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Show Us the Love: Revolutionary Teaching in (Un)Critical Times

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Abstract
In the wake of racial violence in urban schools and society, we question, "Can the field of urban education love blackness and Black lives unconditionally and as preconditions to humanity? What does it look like to (re)imagine urban classrooms as sites of love? As educators, how might we utilize a pedagogy of love as an embodied practice that influences holistic teaching? How might we utilize a pedagogy of love to include Black youths' racialized and gendered life histories and experiences and their language and literacy practices? We outline and discuss five types of violence in schools (physical, symbolic, linguistic, curricula/pedagogical, and systemic school violence) which interfere with the creation and sustainability of revolutionary love in urban schools. We present examples of 'fake love' and provide the current backdrop. We operationalize revolutionary love and offer Afrocentric praxis and African Diaspora Literacy as antidotes to anti-Black types of violence that many students experience in urban schools.

Keywords Anti-blackness · Diaspora literacy · Love · Violence · Urban education

Prelude: Where Is the Love?

People killin'
people dyin'
Children hurt and you hear them cryin'
Can you practice what you preach?
Or would you turn the other cheek?

The Black Eyed Peas (Adams and Fair 2003)

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In the wake of endemic racial violence, we ask the following questions: we question if the field of urban education unconditionally love Blackness, Black lives, and Black humanity. What does it look like to re-imagine urban classrooms as sites of love? As educators, how might we utilize a pedagogy of love as an embodied practice that influences holistic teaching? How might we utilize a pedagogy of love to include Black youths' racialized and gendered life histories and experiences and their language and literacy practices? We acknowledge all geologic types of schools (rural, urban, and suburban) have issues and are bound with deficit imagery. However, given the aforementioned examples and the institutional and structural ways that white supremacy operates, students in urban spaces are prone to be more susceptible to racialized violence (Milner and Lomotey 2014). To be clear, the insidious and daily instances of dehumanizing teaching practices and the lack of love continue to damage Black youth across all geographical spaces.

There is a heightened increase in the racial violence against Black children and youth. Unfortunately, the racial violence that erupts in Black communities, neighborhoods, churches, playgrounds and parks is intertwined to the violence that unfolds in urban schools and classrooms across the U.S. To be clear, we are teaching in unsafe spaces—and, Black children and youths' bodies and lives are not safe. Each day, Black youth are exiting our nation's classrooms with metaphorical broken arms and dislocated shoulders and with bruised hearts and wounded souls. And yet, the adults in their lives continue to expect students to keep entering these combat zones. Many families and educators are unaware of the depth of racial violence that Black students experience in schools since the master narrative is that education is important.

To illuminate, on October 26, 2015, the U.S. witnessed a 16-year-old Black girl brutally tossed across a classroom at Spring Valley High School in Columbia, South Carolina by a white male police officer, Ben Fields (Ruiz-Sealey 2016). On November 2, 2017, Paul Hagan, a physics teacher, in Conyers, Georgia was suspended on paid leave for threatening a young Black male. In a 26-second clip, Paul Hagan can be seen and heard saying, "That's how people like you get shot…I bet by the time you're 21, someone's going to put a bullet right through your head, O.K.? And it might be me, the one that does it" (Phillips 2017). During a classroom activity on November 30, 2017, a paraprofessional at Indiana High School in Kokomo, Indiana, Greg Ostapa, is recorded on video playing a game of hangman that spelled out a racial epithet, nigger (Gutierrez 2017).

Similarly, on December 4, 2017, in Brownsville, TN, over 200 Black students walked out of class in protest after racist threats were made on social media by several white male students: "so no go on stringing a nigger up?… I mean we can find one black guy and make an example for sure…I say we hang the nigger lovers and make an example out of them" (Chen 2017). These intentional and racial incidents are not only projected onto the bodies and lives of Black youth but also can be extrapolated to the lived experiences of Brown, Latinx, Indigenous, and LGBTQ youth. On October 16, 2017, in Cliffside Park, NJ, students at Cliffside Park High School staged a walkout after a white female substitute teacher reprimanded three Latinx students for speaking Spanish in class. The teacher was recorded on video yelling, "Speak American! The U.S. soldiers are not fighting for your right to speak

Spanish. They're fighting for your right to speak American." On November 13, 2017, a female teacher recorded another student removing a young girl's hijab and exposing her hair to the class. The video was uploaded on the teacher's Snapchat account. During an interview, the teacher stated that exposing the girl's hair was not done out of disrespect.

Mapping the racial trauma and violence that continue to seep into schools illustrate the lack of love that exists in urban classrooms. When we refer to love, we are not talking about the mushy, infatuated, and/or the dominant and submissive types of love that occur in classrooms. As such, based on our personal and professional experiences working with teachers, we contend that many urban classrooms are filled with simple notions of love reflected in phrases like: "I love all of my students because they all have potential"; "I love all children because some of them don't get love at home"; and "I love all kids regardless of what color they are… red, white, blue, yellow, or Black". These superficial notions of love represent the ongoing rhetoric that permeates urban classrooms. On the contrary, we are referring to the type of deep-seated love that is cloaked in pain and that is bounded in action which disrupts the social constructions of anti-blackness and white supremacist patriarchy through the practice of humanizing love, which we will further discuss and unpack later in the paper. Being able to practice a humanizing love is a painful process because it is a struggle and ongoing fight for liberation. Building from the words of Matias and Allen (2013), "Love is more than a superficial need to self-gratify; rather, it is a state of existence, a way of being in the world, that leads us back together. It is a feeling that is paid forward in the interconnectedness of our humanity and its capacity to produce conditions that are more just" (p. 302).

In educational settings, love connotes that all humans deserve the right to dignity, freedom, and equal opportunities (Boutte 2008). On the other hand, hate in educational settings is defined as a lack of compassion and lack of respect for the rights and humanity of all people. Like hatred in the political sense, it is usually both intentional and unintentional resulting from a lack of critical consciousness. It reflects itself in various forms of covert and overt violence as will be discussed in this article. Professing love for children and humanity without reflective and collaborative action is inadequate for transforming urban schools (Boutte 2008). In contrast to superficial notions of love that occur in classrooms (e.g., *I love all children regardless of if they are Black, white, or purple*), this article showcases how a revolutionary love arms Black children and educators with critical consciousness and the essential tools to fight for the mattering of Black lives and against white supremacy in and beyond PreK-12 urban schools.

Therefore, we begin this article by explicating how urban classrooms are sites of suffering and violent spaces that operate from a type of abusive love that we are calling—fake love. We outline five types of violence in schools (physical, symbolic, linguistic, curricula/pedagogical, and systemic school violence) as evidence of fake love. The historical legacy and continued absence of love informs the abusive love that is often forced onto the lives of Black youth through educators' mindset, curriculum, and pedagogy. This abusive love has erupted on many different levels, including the over-surveillance of Black youth in schools, unjust policies, irrelevant standards, and culturally assaultive pedagogical practices. As such, these inequitable

policies and practices have overshadowed a humanizing love and has sustained false conceptions of love.

The second part of this article attends to the critical ways that educators can enact a revolutionary love as a pedagogical practice and an epistemic violent tool that counteract the notion of fake love. In doing so, educators who practice love from a humanizing stance move us from this abusive act of love by teaching in ways that resist the hegemonic structures that (mis)represent Black youths' culture, language, stories and experiences. In short, teaching love as a pedagogical practice illustrates education for liberation because it teaches educators and youth how to resist the violent practices of schools while simultaneously providing critical and Afrocentric practices that humanize our Black children and youth.

Urban Classrooms as Sites of Suffering and the Types of Anti-black Violence

Before we can begin to re-imagine urban classrooms as sites of love, we have to critically examine the often unseen ways that urban schools are violent sites and how Black lives and bodies are unsafe in urban classrooms. This is not to vilify urban schools but to shed light on how violence shapes the educational experiences of Black youth. We believe that too many urban schools serve as violent sites that destroy the knowledge and rich cultural practices that Black youth bring to classrooms through privileging the onto-epistemologies and cultural practices of their white counterparts. We suggest that the absence of Black youths' cultural, racial, linguistic, and epistemic practices in classrooms is a form of violence and spirit-murder (Johnson and Bryan 2016). Furthermore, this violence is not new—it is historical and is tightly etched within the nation's fabric. Simply put, historically, Black people have encountered racial trauma and abusive acts in the name of so-called love in schools and in society since being in this country.

We recall the legal prohibition of schools for Blacks during enslavement and the pervasive incendiaries of Black Schools during Reconstruction (Butchart 2010). We remember the courageous spirit of six-year-old Ruby Bridges, a first-grade student, who encountered racial abuse for being the first Black child to attend an all-white school in the U.S. South. We remember the fearless spirits of the Little Rock Nine (Ernest Green, Elizabeth Eckford, Jefferson Thomas, Terrence Roberts, Carlotta Walls LaNier, Minnijean Brown, Gloria Ray Karlmark, Thelma Mothershed, and Melba Pattillo Beals)—the nine Black youth who were registered to attend an all-white high school during desegregation. They experienced overt racial abuse (e.g., being called racial slurs and being spat on by white teachers and students and having chemicals such as acid thrown in their eyes and being physically abused by groups of white youth and adults) and covert racial abuse (i.e. curriculum, pedagogy, and white norms and ways of knowing and being). We remember the painful and racialized stories from our own parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and community members who also encountered similar racially-related experiences as the previous ones mentioned above.

Even in our current racialized and political context at the macro level, there is continual pathologizing and negative depictions of urban schools, particularly urban schools which enroll large populations of Black youth. Since the 2016 Presidential campaign and election, the 45th president, Donald Trump, has made a series of racist and stereotypical remarks about Black youth and communities and urban schools such as, "You're living in poverty, your schools are no good, you have no jobs, 58% of your youth is unemployed—what the hell do you have to lose?" (as cited in Jackson and Flowers 2017, p. 955). Jackson and Flowers (2017) analyzed "45"'s racist and patriarchal discourse and argued that the deficit ideologies that 45 has about Black people and Black schools reflect similar beliefs and perceptions many white teachers hold about Black youth and their communities. We contend Trump's beliefs are indicative of his 'love for his own race' complemented with his devaluation and hate for Black communities. Trump, along with other politicians and educators, espouse that "classrooms are unsafe because of the Black youth" mantra with no consideration of the discomfort and violence that many Black children in urban school experience each day by white peers, curricula, and educators who are symbolically killing their spirits because of their lack of criticality and awareness.

From a standpoint of love, we have to take into account the systemic nature of anti-black racism that infiltrates many urban schools. Black youth who attend urban schools are viewed as "inferior," "dangerous," and "uneducable." In these spaces, their humanity and intelligence and their racial and linguistic practices are not centered. We are in agreement with Jackson and Flowers (2017) when they concluded,

> From a bird's eye view all American students across racial lines are not faring well in our public schools, and that point should also be portrayed in the media and public conversations about school reform. We do not deny that too many Black children are not living up to their academic potential in many public schools. However, it is not because their schools are inherently 'bad', but rather they are at the crossroads of racial and economic segregation; situated in economically under-resourced communities where in the name of capitalism businesses are allowed to make no investments; and staffed by a teaching profession that does not reflect the diversity of the students or hold high expectations for them (p. 966).

Because of structural inequities and institutionalized racism, many urban schools continue to be underserved. For example, factors such as inadequate teaching practices, uncritical curriculum, underrepresentation of Black youth in gifted and talented programs, unequal distribution of funds, overrepresentation of Black youth in special education courses, and weak administrative decisions and practices are the past and current factors that continue to shade how urban classrooms and schools are viewed (Boutte 2012; Milner 2010). Amid constant struggle, the lack of transformative and loving teaching practices that do not take place in urban settings sustains the narrative and negative imagery about Black youth. Dumas (2014) explains this idea as anti-blackness—he states,

> If, then, the cultural politics of black education, is about securing humanity, black suffering in schools signifies the loss or cultural devaluation of that

> humanity, and the loss of the material resources that allow black subjects to be regarded (and educated) as human beings" (p. 21).

The pain and suffering that transpire in urban settings send strong messages to Black youth that their humanity is devalued and that they will not be protected by adults. When Black youth encounter hegemonic curriculum and teaching practices that fail to center the multifaceted ways they exist and operate within the world, they often lose their sense of self, purpose, identity, and hope (Johnson 2016; Dumas 2014; Johnson 2017). The suffering that happens to Black youth is interrelated to the violent acts that urban administrators, teachers, and policies inflict onto the backs of Black youth.

Mobilized by Dumas' conception of anti-blackness, our individual and collective racialized and gendered experiences, and the (mis)treatment of Black lives in urban schools, we explicate five types of violence that unfold in urban schools and classrooms: (1) physical; (2) symbolic; (3) linguistic; (4) curricula and pedagogical; and (5) systemic school violence. Examples and descriptions of each type can be seen in Table 1. On behalf of Black children who experience violence each day, our goal for making these acts of violence explicit is to lovingly invite educators to reflect deeply and critically examine how unintentional and/or intentional enactments of violence are harmful to the bodies, hearts, and minds of Black youth. It is our hope that making these different forms of violence explicit will encourage educators to make efforts to reduce the (mis)representation of Black youths' bodies, realities, languages, and literacies and transform curricular and pedagogical practices.

We note that all five types of anti-black violence are interconnected and are at the nexus of the pain and suffering that takes place in urban schools. As Johnson et al. (2017) pointed out, we are well aware of the deficit-based and anti-black ideologies that lead to the horrendous murders of Black youth. Concordantly, we believe the various types of anti-black violence contribute to the physical and spiritual killing/murdering of Black lives. Against this dangerous backdrop, educators who teach in urban settings must be conscious of the multiple forms of violence. If educators lack critical knowledge about the different forms of violence, they will continue to uphold whiteness, anti-blackness, and white supremacist patriarchy which represent the antithesis of love. Hence, they will not engage in revolutionary love, but instead, continue to engage in what we call "fake love."

"I Hate You; I Love You": The toxicity of Fake Love

> Yo', whatever happened to the values of humanity
> Whatever happened to the fairness and equality
> Instead of spreading love we're spreading animosity
> Lack of understanding, leading us away from unity
>
> The Black Eyed Peas (Adams and Fair 2003)

As intimated in the lyrics, educators should truly and honestly ask themselves where are the values of humanity, fairness, and equality. Across many urban classrooms, teachers, administrators, and staff confess and insist they love all children,

Table 1 Types of anti-black violence in urban schools

Types of Violence	Definition	Examples
Physical	The physical abuse and assault that stem from racial discrimination and prejudicial ideologies and beliefs	Hitting, pushing, beating, etc. Lynching Police brutality Sexual abuse Sexual assault
Symbolic	A metaphorical representation of violence that stems from, "racial abuse, pain, and suffering against the spirit and humanity of Black people" (Author, under review)	Racial epithets and slurs Rejecting the experiences and lived realities of Black youth Silencing the voices of Black youth (mis)reading Black youths' culture, race, gender, and language
Linguistic	This form of violence marginalizes and polices the language of Black youth which is referred to as (e.g., Black language, African American language, or African American Vernacular English) through privileging and promoting white mainstream English	Socializing Black youth to view Black language as "not good", "broken English", and "incorrect" Devaluing the connection between language, race, and identity Teaching Black students and students from other ethnic groups that code-switching is the best approach to "master" white mainstream English (Baker-Bell 2017[GB6]) Teaching grammar and vocabulary in isolation from the texts we are teaching and disconnected to the lived realities and experiences of youth from racially and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Table 1 (continued)

Types of Violence	Definition	Examples
Curricular and Pedagogical	This form of violence infiltrates schools' curriculum through teaching texts, materials, and standards that center Eurocratic notions of existing and being in the world (Cridland-Hughes and King 2015). In conjunction, the *conventional* curriculum provides a false narrative about Black people through promoting deficit-based ideologies which inform teachers pedagogical and instructional practices in classrooms. In general, this is a form of epistemic violence which attacks Black ways of knowing	Enacting culturally irrelevant and unresponsive curriculum Selecting texts where Black youth do not see characters who look like them reflected in dynamic and positive ways. Feeding Black youth inaccurate, distorted, diluted, incomplete, and sanitized versions of history Presenting mathematicians and scientists who are predominately white, monolingual, and male while mathematicians and scientists who identify as women and people from linguistically and racially diverse backgrounds are omitted Omitting critical conversations from the curriculum that explore the intersections of race, gender, religion, language, sexuality, etc. Unintentionally and/or intentionally minimizing how teacher positionality shapes curricular decisions and pedagogical practices
Systemic school	This form of violence is deeply ingrained within schools' structures, processes, discourses, customs, policies, and laws which oftentimes reflect racist and hegemonic ideologies	Underfunded and overcrowded schools Inexperienced teachers and/or teachers who are not certified in the subject area(s) they teach Overrepresentation of Black youth in special education courses Tracking Disproportionality of Black youth in gifted and talented courses Zero tolerance school discipline policies Lack of educational and support services that promote a positive healthy development—physically, mentally, and emotionally

despite intentionally and unintentionally inflicting harm onto Black youth (Boutte 2016). In so doing, this illuminates this love/hate relationship educators have with Black youth (Ladson-Billings 2011). Matias (2016) explained that white educators have a 'bad romance' with whiteness. We extend Matias' comment by adding that many educators have a bad and sadistic romance with blackness. For example, at the beginning of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, particularly the killing of Eric Garner, a group of white female teachers from New York City took a photograph while wearing paraphernalia that stated, "Blue Lives Matter" to push back against the declaration of the mattering of Black lives. This is a clear-cut example of what Johnson and Bryan (2016) referred to as "wearing white sheets without wearing white sheets" (p. 9). By this we mean, although white teachers were not wearing Klu Klux Klan garbs, metaphorically, they were wearing the vestitures of white violence against Black lives. Before discussing how revolutionary love looks in classrooms, we say a few final words about what we refer to as fake love that youth in urban classrooms currently encounter.

Fake Love

Urban classrooms are riddled with teachers who demonstrate this notion of what we are calling fake love. Fake love is inauthentic and it reproduces the disloyalty urban teachers have with Black children and youth. When teachers embody fake love, it produces this bogus relationship, which we describe as pretentious and masquerading the real hate white teachers have and give to Black youth (Thomas 2017). Simply put, white teachers, like white people in general, love on Black culture but do not love on Black people. For example, when white people embrace hip hop culture, appropriate Black language, and imitate Black fashion, clothing and hairstyles, they demonstrate their historical obsession with Black ingenuity and cultural aesthetics while at the same time remaining silent and complicit in Black violence and death.

Within educational contexts, white educators are willing to support Black altheticism by applauding Black boys on the basketball courts and football fields, yet they ignore the academic disparities and miseducation Black male athletes face within and beyond the sports arena (Howard 2014; Singer 2015). In other words, white educators, who invoke fake love, see Black boys' ability to win sports victories as more important than the mattering of Black lives. Black male athleticism is celebrated in such a way because white educators benefit. This way of benefiting and our conception of fake love remind us of what critical race scholars refer to as "interest convergence"— the idea that racial justice is gained for Black people only when it collides with the interests of white people. For example, in the movie, *42* (Helgeland 2013), Jackie Robinson, the first Black major league baseball player, expressed his concerns and issues to his general manager about being the only Black player on the team and the racial abuse he encountered from fans and his teammates. During this conversation, the white general manager responded, "I believe we can win the world series, and the world series means money. Therefore, I want you to worry those pitchers until they come apart…run as you see fit…run those bases like the devil himself. I want

you to put the natural fear of God in them" (Helgeland 2013). In other words, the general manager silently communicated to Jackie the need to ignore the racialized infliction and pain placed upon him for the greater good of the team.

We also contend that fake love is synonymous with "[multiculturalism], [neoliberalism], and discourse of difference and diversity, which "work to celebrate difference, without attention to the ways difference has historically been used to oppress groups and justify marginalization (Carey et al. 2018, p. 123). The inability to see issues of race, racism, whiteness, and white supremacist patriarchy clearly and for what they are demonstrates this conception of fake love. To this end, fake love portrays how white teachers are metaphorically intoxicated and cannot see institutional and structural racism plainly. When white people, in this particular case, teachers, express fake love towards Black youth, they cannot show and enact a humanizing love because of their inability to critically read the world and themselves. Educators from all ethnic groups who express such fake love may not verbally use racial epithets or physically abuse Black children; however, they cannot clearly see how their uncritical perceptions, ideologies, and assumptions softly accept "whiteness, the normalization of whiteness, and white privileges" (Johnson 2017, p. 477). Revoluntionary love is required in order to move beyond fake love.

"I'm Searching for a Real Love": Revolutionary Love As Emancipatory Education

Real love, I'm searching for a real love
Someone to set my heart free
Real love, I'm searching for a real love
I'm out to have a real love

Mary J Blige (Rooney and Morales 1991)

To counter fake love and to interrupt the ongoing anti-black violence encountered by Black, urban youth, we suggest educators embrace revolutionary love. bell Hooks (1994) referred to teachers' ability to invoke revolutionary love through pedagogies and schooling practices as 'teaching to transgress' or the idea of working against the epistemic violence reflected in curricula and schooling norms. This revolutionary love of Blackness can be seen as political resistance (Hooks 2000) and, as Bell (1992) has intimated, resistance against racism is its own reward. Educators who invoke revolutionary love should become what Warren (2017) terms 'Decidedly Black' or embracing "a philosophical and intellectual orientation intended to move Black youth from the margins of education practice and policy making to the center" (p. 163).

When Black children are 'educated' rather than 'schooled,' they become revolutionaries who push back against the intentional and unintentional anti-black violence and social reproduction (Shujaa 1994) constructed to keep them at what Bell (1992) referred to as 'the bottom of the well' or society's lowest rungs. The *bottom of the well* also suggests that Black people are subservient to whites and are not viewed as human (Dumas 2014).

Revolutionary love sparks in Black children the courage Harriet Tubman possessed as she constructed the underground railroad to free enslaved African people or the bold tenacity of Frederick Douglass who asked the perennial question: "To a slave, what is the fourth of July?" (Foner Foner 1999, p. 88). Douglass' question challenged the institution of slavery and the mythical idea of American Freedom during an era where enslaved Africans were viewed as 3/5th of a human being. Similarly, revolutionary love pushes Black children to declare like Fannie Lou Hamer, activist, that they are 'sick and tired of being sick and tired' about being subjected to the violence white supremacy inflict upon them in and beyond urban classrooms and encourages them to engage in what Stovall (2013) considers critical race praxis. Critical race praxis is the idea of "fightin the devil 24/7" or engaging in on-the-ground action to uplift and empower Black people and communities. In other words, Black people must not only pray but they must also run for their lives towards freedom. Frederick Douglass noted that [he] "prayed for 20 years but received no answer until [he] prayed with [his] legs" (Douglass 1995, p. 134).

We contend Black children who are products of revolutionary love should develop what we call 'critical race discernment'— a racialized third-eye to determine those who are enacting fake love rather than revolutionary love. Given that one of the dimensions of Black culture is spirituality (Boutte 2016; Boykin 1994), the third-eye is more of a spiritual phenomenon than natural one and is designed to help Black children not only read the word (e.g., be literate) but also feel and read their world (e.g., understanding how they are oppressed and the need to work against such oppression). Furthermore, returning to the opening quote drawn from Mary J. Blige's song titled "I'm searching for a real love," suggests revolutionary love should help Black children embrace and build on authentic and liberatory love which works against the self-hate and miseducation that often begins in schools (Woodson 1933). In the next two sections, we operationalize revolutionary love through a discussion of Afrocentric Praxis for teaching for Liberation and Diaspora Literacy.

"We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest until it Comes": Afrocentric Praxis for Teaching for Liberation

To me young people come first
They have the courage where we fail
And if I can but shed some light as they carry us through the gale

The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on
Is when the reins are in the hands of the young, who dare to run against the storm

Sweet Honey and the Rock

Drawing from Black emancipatory and Afrocentric traditions (Asante 2007; DuBois 1903; Fanon 1963; Hilliard 2002; King 1991, 1992, 2005; Lynn 1999; Lynn et al. 2013; Woodson 1933/1990), King and Swartz (2016) presented an emancipatory pedagogy that focuses on teaching in a manner that is informed by

African worldviews, cosmologies, philosophies, cultural concepts and practices of people in the African Diaspora. This pedagogical approach is conceived of as a liberating and healing antidote for African children whom have been viewed and taught from Eurocratic perspectives and subjected to ongoing violence. By locating pedagogical strategies within an African cultural context, the education of Black students is viewed as a shared responsibility of teachers, parents, community members, and the world. This approach requires "re-membering" (reconnecting) knowledge of the past that has been silenced, omitted, or distorted (Au et al. 2016; King and Swartz 2016). From this point of view, African and African American epistemologies are lovingly viewed as complex and vibrant rather than problematic and pathological.

Educators who are guided by Afrocentric and liberatory frameworks apply reflective actions (praxis) to fight for the freedom and emancipation of African American and other minoritized students. We will now draw on the vignettes from a study conducted by Lamar to illuminate the qualities of Afrocentric Praxis. Six pedagogical strategies were offered by King and Swartz (2016) and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Pedagogical strategies for afrocentric praxis for teaching for liberation

Pedagogy	Description
1. Eldering	Teachers exhibit authentic authority based on knowledge, wisdom, and expertise—qualities that lead to building upon what students know and who they are. Teachers ask critical questions and co-create curriculum with students. Knowledge is viewed as a communal experience and everyone has something to contribute
2. Locating Students (where they are)	Students experience representation when teachers design instruction based on their normative cultural characteristics. Learning in classrooms is interdependent and students can exchange ideas about their respective norms and learn together
3. Multiple Ways of Knowing	Accurate scholarship is presented which presents multiple ways of knowing and multiple histories and realities which represent the students in the classroom
4. Question-Driven Pedagogy	Teachers pose thought-provoking questions which build on what students know. Teaching and learning is a reciprocal experience which includes ongoing inquiry. Students are able to demonstrate agency and define themselves and share their ideas during instruction
5. Culturally Authentic Assessment	Teachers allow students to arrive at solutions through demonstration rather than through a given predetermined 'right' answer. Student- and community-informed expectations and students, parents, and teachers work together to complete and assess projects and performances that are beneficial to the classroom and community
6. Communal Responsibility	Teachers foster a sense of group belonging, working together, reciprocity, right action, and being responsible for each other. Students are valued for what they contribute to the group during cooperative learning. Collective decision making is important

Consider the example of Lamar, a Black male former high school English language arts teacher at a majority Black urban school and currently a teacher educator, as he engages in Afrocentric praxis with several youth and families. This example comes from a larger study conducted on family literacy practices and race. Drawing upon CRT and counterstorytelling methodology, Johnson's (2016) goal was to combat the ongoing physical, symbolic, and curricular/pedagogical violence that his students encountered and to welcome the voices and lived experiences of families of Color. Over the course of an academic year, Johnson utilized a young adolescent novel, *Mexican White Boy* (2017), by Matt de le Pena, to engage families and youth in critical race and Afrocentric based conversations. Below, we highlight a conversation between several family members and youth pertaining to the killing of Black youth, racism in schools and society, and the importance of Afrocentric education in schools.

Cynthia: *(Disappointedly).* Yeah, I am a nurse at a middle school here in the district, and I witness how horribly young Black males are treated. They may get expelled…while the other person only gets a slap on the wrist. *(Calmly).* We left home to go to Trader Joe's *(Trader Joe's is a local grocery store)* and since we were out, we decided to get something to eat. *(She begins to describe her son who is an eighth grader).* Matthew is this tall guy *(She raises her arm high to illustrate her son's height).* A tall Black guy and he's wearing his hoodie; so, I did tell him this *(quick pause).* I don't know if this is right or wrong, but it was in the moment—I told him that he is perceived as a threat. Especially, with the Trayvon Martin case unfolding, he has to be careful. But, it's the truth…he is a threat. Although, in actuality, he isn't a threat, he needs to know how some people may perceive him to be.

Lamar: *(Looking at Cynthia)* Thank you for explaining and demonstrating how race is a social construct that is interconnected to the identity development of your son. You're right—the Black male body is a threat to society within the United States and abroad. (*He pauses).* But, we cannot forget about Black girls and women who are also victims of police brutality and white supremacy. Black girls are also facing physical abuse and spiritual abuse within classrooms and outside of classroom spaces. *(Several of the book club members nod their heads in agreement).*

David: *(Understanding).* The summer of my seventh-grade year, my dad put me in this program called Freedom School. *(Lamar looks up from jotting notes, surprised).*

Lamar: *(Rapidly).* Can you tell everyone what Freedom School is? *(Smiling).*

David: Freedom School helps you to learn about who you are and the world through books. *(He pauses)* and, it is like an Afrocentric course. It teaches you about where you are from, how you were treated, how your past ancestors were treated, and how you can comeback some of the things that are put upon you as a Black person. *(His eyes wide, and his hands clutched together on the desk).* We may need an Afrocentric course here. *(Taken aback)* But, wait, it provides too much truth that too many white people aren't ready for!

Lamar: *(Inquisitively).* What do you mean by truth?

> **David:** *(Smiling).* See that's the stuff they are not ready for. *(Moving his hands).* They don't think..or they think everything is equal. If you are poor, that is your fault, or if you don't have a job, that's your fault. If you're *(He pauses. There is a look of concernment)* how do I say this without …If there was an Afrocentric course here…it's just too much truth. white people will say, "Oh…well, why would he say that? *(Wittingly).* "Oh, Black people can do the same thing white people can do." If schools operated as Freedom Schools or have Afrocentric courses, it would bring out the white supremacists and racist people that go and teach here.

Johnson's vignette illuminate the power and utility of emancipatory pedagogies by thoroughly unearthing the potential critical and racial consciousness students can develop through intentional and intergenerational racial dialogue. Emancipatory pedagogies require critical race praxis wedded with Afrocentric praxis.

Eldering

Lamar trusted his wisdom when making decisions about how to initiate and sustain critical race and Afrocentric conversations and actions related to the physical, symbolic, and curricular/pedagogical violence. For example, he was intentional about explaining what he knew about the critical consciousness and nature of ongoing anti-black violence in schools and society-writ-large, particularly as it pertains to both Black girls and boys. Additionally, he positioned himself and his students as both teachers and learners. In other words, he saw the act of eldering as bidirectional and essential to the teaching and learning process. By bidirectional we mean that the elder can be the student and the student can be the elder. He also understood that it was important to present an alternative to current school curriculum and norms rather than continue to serve students with deficit-based and dehumanizing curriculum, pedagogy, and texts.

Locating Students (Where They Are)

Lamar's question, "Can you tell me more about Freedom School?" was strategically posed based on what he knew about David's prior experience with his attending Freedom School. This strategy was used because he realized others who participated in the conversation may not have been familiar with Freedom School. He is an avid observer who is willing to learn not only *about* students, their families and neighborhoods, but also *from* them.

Multiple Ways of Knowing

Considering that Lamar does not have any children, he understood the importance of understanding and validating Cynthia's lived experiences in terms of being a Black mother. He reiterated how we live in a racially-stratified society and how Black

males are often positioned as 'targets'. However, he still understood Cynthia's immediate response in the moment in terms of minimizing the perceived threatening presence of her Black son in a public space. This conversation highlights the politics of living within a Black body in schools and how it plays itself out in society-at-large.

Question-Driven Pedagogy

Open-ended and thought-provoking questions are hallmarks of Lamar's teaching. Although not captured in this one example, from the beginning of the initial conversation, even when he felt unsure based on family members and youths' silence, he continued. Under his wise tutelage and question-driven pedagogy, his students, demonstrated critical race and Afrocentric consciousness and academic competence. For example, David questioned why courses which center Afrocentric teaching and praxis were not a part of the traditional school curriculum. David's act of questioning schooling norms and practices is representative of the critical race discernment, which is foundational to revoluntionary love we mentioned earlier. It also demonstrates his courage and tenacity to challenge the status quo, schooling, curricular, and pedagogical violence. Returning to the lyrics of *Ella's Song*, we contend that David's voice, perspectives, and critical questioning are important because 'young people come first,' and 'have the courage where we fail.'

Culturally Authentic Assessment

At the center of Lamar's pedagogical style is the assumption that there are multiple ways of knowing, existing, and being within the world. In order to figure out what students and families know, Lamar observes and questions them. He asks questions to learn what issues are relevant to his students and families, and he shares with them his own commitment to and understanding of racial justice work.

Communal Responsibility

A key component of Lamar's teaching strategy is to foster a sense of group belonging. To do this, he began by inviting families and youth into his secondary English language arts classroom to elicit their lived realities regarding race and racism. Furthermore, in order to accomplish this, it is important to develop deep relationships with students and families to create a trusting school and classroom community. He trusts students and families, for the most part, they reciprocate that trust, which is why they were eager to share their stories and experiences. Trusting students and families means asking them questions about what they know, how they experience the world, and how they would like to learn more, together as a class and as a community of learners. Lamar facilitates communal responsibility not only to each other as students and families, but also to the larger Black community and global human family.

African Diaspora Literacy

Overlapping and complementing Afrocentric Praxis is a broader revolutionary and loving approach that can be applied in urban classrooms—African Diaspora Literacy. Like Afrocentric Praxis, African Diaspora Literacy emanates from a Black Studies paradigm and African American epistemological frameworks and theories (Boutte et al. 2017). King (1992) defined Diaspora Literacy as Black people's knowledge of their (collective) story and cultural dispossession. Diaspora Literacy challenges and critiques social and equity issues while building the racial and ethnic uplifting of people who are often on the margins in society (Boutte 2016; Lynn et al. 2013).

Important parts of the African Diaspora Literacy process for students include helping them: (1) identify and name oppressions and their constituent components; (2) learn about their own history as a healing antidote against oppression; (3) imagine possibilities for a better world; (4) take reflective actions to interrupt ongoing oppression; and (5) organize and collaborate with others who are seeking to dismantle oppressive structures (Boutte 2016). Educators are expected to foster spaces for African Diaspora Literacy by disrupting deeply embedded Eurocratic curricula and substantively and continuously including African Diaspora perspectives, knowledges, and content. In classrooms, African people should be viewed as possessing agency and wisdom (Dei 2012).

African Diaspora Literacy relates to people with African origins wherever they are in the world (e.g., Caribbean, Africa, U.S., Brazil, Europe). The assumption is that people in the African Diaspora have informed and indigenous perspectives which lead to self-recognition, healing, and "re-membering" (Dillard 2012; Fu-Kiau and Lukondo-Wamba 1988; King 1992; King and Swartz 2014). In pursuit of an anti-colonial framework, this process allows Black students to repossess their stories, including a cultural identity as "Africa's children" (King 1992, p. 321).

African Diaspora literacy learning engagements point to several implications for practitioners. First, it is problematic to begin Black history with slavery since the conventional omission of African history is represents 'anti-love' and violence in curricula. Second, we point out that an African-centered curriculum is critical for all students and not just African American learners (Asante 2007; Hilliard 2002, 2009). We have seen the power of African Diaspora Literacy in examples with other cultural groups such as those by Jaime Escalante whose teaching of Latinx students was featured in the movie, *Stand and Deliver* (Musca and Menendez 1988) and who began with ancient Mayan history. Escalante explained to his Latinx students the value of Diaspora history when teaching primarily high school students who were labelled as low achievers and proclaimed to them, "It was your ancestors, the Mayans, who first contemplated the zero. The absence of value. You have math in your blood."

Conclusion

Returning to the opening ideas of this article, it is clear that loving Black youth in PreK-12 schools is not the goal of our current schooling system. Faced with the daily and ongoing anti-black violence illuminates the debasement of Black life and the need for revolutionary love. While we argue that revolutionary love benefits urban children and youth, it also benefits urban educators. By this we mean revolutionary love should have the power to provoke educators to engage in humanizing and empowering pedagogies for Black students which begin with Mother Africa (King 2005). Education for liberation requires the recovery and revitalization of subjugated African heritage knowledges as forms of identity and consciousness to make intra- and inter-group racial, ethnic, and linguistic solidarity possible (King 2017). Afrocentric praxis and African Diaspora literacy were suggested as two ways to enact revolutionary love in PreK-12 urban classrooms. Both can be used as epistemological weapons to demonstrate and respect the racial integrity of diverse groups and to show them love (King 2017).

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