms by helping students discern fact from fiction amid widespread falsehoods and misconceptions about the teaching profession.

To promote a multiracial democracy through pedagogy, teachers who do not believe all students, regardless of background, can grow and achieve when held to high expectations would inevitably conflict with these ideals. Regardless of race, language, culture, ability, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or immigration status, a teacher who affirms a multiracial democracy views these students as assets to the learning community with strengths to contribute over their weaknesses (Paris & Alim, 2017; Renkly & Bertolini, 2018). If not, a teacher does not enact fugitive pedagogy and instead carries a deficit-oriented approach, further indicating the current struggles and areas for improvement across America's classrooms.

Consequently, the aim of educating for a multiracial democracy is to cultivate and model a classroom with inclusive participation, where teachers are "valuing the lives of all young people and creating conditions that enable the full flowering of their human capacity" (Rogers et al., 2022, p. 5). It is where the classroom transcends being merely a place to solve the latest Algebra I equation or analyze the thematic elements of a complex text. While these contributions matter, the essence also lies in developing students' ability to analyze their experiences and contexts, enabling them to contribute to community prosperity and achieve comprehensive self-realization (Dewey, 1937).

BLACK EDUCATION: PAST AND PRESENT PEDAGOGIES FOR DEMOCRATIC FUTURES

In addition, we build upon the limited, but growing work on using fugitive pedagogy to support teachers in politically tense spaces (Cabral et al., 2024; Givens, 2020; Givens, 2021; Stovall, 2023). In particular, the qualitative study by

Cabral et al. interviewed 102 educators interested in antiracist and culturally relevant practices and how they implemented them within their local context. We agree with these researchers that all teachers can learn from the legacy of Black teaching through fugitive pedagogy, where district leaders and policymakers support culturally relevant, antiracist approaches, ensure antiracist professional development, and defend First Amendment rights that fortify democratic principles. We extend their work by illuminating the relationship between democracy and cultivating democratic classrooms through Black fugitive pedagogies. Additionally, we emphasize the need for educators to organize and strategize to support students and other educators as they teach with a fugitive pedagogical approach.

Thus, in Tables 1 and 2, we show how Black teaching has shifted from one era to the next, allowing educators to learn from the past and present to thrive in this politically contentious profession. By juxtaposing past and present strategies, we aim to help teachers adopt effective methods for politically tense spaces, address systemic issues that have persisted over time, and empower them to advocate for systemic change at the local, state, and federal levels using their expertise. We trace the evolution of Black education from the arrival of the first African slaves, through the period of slavery, the Civil War, and the Reconstruction era (1865-1877), continuing through the Jim Crow era (1877-1968), and into the present-day Trump presidency. Tables 1 and 2 highlight historical and contemporary Black teaching practices in politically tense spaces, pivotal events that accentuated the era, and associated threats and challenges. We examine the shift in Black teaching possibilities over past centuries, noting the higher prevalence of retaliatory physical violence in the 1900s, reflecting fugitive pedagogy (Williamson-Lott et al., 2012).

As Tables 1 and 2 outline and as scholars (Cabral et al., 2024) have reiterated, the historical trajectory beginning in 1619 of liberation, justice, cultural relevance, and democratic principles laid the groundwork for the teaching profession we know today as culturally relevant pedagogy, reality pedagogy, abolitionist teaching, and other pedagogical frameworks in the contemporary context. Some focus areas in Tables 1 and 2, such as literacy, Black history, cultural pride, innovation, and academic excellence, are timeless aspects of the evolution of Black education that translate into Black educators having the moral courage to challenge oppressive systems. Threats and challenges to Black teaching have evolved from imprisonment and even possible death for reading a Black history book to the strategic pushout and intimidation of teachers for reading a book about race and/or identity. Additionally, while racial biases are present across time periods, the era preceding the Post–Civil Rights to Multicultural Foundations period included more explicit forms of discrimination, such as Jim Crow laws that enforced racial segregation. These biases, though presented in separate columns, have a relational impact on the evolution of Black education.

Tables 1 and 2 also illustrate what is sacred in Black fugitive spaces, which are Black students thriving academically in inclusive classrooms and being prepared for a democratic society as a result. But we also observe how Black fugitive spaces have not explicitly emphasized covert teaching practices as much in the contemporary context. This does not insinuate that these practices are not happening in classrooms, because research has shown that teachers are prone to have resistance as good sense to reform efforts that limit their effectiveness, time, and authority (Cohen, 1990; Gitlin & Margonis, 1995). Black teachers of the past and present are no different. Also, when considering the importance and application of covert fugitive teaching methods in today's context, it is noteworthy that students are more tech-savvy and own cell phones and other technological devices that can record, tweet, or post conversations on social media channels, which can pose privacy issues and deliberate misinterpretations of breaking the law (Chanenson et al., 2023; Ladson-Billings, 2013).

As Tables 1 and 2 suggest, even with the influence of Black education and scholarship on the teaching profession, though retaliatory physical violence is less common today, structural violence, manifesting as systemic injustices through policies and laws, or verbal and psychological abuse through intimidation and disinformation tactics, is just as pertinent in modern-day schooling (Clark, 2022; Crenshaw, 2021; Jayakumar & Kohli, 2023; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The threat of losing one's job is particularly pronounced, especially in states where teachers lack union protection. For example, a far-right parents' rights organization known as Moms for Liberty, cited unfounded complaints and caused uproars at school board meetings against publisher Great Minds' English Language Arts curriculum, Wit and Wisdom, in a suburban district of Nashville, Tennessee. The organization accused the district and its teachers of using a publisher that created instructional materials to indoctrinate students about gender fluidity and CRT, due to reading about male seahorses carrying eggs or Ruby Bridges integrating an all-white school in Louisiana (Williams, 2022).

Table 1
Evolution of Black Teaching: Historical & Contemporary Contexts (1619-1968)

Category	Pedagogical Strategies & Teaching Methods	Pivotal Events	Threats & Challenges
Enslavement and Emancipation **(1619–1865)**	Disguised communication through stories, songs, and traditions for learning how to read/write during slavery (Baumgartner, 2009)	Arrival of enslaved Africans (1619) beginning institutionalized slavery in the Americas Civil War (1861–1865) battling over states' rights to preserve slavery Emancipation Proclamation (1863) ending slavery in Confederate states	**Retaliatory Physical Violence** **Explicit Bias** **Institutional Racism** **Secrecy** **Employee Termination** **Imprisonment** (Givens, 2021; Walker, 2018; Williamson-Lott et al., 2012)
Jim Crow and Segregated Schooling **(1866–1953)**	Teacher defiance disguised as compliance during Jim Crow; covert teaching methods to avoid detection of teaching reading/writing; integrating Black history and culture in curriculum to cultivate a sense of identity; challenging school system and social reality; modeling lessons that critique anti-Blackness and racist ideas (Givens, 2021) Embracing to teach Black students of democratic principles inspired by John Dewey; preparing Black students for a world that does not yet exist; covertly infusing Black history and dignity into the curriculum (Walker, 2008; 2018)	Reconstruction (1865–1877) reintegrating Southern states and establishing rights for formerly enslaved people *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) upholding racial segregation under "separate but equal" Rise of Black Normal Schools establishing teacher-training institutions for African American educators post-Reconstruction	
Civil Rights Era and Educational Mobilization **(1954–1968)**	Mobilizing and generating resources available to support Black students and racial progress; promoting Black students' acquisition of educational capital (Kelly, 2010) Demonstrating perseverance and resilience; teaching Black history as core component of curriculum (Foster, 1997) Encouraging open dialogue and critical thinking; integrating students' lived experiences into the learning process; addressing emotional and psychological needs of Black students in segregated schools (hooks, 1994)	*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) declaring racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional Civil Rights Act (1964) banning racial discrimination Assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968)	

Note. This table highlights pedagogical strategies and challenges that were more openly accepted, formalized, or institutionalized, and phrased differently within each historical context. While not exhaustive, it offers a representative overview of key practices and tensions where some elements may overlap across time periods.

Table 2

Evolution of Black Teaching: Historical & Contemporary Contexts (1969-Present)

Category	Pedagogical Strategies & Teaching Methods	Pivotal Events	Threats & Challenges
Post–Civil Rights to Multicultural Foundations **(1969–1999)**	Culturally relevant pedagogy that focuses on fostering academic success, developing cultural competence, and supporting critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b) Multicultural education that treats diversity as a strength, not limited to race or social class, is key to influencing how students learn and behave (Banks, 1994)	Rise of multicultural education movements Affirmative action debates *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974) limiting desegregation across school district lines Expansion of Black Studies programs in higher education	**Implicit Bias** **Systemic Racism** **Colorblind Ideology** **Anti-CRT/DEI Legislation** **Teacher Burnout / Pushout** **Minimal Privacy with Technology** (Chanenson et al., 2023; Clark, 2022; Crenshaw, 2021; Howard, 2010; Jayakumar & Kohli, 2023; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995)
Early 21st Century and Obama Era (2000–2016)	Culturally responsive pedagogy that includes cultural stories and references that resonate with students' backgrounds; recognizes the impact of implicit bias on teaching and learning; builds strong, trusting relationships, and creates a sense of belonging in the classroom (Gay, 2000; Hammond, 2014) Culturally sustaining pedagogy that maintains and supports diverse languages, literacies, and cultures in democratic schools (Paris, 2012) Reality pedagogy that uses culturally relevant materials and teaching methods, such as hip-hop music and call-and-response, to make learning more engaging and meaningful (Emdin, 2016) Incorporating cultural and spiritual practices into the curriculum and teaching methods to foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment (Dillard, 2000)	No Child Left Behind Act (2001), a Bush-era policy reshaping standardized testing Obama's presidency (2009–2017) as the first Black president Race to the Top initiative (2009) emphasizing accountability, data systems, and teacher effectiveness *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2013, 2016) revisiting affirmative action in college admissions	
Trump Era and Racial Reckoning (2017–Present)	Anti-racist Black language pedagogy that centers Black language and challenges linguistic racism within instruction aimed at acquiring dominant norms of speaking and expressing White Mainstream English (Baker-Bell, 2020) Abolitionist teaching that integrates civics education focused on social justice, critical thinking, and democratic participation; inspiring students and educators to strive for educational freedom beyond mere survival in the current system (Love, 2019) Challenging systemic racism, power, and oppression, guiding students in understanding and confronting these systems, and encouraging them to use STEM and computer science to empower themselves and their communities (Madkins et al., 2020)	Trump presidency (2017–2021; 2025–present) and rise of anti-CRT and anti-DEI legislation Black Lives Matter at School action in Seattle (2017) expanding to 50+ schools through racial justice curriculum, Black affirmation, youth leadership, local community partnerships, Black-led organizations, and Black male leadership George Floyd protests (2020) sparking national reckoning on racial justice Efforts by Trump and allies to overturn the 2020 election (2020–2021) culminating in the January 6 Capitol insurrection *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* (2023) ending race-conscious college admissions State-level bans on CRT and DEI frameworks in teacher education and curriculum	

Note. This table highlights pedagogical strategies and challenges that were more openly accepted, formalized, or institutionalized, and phrased differently within each historical context. While not exhaustive, it offers a representative overview of key practices and tensions where some elements may overlap across time periods.

BLACK EDUCATIONAL TRADITIONS AND THE LEGACY OF RESISTANCE

Learning from the foundational aspects of Black education and resistance in America, from slavery through the Jim Crow era, can provide a blueprint for how all teachers can educate for an all-embracing democracy in our increasingly polarized society. Yet this blueprint remains aspirational. Despite the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and current educational progress, or lack thereof, Black, Latine, low-income, and other students of color continue to face significant hurdles. These include challenges to receiving quality and equitable education, and resegregation in public schools (Gantz, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Moreover, Black students and families were systematically divested of schools led by Black leaders and teachers who focused on educating Black children about their history (Fenwick, 2022). After the Brown decision, Black students were stripped of school leaders who taught critical and socio-political consciousness, a distinct education that would have protected families against educational gag orders and prepared Black families to challenge them. Historians like Siddle Walker (2018) underscore that, despite these leadership losses, there were institutional supports such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Black teachers' associations that supported critical education.

Throughout American history, Black Americans have demonstrated remarkable resilience and self-sufficiency, building societies and structures despite systemic racism and discrimination. Examples include the prosperous Black Wall Street of Tulsa, Oklahoma, during the early 1900s, and Mound Bayou, Mississippi, where formerly enslaved people in 1887 founded the community with its schools and businesses for social empowerment and economic independence (Gantt, 2021; Meier, 1954). This resistance reflects their worldview, where they leveraged their cultural memory to understand and navigate crises (Kazembe, 2019). Likewise, if public schools are to be sites for social transformation, teachers must embrace a professional commitment to be more than neutral bystanders in the work toward democratic ideals. They must view themselves as engaged participants and sometimes disruptors and resistors if inclusive participation and respectful engagement are possible.

In other historical periods, there have been a variety of local institutions, along with broader national and regional organizations, which sustained such participation and disruption to support Black Americans through slavery, Jim Crow, and beyond. For instance, establishing the Prince Hall Freemasonry in Massachusetts provided a support and advocacy network for Black Americans (Walker, 2008). Similarly, Du Bois (1909), along with other activists, established the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in response to ongoing discrimination and violence against Black Americans. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in Pennsylvania in 1816, played a crucial role in education and social justice, while Carter G. Woodson's establishment of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History in 1915 further promoted the study and appreciation of African American history and culture (Andrews, 1984; Raboteau, 2001; Walker, 2018). The Georgia Teachers and Education Association also supported Black educators and students during segregation, advocating for educational equity and labor rights (Walker, 2005). Some comparable institutions and networks today that promote equity, access, and justice for Black communities in and outside of schools include the Equal Justice Initiative[1], Black Girls Code[2], and the Black Alliance for Just Immigration[3].

FUGITIVE PEDAGOGY AND THE ROLE OF TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS AND RESIDENCIES

Preparing accomplished teachers who are committed to equity, justice, and truth-telling is crucial for preserving democratic norms in American society, ensuring that every child has the right to learn and succeed in a knowledge-based society (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Before enacting fugitive pedagogy toward democratic ideals, it commences with teacher preparation programs and residencies as they develop teacher learners to serve students with the highest standards. Traditional teacher preparation programs housed at universities are structured, typically with clinical experiences where teachers are more likely to be effective with better student outcomes and remain in the profession (Francies et al., 2021; Thompson, 2020). Typically, teacher preparation programs prepare candidates for a variety of

[1] See https://eji.org/

[2] See https://www.wearebgc.org/

[3] See https://justicepower.org/project/baji/

settings. However, many candidates often end up working in urban settings where structural inequities and underfunding are common (Howard & Milner, 2021; Jordan et al., 2018; Talbert-Johnson, 2004). Teacher residencies serve as an alternative pathway, like traditional teacher preparation programs, but are modeled after a medical residency. Residencies, which offer an alternative pathway for teacher certification by pairing candidates with mentor teachers for an academic year, create long-term benefits in student achievement and teacher recruitment for schools and districts (Guha et al., 2016).

Teacher learners who enter the classroom today may be overwhelmed by the injustice of vulnerable infrastructure, school funding inequities, and academic disparities in rural and urban settings (Dhaliwal & Bruno, 2021; Howard & Milner, 2021), but also politically tense spaces as liberals and conservatives contest their view of social change (Li & Cao, 2020). Traditional teacher preparation programs and residencies can shape teacher learners on educating for a multiracial democracy and remain employed when fugitive pedagogy or resistance is necessary for student thriving and success. We argue that teacher learners should grasp how to lead in the classroom and navigate the profession's messiness that challenges democratic principles, such as policies banning books and limiting discussions around race, racism, and facts deemed divisive or controversial by those in power. Preserving democracy is a multidimensional undertaking where teacher education has a role in helping primarily young adults enter politically tense spaces (Westheimer, 2022).

RECOMMENDATIONS

As teachers learn to apply fugitive pedagogical approaches, we offer pedagogical and professional recommendations to consider when reflecting democratic principles. For clarity, we are not advocating for educators to jeopardize their jobs or livelihoods. Instead, we suggest that teachers can learn how to work within the system while not being entirely of the system, fostering democratic values without risking their professional standing.

Pedagogical Recommendations

Unlock Principled Resistance. Achinstein and Ogawa (2006) introduce principled resistance as teachers' professional principles, rather than their reluctance to change or cognitive deficits, defining this resistance as "overt or covert acts that reject instructional policies, programs, or other efforts to control teachers' work that undermine or contradict professional principles" (p. 32). There is a long history of teachers who are resistant to reform efforts that take away time and authority from their profession but are viewed as a reflection of good sense (Cohen, 1991; Gitlin & Margonis, 1995). In fact, when teachers navigate ethical dilemmas and resist mandates that undermine their effectiveness, they can discover innovative ways to implement culturally relevant and responsive strategies, create more inclusive and engaging learning spaces, experience personal and professional growth, and promote democratic values that foster critical thinking and active citizenship among students through dialogue and collaboration (Santoro & Cain, 2018). This good sense reflects the essence of fugitive pedagogy, as teachers move beyond surveillance and oppression, teaching candidly to enrich student learning (Bushnell, 2003).

First-year and novice teachers are more likely to adhere, initially, to district protocol due to their limited experience and confidence in their pedagogy (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Best & Dunlap, 2014). However, seasoned teachers committed to democratic education can assist new and novice teachers within their professional learning communities or grade-level meetings as they model what principled resistance through fugitive pedagogy could resemble in their classrooms. Since there is limited to no evidence that CRT, for example, is being taught in K–12 classrooms (Morgan, 2022), we suggest teachers do not need to overthink and evade facilitating good teaching that cultivates academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

This will not necessarily mirror Tessie McGee reading Carter G. Woodson to her students in her lap with the door closed (Givens, 2021), but it likely will invoke a certain boldness to establish a safe space for students to dialogue about the causes of the Civil War, to solve real-world problems through mathematics, or to explore Indigenous history, rather than shying away from them as educational gag orders intend. This may also resemble supplementing the curriculum with culturally relevant texts, as LaQuisha Hall (Anderson, M. D., 2020) did, knowing the law and your First Amendment rights are on your side.

Adapt Curriculum for Content Mastery and Critical Consciousness. Before principled resistance can occur, we recommend that teachers strengthen their content knowledge as continual learners (Button, 2021) to be deep and flexible to meet their students' diverse needs and abilities (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Shulman, 1987). A teacher cannot understand the intricacy and vastness of their content without understanding its highest levels (Highet, 1950). Thus, we suggest that adapting curriculum for critical consciousness and content mastery is not an additive on teachers' plates, but already a common practice and expectation in the profession (Debarger et al., 2017; Hoover, 1990). Given the growing political contentiousness towards teachers and public schools, it is recommended that educators deepen their knowledge of their content and state standards to know how censorship laws are misinterpreting their work. This knowledge allows them to modify or supplement their curriculum through fugitive pedagogical approaches, inviting students to articulate what they need to critically examine the world and participate as informed, active citizens.

Resources and activities from the nonprofit organization Facing History & Ourselves[4] can be a starting point for adapting curriculum across subjects to meet student needs and counter bigotry and hate. Additionally, Harvard University's Democratic Knowledge Project[5] partners with K–16 educators to co-design high-quality civic curricula that support teachers in facilitating dialogue around difficult historical topics and help students explore their civic identities and values. The Zinn Education Project[6] also offers teaching materials and supplemental resources to teach history in a more engaging and transparent manner.

Sustain Black Fugitive Pedagogical Practices. It is imperative that teachers and school leaders be unapologetic in their efforts to educate children. However, to protect the freedom to teach inclusive and accurate content, educators in politically tense spaces must continue to find and sustain creative, context-sensitive ways to navigate instruction that carry forward the Black fugitive pedagogical tradition. This is especially true in the presence of students' cell phones and other technologies that not only compromise privacy but also risk misinterpreting or even deliberately distorting their professional practice. This necessity is emphasized by the broader movement to restrict equity-oriented curricula, which risk privileging dominant cultural narratives while excluding racially and socially diverse ways of knowing, further marginalizing students of color who now make up the majority in U.S. public schools (LoBue & Douglass, 2023).

Rooted in the Black educational legacy, Black fugitive pedagogy ensures that Black students and other historically marginalized students are valued in ways that teach their history, their current experiences, and the truth about their country. This approach also cultivates critical thinking, intellectual autonomy, and civic awareness, which extends across the classroom and strengthens learning for all students. In this current political landscape, the Blackness of fugitive pedagogy must be foregrounded and not just implied.

Professional Recommendations

Engage in Union Representation and Community Involvement. One strategy teachers can use to protect themselves while advancing a multiracial democracy is to get involved in a teacher union, state affiliate, or organize and strategize resistance. Teacher unions were established to champion member rights (Cowen & Strunk, 2015) and have historically played a crucial role in protecting the rights of marginalized workers, including women (Goldstein, 2014; Murphy, 1990) and people of color (Todd-Breland, 2018; Urban, 2000).

While we recognize that in some states, such as Idaho and Wisconsin, teacher unions are banned from striking or collectively bargaining, we believe that utilizing other forms of resistance, such as work stoppages, can be effective as well. Additionally, teacher unions are crucial in shaping school district leaders' decision-making around censorship legislation and have proven effective in helping win school board elections. For example, union-endorsed candidates account for about 70 percent of competitive school board victories (Hartney & Vladimir, 2023). Thus, it behooves any

[4] See https://www.facinghistory.org/how-it-works/teaching-resources

[5] See https://www.democratickknowledgeproject.org/

[6] See https://www.zinnedproject.org/

educator, working under curricular restrictions, to get involved in unions to further change the trajectory of district leaders to improve their classroom situation.

Moreover, teachers' unions can help educate teachers on their rights. It is also useful for educators to familiarize themselves with equity-oriented approaches such as cultural relevance and their legal rights, so they know how to best engage in fugitive pedagogy. Unions, such as the National Education Association (2021), have defeated many measures by calling out cynical playbooks and pivoting to the values of honesty, inclusion, and respect. If facing legal repercussions, educators can receive support from local unions or state affiliates. Such support is vital, as educators should not fight alone, especially in states where district and/or state leaders are consciously or unconsciously biased and fundamentally racist, homophobic, and sexist.

Lastly, we suggest educators connect with other justice-focused educators and organizations to develop their toolkit to teach, wherever applicable and age appropriately, about race, racism, gender, and sexuality in strategic ways. By engaging in discussion and sharing resources with other skilled teachers, educators can garner resources to best support themselves and their students.

Prepare Teacher Learners for Politically Tense Spaces. The possibilities for teacher preparation programs and residencies are limitless. However, if teacher learners are to educate for a multiracial democracy, understanding antidemocratic, authoritarian governance and its relation to their work is pivotal (Jardina & Mickey, 2022). Teacher education, alongside mentor teachers, should guide teacher learners to ask thoughtful questions that challenge stereotypes, counter misinformation and disinformation from restrictive laws, and question cultural assumptions, making them more conscious of the social construction of their work (Bushnell, 2003). Principled resistance is a familiar stance among seasoned educators, who often recognize when and how to navigate tensions between policy and practice. Teacher education programs could strengthen their coursework by explicitly addressing the conditions under which such resistance may be warranted, particularly considering shifting political climates and evolving district, state, or federal expectations. Educating for a multiracial democracy is possible if teacher learners train beyond the glossy aspects of room décor and catchy attention-getters of the job.

Cabral et al. (2024) recommend that understanding one's constitutional rights is critical. Coursework or additional professional development can inform teacher learners of their rights as citizens and how to be involved in teacher unions to protect them from unwarranted targeting or abuse. Additionally, teacher education programs with mentor teachers in states with censorship legislation should aim to inform candidates about relevant laws, their implications for pedagogical practice, and effective teaching strategies, such as fugitive pedagogy, as a response.

CONCLUSION

"Confronting one another across differences means that we must change ideas about how we learn; rather than fearing conflict we have to find ways to use it as a catalyst for new thinking, for growth" (hooks, 1994, p. 113). When teachers create learning spaces that embrace conflict as a catalyst, they can foster an environment where diverse epistemologies are explored and valued, leading to enriched learning experiences and intellectual growth beyond the classroom. As a result, the complexity and diversity of today's advancing world, combined with the challenges teachers face in these politically contentious times, necessitate improved learning methods beyond merely dispensing information. Schools must not only deliver instruction but also ensure that students learn in more powerful ways, meeting the diverse needs of students with varying experiences, talents, and beliefs (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

As educators move from the fugitivity Jarvis Givens discusses to the new forms of resistance today, we believe the meaning of fugitive pedagogy continues to evolve. Today's more open and public resistance, through solidarities with unions and community members, represents a new manifestation of fugitive pedagogy that embraces visibility and collective action absent in the Jim Crow South and slavery, while still recognizing the necessity of covert methods when appropriate. Through fugitive pedagogy, the Black teaching tradition affirms that student learning can persist nationwide, despite opposition and regardless of whether local politics are conservative or progressive. We believe teaching is the noblest profession, on par with the accomplishments of a basketball player notching a triple-double, a gymnast executing a historic vault performance, or a painter crafting the abstractness of life onto a canvas. A master teacher believes in their students' capabilities, encourages them to create new knowledge, and embraces diversity while upholding democratic values. Not many professions like teaching can have this much influence and power.

Beginning with teacher preparation programs and residencies, teachers can steward this responsibility well in the best interest of all students. Dewey (1938), in his book *Experience and Education*, emphasizes the importance of teaching with a greater purpose by questioning the value of learning subjects such as history, geography, and English language arts if one cannot apply, be challenged, and derive meaningful insights from them for the greater good. We also recognize that the implementation of pedagogical strategies and the challenges of replicating a strategy in one school context to another inside a district may present continuous improvement challenges due to school readiness and not fully understanding the complexities of each school context, as well as lack of cultural competence, personal bias, and limited time and resources for teachers to overcome restrictions on inclusive pedagogical frameworks (Bryk et al., 2015; Samuels, 2018; Shakman et al., 2020).

Therefore, schools can be spaces for social transformation to instill democratic principles when teachers are responsible for disrupting dominant narratives in school organizations toward academic empowerment and student success. Since the insidiousness of white supremacy in school organizations is an embedded phenomenon (Diamond, 2024), all educators have a role to play in transforming public schools into catalysts for social and academic progress inside politically tense spaces. By enacting and sustaining Black fugitive pedagogical practices through learning from both past and present methods, teachers can ultimately foster a multiracial democracy and a stronger republic.

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